

## **Executive Summary: Health Builders**

October, 2013

### **Introduction**

The Access Project (now Global Health Builders, or GHB), founded 2003 and based in Kigali, Rwanda, is an initiative of the Earth Institute at Columbia University in New York. Its mission is to improve the health of the people of Rwanda by using a private sector management approach at primary health centers. In early 2007, GHB started working in three of the thirty administrative districts of Rwanda, which was followed by three additional districts in mid-2008. During this period, GHB refined its approach to improving management skills and introduced a research driven approach to documenting the operational performance of health centers to determine whether their efforts were making a measurable difference. The GHB model provides health centers with cost-effective, sustainable management interventions to function more efficiently.

In Rwanda, nearly eighty percent of all medical consultations take place in rural health centers. Today, GHB works in 89 health centers across 6 districts of Rwanda, and have built 5 health centers (where no centers existed) together with Rwanda Works, serving nearly 2 million people as a result. Their goal is to give centers' tools to effectively manage on their own for the long-term. With an exit strategy in mind, they build the capacity of health centers to implement integrated, sustainable, and scalable solutions. As a result, 2 million impoverished Rwandans are treated at a cost of only \$15/capita, and in 2013 alone, for example, the Access Project trained 42,562 community health workers in mobile technology to save women and children's lives.

### **Partnering:**

GHB co-operates with Rwanda Works, Rwanda Venture Group, and the Government of Rwanda. Rwanda Works, a non-governmental organization, founded by Josh Ruxin in 2007, has set out to build new health centers, ensure fundamental components for existing centers (fully stocked pharmacies, consistent supplies of electricity, and running water). Rwanda Venture Group, also founded by Ruxin, but as a for-profit social endeavor in 2010, has a goal to invest in profitable and market-based approaches to address nutrition challenges. Furthermore, in partnership with UNICEF and the Rwanda's Ministry of Health, the project has implemented Rapid SMS project to utilize mobile technologies to improve maternal and child health outcomes, and are now working towards facilitating health centers to become sources of sustainable and clean water for surrounding communities.

### **Scope:**

GHB provides infrastructure development with management and technology consulting. Their core belief is that a rural health center should be a thriving enterprise with a strategic plan, an annual budget, savings for capital improvements, and valued staff.

### **Challenges/Opportunities**

Largely due to involvements of international organizations such as GHB and also due to two decades of political stability and continued economic growth, Rwanda has demonstrated tremendous improvements in healthcare through proper allocation of funds, and improvements in infrastructure through projects such as the Access Project, in addition to overall cooperation from the Rwandan government. However, there are challenges that are evident. Although the Access Project has demonstrated great success

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over the years, the following areas demonstrate opportunity for further growth: **scale-up of current projects** and **infrastructure development, implementation of technology** within the healthcare centers to further GHB's goals, and improve mobilization and organization of community healthcare workers.

There needs to be a continued focus on integration between district and national level programs and a strong collaboration between the private sector and multilateral healthcare organizations. Given the amount of funds that have come to Rwanda from private and public sector, there needs to be a continued emphasis on appropriate allocation and utilization of funds for health care programs and technological improvement in the sector (e.g. medical reporting, data management, telemedicine).

Recruitment for qualified workers on all levels is a goal that needs to be emphasized. Managers with a business/project management background should be hired to manage clinics, doctors and nursing personnel should focus on the clinical care and Community Health Workers representing a vital link to the served communities focus on information and connection to health centers. This will help to appropriately utilize the strengths of individuals in these positions within the healthcare centers.

Most importantly, the success stories of the 89 health centers have to be extrapolated to the rest of the country, which are crippled by infrastructure breakdown and unavailability of trained medical professionals. The wider availability of prevention, control, and treatment of disease programs (AIDS, malaria etc.) and complementary improvements in community based water/sanitation programs shall be the next healthcare goals in Rwanda.

The involvement of all stakeholders will decide on the success of the recommendations:

- **Communities** are of paramount importance as they are used in sourcing the aspiring change agents who are given sustainable livelihoods.
- Introducing a Health Certificate Program together with the **Medical University and Health Centers** to train local health workers and binding them to serve their communities for extended periods. Using the already trained workers to help neighboring countries, hence increasing their incomes.
- **Private sector** in Rwanda can be involved to invest in Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) in rural areas that provide for-profit services in rural communities, while helping invest in and manage the commonly used infrastructure
- **Ministry of Health** shall allow Telemedicine facilities from the medical resource-rich urban areas catering to the low resource settings in rural areas, complemented by Mobile Health centers and emergency services

All of the above shall help in creating sustainability within Rwanda of current private/public sector healthcare projects that focus on technical support, capacity, and management. In the backdrop of increasing prosperity in Rwanda, this is achievable.

Given the strengths exhibited by the people and the private/public sector in Rwanda, the country has tremendous opportunities in the future including possibilities for interdisciplinary research, enhancing evidence based policy formulations, continuing to coordinate multi-sectorial collaboration between private and public sector, and integration with other countrywide programs. In the future, Rwanda has the potential to be a role model for healthcare in East Africa.

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