

# **THE FIRST MILE: SETTING THE FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY HEALTH SYSTEMS**

**Opening Statement by Dr. Frank  
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- *After several attempts to operationalising primary health care in Ghana, since the Alma Alta Declarations, an experimental study of the Navrongo Health Research Centre in northern Ghana, demonstrated that progress in achieving Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 could be greatly accelerated if **community social and supervisory systems** were mobilized to support and backstop nurses that were assigned to defined community locations where they provide basic health services.*

- *Guided by these results, the Ghana Health Service in 2000, focused on strengthening district health systems development by scaling up a model of primary health care, known as **the Community-based Health Planning and Services (CHPS) Initiative.***

- *In this model, Community Health Nurses are re-oriented as Community Health Officers (CHO's) and placed in health service zones as part of the district health system and community social and supervisory systems mobilized to support them provide services.*

- *CHPS also incorporates **community decision making systems** that allow communities to make decision on issues affecting their health regularly.*
- *CHPS has achieved notable success and has spread to all districts in Ghana.*

- *While the CHPS model has been proven to rapidly reduce maternal and child mortality, research has shown that the pace of scaling-up is stalled in many districts owing to **leadership lapses, resource constraints, essential drug logistics problems, district system planning limitations, and service delivery gaps at the clinical referral level.***

- *Clearly, there is a need to focus on district health systems requirements of making community-based services work.*
- *A key lesson we have learnt is.... “Communities did not really want sophisticated hospitals and clinics - what they need is someone available nearby, knowledgeable, to tell them what is wrong with them, what to do and where to go! .....and that the ‘formal ways’ of the clinics and hospitals pose financial barriers to them.....”*