

Executive Summary

TechnoServe's business approach to solving rural poverty successfully improves Swaziland's economic environment. Swaziland is one of the smallest countries in Africa, yet has the world's highest HIV/AIDS infection rate of 42% and the lowest life expectancy of 30 years. Political, socio-cultural, and economic forces within the country allow the disease to continue to spread. Because poor economic conditions like lack of employment and opportunity are both effects and causes of the severe AIDS situation, the country is a victim of a self-perpetuating cycle. Unfortunately, political corruption makes it difficult to fund AIDS relief efforts. In light of these circumstances, the most feasible way to slow the AIDS epidemic and symptoms of poverty in Swaziland is by taking an economic-focused approach that creates jobs, income, and opportunities.

TechnoServe's business approach to alleviating poverty is superior

TechnoServe uses a superior economic-focused approach that helps create an environment in Swaziland less conducive to the spread of AIDS. TechnoServe develops entrepreneurs, builds business and industry, and improves the business environment. Through these steps, TechnoServe transforms lives by creating jobs, income, and opportunities that were previously unavailable. This helps break the cycle that makes AIDS such a problem. Specifically, TechnoServe is effective because:

- TechnoServe raises awareness by increasing visibility of the problem
- TechnoServe yields higher social returns with competition
- TechnoServe creates a sustainable solution to poverty through business

TechnoServe raises awareness by increasing visibility of the problem

TechnoServe draws attention to the problems facing Swaziland with highly visible initiatives. Due to its small size, many people are unaware of Swaziland and its issues. Without any comprehension of the problem, it is impossible to provide assistance. TechnoServe's Believe, Begin, Become business plan competition and its high-profile corporate partnerships are highly effective at raising awareness and obtaining further international support.

TechnoServe yields higher social returns with competition

TechnoServe's Believe, Begin, Become business plan competition creates national interest in entrepreneurship and higher social returns on investment. Because the competition is a nationally publicized event, it helps create an environment of opportunity and drive throughout Swaziland. It also outsources the process of seeking out the best and the brightest. Lastly, because competition uniquely motivates people, the program is likely to see much higher social returns on investment for the winning plan than other venture capitalist approaches.

TechnoServe creates a sustainable solution to poverty through business

TechnoServe's model is highly sustainable because it has developed a cyclical model that focuses on seeing through business opportunities. TechnoServe is committed to changing the entire industry in which they are working, in order to ensure that it lasts and creates jobs for years to come. In addition, TechnoServe aims to change lives in hope that the change spreads horizontally through the community and vertically through generations.