



Enhancing Drug Access through Private and Multi-Sector Initiatives: The Tanzania Experience

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The goal of the accredited drug dispensing outlet (ADDO) project was to improve access to affordable quality drugs and pharmaceutical services in retail drug outlets in rural or periurban areas where few or no registered pharmacies are.

The ADDO intervention relies on strong advocacy with the central and local government, as well as with shop owners and consumers, to support and promote accreditation by the Tanzanian Food and Drug Agency (TFDA) of non-pharmacy drug shops that are the most numerous outlets for essential drugs in the country, but which often fail to meet minimally acceptable standards. Accreditation is linked to attaining and maintaining quality standards in relation to products, premises, and staffing. The success of the program depended upon receiving and maintaining accredited status that met regulatory standards while at the same time ensuring shop economic viability. Program elements that were key to successful implementation included (1) training courses for dispensers and owners; (2) owner incentives, such as legal approval to sell a limited range of essential prescription drugs, a program-financed marketing campaign, access to microfinancing, links to health financing schemes, and clarification of tax and business license fee liabilities; and (3) an innovative system of regulation using ward-level local government officials trained and deputized as inspectors by the drug regulatory authority to insure that accredited shops maintain approved standards and that non-accredited shops do not emerge and compete unfairly by selling drugs. A recent evaluation of the project revealed that the project has been able to achieve its principal goal. The overall conclusion of government and concerned stakeholders is that the ADDO project has contributed significantly to improving access to essential drugs, rational drug use, and the quality of pharmaceutical services in Ruvuma.

The Government of Tanzania has now approved this project and intends to roll it out to the rest of the regions. ADDO rollout is included in this year's government budget request for the Ministry of Health.

This is a challenging, complex, and costly program that requires substantial support and full commitment from all stakeholders, including government and local and international partners, for its success. The major challenges are related to training and continuing education, supervision, and regulation.

A fully regulated, comprehensive private sector pharmaceutical services system in Tanzania will have a substantial impact on the health of the population. When fully rolled out, the ADDO project will have placed Tanzania in a unique position regarding access, availability, and quality of drugs and pharmaceutical services for the majority of the population, at all levels and settings.