

Addressing Nutrition Gaps in the Community while Improving Business in the ADS

As part of its efforts to improve access to medicines and health care in Uganda, Management Sciences for Health (MSH) and its partner, the National Drug Authority, have collaborated on a drug shop accreditation program to improve access to quality medicines and pharmaceutical services in rural communities. The model uses regulatory, supervisory, and educational interventions to transform class C drug shops into the Accredited Drug Shop (ADS), which deliver a wider range of medicines and pharmaceutical services than was previously allowed. Currently, efforts are underway to scale up the model and ensure its long-term sustainability. A study sponsored by MSH indicated that ADS could become more profitable by broadening their sales to include more general products.

Assessing the Feasibility of Stocking General Commodities in ADS. To make informed decisions, MSH determined which commodities might interest shop owners and sellers, potential initial quantities, the ability of the shops to obtain the required capital to stock the products, and the available storage space or willingness to create it. MSH drew up a comprehensive list of commodities including items such as detergents, disinfectants, nutrition products, toiletries, and cookware. We collected data from 61 ADS shops in Mityana district, which included urban, peri-urban, and rural shops. Findings indicated that the majority of the respondents knew that they were allowed to sell non-drug items in the shops; however, they stocked a very narrow range—mainly diapers and sanitary pads. Nevertheless, all ADS were interested in adding commodities, specifically fortified foods. After exploring potential products, prices and discounts, credit terms, distribution networks, and marketing, East African Basic Foods Ltd showed the most interest in introducing their products in the ADS and signed a distribution agreement with the Mityana ADS owners and dispensers association.

Training Sellers about the Products. With support from MSH, East African Basic Foods Ltd designed and conducted a training workshop for the sellers to educate them about the new commodities. ADS sellers also received leaflets describing each product. At the end of the training, the sellers placed orders for commodities with administrative support from the association leadership. East African Basic Foods Ltd delivered the orders to the association offices within two days, and the shop owners arranged to pick up their items or have them delivered by public transportation.



Annet Nakitende Muwanguzi at Mugabi Drug Shop in Mityana Town said, “Once you have the relevant information related to the product, it becomes very easy to sell them because these products are very relevant in our communities. They address a number of needs we experience.”

Here, Ms. Muwanguzi shows a young mother how to supplement her baby’s diet with the Baby Soya product.

Feedback from ADS Owners and Sellers. Preliminary results of this pilot indicate great potential, and communities in Mityana district are enthusiastic about the new products. We visited four ADS shops to assess the response the sellers had gotten from their customers. On the whole, the products are gaining popularity in the community. The sellers mentioned that once customers purchase the first product, they keep coming for more. Some customers wanted even bigger pack sizes for products such as Booster.

With the information they got from East African Basic Foods Ltd, the sellers find it very easy to describe the products. The most popular products have been Booster and Baby Soya. Baby Soya is well-liked by diabetics, the elderly, and mothers of children under five years, while Booster has gained popularity among immune-compromised patients and those with sickle cell disease.

With time, we expect that demand for the products will grow following the enthusiasm that communities have already shown. Introducing fortified foods into ADS will help address the accreditation model's profitability and sustainability concerns, while supporting the government's plan to boost the consumption of these healthy products and help reduce malnutrition and related health problems in the community.

"This collaboration is to our advantage, since it is an opportunity to open up new markets for our products"
—Marketing Manager at East African Basic Foods Ltd

List of nutritional foods available from ADS

*Baby Soya 500g
Health Booster 500g
High Protein Porridge 1kg
Instant Soya Porridge 500g
Soya Kawa 150g
Soya Kawa 500g*