

Global South-South Development Expo 2017

Women as Benefactors of Development through Social Entrepreneurship

Day 2: 28 November 2017
Antalya, Turkey

1. Introduction

Gender equality remains to be the greatest human rights challenge of our time, and rightfully policies and discussions about how to empower women constitute an indispensable aspect of sustainable development. In fact, empowering women in the economy and closing gender gaps at work are central to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

However, an effective fight against persistent gender gaps requires not only a conservation on 'empowering women' but an equally aggressive conversation on 'empowered women' and how those empowered women transform not only their own lives but that of other women, families, communities, children, and men. Such a conversation will allow us to move beyond the typical image of women as the 'beneficiaries' of social and economic development. In fact, in the last few decades or so, women have become 'benefactors' of sustainable development by taking up on increasingly significant and public roles in business leadership, social entrepreneurship and the third sector, and intellectual life.

This thematic session highlights this growing and indispensable role of women in sustainable development with a focus on *social entrepreneurship* and *the third sector*. The session will discuss such issues as:

a) Objectives

- the emerging and growing role of women in sustaining development and social change especially in the framework of South-South and Triangular cooperation
- the unique role of women and women's perspective in social entrepreneurship or third sector (such as, post-heroic leadership paradigm and women paying greater attention to marginalized segments, violence, and discrimination)
- roadblocks that curtail women's roles as benefactors and enablers of sustainable development, in particular regarding social entrepreneurship or third sector
- actionable insights that can facilitate women roles as benefactors of sustainable development both at the national, regional and international level.

b) Format and Structure

The solution forum will be conducted in an interactive manner allowing participants to present and share tangible examples and best practices regarding the role female social entrepreneurship (and the third sector) in sustainable development. The session will last 1.5 hours and will encourage production of concrete outcomes, including but not limited to MoU signing, launching of a report, announcement of a new partnerships, and suggestion of actionable insights.

The Session will be facilitated by a Moderator, who will set the overall context, drive the discussion, engage the panellists and the participants in an interactive dialogue, and synthesize what she hears throughout the forum to maintain the discussion focused and the expected outcomes reached.

The Session will start by Moderator's introduction of the sessions overall theme and objectives as well as the participants the Moderator will then give the floor to the panellists. After having all presentations or deliberations, Moderator will open the floor for the Q&A and audience comments.

At the end of the solution forum, moderator will summarize the discussions and will provide closing remarks including possible recommendations on how to strengthen the unique role of women and women's perspective in social entrepreneurship and the third sector in the framework of South-South cooperation among others. The summary report with recommendations will be developed after the forum and will be available for all the participants of the forum and on the Global South-South Development Expo 2017 website.

c) Moderator and Panellists

Moderator:

- Dr. Neslihan Çevik, Researcher, Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries, subsidiary organ of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

Panellists:

- Dr. A.H.Monjurul Kabir, Senior Adviser, and Global Lead, South-South and Triangular Cooperation, UN Women HQ, New York
- Ms. Azra Akin, Turkey's 2002 Miss World, the voice and the face of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) on women empowerment (tbc)
- Ms. Esra Albayrak, Chairman of the OIC Advisory Women's Council (tbc)
- Ms. Didem Altop, Co-Founder and Managing Director of Endeavor Turkey (tbc)
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d) Focal Point Contact Details

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2. Why does Social Entrepreneurship Matter for Sustainable Development?

In debates on women and sustainable development, women are typically viewed as beneficiaries of sustainable development initiatives and policies. This ‘beneficiaries-mainly’ image of women is not groundless: vulnerability is not distributed equally, and women —given persistent and global gender disparity across all areas of life— are one of the most vulnerable groups.

While grounded in reality, nevertheless, this image is also tricky: once vulnerability becomes a defining characteristic of a given group, it can justify injury and exclusion of that group, and can create a vicious trap. In the case of women, such a justification in turn reinforces those already deeply entrenched gender norms that always contemplate men as benefactors of development: as scientists and innovators, political and business leaders, community builder, and civil activists and makers of social change.

This picturing of women as beneficiaries-mainly results in a quite tangible problem regarding how we understand women’s role in sustainable development as well. This tangible problem namely is the failure to recognize when women do indeed become benefactors of development and the discernible contribution this role brings about. This failure is not only discursive; it (mis-)informs policies hampering necessary efforts that can advance women’s role as benefactors. For instance, seeing women as beneficiaries has led to the concept of ‘smart economics’ referring to the instrumental value of empowering women; yet, this concept has missed on the fact that economic development does not automatically translate into greater gender equality¹. Rather, gender equality and the ‘smart benefits’ that can be gained from it require greater female autonomy; in other words, it requires recognizing and promoting women’s potential for becoming benefactors.

Despite the common picturing of women as the recipients of development, since the 1980s, both in developed and developing world, women have been taking up on prominent public roles in sports, intellectual life, politics, civil activism, and the private sector, working on diverse development issues from poverty to exclusion of marginalized segments to human’s rights.

¹ Bradshaw, S., Castellino, J., & Diop, B. (2013). Women’s role in economic development: Overcoming the constraints. Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

Women's contribution to sustainable development has been comprehensive. This session, however, focuses on social entrepreneurship as a channel of sustainable development. This focus follows the most contemporary debates in development work and practice and the future trajectory development work is seemingly taking. That future increasingly signals the rise of non-traditional actors, who apply creative methods to solve thorniest development problems: social entrepreneurs.

Traditional stakeholders of development (nation-states, INGOs, IGOs, NGOs, Multinational Corporations) have taken fundamental steps to address sustainable development. Nevertheless, social problems in contemporary society have become densely interconnected, highly complex, and too big for any centralized mechanism. Contemporary society, in contrast, is generating the need for new actors (people and organizational structures) to appear that can directly address social and environmental problems often overlooked by traditional actors of development and that cannot be tackled through traditional solutions.

Social entrepreneurship has emerged in this context and has been increasingly getting attention from various stakeholders of development, from academics to practisers, as a means of tackling some of society's most entrenched social problems². Social entrepreneurship applies business methods and strategies to address social problems and a social enterprise can be defined as "organizations that are primarily in the business of creating significant societal value and do so in an entrepreneurial market-oriented way, that is though generating own revenues to sustain themselves"³.

Social entrepreneurship has a unique ability and position for problem-solving most notably because:

- Social entrepreneurs challenge traditional solutions approach by looking at the old problems with new and creative approaches ⁴
- This innovative aspect gives them a greater edge to formulate faster, more effective, and cheaper solutions
- They are generally people who have experienced and been hit by the problem itself or are experts at it. This enables them to come up with a bottom-up approach
- They can overcome the free-rider problem, which tend to hamper traditional stakeholders and methods
- Finally, their survival depends on their success in solving the problem, which generates greater accountability

Additionally, social entrepreneurs are marked by "ethical motives, a particular ability for leadership, and by a passion for realizing a social mission and objectives as well as a certain ability to recognize social problems and related creative solutions."⁵

² Teasdale, S., McKay, S., Phillimore, J., & Teasdale, N. (2011). Exploring gender and social entrepreneurship: women's leadership, employment and participation in the third sector and social enterprises. *Voluntary Sector Review*, 2(1), 57-76.

³ Huysentruyt, M. (2014). Women's Social Entrepreneurship and Innovation. OECD Local Economic and Employment Development (LEED) Working Papers, (1), 0_1.pg 4.

⁴ Ahl, H., Berglund, K., Pettersson, K., & Tillmar, M. (2016). From feminism to FemInc. ism: On the uneasy relationship between feminism, entrepreneurship and the Nordic welfare state. *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, 12(2), 369-392.

In developing countries and within the framework of south-south cooperation, social entrepreneurship is still at its infancy. Given its unique qualities, nevertheless, social entrepreneurship would be particularly meaningful for and can play a fundamental role in improving social conditions in developing countries, where scarcity of resources (finance or human capital), long-term political and economic instability, and weak public management have left serious social problems unattended. As such, greater investment to promote social entrepreneurship as a channel of sustainable development will be necessary for the pursuance of development objectives in the framework of the South-South Cooperation.

3. Becoming Benefactors of Development: Women and Social Entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurship is a sector with a unique profile in terms of gender and work. Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) Survey and the LSE-SELUSI (SELUSI) reports suggest that, consistently across the globe, women are almost as likely as men to be involved in social entrepreneurial activity, showing that the gender gap in social entrepreneurship is considerably smaller than the gender gap in mainstream entrepreneurship and the private sector more broadly.⁶

In fact, social entrepreneurship has opened up a new space for women to mobilize for sustainable development, social change, innovation, leadership, and social problem solving. It is therefore a practical area through which we can observe women's role as benefactors; that is we can observe what unique skills, traits, and insights women put on the table, and what kind of discernible benefits we get out of this.

Researches have asked why there is less gender gap in social entrepreneurship and mostly tapped into social psychology to retrieve an answer. A recurring theme such studies point is that women entrepreneurs tend to be have a greater sensitivity towards the needs of their environment, which then makes them a relevant role in the framework of social entrepreneurship⁷. Yet, arguments that quickly mark a causal link between socially constructed categories of femininity (e.g., motherhood, being caring) and social entrepreneurship (community-orientation) should be met with caution. When links exist between femininity and entrepreneurship, we should also be aware that those links are shaped within particular contexts marked by broad gender norms rather than stemming from something inherent to women.

Fortunately, there exists a growing body of evidence and research that point to more complex relationships between women and social entrepreneurship and that debunk simplistic gender norms. Most notably, for example, research shows that women-led ventures have greater tendency to being first ones to provide a kind of service or product in their region, country or worldwide⁸ and women-led ventures seem to be more likely to open up new markets. These findings are important insights. They 'debunk the idea that innovation is more of a 'masculine'

⁵ Benavides-Espinosa, M. M., & Mohedano-Suanes, A. (2012). Linking women entrepreneurship with social entrepreneurship. In *Women's Entrepreneurship and Economics* (pp. 53-71). Springer New York. Pg. 54

⁶ Huysentruyt, M. (2014). Women's Social Entrepreneurship and Innovation. OECD Local Economic and Employment Development (LEED) Working Papers, (1), 0_1.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

affaire⁹ and on the contrary point to women's greater capacity in traits we typically associate with masculinity. Women in fact take the role of lead-innovators and produce spill over benefits and remarkable return on investments.

Equally importantly, women have a greater democratizing affect; they spread the benefits of development across a broader range of recipients. Both in social entrepreneurship and the third sector more broadly women are more likely to be receptive of marginalized groups and their needs. Women also tend to employ more females; make partnerships with other women; and put some topics such as children, family, women's health, violence and discrimination towards certain groups of population on the social agenda¹⁰.

Finally, social entrepreneurship is not solely about creating new ventures but also includes leadership. Importantly, while gender stereotypes associate leadership with men (the white male hero), recent research within the context of knowledge-based economies have shown that differing from industry-based economy, the current economic era requires new types of leadership skills, termed 'post-heroic leadership'. While traditional leadership is associated with such traits as individualism, control, assertiveness, and skills of advocacy and domination, the new paradigm emphasizes empathy, community, vulnerability, and skills of inquiry and collaboration.¹¹ These new traits work nicely with the social entrepreneurship which targets public good production rather than individual wealth and especially with women-led ventures, which are more likely to make decisions by consensus and pay more attention to questions linked to quality¹².

What we have discussed so far already and straightforwardly gives us an idea on how women have been contributing to development and what unique benefits we can gain from due recognition of such contributions. It should also be noted that the discourse of development itself is shifting from a one-way relationship between a powerful donor and a vulnerable recipient to a two-way conversation marked by collaboration, solidarity, and integration, as epitomized by the South-South philosophy. Women entrepreneurship can precisely provide the link that can tie in national to the global and community benefits to individual benefits, as such carving out a niche area that can sustain development in a dynamic way. In sum, the session highlights, first, women's key role and capacity in leading societal change and producing public good, and, second it highlights social entrepreneurship as a dynamic channel to empower women and advance development objectives.

4. The way forward: How to help female entrepreneurs to help other women

The link between female social entrepreneurship and social change has so far been widely underappreciated. While bringing this underappreciated role to public attention, the session also aims to bring about actionable insights that can identify challenges women face in becoming benefactors of development as well as possible solutions to those challenges. The

⁹ pg.15. Ibid

¹⁰ Humbert, A. L. (2012). Women as social entrepreneurs.

¹¹ Fletcher, J. K. (2004). The paradox of postheroic leadership: An essay on gender, power, and transformational change. *The leadership quarterly*, 15(5), 647-661.

¹² Humbert, A. L. (2012). Women as social entrepreneurs.

broader question which can underpin and inform this effort is: how do we help women leaders to help and contribute to their communities and to the world?

Some questions the session will raise, therefore, include but will not be limited to: policies that can facilitate the growth of social entrepreneurship and women's role and mobilization in it, the kind of research needed to facilitate women's role as benefactors and also to understand and fight gender norms regarding women role as leaders or innovators, the impact of family and work balance on female social entrepreneurship, and enabling policymakers as well as the public to recognize women's contributions to sustainable development through social entrepreneurship.

These conceptual questions discussion should also be accompanied by specific suggestions on how the south-south and triangular cooperation can contribute to and benefit from female social entrepreneurship, including identifying modalities, programs, and concrete actions.