

## Inequalities

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The UNESCO slide on years of schooling disparities in Nigeria (by gender, family income status, location, ethnic group) helps to clarify the complex nature of inequalities – these are diverse and country and sector specific.

MDG 3 – the gender gap in school enrolment is largely closed. The Rural/urban gap 14%. Wealth quintile gap 26pc (2010). Inequalities persist.

Why inequalities matter:

- They are often increasing
- They produce harms – physically, psychologically, economically
- They are often irreversible – child deaths, stunting, poor education
- Inter-generational transmission.

Policy responses are available – rights based, participatory, universal in intent, designed to focus on the worst off ... and should address the prevailing inequalities. Policies exist that are right in principle and right in practice – that are cost-effective and can be sustained. Examples from Bangladesh and elsewhere.

The failure of aggregates. Global and often national averages deceive and serve to obscure the reality of what is happening with people. The worst off are the most hidden, the least visible – including sometimes in household surveys.

We need an additional dimension to goal setting – which is local and participatory; and to goal monitoring – which is locally driven and owned. A third dimension added to the national and global.

Inequalities cannot be satisfactorily separated out into self-standing, composite goals: these would be too partial to understand the complex reality. We will need ongoing efforts to unpack and interrogate the numbers, lest they be meaningless. Thus – we should build an equity dimension in routinely and systematically to *all* Goals and Targets. We can use indicators carefully and creatively to understand the prevailing inequalities.

Our future Goals should be both “unpacked”, at the indicator level, depending on the prevailing inequalities, *and* focussed, targeted at reducing gaps or achieving universal coverage.

Thus – we should “deepen” future Goals. Deepening is more important than proliferation.

Together with this, we should enable and invest so that people set and monitor their own agendas, within national frameworks.

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