NTD Policies and Programs in Africa – Progress, Gaps and Way Forward

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Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) are a group of communicable diseases that can be caused by viruses, bacteria, fungi, and parasites that affect most people living in the tropics accounting for 1.5 billion people globally. It is worth knowing that 39% of the global burden of NTDs is on Africa. Interventions have been made in the past years to ensure that these diseases are brought to a halt among the population that suffers the most in an attempt to achieve universal health coverage. This study reviewed NTD policies across Africa. Search for peer-reviewed literature was carried out in research gate and Google Scholar with inclusion criteria of research done in Africa. Data were extracted and summarised to highlight the progress, gaps/relative lack of existing NTD policies in the African continent, and the way forward. This review reveals that despite the global progress towards eliminating NTDs, there are still prominent gaps/relative lack of existing policies in about 30% of African countries. These gaps highlight the dearth and inadequacies in policy design, coordination, and implementation frameworks that prioritise tropical diseases. The recent rollout of the ten years NTD roadmap in January 2021 extensively shows the ambitious target of eliminating NTDS and encouraging country ownership. Therefore it is recommended that; there is the urgent need to standardise and scale up the inclusion of NTD management and preventive strategies such as the mass administration, and provision of WASH infrastructure into the relevant health policies. The countries with existing master plans should also consider reviewing them in line with the recently adopted roadmap. There is the need to increase health budgetary allocation towards NTD preventive strategies and diagnosis. To further ensure implementation, programs should be developed to ensure that healthcare professionals are trained in the areas of Logistics and supply chain to enable them to monitor drug distribution, consumption and report any form of adverse events. With the recent transition from the London declaration to the Kigali declaration this year, there is hope that the systems will be strengthened and implementation will be made. Achieving the Sustainable development goals cannot be done without eliminating tropical diseases.