# The Role of Social Entrepreneurship in Environmental Conservation: Challenges, Strategies, and Sustainability

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#### ABSTRACT

Social entrepreneurship is an innovative approach to addressing environmental problems by integrating economic, social and ecological aspects. Conservation-based business models implemented by various organizations have proven their effectiveness to support environmental conservation and improve community welfare. The implementation of social entrepreneurship faces various challenges, such as limited funding, regulatory barriers, and lack of public awareness of sustainability practices. This research aims to analyze the role of social entrepreneurship in environmental conservation and identify key challenges and strategies to improve its effectiveness. A literature study approach was used in this research to examine various social business models that have been successfully implemented in various sectors and countries. The results show that the main strategies to improve the effectiveness of social entrepreneurship include innovation in business models, multisectoral collaboration, strengthening entrepreneurial capacity, and adoption of environmentally friendly technologies. The government's role in creating supportive policies and increasing public literacy on conservation issues are important factors in the sustainability of social entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurship can be an effective solution to achieve environmentally sustainable development with a more strategic approach and support from various parties.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Environmental degradation in recent decades has become a global problem that requires innovative and sustainable solutions. Over-exploitation of natural resources has led to biodiversity loss, climate change, and water and air pollution that threaten human well-being. This environmental crisis cannot be solved solely by government policy approaches or traditional conservation efforts. The concept of social entrepreneurship aims to combine business objectives with positive social and environmental impacts. Social entrepreneurship is oriented towards economic profit, and creating innovative solutions to address pressing social and environmental problems (Fhiri et al., 2021).

One tangible example of the application of social entrepreneurship in environmental conservation is the growing conservation entrepreneurship movement in various industry sectors. Social entrepreneurship in conservation aims to manage natural resources sustainably with innovative business models. A study conducted by Buschke (2015)

highlights how social entrepreneurship can create new approaches to environmental protection through a combination of business strategies and conservation technologies. For example, many initiatives are adopting community-based ecotourism schemes, where local communities are empowered to safeguard ecosystems while earning income from sustainable tourism. This model has been implemented in various protected areas in Africa and Latin America, with results showing improvements in habitat sustainability and the well-being of local communities.

Social entrepreneurship also plays an important role in waste management and carbon footprint reduction. A study conducted by Mukhlynina (2021) shows that environment-based businesses that apply the circular economy concept can have a significant impact on reducing pollution and improving resource efficiency. One example is a social enterprise that develops technology to recycle plastic waste into high-value products, thereby reducing environmental pollution and creating jobs for disadvantaged communities.

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One of the main challenges facing social entrepreneurship in environmental conservation is access to sustainable funding. Unlike conventional businesses that benefit from the market directly, social enterprises must rely on a combination of business revenues, donations, grants, as well as government or international agency support. The study by Konda et al. (2015) shows that many social entrepreneurship initiatives face barriers to stable financial support, as most investors are still more interested in projects with high economic returns than social or environmental impacts. This imbalance is a major obstacle to developing sustainable business models for social entrepreneurs focused environmental conservation (Piwowar-Sulej et al., 2021).

Another issue that arises in social entrepreneurship is the dilemma between pursuing financial returns and maintaining the desired social and environmental impact. A study by Fuentes and Valenzuela-García (2019) in Spain showed that social enterprises often face the challenge of balancing social goals with the need to generate sufficient revenue to sustain operations. The pressure to remain competitive in the market often forces social entrepreneurs to compromise the conservation values they stand for. As a result, some initiatives fail to survive in the long-term or turn into conventional, more profit-oriented businesses.

Social entrepreneurship in the field of environmental conservation also faces challenges in terms of unsupportive regulations and policies (Yasiret al., 2021). A study by Seda and Ismail (2019) found that in some countries, regulations related to social entrepreneurship are still unclear, causing many businesses to face difficulties in accessing tax incentives, government support, and legal protection for their innovations. The lack of policies that specifically support environmentally oriented business initiatives makes it difficult for many social enterprises to compete with conventional companies that have greater access to resources and market networks.

Another significant challenge in entrepreneurship for environmental conservation is low community awareness and engagement. The study by Duncan-Horner et al. (2021) shows that the success of social entrepreneurship depends heavily on the acceptance and engagement of local communities. There is a lack of understanding of the long-term benefits of environmental conservation, and communities tend to favor short-term economic solutions over investments in more sustainable practices. This lack of environmental literacy makes it difficult for social entrepreneurs to gain community support and develop viable environmental-based businesses.

Social entrepreneurship in environmental conservation also faces barriers in the development and application of technologies that can help address environmental problems. A study by Markman et al. (2017) revealed that many social entrepreneurship initiatives struggle to access environmentally friendly technologies that can improve the efficiency of their businesses, both due to cost constraints and a lack of knowledge transfer from research institutions to the business world. As a result, many social entrepreneurs still rely on traditional methods that are less effective in addressing large-scale environmental problems. It is important to create an ecosystem that supports collaboration between social entrepreneurs, research institutions and the private sector so that green technologies can be accessed and applied more effectively (Gonzales & Dentchey, 2021).

Social entrepreneurship is increasingly recognized as an innovative and effective approach to addressing environmental issues by combining economic and nature conservation goals. The study conducted by Fhiri et al. (2021) shows that social entrepreneurship creates sustainable business models, and leads to innovative solutions to environmental challenges. such management, resource conservation and climate change mitigation. Social entrepreneurship is able to bridge the gap between economic needs and environmental sustainability by creating a business system that focuses on social and environmental impacts. This approach shows that economics and environmental sustainability are not mutually exclusive, but can go together (Spangenberg, 2016). Further understanding of how entrepreneurship can be applied on a broader scale is crucial to ensure the sustainability of the global ecosystem (Sharma et al., 2021).

While social entrepreneurship has great potential in environmental conservation, there are still gaps in the implementation and effectiveness of policies that support these initiatives. Ugoani (2019) in his research on the Nigerian Conservation Foundation highlighted how social entrepreneurshipbased conservation initiatives are often hampered by unsupportive policies or lack of incentives for social enterprises. Many countries lack adequate regulations to provide legal protection, access to funding, and infrastructure support for social entrepreneurship in environmental conservation (Bardy & Massaro, 2013; Arasti et al., 2015). As a result, existing initiatives often operate in a limited capacity and are unable to scale up. Further study on effective policies to support social entrepreneurship in environmental conservation is urgently needed.

The study of social entrepreneurship in environmental conservation is also very important to identify innovation opportunities that can accelerate the transformation of the green economy. Buschke (2015) asserts that conservation entrepreneurship can be a strategic solution to create a market-based approach to environmental protection. Conservationbased business models have been shown to provide significant benefits to both the environment and the people involved, such as in community-based ecotourism initiatives and waste recycling-based businesses. This study emphasizes that without an understanding of the potential and challenges of social entrepreneurship in environmental conservation, opportunities to create broader innovations will be hindered. Further research is urgently needed to develop more effective strategies for utilizing social entrepreneurship as a key tool for maintaining the sustainability of global ecosystems.

This research aims to explore the role of social entrepreneurship to support environmental conservation and sustainable development. This research is expected to provide insights into the effectiveness of social entrepreneurship as an innovative solution to increasingly complex environmental problems by understanding how social business models can contribute to ecosystem protection. The research also aims to identify the factors that are the main barriers to the implementation of social entrepreneurship in the environmental sector, including financial aspects, policies, and public awareness and engagement to support conservation-based business initiatives.

This research also aims to analyze strategies that can improve the effectiveness and sustainability of social entrepreneurship in environmental conservation. The research will evaluate the most successful business models to support environmental protection and how these approaches can be replicated or scaled up to expand their impact by examining different approaches that have been implemented in different countries and industry sectors. This research will examine how factors such as policy support, intersectoral collaboration and technological innovation play a role in the success of these models, and how these models can be adapted to diverse local needs.

The results of this study are expected to provide academic and practical contributions in the development of inclusive and sustainable social entrepreneurship in the field of environmental conservation. The findings of this study can also serve as abasis for policy makers, social entrepreneurs, as well as non-governmental organizations to design more effective strategies to support social innovation oriented towards environmental protection and community welfare.

#### **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research uses a systematic literature review approach to analyze the relationship between social entrepreneurship and environmental conservation. Literature study is a research method that collects, evaluates, and analyzes information from various relevant academic sources to gain a deeper understanding of certain phenomena (Krauset al., 2020; Ali, 2021). This approach enables the identification of patterns, relationships, and gaps in existing research so as to build a strong theoretical foundation in the field of social entrepreneurship and environmental conservation. This literature review also provides an opportunity to explore the various perspectives and approaches that have been applied in linking these two areas, and provides a basis for further research development.

The first step in this study was to conduct a systematic literature search using relevant keywords, such as "social entrepreneurship," "environmental conservation," and "sustainable entrepreneurship." The search was conducted through reputable academic databases, including Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar. Source selection was based on research relevance and credibility, with a focus on peer-reviewed publications published within the last ten years. This research canensure that the literature used is current and of reliable academic quality, supporting the development of a deeper understanding of the interaction between social entrepreneurship and environmental conservation.

The next step was to evaluate each article based on the research methodology, key findings, and relevance to social entrepreneurship in environmental conservation. This evaluation aims to identify the strengths and limitations of previous studies, as well as determine research areas that still require further exploration (Bazan et al., 2020). This analysis helps to avoid duplication of research and ensures that this study makes a significant academic contribution.

The final stage in this research method is to synthesize findings from various sources to answer the formulated research questions. The synthesis was conducted using a thematic approach, where data from various literatures were categorized based on main themes, such as business models of social entrepreneurship, challenges in environmental conservation, and social and economic impacts of environmental-based entrepreneurship (Neumann, 2020). This research is expected to provide understanding and evidence-based recommendations for academics, practitioners and policy makers to develop social entrepreneurship to support environmental conservation.

#### **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### The role of Social Entrepreneurship to support Environmental Conservation and Sustainable Development

Social entrepreneurship has emerged as an innovative approach to address environmental challenges and support sustainable development. This business model combines economic and social objectives to create solutions that are financially profitable and have a positive impact on the environment (Nosratabadi et al., 2019; Fhiri et al., 2021). Social entrepreneurship aims to find solutions that meet market needs while maintaining ecological balance, making it a more sustainable alternative to conventional business models that only prioritize financial returns. Social entrepreneurship enables creative solutions that can reduce the negative impact of human activities on ecosystems by emphasizing innovation and collaboration.

One important aspect of social entrepreneurship in environmental conservation is its ability to transform waste into valuable resources. Many social enterprises have created business models based on the circular economy, which utilize industrial and domestic waste to be reprocessed into valuable products (Mukhlynina, 2021). For example, various initiatives in Russia have adopted business models that convert organic waste into fertilizer or alternative energy, which reduces pollution and creates economic opportunities for local communities. Social entrepreneurship plays a role in creating greener ecosystems and empowering local communities through the creation of new jobs and the development of green industries (Lubberink, 2020).

Social entrepreneurship in developing countries has been an effective tool to combat deforestation and land degradation. Research conducted in Nigeria showed that a social entrepreneurship-based conservation program managed by the Nigerian Conservation Foundation was able to reduce environmental degradation through reforestation, soil conservation, and community engagement in sustainable enterprises (Ugoani, 2019). One of the key elements of the program's success is the ability to link conservation initiatives to tangible economic benefits for local communities. The program is able to have a long-term positive impact on the environment while improving the economic welfare of local residents by linking conservation initiatives with economic benefits for the community. The program is having a sustained positive impact, which can serve as a model for conservation initiatives in other developing countries facing similar challenges in addressing deforestation and land degradation.

Social entrepreneurship also plays an important role in raising environmental awareness and changing people's behavior towards sustainability issues (Sharma et al., 2021). Community-based business models enable people to actively participate in environmental conservation initiatives, whether through education programs, waste reduction campaigns, or incentive policies for sustainable practices (Bansal et al., 2019). This social-based approach has been proven to increase the effectiveness of conservation programs due to the active involvement of various parties, including government, private sector, and civil community organizations. When communities are directly involved in activities that support conservation, they tend to feel more responsible and committed to sustainability goals (Krause et al., 2021). Cross-sector cooperation also strengthens conservation efforts, whether through financial support from the private sector, supportive policies from the government, or advocacy and education programs from civil community organizations.

Social entrepreneurship also encourages the development of environmentally friendly technologies by creating innovative solutions that can address various environmental challenges while providing economic benefits to community. Social enterprises have developed innovative solutions, such as communitybased renewable energy, sustainable agricultural systems, and cheap and efficient water purification techniques (Kosovych, 2021). Social entrepreneurship not only helps create sustainable solutions to environmental problems, but also empowers communities to manage their natural resources in a more efficient and environmentally friendly way (Haugh & Talwar, 2016). Investments in these technologies have helped reduce dependence on fossil fuels and accelerate the transition to a more inclusive and sustainable green economy, reduce negative impacts on the environment, and create fairer economic opportunities for local communities.

Government support for social entrepreneurship is essential to ensure the sustainability of environmental conservation programs (Piwowar-Sulej et al., 2021). The role of government including regulation, providing incentives and support that can create a conducive environment for social entrepreneurship. Countries that have integrated social entrepreneurship in national development strategies, such as Ukraine and the European Union, have shown positive results in achieving sustainable development goals (Kosovych, 2021). Policies that provide incentives for social businesses, such as subsidies for green projects or lower taxes for sustainability-based companies, can encourage more social initiatives to flourish (Yasir et al., 2021).

Social entrepreneurship serves as a catalyst for integrating economic and environmental interests, creating innovative solutions to conservation challenges and ensuring the sustainability of natural resources for future generations. This entrepreneurship model can be one of the most effective strategies to achieve inclusive and environmentally sustainable development linking the business sector with social causes. Social entrepreneurship focuses on financial returns, and the positive impact it can have on community and the environment. Social entrepreneurship can help drive significant and sustainable change by creating initiatives social and environmental issues that address simultaneously. It is important to support and promote this model of entrepreneurship as part of efforts to achieve broader sustainable development goals.

Implement Environmental Conservation Practices Social entrepreneurship has an important role to play in supporting environmental conservation and sustainable development. Various challenges hinder the success and sustainability of these initiatives. One of the main barriers is the lack of clear policy support for environmentally-based social entrepreneurship. Many countries do not have regulations that specifically support sustainability-focused social enterprises. A study by George and Reed (2016) shows that the lack of policies that support social innovation in conservation makes it difficult for

environmental initiatives to gain legitimacy, access

funding, and operational stability.

Key Barriers Faced by Social Entrepreneurs to

The second barrier is limited access to sustainable funding. Unlike conventional companies that can attract investors based on profit potential, social enterprises often find it difficult to secure funding because their main goal is not just to make a profit, but also to create social and environmental impact. According to Fuentes and Valenzuela-García (2019), many investors are hesitant to invest in social enterprises due to higher financial risks and longer payback periods. Government and international funding schemes are often not designed to support business models that prioritize environmental sustainability.

The third challenge is the conflict between financial sustainability and social mission. Many social enterprises must balance achieving social and environmental impact with business sustainability (Sharmaet al., 2021). The pressure to generate revenue causes social enterprises to change their business models to be more profit-oriented, thus sacrificing their original conservation goals (Konda et al., 2015). This conflict often causes social initiatives to stagnate or even shift to more conventional business models.

Fourth, the lack of community awareness and participation is also a major challenge. Many social entrepreneurship-based conservation initiatives rely on community engagement in sustainability practices, such as waste management, renewable energy use or ecosystem preservation. Research by Markman et al. (2017) found that the level of community awareness and participation in environmental social entrepreneurship programs is still low, especially in developing countries. Lack of education on the long-term benefits of sustainable practices creates resistance to change and hinders community-based conservation efforts.

The fifth barrier is the limitations in green technologies that social enterprises can access. Technological innovation is often a key factor in the success of ventures focused on environmental conservation, such as recycling technologies, renewable energy, and sustainable agricultural solutions. Access to advanced technologies is often limited due to high costs and lack of supporting infrastructure. Buschke (2015) emphasizes that without adequate technological support, many social enterprises struggle to achieve greater scale and improve their operational efficiency.

Social entrepreneurship also faces external barriers in the form of competition with non-sustainability-oriented industries. Many industrial sectors continue to operate with exploitative business models that damage the environment, often without strict regulation. According to Seda and Ismail (2019), the sustainability of social entrepreneurship in the field of environmental conservation is often hampered by the dominance of large companies that have greater resources and stronger lobbying capabilities to resist strict environmental regulations.

Finally, social entrepreneurship in environmental conservation also faces the challenge of building a scalable business model. While many social initiatives are successful at the local level, challenges arise when such efforts are sought to be expanded to a larger scale. A study by Horner et al. (2021) shows that many social enterprises fail at the expansion stage due to limited resources, bureaucratic challenges, as well as difficulties in adapting business models to various social and environmental dynamics in different regions.

These constraints can hamper the potential growth and impact of social enterprises, making it important to identify strategies that can help address these issues. Social entrepreneurs who understand the challenges they face can design more adaptive and flexible approaches, and seek support from various stakeholders to strengthen their capacity to expand. Social entrepreneurship can be more effective in achieving environmental conservation goals and provide wider benefits to community.

# Strategies to Enhance the Effectiveness and Sustainability of Social Entrepreneurship in Environmental Conservation

Strategies that can be applied to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of social entrepreneurship in environmental conservation include innovation in business models, collaboration with stakeholders, strengthening entrepreneurial capacity, and adopting environmentally friendly technologies (Yasir et al., 2021). Research by Rantalaet al. (2019) shows that sustainable entrepreneurship can be grouped into four main strategies: solution innovators (trailblazers), business-based developers (ride sharers), cost efficiency-based operators (cost cutters), and environmental stabilizers (risk avoiders). The success of a social enterprise in environmental conservation depends on how these strategies are applied according to local needs and organizational capacity.

One of the key strategies is innovation in sustainability-based business models. Profit-oriented business models and social and environmental sustainability can improve the long-term resilience of social enterprises. A study by Ugoani (2019) shows that organizations such as the Nigerian Conservation Foundation have successfully integrated aspects of conservation with community empowerment, creating a business model that not only relies on donations but also generates economic value for local communities. This kind of business model can be implemented by diversifying revenue sources through ecotourism, ecofriendly products, or conservation education programs.

The next strategy is to build strong collaborations with various stakeholders, including governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and local communities. According to Jones and Gettinger (2016), companies such as Patagonia and The North Face have successfully adopted a collaboration-based approach with communities and conservation organizations to create broader impacts. This approach creates synergies between business interests and sustainability goals, enabling social entrepreneurship to gain support in the form of supportive policies, access to broader markets, as well as recognition from consumers who care about the environment.

Strengthening the capacity of social enterprises is also a key factor to increase their effectiveness in environmental conservation. The study by Alomari and Megdadi (2020) highlighted the importance of training and skill building programs for managing social enterprises. Social entrepreneurs can more effectively manage resources, implement sustainable marketing strategies, and improve their operational efficiency with sustainable entrepreneurship training.

These training programs can be facilitated by educational institutions, governments, or international organizations that focus on sustainable development.

The adoption of green technology is also a strategy that can improve the efficiency and sustainability of social enterprises in environmental conservation. Research by Abereijo emphasizes that technological innovations, such as renewable energy, material recycling, sustainable production systems, can help social enterprises reduce environmental impacts while increasing profitability. The implementation of these green technologies can also add value to the products or services offered by social enterprises, thereby increasing competitiveness in the global market. Today's consumers are increasingly aware of the importance of choosing environmentally friendly products, and by adopting green technologies, social enterprises can position themselves as leaders in sustainability-oriented industries.

Social entrepreneurship also needs to adopt a market-based approach to improve competitiveness and long-term sustainability. According to Starchenko et al. (2021), this approach includes marketing strategies based on environmental awareness, product or service diversification, and value creation through transparency and consumer engagement. For example, many social enterprises have started to utilize eco-labels and sustainability certifications to attract customers who are more concerned about the environment.

The final strategy that needs to be implemented is the strengthening of policies and regulations that support social entrepreneurship in environmental conservation. George and Reed (2016) revealed that supportive policies, such as tax incentives, easy access to funding, and protection of environment-based small businesses, can increase the chances of social entrepreneurship success. Social entrepreneurs will be more motivated to develop sustainability and conservation-focused initiatives with the right policies in place.

Governments and international organizations have an important role to play in creating an enabling environment for the development of sustainability-focused social enterprises. Through strong collaboration and support, they can help overcome barriers faced by social entrepreneurs, and encourage innovation and best practices in environmental conservation. Strengthening policies and regulations that support social entrepreneurship will contribute to the achievement of broader sustainability goals and have a positive impact on community and the environment.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Social entrepreneurship has emerged as an innovative approach to addressing environmental problems by combining economic, social and ecological sustainability. Various conservation-based business models have been proven to have a positive impact on environmental conservation and improve the welfare of local communities. Social entrepreneurship plays a role in reducing the negative impacts of human activities on ecosystems, such as through community-based ecotourism, waste recycling, and renewable energy utilization by linking economic opportunities with conservation goals. This business model offers a more sustainable way to manage natural resources, while providing direct benefits to the communities involved in its operations, reducing poverty and improving quality of life. The implementation of this business model faces complex challenges, ranging from limited access to funding, regulatory barriers, to a lack of public awareness of environmental sustainability.

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A comprehensive and evidence-based strategy is needed to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of social entrepreneurship in environmental conservation. One important step to take is the development of government policies that support social enterprises that focus on environmental issues. The government needs to develop supportive policies by providing incentives for environmentally-oriented social enterprises, such as tax subsidies or easy access to funding. Collaboration with the private sector and non-governmental organizations is also needed to expand social entrepreneurship networks and improve technology and innovation capabilities. Increasing public awareness through environmental education and campaigns can be a strategic step to encourage public engagement to support conservation-based businesses. Social entrepreneurship can be a more effective solution to maintain the balance between economic development and environmental conservation with a more systematic approach and supported by policies that favor sustainability.

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