

POSTER ABSTRACT

Tackling Socioeconomic Determinants of Health Through Entrepreneurship Training Program for the Wellbeing of the Butaro Community, Rwanda

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Background: Through community visits, the University of Global Health Equity (UGHE) identified a significant gap in entrepreneurship and business skills among retail, agriculture, and cooperative entrepreneurs in Butaro, a rural community near UGHE. To address this, UGHE launched a 12-month entrepreneurship training program in 2021, designed to enhance skills, leverage UGHE opportunities, and improve community well-being. The program, implemented in four stages – training, consultancy, access to loans, and market linkages – provided participants with comprehensive support to strengthen businesses. As a result, participants saw an increased revenue, tools, and created jobs, contributing to UGHE's efforts to address socio-economic determinants and enhance wellbeing of the Butaro community.

Approach: UGHE, Inkomoko, and local leaders collaborated to launch the program aimed at enhancing local businesses. Participants were selected through a joint validation process. The program included biweekly capacity training for three months, with morning classes twice a week, and six months of biweekly 1:1 business consultancy to allow time for skill application.

Topics covered included bookkeeping, financial projects, operations, growth strategies, marketing. Inkomoko supported eligible participants in securing affordable loans, and an endline survey assessed the program's impact before certification.

Results: The program's two cohorts showed a significant progress. Cohort 1 (March 2021 – March 2022) had 50 participants with a 61% monthly revenue increase, generating \$13,360 and creating 154 jobs. Cohort 2 (June 2023 – May 2024) had 78 participants with a 42% revenue increase, resulting in \$38,601 monthly revenue and creating 37 jobs. Cohort 3 recruited 90 participants, 40% teen mothers, focusing on community reintegration and capacity building, complementing existing psychological support. Overall, 98% of participants adopted new business practices, and Cohorts 1 and 2 secured \$50,000 in loans from Inkomoko.

Implications: The program has positively impacted social determinants of health but currently cannot meet growing demand. A new cohort of teen mothers is gaining skills in business ideation, planning, market entry, and investment readiness to improve livelihoods after school dropout.

Market linkage opportunities are being expanded for past graduates, while future efforts will engage community health workers and people with disabilities through tailored training, consultations, and access to affordable finances.