



BONTIBOR SPEAKS; THE MINISTER LISTENS

The Community-Based Health Planning (CHPS) Services is the Ministry of Health's contribution to the national poverty alleviation strategy. Accordingly, the Minister of Health, Dr. Kwaku Afriyie has been visiting CHPS districts. Early in this programme, he paid a working visit to Nkwanta District on September 4, 2002. His goal was to listen to participants in the programme and learn from their experience.

According, the Minister went to the Bontibor CHPS zone where he learned how CHPS operates. The original destination was the Bonakye CHPS zone headquarters, but due to deplorable road conditions, and 30 distressed vehicles mired in mud, the Minister and his entourage visited Katai junction and ended their trip at the Bontibor CHPS zone.



The muddy road in Nkwanta District

Overcoming inaccessibility to health care in Nkwanta was the main rationale for adapting the Navrongo Health Research Centre service model to the Nkwanta situation. Several innovations were demonstrated for the Minister by the Bontibor CHPS team:

Radio telephones. A two-way radio communication system has been provided by the

GHS with support from USAID. Radio telephones now link all CHPS zonal headquarters. The radio service is used to coordinate supervision and improve health service referral operations. CHO can now communicate with subdistrict paramedics about referral decisions. Also, radio links permit exchanges between any two CHO about service problems or ideas.



Dr. Kwaku Afriyie, Minister of Health, in Nkwanta

Volunteerism. CHPS is a programme that mobilizes chiefs, elders, community groups, social networks, and grassroots political leaders for primary health care. Demonstrating the power of volunteerism, the people of Bontibor were able to complete a Community Health Compound (CHC) within a short time with communal labour. This act was key to the Minister—it demonstrated the high collective spirit in the area that also led to the rapid acceptance of the CHPS concept—enabling communities to improve on health delivery for their residents.

Community-based health care. Briefing the Minister, the CHO for Bontibor, Ms. Beatrice Ananga, said attendance at the CHC has been steadily increasing in the last year, with an average of 40 minor-ailment cases added to the

pre-CHPS caseload, and an increase in the number of family planning clients for services and counseling as well. She praised the community for their active involvement in making her stay convenient—adding that they are very helpful.



The Minister of Health interacting with Ms. Ananga, Bontibor CHO

Community participation. A spokesman for the community told the Minister that Bontibor has reaped immense benefits from CHPS. He recounted how income levels have fallen due to the decline of the cocoa industry which was formerly Nkwanta's economic backbone. This, he said, has contributed to a high level of poverty among the people. He said they have also embraced the concept on Mutual Health Organisations (MHO) to overcome the problem of medical bills—adding that more than 200 people have been registered in his community. He said the presence of a CHO has saved the people from

traveling long distances at a cost to visit the Nkwanta hospital.

Dr. Afriyie commended the people for embracing CHPS, stressing that the challenges on health delivery are too enormous to be handled by an individual; but rather, must be addressed through partnership among all stakeholders. CHPS is less a programme of the Ministry than a programme of the people.



The Minister of Health interacting with community members at Bontibor

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

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