Technical Overview: Accredited Drug Seller initiatveS

Definition of Accredited Drug Shops

Accredited drug shops[[1]](#footnote-1) are small, licensed, privately owned retail outlets, primarily located in rural and peri-urban areas, operated by dispensers who have been trained to sell selected essential prescription-only medicines and other health-related commodities. Accredited shops must meet government accreditation standards for facilities and personnel to ensure that they provide quality pharmaceutical services and products.

Overall Goal of MSH’s Accredited Drug Seller Initiatives

The goal of our accredited drug seller initiatives is to improve access to affordable, quality medicines and pharmaceutical services in retail medicine shops in areas where few or no registered pharmacies exist.

Background

Many people in low-income countries seek health care and medicines from retail medicine shops that are in or near to the communities where they live. Unfortunately, many of these shops are not licensed or regulated, and they are often operated by unqualified and untrained shop attendants illegally selling prescription medicines of unknown quality.

Innovative Element

MSH’s accredited drug seller model takes a holistic approach that includes working with country stakeholders to develop premises and personnel standards for accreditation, business incentives including a product list, and a strategy for regulatory enforcement. These are combined with efforts to increase consumer demand for quality pharmaceutical products and services. The model takes generally unskilled entrepreneurs and through training and behavior change empowers them to provide quality pharmaceutical services within a regulated environment, while enhancing the success of their businesses.

MSH and the Evolution of Accredited Drug Shops

With funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, MSH worked with the Tanzanian government to conceptualize and implement a private sector initiative called accredited drug dispensing outlets (ADDO). ADDOs were piloted in one region in Tanzania, evaluated, and then further enhanced to support nationwide scale-up and long-term sustainability. Subsequently, the ADDO model was adapted for use in Bangladesh, Liberia, Nigeria, Uganda, and Zambia. The approach establishes appropriate standards and regulations that allow accredited shops to legally dispense selected prescription medicines while changing the behavior and expectations of those who patronize, own, regulate, or work in retail drug shops to ensure appropriate medicine use. For shop owners and dispensing staff, this is achieved by combining training, incentives, supervision, and regulatory enforcement, coupled with efforts to boost customer demand for quality products and services.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**Drug seller projects**

**(Gates Foundation Funded)**

Strategies for Enhancing Access to Medicines (SEAM): 2000-2006

East African Drug Seller Initiative (EADSI): 2007-2011

Sustainable Drug Seller Initiatives (SDSI): 2011-2015

LaunchDSI: 2015-2019

While the initial impetus of the ADDO initiative was to improve access to essential medicines and pharmaceutical services in general, the ADDO platform now accommodates multiple public health initiatives, including maternal and child health, integrated management of childhood illness, malaria treatment and prevention, reproductive health and family planning, HIV/AIDS information and prevention, TB case detection and treatment support, chronic illness care, and nutrition.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Major Program Elements of an ADS Initiative

* Developing key stakeholder buy-in and “ownership” of the strategy
* Developing the process for accreditation based on Ministry of Health standards and regulations and public-private collaboration
* Creating a strong public-sector–based regulatory and inspection system and strengthening local regulatory processes and capacity
* Developing drug shop owners’ business skills and providing them ongoing business support and mentoring through formation of drug shop associations
* Changing the behavior of drug shop owners by providing business incentives (e.g., access to loans; accessibility of training; improved supply chain availability; access to and use of mobile technology; legal authority to dispense high-quality essential prescription medicines, not only to increase consumer access but also to generate revenue that contributes to shops’ profitability and sustainability)
* Changing the behavior of dispensing staff through training, monitoring, supervision and recognition of their role in provision of community-based health services
* Improving consumers’ knowledge and expectations about the quality of pharmaceutical products and services and the importance of appropriate use and treatment adherence through marketing and public advocacy

Results and Benefits

In Tanzania, the ADDO initiative has resulted in more than 12,500 accredited shops, more than 20,000 trained dispensers, and high-quality care for nearly 36 million people. The scaled-up program in Tanzania has proven to be sustainable without requiring ongoing donor support and has become a part of Tanzania’s health care system. In addition, ADDOs have contributed to the economic well-being of communities by offering entrepreneurial and employment opportunities, particularly for rural women, who make up 90% of the shop owners and medicine dispensers .[[4]](#footnote-4)



## Expansion and Adaptation of the ADDO Model

ADS models, regulations, and standards have been developed for Uganda, Liberia, Bangladesh, Nigeria, and Zambia, with phased implementation ongoing—

* **Uganda’s** National Drug Authority has accredited almost 1,000 shops in 13 districts, 11 of which were funded by the government. When finalized, a new bill will require all drug shops to upgrade to Accredited Drug Shop status. ADS dispensers and owners pay for their own training at one of four participating institutions distributed around the country. With support from MSH, staff from these institutions underwent a training of trainers on the updated ADS curriculum and the use of best practices in adult-focused learning. In addition, NDA inspectors use supportive supervision tools and ADS dispensers receive self-assessment checklists and training on how to use them in addition to several job aids to support their daily operations.
* In **Liberia**, implementation of the Accredited Medicine Shop (AMS) program is ongoing in Montserrado (urban), Nimba, Bong, and Lofa counties, with more than 1,000 people trained and with activity funding primarily coming from the government. Interest in participation far exceeded government expectations. In the three rural counties, the Liberia Medicines and Health Supplies Regulatory Authority accredited almost two-thirds (226) of the shops inspected. During the year-long Ebola outbreak, when much of the health system shut down due to Ebola, most AMS continued to provide medicines and health commodities at the community and neighborhood levels.[[5]](#footnote-5)
* With support from the UK Department for International Development, we worked with the **Bangladesh** Directorate General for Drug Administration to marshal the support of a wide range of public and private sector stakeholders to establish the country’s first-ever standards for retail drug outlets. Standards for newly established Level 1 Pharmacies and Level 2 Medicine Shops cover premises infrastructure, training and qualifications, services and products. In addition, stakeholders helped draft an implementation strategy that include major components such as dispenser orientation and training, economic incentives and microfinance for owners, information technology, inspection, and consumer advocacy and sensitization.
* The Pharmacists Council of **Nigeria** (PCN) has regulatory oversight of the nearly 60,000 patent and proprietary medicine shops (PPMVs) across the country. PCN wants to reposition PPMVs within the Nigerian health system and develop a better engagement model with the shops by working with stakeholders, including PPMV associations, to establish standards of practice that will harmonize both training and operations. PCN has hosted a number of stakeholder and expert committee meetings to ensure early and frequent engagement, including a November 2017 meeting of more than 60 stakeholders to get consensus on the initiative’s next steps, which was covered by [local media](https://newsdiaryonline.com/pharmacists-council-partners-ngo-improved-healthcare-delivery/).
* To advance its accreditation initiative, the **Zambia** Medicines Regulatory Authority (ZAMRA) mobilized a Health Shops national steering committee and drafted a set of Health Shops guidelines as well as adapting existing training materials in collaboration with the Pharmaceutical Society of Zambia. As in Uganda, MSH sponsored an international trainer to instruct trainers from four districts and Lusaka on delivering the Health Shops training material effectively, and ZAMRA recruited three training institutions to include the curriculum. In addition, mapping exercises and community awareness campaigns were conducted in two districts in Western and Muchinga provinces. ZAMRA has developed a Health Shops inspection strategy and has trained inspectors in anticipation of shops becoming accredited.

Tools and Resources

Drug Seller Initiative Toolkit

MSH’s [Drug Seller Initiative toolkit](https://www.zotero.org/groups/drug_seller_initiatives_bibliography/items/collectionKey/V44A5ZSG) includes many documents relating to drug seller programs as well as a continuously maintained drug seller bibliography (over 400 references).

## ADDO Video

Wellcome Trust’s Promoting Pioneers—Tanzania (2018) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5rU5KTDi_cQ&utm> \_

Accredited Drug Dispensing Outlet (ADDO) Program: Improving Access to Medicines in Tanzania: 20013–2015: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFfPgCOn82I>

## Publication Compendium

Over more than a decade MSH authors have published a number of journal articles describing the accredited drug seller implementation experience and lessons learned in Tanzania—home of the flagship ADDO program. Ranging from robust multi-method quantitative research to informative qualitative research, compendium is classified by overarching topic and includes links to the full articles, if available: [Accredited Drug Seller Initiatives Publication Compendium](http://www.drugsellerinitiatives.org/wp-content/uploads/ADSI-Publication-Compendium.pdf)

Selected List of Resources

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# Contact

**Adjo Mfodwo**
*Director, Private Sector Programs & Partnerships*

Pharmaceuticals & Health Technologies

Management Sciences for Health
Accra, Ghana
Direct: +1 (703) 840 3814

Mobile:+233(0)54 012 5325
E-mail: amfodwo@msh.org

1. Terms vary by country; other names include accredited drug dispensing outlets (ADDOs), accredited medicine stores (AMS), Health Shops, and patent and proprietary medicine vendors (PPMVs). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. E. Rutta et al., Creating a new class of pharmaceutical services provider for underserved areas: the Tanzania accredited drug dispensing outlet experience. *Progress in Community Health Partnerships: Research, Education, and Action* 3 (2009): 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For example, E. Rutta et al., Increasing access to subsidized artemisinin based combination therapy through accredited drug dispensing outlets in Tanzania, *Health Research Policy and Systems* 9 (2011): 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
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