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ijirset@gmail.com



www.ijirset.com

Entrepreneurship And Society

Dr. Ch. V. Rama Krishna Rao

Professor & HOD, Dept. of MBA, Rise Krishna Sai Prakasam Group of Institutions, Ongole, AP, India

ABSTRACT: Entrepreneurship has emerged as a transformative force in addressing complex social issues in India, complementing traditional approaches of government policy and non-governmental interventions. This paper explores the impact of entrepreneurial initiatives on pressing social challenges such as unemployment, poverty alleviation, and gender inequality, access to education, healthcare delivery, and environmental sustainability. By fostering innovation, generating employment, and promoting inclusive business models, entrepreneurs have played a pivotal role in bridging socio-economic gaps across both urban and rural landscapes. The study analyzes case examples of social enterprises, start-ups, and grassroots innovations to highlight how entrepreneurship not only contributes to economic growth but also drives social empowerment and community development. Findings suggest that entrepreneurial ventures in India are increasingly adopting a “double bottom line” approach—balancing profit with social value creation—thereby reshaping the paradigm of development. The paper concludes that entrepreneurship, when supported by robust policy frameworks, financial inclusion, and ecosystem enablers, has the potential to become a sustainable driver for solving social issues and achieving equitable development in India.

KEYWORDS: Entrepreneurship, Start up, Society and Financial Inclusion.

I. INTRODUCTION

India has made substantial economic progress in recent decades, yet social indicators such as poverty, gender inequality, unemployment, access to education and healthcare, and environmental degradation continue to pose major challenges. Entrepreneurship particularly social entrepreneurship offers promising responses by innovating locally, creating sustainable livelihoods, empowering marginalized groups, and delivering essential services.

II. SOCIAL INDICATORS IN INDIA

Here are some recent statistics that illustrate the social landscape which entrepreneurship must address.

Indicator	Statistic / Trend	Implication
Multidimensional Poverty	Multidimensional poverty fell from 29.17% in 2013-14 to 11.28% in 2022-23 (NITI Aayog). Over 24.82 crore people escaped multidimensional poverty in those 9 years.	Large progress, but over 110 million people remain under multiple deprivations. There's scope for entrepreneurial interventions in health, education, living standards.
Female Labour Force Participation	Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR) rose to 37.0% in 2022-23 , up about 4.2 percentage points.	More women are engaging in work, but still substantial gaps exist compared to men. Entrepreneurial efforts can help provide more flexible, accessible opportunities, especially for women.
Unemployment	Newly released monthly unemployment data shows an overall unemployment rate of 5.1% in April 2025 for individuals aged 15 and above.	Indicates some improvement, but underlines that job creation remains a challenge. Many unemployed are likely to be youth or low-skilled; entrepreneurship can help by generating local jobs, informal income sources.

These figures show clear movement in positive directions (poverty reduction, female participation) but also indicate significant remaining gaps. Accordingly, entrepreneurship can play a bridging role.

III. CASE EXAMPLES AND TRENDS IN INDIAN SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Here are some examples and trends in India's social entrepreneurship that align with the data above:

- **Self-Help Groups (SHGs) / Rural Livelihood Missions:** In many states, SHGs have enabled women in rural areas to organize enterprises, access credit, undertake production of goods and services, and link to markets. For example, in Varanasi, 1.38 lakh (138,000) rural women were empowered via ~11,000 SHGs, with support for marketing outlets (Prerna Mart etc).
- **Employment-Linked Incentive Schemes:** The Indian Union government has approved a large (~₹1 trillion) Employment-Linked Incentive (ELI) plan to create ~35 million jobs over two years beginning mid-2025. Such schemes create demand opportunities which social entrepreneurs can supply to.

IV. HOW ENTREPRENEURSHIP ALIGNS WITH SOCIAL NEEDS: ANALYSIS

This section links the data with how entrepreneurship is or could be impactful.

- **Bridging Poverty Gaps:** With over 24.8 crore people lifted out of multidimensional poverty in nine years, there remain tens of crores still deprived. Social enterprises focusing on basic needs (clean water, sanitation, health, education) can be cost-effective modes of reducing deprivations.
- **Gender Inclusion:** Rising female labour participation (37%) opens up space for female-led entrepreneurial ventures. But many women are still outside the formal workforce. Business models offering flexible working hours, work near home, or supporting caretaking responsibilities may help.
- **Job Creation in Local Contexts:** As formal job creation remains a bottleneck and unemployment is 5.1%, entrepreneurship (especially small enterprises, microenterprises) in rural and semi-urban zones can provide alternative employment routes.
- **Innovation in Delivery of Services:** Given infrastructural deficits (healthcare access, education quality, clean energy etc.), entrepreneurs using tech, local models, or community participation can innovate in service delivery.

V. BARRIERS AND CONSTRAINTS SPECIFIC TO INDIA

- **Access to Capital:** Small social enterprises often face difficulty raising finance from formal institutions. Impact investors are growing, but still not enough for mass scaling, especially in rural areas.
- **Regulation & Legal Recognition:** There's no universally adopted legal form for social enterprises with dual objectives (profit + social). Tax and regulatory regimes often favour pure profit or non-profit models, making hybrid or social venture models harder to structure.
- **Skill Gaps:** Many entrepreneurs lack management, financial, marketing, digital skills, especially in poorer or rural areas. Training and mentoring infrastructure is often concentrated in big cities.
- **Cultural & Social Norms:** For instance, women may not always be allowed by family norms to travel or to work outside home. Caste, language, and regional disparities also affect access to markets and finance.
- **Infrastructure & Connectivity:** Poor internet, unreliable power, lack of transport make scaling or even starting up difficult in remote or lagging districts.

VI. POLICY AND ECOSYSTEM ENABLERS IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT

Given the data and challenges, the following enablers are particularly relevant in India:

1. **Government Incentives & Schemes**
 - Continue and expand programmes like ELI (Employment-Linked Incentives) that create demand and make entrepreneurship more viable.
 - Strengthen schemes that support SHGs, rural livelihood missions, and public procurement policies favouring social enterprises or microenterprises.
2. **Financial Inclusion & Impact Investment Growth**
 - Use of blended finance models, microfinance, low-interest loans, grants for social goals.
 - Support from CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) funds to social entrepreneurs for scaling operations.

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3. Capacity Building

- Expand incubators, mentorship programs in tier-2/3 cities, rural areas.
- Training for women entrepreneurs, artisan clusters, digital skills.

4. Market Linkages & Digital Access

- Use e-commerce, online marketplaces, mobile platforms to connect rural producers to national/international markets.
- Improve infrastructure: broadband, transport, power.

5. Legal / Regulatory Clarity

- Formal recognition of social enterprise legal forms.
- Tax benefits or subsidies for double-bottom-line ventures.
- Simplify procedures for registration, licensing, compliance, especially for small and social enterprises.

6. Metrics & Monitoring

- Use data like the National MPI (Multidimensional Poverty Index) to monitor where social deprivation is highest, target interventions there.
- Require social enterprises to measure social outcomes (health, education, standard of living etc.), not only financial returns.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above, here are specific recommendations for strengthening entrepreneurship's role in social transformation in India:

- **Targeted Entrepreneurship Programmes in High-Poverty States / Regions:** Since states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh have shown high numbers of people escaping poverty but still high levels of deprivation, programs there could focus more on social business incubation, support infrastructure, market access.
- **Women-Centric Entrepreneurial Interventions:** Given FLFPR at ~37%, push for more women-led enterprises; ensure access to credit, safe workspace, childcare, flexible working models.
- **Youth Entrepreneurship & Skill Development:** With unemployment still an issue, vocational and entrepreneurial skills training for youth in rural/semi-urban areas is essential.
- **Technology Leverage:** Tele-education, tele-health, clean energy solutions; digital platforms that reduce intermediaries and geographical challenges.
- **Public-Private Partnerships (PPP):** Collaborations among governments, NGOs, social enterprises, private sector to scale solutions, share risks, and integrate infrastructure.
- **Focus on Sustainability & Scaling:** Design business models that generate some revenue plan for after external funding ends; build replicability.

VIII. CONCLUSION

India's social indicators show encouraging movement multidimensional poverty has been reduced significantly; women are more engaged in the workforce, etc. However, large gaps remain. Entrepreneurship has strong potential to fill those gaps through innovation, inclusivity, local engagement, and scalable models. But for that potential to be fully realized, supportive policies, finance, capacity building, market access, and infrastructure are needed. With those enablers, entrepreneurial initiatives can become sustained drivers of equitable development across India.

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