



## Role of Social Entrepreneurs in Grassroots Development

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**Abstract** Social entrepreneurs play a crucial role in grassroots development by addressing social challenges through innovation, resourcefulness, and sustainable solutions. They act as catalysts for change in various sectors, including agriculture, health, education, environmental conservation, and community development. By combining entrepreneurial principles with social objectives, they create employment opportunities, improve livelihoods, and promote inclusive economic growth. This paper explores the impact of social entrepreneurs in grassroots development through case studies of K R Agro Farming and Centre for Improved Rural Health and Environmental Protection (CIRHEP). The findings highlight the significance of community engagement, sustainable practices, and innovation in driving socio-economic transformation. The study concludes that social entrepreneurs contribute significantly to rural development by fostering self-sufficiency, economic empowerment, and environmental sustainability.

**Keywords:** Social Entrepreneurship, Grassroots Development, Innovation, Sustainable Livelihoods, Community Engagement, Agriculture, Environmental Conservation.

### I Introduction

Social entrepreneurship is a growing field that combines innovation, social impact, and business principles to address critical societal challenges. Unlike traditional entrepreneurs who focus solely on profit, social entrepreneurs prioritize creating social value while ensuring financial



sustainability. They work in diverse areas such as poverty alleviation, education, healthcare, environmental conservation, and rural development, seeking long-term solutions to pressing social issues. At the grassroots level, social entrepreneurs play a transformative role by empowering communities, enhancing economic opportunities, and promoting sustainable development. They identify gaps in social services and introduce innovative approaches that benefit marginalized populations. By leveraging local resources and community participation, social entrepreneurs create sustainable solutions tailored to the unique needs of specific regions. This paper explores the role of social entrepreneurs in grassroots development, focusing on how they drive social change, improve livelihoods, and foster economic growth. The study presents case analyses of K R Agro Farming and the Centre for Improved Rural Health and Environmental Protection (CIRHEP) to illustrate the real-world impact of social entrepreneurship. These case studies highlight how innovation, community engagement, and sustainability contribute to long-term social and economic progress.

### 1.1 Objective

- This study examines the role of social entrepreneurs in grassroots development.
- It explores innovative strategies in agriculture, environment, and rural welfare.
- The impact is evaluated through case studies of K R Agro Farming and CIRHEP.

### 1.2 Methodology

The study employs a qualitative research approach, focusing on case study analysis to examine the role of social entrepreneurs in grassroots development. Primary data is collected through interviews and field observations, while secondary data is gathered from research articles, reports, and organizational records. The case studies of K R Agro Farming and CIRHEP are analyzed to understand their strategies, impact, and sustainability. Findings are interpreted to highlight best practices and key challenges in social entrepreneurship.

### 1.3 Review of Literature

#### **Social Entrepreneurship and Poverty Reduction**

**Md. Tota Miah (2024)** conducted a bibliometric analysis on social entrepreneurship and poverty reduction, revealing a significant rise in research interest since 2009. The study found that social enterprises play a crucial role in addressing economic disparities, particularly in underdeveloped



regions. Notably, countries like the UK, Spain, and the USA lead in research on social entrepreneurship, while South Asian and African countries lag behind. The study concluded that social enterprises act as effective models for social change by providing employment opportunities and financial inclusion to marginalized communities.

Similarly, **Mohammed and Ndulue (2017)** analyzed the impact of social entrepreneurship on poverty reduction in Nigeria. Their research highlighted the role of social enterprises in waste management, recycling initiatives, and community welfare programs. They found that social enterprises not only provided employment but also improved local environmental conditions, leading to sustainable poverty alleviation. The study emphasized that low-cost business models and resource-efficient strategies are key to successful social entrepreneurship in developing economies.

### **Social Innovation and Sustainable Development**

**Nchasi et al. (2022)** emphasized the growing importance of social entrepreneurship in social innovation and sustainable development. The study found that social enterprises contribute significantly to economic prosperity by addressing complex social problems through innovative solutions. The research also pointed out that social entrepreneurs are instrumental in achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in eradicating poverty and promoting economic equality. Their study suggested that social enterprises bridge the gap between economic growth and social welfare by integrating sustainability into business models.

**Earnest and Young (2014)** provided insights into the evolving role of social enterprises in Europe. The study observed that the privatization of public responsibilities had led to an increase in social enterprises, particularly in social services, employment training, and environmental conservation. The study noted a 12% increase in full-time employment within Dutch social enterprises between 2012 and 2014, demonstrating their growing significance. It concluded that social enterprises contribute to public welfare while reducing social expenditure, making them valuable partners in sustainable development.



### **Multidimensional Aspects of Poverty and Social Enterprises**

**Chzhen et al. (2018)** examined multidimensional poverty and its relationship with social entrepreneurship. Their study aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), emphasizing that poverty reduction requires a holistic approach beyond financial aid. They identified education, healthcare access, and community engagement as key factors that social entrepreneurs integrate into their models. The study highlighted that social enterprises strengthen the resilience of marginalized communities by addressing social and economic vulnerabilities simultaneously.

### **Entrepreneurial Models and Community Impact**

**Singh, Partap (2012)** defined social entrepreneurship as the application of entrepreneurial principles to solve social problems. The study emphasized that social entrepreneurs prioritize social impact alongside financial sustainability, distinguishing them from traditional businesses. It introduced the concept of international social entrepreneurship, where social ventures operate across national borders to address global challenges. The study recognized figures such as Muhammad Yunus, founder of Grameen Bank, as pioneers who demonstrated the potential of microfinance and social enterprises in poverty alleviation.

## **1.4 Conceptual Framework**

This study's conceptual framework examines the link between social entrepreneurship, grassroots development, and sustainable well-being. Social entrepreneurs drive change by identifying socio-economic challenges and implementing innovative, sustainable solutions. They integrate business principles with social objectives, creating employment, improving livelihoods, and fostering financial inclusion. Community participation ensures long-term sustainability through capacity-building and cooperative models. By addressing poverty, food security, and environmental conservation, social enterprises contribute to sustainable development. This framework is applied to analyze the case studies of K R Agro Farming and CIRHEP, showcasing their impact on grassroots transformation.

## **II Organic Farming System**



Organic farming is a sustainable agricultural practice that focuses on maintaining soil health, biodiversity, and ecological balance by avoiding synthetic inputs such as chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Instead, it relies on natural processes, including crop rotation, composting, biological pest control, and the use of organic manure to enhance soil fertility. Organic farming promotes environmentally friendly practices that reduce soil degradation, improve water retention, and encourage the natural ecosystem to thrive. It is a holistic approach that integrates traditional farming wisdom with modern ecological knowledge to ensure long-term agricultural sustainability.

### Need for Organic Farming

The growing concerns over soil degradation, water pollution, and health risks associated with chemical-intensive agriculture have highlighted the urgent need for organic farming. With the increasing global population, there is a demand for sustainable food production methods that do not harm the environment or human health. Organic farming helps in preserving soil fertility, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and promoting biodiversity. Additionally, consumers are becoming more health-conscious, leading to a rising preference for organic produce free from harmful chemicals. By adopting organic farming, farmers can ensure food security, economic stability, and environmental sustainability while meeting the long-term agricultural needs of future generations.

**Table 1 - Impact Analysis of Social Entrepreneurship on Grassroots Development**

Indicators	K R Agro Farming	CIRHEP
Focus Area	Sustainable agriculture & agribusiness	Environmental conservation & rural health
Key Activities	Organic farming, crop research, market linkages	Watershed development, reforestation, women empowerment
Employment Generation	500+ farmers & workers benefited	300+ community members employed in projects
Community Engagement	Farmer training, seed distribution, cooperative farming	Nature schools, SHGs, livelihood programs



Economic Impact	Increased farm income by 30%	Improved rural household income by 25%
Environmental Benefits	Reduced chemical fertilizer use, improved soil health	Increased groundwater levels, biodiversity conservation
Sustainability Measures	Crop rotation, organic inputs, relay cropping	Rainwater harvesting, sustainable farming practices
Challenges Faced	Market fluctuations, high initial costs	Limited funding, climate change impact

**Table 2: Comparative Analysis of Social Entrepreneurship Models**

Criteria	K R Agro Farming	CIRHEP
Founder(s)	Dr. Parameswaran	P.M. Mohan & K.A. Chandra
Year of Establishment	2010	2002
Primary Objective	Sustainable agricultural development	Environmental conservation & rural health
Geographical Coverage	Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh	Tamil Nadu (Madurai & Theni districts)
Key Beneficiaries	Farmers, agripreneurs, rural workers	Women, farmers, self-help groups, children
Core Activities	Organic farming, crop research, relay cropping	Watershed management, reforestation, sustainable livelihoods
Social Impact	Increased farm productivity, reduced chemical dependency	Improved water conservation, enhanced rural incomes
Economic Impact	30% rise in farmers' income, better market access	25% increase in household income, economic self-sufficiency
Environmental Impact	Reduced soil degradation, improved biodiversity	Increased groundwater levels, eco-friendly farming
Training & Capacity Building	Conducts farmer training programs	Nature schools, workshops for rural communities
Challenges	Market fluctuations, high production costs	Limited funding, climate change effects
Future Goals	Expand organic farming networks,	Scale up reforestation and climate



	introduce new crop varieties	adaptation programs
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**Table 3: Key Challenges and Solutions in Social Entrepreneurship**

Challenges	K R Agro Farming	CIRHEP	Proposed Solutions
Market Fluctuations	Unstable pricing for organic produce	Limited market access for eco-friendly products	Strengthen direct farmer-to-consumer networks, promote branding
High Initial Costs	Investment in organic inputs and R&D	Infrastructure for watershed and sustainability projects	Government subsidies, low-interest credit for entrepreneurs
Limited Awareness	Farmers' reluctance to adopt organic practices	Lack of knowledge about environmental conservation	Conduct awareness campaigns, workshops, and training
Climate Change Effects	Unpredictable rainfall affecting crop yield	Drought conditions impacting water conservation efforts	Implement climate-resilient farming techniques
Funding Constraints	Requires capital for farm expansion and research	Dependence on grants and donor funding	Explore public-private partnerships and crowdfunding
Sustainability of Initiatives	Need for long-term consumer demand for organic products	Ensuring continued community participation in conservation efforts	Develop self-sustaining business models, encourage community ownership

**Table 4: Measurable Outcomes of Social Entrepreneurship Initiatives**

Indicators	K R Agro Farming	CIRHEP	Overall Impact
Number of Beneficiaries	500+ farmers and agripreneurs	300+ rural families	Improved livelihoods and self-sufficiency



Employment Generation	200+ direct jobs, 300+ indirect jobs	150+ direct jobs, 200+ indirect jobs	Increased rural employment opportunities
Increase in Income (%)	30% rise in farm incomes	25% increase in rural household income	Improved economic stability
Environmental Impact	40% reduction in chemical fertilizer use	35% increase in groundwater levels	Enhanced sustainability and climate resilience
Training and Skill Development	1,000+ farmers trained in organic farming	800+ individuals trained in watershed and conservation techniques	Greater community knowledge and adoption of sustainable practices
Crop/Productivity Growth	25% increase in crop yield using organic methods	Improved soil fertility and reforestation outcomes	Higher agricultural productivity and ecological balance
Women Empowerment	100+ women-led farm initiatives	150+ women trained in income-generating activities	Strengthened gender-inclusive entrepreneurship
Community Engagement	75% of farmers engaged in cooperative farming	80% participation in conservation and education programs	Stronger community-driven development efforts

#### IV Case Study 1: K R Agro Farming – A Model for Sustainable Agriculture

##### Background

K R Agro Farming, founded by Dr. Parameswaran, is a pioneering agro-based enterprise focusing on organic farming, sustainable agricultural practices, and market linkages for small-scale farmers. Established in Tamil Nadu, the enterprise supports farmers in transitioning from chemical-intensive agriculture to eco-friendly, organic methods. The farm specializes in aggregatum (sambar) onions, drumsticks, and other high-value crops, integrating research-driven farming techniques with traditional knowledge.





### **Challenges Faced**

Initially, K R Agro Farming struggled with farmer reluctance to adopt organic practices, high costs of organic certification, and market fluctuations affecting price stability. Additionally, poor knowledge of optimal fertilizer application and water management techniques among farmers led to lower yields and inefficiencies.

### **Innovations and Impact**

Dr. Parameswaran introduced relay cropping techniques, improved organic fertilizers, and scientific pest management to enhance productivity while reducing dependency on synthetic inputs. The enterprise also launched farmer training programs, enabling 1,000+ farmers to adopt cost-effective and environmentally sustainable farming methods. By ensuring direct market access, the initiative increased farm incomes by 30% while promoting biodiversity conservation.

### **Key Takeaways**

- Successfully transitioned farmers to organic and eco-friendly agriculture.
- Created employment for 500+ farmers and enhanced rural income levels.
- Promoted soil health and sustainable farming techniques, reducing chemical dependency by 40%.
- Established a strong market network to ensure stable pricing for organic produce.

## **Case Study 2: CIRHEP – Community-Led Environmental and Livelihood Development**

### **Background**

The Centre for Improved Rural Health and Environmental Protection (CIRHEP) is a non-governmental organization (NGO) working in Tamil Nadu to promote environmental conservation, watershed management, and sustainable rural livelihoods. Founded by P.M. Mohan and K.A. Chandra, CIRHEP focuses on improving water resources, organic farming, and women empowerment.

### **Challenges Faced**

The organization faced severe drought conditions, water mismanagement, and low community awareness about the importance of reforestation and watershed conservation. Additionally,



funding limitations and dependence on external donors posed obstacles to long-term sustainability.

### **Innovations and Impact**

CIRHEP implemented a watershed development program, restoring 10+ micro-watersheds that significantly improved groundwater levels and agricultural productivity. Through Nature Schools and women-led Self-Help Groups (SHGs), CIRHEP empowered over 150+ women and educated children on environmental conservation. These initiatives increased household income by 25% and created sustainable employment for 300+ community members.

### **Key Takeaways**

- Restored water resources through effective watershed conservation, benefiting thousands.
- Enhanced rural incomes by introducing sustainable livelihoods and organic farming.
- Empowered women through SHGs, ensuring financial independence and community resilience.
- Increased awareness and participation in environmental conservation projects.

## **V Findings and Discussions**

### **5.1 Findings**

#### **❖ Economic Impact and Livelihood Generation**

- K R Agro Farming increased farmers' incomes by 30%, demonstrating that organic and sustainable farming practices enhance profitability.
- CIRHEP's livelihood programs improved household earnings by 25%, particularly through women-led Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and employment in watershed management.
- Both initiatives created direct and indirect employment opportunities, reducing rural unemployment.

#### **❖ Environmental Sustainability and Climate Resilience**

- K R Agro Farming reduced chemical fertilizer usage by 40%, promoting sustainable soil health and biodiversity conservation.



- CIRHEP's watershed projects restored groundwater levels by 35%, proving that environmental interventions can enhance agricultural sustainability.
- Adoption of organic and eco-friendly farming techniques resulted in better long-term soil fertility and climate adaptation strategies.

#### ❖ **Community Engagement and Social Transformation**

- Both enterprises prioritized community-driven approaches, ensuring long-term sustainability.
- K R Agro Farming trained over 1,000 farmers, fostering knowledge-sharing and best agricultural practices.
- CIRHEP's Nature Schools educated rural children on environmental conservation, promoting future sustainability practices.
- Women's participation in decision-making and income generation increased, boosting gender-inclusive entrepreneurship.

#### ❖ **Challenges and Solutions**

- **Market Fluctuations:** Farmers faced price instability in organic markets, which K R Agro Farming addressed by creating direct market linkages.
- **Limited Awareness:** CIRHEP tackled the lack of environmental knowledge by launching awareness campaigns and workshops.
- **Funding Constraints:** Both organizations faced financial challenges, requiring public-private partnerships and alternative funding models for long-term impact.

### **5.2 Discussions**

- Innovative strategies such as organic farming and watershed conservation have proven effective in improving rural livelihoods.
- Community participation enhances the sustainability of social enterprises, ensuring long-term benefits.
- Despite financial and market-related challenges, strategic interventions such as skill training, cooperative farming, and direct market access improve resilience and scalability.

## **VI Conclusion**



This study demonstrates the vital role of social entrepreneurs in grassroots development, focusing on the impact of K R Agro Farming and CIRHEP. Both initiatives have significantly contributed to economic empowerment, environmental conservation, and community well-being through innovative and sustainable approaches. K R Agro Farming has successfully promoted organic and eco-friendly farming, increasing farmers' income, enhancing soil fertility, and reducing chemical dependency. Meanwhile, CIRHEP has focused on watershed conservation, rural livelihoods, and community education, leading to improved groundwater levels and socio-economic resilience.

The findings suggest that social enterprises can drive rural transformation by integrating business principles with social objectives. However, challenges such as market fluctuations, funding constraints, and awareness gaps must be addressed through policy support, public-private partnerships, and enhanced community participation. Overall, the study confirms that social entrepreneurship is a key driver of sustainable development, providing long-term solutions to poverty, unemployment, and environmental challenges. Expanding such models across various rural regions can further enhance inclusive growth, economic stability, and ecological balance, making social entrepreneurship a powerful tool for positive change in society.

## **VII Future Recommendations**

To enhance the impact and sustainability of social entrepreneurship in grassroots development, several key strategies should be adopted. Strengthening market linkages through direct-to-consumer networks, cooperatives, and e-commerce platforms can help stabilize organic product pricing and expand market access. Financial support and investment should be prioritized through public-private partnerships (PPP), subsidies, and low-interest loans to help rural entrepreneurs scale their businesses. Additionally, capacity building and skill development programs focused on organic farming, climate resilience, and digital literacy can empower social entrepreneurs with the necessary knowledge and tools for growth.

Policy and institutional support is crucial, with governments implementing tax benefits, grants, and incubation centers to foster innovation in rural enterprises. Sustainability efforts should emphasize agroforestry, regenerative farming, and watershed conservation to ensure long-term



environmental benefits. Moreover, community engagement and inclusion should be strengthened by supporting women-led self-help groups (SHGs) and encouraging youth participation in social enterprises. By implementing these recommendations, social entrepreneurship can achieve greater economic impact, financial sustainability, and long-term success, ultimately driving inclusive and sustainable rural development.

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