

# Trends and Causes of Socioeconomic Inequalities in Maternal Healthcare Utilization in Tanzania

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## ABSTRACT

The article assesses trends and causes of socioeconomic inequalities in maternal health care utilization in Tanzania between 2004 and 2016. The study uses three rounds of the Tanzania Demographic and Health Survey data collected in 2004, 2010, and 2016. We use the Wagstaff Index (WI) measure of socioeconomic inequality to examine socioeconomic inequalities in Tanzania's maternal health care utilization. We then decompose the causes of disparities in maternal health care use by using regression-based decomposition of WI. The study findings revealed that there exists a pro-rich inequality in maternal health care use in Tanzania. Results indicate that the magnitude of disparities has increased over time. The decomposition analysis revealed that the women's household wealth status and education level contribute most to the increased inequalities in maternal health care use in Tanzania. Potential challenges in implementing the cost exemption policy, long distance to the health facilities, inadequate capacity of health facilities, and sociocultural barriers could explain the observed results. We thus argue for proper implementation of the cost exemption policy and targeting of less privileged women to redress the situation.

**Keywords:** Maternal health, Inequality, Wagstaff Index, Decomposition analysis, and Tanzania

