

Inequality of Opportunity and Political Challenges in Access to Basic Public Services

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Abstract: With an emphasis on the post-revolutionary era (2011–2014), this article examines the political and economic issues related to unequal access to basic public services in Tunisia. Significant regional gaps still exist, especially between coastal and inland communities, despite persistent attempts since independence to improve human development indices. This is a result of systemic flaws in the design and execution of governmental policies. This study creates the Human Opportunity Index (HOI) to quantify disparities in access to four essential services: basic education, drinking water, sanitation, and electricity using microdata from the MICS (2011) and LMPS (2014) household surveys. The relative contribution of important socioeconomic factors, such as household wealth, the household head's educational attainment, family size, gender, and location of residence, to observed discrepancies is evaluated using a decomposition based on the Shapley value. According to empirical findings, wealth and residential location have a major influence on opportunity inequality, with rural and low-income households experiencing systemic disadvantages in accessing services. Although there has been significant improvement in the coverage of sanitation, access to drinking water and power is still unequal. Additionally, there are concerning setbacks in educational access, especially in underprivileged rural communities. These results highlight the critical need for focused public policies that promote equitable human capital building and spatial justice, particularly for children who are at risk.

Keywords: Political Challenges, Public Services, Education, Drinking Water, Sanitation, Electricity

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