



# Community Health Systems

*Building Capacity and Synergies for African Health*

African Centre for Global Health and Social Transformation

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# Community Health Systems: Critical issues involved



- Reinforces the concept of PHC
- Driven by the people
- Cross-sectional and integrated community efforts
- Health relates to everything else in the society
  - from education, agriculture, water supply, local administration, etc

# Concepts of Health and Health Outcomes



- The WHO Constitution: *health is a state of **complete physical, mental and social wellbeing** and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, and that the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is **one of the fundamental rights of every human being** without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition.*
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights: *everyone has the right to **a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security** in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.*

# What forms the basis of Good Health?



- Good health starts with, and is created by individuals, their families and the communities, and is supported, where necessary, by skills, knowledge and technology of the professionals, not the other way round
- ‘Health is made at home, and only repaired in health facilities when it breaks down’.
- Eat well, be clean, do not share accommodation with animals. *This was a message from the Director General of Health Services in Uganda (Omaswa 1999-2005).*
- According to WHO ‘social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age’

# Roles and Responsibilities: Individuals, Health System and Government



- ***Individuals** have the primary responsibility for maintaining their own health. Health is inborn.*
- ***Health systems** are responsible for providing the services, information (**health literacy**) and facilitating behaviors (**enabling laws regulations**) that individuals need to achieve their best health.*
- ***Government** is responsible for ensuring that the conditions and systems exist that allow people to be as healthy as they can be. (**access to the healthy food, clean water, ?adequate housing, education**)*

# Where is health best fitted in the national development efforts?



- Health has to be part of all policies, integrated into the national poverty reduction and development plans
- It is an approach that is reflected and reinforced by the different ways in which major policies, such as UHC and SDGs, are developed in different countries
- Health cannot be treated just as a separate department or enterprise
- It affects and is affected by everything

# PHC defined



- “Primary health care is essential health care... made **universally accessible to individuals and families in the community through their full participation and at a cost that** the community and country can afford to maintain at every stage of their development...”
- **“The people have a right and duty to participate individually and collectively in the planning and implementation of their health care.”**

# Ownership of Community Health Systems



- Ownership and the design is by the people, at a cost they can afford
- Governments have ultimate responsibility and accountability for the population
- But communities must desist from waiting for things to come from Health HQs
- We must ensure that health policies are not those for the intellectual elite, but they represent the needs and wants of local populations who should own it

# Embedding Health in Governance



- At its best, the routine governance of society should be the **foundation of the health system** by ensuring that **laws, regulations and good practice are complied with** by all:
- that homesteads are hygienic, mothers attend ante natal clinics, children are immunized, the nearest health facility has required personnel and supplies, the referral system is in place, the correct food crops are grown and stored properly, all children are going to school, the rural road network is maintained, safe water sources are available, law and order is enforced etc.
- This should be the job description of the **village or community administrator as the very first frontline health worker. (UHC: Leaves no one behind)**

# What should the appropriate focus of Community Health Systems?



- More attention should be placed on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention: *Good nutrition, Clean Water supply, Sanitation, Environmental protection and Hygiene practices, School health, Immunisation*
- Drama of providing health care is the more visible face of the health system receiving more attention and more resources than health promotion
- **Strong Stewardship Needed for balanced response.**

# Take home message



- Community Health Systems is about individuals, households and communities
- Focus must be on keeping people HEALTHY, as opposed to a focus on the SICK
- All efforts at community level are important for good health, and must be integrated
- Community Health Workers are important to provide skills and knowledge required; but they cannot do it alone without full engagement of the people



.....THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!.....

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