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Social Entrepreneurship powering global reform



► The greatest barrier to social entrepreneurship in Kenya, especially early-stage social enterprises, continues to be the lack of access to capital.

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The idea of social entrepreneurship as a way to promote effective social change for the good

of all, and to address the world's most compelling problems, has been successful.

Whether it is creating a 'dating service' to match unemployed youth with employers in South Africa or tackling the waste problem by employing Afghan refugee women to make edible bowls in India, social entrepreneurs find innovative and creative ways to solve a diverse range of most pressing societal challenges.

Hence, it is not an overstatement to say that, since Bill Drayton coined the

phrase in the early 1980s, social entrepreneurship as a movement has been deeply influential in philanthropy, academia, global corporations, government, and other institutions.

Ashoka has built and cultivated this community of social entrepreneurs, supporting them to scale their innovation changing patterns through distinct paths of systems change.

However, the most powerful attribute of these social entrepreneurs is how they collaborate among themselves and with other players across sectors to transform institutions and cultures worldwide. They support changemaking for the good of society across the world. Today Ashoka has supported a global network of 4,000+ Ashoka Fellows spanning 90+ countries.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, Ashoka has invested \$22 million (Sh2.4 billion)

directly to its network of 500 leading social entrepreneurs (Ashoka Fellows) with 90 of these Fellows coming from East Africa with a bigger share of the number from Kenya.

In recognition of its work, NGO Advisor has ranked Ashoka number 5 among the top 200 most influential NGOs in the world in 2021.

This status is not only from building the world's largest network of social entrepreneurs but also from identifying patterns in social innovations, convening key decision-makers from corporate, public, philanthropic, and financial sectors to turn insights and observations into collaborative models that address the most critical and complex social challenges on a large scale.

While doing this, Ashoka's goes beyond focusing on direct service and systems change, but rather on the third level of impact-mind-set/framework change. Framework change is about creating a new construct, from insights and trends gathered from ongoing work, and rallying the world around this new framework.

Like the way Ashoka constructed the term social entrepreneurship from noticing the men and women who were creatively innovating solutions for societal challenges applying entrepreneurial mindset, it is around the same time 1981 that Ashoka coined the term changemaker which only found its way into the dictionary about 8 years ago.

Changemakers are individuals who feel the responsibility and have the skills and determination to lead change in their group, community, company, industry, sector, departments, or wherever they are best placed.

The rising interest of young people - under the age of 25 - was also a new finding, with three in four experts saying more young people were interested in social entrepreneurship since young people are challenging the notion of work, and combining purpose and career in one place. Young people are more idealistic and want to do something that's beyond just looking for money.

The greatest barrier to social entrepreneurship in Kenya, especially early-stage social enterprises, continues to be the lack of access to capital.

In Kenya, many financial institutions are antipathetic to give financing to these enterprises. Most financial institutions feel that these enterprises are high risk because they don't have assets they can attach to the loans.

This has slowed down the growth of social entrepreneurship in Kenya. Lack of government policy or legislation that is deliberately aimed at social enterprises in Kenya is also a big challenge.

Notable steps are being made like changing the age of directorship from 21 years to 18 years. This means more opportunities for young people to own enterprises without age limitation.

This has led to more people registering enterprises to solve societal challenges and according to the same report, State of Social Enterprise in Kenya, just under half of the social enterprises in Kenya are female-led (44 per cent), which reflects the 48 per cent of medium-sized enterprises (MSEs) which are female-led (United Nations Development Programme, Resilient Nations: Micro, Small And Medium Size Enterprises (MSME's) As Suppliers To The Extractive Industry (2015).

Such policy changes have seen almost half (44 per cent) of the enterprises in Kenya are being run by women, most of them under the age of 35 years. There has been a concerted effort to empower women in many ways more broadly in Kenya which is reflected in the social enterprise ecosystem.

Opportunities driven by the growth of information and communications technology (ICT) to transform the way corporations relate to communities around the world in social business are endless.

ICT plays a critical role, enabling affordability, scalability and other ways to connect to and build the community.

However, in urban settlements in developing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, social entrepreneurs often face the frustration of a developed technological infrastructure that is running below capacity.

Increasing numbers of social entrepreneurs all over the world are using business to help tackle social problems, but as referenced in the 2 global polls by Thompson Reuters in 2016 and 2019 there is little data to point to which thematic sectors are encouraging this growing sector.

In this context, to support the development of the changemaking ecosystem in Kenya, Ashoka East Africa and CARE, with support from Austrian Development Cooperation, conducted a referential network analysis across Kenya to create a visual map of people who, as change-makers, are making a positive contribution to the development and implementation of solutions in the fields of education, climate, agriculture, health, youth and disability.

The mapping also focused on identifying female change-makers in these sectors to make these change-makers more visible, establish lead-ins for cooperation and better understand the opportunities as well as challenges they face for greater, accelerated impact.

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