

SUSTAINABLE DRUG SELLER INITIATIVES

Liberia

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation provided Management Sciences for Health (MSH) a three-year grant to continue its efforts in Africa to involve private drug sellers in enhancing access to essential medicines. The Sustainable Drug Seller Initiatives (SDSI) program builds on MSH's Strategies for Enhancing Access to Medicines and East African Drug Seller Initiative programs. Those programs focused on creating and implementing public-private partnerships using government accreditation to increase access to quality pharmaceutical products and services in underserved areas of Tanzania and Uganda. The drug seller initiative conceptual framework is based on developing public-private links at the national, district, and community levels. The public sector develops and enforces standards, while providing economic incentives through the authorization of an expanded list of drugs that shops can dispense. The private sector contributes to supply, shop renovations, and training costs.

One of SDSI's goals is to adapt the conceptual framework for the Liberian context and roll out the initiative in Liberia's largest county, Montserrado. Based on the success of the drug seller projects in Tanzania and Uganda, Liberia's Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MOHSW) and the Liberia Medicines and Health Products Regulatory Authority (LMHRA) expressed immediate interest and have since worked closely with SDSI to pursue the initiative. In September 2011, high-level representatives from Liberia's MOHSW, LMHRA, and the Pharmacy Board of Liberia (PBL) visited Tanzania for a two-week study of that country's successful accredited drug dispensing outlet (ADDO) program.

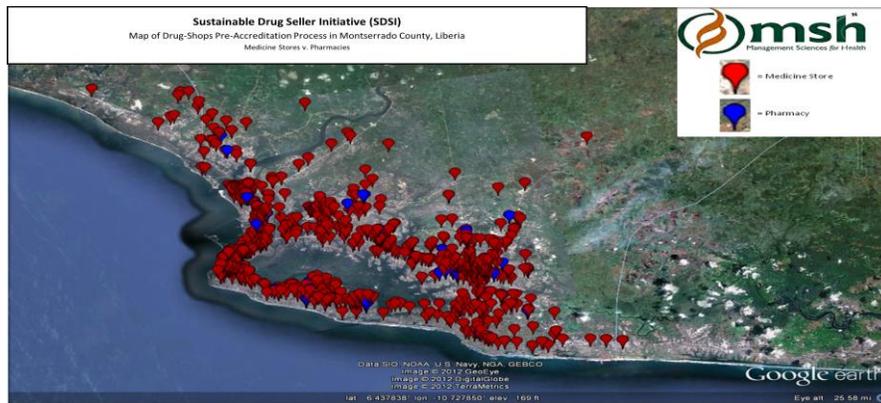


In collaboration with the initiative's champion, LMHRA, and other Liberian stakeholders, the program has carried out the following key activities to adapt and test the accredited drug shop model in Liberia—

- Developed a strategy to create a Liberian accredited drug seller program called Accredited Medicine Stores (AMS)
- Created a technical steering committee comprising 17 representatives from the public and private sectors and academia that contributes to development and implementation and serves as the AMS coordinating entity as the initiative moves from rollout into maintenance phase
- Conducted sensitization workshops for 350 owners and dispensers and completed pre-accreditation inspections at medicine stores (February–June 2012)
- Provided support as LMHRA and the PBL developed standards for ADS personnel, premises, and practices (June 2012)
- Contracted with Pharmaceutical Systems Africa/Liberia to conduct a baseline survey of price and availability of medicines and quality of services in Montserrado medicine stores (June 2012)
- Developed training curricula, which were used to train—
 - 23 trainers, who will be available to build AMS personnel capacity as the initiative grows
 - 350 dispensers in good inventory, dispensing, and communication practices
 - 160 owners in business concepts

The training component was carried out in collaboration with LMHRA, PBL, Pharmaceutical Systems Africa, Top Consulting, Inc., and the Liberia University School of Pharmacy (August–September 2012)

- In Montserrado County, used GIS to map all medicine stores and health care facilities



- Developed an inspection strategy and training curriculum for LMHRA and PBL inspectors (August 2012)
- Conducted a stakeholder meeting to create recommendations for how to scale up and ensure sustainability of AMS initiative (August 2012)
- With LMHRA, presented AMS initiative achievements to MOHSW (September 2012)
- Determined needs and expectations of target populations by conducting formative research in the community to guide marketing and branding (October 2012)
- Developed and implemented, with the assistance of Top Consulting, Inc., the AMS marketing and branding strategy, along with the AMS logo
- The AMS program was officially launched on February 12, 2013

Liberia's MOHSW has indicated that they are committed to the private sector drug seller work and are planning to strengthen both the LMHRA and the PBL. While MOHSW already provides budgetary support to LMHRA, the lead implementing agency for AMS, provision of funding to support PBL's work is new. The PBL will also be reorganizing and developing a 5-year strategic plan to address its role in scale up, maintenance, and sustainability of the AMS program.

Future activities for SDSI in Liberia (pending availability of funding) include—

- Technical support to MOHSW, LMHRA, and PBL to develop scale up plan, including budget
- Provision of additional capacity building in relation to pharmaceuticals regulation, including inspection and registration systems
- Support for inspection process
- Completion of second round of training for Montserrado County
- Endline data collection and analysis for the roll out in Montserrado County
- Institutionalization of training through the University of Liberia School of Pharmacy
- Mapping and preliminary inspection of all medicine stores in remaining 14 counties
- Integration of mobile technology into the AMS program, building on the platform being developed with Tanzania's Pharmacy Council under SDSI
- Technical support for scale up