



**SOCIAL  
INNOVATION  
IN HEALTH  
INITIATIVE**

# NEWSLETTER

April 2021

We showcased and awarded social innovations that have enabled the delivery of more inclusive, effective and affordable health services in Uganda. Congratulations!

## UGANDA SOCIAL INNOVATION HUB RECOGNIZES OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY-BASED HEALTH SOLUTIONS

**O**n the 17<sup>th</sup> of March 2021, the Social Innovation in Health Initiative (SIHI) Uganda Hub held its third national stakeholders workshop at Golf Course Hotel in Kampala. The aim of the workshop was to showcase and award the top community-based health innovations that were identified through two open calls-for-solutions launched in April and September 2020. It convened officials from the Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MoSTI), academia from Makerere University, innovators, SIHI partners and other stakeholders.

During the workshop, the SIHI Uganda Hub Director, Dr. Phyllis Awor briefed the participants on SIHI activities. The Director emphasized the need for supporting social innovations to ensure equitable and affordable health services. Since the establishment of the SIHI Uganda Hub in 2017, more than 12 innovations have been recognized. The hub identifies innovations through innovation calls and conducts research on them. It also builds capacity of innovators through health innovation fellowships and bringing together diverse stakeholders to advance social innovations. Six projects including students'

innovations were identified and awarded. In her remarks, she noted that the identified innovations could be translated into policy and scaled to improve the well-being of Ugandans. The SIHI Uganda Hub will continue identifying and supporting innovations, and collaborating with relevant stakeholders. Special thanks were extended to TDR (the special programme for research and training in Tropical Disease) and SIDA (Swedish International Development Agency) for supporting the SIHI Uganda Hub activities.



SIHI Uganda Hub Director Dr. Phyllis Awor briefing the participants about SIHI at the workshop

## REMARKS FROM KEY GUEST SPEAKERS

Professor Rhoda Wanyenze, the Dean of Makerere University School of Public Health (MakSPH) welcomed the participants to the workshop and hailed SIHI Uganda hub for identifying and advocating for social innovations in health in Uganda. With the high number of health-related issues in the country, the Dean reported that researchers and innovators could work with communities to generate local solutions to address these issues. She highlighted that through equity, various health related issues in Uganda could be addressed. She challenged the academia to transform the way they teach students. Students need to be empowered to feel that they have the capacity to innovate and solve problems. Prof Rhoda congratulated the innovators!



Prof. Rhoda Wanyenze, the dean Makerere University School of Public Health welcomes the participants.

The Director of Science, Research and Innovation at the MoSTI Dr. Maxwell Otim also congratulated the SIHI Uganda Hub team for the great work it has done over the last five years. He noted that the identified innovations address the issues of healthcare accessibility, community health services and insurance, which mostly affect the disadvantaged population who are at the bottom of the population pyramid. The Director expressed interest to partner with the SIHI Uganda Hub to catalyze social innovations in Uganda. Through this partnership, the ministry will tap into the expertise and approach of SIHI Uganda to develop a national social innovation cluster. The MoSTI will also collaborate with the SIHI Uganda Hub in the next nationwide call-for-solutions in order to create more impact. Dr. Maxwell concluded by thanking Makerere University College of Health Sciences and School of Public Health for supporting the SIHI Uganda Hub.



Top: Dr. Maxwell Otim, the Director of Science, Research and Innovation at MoSTI giving remarks at the workshop.

Bottom: Ministry of Health's Director of Clinical Services Dr. Charles Olaro speaking at the workshop

In his remarks, Dr. Charles Olaro the Director of Clinical Services at the MOH noted that the existing health service delivery challenges in Uganda could be addressed by social innovations which are inclusive in nature. Social health innovations are not necessarily new services, but also the improved old services. For example he informed the participants that the MOH reintroduced the dispensing per chart model in all the regional and general hospitals in the country. This did not only greatly improve the availability of essential medicines in these facilities, but also improved planning. Secondly, the MOH introduced the extended refills model during COVID-19 lock down and clients in chronic care were able to continue accessing treatment. These examples demonstrate that re-organizing the existing service delivery models improves healthcare services. He said that the MOH and SIHI Uganda Hub need to explore ways in which the identified innovations and the unselected ones could be supported in terms of scale up and creating impact on communities respectively. He thanked the student innovators for promoting awareness of non-communicable disease in institutions of learning. In his concluding remarks, Dr. Charles Olaro congratulated the innovators and pledged to continue

supporting the SIHI Uganda Hub.



The principal of Makerere University College of Health Sciences, Prof Damalie Nakanjako delivering her remarks at the workshop

Prof. Damalie Nakanjako the Principal of Makerere University College of Health Sciences represented the Vice Chancellor of Makerere University at the workshop. In her remarks, she thanked the guests for honouring the invitation and also appreciated the SIHI Uganda hub for its great work. The participants were reminded that it's Makerere University's mandate to translate research into policy to benefit the Ugandan citizens in combating local problems. Therefore the forums at the University like SIHI Uganda links the innovators and policy makers to facilitate the translation of innovations into policy and scale up. The Principal informed the policy makers that the identified innovations were measured according to their impact on the sustainable development goals (SDG). And supporting these will help to reach the SDGs which every institution works towards to. With the funding from the research and innovations fund (RIF), Makerere University has renewed her mandate on intellectual property to support and promote the innovators. Finally, she thanked the government of Uganda for supporting the university through the RIF.

## AWARDING OF THE OUTSTANDING SOCIAL INNOVATIONS IN HEALTH

Four outstanding social innovations in health were recognized and awarded during the workshop. These innovations included:

### 1. Ishaka Health Plan

Ishaka Health Plan (IHP) is a community-based health insurance scheme which facilitates access to quality and affordable health services to its members through risk pooling. IHP enrolls existing burial groups, schools and tertiary institutions into the scheme. To empower its members to be able pay premium, income

generating activities such as agriculture and formation of saving groups are supported.

The scheme has over 5,000 members. Over 4,000 people access health services annually. This includes infectious diseases care, cancer care, surgery and other health services. The IHP scheme has been in existence for the last 10 years.



Dr. Charles Olaro the Director of Clinical Services at MOH presents an outstanding award to Ishaka health Plan team.

### 2. My pregnancy Handbook project

“My pregnancy handbook” is a user friendly portable short handbook that has been prepared to deliver authentic health information concerning pregnancy to pregnant mothers, midwives and the general population. The book covers: preconception care as a key step to pregnancy preparedness, pregnancy and antenatal care, danger signs in pregnancy and labour preparation. The information is adequate for mothers to learn about their pregnancy.

Currently over 300 copies are in circulation and mothers can access additional health information concerning pregnancy at their convenience. The handbook has been adopted by clinics in Kampala and Gulu districts.



Dr. Maxwell Otim the Director of Science, Research and Innovation at MoSTI presents an outstanding award to “my pregnancy handbook project” team.

### 3. Social, Emotional and Economic Empowerment through Knowledge of Group Support Psychotherapy (SEEK-GSP) Project

The SEEK-GSP project aims at treating depression among PLHIV using group support psychotherapy (GSP) that is delivered by community health workers (CHWs). Trained CHWs identify depressive PLHIV and facilitate eight GSP sessions while being supervised by health workers. Community advisory boards are formed to monitor the project activities at village level.

Evaluation of the intervention was done using a cluster randomized trial:

- 98% of PLHIV were depression free 6 months following GSP sessions compared to the group health education (control).
- Improvement in adherence to antiretroviral therapy and viral suppression in the GSP arm after 2 years.



Dr. Maxwell Otim presents an outstanding award to SEEK-GSP project team for their innovation.

### 4. Saving lives through community health insurance

Uganda Protestant Medical Bureau (UPMB) implements community health insurance (CHI) in its rural health facilities around Uganda. The health insurance is provider based and enrolls pre-existing groups in the community. The CHI members share the burden of health care costs by pooling together financial resources.

More than 97,679 members, 10 hospitals and 30 lower level health facilities are enrolled into the CHI. Mothers waiting hostels were established at Bwindi and Kisizi hospitals. CHI has improved timely access to treatment among its members.



Dr. Charles Olaro presents an outstanding award to Uganda protestant medical bureau team for their innovation.

## AWARDING OF THE STUDENTS' HEALTH INNOVATIONS

### 1. Students' awareness HIV (SHIVA) campaign

SHIVA campaign was started by students pursuing bachelor of Environmental Health Science at Makerere University School of Public Health. The campaign aims at building a network of university students who are knowledgeable on HIV prevention and their sexual and reproductive health rights.

The campaign started at Makerere University in 2016 and has so far scaled to 10 universities in Uganda. More than 20,000 students in these universities were reached and over 50,000 red and blue ribbons were distributed.



Prof Damalie Nakanjako presents a certificate of award to Mr. Filimin Niyongabo, the project lead of SHIVA campaign.

### 2. Youth led cancer and diabetes awareness (YCADAC) campaign

Makerere University School of Public Health's undergraduate students established the Youth Led Cancer and Diabetes Campaign. The campaign creates awareness of non-communicable diseases among Makerere University students. The campaign also

engages the students in physical exercises weekly.

More than 2,000 students at Makerere Universities have been sensitized on the risk factors, prevention and control measures of cancer and diabetes. An average of 30 students from Makerere University are engaged in physical exercises weekly.



Prof Damalie Nakanjako presents a certificate of award to the project team of youth led cancer and diabetes awareness campaign.



Above: Ms. Robinah Kaitiritimba (Member of SIHI Expert Selection panel)  
Below: Prof. Eddy Walakira (also a member of SIHI Selection Panel) at the workshop



Left-Right: Dr. Phyllis Awor, Dr. Maxwell Otim, Prof. Damalie Nakanjako and Dr. Charles Olaro at the third stakeholder workshop on social innovation in health.



SIHI Uganda team led by the hub's Director Dr. Phyllis Awor (2nd right) at the workshop

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**From 1st March - April 2021**, the SIHI Uganda Hub will run a nation-wide call for innovative community-based solutions that improve the health and nutrition of Ugandans. The call targets community organizations, health workers, business owners, government workers and students in Uganda. The call will close on 9th April 2021.

**From April - June 2021**, the Uganda Social Innovation Hub will review the submissions with the help of an independent expert committee and select the top solutions for case study research and recognition.