

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURIAL
BEHAVIOR OF KEY
STAKEHOLDERS: SOCIAL
TRANSFORMATION EFFORTS
THROUGH PARTICIPATORY
IRRIGATION MANAGEMENT (PIM)
IN BATA-ATHA CANAL AREA,
WALawe IRRIGATION SCHEME,
SOUTHERN SRI LANKA

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ABSTRACT

An understanding of the social entrepreneurial behavior of key stakeholders in Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM) is of vital importance to the socioeconomic growth of a country. The term social entrepreneurship or social enterprise is relatively new to Sri Lanka just as it is with many other developing countries. Social entrepreneurs are those who solve social and environmental problems that hinder social inclusion, economic integration, and sustainable development. Though many entrepreneurs are operating across the different agricultural sectors for many years, the exact nature of social entrepreneurial behavior among them is still unknown. As an agricultural economy-based country, PIM policy encompassing many strategies has been

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implemented in Sri Lanka to eradicate poverty and hunger in society. Therefore, this chapter aims to focus on the socioentrepreneurship of five key stakeholders in PIM and to provide empirical evidence of their activities in the area of the Bata-atha branch canal in the Walawe irrigation scheme, Sri Lanka, where PIM has been implemented. This chapter finds that the establishment of the Bata-atha farm by the Ministry of Agricultural Development and the irrigation management of Bata-atha tail-end branch canal under the organizational efforts of the Agunukolapelessa block office of Mahaweli Authority of Sri Lanka presents a good example of an innovative and supportive farm management system that contributes to significant improvements in the socioeconomic situation of the vulnerable farming community. Moreover, this chapter shows that the collective action of active farmer organizations and successful sole proprietors in the area constitute social entrepreneurial behavior that contributes to the social transformation. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications this has for the irrigated agricultural sector and the need for further research to identify the potential for continued development by fostering the practices of socio-entrepreneurship in the country.

Keywords: Farmer organizations; irrigated agriculture; key stakeholders; participatory irrigation management; social entrepreneurial behavior; social transformation; sole proprietors; Sri Lanka

INTRODUCTION

Scholars have defined the term “social entrepreneur” in different ways. Studies on social entrepreneurship by [Seelos and Mair \(2004\)](#) and [Zahra, Gedajlovic, Neubaum, and Shulman \(2009\)](#) point out that there is no precise and clear definition of “social entrepreneurship.” According to [Bloom and Chatterji \(2009, p. 114\)](#), the term social entrepreneur means “individuals who start-up and lead new organizations or programs dedicated to mitigating or eliminating a social problem, by deploying strategies that differ from those that have been used to address the problem in the past.” Social entrepreneurs always strive to design unique but socially acceptable strategies through innovative, entrepreneurial business models to create social value ([Seelos & Mair, 2004](#)) and social wealth, or find solutions to complex social issues ([Zahra et al., 2009](#)). The social entrepreneur is motivated partly by a desire for profit and partly by an urge for social reform ([Seelos & Mair, 2004](#)). Social entrepreneurs seek opportunities to bring about social change and progress, as they wish to go beyond merely generating profits like traditional commercial entrepreneurs ([Zahra et al., 2009](#)).

Based on the abovementioned definitions, a social entrepreneur can be simply defined as one who invests in, develops, and implements a new strategy to solve an existing social or environmental problem at the local, national, and in some cases, international level, through a business or organization, mainly focusing on social transformation rather than on making a profit. Moreover, the concept of