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Research report

- Forum:** General Assembly Third Committee
- Issue:** Combatting the impact of polarisation on equal access to healthcare by advocating for and implementing measures to enhance the availability of affordable and quality healthcare services
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- Position:** Chair & Deputy Chair



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Introduction

In recent years, societies around the world have witnessed a concerning rise in polarisation, an ideological divide that threatens the very foundation of equal access to healthcare. This growing chasm in perspectives and priorities has cast a shadow over the ability to provide affordable and quality healthcare services to all members of society. The consequences of this polarisation are far-reaching, exacerbating existing disparities and hindering progress towards achieving universal healthcare. It is imperative, now more than ever, that we engage in a concerted effort to combat the impact of polarisation on equal access to healthcare.

The aim of this report is to provide information on the issue of the impact of polarisation on equal access to healthcare. It should be mentioned that this is a very broad issue and can be tackled in various different ways.

Definitions of key terms

Polarisation

the division into two sharply contrasting groups or sets of opinions and/or beliefs.

Income inequality

Significant disparity in the distribution of income between individuals, groups, populations, social classes, or countries.

Political polarisation

The divergence of political attitudes away from the centre, towards ideological extremes.

Populism

A political approach that strives to appeal to ordinary people who feel that their concerns are disregarded by established elite groups.

General overview

Some positive signs toward the goal of poverty reduction can be gleaned in the last three decades. Tens and millions of acutely poor people have escaped the poverty trap. However, despite the increase in the size of the economic pie, it is often divided unevenly across

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individuals, undermining inclusivity in development. Furthermore, in recent years, the challenges of constructing a more inclusive and sustainable society have been compounded by the presence of fragile states, lingering conflicts, and trade disputes. This has heightened the difficulties in achieving this goal, with vulnerable populations being especially susceptible to experiencing economic disparities.

Most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated income inequality by disproportionately affecting those who were already economically disadvantaged globally. Consequently, increased economic inequality poses a significant threat to human development and contributes to social, economic and political instability in both less developed and more developed countries.

In the broader societal landscape, tackling the profound impact of polarisation on equal access to healthcare emerges as an imperative. The disparities in economic prosperity that exacerbate existing societal divisions manifest themselves conspicuously within the domain of healthcare. Marginalised and economically disadvantaged populations bear the brunt of these inequities, contending with substantial obstacles when attempting to access quality healthcare services. It is essential to acknowledge and fully comprehend that the uneven distribution of healthcare resources and services perpetuates a vicious cycle of poverty and ill health, thereby further solidifying the prevailing economic disparities within society.

In response to this pressing challenge, concerted efforts must be made to advocate for and implement policies that fundamentally transform healthcare accessibility and affordability across all segments of society. Such efforts should encompass a multifaceted approach, beginning with the promotion of an equitable distribution of healthcare resources. Additionally, strategic investments in healthcare infrastructure are paramount, as they bolster the resilience and capacity of the healthcare system to cater to the diverse needs of the populace, mitigating the adverse impact of polarisation on healthcare accessibility.

Furthermore, educational campaigns designed to raise awareness about healthcare rights and available resources can play a pivotal role in empowering individuals to make informed decisions regarding their health. By fostering a deeper understanding of one's entitlements to healthcare, these campaigns facilitate more active and engaged participation in the healthcare landscape. This heightened awareness, coupled with enhanced accessibility and affordability, contributes to the development of a society that is not only more inclusive but also markedly healthier.

In sum, the efforts to combat the impact of polarisation on healthcare accessibility necessitate a comprehensive and sustained endeavour, encompassing policy advocacy, infrastructure enhancement, and educational empowerment. Only through such concerted efforts can we

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aspire to construct a society where equal access to quality healthcare is not just an ideal but a tangible reality for all.

Major parties involved

Institute of Medicine (IOM)

The Institute of Medicine is a central institution in this topic, as it often conducts research, provides expertise, and publishes reports addressing healthcare access, equity, and quality. Their reports and recommendations influence policy discussions and healthcare strategies.

Government and Policymakers

Government bodies and policymakers at local, regional, and national levels play a crucial role in shaping healthcare policies, regulations, and funding. Their decisions significantly impact healthcare access and affordability, making them essential stakeholders in combatting polarization's effects on healthcare.

Healthcare Providers and Professionals

Healthcare providers, including doctors, nurses, and other medical professionals, are key stakeholders in ensuring equal access to quality healthcare services. Their involvement in implementing policies and delivering healthcare directly affects patient outcomes and access.

Healthcare Institutions and Systems

Hospitals, clinics, healthcare networks, and other healthcare institutions are central in providing access to healthcare services. They are responsible for implementing policies that enhance healthcare availability and quality while also managing resources efficiently.

Health Insurance Companies

Insurance providers play a vital role in healthcare access by facilitating financial coverage for medical services. Their policies, coverage options, and affordability directly impact the accessibility of healthcare services for individuals across different socio-economic strata.

Timeline of Key Events

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- 1948 The United Nations adopts the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, recognizing the right to adequate healthcare as a fundamental human right.
- 1978 Alma-Ata Declaration by the WHO emphasises the importance of primary healthcare and health for all, emphasising equality and accessibility.
- 2000 World Health Organization's Commission on Macroeconomics and Health's decision to address health as an economic and development issue.
- 2000 United Nations Millennium Development Goals include goals related to health, highlighting the need for accessible healthcare services globally.
- 2020 The COVID-19 pandemic underscores the existing disparities in healthcare access, highlighting the urgent need to address gaps and ensure equal access to healthcare services during public health crises.
- 2021 Global efforts intensify to address healthcare disparities, with renewed emphasis on equitable vaccine distribution and healthcare access in the wake of the pandemic.

Previous attempts to solve the issue

Alma-Ata Declaration (1978):

The Alma-Ata Declaration, a seminal event organized by the WHO and UNICEF, emphasized the importance of primary healthcare and called for health for all by the year 2000. It was a significant step towards addressing healthcare access on a global scale.

United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs):

The MDGs, established in 2000, included three health-related goals: reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases. These goals aimed at enhancing healthcare access and outcomes globally. But have not fully solved our issue.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

The SDGs, adopted in 2015, build upon the MDGs and include a dedicated goal on health and well-being (SDG 3), striving to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. SDG 3 encompasses targets related to reducing maternal mortality, ending preventable deaths

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of newborns and children, combating diseases, and achieving universal health coverage. Also SDG 10 provided to solving our issue by the target of reducing income inequalities.

Declaration of Astana (2018):

The Declaration of Astana reaffirms the importance of primary healthcare as a means to achieve UHC and advocates for stronger political will and increased investments to strengthen primary healthcare systems and improve healthcare access.

Possible solutions

Some possible solution include but are not limited to:

- Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Implementation. Prioritise and advocate for the universal adoption of UHC to ensure that everyone has access to necessary healthcare services without facing financial hardship.
- Healthcare Infrastructure Strengthening and Technological Integration. Invest in healthcare infrastructure, including telemedicine, and integrate technology to enhance accessibility and availability of healthcare services, especially in underserved areas.
- Addressing Socioeconomic Determinants and Promoting Health Equity Policies. Tackle socioeconomic determinants of health by addressing poverty, education, housing, and nutrition. Advocate for policies that promote health equity and target vulnerable populations to reduce disparities in healthcare access.

Further reading

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