

Abstract

The tenets of sustainable development require a strong healthcare sector that addresses children's health issues, especially in developing countries like Ghana. But the prevalence of malaria could hinder all efforts at ensuring a strong healthcare sector. This is rightly the case of Ghana. Malaria remains a significant cause of deaths among children under five in Ghana, despite diverse global and national health policy interventions. This study examines the implications of policies, actors, and public institutions in addressing malaria among children under five in four (4) districts of Ghana: Obuasi Municipality, Mpohor District, Kassena-Nankana East District, and Ada West District.

Using descriptive and empirical analyses, the study combined secondary and primary data. The study developed questionnaires and conducted interviews of 241 respondents that comprised individuals and institutional actors with the ultimate goal of gathering detailed information on policy formulation, actor interactions, and health outcomes for children under five under the lens of malaria in different administrative case study areas. These areas showcase varying social, economic and political environments that are critical to determining the outcomes of malaria-based health interventions.

The results from the Ordinary Least Squares regression (OLS), which the study utilised, showed *inter alia* that government health expenditure, access to safe drinking water, low birthweight, and insecticide-treated nets were negatively correlated with under-five mortality. Neonatal mortality and adolescent fertility showed a positive correlation, too.

Current health policies, including the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), insecticide-treated nets (ITNs), indoor residual spraying (IRS), and artemisinin-based combination therapies (ACTs), have made progress in addressing malaria among children under five in Ghana. However, discrepancies between policy intent and implementation, particularly with the NHIS, were identified. Limited stakeholder involvements in policy formulation and implementation, due to a top-down approach and centralized decision-making, were also observed. The study argues that an effective health system governance, with actors' collaboration, is crucial for catalysing policy and practical efforts towards eradicating malaria among children under five in Ghana. This is cognizant to the fact that political and economic environment shapes policy formulation and subsequent outcomes on malaria among children under five in Ghana.

