SHIP: Improving Health Outcomes through Poultry Microenterprise Development

Mbarara, Uganda

Our project examined how SHIP can drive more sustainable repayment rates for its poultry microenterprise program

The Sustainable Household Income Project (SHIP) provides microenterprise support to low-income patients affiliated with the Family Treatment Fund (FTF) and Immune Suppression Syndrome (ISS) Clinic in Mbarara, Uganda. The clinic has provided low-cost treatment to more than 15,000 HIV/AIDS patients in southwestern Uganda since it was first founded in 1998. Although it has made treatment more widely accessible in a country in which approximately 6% of the population is afflicted with the disease, it has uncovered new challenges in ensuring that patients receive consistent, effective treatment. In particular, patients on ART face transportation and increased nutrition costs that can, in some instances, require an entire month’s income.

SHIP aims to address these challenges by creating sustainable sources of supplemental income for participants in its programs. Formed through a partnership between Harvard University and the Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST), SHIP has piloted several income generating activities (IGA’s) among patients in the Mbarara region. Along the way, several MIT Sloan ghdLab teams have worked with SHIP to examine critical strategic challenges and provide recommendations on how the organization can most effectively serve its participants.

For our research, we interviewed more than 35 different stakeholders and market experts regarding poultry farming and microfinance

At the end of 2011, SHIP provided a small number of participants with egg producing chickens (layers), loan capital and materials to build a coop, and training to start a small poultry business. Based on preliminary findings from the first pilot, SHIP is in the process of testing a new program with broilers (chickens consumed for meat). Our role was to help SHIP understand how to make the poultry project more sustainable so that it could eventually be scaled up to a community of 200 or more participants.

On the ground, we spoke extensively with SHIP collaborators at MUST and the clinic and interviewed a number of past and prospective participants. We also visited hatcheries, commercial producers, input suppliers, and even vendors in the local markets to better understand the local market and poultry value chain. Given the embedded microfinance structure, we also spoke with other agricultural microfinance banks or microenterprise support programs in Uganda and East Africa in order to compare different models of lending in this sector.

Our final deliverables include a revised participant screening questionnaire, a series of comparative case studies of poultry and agricultural microfinance programs, and a series of recommendations on how to restructure the program.

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