

ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE IN RURAL COMMUNITIES IN GHANA: A STUDY OF SOME SELECTED COMMUNITIES IN THE PRU DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Good health contributes greatly to achieving national goals and objectives and consequently, international goals such as the Millennium Development Goals. It is, therefore, required that facilities and services are provided to enhance access to healthcare services in order to ensure that all individuals irrespective of their location benefit in developing countries. The Government of Ghanaian has, over the years, made efforts to achieve 'Health for All' through various programmes which include the Village Health Workers Initiative, Primary Health Care and the National Health Insurance Scheme. The focus of this paper is on the assessment of access to healthcare among rural dwellers; the challenges encountered; coping strategies; and recommendations towards overcoming such challenges in Ghana through a case study of the Pru District. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected through household survey, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, observation and review of relevant literature on the subject matter. Data collection instruments employed included questionnaire, interview guide and checklist. A sample size of 200 households was selected for the household survey in 7 rural communities. The revelation is that the rural dwellers are highly disadvantaged in terms of physical accessibility to healthcare facilities. Factors accounting for this included: unavailability of healthcare facilities in the rural communities, poor transportation systems, unavailability of equipment for Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs), long travel distances, and low income levels. The situation results in high mortality rates and teenage pregnancies. It is recommended that the district authorities, community leaders and other stakeholders make efforts to provide health facilities, build the capacity of TBAs to properly manage cases, improve road conditions and intensify community health education.

Keywords: Access, Healthcare, Rural, Communities.