

SUSTAINABLE DRUG SELLER INITIATIVES

Liberia Launch of the Accredited Medicine Store Program

On February 12, 2013, the Liberia Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MOHSW), Liberia Medicine and Health Products Regulatory Authority (LMHRA), and the Pharmacy Board of Liberia (PBL) marked the successful launch of the Accredited Medicine Store (AMS) program in Liberia. The Sustainable Drug Seller Initiatives (SDSI) program supported the AMS initiative in Liberia through a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to Management Science for Health (MSH). Started in September 2011, the SDSI program in Liberia builds on MSH's previous accredited drug seller initiatives 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. SDSI/Liberia adapted the conceptual framework for the Liberian context and rolled out the initiative in Liberia's largest county, Montserrado.

The launch event at Monrovia City Hall was attended by a number of health sector stakeholders and interested community members. Health Minister Dr. Walter Gwenigale unveiled the logo for the Accredited Medicine Stores and presented accreditation certificates to 120 proprietors and 358 dispensers who successfully completed training and met the accreditation standards.



In his remarks, Dr Gwenigale said, "I came because of the importance of this ceremony, as it concerns the health of the Liberian people." Cutting the ribbon Dr Gwenigale said, "when people see this AMS logo on a building it means the medicine store is selling good drugs." The Health Minister said he hoped that with the training received by the dispensers, the Liberian people would now have access to genuine services and drugs to cure their ailments. Dr. Gwenigale further called on the newly certified dispensers to follow the dictates of their training, "You should follow your conscience and work according to the training you got and not otherwise."

Speaking at the ceremony, the World Health Organization (WHO) representative in Liberia, Dr Nestory Ndayimirije, hailed LMHRA for leading such an effort to improve access to quality medicines in Liberia through the AMS program. He said it is only a few years since LMHRA was established with technical support from WHO and other partners, but already significant progress to improve the regulatory environment in Liberia has been recorded. He also praised MSH for initiating such a program in Liberia and for fostering south-to-south collaboration through learning experiences of the accredited drug seller programs in Tanzania and Uganda.



Adapted to suit Liberia's emerging country context, the newly launched AMS program will increase the quality of pharmaceutical services in more populated urban areas and lead to improved access to essential medicines and basic pharmaceutical services and health care referrals in the more remote areas of the country. AMS success in Montserrado County, which has nearly 80% of all medicines stores in Liberia and about 32% of the country's population, will pave the way for full nationwide scale-up of AMS.