

## **Project Focus Areas**

GlobalHealth Lab partners with leading organizations in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia to enable, inform, and learn from their efforts to deliver more or better healthcare to those in greatest need. In 2012, an assessment of our first 36 field projects showed that GlobalHealth Lab collaborations have been of value to partnering organizations in a variety of ways. From the data, we identified five focal areas of greatest potential impact in which we could build on our track record of success: Improving **operations**, internal processes, and logistics; setting **strategy** and enabling the organization to develop as a thought leader in the field; supporting **technology** and software adoption decisions; understanding patient demand and **marketing**; and analyzing **finances** along with **revenue** generation opportunities.

The domains of operations, strategy, technology, marketing, and finance and revenue are well aligned with MIT Sloan academic course content and faculty expertise, as well as student experience and interest. Innovation in all five domains is also much sought by managers and leaders of healthcare organizations across a vast range of settings. This briefing provides an introduction to how GlobalHealth Lab projects address potential challenges and opportunities in each area.

### **Operations**

#### Improving operations, internal processes, and logistics

We work with organizations to analyze and refine daily operations and processes in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of healthcare delivery. Projects may focus on product logistics, patient flow, or utilization of personnel and assets.

In 2011 our students worked with **loveLife** in South Africa to improve the logistics of distributing key materials to 900 sites by assessing the current system, seeking potential partners that would increase product circulation and visibility, and making recommendations for changes in distribution methods.

A further illustration comes from our 2010 project with urban hospital-based **Muthaiga Pediatrics Clinic** in Kenya. The student team built organizational charts, job descriptions, process flow charts, forms, and tools in order to streamline operational processes and minimize wait time. Our on-line capsule guide presents a detailed description of the project to convey the steps taken by students to design, plan, execute, and get feedback on their work. It also presents interim and final work products along with results that followed the student project. *See [this project's overview](#), which also provides an excellent example of how GlobalHealth Lab student projects typically proceed.*

### **Strategy**

#### Setting strategy and helping the organization develop as a leader in its field

We work with our partners to consider how each organization's strategy enables its mission, values, and goals. Some of our projects evaluate new opportunities or shifts in competitive or

funding environments; others address questions about expanding scope, volume, or geographic range of services. A related set of projects aim to identify and document strengths and capabilities, past successes, and lessons learned in order to help the organization's leaders present their organization to others (e.g. ministries of health, future partners, funders) and grow to be thought leaders in their field.

In 2009 our students worked with **Kyetume Community Based Health Care Programme**, which aims to influence health behavior and provide services for underserved rural communities in Uganda. The students helped Kyetume reframe its strategic direction by measuring and analyzing key performance indicators, conducting staff and stakeholder interviews, and benchmarking to reformulate the organization's mission statement and strategic plan.

Another 2009 project took on strategy questions with a firm that operated innovative contracts for HIV prevention in Cape Town, South Africa. Students worked with the leadership of **Careworks HIV Managed Care Solutions** to examine how the company could leverage its experience, existing data sets, and ability to collect, explore, and analyze unique HIV-linked data relationships, ultimately creating a data management and marketing plan. *See this more extensive project overview [we will insert hyperlink].*

## Technology

### Technology and software adoption decisions

We work with organizations to research, select, and plan for new technologies that fit their needs, looking at requirements, utility, features, and implementation. We have examined electronic medical records systems, diagnostic technologies for clinics, and other tools and technologies.

In 2012 our students worked with **Chebaiywa Health Center**, a small mission-based health clinic serving rural communities in Kenya's Rift Valley, to assess a plan to improve the quality of patient care and better track patients by implementing an electronic medical system. After observing and interviewing staff and creating and analyzing process maps, the student team helped plan the organization's move from their current lack of medical records to a paper-based system, as a step towards adopting an electronic OpenMRS medical records system.

Another 2012 project offers a further example. **LifeSpring Hospitals**, a for-profit chain of low-cost hospitals that provides maternal care to low-income patients in Hyderabad, India, sought input on the potential of mobile-phone based tools. The MIT student team piloted and assessed a new application to be used in combination with a nurse outreach program and to create an implementation plan for the technology's adoption. *See a more detailed overview of this project [we will insert hyperlink].*

## Marketing

### Understanding patient demand and marketing

We work with organizations to identify how their services or products are perceived and to understand how patients, beneficiaries, or clients make decisions and value the services they are offered. For some projects, we assess utilization rates. In other cases, we help create marketing or other materials to increase demand for services.

In 2011 our students worked in South Africa with **Unjani**, a division of RTT, Africa's largest privately-owned distribution company, to evaluate the viability of two new offerings that

would increase the availability of healthcare in selected townships. Health-in-a-Homestore would offer over-the-counter pharmaceuticals in local stores, and Clinic-in-a-Box would provide fee-based basic primary healthcare services in a rapidly deployable single-unit clinic. The team analyzed pilot data, explored funding mechanisms, and examined demand generation to come up with short-term tactics to increase the volume of patients to the clinic and long-term strategies for the organization's growth.

A 2011 project addressed marketing and patient demand for a clinic in Kenya. Our students worked with **Carolina for Kibera**, a non-profit organization dedicated to fighting poverty and promoting youth leadership and ethnic and gender cooperation in Kibera, East Africa's largest slum. The student team's market research included interviewing some eighty patients and community members to assess knowledge and opinion of the organization's clinic and its services. They then collaborated with CFK staff and its cadre of peer youth educators to develop marketing materials designed to inform and attract more people. *See this project overview [we will insert hyperlink].*

## Finance and revenue

### Financial analysis and new business models

To improve financial sustainability, we work with partner organizations to assess their finances, accounting, and business models. In other cases, our work with organizations examines their prospects for new revenue generation, including via novel lines of business. For new products and services targeting low-resource settings, we have conducted market entry studies in a variety of countries.

In 2009 our students worked with **Centre for Infectious Diseases Research Zambia**, a major government partner for HIV service expansion and clinical research headquartered in Lusaka, to increase revenue streams by assessing current utilization of laboratory capacity and designing a program to offer fee-based laboratory services to nearby institutions to take advantage of gaps in their own laboratory's usage of capital-intensive equipment.

In 2011, our students first worked with **Daktari Diagnostics**, a Boston-based company that commercializes low-cost, rugged health diagnostics. This project assessed the Uganda market and devised firm entry strategies for a new CD4 counter that would enable HIV service provision to be deployed more widely and cost-effectively. *See this project overview [we will insert hyperlink].*

## General management assessment and recommendations

Although we always aim to develop well-defined projects, sometimes a partner organization is better served by a carefully specified general project that addresses overall management needs by taking an inventory of the organization's capabilities and systems and offering advice designed to improve how the organization is managed, uses its resources, and addresses needs.

In 2010 our students worked with **Kampala Family Clinic**, a full-service clinic serving seven thousand patients in urban Uganda. The clinic's founders hoped to grow significantly. The MIT team helped them to set a strategic direction by examining the clinic's operations, financial position, and IT infrastructure and by conducting market research to find the best directions and methods for growth.