

Catalysts of Change: Social Entrepreneurs Shaping Quality Living

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Abstract:

This research explores the transformative impact of social entrepreneurs on societal well-being and quality of life. It delves into the innovative, market-based approaches employed by these change agents to address pressing social and environmental issues. The study emphasizes the dual focus of social entrepreneurs: generating positive societal impact while ensuring financial sustainability. Perspectives on social entrepreneurship are examined, ranging from its role in combining commercial enterprises with social impacts to innovating for broader social transformation. Case studies feature influential social entrepreneurs such as SELCO Foundation, Goonj, SEWA, and Akshay Patra Foundation, showcasing their diverse contributions across sectors like sustainable energy, rural development, and education. The research reveals measurable improvements in health, education, and economic empowerment resulting from these initiatives.

Keywords: Social Entrepreneurship, Quality of Life, Innovation, Sustainable Development

Introduction

Social entrepreneurship is a prominent catalyst for societal transformation, utilizing inventive, enduring, and market-oriented strategies to tackle urgent social and environmental challenges. The crux of the matter resides in the development and execution of solutions that not only have a beneficial effect on society but also yield financial returns and foster job creation. Social entrepreneurship is widely acknowledged and valued by scholars and professionals in the development field. It is seen as an essential tool for attaining sustainable development. Social entrepreneurs are motivated by a double objective, which encompasses the creation of social value and guaranteeing financial sustainability. This transformative approach is manifested in various forms, encompassing enterprises that offer renewable energy solutions and healthcare services and efforts that prioritize education programs and fair trade items.

Social Entrepreneur: Exploring Innovative Approaches

A social entrepreneur can be characterized as an individual with professional expertise and a visionary mindset, actively pursuing various societal objectives through business endeavors. This individual actively explores innovative applications that can address challenges within the community, showcasing a commendable inclination toward embracing uncertainty to bring about beneficial transformations in society. Social entrepreneurs exemplify ingenuity, resourcefulness, and a results-driven mindset, integrating business and non-profit insights. Emerson and Twersky (1996) argue for adopting a worldview that incorporates commercial enterprises with social benefits, wherein business abilities are utilized to pursue social objectives and commercial viability simultaneously.

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Some scholars argue that social entrepreneurship is significant in creating social change by developing innovative solutions and implementing social structures that tackle social issues (Naumes *et al.*, 2002; Elkington & Hartigan, 2008; Fuschi & Tvaronavičienė, 2016). These approaches often prioritize social effect over economic feasibility, as conventional company standards measure (Dees, 1998b). This particular viewpoint focuses on social matters, resulting in the development of inventive initiatives, novel social structures, and the mobilization of resources as a response to challenges rather than being driven by market or commercial considerations.

Another perspective posits that social entrepreneurship serves as a catalyst for societal transformation that extends beyond its primary emphasis on addressing social issues. This particular viewpoint proposes incremental modifications in the immediate future, which subsequently have a ripple effect on established systems, ultimately leading to substantial transformations in the extended period (Ashoka Foundation, 2000). Social entrepreneurs within this paradigm possess an understanding that extends beyond the immediate challenges, encompassing a broader comprehension of the social framework and its interconnectedness. New paradigms are introduced at strategically essential moments, triggering a series of interconnected changes that mutually reinforce each other, leading to the establishment and maintenance of changed social structures.

Social entrepreneurship is characterized by its ability to produce creative resolutions to pressing social issues while facilitating the mobilization of ideas, capabilities, resources, and social structures crucial for enduring and sustainable societal changes.

The Role of Social Entrepreneurs as Agents of Societal Transformation

Social entrepreneurs have a significant influence on both the social and economic structure of society. The innovative solutions proposed by the organization effectively tackle longstanding challenges such as poverty, unemployment, and environmental degradation, resulting in the generation of employment opportunities, economic advancement, and enhanced quality of life. Social entrepreneurs distinguish themselves by their capacity to effectively solve social concerns that may challenge conventional enterprises and governmental entities (Mohanty *et al.*, 2023).

For example, their emphasis on facilitating access to education, healthcare, and clean water in marginalized areas improves the well-being of individuals and communities. It generates a cascading impact on the broader society. The potential of social entrepreneurship to drive sustainable development is not limited to immediate advantages but extends to supporting environmentally friendly behaviours and waste reduction (Sulphrey & Alkahtani, 2017; Dobele *et al.*, 2015).

Social entrepreneurs frequently advocate for the triple bottom line, which encompasses the well-being of individuals, the environment, and financial gains. Their objective is to generate social and environmental benefits and monetary profits (Perman, 2010). Implementing this comprehensive approach promises to establish a more just and environmentally conscious economic system, yielding advantages for all parties involved.

These folks utilize their commercial acumen to effectuate constructive transformation by identifying challenges and creating inventive resolutions. Social entrepreneurs operate at the crossroads of profitability and societal impact, engaging in activities such as facilitating access to clean water and sanitation, generating employment opportunities for neglected communities, and devising sustainable energy solutions.

Social entrepreneurs distinguish themselves via their unwavering dedication to generating positive social outcomes. They actively collaborate with communities to discern their specific requirements and customize solutions accordingly. They utilize technology and creativity to develop scalable solutions that can provide a broader and enduring influence. Social entrepreneurs play a crucial role as agents of change as they identify societal issues, devise creative solutions, and engage in collaborative efforts with communities to facilitate constructive and impactful improvements (Bhalerao *et al.*, 2022).

In social entrepreneurship, the Ashoka Foundation (1981) defines social entrepreneurs as those who possess unique strategies to address the most critical challenges society faces. Motivated by ambition and unwavering determination, individuals actively engage with significant societal issues, presenting innovative concepts to effect broad-scale transformation. Instead of relying solely on the government or business sectors, these entrepreneurs take it upon themselves to uncover societal deficiencies, implement systemic changes, disseminate their solutions, and convince entire societies to choose alternative courses of action. Social entrepreneurs are often depicted as individuals with exceptional foresight and dedication, devoting their lives to transforming the trajectory of their respective domains.

Despite their visionary nature, they also exhibit a pragmatic approach, prioritizing the tangible execution of their innovative ideas (Ashoka Innovators for the Public - www.ashoka.org).

According to the Schwab Foundation (1998), the term "social entrepreneur" refers to an individual who, via the utilization of novel inventions, alternative methodologies, or enhanced applications of existing technologies or techniques, demonstrates leadership and vision in effecting significant, systemic, and enduring social change on a wide scale. Their primary emphasis is on producing social and environmental value, with a deliberate avoidance of prioritizing maximizing commercial value. These entrepreneurs innovate by identifying goods, services, or novel methodologies to address challenges, persistently improving and adjusting their strategies based on feedback (Schwab Foundation, n.d.).

Table 1- Case studies involve in-depth examination and analysis of a particular individual

Case	Name of Founder and Foundation	Objective	Social Interaction
Case 1	<i>Harish Hande</i> , SELCO Foundation	The primary objective of SELCO is to lead the way in providing sustainable energy solutions to impoverished communities in India to establish enduring resources that effectively combat poverty in the long run. The proposed solutions have the potential to enhance individuals' financial well-being, enhance their overall standard of living, and mitigate the issue of poverty.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The utilization sustainable energy sources to enhance the standard of living in rural regions. The improvement of decentralized healthcare services and education at the most remote locations, focusing on enhancing their quality, quantity, and diversity. Facilitating the provision of essential energy services to marginalized communities by establishing resilient last-mile supply chains and implementing effective financial models.
Case 2	<i>Anshu Gupta</i> , Goonj	The mission of Goonj is to establish a fair and balanced connection between urban and rural areas by utilizing unused resources to promote development while upholding the principles of respect and self-worth.	<p>One significant effect is establishing a network of communities spanning from urban to rural areas in India. This network serves as a means to direct resources towards addressing critical deficiencies in rural infrastructure.</p> <p>Implementing a barter system between urban surplus resources and labor from village communities has the potential to catalyze extensive rural development initiatives.</p>
Case 3	<i>Santosh Parulekar</i> , Pipal Tree Ventures	an organization led by with a mission to establish sustainable livelihoods for impoverished youth and women.	One significant effect is providing training, employment opportunities, and financial support to establish thriving small companies. The purpose is to increase the wealth and personality transformation among trained young individuals and women.
Case 4	<i>Sumita Ghose</i> , Rangasutra	the organization, founded by, to serve as an intermediary between rural Indian artisans and the international market. Rangasutra aims to provide sustainable livelihoods for artisans while facilitating their access to global market opportunities	includes providing essential skills, product design, and assistance to craftsmen, particularly women, enabling them to earn a livelihood with dignity and thrive as entrepreneurs.
Case 5	<i>Rippan Kapur</i> , CRY	To ensure the well-being and development of a child, with a focus on promoting happiness,	The impact of the intervention on social life was observed in 908,479 youngsters, with enrolment and retention rates surpassing the

		good health, and creativity while also safeguarding and upholding their rights.	all-India enrolment status by 15%. The primary objective of the CRY project is to ensure the safeguarding of children from the adverse effects of undernourishment, child marriage, and child labor within the designated
Case 6	Elaben Bhatt SEWA	Facilitating the establishment of unions and cooperatives for women workers to achieve self-reliance	SEWA offers a range of beneficial services, including savings, credit, healthcare, childcare, insurance, legal assistance, capacity building, and communication services, to impoverished women. These services contribute to enhancing their standard of living and economic standing.
Case 7	Dr. Bindeshwar Pathak , Sulabha International Social Service Organisation	Address the core causes of prejudice, abuse, and societal stigma. Liberate manual scavengers from contemporary forms of enslavement.	The impact on social life encompasses achieving equitable sanitation and hygiene for all. This includes addressing the needs of both rural and urban areas through initiatives such as rural and urban sanitation, ensuring access to clean water for all, implementing community toilets in slums, managing fecal sludge effectively, and providing enough toilet facilities in schools.
Case 8	Ria Sharma , Fear	The primary objective of our mission is to prioritize the rehabilitation of those who have experienced acid attacks by offering comprehensive assistance and support in the areas of medical treatment, legal advocacy, and rehabilitation programs	Facilitating the rehabilitation and reintegration of acid attack survivors into society through the implementation of initiatives such as the #Endacidsale campaign.
Case 9	Madhu Pandit Dasa , Akshaya Patra Foundation	The aim is to ensure that every kid in India has access to school, regardless of their socio-economic background, by addressing the issue of hunger as a barrier to learning.	Providing midday meals to a population of over 2 million children in educational institutions has resulted in several positive outcomes. Firstly, it has increased enrollment rates, as children are incentivized to attend school due to the availability of nutritious meals. Additionally, the provision of these meals has contributed to an improvement in the overall nutrition levels of the children, thereby positively impacting their health and well-being. Furthermore, the availability of midday meals has been found to positively correlate with the student's academic performance, suggesting that it plays a role in their educational development.
Case 10	Vijay Ramesh Ram , Vikash Foundation	a non-profit organization dedicated to empowering the community and promoting sustainable development while safeguarding the rights of indigenous people. The foundation's mission is to foster marginalized communities' long-term well-being and self-	One way the organization has affected social life is through the implementation of capacity-building training programs. These programs have been specifically designed to target indigenous tribes, women, persons with disabilities, and other disadvantaged communities. The objective of these programs is to enhance the socio-economic status of these groups. By providing them

		sufficiency through various initiatives and interventions.	with the necessary skills and knowledge, the organization aims to empower these communities and enable them to better their overall well-being and social standing.
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Table 1 states the case studies encompass a diverse array of social entrepreneurs and their respective foundations, each dedicated to addressing distinct societal challenges. Harish Hande, through the SELCO Foundation, strives to provide sustainable energy solutions in India, impacting rural regions by enhancing living standards, healthcare, and education through resilient supply chains. Anshu Gupta's Goonj focuses on establishing equitable urban-rural connections using surplus resources, catalyzing rural development through a unique barter system. Santosh Parulekar's Pipal Tree Ventures is committed to creating sustainable livelihoods for impoverished youth and women, emphasizing training, employment, and financial support for small businesses.

Sumita Ghose's Rangasutra serves as a bridge between rural Indian artisans and the global market, empowering women artisans with skills for dignified livelihoods. Rippan Kapur's CRY ensures the well-being and development of children, impacting over 900,000 youngsters by safeguarding them from undernourishment, child marriage, and child labor. Elaben Bhatt's SEWA organizes women workers into unions, providing services that enhance their standard of living. Dr. Bindeshwar Pathak's Sulabha International addresses discrimination causes and liberates manual scavengers, achieving equitable sanitation and hygiene.

Ria Sharma's Make Love not Scare focuses on rehabilitating acid attack survivors, exemplified by the #Endacidsale campaign. Madhu Pandit Dasa's Akshaya Patra Foundation aims to eliminate hunger as a barrier to education, providing midday meals that enhance enrollment, nutrition, and academic performance for over two million children. Vijay Ramesh Ram's Vikash Foundation empowers communities for sustainable development, implementing capacity-building programs for indigenous tribes and disadvantaged groups.

These social entrepreneurs collectively represent a commitment to creating positive social impact, each contributing uniquely to societal well-being and addressing pressing challenges in diverse sectors.

Similarities and Differences

The social entrepreneurs that have been highlighted have made substantial contributions towards improving the overall standard of living in various industries. They have efficiently tackled social problems and have made concerted efforts to create a more favorable and improved society. The comprehensive assessment of quality of life encompasses various parameters, including but not limited to health, food quality, water quality, air quality, standard of living, education, skills and knowledge, happiness, satisfaction, safety, freedom from fear, protection, human rights, physical activity, and transportation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the information presented supports the arguments above. The examination of social entrepreneurs highlights their function as committed individuals, legal entities, organizations, networks, or alliances within the social economy sector or private companies. Driven by a dedication to attaining societal objectives, their aims involve:

- The provision of sustainable resolutions to social and environmental issues.
- The creation of social value.
- Addressing vital social needs that are frequently overlooked by corporate and governmental entities.

These entrepreneurs facilitate the creation of possibilities for those with low income, provide care and help at a community level on a large scale, and stimulate long-lasting systemic change. Social entrepreneurs possess various skills, such as creativity, proactiveness, risk-taking, persistence, innovation, mission focus, and pattern-breaking ideas. These individuals are motivated to achieve multiple bottom-line objectives, generate positive environmental effects, and facilitate significant social changes. The techniques employed by these individuals represent critical aspects of entrepreneurship, as they demonstrate a keen awareness of potential opportunities, effectively leverage available resources, and use underutilized resources to achieve their social mission effectively. The combined effects of these initiatives not only bring about changes in the lives of individuals but also make a substantial contribution to the restructuring of the societal framework to achieve a fairer and environmentally sustainable future.

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