



ABENA ARRIVES SAFELY, THANKS TO CHPS

It was a bright and shiny Tuesday afternoon at 12.45 p.m. Most villagers of Obanda had long since left for their farms. In keeping with his normal supervisory routine, the CHPS Coordinator, Mr. Constant Dedo had just arrived to find the Community Health Officer (CHO), Miss Vivian Klu, attending to a woman in labour. Miss Klu gave no hint of concern, working with ease and confidence, without any tension.



A CHO and TBA together conduct Abena's delivery

In less than 15 minutes, a baby girl was born. Abena gave the first cry of joy, thanking God for having been delivered without drudgery or distress—thanks to the new CHPS concept which has facilitated proximity of a health care facility to the people. Miss Klu, like all other resident CHO in Nkwanta, has been trained in midwifery. In the conventional training programme, CHO are trained in curative and preventive health services, but are not trained in midwifery. This omission has been problematic for CHO. CHO are based in the community where most deliveries take place; an untrained CHO would be expected to provide midwifery care. For this reason, midwifery training was a priority during the orientation of CHO for community work. Each Nkwanta CHO receives two six-week sessions of training in delivery and safe-motherhood practices. To our knowledge, Nkwanta is

the only district in Ghana that has extended this service to CHO. Midwifery training was launched in response to community demand for this element of primary health care. In Nkwanta, where so few deliveries can be facility based, midwifery has become an essential element of the CHO regimen of care. From the point of view of the community, CHO midwives are valued, not only for their impact on the quality of delivery services, but also because the CHPS programme reduces delivery costs. Without the CHO, Abena's parents would have had to charter a vehicle to take her mother to Nkwanta 42 kilometres away. Even if funds did exist, however, a vehicle is typically not available. To enhance safe delivery, the CHO is trained to offer all the elements of safe delivery care:

- *Partnership with TBA.* Competition with TBA would be detrimental to maternal health. Instead, cooperation and collaboration with TBA is the preferred mode of work. To facilitate her role in assisting in deliveries, the CHO works in close partnership with the four traditional birth attendants in her work zone.
- *Management information for safe delivery.* She keeps track of pregnant women during routine household visitation rounds and during antenatal



The TBA and CHO with Abena and her mother

care encounters at the CHC. Using these simple tools, the CHO knows when to expect delivery, and can make sure that the TBA informs her of the onset of labour.

- *Practical on-the-job training.* CHO are provided locally with classroom training for six weeks, followed by a six-week session of observation and practical training. Emphasis is placed on referral services, cases requiring referral, and appropriate responses to distress.
- *Community involvement in referral services.* The Village Health Committee is oriented to helping with the appropriate logistics response to obstetric emergencies. This involves advance planning of transportation needs.
- *Communication for care and referral.* With the assistance of USAID and the GHS, Nkwanta has

been provided with Motorola radio telephones that link CHO with subdistricts and with the District Hospital. Communication can be used to advise CHO remotely on appropriate responses to delivery problems. Also, communication is used to summon transportation, as needed.

The CHPS concept is implementing a three-decade-old dream of making health care delivery close to clientele. In demonstrating that CHPS can work, Nkwanta District is “putting success to work,” translating research from the Navrongo Health Research Centre into an approach to achieving better health for all Ghanaians.



Abena arrives safely and takes her first breast milk

Comments? Opinions? Suggestions? Please share your local experiences by writing to:

Putting Success to Work

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