**Reflections**

***FIT Uganda Limited Experience*** – As promised by the management at FIT Uganda, the internship offered me both independence and responsibility to structure my work on my own terms. Yet, when I felt the need, I had sufficient guidance. FIT Uganda is a pretty young organization, both literally and figuratively, trying to contribute towards Ugandan agriculture through capacity building, consulting and market information (under the trade name INFOTRADE). Market information system (MIS) which is offered for free to farmers is a *public good* and FIT Uganda is trying to develop private goods out of the information to enable it to be financially sustainable. I delved into this issue to some extent and was able to offer strategies to improve their revenues. A large part of my responsibility included developing the annual INFOTRADE Market Analysis Report, which is an analytical tool for decision-making by key stakeholders in Ugandan agriculture. I acted as the project manager in developing the report and worked with several FIT Uganda staff with each member having a specific role in the process.

Below are some of the key lessons I learnt during my work and interaction with various people involved with market price information in Uganda.

**Patience and perseverance** are critical virtues for successfully managing a new social entrepreneurial venture. Till such time as the product/service gains wide acceptance these traits will enable the continuation of the venture. I experienced this at FIT as I noticed that people had to work with patience and perseverance against several odds, both internal and external. Also, in the context of securing governmental funding, a senior official echoed that it was critical for FIT to be consistent and patient in its efforts till such time as the government recognized the utility of their the market price information. Of course, financials (especially cash flows) matter but sticking out till the tipping point is critical as well. In the presence of some funding, these traits can take the organization a long way.

Like in any enterprise, **organizational structure and leadership** are the most vital elements of successfully running a social enterprise too. Clear allocation of roles and responsibilities along with a strong reporting structure is absolutely necessary in a young organization, in the absence of which it is possible to lose sense of the objectives of the organization and drift in a direction which is not in consonance with the founding objectives of the enterprise.

**Ownership of responsibilities** is also important in new organizations. In a growing venture, there is a need to have a **culture of ownership** by people working for the organization. Employees need to see themselves as stakeholders rather than mere salary earners. Even when the relationship is one of employer-employee, the attitude needs to be that of a stakeholder, which will enhance accountability. Responsibility without a sense of ownership/accountability is a recipe for disaster. Having said this, it is the responsibility of the management to offer the right set of incentives for cultivate such a sense of ownership and accountability.

**Financial viability of INFOTRADE is not short-term possibility**. Sustaining INFOTRADE on its own is probably not realistically possible, especially given the characteristics of Ugandan agriculture and farmers. As a result, some form of external support is necessary, which could come from development agencies or the government. This is true of a number of MIS across the world. Till such time as the economy matures to ensure demand for this service, INFOTRADE should endure to reduce the reliance on external funding to the extent possible rather than becoming completely financially sustainable. This will make the job of the management easier in securing funding as they can demonstrate that they are doing their best to generate revenues.

***Personal Experience*** – Personally, going to Uganda was a very fulfilling experience as it allowed me to move out of my comfort zone - going to a new country, adapting to the new environment and exploring the geography, people and culture. Importantly, I was able to do this without my earlier support systems, which confirmed to me that I would be able to traverse through the globe and be able to adapt to local conditions in any part of the globe.