

## **Social Entrepreneurship as an Approach to Reducing Social and Economic Inequality: An SDGs-Based Perspective**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Growing social and economic inequality is a significant challenge that requires innovative solutions. Social entrepreneurship comes as an approach that integrates social value in sustainable business models to address issues such as poverty, access to education, and job creation. Focusing on community empowerment and community-based problem solving, social entrepreneurship strategically supports sustainable development goals, such as poverty alleviation, inclusive economic growth, and reducing inequality. In Indonesia, this model has proven effective in helping marginalized groups through micro-enterprise development, skills enhancement, and optimization of local products. However, social entrepreneurship still faces challenges such as limited access to capital, lack of policy support, and lack of synergy with the private sector. Therefore, stronger collaboration between the government, private sector, and civil society is needed so that social entrepreneurship can become a motor of transformation towards a more inclusive, independent, and sustainable society.

**Key Words:** *Community Empowerment, Economic Inequality, Social Entrepreneurship, SDGs*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Current social and economic inequality is one of the biggest global problems that prevents sustainable human development. Chancel et al. (2022) affirm that income and wealth disparity has been rising recently; the global top 10% earned 52% of the total global income while the bottom half only got 8%, as stated in the World Inequality Report 2022. It is a condition that needs creativity to foster a reasonably prosperous society. The approach is social entrepreneurship, as it takes efforts that can balance social and economic goals where possibilities of producing social value through sustainable business models are highlighted (Apetrei et al., 2019; Crecente et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2023; Van Niekerk, 2020). Social entrepreneurs attempt to design solutions for problems like poverty,

unemployment, and the education gap creatively and effectively (Adomako & Nguyen, 2024; Rashid, 2019; Seelos & Mair, 2005). This is a way whose goal is to make a profit and benefit society at large. Analyzing the role of social entrepreneurship at the present stage within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals, one should note that it plays a strategic function regarding several indicators within the framework of the following goals: Goal 1 – eradication of poverty, Goal 8 – decent work and economic growth, Goal 10 – reduced inequality (Del-Aguila-Arcentales et al., 2022; Herutomo et al., 2022; Pereira et al., 2024). review of literature shows that challenges available in social business models underscore the importance of social entrepreneurship as a means of enhancing the possibility of achieving the SDGs in dealing with difficulties in different sectors of life and concerns social, economic, and other

issues (Adigun et al., 2024; Diaz-Sarachaga & Ariza-Montes, 2022; Dodo et al., 2021).

Based on stakeholder theory, social entrepreneurship also has a high possibility for success in Indonesia in lowering social and economic inequality. There have been numerous interventions raising and enhancing the standard of living of the vulnerable population: empowerment of the community through micro-enterprise development, boosting of local product development, increasing of education access, among others that have shown positive impact (Al Issa et al., 2024; Mir Shahid & Alarifi, 2021; Setiawan et al., 2023; Sisu et al., 2024). However, several barriers to social entrepreneurship development at the national level exist, such as restricted access to capital and scarce policy support. The Indonesian government has incorporated SDGs within the country's development frameworks, specific to reducing inequality through a few key strategic frameworks. The policy aligns with goal 10, including creating independent entrepreneurs, enhancing business latent capacity in the households of people with low incomes, and creating more job opportunities (Bappeda, 2021). In this case, social entrepreneurship can complement the government in implementing these policies to advance the solitaire's solutions for the local community.

Support for social entrepreneurship is another important factor linked to the involvement of government, the private sector, and civil society. The commitment to supportive policies, capital accommodation, and capability-building measures can expand the part of social entrepreneurship for social injustice obliteration. Also, university social entrepreneurship education can

prepare young people as change-makers (Arcentales et al., 2022; Reimers, 2024). However, social entrepreneurship is not the only way to address the problem of inequality. This approach has to be complemented with fair macroeconomic policies, structural changes, and collective engagement from multiple subjects. However, there is also a need to assess the performance of the impact and social sustainability of social entrepreneurship initiatives to ascertain potential and effectiveness in the long run (Andersson & Ford, 2016). Social entrepreneurship promises a prospective model toward realizing social justice and economic equity that is preconditioned to achieving the SDGs. Thus, social entrepreneurship is designing and implementing ideas, collaborations, and actions that will lead to positive social change based on values of innovation and sustainability.

Many studies have attempted to explore the role of social entrepreneurship in lessening social and economic disparities; however, many areas remain to be investigated. More significantly, most research has been pushed toward the international alias or specific regional comparison context, and research on social entrepreneurship potential in developing countries such as Indonesia was found scarce (Dodo et al., 2021; Herutomo et al., 2022). Moreover, the complementarity of social entrepreneurship with the attainment of particular SDG measures, for example, goal 1, No Poverty, Goal 8, Decent Work and Economic Growth, and also goal 10, Reduced Inequality, which is still unexplored in the literature (Seelos & Mair, 2005). The common questions for analysis in previous studies are the short-term effects of social entrepreneurship. The problems of

assessing the long-term impacts of the approach towards eliminating social and economic inequality have been discussed and investigated insufficiently (Andersson & Ford, 2016).

Due to the gaps in the research studies, the researcher intends to examine the feasibility of the practical application of social entrepreneurship in addressing social and economic injustice. In this research, several new insights can be contributed to the existing literature by considering both social entrepreneurship and the achievement of SDGs in developing countries, particularly Indonesia. This research also aims to establish the local factors determining success in alleviating social and economic inequality through social entrepreneurship. Further, this research builds an understanding of the longevity of social entrepreneurship that has not been proposed before. The anticipated outcomes of the current study are to offer policy implications concerning the better development of SE and to guide future theories and real-world applications. This research aims to investigate how social entrepreneurship improves social and economic equity in Indonesia and discover how social entrepreneurship is linked with the progress of SDG indicators, such as goals 1, 8, and 10. This work also intends to examine the role of social entrepreneurship in eradicating inequality and the correlation between social entrepreneurship and SDGs; it will also uncover the facilitators and barriers that influence social entrepreneurship's success in eradicating inequality. Further, it will be relevant to advance a set of guidelines and recommendations for discussing the long-term consequences of social entrepreneurship

and contribute to the policy impulse that will increase the efficient usage of the potential of SE to address the challenges set by the SDGs. With this strategy, this study will provide a reference for designing other strategies for sustainable social and economic inequality.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts the Systematic Review Literature (SRL) approach to identify, evaluate, and synthesize a body of literature synthesizers of the research topic (Saputra et al., 2025; Tranfield et al., 2003). To this end, this approach is used to analyze the contributions of social entrepreneurship to mitigating social and economic inequalities vis-à-vis the existing sustainable development goals. SRL was chosen because it facilitates passing judgments on literature objectively and systematically (Saputra et al., 2024a, 2024b). The research data sources were identified from scientific journal articles, books, a policy report, and other academic outputs. The literature was collected from reliable database sources since databases such as Scopus, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar were well-renowned among academic students. The articles were written in the past 10 years and published in English or Indonesian to ensure that the data emanating from those articles were recent and credible. This review is based on those that capture social entrepreneurship, decreasing social and economic disparities, the relationship between social entrepreneurship and SDGs, poverty (SDG 1), work and economic growth (SDG8), and inequality (SDG 10).

Therefore, specific selection criteria were used: only literature that reports on

substantial empirical evidence or proposes a theory. On the other hand, exclusion criteria were used to filter out SCs irrelevant to the SDGs, or the articles provided mere opinions without supporting evidence. This is a simple search on the Website where they used social entrepreneurship OR inequality OR SDGs AND social impact to get their articles. For instance, a search could include terms such as ‘Social entrepreneurship,’ ‘AND,’ and ‘Economic disparity.’ The literature analysis was achieved by qualitative and quantitative means: thematic and bibliometric. Criterion-based analysis was employed to understand that results are to be sorted according to specific themes, such as the role of social entrepreneurship in generating economic and social value. Furthermore, the bibliometric analysis determined the publication trend over the years, geographical distribution, and the journals with the highest impact. Lastly, since systematic reviews involved acquiring different studies, the literature's general findings were synthesized narratively to come up with research results (Snyder, 2019). This study should add much value to the literature on the correlation between social entrepreneurship, socio-economic inequality, and achievement of the SRL approach and the SDGs.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### ***The Contribution of Social Entrepreneurship in Reducing Inequality***

Social entrepreneurship helps reduce inequalities in the social and economic realms by incorporating social causes into business operations. While traditional ventures maximize profit,

social entrepreneurship aims to produce values for improving society, particularly the deprived segment. They include employment creation for all its citizens, focusing on inclusive employment creation. In their study in 2021, Desa and Kanya (2021) found that skills training given explicitly to poor people by such social enterprises further opens local employment opportunities for poor people and makes an individual become financially self-reliant, like the SELCO Foundation in India. Furthermore, social enterprises enhance the delivery of services through Smith and Darko (2020). Some of them have demonstrated that social enterprises in Sub-Saharan Africa operated efforts at affordable health care to poor communities and that minimization of the health access divide is a critical issue in developing countries.

Additionally, Tiger notes that social entrepreneurship facilitates community participation and empowers local communities by involving them in decision-making. According to Vargas-Zeledon and Lee (2024), one study observes that social enterprises in Latin America, like TETO, incorporate the community to develop sustainable solutions and own the processes. Indications in financial services, including microfinance, have also been another vital addition (Sajida & Paulet, 2024; Tabares et al., 2025; Wang, 2022). Microinsurance, which targets poor communities to be able to start business with no collateral, for instance, Grameen Bank in Bangladesh The microcredit has been accused of lifting millions of people out of extreme poverty (Banerjee & Jackson, 2017; Chikwira et al., 2022; Garikipati, 2017). In the same way, social enterprise helps minorities, for instance, Indigenous peoples of Canada,

to gain employment, market and create business opportunities for them, hence the reduction of the existing economic imbalance as well as cultural values (Bruton et al., 2021; Cezarino et al., 2022; Schoneveld, 2020).

Not only that, but social entrepreneurship also fosters the elimination of gender disparity via women's aspire. For instance, the Kashf Foundation in Pakistan enhances employment for women through vocational training and extended micro-credit, thereby pushing them into the mainstream economy (Bag & Barman, 2022). With these contributions, there is empirical evidence that SED can contribute to attaining the SDGs significantly, SDG 1, 8, and 10. However, more significant policy support, improved financing availability, and cooperation across different industries are required to optimize.

### ***The Linkage of Social Entrepreneurship to SDGs***

It can be noted that social entrepreneurship is closely related to a number of the sustainable development goals set by the United Nations in the area of activity, primarily SDG 1, No Poverty, SDG 8, Decent Work and Economic Growth, and SDG 10, Reduced Inequality. SDG 1 on ending poverty mainly focuses on social entrepreneurship and creating economic capital for those in vulnerable positions. In practice, Muhammad Yunus continues to demonstrate this concept through the Grameen Bank microfinance model oriented on the provision of microcredits to the poor women of Bangladesh, which experience indicates a marked increase of cash incomes and, therefore, a decrease in the turnover of informal credits (Yunus, 2019). Furthermore,

published studies reveal that the employment-focused social enterprises that operate in India, especially in skills training, have helped in poverty angles in rural areas by availing of skills training and development-based employment. Optimistically, regarding SDG 8, social entrepreneurial activities create an opportunity to apply inclusive employment measures to help women, people with disabilities, and dwellers of rural zones alongside providing job places. observed that social sites where social missions and business strategies generate work inclusion are sustainable. Technology is also identified as a critical source of this growth by Dacin et al. (2020) and Solaz et al. (2024), whereby technology platforms facilitate market access for local artisans, leading to additional income and improved welfare.

On the same note, contributing to SDG 10, social entrepreneurship, in equal measure, minimizes inequality by providing opportunities for disenfranchised communities. According to Nicholls (2021) the social business aims at minorities comprising women in rural Africa and indigenous people of Latin America through skills, markets, and capital. Moreover, as Santos et al. (2020) have proved, working with governments and with companies in Latin America, social enterprises have fulfilled the central role of delivering social services, including education, health, and clean water, to people experiencing poverty and thus have achieved remarkable improvements in decreasing social inequalities. In general, the SE is highly sociable as a transformative agent in approaching social and economic issues related to the SDG. This approach defines long-term economic benefits without neglecting social cohesion, as well as the

improvement of the recipients' conditions. From this perspective, further initiatives from governments, the private sector, and communities are required to continue building on the positive effects that social entrepreneur initiatives produce.

### ***Supporting Factors and Barriers in Social Entrepreneurship***

Social entrepreneurship has several sustaining factors that explain why the strategy effectively decreases social and economic injustice. In that line, one of the significant enabling conditions includes cross-sectoral cooperation with the government, private actors, development partners, and local communities. It helps organizations create scope to pool resources, contacts, and knowledge to make a more significant difference in society. According to Austin et al. (2012), cross-sector collaborations facilitate social enterprises' growth in funding and markets. Furthermore, technological advancements in innovation have acted as significant sources of promotion of social entrepreneurship in the current world. Social enterprises can adopt the best technology to use the website and other digital platforms to enhance their performance and customer base. Deng et al. (2020), Viswanath and Sadananda Reddy (2024), and Ibarra-Vazquez et al. (2023) proved that technology platforms such as social media and further digital applications are beneficial for developing social initiatives and motivating communities. In addition, it is therefore necessary to ensure proper public policy support for the operations; this will create a favorable environment. Some of the outcomes of the touted relations, which are founded by Kerlin (2017) and Gawell (2017) include the

fact that social entrepreneurial growth in Europe is highly brought about by conducive government policies, including tax incentives and easy access to funding and it is skyrocketing due to clear regulations on the sustainability of social enterprises.

Nevertheless, several challenges still exist that affect the development of social entrepreneurship. Another, the largest, is the lack of adequate funding that hampers forward-thinking organizations. Unlike traditional companies, social enterprises have minimal profit-driven motives and can barely attract everyday investors. The authors Battilana and Lee (2014) argue that social enterprises struggle to balance, on the one hand, the delivery of social goals and, on the other, the need to obtain financial support for their activities – a situation that turns away traditional financiers. Also, cultural and social constraints remain significant challenges, mainly arising from culture and unfamiliarity with social entrepreneurship. Doherty et al. (2014) and Besharov (2022) note that this cultural resistance manifests itself as non-support from indigenous populations, especially in cultures with high endogenous organizational cultures. The last is the unsupportive policies hindering social entrepreneurship, especially in the developing world; the policies enacted to support social entrepreneurship are incongruous or inadequate for the country's needs. According to Hoogendoorn et al. (2010), this causes a policy mismatch that limits the chances of future growth for social enterprises.

The findings from this comparison reveal that the realization of social entrepreneurship is contingent upon ecosystem support and the capacity to

overcome structural, financial, and cultural barriers. Therefore, it can be emphasized that social entrepreneurship can reduce social and economic inequality worldwide when cross-sectoral collaboration, the application of digital technology, and related policies are advanced.

### **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

Through various contributions, social entrepreneurship must effectively and strategically address social and economic differentials, including employment, community, service, and gender. The papers revealed that the implementation of the social missions aligns social entrepreneurship with Sustainable Development Goals as follows –SDG 1- No Poverty, SDG 8- Decent Work & Economic Growth, and SDG 10 – Reduced Inequality. Thus, social entrepreneurship has numerous challenges, including reduced funds, cultural barriers, and policy constraints. Yet, in the age of technology, cooperation with other industries, and favorable legislation and policies, social entrepreneurship is positioned to deliver much more extensive and enduring influence.

Hence, the government should embrace friendly policies like tax incentives, funding, and supportive rules regarding social incorporation. Another critical area is the activation of innovative approaches to financing, including social investment and micro-finance, for the sustainability of social enterprises. Another development area is cross-sector cooperation, through which social enterprises in need can have better access to resources, connections, and knowledge. People interested in social

causes but cannot benefit from social entrepreneurship need more education about the program to dismiss cultural resists and get people involved. Last but not least, digital technology should be effective at enhancing the extenders of services and, as a result, get the attention of the community and investors to the company’s social responsibilities. By these steps, social entrepreneurship can be more efficient in solving social and economic injustice, which is supposed to be significant worldwide.

More studies should be conducted to enhance the knowledge about social entrepreneurship in various geographical and cultural settings. Research can be carried out to assess the extent to which different social entrepreneurship models have addressed social inequalities in developing and developed nations. Moreover, it can also be about organizational characteristics that affect the sustainability of social enterprises, such as sources of finance, technology, and management of an organization in changing environments. Research from other fields that associates social entrepreneurship with theories of economic growth, social integration, and digital technology also holds much promise. Lastly, future studies must consider the effect of social entrepreneurship on some groups like women, disabled people, and indigenous groups to deepen the already available knowledge and make relevant policy suggestions.

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Seminar Nasional  
(PROSPEK IV)

**“Memberdayakan Masyarakat Melalui Kewirausahaan Sosial : Peran Pendidikan  
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