**Does Governance Impact Undernutrition: An Integrated Approach to Reducing Underweight in Children Under 5 years**

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## Objectives

To evaluate the effect of governance on nutrition program outcomes for children under 5 years with reference to the human resource capacity required and expenditure for nutrition programs for efficient health care delivery in Ghana.

## Methods

A mixed method approach was used including key informants’ interviews with experts from nutrition unit of the Ghana Health Service, united nations children’s fund (UNICEF)-Ghana, community mother-to-mother support groups as well as anthropometric data from the Ghana Health Service monthly nutrition and child health form, from northern region of Ghana. A four-year panel data (2014-2017) comprising anthropometric measurements of weight and age of children 0-59 months recorded during routine community and facility-based Growth Promotion activities in the northern, central and Greater Accra regions purposively sampled was taken with their Z-score means and proportion underweight calculated using excel. Linear Mixed-Effect modelling in SPSS (Statistical package) was also used to estimate the effect of human resource and expenditure for nutrition program implementations by accounting for the covariates that predict the reduction in underweight

## Results

Between the year 2014 – 2017, apart from Greater Accra region, there was an increase in placement of key staff for nutrition programs in the two other regions, complimented by an increased funding for training, supportive supervision, monitoring and for commodities. Nutrition counselling was tailored to the consumption of nutrient-rich value chain products such as legumes, and orange-fleshed sweet potato for complementary feeding and for maternal diet. The results show that, the percent of children less than 5 years of age registered in well-child clinics with global malnutrition (weight-for-age) less than 2 Standard Deviation below the standard mean decreased by between 80% in Northern region to 49% in Greater Accra region .from 20% at the beginning of 2014 in northern region to 4% at the end of 2017(95%CI:-1.2021.25) Cohen’s d=3.6, from 11.13% to 4.6% (95% CI: 2.89%-11.98%) in Central region representing a 59% reduction in underweight Cohen’s d=4.4 while Greater Accra had a 49% reduction in underweight from 7.21% to 3.71% (95% CI: 2.81%-7.61%) Cohen’s d=2.8 over the same period. However, human resource capacity and quantity with requisite expenditure for nutrition programs although important, were not significant predictors of underweight in children under 5 years.

## Conclusion

Our results indicate government failure, externalities and rent seeking behaviour, however community factors such as nutrition related behavior change through the promotion of nutrition-sensitive agriculture, consumption of nutrient-rich value chain products as well as community support groups are vital in reducing malnutrition and underweight in children under 5 years in the targeted regions in Ghana. Therefore, improving community governance systems could be associated with improvement in nutritional status of children under 5 years in resource challenged settings

**Key word**: Governance, Food and Nutrition Security; malnutrition, social support