

Inequalities in child survival: looking at wealth and other socio-economic disparities in developing countries

Maricar Garde with Nazme Sabina

CPRC International Conference 2010

9 September 2010



Save the Children

Outline

- Ways of looking at inequalities in child survival (CS)
- Overall picture of inequality in CS in developing countries
- Differences in child survival patterns between low income countries (LICs) and middle income countries (MICs)
- Insights from India and Bangladesh
- Policy implications

Measures of inequality and data

- Inequality in child survival can be observed by looking at the disparities in the under-five mortality rate among different groups
- Different ways to measure inequality:
 - Absolute inequality (difference in under-five mortality rates between groups)
 - Relative inequality (ratio of under-five mortality rates between groups)
 - Concentration of deaths in the poorest or most disadvantaged group

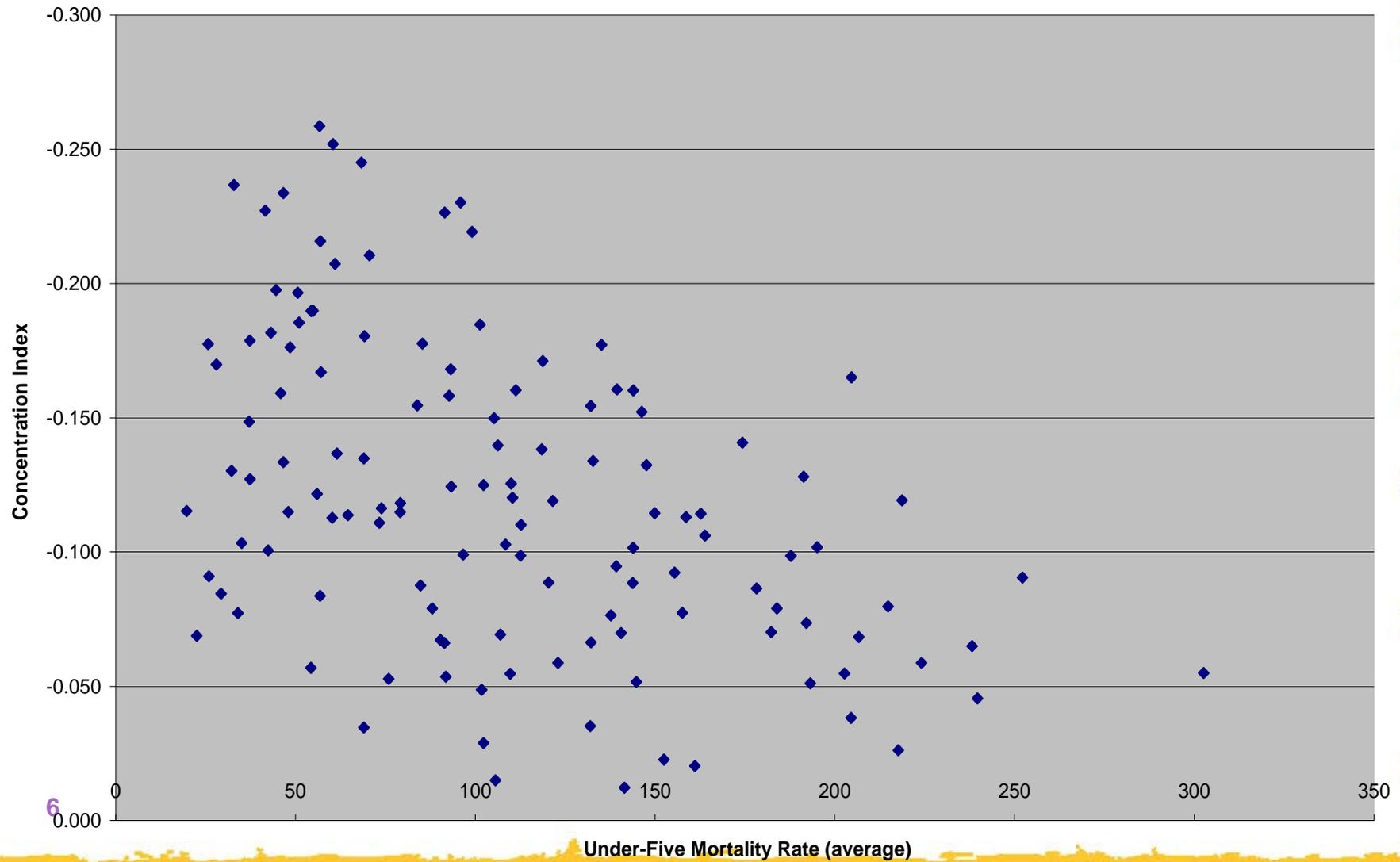
Measures of inequality and data

- Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) provides child mortality estimates disaggregated by
 - household wealth quintile
 - geographic location
 - other socio-economic characteristics
- Measure inequality using concentration indices computed for 65 developing countries between the period of 1990 to 2008

Overall picture of inequality in CS

- Countries with higher rates of under-five mortality tend to have less inequality in child mortality between richest and poorest households
- Validates previous finding of Wang (2003)
- In contrast, those with lower rates of under-five mortality tend to have child deaths more concentrated in the poorest group
- Progress in many MDG 4 on-track countries was accompanied by rising inequality in child mortality suggesting interventions reached better-off households first

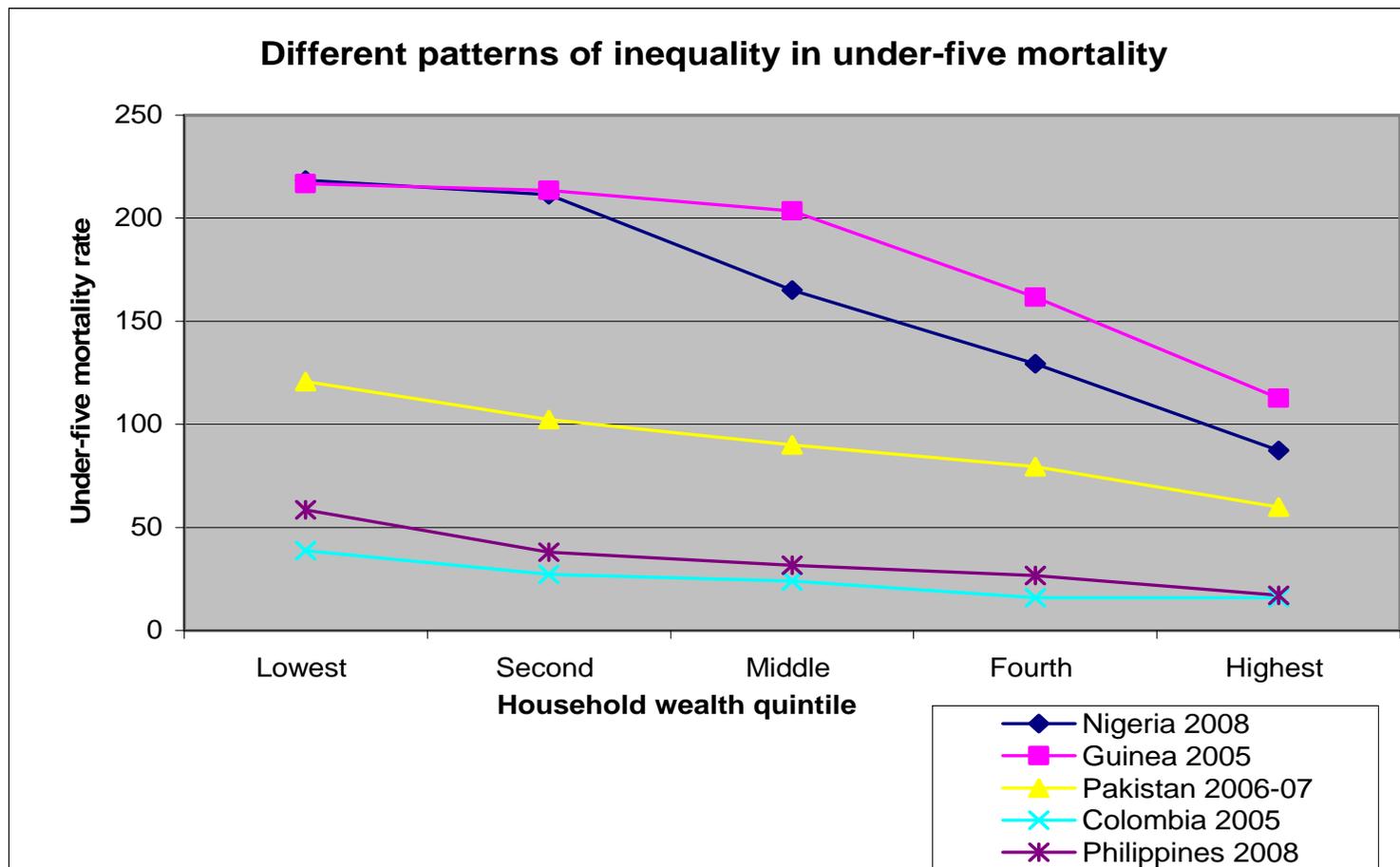
Under-five mortality and inequality in mortality



Differences between LICs and MICs

- In MICs inequality in under-five deaths marked between the top 20 percent and the bottom 20 percent of the population
- In LICs under-five mortality is high in the bottom 40-60 percent of the population
- Reductions in under-five deaths faster for the richest or better-off groups usually through “quick win” strategies, but later need structural interventions to equalise reductions
- LICs need more comprehensive strategies to reach a broader spectrum of the population

Patterns of inequality in CS in developing countries



Source: DHS



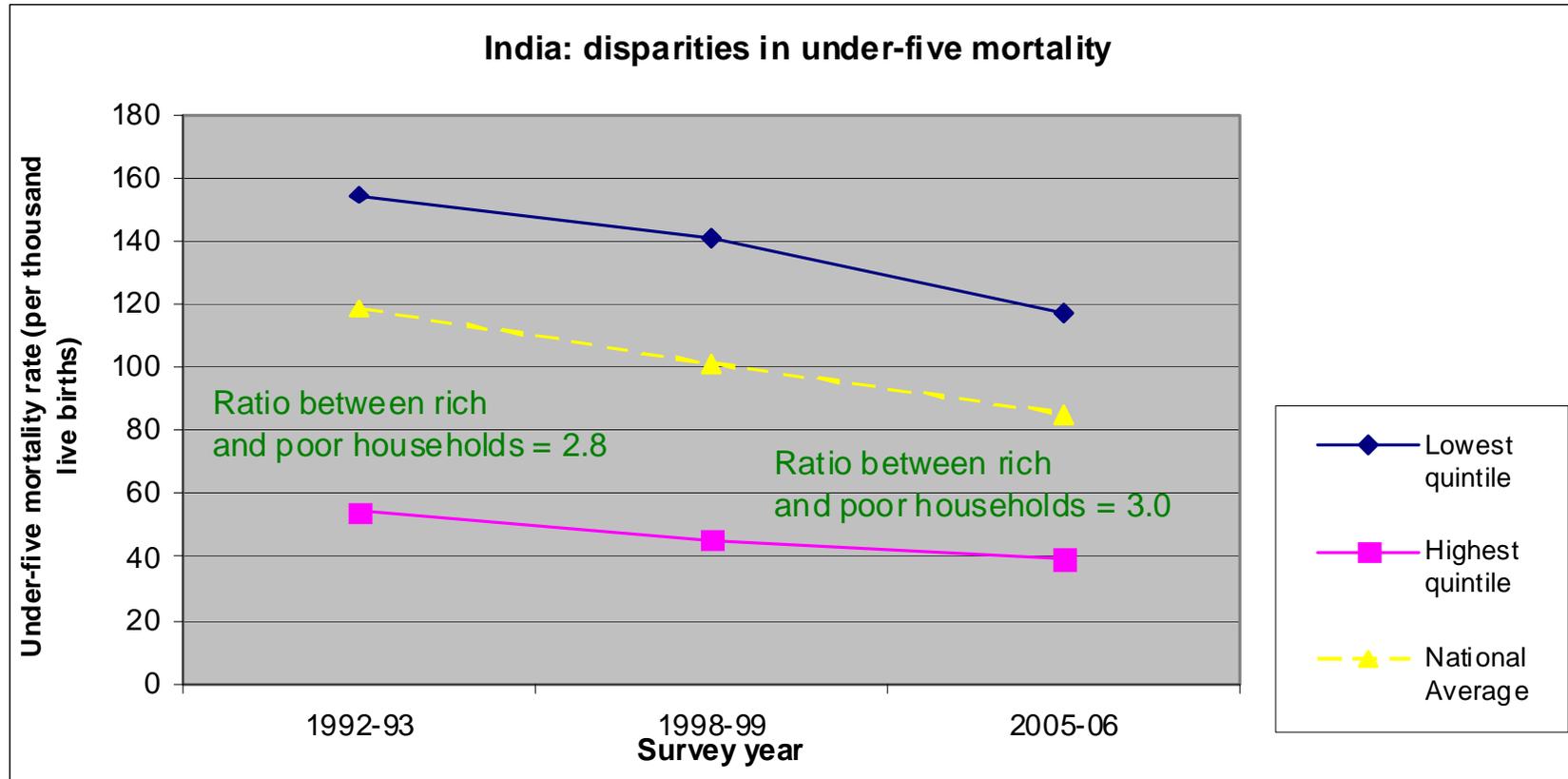
The burden of neonatal mortality

- Neonatal mortality tends to fall slower than under-five mortality
- The share of neonatal mortality in under-five mortality tend to be higher in on-track countries than off-track countries, and in South Asia (about 50%) than in sub-Saharan Africa (about 25%)
- Neonatal deaths driven by circumstances at birth which in turn are linked to structural causes of child mortality
- Require longer-term and structural interventions associated with functioning health systems

Insights from India and Bangladesh

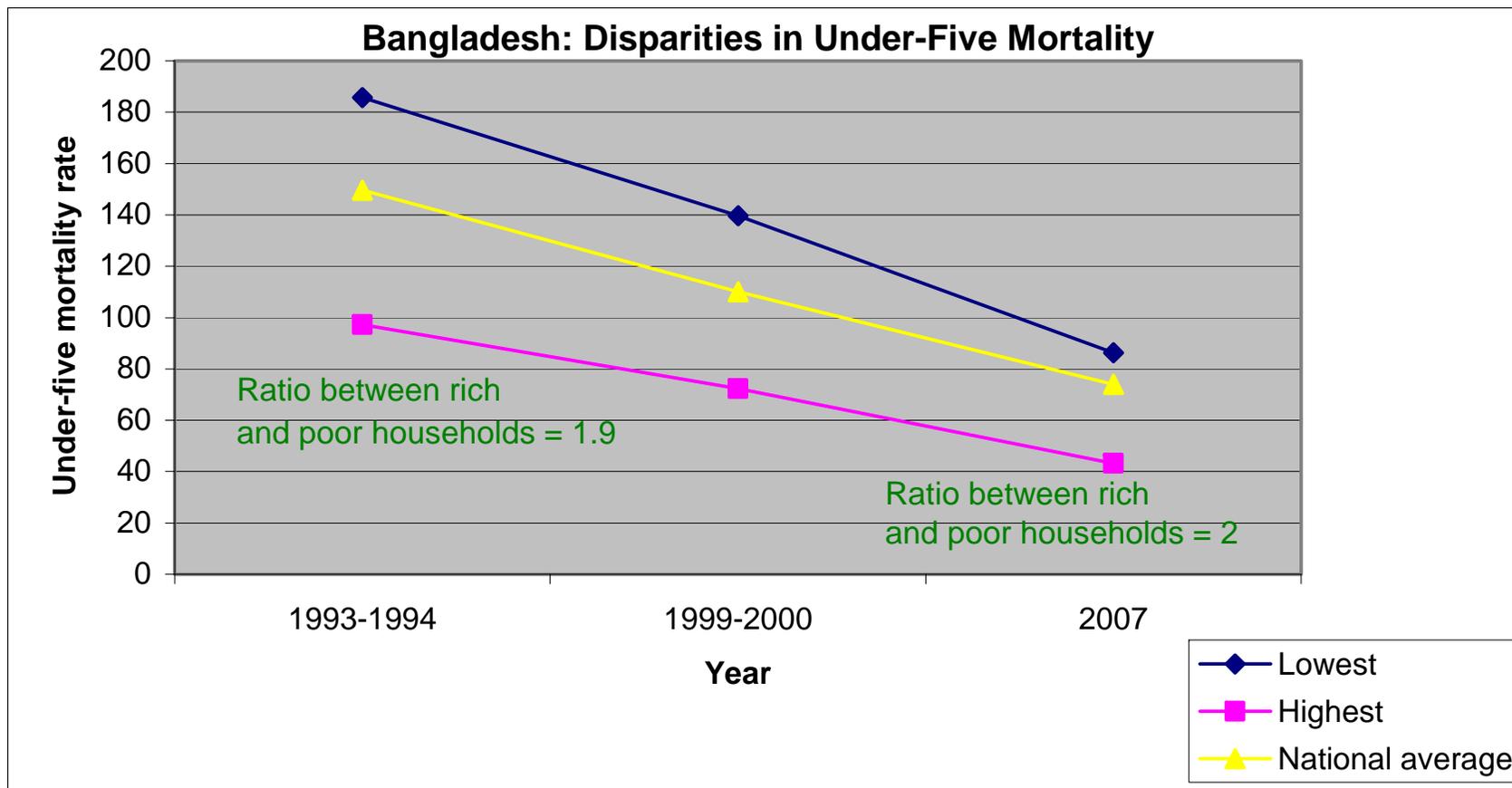
- Growth is not a sufficient pre-condition to be on-track
MDG 4
- Inequality in child mortality is present across other socioeconomic characteristics
- Difficult to quantify how much ethnicity and caste contribute to child mortality but should not be reduced to differences in economic factors
- Absolute inequality in child mortality may fall but relative inequality may persists over time

Insights from India and Bangladesh



Source of under-five mortality rates: DHS

Insights from India and Bangladesh



Source of data: DHS

Insights from India and Bangladesh

- India illustrates how national averages mask true picture of child survival at the state and household levels
 - Some states like Kerala and Tamil Nadu have child survival patterns similar to middle income countries
 - Uneven implementation of ICDS programme
- Bangladesh, a low income country, has significantly improve child survival through inexpensive wide-scale interventions
- Bangladesh needs to focus on structural interventions to bring down neonatal mortality; ensure poorest are not missed

Insights for policy

- Clear need for differentiated strategies in tackling under-five mortality in middle income and low income countries
- Inexpensive interventions rolled out widely puts a dent on under-five mortality but countries cannot escape addressing long-term interventions
- Need to tackle the wider determinants of inequalities in child survival

Insights for policy

- A few countries like Egypt have reduced under-five mortality in a more equalising manner—important to learn from the experiences of these “outliers”
- Need for greater effort to produce disaggregated child mortality data more frequently for policy and planning

Thank you

Download the paper at

http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/54_12286.htm



Save the Children