

Cultural factors influencing the implementation of perennial malaria chemoprevention in children under five, Nigeria

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Introduction

As in most sub-Saharan countries, children under five in Nigeria are most susceptible to malaria.^[1] To tackle this problem, the World Health Organization has recommended administering perennial malaria chemoprevention (PMC) alongside services under the country's Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI). Using this existing structure would ensure more children are reached with PMC. But, such malaria strategies can only be truly effective if people use them. Exploring socio-cultural drivers of malaria service uptake is critical for developing effective malaria prevention and control strategies to close the gap between efficacy and effectiveness. This study aimed to explore cultural norms, beliefs and practices that could influence PMC implementation in Nigeria.

Methods

- The study was conducted in August 2021 in Osun and Ebonyi states, Nigeria.
- We employed an exploratory research design, applying different qualitative data collection techniques including focus group discussions (FGDs), in-depth interviews (IDIs) and key informant interviews (KIIs).
- We conducted interviews with different health sector stakeholders in Ebonyi and Osun, as well as with community leaders and caregivers of infants.
- In each state, we conducted six FGDs, 13 IDIs and seven KIIs and analysed the data using thematic analysis.

Results

- Most caregivers viewed immunisation as beneficial to the growth and development of children. This belief has been strengthened through community mobilisation.
- Community leaders and caregivers identified certain cultural norms and practices that could facilitate uptake of PMC, given their shared focus on protecting maternal and child health. These included *nneji ulo*, where women in the community jointly care for newborns and mothers to ensure their wellbeing, and protecting newborns from mosquitoes by using bed nets.
- Some caregivers were concerned about adverse reactions to drugs, while some health workers felt that delivering PMC would add to the workload of implementers. These concerns are likely to hinder PMC uptake.

Conclusion

Combined with general confidence in immunisation, certain cultural norms, beliefs and practices can facilitate implementation of PMC among communities; whereas, other cultural factors can inhibit its implementation. Improving the understanding of childhood immunisation among communities and other stakeholders (including community leaders and health workers) is imperative for effective PMC implementation.

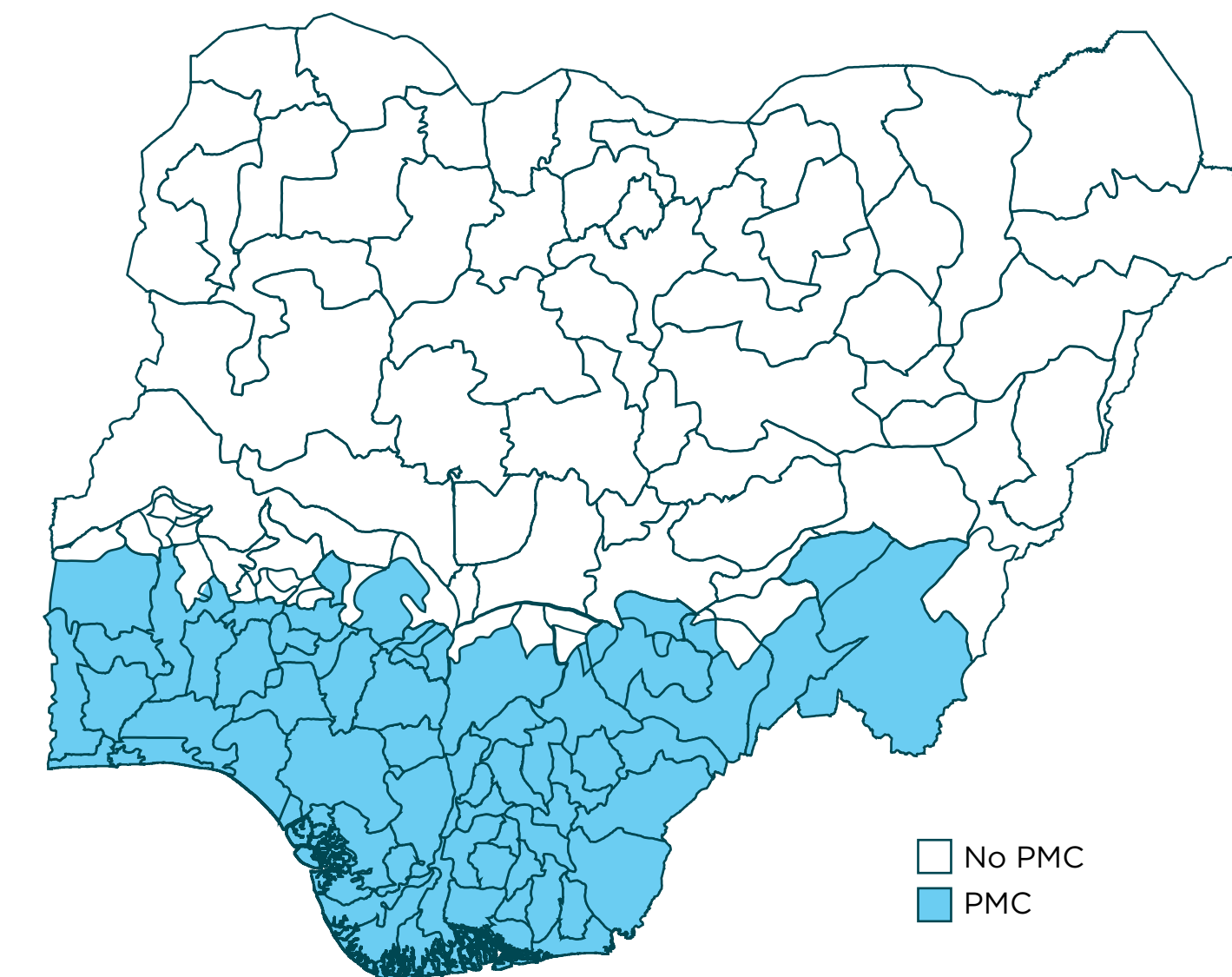
Reference

1. World Health Organization. [World malaria report 2020: 20 years of global progress and challenges](#). Geneva: World Health Organization; 2020.

Cultural norms, beliefs and practices regarding immunisation can promote or inhibit implementation of perennial malaria chemoprevention

Supplementary visual

Figure 1: States eligible for perennial malaria chemoprevention



“...all of us have to be in support [of PMC] to ensure its success.”

Health worker, Bolorunduro local government area, Osun state

malaria
consortium
disease control, better health



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