

Innovative Collaboration in Migori, Kenya Tackles Economic Development and Community Health

San Carlos, California, February 23, 2017—Village Enterprise and the Lwala Community Alliance are launching a new partnership to tackle the most intractable challenges faced by people living in poverty in Migori County, Kenya. This first-of-a-kind project will augment Lwala’s pioneering community-led health model with Village Enterprise’s expertise in community-based economic development.

The idea for this collaboration was seeded when Lwala Community Alliance invited several organizations to submit innovative approaches to increase household incomes for people living at the bottom of the pyramid in Migori County, Kenya. Semi-finalists were then invited to present their intervention strategies at the Sankalp Entrepreneurship forum in February 2016. Village Enterprise was announced as the winner of the competition, leading to this partnership becoming a reality. Community leaders recognized that health and education interventions alone aren’t enough to break the cycle of poverty, but that economic opportunities that generate incomes and savings are also needed. Lwala Community Alliance Executive Director Ash Rogers comments, “We are thrilled to partner with Village Enterprise, an evidence-based, impact-oriented organization that also has a community-oriented bottom-up strategy to ending extreme poverty.”

Village Enterprise’s graduation program equips the ultra-poor with the resources to create small businesses that generate sustainable savings and incomes. Village Enterprise uses a community-driven process to target the ultra-poor, then provides them with a capital seed grant, business and financial literacy training, and mentoring to start small, sustainable businesses and savings groups. Examples of businesses include livestock, farming, small retail stores, simple restaurants and tailoring and distribution of school uniforms.

Village Enterprise Dianne Calvi adds, “No one organization alone can address the complex web of deficiencies that defines extreme poverty. We are committed to working with our partner Lwala to achieve more impact together than either of us would have separately.”

Over the next year, Village Enterprise will train 1,320 new entrepreneurs and jump-start 440 new businesses in Migori County. By 2020, over 1,400 new businesses will be created, which will impact the lives of nearly 30,000 people. The Greater Impact Foundation is funding this collaboration. Both the Lwala Community Alliance and Village Enterprise are grantees of the Segal Family Foundation.

About Lwala Community Alliance

Lwala Community Alliance is a community-led innovator operating in western Kenya, a region with some of the highest maternal and child mortality rates in East Africa. Lwala has leveraged community initiatives to drive a 97% facility delivery rate and cut under-5 mortality to less than half the regional rate. In partnership with the Ministry of Health, Lwala is expanding its bottom-up, holistic model to reach 1 million rural people.

About Village Enterprise

Village Enterprise seeks to end extreme poverty in rural Africa through innovation and entrepreneurship. Working in rural Sub Saharan Africa, the Village Enterprise “Graduation” program provides business and financial training, ongoing mentoring, seed capital and business savings networks to individuals living on less than 1.90/day. Since 1987, Village Enterprise has started over 36,000 businesses, trained over 145,000 new small business owners and lifted over 780,000 people out of extreme poverty.