

End of MoTeCH Pilot Community Durbar at Bugsongu CHPS Zone, Kassena-Nankana West District; February 07, 2012

Introduction

The Mobile Technology for Community Health (MoTeCH) Initiative is a collaboration between the Ghana Health Service, Columbia University, and the Grameen Foundation aimed at improving maternal and neonatal health. Beginning in 2009, the project was piloted in the Kassena Nankana District (KND) and the Kassena Nankana West District (KND-W) of the Upper East Region. To mark the end of MoTeCH's pilot, a durbar was held at the Bugsongu CHPS Zone. The durbar also included the commissioning of the newly constructed nurses' quarters at Bugsongu, which was completed with support from MoTeCH.



Durbar Opening

A prayer from Reverend Father Ken Atiah set the durbar to start. The District Assembly member of the area, Moses Akankeley, introduced the chairperson for the occasion. In her opening remarks, the chairperson of the occasion, Madam Lucy Agamayure was happy for assuming this position and asked for the cooperation of everyone to ensure a successful durbar.

Guests at the durbar were introduced to the crowd and included: the Honorable Upper East Regional Minister, Mr. Mark Woyongo; the District Chief Executive of Kassena Nanakana West District (KNW), Mr.

Thomas Addah Dalu; the Regional Director of Health Services (RDHS), Dr. Koku Awoonor-Williams; the Head of the CHIM office in Accra, Mr. Daniel Darko; the Chief of nearby Sirigu and his elders; the Director of the Navrongo Health Research Centre, Mr. Abraham Oduro; representatives from MoTeCH (Columbia University, Grameen foundation); staff from the Regional Health Directorate (RHD); the KND-W District Health Management Team; health workers in KNW-D; and others representatives.



Community Chiefs and Elders

Speech by the Chief of Sirigu

The first speech was given by the Chief of Sirigu. After officially welcoming everyone to the durbar, the Chief stated that he and the entire Sirigu community were honored for such great opportunity. He voiced his gratitude was to the MoTeCH project that aimed at improving maternal and child health and hoped that the project will continue to improve the health of people in his community. He was also thankful to the RDHS for the immense contribution to health in the area especially the nurses quarters that would be commissioned during the durbar to solve the accommodation problems of nurses. He did not leave out the fact that the Sirigu community has seen many outreaches opening in various sub-communities such as Tangasia, Amutanga, Yongoligo etc., all in the name of improving maternal and child health which was worthy of praise . The chief's special appeal to responsible persons present was to improve the road network of the area to enhance quality health care delivery.



Chief of Sirigu

Speech by the District Chief Executive, Mr. Thomas Addah Dalu

After giving a background of the KND-W and the KND-W District Health Administration (DHA), the District Chief Executive (DCE), Mr. Thomas Addah Dalu, mentioned the aims of the MoTeCH pilot to



KND-W DCE, Mr. Thomas Addah Dalu

improve maternal health, reduce the number of paper registers used at Community Health Compounds (CHCs), to improve reporting process, etc. After implementing the project in 12 CHCs in the KND-W, 4 newly-developed CHCs were later brought aboard. He also revealed recent achievements in the health indicators of the KND-W that may be related to the MoTeCH intervention. He said that there had been tremendous improvements in the health indicators of the district: skilled delivery had shot up from 45% to 62% and postnatal care (PNC) registrants from 26% to 63%.¹ He mentioned that the use of phones in the MoTeCH project has reduced defaulters through reminder messages to clients and health workers. It was interesting to learn from his speech that community members felt drawn to health staff because of the messages they listened to on their phones. Other community members, who previously were not receptive

health messages, registered with the MoTeCH system to receive messages and listened to the messages

¹ Press coverage of such comments spuriously attributed general health progress in the district to MoTeCH. While these statements are innocent and supportive statements about MoTeCH that appeared in the press and were reported on the web, they are not accurate representations of actual research results.

with family members. A great achievement to mention was the averting of a potential maternal death through MoTeCH messages.

On other issues, the DCE mentioned efforts by his office to train more medical students for the area through yearly sponsorships. He also appealed to the RHD to speed up the construction of the district hospital. In line with the project of reducing maternal death by the First Lady of Ghana, Mrs. Naadu Mills, the DCE said the road network of Sirigu will be opened up to enhance the achievement of this goal.

Speech by the Regional Director of Health Services, Dr. Koku-Awoonor-Williams

After thanking all stakeholders of the MoTeCH project, the Regional Director of Health Services (RDHS), Dr. Koku Awoonor described MoTeCH as a pilot project with a goal of improving the availability of health information for client and health workers for improved health delivery. It was a project that employed inexpensive mobile phones for the capture of maternal health, child health and consultation encounters and sent these to a MoTeCH database. The database then sends alert and reminder messages to clients concerning required health services. From the same database, health workers receive reminders of clients that have defaulted for particular services. MoTeCH, he said, also generates weekly health educational messages called Mobile Midwife (MM) for clients, in either text or voice format and in the language of the client's choice. Accessing these messages is free and could be done using any phone, whether the client's personal phone, a phone in the client's household, or a phone in the community.



RDHS, Dr. Koku Awoonor-Williams

Touching on the simplified registers, Dr. Awoonor-Williams said the initiative has provided a standardized format for capturing health data for all CHPS facilities. Finally, he mentioned that, using information stored in the MoTeCH data base, CHCs will receive monthly reports intended to reduce the amount of time health workers spend manually writing monthly reports.

Dr. Awoonor-Williams mentioned the major achievements of MoTeCH in his speech. He said clients find messages helpful and informative and health workers are also happy about pregnancy and childhood messages sent to clients as they improve health knowledge. The use of the simplified registers (SRs) has improved manual report writing and eased identification of defaulters in the MoTeCH implementing zones. He emphatically mentioned that the SRs have been deployed to 3 other districts of the region and plans to scale them up to all districts of the region. Dr. Awoonor also mentioned that reminders and alerts to clients help health workers to plan outreaches and automated reports will be helpful if certain challenges were addressed.

Sincere about the challenges the MoTeCH project was facing, Dr. Awoonor-Williams said noted challenges will be corrected in future for the full achievement of the project's goals. Challenges mentioned were poor network, limited access to phones, more attention needed to explain the steps to accessing messages by clients and difficulty in facilitating mobile phone access by clients. Nurses also have the challenge of capturing all relevant data in the mobiles phones due to workloads and understaffing.

To evaluate the impact of MoTeCH, the RDHS mentioned the NHRC's involvement in the Time Use Study (TUS) as a tool that will show what activities consume the majority of health workers' time. Follow-up will illustrate the impact of MoTeCH. The Quality of Aggregated Data will elucidate the impact of the intervention on the quality of data reported by CHCs. Qualitative appraisal will discern the experiences of health workers and clients in using MoTeCH. Dr. Awoonor-Williams mentioned that evaluation of MoTeCH's impact was impeded because of the challenges mentioned above. He said that once these challenges are addressed, impact evaluation of MoTeCH will be pursued. He said it was important after this first phase of MoTeCH in Upper East to reflect on what worked and what did not so that solutions will be arrived at to best address the information needs of health workers and clients.



New Nurses' Accommodations

Dr. Awoonor-Williams noted in this speech the contribution of the Columbia University (CU) to CHPS standardization as part of MoTeCH activities. In all, Columbia has contributed a total amount of \$200,000 for the provision of essential equipment and logistics for CHPS operation in the implementing zones. He mentioned that CU contributed \$10,000 of the GHC 35,000 that was invested in the construction of the Bugsongo nurses' accommodation that would be commissioned that day. The RDHS lamented about the dilapidated CHC (invaded by bats and other insects, with

many dangerous cracks and bad leaks during rainy season) where nurses were previously living. He said that a new CHC is to be newly constructed next to the new CHO accommodations. He was worried about the rumor that the responsible person, the District Assembly, could not raise the money for that project and hoped the rumor was not true. However if it was true, the RDHS said he would try all possible ways to raise the money for the construction of a new CHC.

Comment from the Navrongo Health Research Centre, Mr. Francis Yeji

Mr. Francis Yeji, the MoTeCH Research Coordinator at the Navrongo Health Research Centre (NHRC), was equally happy to represent the Director of the NHRC in commenting on the MoTeCH pilot. He explained the key role of the research department in the implementation of the project. The NHRC provided the baseline information through its Demographic Survey Systems (DSS) and baseline surveys which included the Time Use Study (TUS) and the Quality of Aggregated Data Study (QADS). He said carrying out these studies



Mr. Francis Yeji, NHRC

at the end of the project was relevant for the evaluation of the impact of MoTeCH and results will be communicated to stakeholders when evaluation is completed.

Comment from the Grameen Foundation, Mrs. Jacqui Moller Larsen

Mrs. Jacqui Moller Larsen, the Country Director of the Grameen Foundation, was grateful to everyone at the durbar. She agreed that the MoTeCH pilot has had some success and challenges, but stressed that challenges will be utilized to help improve the MoTeCH project in other areas. Mrs. Larsen announced that MoTeCH has won funds to continue its work elsewhere in Ghana to replicate the lessons learnt from this pilot. With about 5000 people registered in the MoTeCH system thus far, the team hopes to enroll more people to improve health and save lives. On behalf of Grameen, she thanked all stakeholders who made MoTeCH pilot a reality.

Comment from Columbia University, Ms. Allison Stone

Like the other speeches, Miss Allison spoke about the MoTeCH project as an exciting innovation which has a promise of improving health information for CHPS health workers and their clients. In as much as many potential benefits have been witnessed, she agreed there were challenges experienced during the pilot as well. She said lessons learned will be used in future to make the project more beneficial to target groups. She mentioned how proud Columbia University was to be a partner the MoTeCH pilot and said the organization will welcome any future collaboration with MoTeCH partners. She promised CU's assistance for impact evaluation research when the time comes. Ms. Stone ended her speech by thanking all stakeholders involved in the MoTeCH project.



Mr. Daniel Darko, Head of CHIM

Comment from Representative of the Director General, Mr. Daniel Darko

Mr. Daniel Darko, the Head of CHIM and a representative of the Ghana Health Service Headquarters in Accra, likened the importance of CHPS to the foundation of a building. He said that, the strength of a building was determined by the strength of the foundation and CHPS is the foundation of the Ghana Health Service. MoTeCH, he said, as a tool in KNU-D CHPS Zones was to improve data management, client education and communication which the overarching goal of improving coverage, access and quality of services. He stated that GHS-Accra played a crucial role in planning and implementing MoTeCH. He was however grateful to the district staff and the community for their participation. Adding to the achievements of MoTeCH, Mr. Darko said that outpatient coverage in the district had increased to 22.5%, a figure that is way above the national average of 12.5%. He

also mentioned that, ANC registrants have shot up to 44.5% and that there have been remarkable improvements in family planning and averting maternal deaths. Due to these successes of MoTeCH, the project was currently replicating in the Awutu Senya District of the Central Region. While plans are

implemented to roll out MoTeCH in other districts, Mr. Darko said, lessons learnt during the pilot had been incorporated in national health policy on service delivery, human resource development and Information management. He sincerely thanked all stakeholders for their diverse contribution.

Comment from Satisfied MoTeCH Client

The speech of the satisfied client thrilled the crowd. She narrated how MoTeCH had saved her life and the life of her new child. Though without a phone, the client used her husband's mobile to access Mobile Midwife and reminder messages concerning a healthy pregnancy. During her first delivery she had delivered at home, but due to the messages she had received from MoTeCH encouraging pregnant women to deliver with a health worker, she sought a facility-based delivery for her second pregnancy. After delivering, the client experienced postpartum hemorrhage and was immediately referred to the War Memorial Hospital in Navrongo, where she received 3 pints of blood by transfusion. She explained that if she had not heard the MoTeCH messages, she would not have delivered in a health facility and would have been at home when she experienced this life-threatening complication.

With joy, the client concluded by saying "that is why I want to thank MoTeCH health workers! But for them, I wouldn't be living now with my child!" She also encouraged all women to enroll into MoTeCH.



Message from Satisfied MoTeCH Client



Musical Interlude

Musical Interlude

There was a musical interlude that wowed the crowd! The Regional Minister, RDHS, and others danced and moved the crowd to cheer.

Keynote Address by the Regional Minister, Mr. Mark Woyongo

The Honorable Regional Minister, Mark Woyongo, described MoTeCH as "...cutting-edge in its aim of utilizing mobile phones to improve health." He listed the various advantages of mobile phones and its relevance in the

transmission of information. He said cell phone networks, which travel further than roads and electric poles, can serve as a channel for information to communities that have limited access to information and this can be used to improve health, increase prosperity and reduce poverty. It was exciting to note



Upper East Regional Minister, Mr. Mark Woyongo

that MoTeCH was the first project in the Upper East utilizing mobile phones with the aim of improving health. To reduce maternal and child mortality, he said, MoTeCH seeks to improve health workers' outreach services and reduce the burden of documentation and reporting to allow more time for direct patient care. In the transmission of health information to clients, MoTeCH hoped to improve health of clients by increasing "... health seeking among clients and improve the ability for health workers to conduct service provision." Mr. Woyongo encouraged members present to be proud that MoTeCH was first started in "...our own backyard," and hoped that MoTeCH will continue development in the region. After thanking stakeholders present, the Regional Minister touched on other issues relevant to development. He announced the infrastructural package for the Sirigu area that included the on-going construction of the Sirigu road and five buildings at the Sirigu Senior High School. The minister also left health workers

happy when he announced the progress made by the government of Ghana to bring four equipped ambulances to the Region. He said people in Navrongo, Builsa, Zebilla, and Garu Tenpane would enjoy this ambulance services by simply dialing a toll free number, 911. Finally, the Regional Minister admonished everyone present to approach the election 2012 with peace and transparency.

Presentation of Gifts

The durbar was graced with gifts of traditional smocks and animals for those who contributed enormously to MoTeCH and the Sirigu area. This included the RDHS, the Regional Minister, the DDHS and others.

Closing remarks by Chairperson



Madam Vida Abaseka, DDHS

Madam Lucy in her closing remarks was thankful to participants of the durbar. She was happy MoTeCH will be replicated elsewhere and encouraged community members to appreciate this great asset that has been left in the community.



Presentation of Gift to the RDHS

Vote of Thanks from the DDHS, Madam Vida Abaseka

The District Director of Health Services (DDHS), Madam Vida Abaseka who gave the vote of thanks was grateful to God and everyone who made it to the durbar. She was also thankful to MoTeCH for their initiative and

promised the District Health Directorate will do more to expand health services. The RDHS was also applauded in her speech for the support of logistics and in other areas to maintain a good health system in the district.

Presentation of Accommodation

The Regional Minister, DCE, RHDS, DDHS and others surrounded the new nurses' quarters to commission and to present the building to the staff. A blessing was given by Father Ken before the Regional Minister cut the ribbon.

The durbar was moved to a close with more music and dancing.



The Regional Minister prepares to cut the ribbon of the new CHOs accommodations

