Enterprise Growth Services
Helping entrepreneurs change lives
Case study: Stamp Out Sleeping Sickness, Uganda
Trypanosomiasis — or African sleeping sickness, to give it its common name — kills around 30,000 people a year. It’s estimated that nearly 70 million people in Africa are at risk of contracting the disease, and its impact on the lives and livelihoods of communities can be devastating. The disease is transmitted from some animals, including cattle, to humans via tsetse flies. Controlling the disease in cattle, particularly in areas where farming is the basis of the local economy, is therefore critical.

Stamp Out Sleeping Sickness (SOS), a public-private partnership backed by venture philanthropists IKARE, has been tackling this challenge in Kampala, Uganda. SOS set up newly qualified vets with shops, stock and equipment in the rural north and east of the country. The aim was to create a sustainable means of advising farmers on how best to prevent and treat the disease in their cattle and thus control its spread.

The problem: lacking business experience, many of the vets’ shops were failing, putting the SOS concept at risk. IKARE approached EY and asked for help. Could the remaining vets’ businesses be saved? Could they become the start of a truly market-based solution to the social and economic damage sleeping sickness causes in the rural communities? An EGS project was scoped, and a team of two deployed to Uganda.

### A market-based solution to sleeping sickness in Uganda?

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### Initial findings and observations

- **Huge variations in stock**
- **Inconsistent record keeping**

### A structured approach to sustainable business change

1. **Business resilience review**
   - Assessed all five businesses and vets
   - Carried out a digitization of paper records to create an accurate financial picture of the five shops for the first time
   - Identified weaknesses in the supply chain, financial management, product range, pricing strategy, group cooperation and governance

2. **Intervention design**
   - Prioritized interventions based on need, deliverability and impact
   - Designed a new paper-based bookkeeping system with computerized management information for the vets who were ready
   - Designed a group-purchasing scheme to enable the vets to benefit from volume discounts
   - Conducted an extensive margin analysis and researched new products

3. **Intervention delivery and sustainment**
   - Delivered bookkeeping training supplemented with extensive co-working to familiarize the vets and their shop assistants with the new process
   - Initiated group purchasing and rationalized the supply chain to achieve 5%-10% discounts
   - Introduced new higher-margin products and provided the vets with sales training
   - Supported the vets in developing individualized plans to increase revenue and profit at the shops
When Natalie Bretherick and Alasdair Reid, of UK&I, heard of a project working to contain the disease, they jumped at the chance to get involved. Natalie and Alasdair spent seven months in Kampala working alongside SOS and the five vets.

The vets were chosen for their technical ability and entrepreneurialism, the five vets were expected to work together, but, without leadership, the group was falling apart. Without a proper bookkeeping system, they were also struggling to manage their cash flow. As a result, they weren’t able to save enough money to buy drugs in bulk, and every 10 days or so, they would have to travel a day and a half to and from Kampala to restock. This was taking them away from their shops and seriously impacting their success.

Natalie and Alasdair wanted to give the vets the tools and knowledge they needed to manage their cash and profit properly, to diversify their product range, and to promote the most profitable and effective drugs. They ran training sessions in Kampala and spent weeks on the road visiting the vets at their shops.

Despite some improvements, the vets still weren’t working together, and Natalie and Alasdair knew that progress was unlikely to be sustained once they’d left. So as well as helping the vets individually, they encouraged one of them to step up and lead the group. Patrick – the most successful and profitable of the five – was the obvious candidate, and they worked to increase his self-confidence.

Under Patrick’s leadership, the group has gone from strength to strength, forming a new company together. Having consolidated their purchasing power, they’re getting up to 15% discounts from suppliers. They’ve won a couple of local government contracts. And they are planning to bid for pilot work under the UK’s first Development Impact Bond, which will use a payment-by-results mechanism to encourage private investors to fund the elimination of sleeping sickness from Uganda.

So it’s fair to declare the project a real success. That’s certainly the view of the vets themselves, one of whom, Joy, emailed SOS as follows: “Natalie and Alasdair have been of GREAT help to us. I cannot say it all, but I can sum it up in this statement: I will never be the same again; I am fully set for a successful business. Please help and thank them for us, as we did not thank them enough.”
Experiences that last a lifetime

Natalie and Alasdair – each made a 50% salary sacrifice in order to work through EGS and make their services affordable to the client. Alasdair reflects on his experience:

“I never viewed it as a sacrifice. For me, building a better working world isn’t just a tagline. I wholeheartedly believe that’s what we’re here to do, and now I’ve seen that with my own eyes.

“I’ve learned an awful lot, too,” he adds. “Seeing Patrick grow into his leadership role has reinforced my view that you don’t have to be loud, gregarious or domineering to be a great leader. You can be quiet and thoughtful and lead others by showing that you believe in their capabilities, and by creating an environment in which great people can thrive. I certainly feel I’ve developed as a leader by taking part in EGS. The challenge of taking responsibility for the planning and delivery of a seven-month engagement was really rewarding.”