

Experiences with Village Health Teams' Income Generating Activities

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Introduction

In 2010, Uganda implemented a national community health worker program called the village health teams (VHTs). VHTs act as a vital link between communities and Uganda's healthcare system.

In Uganda, VHTs are trusted to carry out tasks such as:

- home visiting
- mobilization of communities for health services
- health promotion and education
- management of common illnesses
- follow-up of pregnant mothers and newborns
- follow-up of discharged patients and those on long-term treatment
- community information management

VHT members work as volunteers. Financial compensation for VHT members is a contentious issue. Some third-party organizations employ VHT members, although this has led to contention within some groups.

In Healthy Child Uganda program areas, VHTs have committed to organizing Income Generating Activities (IGAs).

Objectives

To present our experiences with:

- VHT IGAs
- How IGAs are structured
- How IGAs have contributed to the VHT program and community

Methodology

Qualitative data and baseline information on VHTs and IGAs were collected during a review meeting with 46 people, including:

- District Health Team members
- VHT supervisors
- HCU representatives

Data was collected from 116 parishes in two districts

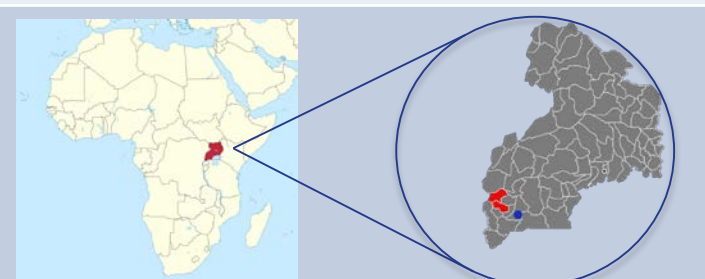


Figure 1. Study area (Bushenyi and Rubirizi Districts)

Results

- All 116 parishes had at least one IGA
- Savings and credit (60%), and cash rounds (38%) were the most common IGAs,
- 8% practiced animal rearing
- 80% of VHT members were part of an IGA
- The structure and origin of IGAs vary between VHTs
- Bookkeeping was a challenge
- Female VHTs gained respect, as they were able to financially contribute to their families
- Funds raised through IGAs contribute to household improvement and were used to support vulnerable populations of the community

Conclusions

IGAs contribute to the development of VHT groups and the community.

Recognizing IGAs and developing guiding principles would be beneficial to the program.



Figure 2. A VHT member selling crafts as part of her group's IGA

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