

## **WHO-UNDESA Technical Advisory Group on COVID-19 Mortality Assessment**

### **Working Group 5: Inequality in COVID-19 mortality between and within countries**

#### **Background**

In the context of the Technical Advisory Group on COVID-19 Mortality Assessment, jointly established by WHO and UN DESA, Working Group 5 on inequality in COVID-19 mortality between and within countries will focus on developing a framework and case studies for a global and comprehensive analysis of inequality and inequity in the risk and experience of mortality attributable to COVID-19.

#### **Objectives**

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted global inequalities and inequities.

The working group will lay the groundwork for a comprehensive, global study to document and analyze differences in levels of mortality attributable to COVID-19 between and within countries. To this end, the working group will undertake an assessment, with illustrative examples, of the potential for using existing operational frameworks, in particular WHO's approach based on the social determinants of health, to assess inequalities at the local, national and global levels.

The working group will consider the utility of assessing inequality by focusing on (conditional) risks of progression through various stages of the disease, from the risk of becoming infected to the risks of developing mild or severe disease or disability, and finally the risk of succumbing to the disease. Priority will be given to analytical approaches or frameworks that can be used to identify possible windows for intervention, so that policymakers, civil society, programme administrators and others can use the recommended framework(s) to drive policy formulation and programme implementation.

The framework could include definitions of terms and describe multiple dimensions of inequality and inequity. The report of the working group could provide original analyses or references to illustrative examples and case studies, including both cross-national and within-country comparisons.

The main purpose of the framework is to provide a tool for identifying relevant indicators and countering the main drivers of inequality and inequity. For example, whilst age and sex are known to be key determinants of COVID-19 mortality risk, characterizing social or economic drivers, measured directly or through proxies, can improve our understanding of the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on the mortality of specific groups and help guide efforts to reduce or eliminate such differentials in the future.

The main drivers that could be identified or incorporated in the framework include socioeconomic status, ethnicity, geography, role of health systems, and local factors affecting the transmission, virulence or other characteristics of the virus and its epidemiology in a given population.

The working group will assess the availability of data for relevant indicators or proxies, and will explore the feasibility of applying the framework using incomplete data when necessary.

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