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Emerging Social Issues Division

Social Policy and Population Section

Asia-Pacific Population Journal

Article   **Sociocultural and Geographical Disparities in Child Immunization in Nepal**

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Abstract   Child immunization stands as a high priority public service in Nepal. Yet, in 2001 one third of children were deprived of receiving a complete course of vaccination. Using the 2001 Nepal Demographic and Health Survey data, this study examines whether a child was left behind in receiving immunization owing to his/her sociocultural background and place of residence. The results indicate that children of ethnic minority groups (e.g., Bangali, Musalman, Rajbhar, Raute, Raji and other minorities of the hill and Terai) were less likely to be fully immunized compared with those of high caste Hindu. In particular, they were less likely to receive a complete course of DPT, BCG and measles vaccines. By gender, although significant gap was not observed in receiving a complete course of immunization, boys were more likely to receive DPT, BCG and measles vaccines than girls. Geographically, children living in the eastern region of Nepal were relatively advantaged compared with those living in the western region of the country. However, variations in immunization coverage by ecological regions and rural-urban residence were not prominent. More importantly, mother's education, household wealth and access to health service were found to be significant predictors of child immunization. These findings suggest that the child health policy in Nepal should focus on existing sociocultural and geographical disparities with a particular attention paid to female's education, household economic status and service provision in order to alleviate low immunization coverage.

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