

Explaining the Rural-Urban Malnutrition Inequality in Malawi

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Abstract

In this paper we look at asset-related inequality in child malnutrition between rural and urban areas in Malawi. We use data from the 2006 multiple indicator cluster survey (MICS). For each area, inequalities across the distribution of household assets in malnutrition as measured by a concentration index of the height-for-age z-scores (HAZ) are decomposed into their causes. We then decompose the rural-urban gap in inequality in malnutrition into the effects of changes in the means and inequalities in the determinants of malnutrition. Finally, the rural-urban difference in malnutrition inequality is decomposed into changes in the effects of the determinants of malnutrition. This allows us to dig deeper and pinpoint the changes within the changes in the elasticities. In each area, most of the asset-related inequality in malnutrition is explained by parental education and household economic status. The rural-urban difference in parental education and economic status is a major driver of the malnutrition inequality differential. Further to that, we find that it is the difference in the education elasticity rather than the difference in education inequality that accounts for the bulk of the gap associated with education.