

## SOCIAL BUSINESS REDUCES THE BURDEN FOR WOMEN WITH HIV-AIDS

### HOWARD WEINSTEIN

*Co-Founder Solar Ear Ashoka Fellow*

#### INTRODUCTION

HIV-AIDS is one of the leading causes of death for women in Sub-Saharan Africa. There are many preventative health methods to reduce the initial infection, but there is a lack of information available to women who are poor, there is a stigma involved by having HIV-AIDS, there is a lack of money to buy the required medication, there is a higher rate of infection for people with a disability, especially people who are deaf.

#### AIM:

We will use examples of the 3-dimensional approach of a social business to reduce the rate of HIV-AIDS as well as the burden of having HIV-AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa.

#### MATERIALS AND METHODS:

A social business can be viewed as a 3-D game of Tic Tac Toe, operating the 9 spaces in each of the 3 levels. The first level is the revenue-generating activity of the social business. The second level is the social mission of the business. The third level is the empowerment of its workers. The author has worked in a social business where the stakeholders were women with HIV-AIDS. The social business's revenue was made by using the garbage from their city to make decorative recyclable paper. From the revenue, salaries were paid which enabled the women to purchase the required drugs. Health education programs were held where these women could share common experiences and solutions which lead to empowerment programs, such as attending congresses, and exhibition, which gave them a sense of worth. Also given the stigma of having HIV-AIDS these women along with others in their country participated in a Ms. HIV-AIDS beauty pageant. The goal was to show these women and others that you can be beautiful and be HIV-AIDS positive.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/3087366.stm>

In another social business, the workers who were deaf made low-cost hearing aids. As part of their empowerment program, they developed the first HIV-AIDS sign language dictionary. One of the results on the 2nd level, i.e., social mission were ones of education and health.

#### RESULTS:

The social businesses created 20 jobs for women with HIV-AIDS. The income allowed them to not only purchase the required medication but also gave them a sense of worth which encouraged them to stay healthy. The HIV-AIDS sign language dictionary lowered HIV-AIDS in the deaf community from 38% to 10%.

#### CONCLUSIONS:

HIV-AIDS government education program often misses the root cause of the problem, i.e. lack of funds for women with HIV-AIDS, the stigma put upon them by community members as well as the language to communicate with many women, in general, women who are deaf, women with Down Syndrome in particular.

**KEYWORDS:** HIV-AIDS, Economic Empowerment, Stigma, Deaf

#### BIOGRAPHY:

For 25 years, Howard ran a successful international plumbing manufacturing business in Canada. Through life events, he went to Africa, Asia and Latin America as a volunteer, helping start 10 sustainable businesses for people with disabilities, refugees, youths in a favela, women with HIV-AIDS and others. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fzz669hSARw>

He has had some success as well as some spectacular failures. Success has come by listening to the stakeholders plus empowering them to solve their problems which enabled them to live their dreams. He taught classes on social business at Harvard, Oxford, Duke, and INSEAD. At any time, he is a mentor to several young social entrepreneurs. His greatest mentors were two young adults with Down Syndrome.