

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR: A CHANGE AGENT, CONVERTING SOCIAL ISSUES IN TO OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE.

SNEHA- A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Worldwide humans die due to lack of resources caused by poverty. Climate-change (provoked by humanity) increases. The number of refugees has grown in 2019 significantly. These are only some examples of the problems the generation of today and tomorrow are facing. There are different ways of meeting these global challenges. While nonprofit organization serve the community in significant ways, their heavy reliance on philanthropic and government funding is increasingly not sustainable, especially in the wake of economic downturns. Social entrepreneurship has emerged as a complex yet promising organizational form in which market-based methods are used to address seemingly intractable social issues, but its motivations remain under theorized

This paper is based on a case study where the author tries to analyze different challenges relating to Maternal and Newborn Health and how a social entrepreneur take it as an opportunity to solve those issues and serve the society

KEY WORD- Social Entrepreneur, Challenges Of Maternal And Newborn Health, Sneha

1. INTRODUCTION

Social entrepreneurship offers opportunities to improve society using practical, innovative, and sustainable ways. A social entrepreneur is an individual or organization who seeks out to find solutions surrounding social issues environment fair trade, education, health, and human rights. Social concerns are conducting more than financial or market opportunities. It has to be financially sustainable. Entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship also maintain employment opportunities. A social enterprise also facilitates employment for disadvantaged groups. There are niche opportunities for social entrepreneurs which are not suitable for entrepreneurs. Social

initiatives represent a concept for the access to services for disadvantaged groups and protection for the environment.

In 1989, Dr. Armida Fernandez set up Asia's first milk bank at Sion hospital. She then went on to start **SNEHA** in the early 1990s with the aim to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality and gender-based violence. Routinely treating low-income families coming in with sick, premature infants, she wanted to develop sustainable interventions that would go beyond providing stop-gap solutions.

Dr. Fernandez then decided to transition out of her role at SNEHA – a feat very few founders manage. After retirement, the serial entrepreneur set up a palliative care clinic, and continues to actively participate in the improvement of public health services

Ms. Armida Fernandez founded the Society for Nutrition, Education, Health, and Action for Women and Children (SNEHA) to achieve her mission of saving lives of newborn babies. She reorganized the limited resources of the Indian public health system in order to ensure quality maternal and neonatal health care for low-income families

2. Objective of the study

1. To examine the social innovation developed by the social entrepreneur
2. To discuss the concepts that emerged from the data analysis.
3. To summarize the concepts and illustrate the relationships between them

3. Research methodology

Research Methodology is the systematic, theoretical analysis of the methods applied to a field of study. It comprises the theoretical analysis of the body of methods and principles associated with a branch of knowledge. Typically, it encompasses concepts such as paradigm, theoretical model, phases and quantitative or qualitative techniques.

A methodology does not set out to provide solutions it is therefore, not the same as a method. Instead, a methodology offers the theoretical underpinning for understanding which method, set of methods, or best practices can be applied to a specific case, for example, to calculate a specific result.

In the present article a case study method has been used. An organization Named “SNEHA” has been taken as case study for this article.

The case study method is a very popular form of qualitative analysis and involves a careful and complete observation of a social unit, be that unit a person, a family, an institution, a cultural group or even the entire community. It is a method of study in depth rather than breadth. The case study places more emphasis on the full analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their interrelations. The case study deals with the processes that take place and their interrelationship. Thus, case study is essentially an intensive investigation of the particular unit under consideration. The object of the case study method is to locate the factors that account for the behavior patterns of the given unit as an integrated totality.

4. Description of social innovations

One of SNEHA's major programs is the Maternal and Newborn Health programme which was designed to influence the government to provide better access and services to mothers and infants in slum communities. Ms. Fernandez has built collaborations between different public health institutions and has introduced a city-wide referral system for pregnant mothers between hospitals, maternity homes, and health posts to ensure quality treatment and survival of mothers and infants. SNEHA also works with health care providers to change the attitudes and behaviour of staff members towards low-income clients. Moreover, mothers are educated regarding the best practices to be followed during and after the pregnancy and receive training on how to use the referral system, and to become informed and responsible caregivers for their babies by being able to identify maternal and new born health problems. Another program of SNEHA is the

Prevention of Violence against Women & Children Program. SNEHA has helped slum communities to build empowered women's groups and offers, in addition, intervention and counselling services for women and children facing violence. Other programmes address child health and nutrition, sexual health and reproductive health, and livelihood generation. Table below summarises the major social innovations created by Ms. Fernandez.

Social innovation	Stakeholders and people concerned	Social value created
1. City-wide referral system	Pregnant women and mothers, hospitals, maternity homes, health posts	Health of mothers and babies
2. Prevention of violence programmes	Women, mothers, and children	Fostering bodily integrity

Table: Armida Fernandez – social innovations

SNEHA reports that more than 3000 women have accessed health services at the antenatal health posts to date. And more than 800 doctors, public health nurses, auxiliary nurse midwives and outreach staff have been trained in clinical and behavioral skills. 548,000 people have been reached via campaigns to educate them on violence as a human rights issue.

5. Emerging concepts from the within-case analysis

➤ **Relentless social innovating**

The case study shows that the social entrepreneur is continuously engaged in inventing and developing solutions to problems. In fact, three major innovation phases can be distinguished. The first phase spans over the time that the social entrepreneur worked in the hospital as a paediatrician. In this phase, the social entrepreneur introduced solutions to existing problems within the hospital itself. The major problem in the hospital, according to the social entrepreneur, was the high death rate of sick newborn and premature babies due to infections. According to the social entrepreneur, seven out of ten sick premature babies died on an average initially. Some

strategies to reduce the rate of infections and, therefore, the high death rate were as simple as shifting a washbasin into the premature unit. Other strategies were more intricate and innovative such as starting the first human milk bank in order to avoid infections from bottled milk. Another source of infections that the social entrepreneur identified were the incubators that were used to keep babies warm. Instead of using these incubators, which not only provided warmth but also contained a humidifier, and, therefore, served as a fertile ground for bacteria to flourish, the social entrepreneur suggested the use of table lamps and the application of oil on the skin of babies to keep them warm. Another problem the social entrepreneur solved was the lack of nurses in the hospitals. She did this by bringing mothers into the ward to take care of their own babies in order to ensure improved care for each baby. The different strategies together resulted in a drop in the death rate of premature sick infants to one or two out of ten from the initial rate of seven out of ten.

The social entrepreneur soon realized that improving the conditions in the hospital alone was not enough to save the lives of infants. She wanted to prevent these babies from falling ill in the first place and decided that she had to move her attention from the hospital to the slums where the babies were born and actually fell sick. This shift of focus to a deeper level of the problem marks the second innovation phase. The organization SNEHA was established in this phase, and the social entrepreneur developed new techniques for educating slum-dwelling mothers in newborn care and in how to seek help from hospitals. The third innovation phase began when the social entrepreneur started to not only work with the community but also with the hospitals in order to improve the quality of maternal and newborn care. It was in this phase that the social entrepreneur and her organization started building a city-wide referral system through which hospitals, communities, and other public health care providers could cooperate with each other.

The case study shows that the major social innovations such as the city-wide referral system emerged from a stream of innovations. Hence, the innovation pattern of Armida Fernandez is characterized by the continuous solving of problems which eventually lead to the development of

a major social innovation. This on-going process of innovation was driven by the social entrepreneur's strong mission to save the lives of infants.

➤ **Getting ideas through immersion**

It is suggested that a major source of ideas for social innovation lies in the social entrepreneur's immersion in the subject for many years. For designing impactful solutions, it was necessary for Ms. Fernandez to have the knowledge about the root-causes of the problem.

Her direct interaction with mothers in slums acquainted her with their problems regarding access to public health services. For example, the insensitive and apathetic treatment of indigent patients in hospitals by the hospital staff has resulted in a negative attitude towards hospitals among poor mothers. Also, being immersed in the subject for many years as a doctor, on the one hand, and as a social worker on the other hand, Ms. Fernandez had excellent knowledge about the public health care system regarding its drawbacks and its underused resources. Hence, a precondition for developing a city-wide referral system was to have knowledge about opportunities within the system, which was in turn possible only because she had been immersed in the problem for several years. What drives the immersion of the social entrepreneur is her mission to save the lives of babies which is, in turn, connected to spiritual and life-purpose aspects, and the joy that she derives in following her mission.

➤ **Mission and spirituality**

Ms. Fernandez got immersed and stayed immersed in the subject because she is highly committed to her mission. Several times during the interview she explicitly states her mission:

*All my research topics for students are 'how can I save babies in my country' [...]
So all my life I was looking at innovations that would save babies in our country of
the poorest and the people who are the most deprived.*

The social entrepreneur felt the calling for saving lives ever since her childhood, which was one of the reasons why she took up the profession of a paediatrician.

I think it is somewhere deep within me. You know, when you take up the subject of medicine, deep inside your... You know, from my childhood I wanted to save lives.

For her, her mission is very much connected to an emotional and spiritual level. In explaining the difference between her and other doctors who do not bring about such change, the social entrepreneur emphasizes the importance of feeling very strongly about what one is doing.

So I think what we feel very strongly somewhere deep in your heart, you have to feel very strongly about whatever you're doing.

This “feeling strongly” to bring about positive change shapes the intense mission feeling of the social entrepreneur. The statement also shows that the level of affect and emotions are very important for the social entrepreneur and it influences her commitment to her mission. The social entrepreneur also specifies the location of that feeling: “somewhere deep in your heart”. It is suggested that “deep in your heart” can mean two things. Firstly, it can refer to the heart as the seat of emotions and feelings; secondly, it can refer to the heart as the seat of spirituality, the connectedness with creation, goodness, and virtue. The social entrepreneur points further into the spiritual direction by stating that the reason why you are here is to bring about change.

And I think that is the depth of being in the... one thing to bring about that change because that's why you're, that's the reason why you are there.

This statement shows that she has the faith that there is a purpose of one's being in the world and that there is also a kind of destiny connected to one's existence. For her, it means that she perceives her purpose in life to follow her mission and to save the lives of babies.

➤ **The joy in fulfilling one's mission**

Another driving force for staying immersed in the problem solving process is the intense emotion of joy experienced upon fulfilling one's mission. The social entrepreneur explains that she derives immense joy out of her work, even though she does not earn anything from it and even feels partly ashamed for not earning.

Every minute of the time I spend in my hospital or in SNEHA I enjoyed. Every single minute [...]I've never earned. You know my salary is a, I feel ashamed to talk, when I was in government service and after I left government service for SNEHA I did not earn anything at all, the last twelve years. But I wouldn't change my life for anything. Every moment that I spent, ... I really tell you it's an enriching time.

The social entrepreneur continues by stating that she feels that people have a wrong concept about social work and her work in particular. They are in awe of persons like her, who are seen as extremely hard working and self-sacrificing. But Ms. Fernandez makes the point that it is not self-sacrifice for her at all.

It's not that, it's many people think 'oh you're doing social work, you're working so much, you're working in slums'. They want to put you on a pedestal. But I think it's wrong. You know, when you're doing this work, you do it because you yourself derive so much out of it. You derive so much pleasure and happiness. It cannot be compared to other things. And therefore you work for a very selfish, I always say, I work because I'm selfish, because I enjoy what I'm doing.

For her it is that the work brings pleasure and happiness. "It cannot be compared to other things" emphasizes the amount of positive emotions her engagement with the work creates. She feels happy with what she does and is fully enjoying it. In her opinion she does the alleged "self-less work" for herself because she derives joy out of it.

➤ **Compassion and empathy as sources of creativity**

The social entrepreneur views that creative thinking which leads to social innovations is rooted in the perceived urgency and necessity to find solutions to a social problem. However, being able to perceive the situation as urgent and feeling emotionally disturbed by the situation necessitates the existence of empathy and compassion, i.e., to be able to feel with and for others.

When asked about from where she gets her ideas, the social entrepreneur replies:

So I think, when you say, where you got the ideas. Ideas come out of experiences and out of successful experiences. Then how do you get the experiences? When you are forced to think out of the box.

The social entrepreneur explains that ideas come very predictably from experiences. And this, in turn, comes from when one is “forced” to think differently. The word “forced” shows the urgency and the necessity that she perceives with regard to the problem. It seems to imply that she or one has no other choice than being creative in finding solutions. The social entrepreneur further explains that urgency facilitates creativity and unleashes higher brain functions.

So I think innovations, entrepreneurship comes out of a necessity. You know, when you're pushed to the wall and you have to deliver, your brain starts thinking faster. What can we do to save babies lives?

The language is very vivid (“when you’re pushed to the wall and you have to deliver”) and shows that the social entrepreneur perceives the problem as absolutely urgent. “Being pushed to the wall” implies that inaction is not a possibility – something has to be done. The statement of the social entrepreneur also shows that she is convinced that, if the situation demands action, she can deliver appropriate solutions since the urgency of the problem also increases one’s ability in solving the problem. This feeling of urgency can be understood as an instance of emotional disturbance triggered by the existence of the social problem.

So out of ten babies, sick and premature babies, seven died. And that was very upsetting and I said ‘what is it what we can do to save these babies’ lives?

The social entrepreneur states that the situation was very “upsetting” and may imply things such as worries, disappointment, sadness, and anger. It was out of this emotional disturbance, this perceived urgency of the problem, that the desire to change the situation arose. It is suggested that this feeling with and for others which not only creates emotional disturbances due to others’ suffering but also the feeling of utmost urgency to change the situation can be subsumed under the concepts of compassion and empathy. Hence, it is the social entrepreneur’s compassion and

empathy for mothers and babies which creates emotional disturbance, the desire to change the situation and, finally, the feeling of urgency which, in turn, makes her think more creatively and find innovative solutions.

➤ **Overcoming resistance**

The social entrepreneur states that she often faced resistance towards the changes she intended to introduce in the hospital. However, it was only by overcoming these obstacles that she was able to introduce innovations.

But the gynaecologists objected, they said 'No baths for the baby? Babies will ... this will happen, that will happen'. And then the administration, the administration said 'We're throwing away expensive incubators? And where will we buy?' So, to do every, all these changes, I mean, it was sometimes a battle [...] Sometimes it would take weeks or even months to bring about one change.

It was her persistence and the importance she gave to her mission that made her overcome resistance and obstacles. She was supported in her endeavour by the head of the department who was convinced of the effectiveness of her solutions when shown evidence.

But I had the head of the department supporting me because there was evidence. I was showing them evidence why am I doing this and, therefore, I could go ahead and do whatever.

Resistance came also in the form of ridicule for unconventional solutions that the social entrepreneur suggested. For example, the social entrepreneur suggested to get rid of the incubators which were a proven source of infection and instead to follow the old Indian custom of applying oil on the skin of the babies to keep them warm.

People were laughing at me. They said, you know, people are in intensive care, people are going forward and I'm going backward in the times.

It can be, therefore, concluded that the ability to overcome resistance is a crucial element in introducing social innovations.

6. Summary of concepts and their relationships

To summarize, it was due to a strong feeling of mission, spirituality, and the joy in fulfilling one's mission which made the social entrepreneur get involved and immersed in the subject. Being immersed in the subject for many years proved to be important for designing impactful solutions by helping her to gain knowledge about the root-causes of the problem and knowledge about opportunities for solutions. Being immersed in the subject also helped the social entrepreneur to relentlessly invent solutions. The creativity for finding innovative solutions was fostered by the social entrepreneur's compassion and empathy which, in turn, created not only emotional disturbance but also a strong feeling of urgency which gave her the willpower and energy to search for solutions. The social entrepreneur had to cope with obstacles and resistance to change in order to successfully implement solutions and innovations. Figure below illustrates the concepts and their relationships.

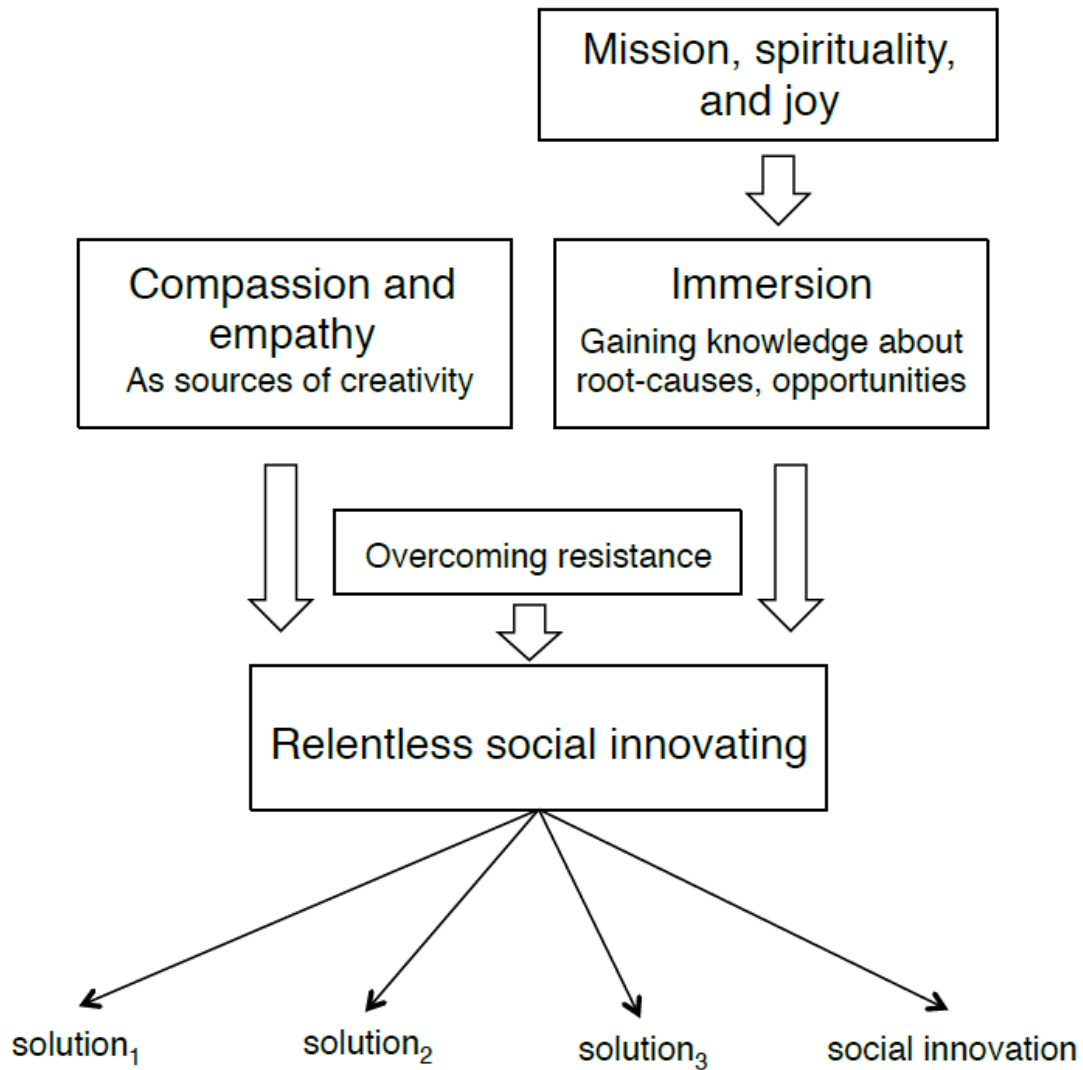


Figure: Within-case analysis of Armida Fernandez

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