



Rama Krishna Reddy Kummitha

# **SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SOCIAL INCLUSION**

*Processes, Practices, and Prospects*



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*To Barefoot winners*

## PREFACE

In my earlier work *Social Entrepreneurship: Working towards Greater Inclusiveness*, I carried out a multi-case analysis to understand how social entrepreneurs achieve inclusive growth by initiating various innovative experiments. While the book offered narratives about the positive social change in multiple contexts, it warranted the need for a more nuanced understanding of social entrepreneurship at the grassroots level, and the conflicts and the interactions that exist among various stakeholders. Such understanding is crucial due to the existence of conflicting local contexts, institutional identities and aims. Accordingly, the analysis in this book relies on a single case to offer a deeper analysis of the “change” process by highlighting the issues of embeddedness and community participation.

The book takes stock of the relevant academic scholarship that exists in the field of social entrepreneurship and offers a perspective in which to understand its relevance and significance in a community context. Building on the literature on social exclusion and social inclusion, this book argues that social entrepreneurship is a phenomenal approach that could bring excluded communities into the mainstream. Social exclusion as a concept recently came into existence due to the failure of existing institutions, including the state and the market, to protect the interests of the population. Thus, it has been identified that “including” those who have been excluded from the mainstream is considered a crucial act that existing institutions, which talk about development, need to take up. It is found that the existing systems in both the social and market context

compromise social realities and most likely discourage disruptive innovations at both the process and product or service development level, which are crucial for achieving social inclusion.

However, civil society and its positive role in building inclusive societies has opened a space for enhanced expectations. The social innovations adopted by these organisations time and again created the necessary scenarios for positive social change to roll. Social enterprise as an advanced form of civil society organisation takes the credit to create necessary environment to build inclusive societies. Taking inspiration from the author's field exposure, the book highlights various innovative approaches and methods that social entrepreneurship as a practice adopts in order to build a more robust social order.

While existing knowledge in social entrepreneurship has long accepted and analysed the methods that social entrepreneurs adopt in order to achieve the relevant social change, the book brings a novel perspective to analyse how community participation and embeddedness offer necessary contexts. Based on field research, the book looks in depth into a social enterprise for evidence to understand how social entrepreneurship as a practice brings different segregated communities on board and enriches their living conditions. As part of the embeddedness, it is found that social entrepreneurs as agents initially engage themselves in the local cultures, known as structures, in order to gain the necessary trust and recognition from the communities. After acquiring this, the social enterprises run by the social entrepreneurs then moves on to transform the local cultures where they are embedded in order to make them holistic. The participation of communities in the process of social entrepreneurship opens up new avenues for social entrepreneurs to innovative and build robust systems as necessary.

The researcher interacted with communities who benefited from the services offered by the social enterprise, and those who were provided with jobs. The latter claimed to initially hail from the most excluded backgrounds who found a way out from their deprivation due to the enhanced skills, capabilities and financial freedoms they acquired as part of the jobs they were provided with. It is also found that by employing community members in various jobs roles, the organisation has, it created win-win scenarios where communities gain through the provision of employment and service, and the social enterprise benefits from the trust it created among the communities. Communities who have been provided with various services have also gained quite significantly by undertaking central

roles in their planning and execution. It is found that excluded community members, especially women, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and the physically challenged have benefited in multiple ways. Social capital created as part of the social entrepreneurial endeavour offers the necessary mechanism for communities to come together and fight for their rights and space in the mainstream social order. In fact, the way that social equity is achieved using innovative mechanisms is quite instrumental in bringing communities into the mainstream.

It is argued in the research that Barefoot College, the case study selected as part of the book, has successfully operated to create the necessary contexts for social inclusion to thrive. While analysing these contexts, it is found that Barefoot College began as a community-based voluntary organisation and later emerged as a social enterprise. The transition was not merely caused by the innovations it adopted, but also due to the entrepreneurial endeavour it undertook. Though the entrepreneurial context offers a significant push in terms of raising necessary resources from the local contexts and the marketing techniques it adopted, it is found that the organisation's capacities to venture into successful entrepreneurial endeavours became stuck as income raised from the local contexts had significantly fallen in the recent past. Thus, it is argued that the organisation, apart from contributing to its social value creating endeavour, must adopt a strategy in order to be entrepreneurially sound again.

Accordingly, the manuscript offered the study of a tree diagram with three pillars—organisational, social value and sustainable, which have quite significantly contributed to the successful existence of the social enterprise. The various key identities developed as part of the diagram offers a rich understanding of the identities that successful social enterprises would need to excel in. Finally, the manuscript narrates how future research could narrow the gap opened by current research.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The book took shape from the work I undertook as part of my doctoral research, which was carried out at the Centre for the Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy at the University of Hyderabad. While my research endeavour on social entrepreneurship and social exclusion took shape at the University, my participation in the Jagriti Yatra, at the beginning of my doctoral study helped me to meet unsung heroes who undertook innovations to build inclusive societies. It was actually their idea of development and inspiration that inspired me to carry out this research in order to build scholarship that will be useful to understand the grassroots innovations and developmental patterns.

This research has constantly benefited from several researchers and academicians at the University of Hyderabad. Among them, Professor Sudarshanam Gankidi, my doctoral supervisor, guru and source of inspiration, has constantly supported my ideas and encouraged me in all my research and academic endeavours. Apart from his academic credentials, he is one of the finest human beings I have ever met. He was the first person to support my attempt to do research on social entrepreneurship and has encouraged me from the day one. Professor Sudhakar Rao, who happened to be one of my doctoral committee members and mentor, helped me when I was short of ideas and constantly nurtured the progression of my career. He, along with Professor Gankidi, oversaw my overall academic orientation and developed my doctoral work. The other scholar who offered invaluable support is Professor Krishna Reddy Gaddam, the then Director of the Centre for the Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy. He advised me to

focus more on an in-depth understanding of the grassroots level social transformation and contribute to academic scholarship. He has also been a source of knowledge and academic significance who has tremendously influenced my career path.

The other researchers and scholars who helped me shape this work include Doctor Rani Ratna Prabha, Doctor Ramdas Rupavath, Doctor Nagaraju Gundemeda, Doctor Ratnam, Doctor Chandrasekhar Rao, Doctor Srinivasa Rao from JNU and Mr. Dileep Valeru. It is also appropriate to mention the intellectual stimulation I received from scholars like Hilary Silver, one of the most renowned scholars in social exclusion and inclusion. She not only guided me through her phenomenal work in the field, but also mentored me on several of my scholastic endeavours. In addition, it is needless to state the support and sacrifices that researchers receive from friends and family. They have always stood by me and encouraged my research, and personal and academic endeavours. The administrative staff of the Indira Gandhi Memorial Library where this book took advanced shape and the staff of the Centre for the Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy were extremely helpful. I owe special thanks to my other colleagues at the Centre for Social Entrepreneurship, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability of the United Nations University and National Graduate Research Institute in Tokyo, the Smart City Institute at the University of Liege and my colleagues in the research group on Technology and Innovation REsearch on Social ImpAct (TIRESIA) at Politecnico in Milan.

The Jagriti Yatra team including Shashank, Rewati, Raj, Swapnil and Ashutosh were the first few people who introduced me to social entrepreneurs and their phenomenal work. This then moves to the Barefoot College team, especially Roy, Vasu, and Ramkaran and several others who provided great hospitality at the Barefoot College guest house and allowed me to collect data and information from various people. In addition, I have greatly benefited and acquired energy from the passion and enthusiasm from the 800-odd youths with whom I travelled in the Jagriti Yatra. Their passion to learn from the successful experiments, and contribute to national growth was phenomenal. I also took inspiration from my students at the Centre for Social Entrepreneurship, TISS where I taught social entrepreneurship upon completion of my doctoral research. My involvement with student ventures, their novel ideas and community concentration helped me to understand the intentions of social entrepreneurs, first hand.

The suggestions from external reviewers on my doctoral thesis and the reviewer from Palgrave were extremely useful. They guided the work to advance from a thesis, which was the outcome of an early researcher's learning experiment, to a monograph, which is expected to contribute to the vast knowledge in the fields of social exclusion and social entrepreneurship. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the Palgrave team—Jacob Dreyer and Marcus Ballenger for their constant support and cooperation.

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## ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
BLM	Block Level Member
BoP	Bottom of the Pyramid
BSE	Barefoot Solar Engineer
CA	Chartered Accountant
CAPART	Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology
CM	Chief Minister
CP	Community Participation
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
FCRA	Foreign Contribution Regulation Act
ISDS	Innovative Service Delivery System
JNU	Jawaharlal Nehru University
NCA	Norwegian Church Aid
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NREGA	National Rural Employment Guaranty Act
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PH	Physically Handicapped
RRWHT	Rooftop Rain Water Harvesting Tank
RTI	Right to Information
RWHT	Rain Water Harvesting Tank
SC	Scheduled Caste
SCWE	State Chief Water Engineer
SHG	Self Help Group
ST	Scheduled Tribe
SWRC	Social Work and Research Centre

TISS	Tata Institute of Social Sciences
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UoH	University of Hyderabad
VDC	Village Development Committee
VEC	Village Education Committee
VEEC	Village Energy Environment Committee
VWC	Village Water Committee
WEG	Women Empowerment Group
WISE	Work Integration Social Enterprise

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## Introduction

The emergence and growth of social entrepreneurship as an area of developmental discourse passed through the initial stage, which was actor centred and individual focused. Previously, economic entrepreneurship as a separate discipline had also undergone a similar growth stage where the entrepreneur alone was subjected to an individual actor, who manifested the economic engines through creative destruction.<sup>1</sup> After the successful exploration to understand the role of the entrepreneur as a source of constant inspiration, the research has progressed to understand or analyse the relational aspects in the wider context, including understanding how entrepreneurial action is constrained or enabled by social, market and regulatory mechanisms in a larger system where they are operational. It has led to the understanding of entrepreneurship as an innovative process, which is embedded in larger systems, that create conditions for entrepreneurship to enable or to constrain (Jack and Anderson 2002).

Similarly, social entrepreneurship in the social context, which is a source of social development to create inclusive societies, has been subject to enormous scrutiny. While initial research succeeded in building case studies to probe the working and impact of social entrepreneurial ventures and the role of the social entrepreneur as an individual actor creating the necessary contexts, since the last decade scholars have been concentrating to focus on the contextual factors that influence social entrepreneurship and its practice (Nicholls 2006; Santos 2012; Ormiston and Seymour 2011).

A number of scholars argued that social entrepreneurship has to move beyond individual or social entrepreneurial heroic role based research or studies in order to build a robust academic field for social entrepreneurship. For example, Nicholls and Cho (2006) opine that understanding the relationship between the agent (social entrepreneur) and the structure (social environment) in which the social entrepreneur operates is necessary to gain holistic knowledge about the field. Accordingly, the current manuscript makes an effort to understand and contextualise social entrepreneurship as a process influenced and reoriented by a number of factors which are embedded in the local culture or systems.

Historically, the active participation of entrepreneurs in the business sector has witnessed a significant market revitalisation which has provoked individuals who have the same capabilities and who are interested in social change to experiment in order to ensure that they undertake entrepreneurial ventures to attain social change. Though the concept of social entrepreneurship has offered a lot in the way of reorienting existing social disparities, the research scholarship could not determine the various factors that influence its altruism.

In the recent past, social entrepreneurship has emerged as a dynamic approach within the third sector. Broadly speaking, an economy is divided into three categories: (a) the private sector which is privately owned, involved in trading, market-driven, and profit centric, (b) the public/government sector which is publicly owned, non-trading and the intention is service facilitation and (c) the community or voluntary sector which is known as socially owned and aims to create non-personal profit, self-help, mutuality and social purpose (Pearce 2003). Social entrepreneurship in the third sector brought added value as, unlike existing structures, it offers passionate, dynamic and innovative solutions to unaddressed social problems. The entrepreneurial and innovative processes adopted by social entrepreneurs have largely redefined the traditional service delivery system into Innovative Service Delivery Systems (ISDS),<sup>2</sup> where inclusion is facilitated in more sustainable ways. Unlike previous approaches, including those based on charity, this model opened up a space for stakeholders to empower their potential through learning skills that are essential to acquire decent employment in the societies in which they live, to be able to sustain their families and communities.

The literature argues that social enterprises adopt different approaches and methods to reduce disparities within and among communities and save them from exclusion. In order to realise the social transformation,

some may choose to provide goods at cheaper rates to the disadvantaged sections, whereas others may employ the disadvantaged in ventures created for the purpose. In order to achieve the mission, some may start a for-profit or a non-profit venture and then build it up to create hybrid ventures and others may choose to start hybrid ventures from the beginning. Of late, social enterprises are considered as hybrid organisations, which emphasise creation of both social and financial value creation. The multiple value creation distinguishes them from other forms of organisations which exist to create either of these values. As emphasised in Jeff (2001), social entrepreneurs employ entrepreneurial thinking to address community concerns and combine local skills and resources in innovative ways with the aim of achieving social and business missions. Put simply, a social entrepreneur is a person who identifies social problems and explores innovative solutions.

There is no doubt that the existing social sector has contributed significantly in addressing some of the major social problems, and advancing human existence, but the intensity and complexity of social problems continue to delay a lasting solution. Solving these problems is not just a matter of mobilising resources; it entails developing new models and ways of achieving sustainable mission impact. This reality of achievement makes social entrepreneurship an approach that has better leverage in the resource-constrained environment (Wei-Skillern et al. 2007). It is relevant to discuss that one of the main reasons that makes the existence of social entrepreneurship imperative is the global decline of resources required to build inclusive societies.

In fact, the very existence of social entrepreneurship as an organisational form and its practice have strong correlation to the practice of social exclusion. It is the prevailing social exclusion that provides a platform for social entrepreneurship to thrive. Social exclusion is a mechanism which distances people from mainstream society by restricting their participation in a number of ways (Kummitha 2015). Social exclusion is defined as a “process whereby certain individuals are pushed to the edge of society and prevented from participating fully by virtue of their poverty, or lack of basic competencies and lifelong learning opportunities, or as a result of discrimination. This distances them from job, income, education and training opportunities, as well as social and community networks and activities. They have little access to power and decision-making bodies and thus often feel powerless and unable to take control over the decisions that affect their day to day lives” (European Commission 2004, p. 3).

The dynamic existence of social exclusion is claimed to offer ample scope for the practice of social entrepreneurship to address the problems created thereof and push those who are affected from the exclusion trap to mainstream, thereby it ensures social inclusion.

Dorsner (2004) and Hill et al. (2002) argue that the difference between exclusion and inclusion is lack of participation. Whereas social inclusion has been defined by the European Commission (2010) as “a process which ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live. It ensures that they enjoy greater participation in decision-making, affecting both their lives and their access to fundamental rights” (European Commission 2004, p. 3). If a person is able to participate in the mainstream without being restricted by any condition, then that person is considered to be socially included, whereas those who have restricted access to mainstream society and do not have the privilege to participate in activities in which their participation is necessary to enrich their lives, are considered socially excluded. In other words, the exclusion space offers opportunities for social entrepreneurs to discover, define and exploit such opportunities (Zahra et al. 2008; Seelos et al. 2010). Social entrepreneurs mainly aim to create systems that foster social inclusion by enabling individuals to take part in mainstream activities (Kummitha 2016). Furthermore, it is argued that social exclusion can be better addressed by using innovations and developing local entrepreneurship which will help alleviate poverty and other deprivations that are linked to social exclusion (Peterson 1988).

Despite its significant contribution to addressing the concerns of exclusion, due to the lack of provision for its holistic understanding, the concept of social entrepreneurship has so far been poorly defined, widely misunderstood and even controversial. In a nutshell, there is a lack of proper understanding of the term “social entrepreneurship”. Many scholars from various disciplines believe that the concept simply represents business, capturing social agenda, or the use of public funding for welfare activities by non-governmental organisations (NGOs). However, the disparities and exclusions that exist in the social order talk about different dimensions where social enterprises are capable of addressing those concerns and engaging in social transformation. In this regard, in order to better understand the ways in which social inclusion can be guaranteed, the notion of social entrepreneurship must be understood from a

vaerity of ways, given the dynamism exists in the social order. Both, social entrepreneurship and social inclusion are some of the most potential areas where extensive research is needed. In addition, the emergence of social entrepreneurs to create inclusive societies further opens a space to understand the contexts which bring these two practices together. Hence, the current research makes one such attempt to understand the dynamism and innovation adopted to achieve social transformation.

The social entrepreneurial process as an innovative holistic approach requires a thorough understanding. In particular, it would be more apt to understand how social entrepreneurship as a process addresses social exclusions and achieves social inclusion. Against this background, there is a larger need to understand the processes involved and methods adopted to meet the ends in terms of realising the social transformation from static social structures that obstruct the free flow of social participation of different sections. The researcher has used social exclusion as a phenomenon to explain the pre-context necessary for the emergence of social entrepreneurship. The current research thus attempts to understand an entire process where social exclusion has been tackled in order to create a cohesive social order. The relationship that exists among various major concepts employed in the study include social exclusion, social entrepreneurship and social inclusion is detailed below.

## SOCIAL EXCLUSION

It is argued that social exclusion as a practice dates far back, especially in the historical evolution of societies (Kummitha 2015). However, as a concept it was coined in the early 1970s. Its origin was linked to the elevated deprivation and marginalisation in Europe, especially in France, due to the failure of the welfare state (Saith 2001). The crisis in France and mainly across Europe left a significant proportion of people unemployed. Unemployment, as everyone recognises, creates very distressful conditions for the individuals and families affected and such circumstances restrict their participation in mainstream society. This is how Lenoir (1974) coined the concept of social exclusion.

Despite the fact that the term was adopted and developed initially in a Western context, it has successfully been deployed in all national contexts (Haan 2001). The long existing deprivation and exclusion in the global south further opened the scope for social exclusion as a way of describing long standing deprivations. It is not necessary to articulate that

the poverty is one of the main causes of social exclusion. Many deprivations that exclusion encompasses have been largely previously described by poverty. Accordingly, it is claimed that social exclusion simply hijacks the issues that poverty otherwise deals with, whereas it is argued by various scholars that social exclusion is altogether different from poverty in a number of contexts. For example, Levitas (1999) argues that although poverty and social exclusion appear to be treated synonymously, there are many differences that need to be noted. For example, in the context of India, some Dalits who are socially excluded due to the practice of untouchability,<sup>3</sup> may, in economic terms, come from rich backgrounds. Such rich Dalits do not fall into the category of being “included”, despite their rich backgrounds. Levitas further clarified that the concept of social exclusion needs to be defined in proper terms so that it is more effective in helping governments as far as policy measures are concerned. In a more nuanced example, Ramachandran (2001) narrates the story of Savitri, a 15-year-old schoolgirl who had to drop out of school not because she was poor, but because she came from the lowest possible section of Indian society. She came from a manual scavenger family, which is the most deprived group among Dalits (formally known as “Bhangi”). As soon as she enters the classroom, the other children make faces and sing a foul and insulting song which says that “the Bhangi has come”. As a result, sometimes Savitri would cry and felt isolated which didn’t do her any good. She had to leave school due to the overall stigma that she was often exposed to. Savitri’s story shows that her deprivation has no connection with poverty. It also highlights that the contextual significance that social exclusion brings on board is of crucial importance when compared with poverty.

Despite the fact that social exclusion as an academic and research concept describes social realities in a more nuanced way, it lacks an universal definition which could be adopted across the spectrums and geographical locations in order to relate it to all the excluded. Such difficulty occurs due to the fact that social exclusion is a broader concept which encompasses a variety of concepts such as poverty, marginalisation, deprivation, and so on. As a result, it becomes difficult for the proponents to articulate its exact relevance and contribution. With regard to its relevance, social exclusion as a concept operates in all four dimensions of the social order i.e. social, economic, political and cultural contexts. Due to the varied nature of the concept through circumstances, different scholars from a variety of backgrounds projected numerous views to propel the nature of

social exclusion. As a result, national governments adopted the concept according to their local needs.

As narrated in the EC's definition earlier, in order to be labelled socially excluded, (a) one has to be moved away from mainstream society and thus away from mainstream living conditions; (b) this act of pushing away prevents the participation of the excluded in mainstream activities; (c) this could happen due to lack of income that enables poverty, or a lack of basic skills that could have potentially been acquired through learning opportunities that they missed or as a result of discrimination based on caste, creed, gender, disability, and so on; (d) this process forces them to be without a job, income, education for their children, and training opportunities that might have helped them empower their capabilities. In addition, the process also disconnects them from social and community networks; (e) as a result, they are no longer connected to decision-making bodies whose decisions affect their lives. This makes them powerless and weak and consequently, their voices are not represented. The paradoxical situation with regard to social exclusion is that as analysed, the process could equally occur in reverse order. For example, lack of participation in decision-making processes results in their choices not being represented and capabilities being underestimated. Due to this deprivation, they are not provided with opportunities to access basic education, employment, income, and so on and as a result, they face discrimination along the lines discussed above. This entire process forces them to move away from the mainstream.

Levitas et al. (2007) believe that the process of social exclusion “involves the lack of denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities, available to the majority of people in society, whether in economic, social, cultural or political arenas. It affects both the quality of life of individuals and the equity and cohesion of society as a whole” (p. 9). Thus, it is argued that social exclusion is a theoretical and practical construct that provides ways in which we can analyse the mechanisms which can deny full participation to certain citizens in mainstream society (Lister 1999). Accordingly, social exclusion best suits to describe the mechanisms that detach people from the mainstream (Giddens 1998).

The stigma that social exclusion brings is wicked in nature where people stigmatised are often reduced from whole to tainted or discounted (Goffman 1963, p. 12). In other words, Goffman's analogy narrates that the capabilities, skills, social visibility, and so on of the stigmatised have

often been reduced and this in turn does not allow them to fully participate in normal social life. Ward (2009) further emphasises that this is why certain excluded communities often do not show an interest in getting into the mainstream due to a fear of humiliation. For example, a Dalit boy in India may not be interested in attending school, already assuming that he might experience discrimination at the school. In reality, there may not actually be any discrimination at the school, but his fear might be a result of an earlier experience of discrimination in a different social context. Thus, the practice of social exclusion not only taints people, but also leaves them isolated. Ward (2009) further offers a unique perspective that when people are stigmatised, it would be difficult to integrate them even with paid employment alone, where the local dynamics in neighbourhoods play a crucial role in managing such stigma.

In order to simplify what social exclusion could potentially represent, the following analogy may be helpful. The analysis helps us to understand how best one could analyse the actual magnitude of social exclusion and what would be required in order to include someone in the mainstream. I would like to take Mike as an example. If we assume that “Mike” is excluded or pushed away from the mainstream, firstly, Mike’s background and living conditions must be understood in a systematic method. This understanding contributes to a broader analysis at a later stage that could enhance the possibility of more intensified results. In the following phase, the reasons for Mike moving away from the mainstream need to be investigated; we have to learn whether this move is Mike’s choice. If it is his choice, then one has to determine the reasons for such a move and one has to observe the prosperous lifestyle Mike might experience as a result of such exclusion. Here I would like to apply the Rawlsian theory of social justice in order to know whether Mike is aware of the consequences of his journey away from the mainstream. If his move helps him to secure a better life, then there is no need for apprehension. However, what happens if the move defeats the object of improving his life? Does Mike get a choice of relocating to his previous position? On the contrary, if the move is a result of hegemony or dominancy of certain sections in the mainstream, then the following understanding may be useful. In whose interest is Mike being pushed away? Why has Mike given up rather than resist the attempt to exclude him? Isn’t there a support system that can speak on Mike’s behalf against his exclusion? Is such an exclusion a result of an earlier act of Mike? For example, if Mike attempted a theft or any unlawful activity, then that society may not accept him as part of it. In another case, is it due to



his lack of capabilities to compete with the modern system? Adopting such thorough prolonged analysis certainly helps scholars to be more relevant when conducting studies related to understanding the magnitude of social exclusion. However, such an analysis may not be required in all contexts. Hence, researchers have to ideally deal with and decide on the need for such analysis and act accordingly.

It is also argued that people affected by social exclusion are rarely attached to institutions that have any influence over their social functioning (Todman 2006). Such institutions restrict the participation of socially excluded sections and do not allow them to claim entitlements, resources, freedoms and opportunities like others in mainstream society. It is further emphasised that social exclusion could be either a cause or a consequence in relation to several dimensions, including poverty and low income; unemployment; poor educational attainment; poor mental or physical health; family breakdown and poor parenting; poor housing and homelessness; discrimination based on caste, creed, gender and age; crime; living in a disadvantaged area, and so on. The risk related to living a decent life especially in neighbourhoods which are often excluded by both policy makers and those who are responsible for the development of those areas is especially daunting as such risk can be addressed by adopting proper policies. For example, slum dwellers and slums in urban areas where the dwellers reside have been highly neglected by state policy and developmental institutions. However, active social networks and relationships may help those who are at risk of exclusion to move towards inclusion (Atkinson 1998; Room 1999).

Given the complexity involved, it is quite difficult to simplify who is covered under the purview of social exclusion. In its current form, social exclusion covers a broad realm of excluded sections. Indeed, some people may be affected by exclusion for a long time, which is permanent in nature, but most people do not face such exclusions on a permanent basis. For instance, we can consider disability as an impediment that causes permanent social exclusion where the person affected may find it very difficult to be included in the mainstream. However, respected parties should make sure that such exclusions do not dominate the person's life and it is also their responsibility to create opportunities for them to live a harmonious life. There are other sections of excluded people who can be brought out of the poverty trap, provided they are given some form of resources, including for instance, if the poor are provided with certain livelihoods then most likely they are able to escape the poverty trap. Thus, it can be

considered that social exclusion seems to be an endless process. It may move across different communities and groups due to a variety of reasons and sometimes due to active and passive exclusions or unfavourable exclusion and inclusion (Sen 2000). However, there is a clear ambiguity over the structural views on who constitutes the pool of the excluded. Thus, an attempt has been made below propose various views expressed by scholars in the field.

Lenoir (1974), who coined the concept of social exclusion, opined that the excluded are those who are not protected by the welfare state. Accordingly, he claims that the mentally and physically handicapped, the aged and invalid, drug users, delinquents, and suicidal people may be considered excluded. Whereas Silver (1994) found that mentally and physically handicapped, suicidal people, aged invalids, abused children, those in substance abuse, delinquents, single parents, multi-problem households, marginal, asocial persons, and other social misfits, socially excluded. More recently, Todman (2006) put forward a set of circumstances that cause social exclusion, such as abandonment, ostracism, discrimination, shame, marginalisation, segregation, confinement, imprisonment, exile and pathologisation, extermination and genocide, whereas public policy, governmental and other institutional practices, cultural values and beliefs, demographic shifts, globalisation, technological innovations and organisational transformations are the agents that promote activate exclusion. While these instances of exclusions as described above well known in the context of a developed country, the context of a developing country varies quite significantly by offering a more robust narration with regard to the socially excluded.

The context of developing countries offers a much more nuanced understanding. For example, in developing countries, landlords exclude people from access to land or housing; elite political groups exclude others from legal rights; priests in India may exclude schedule castes from access to temples; minorities may be excluded from expressing their identity; labour markets and some trade unions exclude people (non-members) from getting jobs; and so on. The list shows how the dominating sections push the disadvantaged towards exclusion (Haan 2001). Haan's perspective emphasises the fact that structural disparities and cultural disadvantages create constraints for "others" not to enter to the mainstream or climb the hierarchy of the social order. With the context-specific examples of exclusions, it becomes obvious that exclusion can be an effective mechanism that destructs social bonding and causes the rupture of social networks. In

fact, such scenarios may result in exclusion from education, exclusion from housing, exclusion from property ownership, exclusion from democratic participation, exclusion from access to health services, exclusion from public goods, to name but a few (Nayak 1995). In addition, one may think in terms of gender-based exclusion, exclusion of the old and infirm, exclusion of widows, and exclusion of the physically handicapped. However, on the other hand, cultural factors also play a crucial role in dictating social exclusion. For example, lack of participation in cultural life that includes cultural identity, lack of resources to promote one's own culture, and participation in various activities that would enhance skills and talents of the individuals concerned are a few concerns that create a necessary base for social exclusion to prevail (Council of the European Union 2010). This understanding helps to highlight that the practice of social exclusion is a potential cause of all other social deprivations. However, adopting this approach as it appears for various social realities may mislead actual social systems or structures. Thus, as discussed earlier, those who would like to adopt this approach need to thoroughly understand the social realities of the particular context and adopt it accordingly. However, as we will discuss in the following chapters, it is necessary for a social entrepreneur to embed in the local scenarios or systems in order to have a clear picture to deal with social exclusions.

In a nutshell, poverty is considered the lack of proper economic resources to carry out certain activities, but social exclusion is the lack of proper social participation in particular and all other activities in general. Thus, the elimination of absolute poverty is one of the prior conditions to combat relative poverty. Policies and Acts that promote social inclusion should require thorough consideration in order to proclaim a holistic society rather than going for separate policies on each deprivation. Employing the language of social exclusion, however, simplifies the complexity involved in social contexts, which result from a variety of social problems. In other words, it is derived that social exclusion is a predominant way of describing the deprivations that individuals and communities face. However, it is opined that social inclusion does not always mean the opposite to social exclusion. The mechanisms that cause exclusion and inclusion are very different. Thus, the discussion below takes up social inclusion as a construct to understand its meaning, background and context, based on which the discussion then moves to analyse how social entrepreneurship could address social exclusion in order to create inclusive societies.

## SOCIAL INCLUSION

One's desire to be accepted by others, especially in the mainstream is one of the most desired human needs, the failure of which would result in a stressful environment (Lloyd et al. 2006). It is to further emphasise that people who feel excluded or rejected often face enhanced stress and anxiety. For example, Rohit, a Dalit PhD research scholar, along with his four friends, were recently suspended from the University of Hyderabad by the university administration, in response to a complaint that they indulged in a criminal act. Challenging the decision of the university administration, which was claimed to be politically motivated, to re-exclude them,<sup>4</sup> the suspended students put up a small tent, which was named as "velivada" (Dalit ghetto) where they lived for a couple of weeks before writing to the university administration to say that they wanted to share their concerns and appeal against their suspension. However, unconvinced by this request, the university administration did not respond to them, leaving them isolated, annoyed, segregated and excluded. In the end, Rohit, who felt humiliated by the entire episode, committed suicide. Legal proceedings in relation to the alleged criminal act of the dalit students might have prevented the university from responding to the students' representations and concerns, however not providing a forum for the students to represent themselves and express their concerns not only limited their own abilities to represent themselves sufficiently, but also restricted the university's ability to acquire necessary information or knowledge to empathise with the students. Thus, this provides a clear case which demonstrates that acceptance by the mainstream, or consoling the affected when they feel isolated or listening to them when they feel neglected by the mainstream are a few externalities which have to be considered when we talk about social inclusion. Participation is not just about inclusion, but it is about avoiding the humiliation, distress and loneliness that deteriorate basic human existence. One must understand that social inclusion is all about the "redistribution of social opportunities" to all sections of the population without being restricted to any bias and segregation (UNDP 2011). In addition, the larger social order has to respect and be responsible for developing its own communities where its members feel secure, and preserve and enhance their membership through continuous contribution to the development of the whole community (Kilkenny et al. 1999).

It emphasised that social inclusion has never been an independent concept. It has always been linked with the notion of social exclusion. Social

inclusion can be achieved broadly by ensuring participation of people in all the activities in which their presence is necessary. In general, it is meant to address the multidimensional deprivations that are caused by social exclusion. Though the meaning of social inclusion is dependent upon the conditions and circumstances, it subsequently seeks secured social settings in which everyone is guaranteed basic rights to sustain his/her life. In some places, poverty alleviation is considered a process of social inclusion, whereas in other places, annihilation of caste is considered social inclusion. The notion of inclusion may vary based on the grounds that we critically examine the scenario. One might be academically included in the mainstream with a PhD degree, yet due to lack of employment opportunities he/she might be excluded from the job market.

To expand, social inclusion requires opportunities and resources that are necessary to ensure the participation of those who have been excluded in economic, social, political and cultural life. It should then be able to provide them with a standard of living and well-being which is considered normal in the society in which they live. Furthermore, such provision ensures that their voices are respected in any decision-making which affects their lives (European Union 2004). Thus, it is claimed that social inclusion is a systematic process that rescues a person or community from the risks of uncertainty and exclusion. It elevates living conditions and in the process, all options are explored and exploited to attain social inclusion on a sustainable basis. One of the approaches to understand the social exclusion/inclusion phenomenon could be to employ a rights-based approach. In order to define what social inclusion could constitute, one may refer to the rights that are available in that particular territory. Rights may include the constitutional safeguards necessary for social inclusion. Hence, the state provides certain guarantees that would allow a systematic inclusion of those excluded community or people. However, social inclusion is a much broader concept than the rights-based approach. The social inclusion approach needs more welfare-based policies in order to deal with the causes and consequences that promote it. There are quite a few numbers of scholars who argue that the notion of social inclusion has come to light in order to accommodate the growing demands of the postmodern society.<sup>5</sup> The acceptable part is that the concept of social inclusion could accommodate all kinds of demands raised by modern society.

It is argued that a variety of social groups exist and struggle to earn a dignified life a daily basis. Two specific groups known as “excluded” and “included” constantly attempt to deal with each other and the latter creates

necessary structures to maintain the status quo. In other words, it is the “included” who do not generally open up to make the necessary provision to include those who have been excluded (Sojo 2001). Pocock (1957) put it simply that the process of exclusion and inclusion are a fundamental feature of all hierarchies. The participation of socially excluded parties in their own inclusion is considered a key mechanism in order to address the concerns of social exclusion. However, it is relevant to argue that social inclusion should never be considered an antonym of social exclusion. In addition, a mere policy to include people into the mainstream may not actually result in their active participation in the mainstream. It would require further assistance and provision in order to make the inclusion take place. For example, Scheduled Castes, the historically excluded section in Indian society was provided with the abolition of untouchability as a basic right through Article 17 of the Indian Constitution. However, abolition may be a necessary condition for the inclusion to take place, but this in itself does not promote inclusion. Thus, this was supplemented by affirmative action which offered them a number of positions in government jobs, legislative membership and state-run educational institutions. Thus it is narrated that while social exclusion and inclusion are two sides of the same coin, they are the result of different influencing actors, laws and processes (Silver 2010).

While there is an active debate about how to integrate the excluded in the mainstream, Ward (2009) opines that the mainstream itself is exclusive where certain sections maintain the dominant social order over the other. However, trust, networks and norms could potentially form to improve the efficiency of society by enabling actions where the actors either facilitate or gain by participating in such actions (Bourdieu 1997). It is also emphasised that in order to transform the direction where current social systems promote social exclusion, it is necessary to have a responsible civil society that recognises and enriches values, freedom and inclusiveness (Mohan 2007). In addition, the state in several instances promotes skills among its citizens in order to empower them to address their own social problems. For example, the British government, in its attempt to achieve full social inclusion of its citizens, aimed to reduce the welfare burden on the state, promote skills among individuals and create active neighbourhoods with a focus on employment generation, while enriching prospects to gain employment by facilitating proper training and education (Ward 2009).

We have so far discussed social inclusion as a reverse practice of social exclusion. Though there is not much debate or research that has focused on social inclusion, there is a lot of research as well as policy implications established to tackle social exclusion and to understand how it creates a hostile environment for a holistic human environment to evolve. Since these two terms are opposite and interdependent, disabling one of them enables the other. However, it would require an extra mile to move from exclusion to inclusion where special provisions and facilities are required to undergo the transition as discussed. It is learned from existing literature on social exclusion, that discussion and deliberation on policy and process in relation to social inclusion is highly useful to understand the crux of both the domains. Considering the existence of limited research on social inclusion, this research focuses on understanding how a combination of social exclusion and social entrepreneurship could create social inclusion. As discussed, it would be a wise choice to depend on the civil society in its advanced form, which takes care of the problems faced by the excluded communities and provides a constructive dais for a conducive transition towards social inclusion. Thus, the following section opens a space to put forward a novel understanding about social entrepreneurship.

## SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Social entrepreneurs within the third sector emerged as crucial actors to address major concerns of social exclusion in order to promote social inclusion. Bornstein (2007) perceives “social entrepreneurs as transformative forces in today’s world, people with new ideas to address major problems who are relentless in the pursuit of their vision” (Schwartz 2010, p. 80). Social entrepreneurs are also considered the social architects of a new social economy (Jeffs 2006). Various local initiatives across the globe have significantly benefited from social entrepreneurial endeavours. However, in the recent past, various national governments have capitalised to tap into the innovative approaches adopted by social entrepreneurs in order to reduce social disparities and to overcome economic and employment barriers among the disadvantaged sections. Scholars believe that social entrepreneurship is not just meant to address social problems, but to catalyse social transformation in an effective and efficient way (Alvord et al. 2002). Accordingly, though they address problems in relatively small societies, the multiplier effect of such solutions promotes significant social transformation, where they influence larger systems.

Social enterprises differ from existing organisations which look after social development by the degree in which they adopt both entrepreneurship and innovation in their operations (Campell and Sacchetti 2014). It is argued that social entrepreneurs would prefer to avoid “quick fixes”. One of the major problems with regard to the existing social order is that it always looks for quick fixes. While demand from the social context partly forces the initiatives to get quick fixes, social enterprises are largely involved in local environment where the cultural contexts and community participation are given priority. Thus, they negotiate, advocate and explore various possible opportunities to reach a solution (Fawcett and South 2005). In addition, they aim to create sustainable social order by addressing or promoting sustainable grassroots initiatives. For example, Boschee and McClurg (2003, p. 3) opine that “as long as non-profits continue to be dependent on contributions from individuals, grants from foundations, subsidies from government and other forms of largesse, they will never become sustainable or self-sufficient”. Unless a non-profit organisation generates earned revenue from its activities, it is not acting in an entrepreneurial manner. It may be doing good and wonderful things by creating new and vibrant programmes. We can call such NGOs innovative but not entrepreneurial. Despite depending on outside funders, NGOs failed largely to adopt innovations to question the status quo.

Social entrepreneurs initially identify social problems that exclude certain sections or groups of people from the mainstream. The platform created by identifying a problem moves to the next levels by creating an organisation and/or mobilising resources to address such problems. The social entrepreneurial endeavour may take place using different methods, which include (a) initially, entrepreneurs may simply start a voluntary organisation or NGO which is financed by charities or government-funded programmes. In such scenarios, they may employ the deprived or excluded, which is referred to as the Work Integration Social Enterprise (WISE) approach; (b) while initiating activities and creating social value with the help of the donor-based service delivery system, they might start an entrepreneurial venture to support their social mission; (c) in the exploration to acquire a range of financial mechanisms to promote the organisational sustainability, they may employ cross-subsidised approaches while working in one single entity, or create different institutions for serving multiple target groups; (d) after achieving initial results that look stable, the intervention can then be scaled or replicated in other geographical contexts. Nevertheless, all efforts are generally focused on building the



sustainability of the venture. In addition to the above method, entrepreneurs may just want to start a social business after identifying the social problem based on the opportunity, need and resource availability. They might benefit the society in various forms by the adoption of innovations, but unlike business ventures, their major objective falls within the philosophical boundaries of solving a social problem. The envisaged financial returns are considered secondary, which are in turn expected to facilitate the primary objective.

As part of the endeavour, social enterprises promote social capital among communities and build their capacities to create inclusive societies. Thus, social exclusion, social entrepreneurship and social capital are all interrelated processes where each facilitates the other in order to build a robust social order. Social entrepreneurs are known for creating social capital among the excluded, therefore, it is related to the process of social inclusion. In fact, social exclusion and social capital are the two most prominent terminologies that provide the framework for re-envisioning the interrelations between economy and society. They are influential in different locations. Social exclusion, in Europe and Latin America, is prominently discussed and debated, whereas social capital is the preferred concept in the USA and developing countries (Daly and Silver 2008). Thus, the creation and promotion of social capital among communities form a significant factor for social entrepreneurship to thrive.

Putnam's work revolves around US social capital and its decline. He argues that faith in the governments in the USA has declined several fold from 75 % in the 1950s and 1960s, to 19 % in the 2000s. This has led to a contradiction on whether the government, originally meant to protect the social harmony, has failed to keep the faith imposed upon it by its stakeholders. School performance, public health, crime rates, clinical depression, tax compliance, philanthropy, race relations, community development, census returns, teenage suicides, economic productivity, campaign finance, even simple human happiness, are some of the important human quality indexes that have manifested deterioration over the years in the USA. Thus, Putnam demonstrated the need for building bonds of civic trust among the community (Smith 2007). It is quite clear that the lack of social capital creates conditions for the prevalence of social exclusion.

Evidences are not clear about how social capital grows. Some have proposed that it might even be an ephemeral concept, a consequence, rather than a cause, of government performance (Brehm and Rahn 1997). It

has been seen that the building or collapse of social capital may entirely be a result of governmental or institutional policy. The three frameworks described above—social inclusion, social capital and social entrepreneurship—delve into the density and quality of social relations, and they all stress the importance of active participation against the contemporary tendency of social isolation, or being alone, so to speak. Beyond this, Daly and Silver (2008) argue that both concepts, i.e. social exclusion and social capital, contain a strong normative element and are meant for social integration which would enrich social inclusion. While the importance of social capital is discussed, some forms of social capital are good in certain sectors, whereas, at the same time, they are not useful in others. There is a clear assumption that the antidote to social exclusion is social capital and social entrepreneurship, and equally that social exclusion depletes the stock of social capital.

There is ambiguity over the usage of the word “entrepreneurship” in social entrepreneurship, as entrepreneurship has been a prime engine for driving economy. Several studies have emerged differentiating between social entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship. It is felt that social entrepreneurs would continue to take inspiration from larger entrepreneurship fields. However, one of the prominent researchers—Santos (2012)—opines that social entrepreneurs adopt the logic of empowerment, whereas entrepreneurs adopt the logic of control. In other words, social entrepreneurs build the community capabilities by creating necessary social settings, whereas entrepreneurs advance their market positioning and profits in the market place by adopting “control” as a mechanism (Santos and Eisenhardt 2009).

As entrepreneurs redefine the perception of business, social entrepreneurs emerge as change agents in the social context. They seize opportunities that others may have missed, improve systems, invent new approaches and create spaces for change to happen in society. While a business entrepreneur might create an entirely new industry, a social entrepreneur will come up with new solutions to social problems and then implement them on a larger scale. Social entrepreneurs play the role of change agents in the social sector (Dees 1998) by: (a) adopting a mission to create and sustain social values; (b) recognising and relentlessly pursuing new opportunities to serve that mission; (c) engaging in a process of continuous innovation, adaptation, and learning; (d) acting boldly without being limited by resources available at that time, and (e) exhibiting a heightened sense of accountability to the constituencies served and for the outcomes created.

Thompson and Doherty (2006) argue that social enterprises have four basic features such as (a) enterprise orientation: social enterprises are directly involved in producing goods/services to markets for which they seek operating surplus while running the venture; (b) social aims: they have explicit social aims such as job creation and training the deprived by utilising local resources. They have ethical value which also includes a commitment to local capacity/capability building and they are accountable to their stakeholders and the wider community for the social, economic and environmental impact; (c) social ownership: they are autonomous organisations with governance and ownership structure based on the participation of stakeholder groups. Profits are distributed among the stakeholders, or used for the benefit of the larger community they serve; and (d) risk management: in pursuit of their goals, social entrepreneurs are most likely expected to understand and deal with the risks they might come across. In addition, social enterprises are also involved in less profitable markets/areas in the pursuit of including disadvantaged sections.

Social entrepreneurs operate with embedded mechanism where they work with communities. The embedded action may result in credibility, gaining local knowledge and acquiring resources from local contexts (Jack and Anderson 2002). The core idea of social entrepreneurship is to do business with a significant social mission or to start a venture for a social purpose. The goal would be limited to benefiting the target community or the deprived sections, rather than doubling the founder's economic benefits. So far, social entrepreneurship reportedly represented an exciting and emergent set of new models which offer hope for systemic, positive, social and environmental change that seeks the inclusive existence of societies (Nicholls 2006). When it comes to their existence, Yunus (2006) opines that, "social entrepreneurs are not interested in profit maximisation. They are totally committed to make a difference to the world. They are social-objective driven. They want to give a better chance in life to other people. They want to achieve their objective through creating/supporting sustainable business enterprises. Their businesses may or may not earn profit, but like any other businesses they must not incur losses. They create a new class of business which we may describe as 'non-loss' business" (p. 2). Furthermore, he adds that social entrepreneurs use different financial mechanisms to achieve their objectives; some just give away their time, labour, talent, skill, or such other needed contribution.

In addition, it is found that social enterprises most likely create systems to promote accountability and transference. Santos (2012) offers a novel

understanding of social entrepreneurship and proposes that both “value creation” and “value capture” can be used as a focal point of discussion in order to differentiate between the value proposition of both entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship, respectively. While value creation is measured at societal level, value capture is measured at organisational level. In other words, social enterprises “create value” whereas entrepreneurs capture the value. In order to further understand the notion, social entrepreneurs do not capture value as such at organisational level; their entire efforts aim to create value at societal level, whereas the prime role of enterprises is to capture value at organisational level so that the shareholders and other partners in the organisations’ management benefit due to the enhanced share value captured. When it comes to the value created in social enterprises at societal level, the value is proportionately distributed among the stakeholders in terms of improving their livelihoods, living style and overall well-being. This shows that maximising both value creation and value capture is not possible within an organisational context. However, at times both of them can be aligned in an organisation as part of the multiple value creation, there exist trade-offs, which has to be managed systematically. Such distribution of value is necessary to mitigate the possibilities of mission drift (Christen and Drake 2002; Haight 2011; Mersland and Strøm 2010). For example, it would always be easy for an organisation which aims to create value at society level to neutralise the tensions that exist due to a change in leadership or change in the markets, when such organisational culture is properly positioned in creating the value.

There are many social entrepreneurs across the globe working on ways to impart various skills among individuals and to empower them to enjoy their rights in a meaningful way. In India, in particular, where more than half of the total population live in rural areas, social entrepreneurial activities are highly necessary due to the prevalence of social exclusion in dictating the social realities. For example, rural India has become one of the most prioritised areas for social entrepreneurs to initiate their ventures. Rural social entrepreneurs have emerged to mitigate the problems of the excluded sections in rural areas through ISDS and employment generation.

There exists the need for partnerships and collaborations in order to make sure that the necessary resources are acquired to facilitate the process. In this regard, Fukuyama (2001) argues that cooperation between different stakeholders and agencies promotes further opportunities,

creativity in execution and social engagement. For example, the governance structures of social enterprises often include major stakeholders, where communities play a major role (Borzaga and Sacchetti 2014). In other words, partnerships with communities would create more conducive environments for social enterprises to thrive. In addition, developing countries have been seen as testing labs where both social enterprises and various players in ecosystem create necessary conditions for experimenting or undertaking innovative initiatives. In fact, several approaches invented in developing countries later became instrumental in promoting livelihoods worldwide. For example, the microfinance movement which was initiated in Bangladesh, was later replicated in several other geographical contexts, which benefited millions of people worldwide. It is argued that social enterprises need to embed themselves in local cultures in order to create robust systems where communities can enrich their existence and be actively involved.

In a nutshell, it is emphasised that social entrepreneurship undertakes a novel or innovative approach in order to address the concerns of exclusion and facilitate the transition towards inclusive societies. However, there has not been much focus in existing literature on understanding how social entrepreneurs address the concerns of exclusion in order to create inclusive societies. Thus, it is necessary to further emphasise how social entrepreneurship could enrich the concept of social inclusion. The following section briefly analyses the relationship that exists among social entrepreneurship, social exclusion and social inclusion.

## HOW DO THEY RELATE TO EACH OTHER?

Following the thorough discussion on social exclusion, social inclusion and social entrepreneurship, it could be argued that social entrepreneurs and the socially excluded come together in order to create what is called “social inclusion”. It is found that the failure of the state and the markets to empower or serve the deprived is the major cause for the existence of social exclusion and social entrepreneurship. These two concepts have a very interactive relation where social entrepreneurs need the presence of social exclusion to experiment and innovate. At a primary level, social exclusion describes and narrates the deprivation of the excluded, whereas at a secondary level, social entrepreneurship attempts to solve the problems of the excluded. Social exclusion as described talks about the lack of proper participation of individuals or communities in such activities

where their participation is needed for their personal growth and social development, whereas social entrepreneurs enable the contexts to create such environment by adopting unconventional market models and inclusive participation methods.

Social exclusion explains the inability of a person or a group to do certain things when they are struck by a set of problems. Since social exclusion is a multidimensional construct which creates allied deprivations, the living conditions of the affected are seriously affected. Thus, social exclusion as an academic discipline offers a novel understanding of contexts that open a space for an innovative institutional form to rise from the gap created by the practice of social exclusion. The social entrepreneurial approach is therefore necessary in the current research to thoroughly understand how the grassroots level realities draw necessary contexts to analyse the process. Existing scholarship has already demonstrated that social entrepreneurship is different from any other form of institutions that exist in the current context. As discussed, unlike the welfare state and other actors in the third sector including NGOs, social entrepreneurs have a mindset that sees possibilities in the prevailing environment, rather than the problems themselves (Dees 1998). In other words, social entrepreneurs are the “People who realise where there is an opportunity to satisfy some unmet need that the state welfare system will not, or cannot meet, and who gather the necessary resources and use these to make a difference” (Thompson et al. 2000, p. 328).

The triple bottom line approach adopted by social entrepreneurs offers scope not only to address the concerns of the exclusion, but also to create a sustainable society (Peacock 2008). For example, in addition to its social performance, a firm’s environmental and economic effects are considered significant factors that direct its existence. Overall, the presence of social exclusion fuels the practice of social entrepreneurship through the use of different innovative methods. The literature so far described that social exclusion derogates social living and destroys social ties, whereas social entrepreneurship not only provides basic facilities to address social problems, but also builds confidence and skills among the stakeholders. Thus, it is essential to analyse the conditions and constructs in which both social exclusion and social entrepreneurship interact with each other in order to create inclusive societies. In addition, it becomes more relevant to understand how embeddedness and community participation become crucial mechanisms for social entrepreneurs to nurture their existence and create necessary mechanisms for fostering social value.

## RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The conceptual differences have their own significance because social exclusion, social entrepreneurship and social inclusion as a combined area of inquiry has been less researched and investigated by researchers. Although the concepts seem to be more relevant in the context of developing countries in terms of articulating the participation of different sections in the mainstream, the policy agenda seems to ignore their relevance. It is further learned that the three broad concepts and processes in discussion are dynamic in nature and have implications within the framework of social networks and social bonds. To demonstrate the relationship among these three concepts, the processes have to be described and unveiled by articulating the activities among the three notions.

The basic understanding derived from the introduction and review of the literature in this initial chapter is that the prime task of social entrepreneurs is to facilitate excluded communities to form social capital among themselves in order to strengthen their social ties. They do so by embedding themselves in the local structures in which they operate, and promoting community participation. While scholars argue that community participation and embeddedness are two necessary mechanisms to create successful social order, there has been no thorough research to understand the local level constructs that create the social order. Social enterprises through adopting innovation and entrepreneurial approaches not only claimed to create systems that are inclusive, but also elevated their activities to be sustainable. Jack and Anderson (2002) in their seminal work, opine that it is essential to move away from the entrepreneur focus alone understanding to analysing holistic context in which the process is embedded. Similarly, it is essential for social entrepreneurship to do so and to understand the local contexts in which the process is embedded. Seelos et al. (2010) argue that knowledge about the structure in which social enterprises emerge and develop is essential to understand further and nurture the field. The local community, with the help of social capital, should demonstrate that the innovative attempts carried out by social enterprises are sustainable. Thus, it helps to achieve social inclusion of excluded groups in the developmental process, which is viable and sustainable. However, there is a need to understand the social realities that facilitate the process. Thus, the research attempts to analyse how independent variables such as social entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurial strategies and processes adopted, affect various dependent variables including, but

not limited to, social inclusion, social capital, community participation, embeddedness and social transformation. The research adopts a case study approach to enrich the understanding. Barefoot College in rural Rajasthan has been selected for this purpose.

Barefoot College, located in rural Rajasthan, is a significant example of a successful social enterprise in India. Though it was started as a voluntary organisation four decades ago, through the mobilisation of local resources and the entrepreneurial orientation it embarked, it is now in the process of becoming a self-sustained venture. The successful existence of the College has been instrumental in encouraging the community members to take up several innovative initiatives at different levels. Empowering rural illiterates to become Barefoot Solar Engineers, doctors, teachers, architects, and so on is a significant innovation that is practised at Barefoot. The empowered community members are then expected to return to their communities not only to serve the rural communities, but also to ensure the sustainability of the intervention.

#### Rationale Behind the Chosen Site for the Fieldwork

Barefoot College has been selected after following Flyvbjerg's (2006) paradigmatic case perspective, where the researcher believes that Barefoot College can provide a nuanced understanding about community practices, as community integration is one of the strong reasons for its success. Further, Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) opine that the paradigmatic cases are central to human learning and knowledge generation. While scholars are expected to select cases using their intuition under paradigmatic notion, the present case has been selected beyond the author's intuition as the case is well proven in the practice of social entrepreneurship due to its larger contribution to social value creation. As detailed by Seelos et al. (2010) data embedded in community practices come in exploratory nature which offer rich knowledge for theory building. The rural case study has been selected because it is easier to observe social realities in a rural context. For example, Jack and Anderson (2010) opine that social relations are transparent in rural areas. Accordingly, it is easier to observe such social influences to build theory.

Barefoot College, which has been selected for the purpose of the study, is a hybrid form of social enterprise located in Tilonia, Rajasthan, India. It has been chosen because of its successful operations and the social transformation created as part of its existence. Barefoot College was created in 1972 to eradicate rural poverty and to assist the rural poor to be able to earn their dignity by elevated social, economic, political and cultural



contexts. When we talk about social entrepreneurship in India, Barefoot College becomes a familiar name. It was started as a volunteer organisation, by employing various innovative and entrepreneurial approaches and it evolved as a social enterprise. In the process, community participation has been adopted as a crucial mechanism and their empowerment is achieved thereby. The transformations the organisation itself has undergone to attain larger social transformation is worth understanding to enrich knowledge not only of social entrepreneurship academic scholarship, but also organisational theory.

## METHODOLOGY

Both secondary and primary sources of data collection have been used. For secondary data, the study is based on books, articles in referenced journals, and reports prepared by different organisations and various governments that deal with social entrepreneurship and Barefoot College. For primary data, fieldwork has been carried out using the qualitative data collection method. As already discussed, a case study method is adopted. The study talks about embeddedness and community participation and it is imperative to engage various qualitative techniques to derive proper results. The researcher believes that a quantitative study may not facilitate getting into each and every corner of the broad areas such as the socio, political, cultural and economic aspects of the respondents. Thus, it is observed that information relating to these issues may be obtained using qualitative methods. It is believed that understanding the life patterns of the respondents over a period of time may be useful in order to gain greater knowledge of the structures employed, contexts promoted and social impact created.

The research has adopted inductive methodology where initially, a modest attempt has been made to review the existing literature based on which research objectives are drawn and field research has been carried out. After data analysis, the researcher then reviewed the second stage of literature, as part of which the researcher, referred to the literature on embeddedness in order to contextualise how organisational context including social entrepreneurship and the matters related to sustainability of the organisation are influenced by the larger social context and community participation. Thus, the scope of this research is to understand the practice of social entrepreneurship and its dynamic formulation. The qualitative research methodology resulted in comprehensive descriptions

as well as explanations of processes, and allowed to preserve the chronological flow, assess local causality, and derive fruitful explanations (Miles and Huberman 1984). Many of the issues used in this research call for qualitative approaches, e.g. case study analysis, narratives, discourse analysis, or ethnography that are aimed at understanding the meaning behind the existence of Barefoot (Hammersley 1992).

Fieldwork was conducted in four stages. The first phase of the fieldwork took place between December 2008 and January 2009; the second between April and June 2009; the third between September and November 2009; and the final and most crucial phase was conducted between January and April 2010. During the fieldwork, the researcher initially stayed at a friend's house and then later stayed at Barefoot College Guest House.

The total universe of the study is 250, from which 98 in-depth interviews were collected. Group discussions were also carried out with villagers, where several men and women were interviewed about the usage and impact of the services that are delivered by Barefoot College. Unstructured interview pattern has been used while collecting the data in the form of interviews. All the interviews were held at the work places, and at the respective houses of the respondents. During the interview of every respondent, detailed notes were taken, apart from recording the interviews with a digital recorder. Apart from these in-depth interviews, the researcher spoke to several villagers who are actively involved in Barefoot activities.

Observation method also has been used while collecting the data, both overt (everyone is aware they are being observed) and covert (no one knows they are being observed, the observer is concealed) methods have been employed while collecting the data. In addition, both direct and indirect approaches under the observation method have been used in terms of observing the interactions, processes and behaviours under the direct approach whereas improved lifestyles have been measured in the indirect observation method.

## DATA ANALYSIS

For data analysis, the researcher has initially adopted lean coding with a few codes and then expanded them based on the re-review of the data that was carried out (Creswell 2007). Accordingly, we have developed several codes, which were later either reduced in order to maintain the focus in

the manuscript or merged with similar codes that have strengthened the arguments. We have also avoided adopting prefigured coding based on literature, which might have influenced our coding pattern (Crabtree and Miller 1992). Once codes were classified, we then converted them into categories or themes. Each category or theme has been developed in the paper based on various perspectives drawn from the data (Stake 1995). At this stage, we have further discarded some data which had nothing to offer in response to the research questions that the research intended to address (Wolcott 1994). We have developed the themes based on data and observations made on the field site (Hammersley 1992).

This chapter offered a nuanced understanding about the relationship among the three dynamic concepts explored in this research i.e., social exclusion, social entrepreneurship and social inclusion. In addition, the chapter also indicates that community participation and embeddedness are two crucial approaches that help social enterprises to achieve sustainable social value. We now turn to the literature in those fields to understand their relevance for the practice of social entrepreneurship and make a detailed attempt to offer a rich analysis of the context.

## NOTES

1. Creative destruction is a process whereby the new product or process comes into the market by destroying the existing ones (Schumpeter 1942). For example, every new mobile phone that is invented not only brings new technology into the market, but also destroys the market for old mobile phones. Schumpeter documented this process as creative destruction which he credited as an essential element in capitalism.
2. The Innovative Service Delivery System (ISDS) refers to a structural change in service delivery patterns through which empowerment of the poor and the deprived is made possible in a sustainable way. It could also be seen from the lens of any non-traditional service delivery. Even centuries after the adoption of the traditional structure of service delivery, the result has been so embarrassing where people have been pushed towards more vulnerability and exclusion. Their capabilities have been underestimated and surprisingly underused for centuries. As a result, they have been forcefully linked with the multi-dimensional patterns of exclusion. This scenario has brought a sea change in the behavioural aspects of some individuals whose

aim is to dissolve social problems and further promote social cohesion. This structural change in service delivery is the result of efforts by social entrepreneurs who in the process elevate the capabilities of the deprived through which employment and jobs are provided.

3. Untouchability is a social practice which is a by-product of the Hindu caste system. The Dalits who are placed out of the caste hierarchy are considered as untouchables.
4. Kummitha (2008) in his earlier research introduced social re-exclusion as a process which excluded the excluded sections who are in the process of inclusion.
5. Based on a discussion with Doctor Nagaraju Gundimeda, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Hyderabad on 21 March 2011.

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## Social Entrepreneurship, Community Participation, and Embeddedness

We learned in the first chapter that social exclusion as a practice is capable of depriving several sections of people from mainstream society, whereas social entrepreneurship could form an antidote through transforming their lives. However, it is argued that unlike the established institutions such as the state or other civil society organisations, social enterprises initiate entrepreneurial ventures to create both financial and social value by building on community culture and capacity building. Thus, the way that social enterprises interact with communities and the structures in which they operate is of crucial importance to understand the field of social entrepreneurship. The chapter builds on literature related to community participation and embeddedness and analyses how they influence the practice of social entrepreneurship.

One of the major problems with regard to the developmental discourse so far is the fact that it has ignored community participation in the planning and execution of the very projects that are meant to improve their lives. As a result, Burkey (1993) claims that many of the efforts to foster the economy of developing regions have largely failed. He further explains that such efforts have neither been grounded in local cultures and values, nor have found sustainable efforts to manage the initiatives for longer periods, especially beyond available funding. This has led to communities disowning the initiatives or projects which were meant to improve their living conditions (Hall and Hickman 2002; Boyce 2002). The top-down approaches and imposed philanthropy claimed to fail to

create respectable living for excluded communities. For example, Peredo and Chrisman (2006) attributed this scenario to the “beggar mentality,” where communities are forced to accept the initiatives and benefits thereof. As a result, there has been uproar against the functioning of western style institutions and practices in the global south, which quite often fail to pay sufficient attention to local practices and knowledge (Rodrik 2007; Tandon 2002; Khawaja 2004). These initiatives or projects which come from the imposed development do not take local knowledge and culture into consideration. When the projects are developed without taking local knowledge and perspectives into consideration, communities tend to show the least interest in those projects, which apparently result in their failure. For example, Cadrido (1994) while referring to Africa claimed that it has become a graveyard of the development projects as most of them fail due to the externally induced developmental approaches and processes. Accordingly, it is argued that ideally any development strategy should come from the indigenous people and their ideas and knowledge. Any development imposed in a system by external parties is considered counterproductive, irrespective of its proposed contribution.

Communities often develop a negative opinion about the presence of developmental experts from elsewhere. There is a general tendency that experts coming from the outside believed to have the knowledge required to quickly fix the problems that have arisen in the communities and thus, they expect the communities to accept the quick fixes they propose. For example, Botes and Rensburg (2000) opine that the developmental experts consider themselves the sole owners of wisdom and knowledge and whatever they bring from elsewhere must suffice for the communities. Thus, the top-down approaches and externally induced developmental efforts have been gravely criticised by not only critical thinkers, but also by communities. Accordingly, community participation is expected to fill the void by bringing the communities on board. However, the question arises whether empowering communities using external knowledge would benefit their overall development, or would it be ideal to create systems from within and utilise local resources and knowledge in order to build the knowledge systems on which the community capabilities could be based and enriched. At times, communities may be unable to offer sufficient knowledge or approaches required to address the problems due to their deprivation and suffering. However, it is argued that in order to enrich their capabilities and build sustainable living, it is necessary that

communities are in a position to take control over the initiatives that are meant to improve their living. The literature claims that social enterprises facilitate such processes by grounding their initiatives in the community culture (Seelos et al. 2010). Thus, the knowledge relevant to community integration and various methods followed as part of it are of high relevance for both theory building and practice of social entrepreneurship. In the next section, an in-depth discussion of community participation is proposed.

## COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Community participation as a practice of good governance became a predominant approach in the 1980s. Initially, the top-down approaches adopted by governing agencies and non-governmental organisations left a significant portion of the population out of the developmental efforts. Subsequently, they were unable to take part in the growth process. As a result, there has been a popular demand to influence the decision-making systems and introduce bottom-up mechanisms to transform social systems. Community participation is a key strategy related to the bottom-up mechanism where communities take an active part in decision-making, execution and evolution of the projects and initiatives that are meant to improve their own living (Gran 1983). In fact, the general perception has been that increased participation would promote greater efficiency, transparency, accountability, community ownership, and so on (Dorsner 2004). Later, with the successful application of community participation as an approach, scholars have adopted a rights-based perspective to understand the impact of community participation. The rights approach adopted to describe participation as a basic right enhanced a notion that the poor and excluded are neither passive beneficiaries nor mere consumers, but are the agents who are determined to build their own lives (Cornwall and Gaventa 2001). For example, UN-Habitat (2003) opines that the participation of poor residents in decision-making not only facilitates their rights, but also enriches greater effectiveness of the public policies. In fact, several national governments made special provisions to engage communities in decision-making. For example, the New Labour government in England, in its agenda to tackle social exclusion, adopted several innovative policies to modernise local government and work in partnership with communities and so on (Taylor 2007). Initially, discussions in the scholarly community revolved around trying to understand whether community participation

is an end in itself or is a means to an end (Michener 1998). Nelson and Wright (1995) argue that participation is a mechanism to shift power to the poor where sustainable poverty alleviation is possible. In addition, it is argued that community participation builds social capital among the communities.

### SOCIAL CAPITAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL DIMENSIONS

Social capital as a concept, along with community participation, rose to new heights in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Both concepts are equipped to build self-reliance and capacities among communities. Social capital emphasises the perspective that participation in social activities builds mutual trust, which will enhance the prospects of the participants to gain from such participation by mutually reinforcing the interests along with others who also participate in such activity. Social capital as a theory gained currency in the writings of Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988) and Putnam (1993). Putnam (2000) defines social capital as “features of social organisation such as norms, networks and trust which facilitate cooperation and coordination for mutual benefit” (p. 9). Social capital largely brings cognitive and structural understanding about how people gain from their relations, networks and mutual trust with others. For example, Palmer et al. (2002) argue that building social networks and social connections encourage people to participate in social contexts including local services and other voluntary activities. Trust creation among the subjects is a necessary condition in order to build social capital. Accordingly, social entrepreneurs spend a significant portion of their time building trust among the communities they serve. It also helps them to gain trust from the communities. Bourdieu (1986) emphasises that social capital is a result of an individual or group’s attribution in a social context. Social capital can be acquired by individuals or groups by purposeful actions where they can transform it for commercial or mutual gain. However, the ability of such gain purely depends on the bonds between the subjects, the nature of the social obligations and the length of the networks. Social capital is further classified between bonding and bridging social capital (Putnam 2000). Putnam emphasises that while bonding social capital establishes or fosters bonding within the community, the bridging social capital extends the internal bonding to other communities where the community which has social capital internally, strengthens its ties with others. He argues that it is the bridging

social capital that creates coercive and creative societies. Social capital that is enhanced among communities over a period of time allows them to have a common language where people from different social groups come together and behave similarly (Woolcock and Narayan 2000). This further enriches their capabilities to solve their own problems.

The introduction of sustainable development goals amplified the promotion of bottom-up innovations where communities actively undertake developmental activities in order to address their own problems. For example, in earlier research, Lyons (2002) expressed that social capital in community culture can be instrumental to achieve sustainable development. Social entrepreneurs involve themselves in collective actions where they empower communities, shared values and a sense of trust among the community members, which are indeed necessary for creating conducive environment for social inclusion to thrive (Dhesi 2000). Social entrepreneurs initially involve themselves in local settings and participate in the local culture, where they later influence and transform the local practices in order to enhance social capital and community participation. In a way, social entrepreneurs are expected to strengthen community skills and capabilities and their social ties.

Dhesi (2010) argues that social entrepreneurs mobilise community resources in order to build sustainable initiatives, apart from offering their own financial contributions. In return, they strive to create social value, rather than returns on their investments or efforts (Couto 1997). As part of the trust building in the initial stages, social entrepreneurs bring government officials, and other well-known people to address the communities in support of their activities, which strengthens the social capital among the social entrepreneur, his team and the communities. While community participation is claimed to be a crucial mechanism in order to achieve inclusive growth, as discussed earlier it is necessary that communities are trained or empowered to enhance their own skills. Thus, OECD (2009) opines that it is the role of state policy to construct services and strategies in order to stimulate enterprises, capacities of the communities and their social capital. Such policies should aim to enhance the strategies of public, private and third sectors, which will in turn promote community integration. In order to do so, the competent authorities should make sure that the decisions that influence the lives of the communities should be taken with active consultation from the communities. It further argues that it is highly difficult to promote community engagement, their capacities and social capital when decisions are made externally.

Earlier research argues that entrepreneurs gain significantly by their networks at different levels, which help them to gain personally and institutionally (Manning et al. 1989). Community networks in particular are crucial for social entrepreneurs to ensure that their interventions result in community development and create social value. Perkins et al. (2002) opine that social entrepreneurship is a multidisciplinary construct which is useful for promoting formal and informal community participation. Social entrepreneurs, while building their community based initiatives, create inclusive social order which enriches social capital among the constituencies they serve. Community participation in the context of social entrepreneurship, in addition to enriching community awareness and their choices, also brings employment for the deprived communities. Kummitha (2016a) argues that by employing communities in their organisations, social enterprises experience win-win scenarios. While the most deprived among the communities gain employment and services, social enterprises are able to integrate themselves with the communities where it becomes easy for them to build trust and enhance community participation. Putnam (2000) emphasises that in order to build trust, it is essential to have face-to-face interactions with different people. While face-to-face interactions may not be possible in all contexts in the case of social entrepreneurial ventures, Zahra et al. (2009) opine that trust building and necessary embeddedness differ from a variety of methods used by social entrepreneurs to create social value.

Social entrepreneurship as a practice spread across different geographies in a variety of forms. In other words, the solutions social entrepreneurs propose take geographical concerns into account. Thus, taking geographic dimensions into account, Zahra et al. (2009) differentiate among three varieties of social entrepreneurs which include (a) social bricoleur, based on Hayek (1945) entrepreneurial model, (b) social constructionist, inspired by Kirzner (1997) perspective of entrepreneurship, and (c) social engineer type, inspired by Schumpeter (1942) contextualised entrepreneurship.

In the social bricoleur model, social entrepreneurial interventions are highly localised with a focus on local problems and communities. This is driven by first-hand exposure to a local problem. For example, the *Dabbawala* system in suburban Mumbai was initiated way back in 1890. Dabbawala literally means a lunch box delivery man, who collects lunch boxes from the households of various employees and delivers them to their workplaces by their lunchtime. Mahadeo Havaji Bachche identified the problem of office workers who were unable to take their lunch boxes with

them when they left for work because their wives were unable to prepare their lunches early in the morning. As a result, office workers were forced to eat in restaurants and as a result they often became ill. After recognising the problem, Bachche initiated the Dabbawala system with 100 dabbawalas, which has grown quite significantly over the last 125 years and now employs about 5,000 dabbawalas, serving about 200,000 clients every day. The second model, the social constructionist-based social entrepreneur, identifies gaps in the social market and fills them. It is argued that the issues addressed by the constructionists are of local relevance, however, they are easy to replicate in other contexts and geographies. For example, the water and sanitation programme initiated by Gram Vikas in India was initially developed based on a local need in rural Odisha, which was later replicated in several other locations and communities based on the requirements (Kummitha 2016b). The final variety of social entrepreneur is a social engineer who is equipped to undertake creative destruction in social markets. Their focus is oriented towards larger contexts, which are known in a variety of settings. For example, the well-known Grameen bank experiment in Bangladesh—where poor women are given micro-loans to undertake business activities—is of global relevance and has been successfully adopted on a global scale. Despite the scale, initially all social enterprises start as a social bricoleur who would then move on to build national and global-scale social enterprises. Thus the idea related to social enterprise on all levels comes with a tight community relationship.

Active social entrepreneurship and community oriented solutions for the problems they face would result in inclusive societies. It is argued that when communities are inclusive, they offer equal opportunities for members to share power and resources. When power and resources are shared equally among members, the values, beliefs and visions of all members will be shared (Townsend 1997). Individual preferences are transformed into community preferences, which enforces their participation. Ramachandran (2001) highlights how a state-based programme called *Shiksha Karmi* succeeded in achieving its objectives compared to many other programmes simply because it promoted strong community participation. Active community participation may infuse or engage communities to undertake or propose innovations in order to achieve greater value. For example, Seyfang and Smith (2007) claim that such engagement spurs grassroots innovations. Innovations are generally built on bottom-up initiatives, often using design technology in order to respond to local problems while simultaneously protecting the interests and values of the communities involved. Martin and Upham (2015) go a step further and

argue that values at the community level are crucial in fostering sustainable grassroots innovations.

When community members are together as a team, their optimistic levels are on the higher side towards collective action (Jessop 2003). Even when they recognise that the proposed effort might most likely fail, they would still move ahead as if its success is plausible. In such critical times, they are more inclined to adopt creative solutions in order to enhance the slim chance of success. Thus, the previous research recognises that the interventions rooted in communities offer a high success rate (Whitford and Ruhanen 2009). Accordingly, Quick and Feldman (2011) argue that inclusion and participation are the two major dimensions of public engagement in activities that affect their lives. Their participation would not only enrich the quality of the decisions, but also enhance the long-term capacities of the communities.

The bigger question that remains unanswered is whether communities have sufficient time to participate in the entire project planning, execution and evaluation. Especially when the communities consist of the poorest of the poor and the excluded who would often need to spend most of their time in search of their livelihood, then it might be difficult for them to participate in activities. For example, there is a significant portion of people who work continuously and remain poor or unable to eat two square meals a day. In such scenarios, how do we expect them to participate in the project planning and execution is a relative question. This is where the social entrepreneur responsible for the initiative must take into account local practicalities, and facilitate the process at the grassroots level. While a section of scholars argue as discussed that community participation is a holy grail and brings necessary changes in the way systems exist and create the necessary environment for inclusion to take place, a critical approach exists which questions various practices taken up as part of community participation and proclaims that community participation is an engagement which imposes participation as a mechanism on the communities. In this regard, the next section deals with the other side of the community participation.

### CRITICAL APPROACH TO COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Critics are of the opinion that community participation is a tactic of power blocks in order to project that their governing structures are poor-friendly. Taylor (2007) argues that communities are forcefully incorporated into



government agendas, which results in communities being responsible for their own deprivation. Communities became passive spectators in the entire episode where decisions are being made by others. For example, Rao (2009) carries out an interesting study in India in which he concludes that lack of awareness among communities is one of the major causes that hamper their participation in the development projects that are meant to improve their living or to provide certain services. Though tribal communities attend educational committees as participants, they are neither aware of their responsibilities nor the outcomes of such meetings, which conveys their levels of understanding. Scholars such as Tosun (2000) criticised the whole construct of a normative approach such as participatory development. He claims that participatory development, which is a practice enforced on the south by the north, is not necessarily viable in most cases or efficient in several cultures, whereas Li (2006) demonstrated that local decision-making is always vested in the hands of a few “elite” management or those who control power in local systems. Such individuals are considered knowledgeable, legitimate and efficient in such contexts. It is further emphasised that community participation is determined by the notion of authority, control and power at the grassroots level settings (Clausen and Gyimóthy 2016).

Community participation, which involves the participation of communities in initiatives or projects from the very beginning i.e., from the proposal development stage, is claimed to offer better benefits for the communities. However, in several instances, communities are asked to join the process at a later date, particularly during the execution or implementation stage. In such cases, communities are just used as pawns in projects that have already been developed by external experts. In fact, Gilbert (1987) argues that in Latin American societies, governments have used community participation to maintain existing power relations. He further argues that it is too dangerous when community participation is handled by the wrong people. In fact, actual scenarios in rural contexts may gravely differ where small things could lead to big differences. When different opposing groups present themselves in a single community, they do not engage in mutual discussions, nor agree on certain elements, which may be of greater use to bring development and harmony for the whole community.

In fact, communities are the focal point to manifest exclusions where power imbalances exist between different sections of people within a single community. Cooke and Kothari (2001) emphasise that community exists

as a power block where solidarity and conflict are both present. Space as a physical entity creates scope for the power block to operate. Deprived communities need to take an active part in the “space” from which they were earlier excluded. Actors in the community are often connected to each other by the networks of communalism and symbiosis (Aldrich and Ruef 2006). Space becomes an instrument for communalism and exclusions to take place. The space is by nature exclusionary, where certain sections are restricted to participate and perform the duties necessary for them to be equal in social order. For example, Lefebvre (1991) argues that space is a social product, which is produced by the dominant sectors that enables some and blocks the others. However, the notion of community participation which operates in the forefront, creates a space for everyone to participate equally in the process. It is quite relevant to argue that neutrality never exists in spaces in which a section of citizens are invited to participate, for whom such participation previously never existed. This may also be true in the case of those spaces, which are specially created for a section of people (Cornwall 2002).

In fact, the way that physical spaces are constructed represents exclusion. Foucault (1975) emphasises how physical spaces are built or arranged in symbolic structures to serve domination and control. For example, in primary schools in India, Dalit children are assigned to sit on the back benches or away from children from mainstream society. When we consider space in both the physical and normative notion, those who have been invited to participate in such space never get a chance to participate to their fullest capacity. However, what becomes important is to understand who is inviting whom and what do both parties think of participation and to what extent. Accordingly, when social entrepreneurs invite excluded communities, or create a new space which is considered to be mainstream, efforts are being made to curb deprivation and exclusion. In this regard, community participation enhances the prospects to co-create such spaces.

It is also felt that the main intention of the state to adopt community participation in state-run programmes is not to improve the living conditions or to benefit the marginalised, but to maintain power hierarchies and to ensure that the poor are silent (Botes and Rensburg 2000). In other instances, it is mainly the developmental partner that selects the community members to represent, instead of communities selecting them, which doesn't necessarily result in active community participation in the entire activity.

Despite the criticism and scholarly outrage against the practice of community participation, it is claimed as an instrument for change to occur. In order to enrich its effectiveness, power dynamics must be zeroed down in the social context (Finsterbusch and Wicklin 1987). It is emphasised that community participation is an instrument for communities to solve their own social problems and develop methods to meet their own needs. It will help them to acquire power which was earlier retained by the state, markets or a certain section of people. It is assumed that innovative interventions undertaken by social entrepreneurs could actually facilitate this transition. It is found that with social entrepreneurial interventions, communities benefit from spin-offs where they gain the knowledge and skills required to participate in routines that are intended to bring them into the mainstream. For example, Goonj, a social enterprise located in Delhi, undertakes work for a cloth programme. The beneficiaries of this initiative have actively participated in various other livelihood activities and gained significantly. Creating scope for communities to “participate” is nothing other than creating space for them where they previously had none (Cornwall 2002). It is in fact about asking them to engage themselves in spaces to which they were earlier denied entry. Thus, social entrepreneurs as visionaries of social change first imagine such spaces where they may be able to build space for those who were never considered worthy. Such spaces open continuous interactions and learning opportunities for community members who often come from a variety of social, political, economic and cultural backgrounds. Sometimes communities may show an inability to participate in activities due to the failures they had experienced in the past. For example, when Joe Madiath of Gram Vikas wanted to work with tribes in rural Odisha, the communities had not believed his promptness as they had experienced several people in the past who promised lucrative benefits, but in return had benefited from their hospitality, collected some money from them and left without offering anything. Thus, communities need to be persuaded to believe in what constitutes social entrepreneurship and the benefits that they might gain by participating in the proposed activities.

While emphasising the benefits that community participation brings, Finsterbusch and Wicklin (1987) further described that public participation in the projects attracts more resources and achieves greater results, by using underutilised labour from communities. Several rural initiatives have been successfully built on community labour and reduced their investments on the projects. For example, Gram Vikas as part of its 100 percent

sanitation scheme provides the necessary infrastructure and some funding to look after the facilities, whereas beneficiary communities not only provide labour for free but also contribute about USD 18 as a joining fee for the general maintenance of the project which is again managed by the communities. Thus, in several cases, even community participation will enhance the prospects of achieving sustainability of a given project (Kummitha 2016b).

As discussed earlier, social entrepreneurs need to have a high understanding of the constituencies they aim to empower. This obviously results in the social entrepreneur becoming much closer to the subjects and the issues being addressed. Such closer connections are subjective in nature where all the social entrepreneurial team members may not have equal access. However, such difference in closeness may result in difference of opinions, priorities and expectations among team members. Such difference of perceptions may create biases with those closest to the communities hijacking the initiative (Renko 2013). Such closer connections and networks with communities elevate the status of the social entrepreneur and the teams from “outsiders” to “insiders.” The social entrepreneur, in addition to building social capital, needs to embed themselves in the local contexts in which they operate. Existing research argues that embeddedness is a key mechanism to build trust and to enrich their prospects to build their initiatives on community context. Given the fact that embeddedness offers a crucial context for social entrepreneurs and their teams to indulge themselves in the communities they serve, the following section analyses the role of embeddedness in achieving social value.

## EMBEDDEDNESS AND SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Embeddedness aims to find out how social entrepreneurship as a process is affected by the social entrepreneur’s dyadic relationships in addition to the overall structure that exists in a social system (Granovetter 1985). Embeddedness as a metaphor argues that economic actions are not stand-alone, rather they are influenced and enacted by social spheres (Johannisson and Monsted 1997; Johannisson et al. 2002). If we consider social entrepreneurship as a combination of social and economic activity which aims to create social value rather than capturing social value, it becomes crucial to understand how economic action is shaped by social action. Granovetter (1985) emphasises his argument that embeddedness focuses on the concrete personal relations and structures, resulting in trust and disowning

malfeasance. Embeddedness offers a crucial mechanism to understand the constructs about the value creation mechanism in social entrepreneurship. In addition, it also offers a clear idea about how social entrepreneurs and their teams, with the aim of creating both social and financial value as a parallel mechanism, operate to achieve them. Granovetter (1985) was the pioneering scholar who first wrote about embeddedness. “How behaviour and institutions are affected by social relations is one of the classic questions of social theory” (p. 481) is the major question that he posed. He argued that neoclassical orientation under theorised the importance of social relations on behaviour and institutions, who then went on to argue that economic actions in any given condition must account for the social relations in which they are embedded.

As discussed, being embedded is one of the key processes in the practice of social entrepreneurship. It is argued that local cultures enable social entrepreneurial action, which later transforms perceptions and beliefs among communities. In a way, communities and their culture first enable social entrepreneurs to embed in it, who later adopt innovative mechanisms and instruments to influence the cultures and their masters to adopt the best possible methods that are relevant for bringing them into the mainstream. Management scholars opine that social entrepreneurs need to embed in the local processes and social structures in order to grasp specific knowledge about local culture, resources and rules (Jack and Anderson 2002) and build the motives and expectations (Uzzi and Gillespie 1999). It is further argued that embeddedness allows entrepreneurs to understand and engage in local cultures and settings, which result in reaching out to communities to access available resources and opportunities. Accordingly, Seelos et al. (2010) argue that embedding in local cultures is necessary for the early stages of social enterprises to be successful. This advances social enterprises to build trust and create social capital among the constituencies they serve. While social entrepreneurs face several constraints, by way of existing practices and prejudices in the local culture, there are other institutional mechanisms, ranging from regulative, normative and cognitive forces, which influence social entrepreneurial embeddedness and its process (Scott 2008).

Smith and Stevens (2010) argue that the length of the geographical area determines the level of embeddedness of the agent in the structure. They argue that the smaller the geographical area, the stronger the embeddedness becomes, as a result of limited distance and growing interactions. As proposed earlier by Zahra et al. (2009), social bricoleur social

entrepreneurs will be able to render the highest form of embeddedness due to their close proximity with the communities. They are able to build on a two-way embeddedness where entrepreneurs embed themselves in communities to gain relevant knowledge and trust, which in turn is only possible when communities also embed in the social entrepreneurial approaches and processes (Smith and Stevens 2010). Jack and Anderson (2002) further emphasise that embeddedness includes understanding the local structure, integrating oneself into the structure, and creating new ties and cultures, which opens a space for the structure to be re-created by adopting the principle of co-creation, and then sustaining it. In the end, the agent's active involvement allows one to use community participation as a mechanism to create a structure which is based on the aspirations from local communities. How structure influences the agent and vice-versa is an important question which requires thorough understanding. It is argued that in order to form a relationship which later inspires embeddedness, at least two or more people need to interact in space and time (Sorenson 2003). Accordingly, it is found that the larger the distance, the more the chance to form embeddedness reduces (Smith and Stevens 2010). Embeddedness further allows social entrepreneurs to build on the trust created, knowledge gained and social capital promoted among communities to enhance community participation.

Structuration theory takes embeddedness to the next level and offers a novel understanding of the social entrepreneurship practice and its embeddedness in a community environment. It is understood that human behaviour is constrained and structuralised by ongoing social relations, and as a result, constructing them independently is a myth (Granovetter 1985). Thus, Giddens (1984, p. 54) narrates the interaction between structure and agency in the following way—"All human action is carried on by knowledgeable agents who both construct the social world through their action, yet but whose action is also conditioned and constrained by the very world of their creation." Agent behaviour is dependent on the particular context in which they operate (Steinerowski and Steinerowska-Streb 2012). Earlier authors including Cooke et al. (2005) argue that structurally embedded social positioning enables agents, known as social entrepreneurs in communities, to acquire different resources in addition to the information flow. Social entrepreneurs who operate in local contexts adjust themselves and modify their behaviour in order to embed themselves in the local structure. They call this process adaptive structuralism.

Jack and Anderson (2002) adopt Gidden's structuration theory where agent and context are explored to understand the entrepreneurial process. It is especially necessary to understand the role of resources to create an enabling environment for the successful existence of the firm. The structuration theory offers scope for understanding the social entrepreneurial embeddedness in a structure which is manifested by local cultures, norms and practices. Thus, forming or building culture is an ongoing process which is constructed and deconstructed in the process of its emergence and existence. Granovetter (1985) argues that culture being a process not only shapes its members, but is also shaped by them. Thus, the community culture in the context of social entrepreneurship influences the social entrepreneur or agent, who later influences the structure in which he/she is embedded.

In the entrepreneurial context, embeddedness is instrumental in offering profitability (Jack and Anderson 2002). Accordingly, in the social context, embeddedness offers scope for sustaining the venture as communities are able to actively participate in activities initiated as part of the social entrepreneurship (Kummitha 2016b). However, scholars like Uzzi (1997) emphasise that stronger local embeddedness in entrepreneurial orientation may limit the venture's growth potential in terms of limiting its access to venture financing, whereas for social entrepreneurship, it may not be seen as an obstacle.

Being embedded has its influence on the entrepreneurial process as the structure implies its expectations, intentions and objectives upon the decisions made in the process and the outcomes. It offers a mechanism which allows interconnected local resources and social systems to decide the actions at system level (Baker 1990). In a way, embeddedness allows social entrepreneurs to deepen their relationship with "others" in the social space and reduce uncertainties by mobilising various players in the decision-making process. In addition to the advantages embeddedness brings, Granovetter (1985) argues that it may also contribute to the falsification of the context. He emphasises that it is easy to exploit someone who trusts you. Thus, there is a larger scope for the misuse of trust. For example, in the global south, marginalised women trusted the microfinance initiative due to its embedded nature in the problem context, whereas it later resulted in creating disasters by charging communities heavy interest rates. Embeddedness is altogether more than just developing social networks; it is about trust, social capital and the resulting larger community participation that the entrepreneur develops in the local culture. While social enter-

prises embed in both local and global networks, it is necessary for them to manage with networks that exist in both the contexts. In fact, if a social enterprise fails to embed in the local context, then there is a significant threat for this social enterprise to access local resources and legitimacy, which may threaten the very existence of the social enterprise.

Thus, as argued throughout the chapter, community participation and embeddedness has the potential to create the necessary environment for social enterprises to achieve their social mission. This chapter highlighted that community participation not only provides scope for social enterprises to gain, but also benefits communities in terms of elevating their capabilities and building sustainable social order. Embeddedness in the process offers scope for social entrepreneurs and their teams to build relationships and trust with communities and transform the norms and cultures that hinder the development of local communities. As discussed in the introduction, the next chapter will build on the case study research and analyse how embeddedness, innovation and community participation help communities to achieve social inclusion.

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## Barefoot College: Philosophy and Governance

We have so far discussed how social exclusion deprives individuals and communities from basic living. In addition, we have also learned that community participation and embeddedness could be instrumental for social entrepreneurship to empower and enhance the capabilities and skills of communities. However, community participation does not occur in isolation; it requires institutional encouragement and pursuit. Accordingly, we have described how social entrepreneurship as an institutional approach is capable of bridging the gap between communities to achieve inclusion. The book now moves on to understand the influence of a social enterprise on communities. How community participation has become a tool for an initiative to emerge as a social enterprise and how the social enterprise has become an instrument to empower citizens using various innovative mechanisms. We turn to a rural social enterprise called Barefoot College in India to understand the mechanisms which are instrumental in bridging the connection between exclusion and inclusion. The chapter aims to understand the governing structures created for the purpose of addressing multilevel social problems under the broad Barefoot approach. It also focuses on demonstrating the philosophy and governance of Barefoot College and understanding how innovations are instrumental in carrying out a variety of initiatives.

## BAREFOOT COLLEGE

Barefoot College was formally registered as Social Work and Research Centre (SWRC) in February 1971 in Tilonia. The College's main campus is located in Tilonia, a village in the Rajasthan state in India. The College is spread across the state with the help of various decentralised centres which are responsible for overseeing developmental activities in various places. Barefoot was named as a College due to its efforts to integrate communities through both formal and informal education. Such education is expected to build necessary knowledge and skills among the masses to construct inclusive societies. Initially, the College was established by educationalists from different parts of India in order to deploy the philosophy of social work in rural India, which, by and large, was in the tight grip of urban social workers. Initially, the main purpose of the College was to listen and learn from each other, where farmers in the villages and social workers from urban areas come together in order to develop rural areas. During the 1970s in particular, the College focused on professionals and farmers, between whom there was an expected exchange of ideas and experience, which was to be used to benefit communities. It was clear in the beginning that the existence of Barefoot College was to address multiple problems faced by villages and rescues them from the clutches of exclusion. Hence, in the first few years, it was a joint venture between literates from social work academic backgrounds and illiterates who hailed from communities affected by problems. Accordingly, the Barefoot College emblem depicts a person holding a book and another person holding a plant; a clear reflection of the initiative adopted. However, with the passage of time, initial ideas and intentions have been significantly transformed by the continuous innovation adopted for enhancing social participation. It has helped them to construct an enterprise that later provided a lot of choices for the deprived to enhance their market and social participation. In fact, the term Barefoot itself evolved when Chinese leader, Mao Tse Tung, launched a programme to train farmers to become health workers and replace mainstream doctors. Inspired by such an inspirational experiment, Barefoot College has evolved with several innovative activities in a more sustainable way.

## ORIGIN OF THE CONCEPT

The Barefoot initiative began when Bunker Roy<sup>1</sup> and his friends visited Tilonia to study the communities and understand the social structures that existed there. They studied the basic social structure in the village,

their way of living and their share of contentment. Prior to this, Roy had attained an external expensive education from one of the elite schools in India. Despite such an elite background, he decided to go and work with the villagers. When Roy first arrived in Tilonia, he faced a list of questions from communities including, but not limited to, “Are you running from the police? Did you fail in your examinations? You did not manage to get a government job? Is there something wrong with you? Why are you here? Why have you come from city to this village?” (Roy and Hartigan 2008, p. 70). This has been the prevailing situation in most rural settings to date. It narrates the social reality where villagers are unable to expect an educated person to come to their village to serve them. There is a strong assumption that educated people do not usually go, or would not want to go back, to the villages. In addition, worsening scenarios emerge when government officials, who are appointed in villages to serve various immediate basic services including education, health, engineering, and so on, are not willing to move in. In fact, most of the questions Roy faced came from women and adolescents as he saw barely any adults or young men in the village.

The youths from the village had migrated to nearby towns and cities after having acquired diplomas or certificates from colleges in the nearby towns. However, the qualifications acquired from these colleges were barely entertained in the city environment. Hence, the situation imposes on youth a forced exclusion from the employment sector. As a result, Roy was further frustrated through understanding how the unemployed rural youth end up promoting slums in urban areas. Due to the lack of respectable employment, youths from villages tend to end up in slums where their basic survival remains at stake. The youths, instead of moving back to villages when they find that their prospects are minimal to gain respectable employment in the cities, check their luck by continue to live there. Even parents would not want their children to go back to the villages as the situation there remains disastrous. Roy wanted to change the scenario by transforming rural dynamics in terms of creating employment within the village structures where the employment generated would facilitate the basic services required among the communities.

## HISTORY OF THE COLLEGE

As discussed, the original name of the College was Social Work and Research Centre (SWRC) and it dealt mainly with the poor and the excluded. Later, the College was renamed Barefoot College, symbolising

the poor and the excluded who enter the College to become professionals who are able to address their personal and community needs. Over a period of time, Barefoot College realised that communities are capable of addressing their own social problems provided that proper capacity building is undertaken. In fact, Barefoot College, which initially consisted of urban-based experts, has in fact learned several issues from illiterate locals who possess traditional knowledge. “After speaking to them, we have gained a lot of knowledge and realised that this knowledge should be utilised to ensure their inclusion in the mainstream. After a series of discussions and debates with the villagers, we have established SWRC,”<sup>2</sup> said Roy. Communities were encouraged to share their experiences, ideas and knowledge through which many villagers were motivated to take part in the College activities. Following SWRC’s philosophy of “learning by doing,” people came to the College, learned and became professionals such as computer engineers, hand pump engineers, solar engineers, architects, masons, to name a few. The poorest of the poor and the illiterates were trained and given the knowledge to employ themselves. This is the reason it became known as Barefoot College. Without formal degrees, diplomas or education, communities acquired knowledge through mutual learning under this approach. The founder has played a crucial role in developing the College and its philosophy. He faced several odds when he started this journey, which was initially not even respected by his own family. However, the initiative was later owned by communities and it benefited from their interactions.

Bunker Roy was born in 1945 in Burnpur in West Bengal, India. After having a very exclusive education, his parents expected him to take up a high-class job in a government or private enterprise. But when Roy took an active role in Bihar famine rehabilitation activities post 1960s, his total behavioural aspects had transformed. He had seen people living in extreme harsh conditions in rural areas and then realised that this was not what he wanted to see. His participation in the post-famine rehabilitation activities made him to decide to work for people who are deprived of basic survival skills, and to empower them to live a dignified lifestyle. Then, with the encouragement of his friends and other well-wishers, he decided to live in the villages and offer sustainable solutions for the unaddressed rural social problems.

When Roy informed his mother about his wish to go and stay in the villages of Rajasthan, she did not talk to him for six months. She was horrified, because, having provided her son with the most expensive



and best education, she wanted him to take up a reputable job instead of staying in a village. But Roy decided to take a different route after being greatly saddened and influenced by the Bihar floods. After reaching Tilonia, it did not take him long to realise his decision to stay in villages was not unworthy. He had seen extreme conditions in the villages near Tilonia, Rajasthan where communities were most affected. In the process, he and his team became embedded in local cultures, aspirations and ambitions in addition to the views of the communities about possible ways to move away from their problems. He further envisaged that rural knowledge and skills needed to be tapped in order to empower the way in which they live. While listening to the voices of the excluded, he wished to adopt the ideas that came out during the discussion to explore better ways of addressing social problems. As Bernard Shaw mentioned, “the reasonable man adapts himself to the world, whereas the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself” (Elkington and Hartigan 2013, p. xi). Roy is claimed to be one such unreasonable person. Due to his significant contribution, Roy was awarded with the Schwab Foundation Award. He was rated as one of the most influential 100 people of the world by *Time* magazine in 2010, among many other recognitions. In addition, Roy emerged as the source of inspiration for many young social entrepreneurs, not only in India, but also across the globe, to take up challenging initiatives in order to address social problems.

Roy has always been an inspiration to the workers at the College. He inspires them to question the status quo and unleash new ways of development. Kazzi Devi narrated how we came to Kotadi, a village where she was previously working. “He had come to visit the Crèche School, which was located five miles from where we were residing. He had come there and asked me, Kazzi Bhai, ‘could you prepare breakfast?’ Instantly, I made it for him, and he walked with us for five miles to see the Crèche School. On that mud road, his toe hurt several times and his sandal was also damaged, but he never compromised his commitment for the day and he kept on walking. In fact, I was tired after walking for some distance due to the humid summer. I can admit we walked the whole distance only because he was with us as his presence brought necessary positive change. He visited all the crèche centres and spoke with the children and with all the men and women. His working style is what keeps us moving”. This kind of behaviour has been helpful for us to work better. The required commitment in fact

has been partly as a result of the space that communities offered him to engage in.

Roy saw extremely horrible conditions of rural life when he entered the rural areas. On the one hand, he witnessed a decrease in community knowledge and cultural system due to the fall in capabilities and accumulation of skills. On the other hand, the failure of civic administration in leading the rural development mission constantly forced the communities to explore other alternatives. Roy had seen the resources in the form of villagers in harsh and difficult conditions. Rather than seeing the youths or villagers as passive beneficiaries, efforts were made to integrate them in the entire process of their own inclusion.

### DURING TRANSITION

As discussed initially, traditional learning from communities was of great use to Barefoot College to implement or undertake various activities that were necessary to include the excluded sections in the mainstream. In the process, employees of the organisation who came from urban areas needed to learn several processes that existed in the villages. Those who came to the villages with the intention to serve the communities had to go through a deschooling process due to the conflict between their existing knowledge, which they gained from their education system, and the practice at ground level. However, later, between 1975 and 1979, the organisation faced significant crises including founding members leaving the campus due to problems related to ideologies, as well as decision-making.

In the initial stages, experts from the cities were considered saviours to address various social problems that the villagers or communities faced. Accordingly, they were given the highest priority in decision-making and paid high salaries, which resulted in creating a gap between educated professionals hailing from the cities and illiterates from the villages. As a result, the main objective of the organisation, which was to bring together experts and villagers in order to use their professional knowledge and traditional skills respectively for the creation of harmony and inclusion, was thrown off course. Very often, rural masses did not dare to speak freely in a gathering where professionals were present. Thus, it was decided after thorough discussion and deliberation to leverage everybody's positions in the enterprise, irrespective of their qualifications. Thus, all privileges and powers were balanced. In addition, the lack of infrastructural facilities in

remote Rajasthan where the College was located pushed the professionals to depart the College, leaving it with only illiterates and farmers. Further, there was ample evidence to suggest that the experts had failed to provide the necessary knowledge or expertise to address the rural problems. For example, when the professionals were asked to locate a solution for the water problem in the village, they suggested digging up wells to search for water. This was carried out on a priority basis for more than five years initially, but the search did not yield any solutions. Then, instantly the rural masses suggested that trapping ground water would be more effective in the rainy season. That way they could easily locate ground water. In fact, rain water harvesting has turned out to be one of the most successful programmes run by Barefoot College to date. This scenario helped Barefoot to understand that it is essential to preserve and respect the local knowledge and culture in order to take the necessary steps to address the local problems. It was also considered that promoting the participation of the communities, especially those who have been associated with the problem in the decision-making process of the project would produce better results, because of their long involvement with the problem. This is how the College induced community participation as one of their key areas that would require sufficient attention. “We have looked at the problems that the poor face from their point of view and not from the point of view of a so-called expert looking from outside,” Roy clarified. He elaborated further “We have come to the conclusion that by using their own knowledge, skills and practical wisdom, it is possible for them to solve their problems themselves.” (Coles 2002, p. 42). As a result, today 95 percent of the staff at the College come from rural Rajasthan. The internal crisis, when the professionals left the College, was one of the major problems that the College had faced, whereas the external crisis, such as pressures from the government had left the College vulnerable. However, with sheer commitment, the College could address these problem.

In the initial stage, the enterprise made the villagers aware of social evils including the corruption of local political leaders. As a result, the College attracted sharp criticism and allegations from lawmakers in the State Legislative Assembly. Due to the unexpected exposure of political leaders by the College, the gap between Barefoot College and the government had widened. In fact, one of Barefoot College’s campuses was on government subsidised land, given to them to run the College. Thus, the government was annoyed with SWRC and the College was pressurised by the government to vacate the premises, which had been offered on subsi-

dised rates. However, the innovations that were pioneered at the College attracted several well-wishers from various places around the globe. Accordingly, during such critical times, the visit of Robert McNamara, the then president of World Bank and former security adviser to the US President to Barefoot College campus, helped the College to receive global support. After the World Bank President's visit, the government was left with no option but to support the College, due to the pressure from not only local constituencies, but also from global parties. In fact, both internal and external difficulties and the pressure from various sides experienced by the College in the first few years made the College and the villagers strong enough to take on risks and innovation to address their own problems.

With this background, Barefoot has taken a transcendental approach in which the poor were given priority both in decision-making and implementation. It was felt that community active involvement would negate the socio, political and economic pressures it receives from different dimensions. In general, villages in India are classified based on several identities. Caste plays a crucial role in deciding social background and restricts the participation in the mainstream of those who fall in the lower order of caste hierarchy. Caste creates the highest form of discrimination and exclusion. Hence, Barefoot was in dilemma as to whether its aspirations when dealing with such social backgrounds and cultural hierarchies in villages would allow them to experiment with various activities that would largely benefit the excluded. For example, in order to let excluded communities access water from public places, it was realised that the caste hierarchy would never allow any person from socially deprived backgrounds to draw water from open wells. Especially in villages where untouchability prevails, it becomes literally impossible for those who are placed in the lower of the caste hierarchy to fetch water. Thus, after identifying such problems rooted in social and cultural settings, it was identified that the caste-based approach<sup>3</sup> would not allow them to achieve their desired objectives, and therefore a poverty-based approach was adopted. When a poverty-based approach is adopted, it could be argued that any section, irrespective of their social and cultural background, could equally participate and benefit from the activities initiated by the College, thus, leaving minimal scope for conflicts to take place. Accordingly, a large section of groups are able to find place in the target groups including, but not limited to, marginal workers, landless peasants, marginal farmers, rural artisans, women, children, Scheduled Caste, and Scheduled Tribes (STs) (Murray et al.

1997). This approach has helped them to embrace the discrimination and exclusion derived from caste-based practices. This thought-provoking and innovative approach helped the College and communities to adopt the poverty-based approach to deal with those affected by caste hierarchies.

The entire structure of the social enterprise has been transformed to help those who are excluded and need assistance to lead their lives. In the process, their previous experience, which they gained while working with the urban-based professionals, helped them to learn that the problems that exist in rural areas must be addressed by villagers using their traditional knowledge or enhanced skills, as it is too ambitious to expect professionals from urban areas to serve the needs in villages. The initial learning has forced them not to depend on any external agency or factors. In fact, they constantly questioned whether it was appropriate to invite or entertain someone from the outside, who neither has any expertise on the local issues, nor is interested to learn from the local cultures in order to address the problems existing in local structures. Accordingly, they united to argue that it is necessary for them to address their own problems. Thus, they started to adopt a bottom-up structure, where communities take up the interventions. The major aim of Barefoot has transformed to assist or guide the poor to depend on themselves, rather than on professionals from elsewhere. Furthermore, Barefoot wants to be an institution which is owned by its beneficiaries. Accordingly, the stakeholders are asked to be more active and take part in the construction and development of the College. It envisaged to actively promote reverse migration from cities to villages through offering ways in which employment can be created in the villages. This has also enhanced the image of the organisation among stakeholders; the communities were particularly impressed by the existence of the College. Barefoot College had also realised that active community involvement would help them to get away from political influences. In fact, conflict with political groups helped the College to gain necessary trust and embed itself in the culture of the community.

## POST-TRANSITION

In the post-transition phase, particularly following the major external and internal crises, Barefoot College concentrated its focus on the poor, the impoverished, the economically and socially marginalised and the physically challenged who earn less than USD 1 per day. It aimed to empower them to acquire skills, which will help them earn two square meals a day.

Situations in the social enterprise are made accessible to the very poor for whom the College is built. All activities have been made poor-friendly. Everyone sits, eats and works on the floor. They have differentiated between market wage and working wage and prefer the latter to reduce administrative costs involved in order to achieve better results to empower the communities for whom they work. The needs of the employees are also taken care of. For example, “when a member of an employ’s family becomes ill, a doctor is available on the Barefoot campus, schools are made available for the children of the employees, in addition, the college funds the higher education of the children in terms of educational allowances. For those who stay on campus, a house, electricity and water supply are provided. We are experiencing about how to be more dignified and happy without having more money. That is why I always feel that one has to be happy with whatever he/she holds, and finance never becomes a major topic for discussion. I have lots of faith in the Barefoot system, because I am one among those who have framed the system,” Ratan Devi reiterates. Salaries in the organisation have been paid according to the needs in the village. It is claimed that the salaries will look after the needs of the employees and allow them to save a part of it.

After undergoing the transition, the ideology of Barefoot College, as mentioned by Roy and Hartigan (2008), focused on four key components i.e. alternative education, valuing traditional knowledge and skills, learning for self-reliance, and dissemination. In order to pursue them, the College adopts: (a) training the deprived sections, especially women and the illiterate youth, on solar electrification of night schools and remote villages; further they are also trained to repair and maintain them; (b) the provision of safe drinking water by conducting continuous water quality tests, locating the hand pumps in needy areas and further maintaining and repairing them by the Barefoot hand pump mechanics; (c) training and employment generation in artisan related products; (d) educating the children through night schools and pre-primary schools in the villages; training the semi-literate youth to become teachers in these schools; (e) the empowerment of women by allowing their presence in all the initiatives and ensuring their participation in the social movements; (f) enabling technologies to be rural friendly; (g) promoting traditional communications including puppet shows to spread awareness in the villages about the issues related to social and environmental concern; and (h) the provision of basic health facilities through community health workers.

In order to achieve its objectives and create a holistic social order, Barefoot College has been training Barefoot doctors, teachers, health workers, solar engineers, hand pump mechanics, accountants, designers, communicators and architects. All these positions are held by the local youth, women, deprived sections who come from illiterate or semi-literate backgrounds. The selection process of such youths and women is based on a need-based approach.<sup>4</sup> It is claimed that those who want to enter Barefoot College as an employee must have several normative constructs including “honesty, integrity, compassion, practical skills, creativity, adaptability, willingness to listen and learn, and ability to work with all sorts of people without discriminating” (Roy and Hartigan 2008, p. 72). The candidates are first expected to undergo training before joining their respective jobs. The College does not provide any paper degrees or certificates<sup>5</sup> on completion of training or gaining working experience, because it believes that paper degrees or certificates would encourage them to migrate to nearby towns for employment. Any such move would mean that the College was contributes to urbanisation, which goes against one of the major reasons for its existence. Thus, the College never provides paper degrees in order to make sure that the trainees continue to work with communities to improve their living.

The College adopted several innovative methods such as learning by doing and learning from failures etc. in order to allow communities to engage in continuous innovation. Villagers and communities are encouraged to learn from each other and from their respective local knowledge. As discussed earlier, though it is named a college, there are no classrooms, or lectures by experts or teachers, unlike the typical college system. Everyone at the College is considered an expert, where learning by doing is respected and practised.

This training and knowledge acquired as part of the learning by doing experiment opens up new avenues for disadvantaged people. Due to the high priority given to the communities and their participation, all the initiatives of Barefoot College are expected to be collectively accepted in community meetings. In fact, to initiate an activity, prior approval from the village level committee<sup>6</sup> is necessary, followed by acquiring endorsements from all the concerned village level committees established to undertake such activities. The village level committees are equipped with the necessary power to administer the day-to-day activities of the College.

As discussed in the last chapter, communities are largely ignored in the decision-making processes related to the activities that influence their living, and the efforts of existing systems have failed to address the social disparities due to the external influence and top-down approaches adopted thereby

(Wallace 2003). The College, therefore, decided not to allow any funding or governmental agency to pressurise them to adopt policies fixed or framed by such agencies in the external context. As discussed, the villagers are given training so that they address their own social problems and contribute to each others well being. For example, by adopting innovative steps to promote capabilities at the grassroots level and use them to serve the needs of the communities, Barefoot doctors serve the needs of the villagers. While teachers educate those who are unable to attain formal education, solar engineers electrify remote areas where electricity systems are not managed properly, and architects construct rural water harvesting systems.

### THE WORKING OF THE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

The activities undertaken to provide basic services to communities have been distributed among various divisions created within the College. All the activities including education, groundwater, solar energy, health, women empowerment, communication, rural enterprises (Hatheli Sansthan) etc. have been undertaken by their respective divisions. Each division is headed by a coordinator who comes from the local community with at least ten years' experience of working in the Barefoot system. All the activities in the College are decentralised and accordingly, each section has its own budgets and accounts. Every month, review meetings are conducted in order to discuss the overall performance of each division and activities that require further attention.

The governing structure of the College is decentralised i.e. communities are empowered in multiple locations to deal with their own problems and thereby achieve empowerment. The College has five field centres in Rajasthan and 17 sub-centres in 13 states across India. Each field centre has a field campus. The field centres have decentralised working structures in order to empower communities in their respective regions. Barefoot believes that centralised activities will not yield better results. Hence, in order to serve the neediest on their door step, various field centres are created. Each field centre covers around 25 villages. Each village under the field centre is managed by a committee called Village Development Committee (VDC). All the activities at village level are controlled and coordinated by community-based committees, and they make sure that decisions are made collectively with regard to every activity. In addition to VDC, there are sub-committees that look after each activity, including Village Water Committee (VWC), Village Education Committee (VEC), Children's Parliaments (CP), Women Empowerment Group (WEG) and so on.



Among other activities being undertaken, trapping ground water has gained significant momentum due to the importance given to water in Rajasthan, which happens to be a drought-prone state. However, availability, affordability and accessibility of water sources in the rain-fed state is a major concern. Accordingly, rain water harvesting tanks have been constructed by trained community-based professionals. In addition, wasteland has been utilised and converted into nurseries. The village panchayats<sup>7</sup> look after the nurseries and promote plantation among the communities. Hansi Swaroop, coordinator of the Jawaja Field Centre, while speaking about the tasks that his field centre has carried out claims that they are working with two panchayats to implement solar projects. “We also worked with government and solar electrified 15 panchayats earlier. Accordingly, solar street light programme is another very important task that we have carried out. In some of the villages, where electricity is not available, we distribute solar lights. We also have a solar energy workshop, and installed solar lights in the night schools<sup>8</sup> under our given administrative region. We try to maintain these initiatives sustainably through various means of fund raising and community involvement.” Thus, the various activities described are promoted using community participation.

Another respondent narrated that night schools are being initiated for those who could not attend day school. The basic educational needs of the children are taken care by the night schools. Based on the suggestion of VEC, teachers are trained and then placed in the night schools to undertake teaching activities. Once the teacher is appointed after thorough training at Barefoot College, she/he will be transferred to the concerned VEC, which takes care of the teacher appointed for the purpose and pays their salary. Barefoot College transfers a lump sum to the VEC’s bank account and it is the responsibility of VEC to check the teacher’s attendance. Therefore, the committee is empowered to play a vital role as a monitoring agency. The village has to provide a space for the school. Jawaja field centre has 13 such night schools. In addition, they also work for women empowerment, National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), women health, and other women-related issues. With regard to community participation, Swaroop, the coordinator of the Jawaja field centre, opines that “unless we make the communities aware, it is highly impossible to bring, and sustain the change.” Thus, there has been continuous emphasis on community participation and in fact it has become an integral part of the entire process.

The Barefoot College campus was built by Barefoot architects. Twelve Barefoot architects, under the leadership of Bhanwar Jat, who can barely read or write, made it possible by constructing a new fully solar electrified campus (Barefoot solar engineers installed a total of 40 kilowatts of solar panels and five battery banks). They proclaim that all aspects related to the construction went smoothly, except the handling of the money. As described earlier, it is the responsibility of the concerned committees and communities to spend the allocated money on the activities that they undertake and be accountable. As the architects came from communities who had never seen such a huge amount of money—USD 21,000—they claimed to have found it difficult to spend the amount that was allocated, on the construction. The completion of the construction involved various ways of impressing everyone involved in the process. They measured the depth of the wells and floor spaces using their arms and hands and a traditional measure called the *hath*<sup>9</sup> (Roy and Hartigan 2008, p. 76). Every single person working on the campus was consulted for their approval and acceptance to construct the buildings and their suggestions were taken care of. The solar energy installed on the campus by the “solar engineers” provides power supply to 500 lights, fans, a photocopier, 20 computers and printers that work in various parts of the campus including the hospital, pathology lab, marketing centre, library, a shop that sells handicrafts, solar electricity training centre, a traditional media centre which stages puppet shows, screen printing, a phone booth and a milk booth. The jury of Aga Khan Foundation Award (an award given to the best architect around the world) opined, “augmented traditions and knowledge of a rural community, enabling untutored residents to design and build for themselves and the success of this approach is exemplified through the construction of the campus by an illiterate farmer from Tilonia along with 12 other Barefoot architects most of whom have no formal education” (Sebastian 2002, p. 8). The employees who undertook the construction activity come from various deprived families within the communities. The most excluded from the communities get the chance to receive training and they are either expected to be nominated by the communities, or the aspirants prove that they come from excluded backgrounds. It is an interesting process. Thus, let us understand how the various positions are filled at Barefoot College including the procedure adopted.

### HOW EMPLOYMENT IS OFFERED

It is quite interesting to learn about the recruitment process. The process is quite simple and need-based. It is claimed that “a simple reason to work in Barefoot College is that, if you are poor and are interested to

take home a minimum wage, then you can come here [Barefoot College]. There are no gates to prevent you from being with us. Of course, you can leave whenever you lose interest. If you are totally into money making orientation, you are strictly advised not to choose a job here, because it is not going to work out. If you are passionate and interested to work in your own way for doing social good, then you can be accommodated happily in our Barefoot family. You do not require to have any paper based qualifications. We will trust you and respect your capabilities,” says Bata, an employee in the Audio Visual section. It is found that the process, as learned from the respondents, is quite simple which, in itself, is highly useful for the poor and the excluded sections.

People approach Barefoot College for voluntary employment, and in return, a small honorarium is paid. Once they are recruited, Ramkaran, who has been involved with the College for more than 35 years, says that “everyone knows the principles and non-negotiable values that we respect. Whoever is comfortable with it, can come and join the Barefoot College. Lots of people approach us even from other regions. They understand our approach and learn skills in the College, go back to their respective places and start similar work. In fact, there are people who come from other countries to receive training in order to go back to their respective places for implementing various activities we undertake here.” The Barefoot approach has been replicated by as many as 20 different organisations in 13 different states of India<sup>10</sup> and the approach is slowly expanding globally. Most of the job roles, for example, to become either a social engineer or a teacher, are filled with female community members because they will continue to stay in the villages with the communities, even after completion of their training. The College has learned over a period of time that when women are trained, they are most likely to become attached to communities, whereas men tend to migrate to cities for jobs. This strategy not only helps Barefoot College to achieve its objectives to serve the communities, but also the participation of women in employment results in their families becoming empowered and women themselves gain quite significantly among their own communities and societies.

There is a committee with secondary level leaders, who are termed in this work as second level social entrepreneurs, which coordinates activities of the organisation. Those who are interested in working are expected to express their willingness to the committee which will then decide whether to recruit or not. The committee meets twice a month and makes decisions related to employment. The appointment process follows a need-based approach where the candidate's needs and background are taken

into consideration. “Before they handed over an appointment letter to me, we had a discussion in which they asked me several questions including what did I study? How much beega (beega is equal to 1/3rd of the Acre) land I own? How many dependents do I have? What does my parents do? Based on my answers, they realised that I was in need of a job. My recruitment was entirely need based. They wouldn’t have selected me, had I been from a wealthier family,” Naru shared his experiences. The second approach adopted for recruiting employees is by referral from communities. When an initiative needs to be taken up in a community context, Barefoot asks the community to nominate someone from the community to be trained in order to serve the community as part of the initiative. For example, when solar electrification process is initiated in a community, it is the responsibility of the community to identify and nominate a person to be trained by Barefoot. Accordingly, the person who is trained is expected to serve the community. In most cases, it is the poor and the excluded that are nominated and trained. A need-based approach is followed in which only those who cannot survive without a job are appointed. Capabilities, qualifications and backgrounds are never viewed as significant factors when selecting the employees. It is considered that since all the candidates have barely any educational qualifications, they will learn the skills and acquire capabilities through learning by doing methods.

### COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

As discussed, Barefoot promotes community participation as a crucial mechanism to empower communities and to partner with initiatives in their own inclusion. As found in the second chapter from the existing research about community participation, community participation could well represent the hegemonic social order where gaps always exist. However, in the case of Barefoot College, it is found that in order to avoid any such scenarios to take place, the communities are made part of the activities from their very beginning. In fact, Barefoot does not get into any initiative without the involvement of the communities. There is a perspective promoted among the communities that if any problem persists in the villages, the villagers have to come together and make a decision in order to address the problem. During the course of this process, communities may adopt some of the innovative solutions that Barefoot is familiar with or they may come up with entirely new approaches. Such new approaches will be tested, modified and adopted by communities with support from

Barefoot College. So, the organisational transition as discussed earlier helped Barefoot to transform into a community-centred organisation. Barefoot, as an organisation, facilitates community tasks and advises them how to move forward. Whatever “programmes we undertake, we need to get prior approval from the community. We strive to get the best with relatively less resources we have,” Ramcharan, who is presently working in Harmada Field Centre, expressed his views. Communities represent the core of the work that Barefoot College undertakes, and while it has not done any wonders, it is operational in its normative limits. “We have been staying in Tilonia since 55 years. We are familiar with the College for about 30 years. We are very happy with the services, being provided by Barefoot College. They give us solar energy, when there was no electricity. We are provided water through rain water harvesting method. Our children have been provided with basic education whereas our women have significantly benefited from various activities. What I like most from the College is that they provide us the best at the cost of the cheapest methods that they employ,” gushed Shyam Karan, a beneficiary from Harmada village..

Before writing a proposal, representatives of Barefoot College meet the communities. Based on the consensus drawn from such meetings, Barefoot College prepares proposals and applies to different funding agencies. Communities give ideas and play a responsible role. The role of the community, Barefoot College, government and other agencies involved, are discussed within the community. Upon the completion of initial agreement among community members, Barefoot starts preparing the proposal. Once a funding agency approves the proposal, the grant approved as part of it is immediately transferred to the VDC in accordance with the project guidelines. Thus, communities are expected to play a crucial role from framing the guidelines to undertaking the activities. Barefoot College works as an intermediary in order to create the necessary awareness and knowledge among community members where elevated knowledge and skills help them to carry out the activities. Accordingly, the VDCs are asked to open a bank account and the money is transferred into their account. This shows that communities are not only responsible for controlling the work, but also have control over the money spent on their development. For example, Barefoot runs 150 night schools in 150 villages in a sub-district. Barefoot employees cannot physically go and check every day whether the teacher is present or not in the school. Hence, the power of control has been vested in communities themselves. In the case of construction-related activities, communities

purchase the material required, pay the bills and complete the construction. So, control is centralised within the communities. The committee looks into the day-to-day activities, and tackles any problems that may arise in the process. “We have acquired a wealth of knowledge from the communities. Whereas we have also taught them in several aspects. We believe that when our capabilities are different, it is ideal to learn from each other,” Ramkaran, coordinator of the Women Empowerment Section, added. The committees are responsible for undertaking various activities, undertaking their roles and making sure that communities are sufficiently provided with necessary services. Krupakaran, a beneficiary, mentions, “I am a member of the VDC. I have been associated with this committee for the last 12 years. A school building, several rain water harvesting tanks and solar electrification of several households have been taken up so far. Everything has been done with our active participation. I do not have any relation with the Barefoot except that I am a member of the VDC.” It is narrated that communities and VDC constantly engage with one another in order to create value at community level.

Engaging communities in activities is a mammoth task. They have to be trained in various skill sets and their awareness levels need to be enhanced. In fact, embeddedness as a mechanism helped the College to integrate itself with communities. Further, communities have started to influence the activities of the College with their active participation and as a result of the embeddedness. Initially, communities expressed several reservations. It is the responsibility of the College to create awareness. According to Sushila Devi, when she used to go to villages, all the men and women were suspicious about her involvement with communities. In particular, there was a heightened curiosity about her intentions among the communities as to whether she was trying to take resources, which they might otherwise be getting from the government. There are several women in the villages who have never moved out of their houses or villages thus far. So, creating awareness among such women about their rights and entitlements was the biggest hurdle that she had faced several times. “Awareness building and exposing them to the government policies and programmes is a biggest concern for her. Lack of awareness among the villagers is the biggest reason for all other problems exist in villages,” she claimed.

When it comes to internal governance and structures, everyone is expected to participate in community interactions beyond cultural or social hierarchies. “We never compromise on our non-negotiable values like equality—equality in caste, gender equality, religious equality, etc. Honesty

is also a necessary quality among the beneficiaries: honesty towards work, honesty while dealing with money, and honesty with the communities,” says Ratan Devi. She further says that they have been sustaining the organisation by tapping the local resources available in the villages. The embeddedness allows the College to integrate with communities and collect ideas. It is all about establishing partnerships with communities for their own inclusion. Participation of communities is given utmost priority and, in reality, it could be seen as the basic foundation for Barefoot College. It is found that problems are created by people, and the solutions thereof need to be found by themselves. While exclusion is not created by themselves, as discussed, it becomes their responsibility to address their own exclusion as it is unwise to expect someone else to visit the rural areas to serve them.

As discussed, the village level meetings are frequently conducted in order to neutralise the hierarchies that exist among communities. The village level committees are formed using democratic systems. The village level committees in fact claimed to emerge as key in the successful penetration of the Barefoot College with communities. However, the contributions of employees that Barefoot College recruits from communities, and which in fact offers better opportunities for such connections to take place, are not to be ignored. Before carrying out its activities in any village, Barefoot conducts a meeting in the village in which every villager is invited to participate. The VDC is selected in the meeting. VDC comprises of ten men and ten women. Among them, a man and a woman are authorised to manage the financial transactions. Those two individuals are selected by the VDC itself. “The account is opened in the nearest post office or bank so that they will not have to take risks while operating the accounts.” It is claimed that money power plays a predominant role in community empowerment. That is the reason the College ensures proper training in accountability and transference related issues.

To detail further the activities, if a school needs to have solar electrification, the financial resources will be deposited in the appropriate VDC account. Labour and engineers are sourced from the community.<sup>11</sup> Barefoot College mediates and trains the person that represents the community. Shama says that previously, there was no electricity available in her village. Her community in the village selected her and sent to Barefoot College to learn the processes and patterns of arranging solar light. She learned the necessary aspects related to solar technology. During her training, there was another training programme on solar cooking, and she was asked to learn the solar cooking systems as well. With the training she received and

subsequent field exposure, she later became a trainer, where she now trains uneducated women. In the process of mobilising resources for the activities that are proposed by the community, Barefoot College also invites communities to contribute to the proposed project. Accordingly, around 15–20 % of the total estimated budget is collected from the community itself.<sup>12</sup>

When it comes to contribution from the communities for initiating the projects, some contribute in the form of labour and others, who can afford it, offer financial resources. For example, as Ramkaran says, “we run crèche. If there is no nutrition to feed the children, we collect grain from the community and feed the children. People are always encouraged to donate whatever they are capable of including, fruits, vegetables or whatever necessary.” If the organisation does not have any funds to implement the programmes, the beneficiaries offer necessary resources to run such activities. Since all the activities have been approved by community members, such activities are deemed necessary to address local needs. Thus, in the event of the failure to obtain funding from funding agencies for any initiative that is deemed to be useful for the community, the community itself comes forward and offers the necessary resources to undertake the initiative. Ramkaran further adds that the community must contribute to the completion of the project. For example, in the case of rain water harvesting tanks (RWHT), villagers are expected to dig the pit to lay the concrete in addition to offering a continuous supply of labour. This way, about 15 % of the total amount is covered by the communities. Apart from that, everyone is encouraged to take an active part in the projects in some form or other so that there is a partnership, which encourages everyone to work for the successful completion and maintenance of the project. This commitment has helped Barefoot to maintain the structure for a long period of time.

If funding for any project is rejected by the agency, contributions are then collected from the communities and the task is expected to be completed based on the need. In such contexts, it is relevant to argue that the completion of the tasks is of utmost priority, which is not restricted by the availability of finances. In the event of lack of funding, communities then decide how to move forward. As discussed, the role of Barefoot is to facilitate the process. Planning, implementation and maintenance are undertaken by the community. “Many governmental welfare activities have failed because they ignore the significance of people’s participation,” says Ramkaram. The literature in the last chapter has also emphasised about the importance of community participation, and lack of it has been seen as a major reason for the failure of many such efforts to promote their inclusion. Another example of active community participation is mentioned



by Bagwanthnandan, the coordinator of the solar section. He said that recently, “one of our field centres selected a village for solar electrification. It was an interior village and 200 families were selected by this field centre. They are then provided with the solar electricity supply. They are asked to pay Rs.3000 (USD 50) as their contribution, which they could chose to pay in instalment basis. However, it is the community which decides about the operations and implementations. We do not have any say in it. We just listen to them. The project proposal which we write before initiating the project includes the terms and conditions of the communities too.”

Ramkaran further describes the process from the time he receives a request for a service to its accomplishment. He takes proposals for the construction of RWHT as an example. After receiving the proposal, he visits the village to understand whether villagers are willing to work in accordance with the Barefoot philosophy. He particularly analyses how people’s participation could be understood and how they are positioned in terms of contributions. For example, suppose a family in the community does not have any physical labour to offer as a contribution, then they are asked to hire someone to work and pay him/her according to the minimum wage. The purchasing committee is elected by the VDC in order to purchase material required to complete the work. VDC and the Purchase Committee manages different bank accounts. Basically, it would not take more than a month to complete a RWHT. However, being restricted by its philosophy to motivate, involve, train and educate communities about how to manage the projects, it takes more time. Most of the members of VDC are illiterates and are not aware how to maintain accounts. Therefore, Barefoot trains them to undertake the whole process in a transparent and accountable manner. After the completion of the construction work, village level meetings are conducted to discuss the expenditure. This process is known as social audit. Everyone sits in the meetings and discusses how the money was spent. Every bill is validated in the meetings by each and every attendee. It is not just about undertaking a developmental activity alone, but about managing accountability and transparency further encourages communities to participate in activities.

## SECOND LEVEL SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS

While community participation externally plays a crucial role in order to facilitate and adopt innovations, it is again a different set of representatives from the community that manages the internal functioning of the

College. When Barefoot College was started, it was envisioned to promote a decentralised system. It was further decided that community decision-making would direct the organisational existence. The job roles of different people in the organisation may be different, but everyone is treated equally. For example, someone may be working in the dining hall, another might be a coordinator, doctor or director, but everyone is considered equal, irrespective of the nature of work when it comes to decision-making. Decentralisation of power, decentralisation of decision-making and collective decision-making are some key elements that make the difference. Community members, who have been involved with the College for a long period of time, are further equipped to coordinate day to day activities and take decisions accordingly. They are considered as second level social entrepreneurs due to their strong involvement in both the College's internal governance and community management.

It is claimed that given the crucial role the coordinator plays, their selection has been decided upon following democratic principles. The selection/election of the coordinators takes place democratically. "We have a voting system which takes place during the selection. Nominations are invited based on which voting takes place and then we have been selected. We have an entirely decentralised and transparent process." Ramniwas who coordinates the Communication section clarified. The decentralised systems, community participation, transparency and accountability, and sustainable orientation attained in the process talk about process innovation which has enriched the existence of the organisation. With this in mind, the book further steers towards analysing the activities that Barefoot undertakes and the kind of impact that it has made on the lives of the excluded.

## NOTES

1. Mr (Sunjit) Bunker Roy is the founding director of the College. However, he is more familiarly known as Bunker Roy.
2. SWRC is formally known as Social Work and Research Center
3. A caste-based approach restricts the focus of the organisation to selective castes or communities. Moreover, it may further create problems and unrest in rural areas. Such approach isolates the College from receiving support from other groups.
4. A further discussion about the need-based approach adopted by Barefoot College is discussed in detail later.

5. Paper degrees and experience certificate help someone who has undergone training in the College or gained work experience to migrate to cities and get a job in the market place.
6. A detailed discussion about village level committees is taken up in the next chapter.
7. Village panchayat or Village development council is the village democratic body which looks after the village level development.
8. Barefoot night schools is one of the flagship programmes initiated by Barefoot College. A detailed discussion about night schools is taken up later in the book.
9. A hath is equal to 18 inches, or the length of the arm from the elbow to the end of the middle finger.
10. Rajasthan, Sikkim, Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Orissa, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.
11. Community members who are represented by the community undergo thorough training in order to become engineers.
12. Thorough discussion will be taken up about the sustainable concerns in the next chapters.

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## Barefoot Approach and Its Practice

*First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win*

—Mahatma Gandhi

While we discussed the philosophy and governance style of Barefoot College in the previous chapter, this chapter deals with the activities carried out by Barefoot College and further enhances our understanding of the major thrust areas of the College, such as education, rain water harvesting, women empowerment, communication, solar energy and so on. This helps us to understand the micro processes and innovations adopted from time to time in order to transform social settings according to the changing social dynamics and culture. The chapter further discusses various marketing techniques adopted in the process. The villagers' perspectives on the services that they receive from Barefoot College are also included in order to balance the views of the College and the various stakeholders. As discussed, Barefoot College aims to empower the poor and the marginalised by building their capabilities to ensure their inclusion in mainstream society. The Barefoot approach prepares the poor to fight poverty and ensures their participation in the mainstream. It opts for training and educating the rural poor as a means to promote their inclusion, which would not only bring, but also serve the needy in the rural areas.

It was discussed in detail earlier that most of the existing systems including government interventions, opt for methods that disempower

communities and further societies. Thus, communities are denied their right to choose according to their choice. In identifying this problem, Barefoot College was thus charged to empower the poor to address their own needs. It offered the poor the right to empower their capabilities to further enhance their choices in the market. Roy mentions that the Barefoot approach includes an ideology that is surrounded by a practice that the resources need to be mobilised from the community in order to undertake activities that aim at their inclusion. It is opined that no service should be given free of charge. Furthermore, it is conceived that charity should not be the focus of development. This perspective has not been dumped by Roy or his colleagues on the communities. In fact, it is the result of deliberant discussions that Barefoot College members had with communities, who specified that they do not want to be seen as passive beneficiaries. More significantly, they expressed their concern to be part of the activities undertaken. This self-respect viewpoint is too often ignored by urban-based development agents (Roy 1997).

Today, many social entrepreneurs believe that services provided free of charge have destroyed the capabilities of communities, and hence, they have started breaching their own philosophy in which they speak about the ISDS. Further, policymakers, who develop policies aimed at empowering the poor, have never considered views from the bottom, for whose benefit such policies are initiated. As discussed, such top-down approaches largely adopted by both government and existing systems have imposed their views on communities and made them part of the developmental trajectory created and imposed from the outside. In addition, the top-down model is “insensitive and expensive, thus disempowering the marginalised, the exploited and the very poor,” says Elkington (2008, p. 95). For this reason, Barefoot College has completely believed in a bottom-up approach in order to provide a space to the very poor, in whose name the College is working.

The migration problem occupied a significant role in the initiatives carried out by Barefoot College. In fact, the College envisaged its philosophy to facilitate reverse migration. Reverse migration in this regard reflects people coming back to their villages due to the opportunities available in rural areas. It is claimed that if employment is available in the rural area itself, rural-urban migration could be easily tackled, which is one of the basic principles of Barefoot. “If we migrate to the cities, no one gives us jobs, we are not educated, and there is no guarantee that our choices would be respected. We are not even sure whether our lives are secured.

They [the urban-based employers] will certainly reject us because of lack of education,” Kazzidevi, an employee in the Jawaja Field Centre, explained. Overall, Barefoot strives to render sustainable solutions to the seemingly unsolvable problems of rural areas such as migration, lack of education, technological backwardness and water problems. It is a movement that aims to maximise rural capabilities.

Barefoot College brings technological advancements to rural communities that have been ignored by the latest developments. Bhanwar Jat mentions that nobody in his family knows how to read and write. They are three brothers and all of them are farmers. All together they have about 15 acres of agricultural land. He joined Barefoot College about four decades ago, in 1977 to be precise. His first job was to carry water to the resident quarters of the campus along with Kanaram. Since he was initially a farmer, he was later asked to work on the agriculture field to grow food for the College. Then he worked on the poultry farm, looking after chickens for a year with Vasu, who is happened to be another employee. It was also his job to take people from one of the centers on a tractor to night schools. In 1986, he was asked to build the Barefoot College campus in the capacity of architect. By the time he was asked to become an architect, he had already completed several jobs at the College. It took a year to dig the foundations. He was asked to supervise the work of about 50 rural masons and over 100 labourers daily. It took two years to complete the work. Everyone on the campus who was going to live there was consulted. Everyone's views had been respected. Therefore, the location of doors, windows and roads changed every day based on the need and choices of the users. Rafiq, the Muslim blacksmith, made the doors and windows in his rural workshop in Tilonia (Roy and Hartigan 2008). This shows that it is the confidence built and the additional training that worked in the case of Barefoot College.

## THE WORK STYLE

Barefoot College follows the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, the Indian freedom fighter and Father of the Nation who propounded the very simple notions of non-violence, truth and dharma. The philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi emphasises that, knowledge, skills and wisdom found in villages should be used for their own development under the Barefoot approach. Traditional knowledge is identified and fostered in order to create a better future. In order to make it more robust, it is believed that before

mobilising skills from the outside based on the requirement, there is an approach duly followed under Barefoot. They believe that the development programmes carried out by various governments do not need any urban-based professionals to carry them out. It is further emphasised that Barefoot is not anti-urban, but it is ideal to build the capabilities of the villagers as it is identified that they have many capabilities which can be used to benefit not only themselves, but also the well-being of the entire rural communities. In other words, Barefoot demonstrated that it would not be necessary to depend on someone from urban areas to address a problem that exists in rural areas, where the villagers themselves are capable of addressing their own problems.

Apart from rural-based developmental interventions, Gandhi further opined that, before introducing sophisticated technologies in rural areas, poor and rural communities should be educated about the technology and its implications. This creates self-dependency, where experts from elsewhere are not required in case of technology breakdown. This philosophy plays a crucial role in Barefoot education and training patterns. Further, Gandhi's view of distinguishing literacy and education has been identified as one of the main areas of the College. Roy believes that there is a difference between literacy and education. Literacy is reading and writing and what you pick up in school. Education is what you receive from your family, your community and your environment (Roy 2005). At Barefoot College, people work for themselves, they learn for themselves in order to resolve community-based problems and whenever they need technical support, an external expert will be called to assist. The assistance would be first incorporated into the Barefoot knowledge and then practised by the rural communities, rather than simply adopting it as it is.

For example, Mangi Bhai recounted how her life has been transformed through Barefoot learning approaches. She says that no one taught her how to use the Internet. However, now she has a good knowledge of computers because she has undergone computer training programme. She then became an expert in using the Internet. She reads daily newspapers such as Rajasthan Patrika on the Internet. Earlier, when she first joined Barefoot, she used to work in the handicrafts section. She says that, "It was very hard for women to work during 1970s, one has to break cultural and societal structures in order to work in the public." She said there were many who did it due to the existence of Barefoot College. No one in her family was educated, including her husband. Then, slowly she started working at Barefoot College. After joining the College, everything

changed for her. One day when she was working in the handicrafts section, Aruna, another social activist, who was married to Roy, told her to undergo a training programme on computers where she was trained for six months. Mangi had several apprehensions about the training, as she had never ventured into this kind of work before. But after some time, she successfully completed the training. Later, she worked in the women empowerment division for eight years. After a period of time, when her children had grown up, she was transferred to the education section. She worked there for nine years where she also looked after night schools. Some of her duties included going to the fields, arranging school committee meetings, training teachers, and so on. Later, Roy asked her to carry out a survey to find out the whereabouts of the children who had attended the night schools. The survey results showed that several of them were working as labourers, for whom later a training programme was conducted at the College. The module was prepared in-house and they successfully conducted the training. After the training, the trainees who showed an interest were provided with jobs at Barefoot College.

As previously discussed, Barefoot fulfils two important aspects of a social enterprise, i.e. service delivery and employment generation. Accordingly, it mainly falls into the Mission-related social enterprise category. The following section emphasises the work that is carried out at Barefoot College to provide basic services for the villagers. Among many services to be discussed in this chapter, first let us understand how renewable solar technologies have been used in the innovative service delivery paradigm.

## SOLAR TECHNOLOGIES

The use of traditional knowledge and skills, which are ignored in the developmental discourse, have been brought to the forefront in order to prepare the rural masses to use the latest technologies. This endeavour aims to place the technological advancements in the traditional knowledge outlook. So far, mainly technological inventories have been installed in villages or rural areas by experts from urban areas, and, if any problem arises while using those technologies, the villagers who do not have any knowledge of them are expected to depend on the urban experts to come and resolve the issue. Although the main purpose of the technology is to facilitate smoother social functioning, they made rural people depend on urban experts to deal with it. It is argued that the user does not have control over technology. Hence, identifying the lacunae, Barefoot College started to provide relevant



knowledge and skills that help the rural poor to understand technology and acquire necessary knowledge in order to adopt such technologies. It allowed them to own, manage and benefit from the technologies.

Barefoot believes that providing technological solutions for rural problems does not alone constitute a response to their problems. The needy among the rural context i.e. the poor, women, deprived communities, and so on must acquire the opportunity to excel entrepreneurially by demonstrating the building and managing of such technologies. As discussed, by employing learning by doing as a learning and practice-oriented mechanism, Barefoot learns and promotes mutual learning among the masses. Unlike other existing organisations which work on the basis of top-down approaches, Barefoot encourages the poor to make mistakes and learn from such mistakes whenever necessary. In other words, there is no strict mechanism that restricts them to operate in success-oriented endeavour alone. Often, travelling in less explored paths is encouraged in order to look for new avenues of promoting innovation.

The Barefoot Solar Engineering section has been operational since 1984. It started off with a small experiment of solar electrifying a community health centre. The solar system promotes the use of solar photovoltaic cells on a massive scale under this approach. With this experiment in practice, Barefoot disproves a myth that rural illiterate poor cannot become engineers. It works with the deprived in order to enrich their capabilities and facilitate them to work towards achieving the impossible. Barefoot Solar Engineers (BSEs) are those who come from communities with hardly any educational background. They are trained to become solar engineers in order to enable them to go back to their respective villages to initiate solar electrification in the communities. The BSEs are trained to take up repairs and maintenance as well. BSEs have so far built solar electricity systems that generate power equal to that of the largest centralised solar power plant in India and it is claimed that about 90,000 of the poorest households in India have benefited from this experiment. The Barefoot solar electrification mechanism helped the most deprived to get access to electricity. For example, places like Himalayan mountain villages, which often suffer from severe winter temperatures where sometimes the temperature drops to as low as  $-40^{\circ}\text{C}$ , have been solar electrified to benefit the communities. Due to the external geographical location, the formal electricity supply is restricted to six hours a day. In such scenarios, although people depend on kerosene lamps for light, while it is the rich alone who could afford to buy kerosene, due to the black market as a result of the demand. However, the

BSE intervention helped the region to get sufficient light for the entire day. In order to make this happen, Barefoot trained the most excluded from their respective communities to become solar engineers. In addition, users pay a nominal fee for repair and maintenance in order to sustain the initiative for a longer period. Women from the community who were trained to become BSEs went back to the Himalayan region and solar electrified it. Apart from providing electricity in the unreached areas, it also contributed to the control of health problems and elevated living standards. The College prefers to train women to become BSEs not just because it contributes to women empowerment, but also due to the fact that when a man is trained it is hard to trace his whereabouts after the completion of his training as they mostly migrate to nearby towns in search of better livelihoods. For example, Laxman Singh, who worked with the College for more than two decades says that “once a man gets trained or educated, he migrates to a town or city. This defeats our purpose.”

The BSEs solar electrified several villages across the globe. With regard to community participation and the process adopted, Krishnalal, one of the beneficiaries from the local communities, claims that in the first phase Barefoot representatives ask the communities whether they are interested in solar electrifying their households. Having expressed their willingness, the communities are expected to nominate the most excluded among them to become BSEs. The successful BSE, upon completion of the training, is expected to install solar electricity systems and carry out maintenance of the systems installed in the community. In most cases, it is the most deprived or disadvantaged who get the opportunity to become BSEs. From the community side, in order to benefit from the solar electrification system, they are expected to contribute a nominal fee towards the installation and maintenance of the system. In order to enable this process, a Village Energy Environment Committee (VEEC) has to be created, which works as an intermediary between Barefoot College and the communities concerned. The money deposited by the communities is put into a bank account which is managed by the VEEC. Since the constitution of VEEC is vested in the communities, there is a possibility for the financial irregularities to take place in the given context. Accordingly, several measures are put in place to make sure that transparency and accountability are maintained. The money has to be used for repairs, changes of battery and salary for the BSE. The maintenance fees range from Rs. 50–60 (around USD 1), a month, and this covers the provision of electricity for two lights and one mobile charger. In addition, the fee covers the general maintenance

of the system. For example, the battery needs to be replaced every few years, which will be taken care of by the initial fee collected in the form of monthly payments, which otherwise would cost them a fortune. While communities are responsible and maintain integrity in several instances, in some areas communities themselves later became troublesome. It is found that after paying the monthly instalments for a number of years, communities realised that their solar systems never experienced any problems, including that of battery replacement. Hence, they believed that there was no need to pay a maintenance fee as their systems were in good condition. In order to address this concern, Barefoot College later came up with a new model whereby those that required a replacement battery would pay as and when the need arose. For example, when there is a problem in one of the households, then a BSE will be called to repair it and the BSE will charge the concerned household the cost of the repair.

Solar electrification in India has helped about 200,000 people access solar electricity. Various activities undertaken include fixing about 22,752 solar units in sixteen Indian states. In addition, a sum of 5,220 solar lanterns are provided, and 549 schools have also been solar electrified in order to conduct night schools where children are being educated. The total installation produces 569,647 watts of power. A total of 636 BSEs, including 184 women, have been trained so far. In other countries where Barefoot College works in collaboration with local partner NGOs, BSEs have fixed 4,967 solar units in seventeen countries scattered across Asia, Africa and Latin America. They have also fixed 3,365 solar lanterns. The entire contribution reached about 60,486 people from 123 villages. The total installation in the global context produces about 250,240 watts of power. This work involved about 155 BSEs, including 119 women (statistics obtained from Barefoot College on 8 November 2011).

Over the last 13 years, Barefoot College has trained women in Asia, Africa and Latin America to assemble, install, repair and maintain the solar photovoltaic systems in their respective regions. The BSEs who were trained at Barefoot are not only equipped to become solar engineers, but to also enrich their capabilities to participate in other developmental activities in the villages. Many women who have been trained at Barefoot have made history by solar electrifying their own villages in their respective regions. The community in Jawaja village says that they are very happy with the solar electricity initiative and they proclaim that a couple of poor villagers have gained respectable employment and the whole village is solar electrified including their school and some community buildings. They claim that they do not face any problems while using the solar systems.

The foreign outreach program was started in 2003. In 2004, people from Ethiopia, Sierra Leone and Afghanistan visited the College to undergo training to become BSEs. Bagwathnandan, the coordinator of the solar section, explains that, “now we are working in 35 countries in Latin America, Asia and Africa. Since 2008, Govt. of India has started funding the international training. Ministry of External Affairs has been taking care of it.” As discussed, this experiment and the relevant cultural exposure helped women to learn about other cultures and in turn question the backwardness or primitive cultural practice that exists in their respective regions. For example, in some African countries, there are cases where one man is married about four or five times at a given point of time. Bagwathnandan further claims that, “In fact, when the women come here [Barefoot College], they realised that it is wrong.” In addition, women also gained significantly by their elevated capabilities and skills. He further narrates that, “In 2007, two women from Sierra Leone were trained here and they have gone back and discussed with their government. Today, they are fixing around 40 kw solar electrification equipment in their villages. Govt. of Sierra Leone funds them and we are sending the instruments from Barefoot College headquarter in Tilonia. We face several obstacles in the process, as we have only uneducated women and our system is learning by doing. For us, solar energy has become one of the vital entries to get into the communities.” This is the way illiterate social engineers come together and train others to become experts in the area.

The usage and promotion of solar has also resulted in reducing the carbon emission of CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse gases. Solar energy has been substituted for cutting down trees and shrubs for cooking, heating and lighting. Diesel and kerosene consumption have also been minimised. The massive installation of solar systems has certainly contributed to reducing global warming by a decrease in consumption of several thousand litres of diesel and kerosene. As a result, it is estimated that 1.2 million tons of carbon emission has been prevented from entering the atmosphere. Cases of respiratory diseases due to toxic smokes, emitted while burning kerosene, coal and wood for cooking and lighting indoors, has also reduced significantly. In Africa alone, an average of 1.6 million women and children die or suffer due to this problem. The solar mechanism has been a prominent model to eradicate said problems in the poorest African countries (Statistics obtained from Barefoot College 8th November 2011).

As discussed, community participation continues to play a crucial role in installing and maintaining solar systems. Barefoot College solely believes that unless communities are ready to take up any activity, it would not be feasible and sustainable to initiate them. In this context,

Lalita clarified, “for solar energy, except for the battery, you need not worry about anything else. Battery has worked for 11 years in some areas. So, we will have to maintain them carefully. Two lights work for five hours in the night.” The charges collected to provide solar electrification are quite nominal, where the poor can most likely afford it. The poor and excluded communities gained the chance to enjoy electricity supply through solar energy. Meghanath, a beneficiary, states that his village was not provided with grid-based electricity supply. He hails from a very poor family where they had little money to pay for a kerosene lamp. But with the help of Barefoot solar energy initiative, they have been using solar energy for the last 12 years without any problems. “The amount we have been paying for the usage is also nominal, which is much lesser than what we used to pay for kerosene lamps,” says Meghanath.

It is found that the system has not worked well in communities where they have not shown much interest as they were provided with other options over a period of time. For example, Dorji, one of the BSEs, claims that he would not say that the solar venture is 100 % successful. There are some cases, which we need to critically examine. We have such villages in Sikkim state, which are solar electrified, but the communities have not shown any interest later when they got grid-based electricity, nor were they willing to return even the instruments. Thus, transforming community culture is key in order to bring about change. However, as a whole, the Barefoot solar technological initiative has contributed quite significantly to solving some of the difficult problems that exist in rural areas such as overdependence on kerosene, lack of power supply, environmental degradation, and so on. In a nutshell, social electrification and training deprived women to empower communities turned out to be a crucial mechanism that helped the College to demonstrate this initiative. In the next section we will deal with education, another area where Barefoot has contributed to empowering communities quite significantly.

## EDUCATION

Education is one of the major thrusts of the College. The College runs pre-primary school and night schools to educate children in rural areas. The teachers in these schools are recruited from the communities. The selected youth as teachers undergo a residential training camp for 30 days before taking up the charge as Barefoot teachers. The target group to become teachers is again those who are the most excluded and have an interest in

education but do not have any employment. At night school, the curriculum is decided by the teachers, who follow the practical learning approach, which is mostly suited to the local environment and needs. The curriculum, for example, includes information relating to common civic needs, such as how a post office functions, how to use a bank, a police station, and so on. Barefoot teachers are selected by the rural communities wherever the night schools are in operation. The main purpose of initiating this particular educational initiative under the Barefoot approach is to adapt the education system according to the needs of the learners. The schools are reoriented, in terms of mutual learning, where the teacher also learns from the children.

Ratandevi, who has been associated with Barefoot College for more than four decades, explained about the evolution of Barefoot schools in Tilonia. In the early days, there was an adult education programme, in which no adult showed any interest in attending. Instead, it is the children who attended the programme. Accordingly, the organisers decided to change the programme for children by initiating experimental schools. Centre for Education Technology, one of the academic Centres in Rajasthan, funded the project. They chose three schools in Tilonia, where several villagers were selected and provided with training in order to work as teachers in these schools. The project worked well for three years. Despite its success, political pressure did not allow the programme to be extended so they had to hand the project over to the government. Having seen the success of the project, the government of Rajasthan adopted this pattern in all schools in the state under the scheme, *Siksha Garmi Yojana*.

With this background and the learning from the earlier venture, Barefoot initiated night school programmes in 1975. This was further driven by local demand where parents were not interested in sending their children to school as they are expected to work with the parents or look after household activities or to look after their younger siblings. Night schools, thus, have been an inspiration to the villagers and parents who were happy to see their children getting trained and educated, as well as helping them in the daily activities. In the day the children help their parents in their search for livelihood and at night, they attend the night schools. Night schools offer five years of primary schooling. After gaining basic education at night school, it is found that most of the children continue to attend high school, whereas a few of them are forced out of education. The children who studied at night school and later went on to pursue higher education got various government jobs such as police, army personnel and some work as teachers and village secretaries and so on.

It is found that the night schools that are in operation offer a dynamic approach to eradicating illiteracy. It has been argued that the approach that both governments and NGOs adopt have failed to address the paradox between a family's need to find their livelihood and child labour.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, various approaches adopted by governments and NGOs to eradicate child labour have been quite often criticised by the poor. However, night schools, which are functional under the Barefoot approach are organised entirely to provide education for rural children who cannot afford formal education during the day, due to their poor financial conditions. Thus, the Barefoot approach adequately addresses the problems of child labour and the need for children's education simultaneously. This provision of helping families in the day and studying at night has been highly appreciated by families of the children. As a result, this particular initiative has become one of the most successful activities of Barefoot, which reaches several thousands of children every year. This approach again has its roots in community participation. The success of the Barefoot night schools approach has inspired others to implement similar methods in other parts of the country.

As discussed earlier, motivating communities is not an easy task. Embeddedness and community participation are the two mechanisms that social enterprises adopt time and again in order to achieve their objectives. As a result, sometimes communities approach Barefoot College to establish a night school in their respective villages. In such cases, it is quite easy for Barefoot to put it into practice. However, the problem of motivating communities becomes a little difficult when Barefoot approaches the communities, often in new regions. In such cases, the Barefoot communication team works in a professional manner to motivate the communities. In fact, prior to pressurising the communities, in most of the places the Barefoot communication team performs a series of plays to create awareness among the communities.

Barefoot night schools are operational in six states in India. They have been managed by 714 Barefoot teachers, of which 200 are women. The innovative idea gives children the opportunity to prove their interest and parents the chance to understand the children's curiosity and their learning propensity. That is the reason many children continue to be educated even after their engagement with the night schools, despite the poor conditions prevailing at their respective houses and their parents' poverty. One of the night school alumni called Nanda Ram specifies that "children from poor and marginalised backgrounds have been provided an opportunity to

study in the night schools. For them, the day time education is impossible, because of their participation in the family activities. I used to take care of my buffalos in the day time and attend night school.”

Every year, more than 3,000 children from various schools attend night school, of which 2,000 are female. In general, women have been excluded from accessing basic amenities including education. In a traditional state like Rajasthan, this particular situation is alarming. It is for this reason that Barefoot prioritised women education and empowerment as its primary objectives in order to ensure social inclusion. Hansi Swaroop, coordinator of Jawaja Field Centre clarifies, “women are really backward in terms of education. That is the reason, women education has been given top most priority in our night schools. As a result, most of the children in the night schools are girl children. This is because they will have to work along with their parents in order to help them during the day time. If not, they either have to take care of their siblings or buffalos.” Now the communities realise the importance of child education. Barefoot’s prime motive for adopting this approach is that every child should be given primary education at least. Later, it is left to the family to decide whether to send them on to higher education. The whole scenario has brought a sea change in the traditional outlook of families and mothers, in particular, who have significantly benefited. With the help of night schools, girls, as well as women, started studying and participating in day-to-day social activities in better ways. This has changed the outlook of men, family, village and society. The girl children who learn several issues at night school share their learning and/or experiences with their mothers, who indeed realise that if the girl child is learning significantly from the night schools, why can’t they also learn? Benagal, one of the beneficiaries, shared his views on the subject.

In the areas where night schools are located, VEC coordinates the activities of night schools with Barefoot College. So far, as a whole, 235,000 children (of whom 170,000 are girls) attended schools in six states, and 714 night schools in 673 villages are in operation. Apart from empowering children, the night schools approach has been providing employment to 3,140 Barefoot teachers. Badrilal, a Barefoot night school student, opined that “the knowledge I gained from the night school was a significant factor that helped to attribute for my overall growth. The knowledge and skills helped me to earn a respectful job in society.” Those who work at Barefoot as teachers are also very happy about their own empowerment, as well as about their task of offering a better life for underprivileged chil-



dren. "I was a teacher in the night school. Many of the children whom I trained in the night school studied further whereas some of them have stopped after the night school. Some of them have moved to Mumbai for jobs and other are working in Kishangarh, whereas some people have even got government jobs and several of them are working in Barefoot College itself," stated Gishalal, a teacher who teaches students in the night school. Apart from educating underprivileged children, Barefoot night schools are also known around the globe for their famous "Children's Parliament".

The role of VEC is acknowledged by the beneficiaries across the communities. Lakshmi, a 40-year-old respondent, who also happens to be a member of the VEC, states that previously she never attended any public meetings and was often constrained to her own house. This was quite common in rural areas where women are not encouraged to speak out in public, nor to participate in social activities. But with the help of Barefoot night schools, she has become a member of the VEC through which she came to know about several problems that school going children face. She believes that if it were not for the Barefoot night schools approach, most of the children in her locality would not have received even minimum education, particularly if they were female. She further felt that being a VEC member, the committee is well equipped with the necessary autonomy to decide the operational issues of the night schools in the villages. In order to further promote political ethos among the children, night schools are equipped with award winning "Children's Parliament".

Children's Parliament is meant to create awareness among the night school children of the practice of democracy. Once every two years, elections are held to elect the "Parliament" which has its own "Cabinet". Its function is to supervise, monitor and administer night schools. Children in the 8–14 age group are given the right to vote. The practical experiences of governance have been imparted to the children with the help of the Children's Parliament. In order to ensure that they are learning all the necessary democratic aspects, parliamentary elections are given utmost importance where each step of the formal democratic processes, such as voter ID cards, electoral committees, nominations, withdrawal, campaigning, no-campaign day, polling, counting, declaration of winners, forming the "Parliament," and then the "Cabinet", are duly followed. It takes inspiration from the Indian democratic system which is the largest democracy in the world. The ballot boxes are carried to the Barefoot campus after the elections in order to count the votes and declare the winners. These Parliamentarians and the Cabinet make sure that the teachers play

an active role in classroom activities, and that basic amenities in the school are provided. A couple of years back, a girl was elected “Prime Minister”. This girl had to take care of her goats in the morning and at night she acted as Prime minister. When talking about Children’s Parliament, it might be too simple to hear, but it is working better than our conventional parliamentary system to tackle the emerging problems and decide on actions. Barefoot College feels that some time down the line they might produce Barefoot politicians with the help of the Children’s Parliament approach.

Ratan Devi spoke about the history and working style of the Parliament. She explained that when she was teaching the third standard students, there was a small lesson on Chalo Panchayat Dekhiye (Let’s see the Parliament). As part of the lesson, there were a lot of pictures and diagrams printed in order to create awareness among children of the political practice and functioning of the Parliament. Having witnessed the curiosity of the children in the discussion, she thought of teaching them about the democratic systems by conducting it in experimental learning method. Hence, an election in the school was planned in order to give a proper understanding about the parliamentary system. Her school has done everything in practical terms and she asked all the children to take part in the election. The intention was just to give a practical turn to the lesson. In the process she observed that the children were so keen that they participated in each and every activity. Further, she brought up the success story in the weekly meetings, where another teacher also agreed to practise it. Then, it was practised in other schools. This practice has opened a space for children to learn about elections as well as their importance.

Gradually, Children’s Parliament was created. Teachers came forward from all the night schools located in different states and decided to teach clean politics to the children, in the form of elections. Barefoot College has taken Children’s Parliament to the next level. Posts like “Prime minister” and several other “Ministers” have been created. Elections for the parliament are held every two years. Roy has clarified that all the divisions in charge in Barefoot College are the secretaries to the “Ministers” concerned. If there is no water in the school, Ram Karan, who coordinates water division in Tilonia, has to answer to the parliament in the capacity of secretary. The villagers are responsible for paying for repairs; repairs have to be undertaken by Barefoot College, using its own approach.

There was a “Minister” at one of the night schools who insisted on laying a pipe-line in his village. Barefoot College told him that laying a pipe-line was a big task and that it could be done only through the Panchayat.

There was a lot of debate. He said, “I will collect some contribution from his community, they will listen to me, at any cost, Barefoot College must lay the pipe-line.” For six months, the struggle continued. Finally, he collected around Rs.10,000 (USD 140) from the community. Then it was realised that if the whole village had faith in this small kid, why could his interest not be fulfilled? So Barefoot College decided to get the pipe-line done. It helped to encourage the children to build confidence and rise as leaders in the future.

The democratic process also establishes norms and permits the children to question several social evils that exist in society. For example, once, one of the “Education Ministers” insisted that there should not be any wine shops near the school, and everyone agreed. Then they began to doubt themselves: how would they support her? How would the shop be removed? She said girls are scared to go to the school because of the wine shop that is on the way. It used to create a lot of tensions. Then, with help from women groups in the village, they approached the Sub-Divisional Officer, and asked him to get the shop removed. They were told that the shop was operating without an official licence from the state. Their task suddenly became easier and the shop was closed. In another incident, the sarpanch of a village had given a building to house a school, but in the next election he lost his post and another sarpanch was elected. He said he was not happy about the school and wanted to close it down. The children asked him, “If the school is closed, where do we go?” He said, “I don’t know where you will go, but I need this building for some other purpose.” As a result, the children carried out a *dharna* (a non-violent sit-in). Finally, these children approached the District Collector for a solution and he gave orders to reopen the school in the same building.

The typical process Barefoot College adopted to conduct free and fair elections for the Children’s Parliament also helped the children to be more serious and learn from democracy and its practice. For example, once, a child gave a chocolate to another child during the election campaign. The organisers learned of this and made enquiries. The child who had offered the chocolate replied, “yes, it is after all a chocolate.” Then he was questioned as to why the chocolate was given during the election campaign, when he had never done so before. There was a lot of debate and everyone heard about this issue. The organisers thought of debarring the school from elections, but were then haunted by the fact that by debarring the school from elections, the children of that particular school might be excluded from the entire election process. Instead, they thought

to teach a lesson and set the standards for the democratic process. So they cancelled the whole election process and initiated re-elections in the same year. Because of the serious and thorough process followed, children became aware and this allowed them to create a free and fair election.

The democratic ethos planted in the children has influenced their understanding about society and their respective roles in the larger social order. For example, once, there was a debate on an issue where a child was not allowed to take water from the pot by another child as he was from a lower caste. When the issue came to the notice of Children's Parliament, there was a lengthy discussion among them on the issue as it was very important and finally there was a clear verdict that everyone is equal and must enjoy the same privileges. As a whole, the concept of Children's Parliament looks so simple, but it is very difficult to operate. Due to its immense contribution and innovative existence, the Parliament has been recognised time and again globally and received several awards. For example, Children's Parliament received the World's Children's Honorary Award in 2001 from Sweden.

As a whole, Barefoot night schools and their allied initiations including Children's Parliament offer an inspirational story where innovations are key to empower children and communities. Night schools have helped children from poor families to gain basic education, which in several cases has been later enriched with their participation in higher education. In addition, they have gained jobs in both the private and public sectors. It is also found that the Children's Parliament has helped children to be strong democratically and confident when it comes to promoting social norms. In the next section we will discuss the rain water harvesting system, another successful innovative experiment taken up at Barefoot College.

### RAIN WATER HARVESTING

Water occupies a crucial role in the developmental discourse of the state of Rajasthan. Water required for consumption in the state far exceeds the availability. Thus, preserving and developing water sources is a main objective of any organisation that works on water-related issues in the state. Drinking water has been identified as one of the high priority areas at Barefoot College. As discussed earlier, Barefoot's experience in the early days was that many engineers that Barefoot invited to tackle water problems insisted that problems of water shortage and portability could be solved by

digging big, expensive, deep wells or getting piped water supply from the areas where there is no water scarcity. Barefoot tried this approach in vain in the early days and a lot of money and valuable time was wasted. Fed up with the suggestions that the urban experts had offered, the villagers were asked to find a solution. They suggested that rain water harvesting was a better solution for the water problems that they had been facing for a long time. It was then decided to deploy rain water harvesting techniques through employing the Rooftop Rain Water Harvesting (RRWH) system. The villagers were asked to trap the rain water. Rooftops of schools and buildings became the channels to trap water in order to store the water in tanks and use when the water sources had been exhausted. These RRWHs were used wherever night schools and crèches are located. The RRWH system has been operational with relatively less financial requirement. The success of the rain water system has to be credited to the communities and their conventional wisdom. Barefoot had wisely approached the communities, as a result of the enriched community participation and the social entrepreneurial embeddedness in the particular local contexts where they are operational.

There are several spin-offs from the success of the rain water system. The RRWHs facilitated an increase in school attendance. Various studies conducted by Barefoot College proved that the percentage of children attending school rose after the RRWH system was introduced in school buildings. For example, there has been around a 50 % increase in attendance throughout the year. The reason being is that school buildings have been used to trap the water which can then fulfil the needs of the children in the school. Earlier, lack of water in the toilets made children, especially girl children, not attend the schools. In addition, as an incentive, children are allowed to carry water to their respective homes after successfully attending school every day. Neena, a beneficiary, says that the concept of rain water harvesting in school buildings has motivated her to send her daughter to school. Previously, her daughter used to just take care of the household activities, of which bringing back drinking water from 2.5 kilometres occupied most of the time. But with this initiative of Barefoot, her daughter has been sent to school and instantly she was allowed to take water from the rainwater harvesting tank in the school. She further claims that, as a result, her daughter need not walk for miles to get drinking water and, more importantly, she is being educated. She was quite delighted to advise that her daughter is the first girl in the family to complete tenth class.

It is very interesting to note that all the Barefoot night schools have underground tanks to trap the rain water to meet the needs of the children attending the school. Initially, the RRWH approach was turned down by many urban-based engineers, including Sikkim State Chief Water Engineer (SCWE). However, despite the prejudice of the SCWE, Barefoot architects constructed one such tank with a capacity of over 160,000 litres on a village school rooftop in Sikkim, and the Chief Minister (CM) and SCWE of Sikkim were invited to inaugurate it. Impressed by the construction, the CM approved 40 more RRWHs. To date, a total of 1,000 RRWHs have been constructed by Barefoot water engineers in 17 Indian states,<sup>2</sup> which altogether have a capacity of nearly 50 million litres of water. In order to complete the construction of these tanks, about 20,000 villagers have gained seasonal employment (data obtained from Barefoot College on 19 November 2010). Devi, another beneficiary, mentioned that the Barefoot rain water harvesting system requires special appreciation. In the past, I used to walk for miles to get drinking water because of which my health deteriorated and most of the time I used to suffer from severe health problems. But with the help of this approach, my health condition is improved. Previously, I was of the view that my health condition was worsening due to other reasons, but once I stopped walking for miles for drinking water, my health was restored to good condition. About 2 million people have benefited from the rain water harvesting systems of Barefoot. Practices of rain water harvesting have yielded greater results not only in addressing drinking water-related issues, but also helping children attend school, saving women from walking far distances in search of drinking water and so on. For example, women and children have significantly benefited from this initiative as the time they used to spend carrying drinking water from large distances are now being utilised to find better livelihood. The next section of the chapter deals with the communication and crafts initiative under Barefoot College.

### COMMUNICATION AND CRAFTS

When Barefoot College embedded in community cultures, it was realised that there was a brief need to influence their priorities and transform systems that exist in rural settings. As discussed earlier, embeddedness allows the agent to integrate in the system and then influence its functioning over a period of time. Accordingly, after understanding the local cultures, it is felt that there is a need to transform rural understanding about sev-

eral social issues. Accordingly, various communication devices have been used by Barefoot College to make the villagers aware of social taboos and various social issues. It is felt that the method of communication is a key element to ensure transparency and accountability. In order to avoid any gaps, Barefoot College launched a communication division in 1981, using puppets to increase awareness related to several social issues. Social messages were disseminated to the audience through puppet shows, especially where the target groups are rural illiterates. Issues of concern include child marriages, bride burning, legal rights of women, right to education, right to information, exploitation of the poor, equal pay for both men and women, child education and so on. Each year, the communication division of the College performs about 100–150 plays, reaching an audience of approximately 100,000 in around 100 villages. Ramniwas, the coordinator of the division, emphasises that the main intention of the communication division is the creation of a good world. We undertake activities on various social issues in order to create a better world especially in rural areas.

In 1985, immediately after a puppet show on roti (bread), about consuming alcohol and its consequences in one of the villages, a person in the audience responded, “did you listen to the play carefully? That happened to me. You all know how liquor totally destroyed me and my family. You have opened my eyes. Where were you all this time? I have a request to make. From now on, whenever you perform this play, please tell people that this is the real story of a man in the village of Chota Narena.” (Roy and Hartigan 2008, pp. 88–89). This is the kind of response that the puppet shows attract in order to motivate the illiterate and semi-illiterates.

There were even instances where the impact was so dramatic that results appeared immediately: Ram Narayan mentioned “earlier how I used to vote for those for whom my parents or community voted. But after attending the plays by the communication division on the importance of voting, I have realised the blunder that I had committed for a long time by misusing my vote. And from then onwards, I cast my vote for those who just work for us”. That is how the villagers are made aware about various social issues like caste, dowry, importance of the vote, children’s education and so on.

Ramniwas mentioned the increase in awareness levels that he had witnessed, how communication always allowed the sharing of knowledge with others. He was asked to take care of women empowerment related activities, and he was sent to Tilonia to undergo training on such issues.

He claims that he was very eager to eradicate untouchability practices, at least in his village, which he felt restricted the ability of certain sections of people participate in any activity in the mainstream. Then he asked himself, apart from the social untouchability that exists in rural settings in India, who are the other untouchables in a family system? Then he realised that it could be the mother, sister or wife. This thought led him to think differently, and he realised that in order to build a holistic social order, in the first instance, equal opportunities have to be provided in order for everyone to excel. It's about recognition and respect that we must offer the women in our houses. So, he also learned about women and their backwardness in the society. He demonstrates this in some of the plays, songs and dialogues that are performed in the villages. Due to several such plays being performed in the villages, people started to gain knowledge about wages, political participation, village problems, women empowerment, student-teacher-parent relations and so on. The communication division also makes the teachers aware by letting them know what exactly a teacher must do. Is it enough for him/her to just teach how to read or write? The plays emphasise that the teacher must work to create a better world where every child gets equal opportunities to reach their potential. She/he must work for the well-being of society. It is felt that the creation of a good house, a good village, a good society, a good panchayat and a good state must be the objectives of any teacher and his/her teachings. Education, in such direction offers light to guide them. In such a sense, it allows them to create a proper environment in the villages, where everyone lives in harmony. This kind of attitude has evolved in Ramniwas' behaviour after joining Barefoot College.

The communication division has recently procured a community radio initiative, which helps them to communicate with the villagers more systematically and cost-effectively. Community radio brings a lot of technological elements to be handled by the illiterate operators. However, they have learned how to operate it, and they have proved their success through running various programmes on the community radio. Ramniwas shares his experiences about working with this new division. Community radio was initiated in 2009, but he was initially afraid to work on it as it was entirely different due to the technology involved in it. However, after gaining some knowledge, he interviews the villagers about various rural developmental issues and transmits them on the radio. The main intention of the community radio is to propagate rural culture among the villagers. It allows them to build programmes on village cultures and promote



it across the region. In addition, if any untapped talent is hidden in the villages, the community radio initiative promotes it by telecasting in the radio.

The handicrafts division, under Hatheli Sansthan, deals with handicrafts production and sales in the foreign market. In addition, it organises stalls at exhibitions to sell the products. Around 18 people work in the handicrafts division. In addition, there are 300 part-time artisans. The weavers, traditional crafts persons and leather workers have been promoted under the Barefoot emblem. Though the crafts are traditionally made at home, Barefoot has trained about 1,850 women and prepared them to become specialists in the area. They have been provided with markets in India and abroad with the help of Friends of Tilonia. Friends of Tilonia helps Barefoot College to channel their products directly to sell in the USA and abroad. A team from Tilonia and a team based in the USA operate a merchandise website ([www.tilonia.com](http://www.tilonia.com)) in order to ship the products directly across the world. All the team members from Barefoot College were educated at Barefoot night schools. Friends of Tilonia is registered in the USA as a section 501(c)(3) non-profit organisation. It is found that both the groups from Tilonia and Friends of Tilonia promote rural craft production in order to address the basic unemployment issue in rural Rajasthan. This initiative has resulted in promoting income for women in the villages, and benefitting a total of 400 artisans from 50 villages. Merchandise sales generate about USD 250,000 every year by operating in retail outlets in India, Europe, the USA and Canada. With the variety of initiatives being undertaken at Barefoot College, women have been empowered in a number of ways. The following section helps us to understand the methods that have been used to promote women empowerment.

## WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Most of the activities of Barefoot College have been managed and controlled by poor women. Women are empowered to work as solar engineers, water engineers, school teachers, computer trainers, hand-pump mechanics, masons, architects and last but not least, fabricators of solar cookers and so on. The empowerment some of these initiatives have facilitated for women is quite significant. For example, illiterate women becoming solar engineers is in itself quite a challenging development. As a result, women have gained the necessary recognition and appreciation from communities, who previously never used to encourage them. Women have

shown enormous capacity and confidence to render their services in their communities and regions, and it has also helped them to gain respective positions in the communities. Illiterate rural women who were earlier trained to handle computers later train unemployed youth, which is an effective approach. In addition, rural women sub-committees have been formed in several villages, where the groups work in order to discuss gender-related issues including, but not limited to, rape and atrocities in the village environment. Uma, a respondent from the community, said that the women group solves several problems relating to gender discrimination in the society.

Barefoot College has been working with various government initiatives including self-help groups. So far, Barefoot has helped about 62,500 people to form rural self-help groups (SHGs). In order to fight against their exclusions related to poverty, dowry, domestic violence, minimum wages, land ownership and so on, a total of 3,095 rural women SHGs are in operation. The communication division empowers women to fight against social evils such as child marriage, dowry, minimum wages, and so on. The transformation requires significant attention. Noori Bai, a 54-year-old illiterate computer expert, said that, "in 1981, there was no question of girls going beyond the village for study. But, later, there was a transformation in the social settings, it all happened because of Roy who has dedicated his life to sustain our lives."

Apart from undertaking several developmental activities, various stakeholders at the College undertake various protests against atrocities or social evils. For example, women committee members under the Barefoot approach quite often undertake protests against the atrocities against women in society. Thus, Barefoot College promotes the participation of women by encouraging them to take an active part in social movements. Ramkaran mentions about women empowerment that, in Barefoot College, fighting for the rights of the people is given utmost priority. Barefoot never gets any funding to organise social movements. When they go on strike or dharna, they would require financial resources to successfully organise such protests. In particular, they would need food and other basic needs. Hence, all the women with whom Barefoot work have decided that everyone will donate Rs. 1 (2 cents) and 4 kg grain each per year. The grain is saved in the village itself and is utilised during the protests.

While it is quite encouraging to learn that women actively participate in protests, it doesn't just happen in isolation. Women would require thorough persuasion and they would have to operate in groups in order to make a difference. For example, Lalita, in charge of the Water Testing

division, mentioned that women's voices must be respected in the house, and they should be given choices to empower themselves initially, then their family, and later their communities. Barefoot formed women groups to help others, and within a short span of time, they learned that a woman alone cannot protect her own rights, because of rigid social customs and traditions that exist in a traditional society like Rajasthan. How to go to the police station, how to file a case and fight against those who violate women rights are some of the activities that are being taken care of by women groups. Training in health and legal education is provided additionally. Women who take part in the groups hail from all social backgrounds like poor, rich, socially deprived, and everyone has equal say in the group.

It is also found that with the kind of transformation, women from upper castes started to fight for the rights of the lower castes and vice versa. "I belong to the Brahmin community. I always encourage women from deprived sections to fight against their deprivations. In my village, I filed the first case against the upper caste men who raped a woman from a deprived section. I became an enemy to others in the village. But I know whatever I have done is correct, even my parents always have faith in me. People are well aware that Barefoot College only works for poor, as a result, rich people never approach us," said Ratan Behan who previously worked with the Women Empowerment division.

Ramibhai presently works with the Women Empowerment division and she clarified that a women's group typically comprises around 20–40 women, the number may vary depending on the population of the village. If it is a big village, the number would be around 40 and if it is small, it would be around 20. Every month, meetings are conducted to discuss the problems that they face. They also undertake several *dharnas*, mostly against social evils, such as irregular or less wages in different enterprises in their respective regions, dowry and other social evils. The village level meetings are used to discuss matters relating to the problems of the women. For example, in a case where the rights of any women are violated then the committee decides about the kind of support that it can offer to the concerned women. If the problem is smaller, then it will be solved at a village level meeting itself, whereas in the case of a bigger problem, the issue will be resolved in a meeting held at Barefoot College, Tilonia. Every month, approximately about 5,000 women meet in Tilonia and discuss several problems that women face and they find solutions. Earning incomes have raised the living

standards of women; it has also resulted in raising respect not only in their families, but also in the society where they live. Previously, those who had seen women as incapable, now realise that women are equal to men, provided they have access to equal opportunities to demonstrate their capabilities.

To conclude, it is found that the concern for the empowerment of the most excluded sections led the Barefoot approach to adopt several innovative methods. The communities' active participation helped in several contexts to be innovative and transform the organisational existence with the changing social context. With the innovative practices, lives of several sections have been transformed in two ways. First, communities have benefited from the service delivery system, and on the other hand, the most deprived in the communities have attained a dignified job by serving their own communities. While the current chapter has discussed in detail about the former, the next chapter will focus on the latter and aims to discuss the transformation in the lifestyles of those who have been provided with employment by Barefoot.

## NOTES

1. Child labour has been abolished by the government without providing any alternative to the families whose children work to contribute for the family well-being. That's the reason government and NGO policies against child labour have been criticised by the excluded sections.
2. Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Sikkim, Assam, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya, Jharkhand and Telangana.

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## Implications of the Barefoot Approach on the Rural Poor

*Preparing the poor to face poverty is the best available option to eradicate poverty*

The innovative activities carried out by Barefoot College have transformed the lives of illiterate rural poor in multiple ways. The current chapter deals with the narratives of those whose lives have been positively affected. It is believed that the Barefoot approach has been praised by the rural poor, but criticised by urban educationalists, as it does not give sufficient recognition to the knowledge processed by urban-based professionals. Irrespective of different views, the reality is that it has helped a significant proportion of excluded people to gain dignified employment, especially those without prior educational qualifications or professional experience. As discussed, two kinds of beneficiaries of the Barefoot approach can be identified: first—those who are provided with services at cheaper rates and second—those who are provided with training and employment. This chapter focuses on building the latter and argues that the lives of many for whom employment has been generated have significantly gained. As claimed, there has been a tremendous transformation in the way that people live. Some of the employees work on the Barefoot campus because they like the work that it does, others like its philosophy and the learning pattern, and the remaining work because of the activities that they undertake to provide various services to the most deprived.

First of all, people respect the working environment as they are free to experiment and learn. For example, Mohanlal, who is in charge of the

Audio Visual division, claims that he has learned many things since joining the College. While he is officially engaged in a particular section at any given point in time, he is free to explore other divisions as well and learn. In fact, the College encourages its employees to be multidimensional and learn from different areas in which it works. That is the reason the College formally transfers the employees in quick intervals. "I was initially with the communication team. We had a field centre in Binjar Wada. It was 5 km away from my village. I was an actor in the communication team. After that, I worked with the mobile library. As part of the mobile library, we used to visit all the night schools in order to distribute books to the children. After that, I was with the education division, my roles include to run a bridge course and a night school, organise training programmes to teachers and to arrange meetings, as well as visiting the night schools. After that, I joined the transport division as a driver," Vishalal described his attachment to the College. Further, employees are happy with the College because it respects individuals, rather than their qualifications. In Bagchand's view, "Barefoot approach is extremely good. It gives importance to the individual, not to the qualifications. If the individual is interested, people can use their talents and transform the interest to achieve the impossible. After I came here [Barefoot College], I realised my ability and equipped myself with necessary skills." Even employees are happy about the social life that they gain at Barefoot College. Women employees, in particular, consider it one of the greatest opportunities in their lives. Women get the chance to be financially independent and their freedom and independence are highly appreciated in the communities. For example, one of the respondents proclaims that Barefoot experiments are great because uneducated people get employment. More than that, they get opportunities to learn and speak with others," we discuss several things with people like you [referring to the author]. My lifestyle has been drastically transformed. When I was in my village, I barely had any idea about the complex issues involved in social order. At the same time, when I was a housewife, whatever my husband earned, it was not sufficient to sustain the family. But now, we both earn and share the family expenditure. More than that, it is all about learning and sharing of knowledge with others, which I like significantly in Tilonia," she added.

Not only employees but also communities respect the College because of the service it provides them. Badrilal reported that he knew Barefoot College because there was a field centre in Kadampura. "Everyone knows about it because they provide good health, education and other facilities to the deprived. In other words, they approach every household in order to

request the parents to send their children to school. In case if parents are not willing to send for day time schools, then they persuade the parents to send at least to the night schools.” As discussed, the most deprived in the communities often gain employment from the Barefoot approach. Let us now understand who are the excluded and how do they get employment.

### WHO DO THEY TRAIN AND EMPLOY?

Barefoot’s target population, as discussed earlier, is the most deprived, who would otherwise be vulnerable if not trained and employed by the College. The category of those who have been employed include the poor, women, the physically challenged, Dalits, Tribes and other vulnerable sections. The College attempts to accommodate those who most likely fall under the realm of social exclusion. It is needless to state that in order to create synergies among the communities and to make sure that those who are provided with training on a specific skill, remain to work for communities, the communities are asked to nominate someone from their group to undergo such training. This section discusses the background of the respondents and their adverse backgrounds when they were recruited into Barefoot College.

#### *Recruiting Night School Students as Employees*

Barefoot College has implemented a policy through which it recruits some of the night school alumni as its employees. The night school alumni, while undergoing their primary education at Barefoot night school, acquired a fair idea about the functioning of Barefoot College, which in fact helped them later to quickly integrate themselves in the system. A few respondents said that they studied at the night school for four years and later attended day school for a few years. After that, they had to stop further studies as there was no school available in nearby towns. With the difficulties in their respective houses, they approached Barefoot College for a job, which was instantly provided to them as they were already trained under the Barefoot system and are familiar with its philosophy. The respondents believe that they have been given an opportunity to give something back to the organisation that nurtured them and to the community by working in the organisation. One of the respondents further states that he has been working at the College for four years on water-testing instruments. His job is to go to the villages and test the water. Initially villagers inform

him about the possible contamination of the water due to the prevailing diseases in the area. It is his responsibility to collect the water samples and conduct tests.

As discussed, the process employed to provide employment is quite simple and particularly in the case of the most disadvantaged, it has been significantly easier. A respondent, who was also a night school student, described how upon successful completion of his schooling, he had worked in a shop in Kishangarh. While working in the shop as a labourer, he had an accident where he lost his leg and thus became physically challenged. As a result, he could no longer lift any weights in the shop and became unsuitable for the job. He left the job in the shop and met Bagwanthnandan, who was heading up the solar division, and requested him to provide him with a job. Bagawanthnandan represented Chota Singh's case in the coordinators meeting and the committee decided to give him a job. Other physically challenged respondents, who also studied at Barefoot night schools, have been provided with employment in the Barefoot system. The selection took place entirely on a need-based approach.

While Barefoot College may be paying the nominal wages as part of the remuneration, according to the minimum wages act of the state, it appears that it is way higher than the market wages offered in that region. For example, Nawshad, who is also a night school alumnus, expressed that he completed his schooling at Barefoot night school. Later, he studied up to tenth class in Kishangarh, a nearby town. However, due to financial constraints he was forced to work immediately upon completion of his intermediate. He found work in Kishangarh and worked there for three years. Though he was working at a cloth merchandiser, his financial situation remained bad. He was paid as little as Rs. 1,500, a month (USD 25). Later, he approached Barefoot College and asked them to provide him with a job. They agreed to recruit him on a pay scale of Rs. 1,800 per month (USD 30), after the completion of some formalities. His first placement was at a night school as a teacher. Later, he was transferred to Shingla field centre and then he went on to study at Kota Open University. This shows that Barefoot College opens avenues where it is not only about professional growth and happiness, but also about personal accomplishment. This is how Barefoot became one of the favourite destinations for several of the employees interviewed. It is also found that the physically challenged received special provisions and encouragement from Barefoot College, which recruited them in various jobs.



### *The Physically Challenged*

The physically challenged, in general, are deprived of education, knowledge and social awareness due to societal negligence. As a result, they do not qualify for a respectable job in society, nor is their social existence respected in either of their community and social contexts. Their physical deprivation does not even allow them to apply for any physical work. Hence, they have been neglected and their capabilities have been underestimated by their families, in addition to society (Kummitha 2016). Barefoot believes that every rural poor person, regardless of gender, caste, creed and physical disability, has similar knowledge which can be used to improve his/her personality/life. Barefoot started to put its trust into the physically challenged in order to uplift them.

Through its dedicated surveys to identify the physically challenged in 190 villages of the Silora Block of Rajasthan, Barefoot found the existence of more than 1,500 physically handicapped men, women and children who were trapped in the clutches of exclusion. These surveys were conducted with the help of three disabled persons. It was found in the survey that all the disabled surveyed, were poor and disabled in several forms, not only physically, but also economically and socially. With the sheer dedicated work style of Barefoot, they have so far trained 450 physically challenged persons for several of whom employment is generated. They were provided with employment in several forms as Barefoot independent rural entrepreneurs, Barefoot teachers, pathologists, computer instructors, accountants, screen printers, toy makers, recycling professions, and phone booth operators, milk booth operators, and so on.

Jagdeesh, a physically challenged person, describes, “we, the physically challenged never get attention of anyone in the society. For that reason, our education and employment have never been taken care off. Especially, differently abled persons from rural poor families are more vulnerable. I have completed intermediate, whereas my father asked me to stop studies and start working after that. Hence, I decided to work but no one was willing to provide a job. Then, someone told me about Barefoot College, which helps people like me in order to gain employment. In fact, it was all my fortune as people approached from Barefoot College when they started surveying in the nearby villages about the persons with disabilities. They collected data about physically challenged and, in the process, approached me too. That is how I could first become familiar with the people from Barefoot College. After observing my pitiable condition, they themselves

came forward and offered me a job.” He further mentioned that, “we work here [Barefoot College] very happily, we don’t have to fight with anyone in order to get two square meals a day and tea in the evening, we also get a chance to work and learn simultaneously.”

People with disabilities claim that they find life comfortable at Barefoot College. The financial gains they attain by being employed by Barefoot College are quite significant. Jagdeesh said that, “my life has become so easy and happy as I started earning on my own. When physically challenged persons stay with the family, they will have to depend on the family members, even if we need Rs. 1/- (2 cents). But now, I am very happy because, I am sending some money even to my house. I have studied up to 12th class but no one was ready to give a job, we need house, money, but due to the lack of employment I couldn’t get anything, but after joining here [Barefoot College], I got everything.” Gopal Suri, another physically challenged person, felt that “I have witnessed a lot of transformation in my life. In fact, I used to be in sad circumstances before I came here [Barefoot College], I was totally excluded from all the spheres, not only at the societal level, but also in the family environment. No one bothered about me. But, after becoming part of Barefoot College, everyone started respecting me, which I never expected. As a whole, I am very happy about what I am today. I learned many things here [Barefoot College].” While the most excluded have been recruited into jobs, it is women who have had to face resistance from the communities.

The respondents had a really tough time from the communities, as the existing culture does not allow them to gain respective jobs and enrich their living. For example, in the case of women, it so happened that communities were not willing to appreciate women gaining employment from the College. Some of the respondents claimed that when their family conditions deteriorated due to either the demise of the husband or to debt, there was an urgent need for them to participate in labour market. After gaining employment, they started working at the College, and later faced strong criticism from their own communities. It was found that some of the communities are rigid and strongly patriarchal in nature. Such communities were not happy with women being employed at the College, where men were also employed. However, since employment was unavoidable for those women in order to sustain their families, they resisted the communities and showed their courage by working at the College. In addition, other reasons that forced the respondents away from the mainstream, who were later employed by Barefoot College, are discussed below.

### *Other Adverse Circumstances*

Women who have never been out of their houses are now empowered by gaining employment under the Barefoot approach. One of the respondents says that before joining Barefoot College, she was just looking after her family's needs as a homemaker. Since coming to Barefoot College, she has become more independent. In the past, she was restricted to the kitchen, but now her social sphere has widened from that of family to society. She made up her mind to work at Barefoot College. Her husband also used to work at Barefoot College. She went to the College to understand how the College works and to her surprise, they asked her then to work at the College, as they had learned that she was interested in Barefoot philosophy. She discussed the matter with her husband and both of them decided on her joining the College. She claimed that her husband has been a great source of inspiration for her. He asked her to learn several things and advised her to take control over the issues in which she worked. She narrates that, "I was asked to undergo computer training. At that time, I neither had knowledge of English nor computer applications. I was first appointed in Audio Visual division. Later, I also worked in Accounts, and then administration. After that, I have been working here [Barefoot College] in the water testing division."

Another respondent, Punaram, revealed that he traditionally hails from a musician storytelling community, i.e. the Bhat community. They traditionally write stories and narrate them. Since the market for "storytelling" was grim, those who depended on this particular profession for their livelihood had to look for an alternative means of income. However, Punaram did not have any other skills apart from his own community-based profession. As a result, he was frustrated and became a sadhu in a local temple where he used to perform continuous prayers. Given his commitment for the cause of Hindu religion, he was later made a Baba, a godman, to whom local people used to offer prayers. He could get free food, a place to stay and undefined respect from communities. Despite this attribution, one day he felt ashamed and realised that he should be doing something meaningful. Then he visited Barefoot College as suggested by someone else and secured a job. Another respondent recollected Punaram's arrival on campus and opined that "we got scared on Punaram's arrival in the campus, after looking at his huge beard, he was treated as swami in a temple before he came here [Barefoot College]. We were even not sure, how this chap would complete his training. But, today he has transformed

himself quite a bit.” In response, Punaram said that, “the College has given us dignified employment, which we would not have got anywhere else. Hence, I have due respect for the College, because of which we take pride in working for other poor and deprived.”

It is found that all the respondents come from heterogeneous backgrounds, but they are together. The bond of exclusion ties them together, working to fulfil each others’ ambitions and contribute to the larger social good. Most of them lack at least ten years of formal schooling. Their financial situation was bad and they had to find employment in order to lead a respectable life. That was when Barefoot College helped them to secure a livelihood and respect in society. While we are already aware that all the respondents are excluded in their own capacity, the next section deals with the degree of their financial exclusion and builds on the arguments.

### FINANCIAL BACKGROUND OF THE RESPONDENTS

Most of the respondents faced adverse financial situations before being employed by Barefoot College. Although some of the respondents had some kind of employment, for the most part, it was extremely harmful due to its exploitative nature. Altogether, everyone had to face extreme difficulties in leading their lives with dignity. For instance, before joining Barefoot College, Naru had worked at a marble factory for four months in the nearby town of Kishangarh, in addition to working at a small store for about five years. He used to make about Rs. 2,000 (USD 30) a month from both jobs. He was then provided with employment by Barefoot College, which paid a better salary. He narrates that, “In fact, it was my dream to get a job in Barefoot College. When I first visited Barefoot College during my study in the night school, it was an ambitious plan. When I was working in the marble industry, the job used to be boring due to the routines involved in it and we were just restricted to do the same job over and again. It was just a business, so there was no scope for someone like me to offer any ideas or suggestions. Moreover, I was expected to work every day throughout the year without any holidays. Whereas in Barefoot College everyone is equally treated, equally paid and equally respected.” Another respondent, Lalchand, was just paid Rs. 800 a month (USD12) when he was working at a marble factory. Because of the low income he had to look for an alternative job, but in order to search for another job he had to leave his job at the marble factory, and was consequently idle for several years. However, he was later given a job by Barefoot College where his earnings are quite high.

Some of the respondents mentioned that their financial situation was highly disturbing when they ended up at Barefoot College. For example, Ramswaroop was one of those who was given employment because of his poverty. About 30 years ago when he first approached the College, he was offered a minimum wage of Rs. 420 per month (USD 7 at today's rate). At the same time, he was offered another job in the local market with a pay of Rs. 300 (USD 5). Having chosen the job at the College, along with other illiterates, he was placed in the accounts division. From there he learned how to perform different roles in the organisation. Thus, the need-based approach followed by Barefoot College helped most of the respondents to get respective jobs and gain the livelihoods they required. When recruited, all of them were offered training before being placed in different divisions in the College. The following section deals with the kind of training that empowers the skills and capabilities of these illiterates before being placed in different work roles.

### HOW IS THE TRAINING?

As discussed earlier, the College follows learning by doing principle as a driving force to transfer knowledge among its stakeholders. Learning from each other during the training help them to build their confidence along with their fellow trainers, who also happened to be illiterates. The illiterates who offer training have already undergone similar training prior. One of the respondents says that he had undergone intensive training which was so informal. He learned by watching what others did. He was asked to learn from the Barefoot doctor about the distribution of medicine. He was asked to give medicine which he learned from the doctor and he began to distribute medicine. Another respondent mentioned that she had undergone computer training for six months from Lalita, who was also an illiterate. This "Why not?" attitude helped them face the hurdles and move on with confidence. One of the female respondents claimed that when she was asked to work in welding-related activities, she was afraid as the society may not accept a woman to take up welding as an occupation. However, the 'why not' attitude helped her to question that if men are doing it, what restricts women from undertaking the same profession?

One of the most important aspects of the training is that those who are trained at Barefoot will train the next batches. Training allows them to gain access of the issues that are of concern for Barefoot College, and in addition, it allows them to have control over local resources. Some of the respondents stated that they had to undergo training for one year. They

got the opportunity to meet different people, and got to know the social problems people faced and the innovative ways of addressing such problems. For example, one of the respondents mentioned that in his earlier job, he was constrained to the job role, whereas now he gets the chance to learn about social problems, visit several places and interact with a range of social groups, which he claims is a great learning experience.

It is not to say that the training procedure was too easy for illiterates. Some of the respondents claimed that the training was quite tough in the early days as they didn't have any background knowledge of the issues in which they were trained. However, commitment from both ends helped them to acquire the training, despite the delays in gaining the necessary knowledge and skills. In fact, many of the respondents had no idea about the work they were expected to undertake, the nature of the training or the possible job roles that they might be expected to take up. Ramcharan said that, "we didn't know anything before. Once we started learning in the training, we got to know its importance. Those who do not know anything before, sit and learn from others, those who have learned in the same environment earlier."

Training an illiterate to become an engineer, architect, or teacher is no easy task. In certain cases, the nature of the training and the possible job which is expected to be taken up are so difficult. For example, a respondent claims that a puppet show needs to attract the public. It needs a lot of care, as well as smartness in how they articulate their feelings, emotions and concerns. Sometimes, they may even face a lot of difficulties during the shows. "At times audience ask us to sing movie songs while playing a show to eradicate a social evil. It is at that times, we need to have a lot of patience and keep concentrating on our play. Thus, we are trained very professionally in all aspects as required for the profession we are expected to deal," one of the respondent explained. The training and the employment that they undertake give them sufficient scope to navigate away from the exclusion trap. We have by now understood that the various practices of social entrepreneurship offer avenues for inclusion of the excluded. Accordingly, the next section deals with the actual scenarios that explain the process of inclusion.

## TRANSFORMATION TOWARDS INCLUSION

The respondents claimed that their lives had been positively affected by their employment prospects. One of the respondents put it simply that their families have been facilitated with secure employment. Their children have been

educated and their awareness of political, cultural and social issues had been elevated. In fact, the children of the employees have also started to associate with the College despite their strong academic credentials. They want to help the College to help the communities further. For example, one of the respondents said, “one thing I must tell you that I was two and my sister was four years old, when we came here [Barefoot College]. Environment in Barefoot College was entirely different from that of the society, which I later realised. The living style significantly differs in Barefoot College campus and it was a thought-provoking structure. Barefoot College works for women empowerment, girl child education and, it asks people to be confident and be truthful to the normative and ethical life style. Whereas in the society outside, women have to wear veil and girl child should not be sent to the schools, were a few practices that restrict women to gain from the social advancements. However, my parents questioned such practices and took a radical step, which resulted in our empowerment. They allowed us to be free from chains so that we could enjoy freedom to the fullest possible level. I should also mention here that if we grow in a good environment like Barefoot, our thoughts would be noble.” It can be argued that the positive environment at Barefoot College offered the respondents the opportunity to be creative and to achieve their ambition. She further emphasises, “We are four sisters, our marriages were not held when we are 14 years like all my other friends. We were supported by our parents to excel, as a result, we have broken the rule of the villages, cultures and societies. My friends in the village who were of similar age were married long back and they immediately became mothers. As a result, not to be cynical, they are restricted to their kitchens where they just look after their families. Their life was initially dictated by parents before the marriages and now by their in-laws and husbands. Whereas our life is altogether different, because we have grown up in a good environment.” The children of those who work at Barefoot College have received a good education. Parents concede that this has been possible due to the continuous support they receive from Barefoot College. Bata, whose parents work at Barefoot College, completed her higher education which was totally supported by Barefoot College. Barefoot maintains a fund to support such initiatives. Another respondent mentioned that she has two daughters and both of them completed their Master degrees followed by teacher training courses.

As discussed earlier, various deprived sections including the physically challenged sections gained dignified employment and claim to have a secure life. In fact, it is also found that the jobs provided by the College helped someone like Bagchand to have a family of his own. He claims that

Barefoot is an institution which has given him a life. Prior to Barefoot, he couldn't afford to have a family of his own. It is all because he got a job at Barefoot College that he was later able to get married. Today he is a proud father of a son. Earlier, he claimed that he was not sure of having a married life, due to his poverty and physical disability. He claims that no one bothers about the physically handicapped (PH) in a society like Rajasthan, whereas their welfare has been taken care of at the College.

Most of the respondents have ended up in the Barefoot system without any knowledge about its significance and the role it offers to the poor and deprived. One of the respondents said that working at Barefoot College is a great opportunity to learn several things about society. He hasn't even undergone ten years of schooling, but got an opportunity to work at an innovative venture. Previously, many of his school friends had completed their higher education and got various jobs, but they were not as happy as he is now. His friends work in the marble industry and are not aware of any technological advancements in society, whereas he claims that he is completely happy about the job he is currently doing and gets the chance to visit different places and learn from different cultures. This is how the simple things become significant when dealing with the most excluded sections.

Further, it is claimed that the Barefoot philosophy helped them to realise their roles in the family, college and society. Since most of them are illiterates, they were not socially aware, however, with the Barefoot approach in place, they have gained the required social consciousness and further influenced their friends and families to act responsibly. Ramswaroop, who presently works as an accountant at Barefoot College, mentioned that the first time he listened to Roy, he got to know about the philosophy of Barefoot College and its contribution to the social transformation. After working at the College for some time he realised that he was dealing with a noble cause where it not only helped him to transform himself but also created scope for him to contribute to social development. The magnitude of his bond to the College is such that he states, "several of my friends and relatives always enquire why am I still working here, when the salary is not optimal according to the market rates? They always encourage me to leave and join their employers where there are all possibilities for better job with attractive salaries and other benefits. In fact, one of my friends, who earlier worked in Barefoot College as an accountant, left to join marble industry because of higher salary offered there. He asked me several times to join with him so that I will get three times more than what I am earning now. However, I have restrained that I am happy here with whatever I am paid.



Frankly, I did think about leaving a couple of times because of the high salaries that I might get for my degree and experience, but I couldn't do it due to the affection that I have built towards Barefoot College." It proves that the affection and the environment that fosters contribution to society offer a clear case for employees to remain loyal to the organisation for a longer period of time. It is appropriate to mention here that one of the studies Intellecapp (2012) undertook claims that social enterprises are unable to recruit and retain qualified middle level managers. In the case of Barefoot College, it has successfully retained most of its employees for as long as three decades due to its innovative operations and governance structures which are deeply rooted in community culture. It emphasises that Barefoot not only helped the employees to transform their lives, but also equipped them to contribute to the larger social cause.

Sometimes, this transformation also helped them to successfully undertake several innovative experiments. For example, one of the respondents spoke about one such innovative instrument that he developed. He fabricated an innovative instrument in LED lamps, which lights better and consumes less battery. He developed the idea and prototyped it in Delhi. This worked well where communities have benefited from the instrument. LED light consumes far less solar electricity than the other lights available in the market. It is also found that the illiterate solar engineers have developed several such new innovative instruments. They opine that technology changes rapidly and accordingly it is necessary to adjust to it as it gets invented. The Barefoot solar systems allow them to modify different instruments in accordance with their needs. When the instruments are built locally, it is easier to deal with repairs and maintenance using the localised infrastructure. When the respondent was asked how he saw himself according to the transformation philosophy, he emphasised that previously he didn't even know how a computer worked as he studied it only up to 8th class. However, now he works on PowerPoint presentations, types in Word and does several other things on the computer. He further claims that he has an email address where he gets approximately more than ten emails a day. He emphasises that this transformation is only possible due to his association with Barefoot College.

Another respondent mentioned that previously she used to take care of the kitchen and household activities. Since joining Barefoot, she has learned many things. She had never seen a computer before and yet now, she is a professional in the operation of computers. She has just attended school for six years and barely knows the alphabet. However, she manages

all activities with regard to her office, including the usage of computer. Initially she took inspiration from other illiterate women who used to work in solar division and works on a computer. She had acquired training for a few months from other uneducated professionals. Later, she started to practise on the computer. After a long period of practice, she learned the techniques and became a professional who could handle all activities related to her office. Before coming to Barefoot, women respondents claimed to face extremely difficult conditions, having no knowledge of the outside world. For example, another respondent mentions that previously she never had the chance to come out of her house, and as a result, she is even afraid of talking to others outside. After joining the training, she had run away several times as she was afraid of talking to outsiders in the training. However, now she has been totally transformed and can handle several activities on her own. In fact, people sometimes wonder how she balances her work and educational background as she also comes from an illiterate background.

Transformation in the life patterns of the respondents has occurred in more than one area. Their social settings, behavioural aspects, children education health conditions etc. have all been transformed. Employment and financial stability have helped them to be more dynamic and break the exclusion trap. It also contributed to achieving social equity among those excluded sections. Thus, the next section aims to understand how social equity is attained under this approach.

### PROMOTION OF SOCIAL EQUITY

Respondents proclaimed that they work at Barefoot College without experiencing any discrimination. Initially, before the transition, Barefoot College was to look into the background of the problem before addressing it. Let's say, organising a night school or installing a hand pump or recruiting employees—they would look into the background of the problem and then they would understand what adverse situations could be caused by the unresolved problem. Then, the neediest among those who suffer are provided with the services. However, with the organisational transformation which was instilled by both internal and external conditions, as discussed in the third chapter, they had to take a unified approach where they started to serve the poorest sections in the society. By doing so, they started to address the problems of the Dalits and tribes who are on the lowest order of caste hierarchy in India. This resulted in

the most deprived sections beginning to appreciate Barefoot College. Ramniwas, who hails from a Scheduled Caste community, narrates his experience. He is traditionally from the sweeper community. After several surveys, in 1983 a drilling team from Barefoot College visited his village of “Akodia” in Rajasthan. There is a disturbing caste problem in rural Rajasthan villages. The team from Barefoot College went to him and asked where they could find the *harijan*<sup>1</sup> colony. He responded, “What do you want, I am from the Harijan Colony?” Then, they asked him whether there was a drinking water problem in the community. He told them there was a huge problem with the drinking water. They assured him that a hand pump would be fixed in this colony, provided that they deposited Rs. 300 (USD 5).

He thought a hand pump costs around Rs. 10,000 (about USD 170), but the Barefoot team insisted they would install it for just Rs. 300. He felt it was an amazing idea. He had just started to collect the money from everyone in the colony. However, community members could barely contribute half of the required money due to their extreme poverty. After learning of the plight of the community, the College representatives decided to install the hand pump. When the process was initiated the remainder of the village, who came from the “mainstream” objected, knowing that the hand pump was being installed in the Harijan colony. It was all about prestige for them as they did not have any such facility in mainstream society. They strongly resisted the move to install the hand pump in the colony and protested that they would never allow this to happen. Due to the strong restriction, the College representatives visited the village at night and installed the hand pump.

Ramniwas was astonished to see what had happened: “They came all the way from nowhere and fixed a hand pump—that too in a Harijan colony!” he narrated. Then someone told him that they had come from Tilonia where Barefoot College is located. Later, he went on a bicycle ride for 40 km to see what was in Tilonia. He got the opportunity to see how the entire system worked and he felt very happy about it. At Barefoot College, caste disparities are tackled carefully; people from both upper as well as lower castes take equal part in the system that governs them. One of the respondents who hails from the Brahmin community, clarified that his caste never became a hurdle for him to interact with others. He takes water from the same pot as the others. He further mentions, “we are like a family, if anyone has any problem, everyone is concerned about it. If there

is no food in my house, I approach others, irrespective of his/her caste. I invite everyone to the functions in my house. Everyone actively takes part in the developmental activities.”

As the respondents proclaimed, caste or religion do not appear to become a matter of concern at the College. Everyone has to follow the same procedures and work conditions accordingly. This way they are able to tackle several social evils. The organisational environment allows them to be more social and progressive. While fighting against social evils, Barefoot College has faced the hostility of several individuals and groups across the villages where it works. On the other hand, due to its innovative experiments, several people in Rajasthan and elsewhere have developed a lot of respect towards Barefoot College.

#### A Narrative from an Employee (Satyanarayana)

I have been working for the last 12 years in the College. Initially, I used to fix tube lights in my village. Later, I joined in Kishangarh Marble area for a job. I failed in IX class. Then, I stopped my studies and decided to work. Later I used to do electricity fitting and wiring work in my village. There was a huge demand for motor windings in the village. Hence I went to Kishangarh and learned how to fix winding for a year. I was earning Rs. 200 per month (USD 3). I used to go to Kishangarh on bicycle, which is located 22 km away from my village. I go in the morning and come back in the evening, after working for the full day, I was just paid Rs. 7 (10 cents) a day, which was not enough to sustain. Though I was working throughout the day, my family had to face extreme hardships to lead a more secure life.

They used to pay me very less apart from ignoring all my requests to increase the salary. Further, they also warned, “If you work for the same amount without any complaint, you will have work. Otherwise, you will have to leave.” Then I went to Jaipur. I worked in an industry where motor meters were manufactured. I used to get Rs. 700 a month (USD 10) in 1997. With Rs. 700 in a city, I got nothing to sustain. I searched a lot for a better job, but in vain and all my hard work was of no use. Then, I decided to go back to my village and never wanted to work in a city.

So, I told my parents the same, who resisted me, but they also didn't have any other choice. My uncle used to teach in one of the Barefoot night schools. He asked me what skills do I poses. I said I am quite sound in electrical related work, then he brought me to the solar section. By that time, the solar section had projects from United Nations Development Program and European Union. He asked me whether I can work with them. It was crazy with a lot of equipment, I just like electronic gadgets. I felt like I just arrived in my own world. In fact, I was surprised to see such kind of huge and costly projects being taken up in a village. Since I came from a village, they trusted what I said and gave me a job, expecting me to do something innovative. I was given training for about six months. Our solar electricity system in main campus, which was depending up on 50 DC had been reinstalled by us to make it as strong as a 40 KW AC. We took everything on our own and completed the task. We fixed 8 power plants, each one was of five KWs. With that, we are able to have 24 hours solar electrification in the campus. Apart from a job, I have got a chance to meet several people and know their sorrows and became part of their happiness. I was earlier sent to Nepal to train them on solar technologies. In addition, I got several chances to visit almost all Indian states. I am totally happy about myself and my contribution to social change.

Ramniwas' story must be shared here to understand how caste- related issues are dealt with. He said that he had completed 11th standard of education, but due to financial problems, he had to leave his studies and take up a job. He went to work in a factory in Ahmadabad city, as there was no employment available in the nearby villages. As he comes from a Dalit community, which is considered untouchable, he could not open a tea stall or work in mainstream society. In fact, one must disclose his/her caste to the landlord before opening a tea stall. When Ramniwas disclosed his caste, he was not allowed to stay there. As a result, he had to travel to Ahmadabad and find work in a factory. However, he was frightened by an accident where two of his colleagues were killed by a gas leak in the same factory where he was working. As a result, he left the job and went back to his house. There was an adult education centre in his village, which was

undertaken by an organisation based in Ajmer, a nearby city. Though it was an adult education centre, a lot of children used to attend along with adults. While he was interested in attending, he did not do so because of his caste background. He claimed that “if I was there to study, people would have stayed away by proclaiming that I am a dalit and I would eventually pollute surroundings.” In one of the author’s earlier writings, it is narrated that this practice be seen as self-exclusion (Kummitha 2015). The excluded person does not join in the activities conducted in the mainstream, due to the assumption that such an attempt to participate may create troubles for him or his community. However, Ramniwas was able to get some space in the group activity in the village with his active participation in entertainment programmes, such as singing and storytelling, based on which he was hired at the school. He was able to attract a huge number of children with his dialogue and action. This enabled him not to be fired from his job by mainstream hegemonic entities.

After working there for a year, he decided to quit because, despite his top performance in the children evolution, he was never treated equally. He says that “I was never allowed to take water from the same pot which my other colleagues use and many of them were jealous of me due to the high scores I have secured in the children evaluation.” In addition, once, intentionally, he used the same pot as his colleagues to drink water. Learning of this incident, his colleagues broke the pot, and when he touched the food in the school, it was thrown to the dogs. It was then that he was sent to Barefoot College to undergo puppet training. He was already aware of Barefoot College due to his earlier experience of installing hand pumps. He attended the training programme in 1986. He further clarified that, “Sankar Singh was looking after the communication division at that particular point of time. When I visited the division, he asked me to get some water for him from the pot. I thought he was joking, because he is from warrior caste and I am from Scheduled Caste, which leave no scope for someone from his caste to drink water which we touch. I felt that he might be joking and it was a result of his upper caste arrogance. However, I had to obey his wish and I brought the water, which he then literally drank. It was a kind of magic for me. I thought what kind of man he was, coming from the upper caste and drank water which was offered by a dalit. This experience in the beginning helped me to understand the environment in the College. I stayed there for seven days, which I enjoyed quite happily. We ate together, sat together and drank water from the same pot. It was entirely opposite to the experience that I had undergone in adult educa-

tion centre, where I worked earlier. They never used to give what they ate. I had a separate plate, and the food was also different, they never allowed me to be with them. With the experience at Barefoot College, I decided to quit adult education centre and secure a job in Barefoot College. I must tell you that I just came here [Barefoot College] only because everyone sat together and ate together, and that is what I liked the most at the college.”

After quitting the adult education centre, he wanted a job at Barefoot College. He inquired about this with Singh who had trained him in puppets. Singh advised him to meet Roy, the Director of the College. When Ramniwas met Roy, he submitted an application for a job and Roy asked him what he wanted to do. Ramniwas replied, “there is a huge untouchability practice in my village and I do not want to go back. So, I told him I want to become a helper/peon. Then for my surprise, he told me there would not be any peon in Tilonia. I thought he had gone mad, he immediately asked me, would you become an accountant? It was another shock for me. It was all because, if a dog gets into a house, it is not a problem for the house owner whereas if we go, it becomes a turmoil. I thought Roy was also joking with me. I responded, how could I become an accountant as I have not studied much and I felt an accountant must have a tie, a belt and a coat? However, after he insisted, I accepted his offer. He realised after the initial discussion that I was scared but capable, that was the reason he insisted me to accept. I had undergone the training and became an accountant after one year and look after the accounting of the College.”

After spending three months at Barefoot, he was sent to the field centre for four years. He had worked there as a multipurpose worker, where he was expected to work on different things. As he moved from the Barefoot College campus, his colleagues in the field centre were not happy to work under his supervision as he was a Dalit. However, he received constant support from the main office. Barefoot College had made the decision several years ago that, whoever promotes or practices untouchability, will be severely punished. There were (are) a lot of untouchability practices in the villages, but at Barefoot College, it has been totally abandoned. Especially in those days, it was tough to take such a crucial step. As a result, about ten teachers quit their job in the field centre because they were not prepared to work under the supervision of a Dalit. During the struggle, Barefoot College wrote to all ten teachers asking them to work at the College under Ramniwas’ supervision. In the case that it was too problematic to work under this condition, then they were asked to quit and then warned to file a case against them under the Scheduled Caste

and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.<sup>2</sup> As a result, everyone, apart from two, returned to work.

He further clarified that in society, “we are not allowed (i) to sit with others on chairs, (ii) to take a tea comfortably in the roadside shops in the villages, and (iii) not permitted to be part of the social discussions in the villages etc, but Barefoot College never allowed any such activities. That’s the only reason which has bonded me here for more than two and half decades. If I go back to my home in the village, even today, I will have to experience the same kind of untouchability practice. That is the reason, I have almost avoided to go to my village for several years now.”

Working against the caste hierarchies in Indian rural settings is not an easy task; it needs strategic attention and commitment. Barefoot has done this since the beginning, not by taking up any activism, but rather by a mere committed mechanism. With their effort, the Barefoot approach has provided a space for the deprived sections such as Dalits and women to fight against social evils. Unlike the structured way of working, Barefoot College initiated that everyone must be trained in more than one activity so that they can handle multiple activities at any given time. It not only builds confidence among the subjects, but also helps the College to gain the maximum from those who work at the College and further reduces the operating costs. The same thing happened in Ramniwas’ case. As discussed, everyone who works at the College is expected to play multidimensional roles, and everyone is trained in the multiple activities that the College is involved in. This helps the College utilise the skills of the employees as and when required. One of the respondent mentioned that he had started his career in the solar division, which was followed by, in a sequence; computer, NREGA, Medical, crèche and education. Another respondent describes how he was working in the dining hall in the early days. He then worked in the transport division as a driver, and then worked with Balwadi.<sup>3</sup> In fact, he was in charge, and he also worked with women empowerment and took care of night schools. Then, he was again asked to go back to one of the field centres and work for Self-Help Groups. Finally, he worked in rain water harvesting and NREGA. Under NREGA, he used to conduct meetings and make people aware about the rules of the game.

They believe that it is all about how multidimensional one could be, “we are not government officials who just come to office, spend some time and go home. We work in the name of the poor, accordingly, we should not say that my expertise falls in one particular area. I have been to several places such as Bombay, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Trivandrum, Delhi,



Bhopal, etc. on the work purpose. I have also worked in several projects that Barefoot College has taken up so far, where earlier I was looking after the financial and accounts related matters. Once I go to the field centre, I do not restrict myself to the accounts work alone, I become a multipurpose worker. It is all about how much we could support the communities that drives our ethos,” Ramswaroop shared his experience.

People are happy to work under the Barefoot approach because, employees are not divided based on their background, nature of the work or even salaries. Irrespective of the nature of the work, everyone is equally respected. Everyone works equally, is paid equally and respects each other equally. When we talk about equality, equality in salary structure brings an element of surprise. It requires a certain understanding to know how the salaries system is managed homogeneously.

### THE SALARY STRUCTURE

After learning about the transformation of lives and the levels of happiness from the respondents who benefit from the Barefoot approach, one may feel that the salary system must be strong enough, where higher salaries are offered to support their needs. But the fact is that they have been paid a lower salary compared to market rates. In fact, they never consider that they are paid salaries, but a working wage or honorarium. Though the working wage or honorarium is paid in accordance with the Rajasthan Minimum Wages Act, it is felt by a few of the respondents that the salary is quite low to maintain their families. But the majority consider that they are paid in accordance with their needs and it allows them to lead a decent life. Everyone's salaries are decided by others in the College. They democratically decide how much everyone should get. Salaries are paid equally, with the exception of nominal increase for senior workers as they have gained more experience.

For example, one of the respondents mentioned that Bagawath Nandan and she get more than what Roy, the Director, gets. Roy is just paid the minimum wage. The maximum variation that they follow ranges between 1 and 1.5 ratio. She further added that she gets Rs. 4,500 (USD 75) per month, which excludes other allowances. There is not much difference between two individuals working in the organisation while the lowest paid is Rs. 3,000 (USD 50), which is the minimum wage according to the local rules whereas the highest paid salary is Rs. 4,500 (USD 75). In fact, many respondents claim that they are privileged to get such salaries. They

had previously experienced the highest form of exploitation in the local markets. For example, one of the respondents said, “when I was working in Kishangarh, marble factory I was told to pay Rs. 60 per day (USD 1), however, when there was no electricity, they used to cut down the working hours and pay only Rs. 30 (50 cents). But the whole situation is different here. Here I am paid 12 % dearness allowance every year. I get Rs. 3,500 pm. which excludes other facilities such as a house on the campus, electricity, water and other allowances for a nominal fee. If we include everything, I get between Rs. 5,000 and 6,000 per month (USD 85–100). We never think that we are paid less. We have been paid whatever the minimum wage prescribed by the Govt. of Rajasthan.”

One of the very inspirational answers that the researcher came across was, “see, if we compare our salary with high paid employees in markets, certainly our salary is low. When we compare it with the poorest of the poor, with whom we must be comparing ourselves, our salaries are incredible. I am happy, I don’t need more money. I have been involved in Barefoot College with dignity, and I have been respected by everyone here. For me, finances do not matter, but what matters most is the working conditions,” Bata shared her views. Moreover, due to the exploitative nature in the markets, it is claimed that no one gets more than Rs. 3,000 (USD 50) on a regular basis in the outside market. For example, she further narrates that, “if someone prefers to do agricultural work, the work is only available for four months whereas at Barefoot College, work is provided 365 days of the year, which leaves the person less worrisome.”

While the regular remuneration offered is one of the key factors that keep people attached to the College, there are other sections of people who are loyal to the College because of the affection that they have built over a period of time with the College and the communities they serve. It is further claimed by a few respondents that they get free food and shelter on campus in addition to being paid every month. The best part is that the facilities are not only offered to the employees alone, but their entire family can benefit from them. This is something that they would require for sustainable living. Compared to several other people in their own villages, they are better off.

It is also claimed that since the College is located in a remote location, living expenses are always minimal compared to cities where such expenses are at the higher end. For example, one of the respondents opined that in case if he was to live in a city, he would have to pay for water, electricity, rent and so on, whereas Barefoot College provides all the facilities neces-

sary for a respectable life in a rural environment. In addition, it is also claimed that, by paying a working wage, they are able to recruit many people. So it is all about “sharing and caring” as one of the respondents said.

We discussed in earlier chapters that social capital is a crucial element that helps communities to enhance their mainstream participation. Accordingly, it is found that some of the respondents continue to work at Barefoot College because of the social bond and social capital that they have built with their colleagues, neighbours and communities. In one of the respondent’s view, “here I got a chance to meet several people, and worked in several divisions. We never think about our salaries, because we haven’t had any educational background that can attract an employer to recruit us. Whereas Barefoot has given us jobs, money, shelter and food. Apart from that, we get a chance to teach and learn through meeting several eminent personalities.” Another respondent mentions that since the beginning, he knew that he may not be paid a great salary, but what he knows is the fact that his family will be part of a better happiness. He claims that he gets a lot of support from Barefoot College. In fact, everyone in the family has been registered with a medical insurance scheme where any of his family members can be treated as and when there is a need. This is in addition to the educational allowances paid to the employees, as discussed earlier.

It is also found that there are several instances where both wife and husband are provided with work at the College. For example, Ramswaroop opined, “there are many people like us, who never have a chance to get employment and salaries by end of every month. Compared to them, we are far better off. Here, both my wife and I work and both of us are paid working wage, which keeps our family sustained. Apart from that we have got a business to do and our business is that poor should be elevated above the poverty line.” It is claimed that the culture at the College transforms like-minded people to get involved and be part of the change being carried out. This attitude is in line with Ashoka’s philosophy which claims that the social entrepreneur would need to change the cultures around them where teams of teams would eventually become inspired by the social entrepreneurial philosophy and transform the larger social reality. We witness a similar environment in the case of Barefoot College.

While most of the respondents are happy with their salaries and the existence of the College, there is a small margin of respondents who claimed the opposite. Nonetheless, the latter have shown an inability to leave the College due to the lack of a proper academic background which

might curtail their chances to get a job in the market space. They were cautious to claim that they have never been exploited, as they are working for a volunteer organisation, rather they opined that it would be better to revise the salaries in order to take their aspirations into account. In fact, as discussed, everyone's salaries are decided by others, which does not leave scope for complaints in the larger scenario. One of the respondents said that since he does not have a family of his own, the money he makes is somehow fine for him, whereas he claims that it is really difficult for those who have a family. Accordingly, one of the respondents opined that the salaries need to be increased and he has raised this issue several times in the meetings. He claims that "People in government services and other organisations are paid excellent salaries, but we are getting very low, at least it has to be increased to Rs. 5000, per month excluding allowances (USD 85). It costs about Rs. 40 (about 70 cents) to buy one kilo gram of sugar and everything costs much higher in market due to the inflation." Thus, the researcher found the need to improve the salaries to a market proposition. Nevertheless, it is the working culture and innovative mechanisms that allow employees to interact with other community members and the space provided to help other communities to raise their living standards are the few key crucial components that help them to stick with the College.

However, it does not isolate the cases of those who left the College for higher salaries in the market place. Punaram mentioned that, "many have left the organisation, gates are always open for anyone to leave or enter. Most of them go on personal, as well as financial problems. If they feel that the salary is less, they will go away for any other work in order to earn more money. In fact, I myself left the College in 2003 for my village, because I thought I must do something bigger than this, I had developed a zeal to learn something more than this. There, I worked as a freelancer and created my own team with some of the young people whom I had trained. Whenever there was a programme, we were paid and in rest of the days we used to go hungry. For a few months I used to get around Rs. 7000–8000 (120–140 USD), whereas during the other months, I received nothing. This has resulted in lack of proper stability in life. That was the reason I had to return back." Some employees left due to various family issues. For example, Rekha felt that, "we get less salary with which we couldn't sustain, especially when our children wanted to pursue professional courses. That was one such reason which pursued my husband to find employment out-

side. He later joined employment outside. Now he works in the marble industry and earns a good salary.”

The researcher found from interactions with the second level social entrepreneurs that it is their policy to stick to the minimum wages. While they are not exploiting any employee, their main concern is that the majority of the project funds should be ventured towards benefiting the communities. One of the respondents claims that, “If we take more salary out of the projects, either the project costs go up or the quality has to be compromised. Rather than going for either of these, we opted to downgrade our salaries or overheads, so that the best can be offered to the communities.” It was further felt that since the College offers different kinds of facilities for the employees, the major question arises with regard to savings and other conditions such as when their children would need to apply for professional work. In fact, the College strictly follows the minimum wage policy set out by the government. While recognising the need to increase the salary, the College tried to persuade the government to increase the minimum wage set by in the state. Accordingly, it could also increase the salaries of its own employees. During the third round of field research, it was found that the salaries were in fact hiked due to the positive response from the state government. The minimum wage, which used to be Rs. 100, a day (USD 1.5), has now increased to Rs. 135 (USD 2). The respondents claimed that the increase in salaries would eventually create a positive environment among the employees. One of the respondents claimed that, with the increased salaries, he plans to send some money home and keep the rest.

The concern for salaries would require a deeper understanding of the salary structure followed by Barefoot College. In general, there are three kinds of workers in the College: (a) those who have worked for longer durations, let's say 30 years; (b) those who have worked for a decade or less and (c) those who have recently been recruited in the last two to three years. When the salaries increase, the salaries of the most experienced will increase less and those of the least experienced will increase more, in order to keep the gap reduced. It is all decided in a workshop where everyone decides or evaluates everyone's salary. In total, there are 230 full-time workers and they all sit together to discuss the salaries of all 230 workers, with reference to a six-point criteria. The criteria includes issues such as their capacity, loyalty, responsibility, and relationship with the community. In addition, their involvement, capability to work, style of work and their relationship with others are some of the issues that are also considered.

When the salaries are set, they evaluate each and every one including his/her own salary. The scenario is such that no one pays the salaries, but they pay each other, and they do not have any giver or receiver. This is an entirely community managed and maintained structure. Accounts are transparent with the aim of letting communities take part in their efforts. As discussed, the lion's share of the money goes to the implementation of the programmes. It is found that administrative costs, including the salaries of the employees, are restricted to about 10–15 % of the total budget. To sum up, Barefoot College has never attempted to pay below the minimum wage, as set out by the government. When the minimum wages are revised, then the employees are paid salaries according to the revision. While we talk about their happiness and various aspects involved in their work performance, further understanding is required to know how financial inclusion is achieved. Accordingly, the next section focuses on understanding the process of achieving financial inclusion.

### FINANCIAL INCLUSION

In this section, the researcher compared the previous financial background of the respondents with that of their current status. Most of the respondents as discussed already claimed that they used to be poor and required some kind of assistance in order to lead a pleasant life. For example, one of the respondents used to be poor and deprived and she had to move into Barefoot College because she lost her husband in an accident. She had to take care of her daughter with literally no financial backup. On the other hand, there was no woman in her family who had previously worked outside. So, she had to not only against her financial deprivation, but also fight against the traditions and customs that hindered her participation in the job market. However, left with no option, she came out and joined the College, and as a result, she is not only able to take care of her daughter's education, but she also gained her livelihood and further empowerment.

The author had an interesting conversation with the respondents to find out their response to their salary structure, which was claimed by many as insufficient. The researcher had a curious response as to whether they consider themselves poor given the low salary structure. Most of the respondents said that they were not poor because they were making money. One of the respondents claimed that "I am not poor as I am earning. I would have been poor, had I been not employed here. Now I have every means to earn my food," Bata shared her views. Some of the respon-

dents insisted that they should not be considered poor as they have food to eat. They further claim that the poor should be those who do not have any food to eat, have no clothes to wear, have no proper house to stay in and do not have any work to make money.

In addition to financial gains, the respondents claim that they have been included in the mainstream due to the social aspects. For example, respondents viewed that their social status had been elevated. They never used to get respect from their peers before, especially within the communities/villages, whereas now they have found their place. Due to the kind of social service they undertake, communities respect and recognise their services and give a space for them to include themselves in the communities. They claim that the respect they get in the social space is more valuable than the financial incentives they get from the employer. It also adds up to the fact that many deprived and excluded, such as the physically challenged, claim to be pleased with the life transformation that they have been undergoing. For example, a respondent, who is a physically challenged, claimed that prior to his joining, he had no work, nor did anyone recognise him as a fellow person. As a result, he just sat idle at home. However, with the Barefoot approach, he is making money and is happy with his life.

In summary, Barefoot College has been an inspiration to promote social inclusion among those who have been given training and employment. Most of the respondents claimed to be happy working at Barefoot College. Moreover, they felt that they came out of the poverty trap in which they had lived for several years. Before coming to Barefoot College, everyone was in dire need of employment, without which their exclusion levels tended to be alarming. Through securing employment at Barefoot College, they not only came out of the poverty trap, but have also been able to secure respect in society, financial security, social security and social inclusion on a larger scale. It also allows an understanding of how people have been included politically.

The environment in the College helped these people to position themselves in a more civic and political culture. As they learned about the new waves in the social dimensions discussed earlier, their political outlook significantly changed. Previously, they used to be as casual as others when casting their votes, but now they realise the importance of utilising their votes in a more democratic manner. Social capital, which they developed over a period of time through constant interaction with people, has helped the Barefoot College personnel to take part in the elections. Many have become political representatives at various levels

and have shown their mark of change. One of the respondents mentioned that her association with the College has increased her political interest. She was encouraged to take part in the election for Panchayat Samiti because she was well known to everyone in that community, due to her active involvement in the welfare activities. Though she does not belong to that particular village, due to her connections among the communities and her reputation, she was encouraged to take part. Accordingly, she couldn't even cast her vote in her own support. As the philosophy of Barefoot states, they have not distributed any money or gifts to voters.<sup>4</sup> As part of the campaign, she just met people from all sections in the villages. Everyone from the College helped her during the elections, including during the campaigns and all other important activities. On the other hand, another respondent clarified that he never bothered with political aspects before. In his village, Nourathi Bai acted as Panchayat Samiti, and before that she was an employee at Barefoot College. She resigned from the College and went back to her village in order to become president in the Panchayat. In fact, she has been doing significant work as far as welfare activities are concerned. She has spent time with the deprived sections. She has got all the talent because she is a product of Barefoot College.

Another respondent stated that he was elected as a ward member in his village. He was an independent candidate in the election. The Barefoot College experience has greatly helped him to gain political power in the elections, and people from Barefoot College were so helpful to him to win in the elections. His sarpanch was also from Barefoot College so it was easy for him to work in order to realise the needs of the people. They also met the minister and district collector several times to represent the problems of the communities.

The overall awareness levels of the communities and employees have improved. Hence, they have started promoting the ethos of the democracy. Most of the respondents mentioned that they vote for those who promise to do good work for the society. One of the respondents even said that before their association with Barefoot College, they used to vote based on the party symbols,<sup>5</sup> without bothering much about the actual candidates and his/her election manifesto. Now they realised the importance of the vote and cast it in accordance with the actual candidates, their background and their possible contribution were they to win.

Sushila Devi's story is a bit different. Knowing that she would lose if she took part, she did take part just to see society's response towards new



aspirants. In fact, she did it on her own, without any pressures from her husband or family. She narrated, “I have contested in the election once. Panchayat Samiti Cluster, Block Level Member, but I could not win. We have not spent a single penny on the election. I had resigned to my post at the Barefoot College before contesting in the election. I could not win, because we have not done what others did. In fact, I knew that the result would be negative, while filing nomination itself. Other contestants spent around Rs. 500,000 (about 8,000 USD) each in the election. As part of our campaign, we just used to walk down in the villages to talk to people in the morning and come back in the evening after the campaign. We did good campaign to influence voters, but in turn, it was all about money and gifts.”

One of the main aspects that have been observed during the study is that everyone had developed an opinion that politics has been drastically downgraded by the cheap mentality of the politicians and their acts of corruption. A respondent said that politics has become worse nowadays. Politicians promise several things, which never materialise. Corruption is a brainchild of the politicians. He attended several *grama sabha*,<sup>6</sup> in his village where deprived sections like Dalits are never allowed to represent their problems. He helped them to get what they are entitled from the Panchayat. This is due to the fact that bonding in the College creates social capital not only among those who have been employed by the College, but also among communities.

### SOCIAL CAPITAL

Another very important aspect that is observed in the research is the enriched social capital among the communities, in terms of strengthening social bonds, within the neighbours in the College and the communities where they work. In Meghraj's view, he is the eldest son in the family and the rest of them were much younger. His family was facing a lot of trouble in terms of financial and other aspects. After joining Barefoot College, he is given a chance to work for the society, family and others. He got several opportunities to learn and to meet different people and had the chance to form friendships with different sections of people. Meeting people from several sections helped him to improve the social capital which is of a lot of use to him. Meghraj hails from a Dalit background, where in the past, he was never allowed to take part in village level discussions that were initiated by upper castes. But when he started his career with Barefoot, they

started to recognise and respect him. His participation in all the activities of his village is relatively assured.

Barefoot College has developed a lot of faith in the poorer communities of society and they, in turn, have a lot of trust in the College and its activities. Bagchand recounted how the College helped him to be included in mainstream society, whereas earlier, subjects in the mainstream were not willing to talk to him, as he hails from the ST category, which is another backward community. However, now the communities, as happened in others cases, respect him and recognise his services for the community and society at large.

The employees help the communities and gain faith in return. They fight with the existing systems and that results in communities respecting them. Sushila Devi stated, "I take a lot of women to the hospitals and several times I have to fight with the doctors. Otherwise they would not properly treat them. During the initial days, we did not get enough support from the communities, but now, they have realised that we are working for them, they do not leave us. That is what happened in my case."

As discussed earlier, social capital has been attained in two methods, i.e. bridging social capital and bonding social capital. The bonding social capital helped them to gain necessary bonding within the organisation. For example, Lalita had three girl children, but one of them passed away due to a brain tumour. During her daughter's final days, her family received enormous support from Barefoot College, which she said she would never forget. She got the chance to meet renowned doctors and Roy helped her like a father. During the surgeries, the College staff helped them by donating blood and in other ways. The College let those who wanted to help Lalita use official vehicles. As a result, she claims they share a common bond and care for each other's well-being. She believes that this empathy helps them further to offer the best for the communities.

The bonding social capital which strengthens internal dynamics helped them to have a strong bridging social capital with communities. For example, a respondent said, "I take people in my villages to the government offices in order to get their works done easily. I have built that rapport with all the sections in the government offices, on one hand, and people from the villages, on the other. Everyone whom I helped have supported me when I contested in the local elections. Because of the increased relationship with others, trust and faith has been built over a period of time, which has encouraged me to associate very closely with all sections of peo-

ple.” Some respondents mentioned that the social capital, that has grown over a period of time due to their attachment with the College, has helped them enormously. The social capital has been helpful in a more reciprocal manner where the employees benefit the community and gain a lot of support from it.

Altogether, the Barefoot approach and the normative constructs they undertake helped them to understand or improve their socio, political, cultural and economic aspects of life. This helped them to contribute to society and gain respect from the communities. In particular, they have gained political awareness, cultural identity and economic freedom. All these aspects help them to interdependently secure what is called a dignified life and social inclusion on a much broader scale, which they had never dreamed of.

This chapter has helped us to understand the sea change that this innovative social enterprise is brought about in the lifestyle of these villagers. As we discussed the internal and external dynamics of the College in the last two chapters, the next chapter aims to understand how Barefoot College, which was started as a voluntary organisation way back in the early 1970s, has transformed itself into a social enterprise by attaining sustainability. In addition, the chapter further aims to build on three pillars that have been crucial for the successful existence of Barefoot College.

## NOTES

1. Mahatma Gandhi popularised the word ‘harijan’ to refer to Dalits, who were traditionally considered untouchable.
2. The Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act was enabled in 1989 to prevent offences and atrocities against members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. There are several provisions created as part of the Act in order to ensure that people from these excluded backgrounds do not face any hardships in leading their lives in mainstream society.
3. Balwadi was a government programme implemented by Barefoot College in certain areas of Rajasthan. The schools were meant for children from weaker sections with the aim of enhancing their growth by using local made resources and material.
4. It is customary in India to give gifts or money to voters to lure them to cast their votes in support of a particular candidate or political party.

5. In India, due to the large proportion of illiteracy, symbols are allocated to candidates taking part in the election in the ballot paper. Voters are expected to choose the candidate based on a symbol allocated to that particular contestant.
6. Gram sabha meetings are village level meetings where every member in the village can take part and discuss the growth and development of the village. It can plan activities to be taken up and promote scope for creating a good democratic system at the village level.

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## Barefoot as a Social Enterprise

This chapter initially builds on the financial data collected from Barefoot College to understand how various sustainability efforts undertaken by the College helped it to become a sustainable venture in the long run. When the College was established, it was a mere voluntary organisation, but by adopting various innovative approaches and initiatives, the College became a social enterprise by not only contributing for the social good, but also mobilising resources from local sources which are necessary for its existence. Thus, this chapter offers the opportunity to understand how various initiatives adopted helped a voluntary organisation to become sustainable. The organisation has been registered legally under the limitations of the Societies Registration Act 1860 and Income Tax Act 1961 under sections 12(A), 80G and 10 (23C) IV under the rules that are applicable for the creation of a civil society organisation (CSO). As a result, like most of the CSOs, it is also entitled to benefits, such as exemptions from taxes levied on funds received from donors. The Act permits the organisation to use 85 % of the funds received in a financial year, in that same year. Alternatively, the organisation has the option to report the expenditure that will be incurred in the following years on any specific project which is already in existence or to be taken up. However, the remaining 15 % of funds can be utilised at the discretion of the concerned organisation. In addition, it is strongly advised for an organisation of this level to manage their own corpus in order to look after the long viability of the projects that it undertakes. Financial sustainability brings added value to the exis-

tence of the social enterprise by letting the organisation decide on its innovative experiments and creating scope for it to experiment in a larger social context. In the course of the next few pages, we will analyse how Barefoot College could make its own finances and build its resource base.

In addition to registering under the tax exemption rules domestically, it is also registered with the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act 2010 (FCRA) in order to receive funding from foreign sources. As the innovations are employed in every corner of the organisation from idea generation to achieving the social transformation, it has a propensity to attract a large amount of funds from donors and investors in the global context. Thus, the FCRA helps the College to obtain such funds smoothly. Apart from receiving funds from external sources (foreign players), the College also attracts a good amount of resources from the Indian government and various government agencies. However, the research is particularly interested in understanding its own efforts to raise finances from local resources, communities that it serves and the enterprises it created to attain financial sustainability.

It is understood that Barefoot College established several enterprises in order to enhance its prospects of becoming sustainable. In fact, its financial sustainability is structured within the two approaches it adopts: (a) increasing internal resources by securing contributions from the communities, beneficiaries that are being empowered, the products that are manufactured and the services it offers, and (b) contributions it has acquired from funding sources. While the College receives funding from donors, philanthropists and other funding agencies, it is found that unlike other organisations which receive funding from outside agencies, in the case of Barefoot College, the rules of the game are framed by Barefoot College. In other words, when a funding application is submitted by Barefoot College, it expects the funding agency to adhere to its principles and requisitions. In fact, it was found that in a few cases the College had declined offers of funding it had received, which did not fit into its framework.

The other key aspect that keeps the organisation more successful when it comes to achieving larger social objectives is its autonomous powers and the decentralised decision-making vested in the communities. That means they do not allow anyone from the outside to demonstrate or influence their philosophy or the ideology. They have taken a strong stand in support of their philosophy that the bottom-up interventions which are supported by the communities must only be respected, not by any externally

infused mechanisms, such as the well-known top-down approaches. They even made it clear that they do not allow any imposed views from the so-called experts or other administrative representatives.

For example, Roy (u.d) maintains that they never let an expert come into their organisation. "We don't allow anyone from the World Bank, we don't allow any UN types to come into the organisation" (p. 2). He further mentions that, apart from offering money, they do not have anything valuable to offer the organisation, and emphasises that they do not have the empathy required to make decisions in the regional environment. Further, they do not have any patience and they come with arrogance which is unbelievable and unacceptable within the rural settings. Hence, such stereotypes are not entertained. At times, they have even rejected offers that came with external compulsions. For example, Barefoot College received the Aga Khan Award for Architectural Innovation in 2002, through which the College received USD 50,000. However, due to a tussle which was caused by the citation as part of the award, the College returned the award. The College claimed that the citation which was offered by the Aga Khan Foundation undermined the work of Barefoot architects. There are two issues involved in this particular incident: one is the fact that financial incentives or awards do not substitute the identity of the College or such external awards underestimate the innovative work of the Barefoot architects, whereas the second issue is that the decision to return the award was not made in anger, but was discussed in detail among the communities and the decision was then taken by them. Having understood the priority that the College offers to its autonomy, ideology and community decision-making when it comes to not only social value creation but also decisions that decide the financial stand of the organisation, it can be felt that the College has its unique specifications and existence in order to reach the unreached with unorthodox practices and innovative experiments.

When it comes to the organisation's finances and accounts, as already discussed, financial transparency is given utmost priority which resulted in greater community penetration. In fact, social enterprises create such mechanisms in order to build accountable and transparency among the stakeholders and others. As part of it, every year Chartered Accountants (CAs) prepare the accounts of the organisation relating to each financial year, which starts on 1 April and ends on 31 March of the following year. The financial resources received or raised by the College are divided into three categories, which include finances received from (a) various agencies including the government of India and individual donors,

(b) international funding agencies and (c) income generated through its own sources, which are considered sustainable sources. While CAs prepare the accounts for the centralised funding of Barefoot College, Barefoot accountants prepare the accounts for the field centres in addition to assisting the CAs in the main campus. More than 30 Barefoot accountants have been trained to do the task, and they share financial information with the rural communities in order to make communities aware of the financial transactions being taken up in the College. They promote all the possible conditions to create an accountable and transparency based systems in the College. Barefoot accountants are again those who come with minimum educational qualifications from the communities, thus, efforts are made to create a community-based social enterprise. Barefoot is one of those organisations in India that shares each and every financial aspect with those who are interested. The financial outlook of the organisation is given in the table below for the period the data was available i.e. 1993–2013. The table divides the income into three specific sources—(a) sources within India, (b) sources outside the country, and (c) sources that have been created and fostered by Barefoot College.

**Table 6.1** Breakdown of the total annual budget in a financial year (1993–2013)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total annual budget (\$)</i>	<i>Sources of funding (in \$ with its proportion in the total annual budget)</i>		
		<i>Sources within India</i>	<i>Sources from abroad</i>	<i>Sustainable sources</i>
2012–2013	2,151,304	367,708 (17.09)	1,544,405 (72.00)	239,190 (11.11)
2011–2012	2,129,177	278,540 (13.08)	1,625,299 (76.33)	225,337 (10.58)
2010–2011	2,581,626	376,502 (14.58)	1,966,258 (76.16)	238,865 (9.25)
2009–2010	793,064	71,042 (8.95)	560,631 (70.69)	161,389 (20.35)
2008–2009	1,701,767	144,346 (6.01)	1,301,384 (54.21)	256,036 (39.78)
2007–2008	2,076,866	155,643 (7.49)	1,254,416 (60.40)	666,805 (32.11)
2006–2007	1,909,023	106,595 (5.58)	1,098,386 (57.54)	704,041 (36.88)
2005–2006	1,818,057	275,837 (15.17)	839,461 (46.17)	702,759 (38.65)
2004–2005	1,061,557	137,900 (12.99)	709,012 (66.79)	214,643 (20.22)

(continued)



<i>Year</i>	<i>Total annual budget (\$)</i>	<i>Sources of funding (in \$ with its proportion in the total annual budget)</i>		
		<i>Sources within India</i>	<i>Sources from abroad</i>	<i>Sustainable sources</i>
2003–2004	1,202,110	118,497 (9.85)	337,793 (28.10)	745,819 (62.04)
2002–2003	819,791	188,034 (22.93)	333,606 (40.69)	298,151 (36.36)
2001–2002	1,604,698	433,797 (27.03)	578,012 (36.01)	592,888 (36.94)
2000–2001	1,251,544	318,306 (25.43)	416,905 (33.31)	516,332 (41.25)
1999–2000	904,459	593,977 (65.67)	97,714 (10.80)	212,766 (23.52)
1998–1999	583,937	291,881 (49.98)	69,959 (11.98)	222,096 (38.03)
1997–1998	567,040	169,736 (29.93)	134,599 (23.73)	262,704 (46.32)
1996–1997	263,828	130,164 (49.33)	96,690 (36.64)	36,973 (14.01)
1995–1996	318,663	160,560 (50.38)	142,393 (44.68)	15,710 (4.93)
1994–1995	214,882	29,762 (13.85)	177,996 (82.83)	7,124 (3.31)
1993–1994	283,681	107,884 (38.03)	171,249 (60.36)	4,548 (1.60)

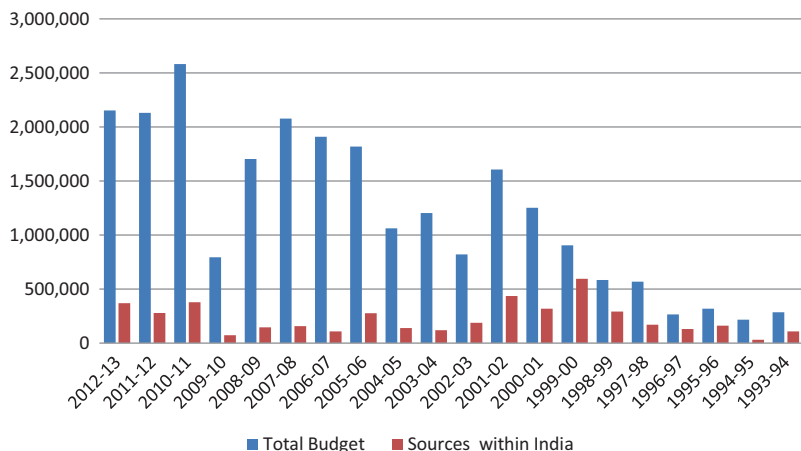
*Source:* Annual Reports of Barefoot College 1993–2013; all the figures are based on the USD–INR exchange rate on 13 March 2016 (1 USD = 66.97 INR)

The table above indicates that the annual budget of the organisation has increased from USD 283,681 to over USD 2 million in 2012–2013. The discussion below provides further details about the three sources of funding shown above.

### SOURCES WITHIN INDIA

The following chart indicates internal sources of funding (within India) that the College secures (Fig. 6.1).

The chart above compares the internal sources with the total budget of the organisation on a yearly basis. It is found that the funding sources within India are quite low compared to any other source. However, in 1999–2000, the contributions within India saw an increase. Most of the contributions in the national context are made by the governments at both central, as well as state levels. The government supports the projects that have been taken up by Barefoot College. Several ministries and departments of the government fund a variety of activities taken up by the College. Barefoot College finds different programmes or schemes that could fund the initiatives it runs and then apply for the funding. For example, Ministry of External Affairs funds under



**Fig. 6.1** Sources within India. *Source:* Annual Reports of Barefoot College 1993–2013

Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme, as well as Special Commonwealth African Assistance programmes, in order to train African illiterate and semi-literate rural women on solar electrification and rain water harvesting tanks. RWHTs and fresh water campaigns have been funded by Ministry of Water Resources. In addition, Ministry of Non-Conventional Energy Sources promotes the use of renewable energy, whereas crèche schools have been funded by Central Social Welfare Board, and Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology assists solar energy and fresh water related activities. Apart from government funding, there is an enormous participation of private charities and philanthropists in supporting the cause. There are various well-known charity houses such as Sri Ratan Tata Trust funds night schools whereas Aid India offers financial assistance to propagate the ideals of the Right to Information Act (RTI). Thus, it is necessary that persuades Barefoot College to apply to different agencies to obtain funding while private players play a role in terms of offering funds which are sometimes used as corpus in addition to supporting their projects. The next section will deal with funding sources from foreign countries and agencies.

## FOREIGN SOURCES

The following chart reveals the external sources of funding (Fig. 6.2).

The chart shows that a significant portion of the total funding for Barefoot College comes from foreign sources. During every financial year as shown in the chart, this particular source on average, contributes half of the total annual budget, except in a few occasions. Funding ranges from 76 % of the total budget in 2010–2011 and 2011–2012 and the lowest ever was recorded as 11.98 % in 1999–2000. Various social entrepreneur supporting agencies such as Skoll Foundation, which supports social entrepreneurship and promotes innovations across the globe, provides funding to undertake rain water harvesting, in addition to providing support to purchase solar equipment and to install them in remote locations. Asian Development Bank also funds the same activities, i.e. purchasing solar equipment, as well as solar training for the marginalised poor and unemployed. On the other hand, Princes Charles Foundation supports RWHs and Solar Cookers. In addition, when it comes to state-funded agencies and international organisations, European Commission and European Union funds promote the use of solar technologies in African countries. Apart from these, German Agro Action, Germany, assists Barefoot College in its educational programmes. Plan International, a renowned NGO and UBS Switzerland (a premier

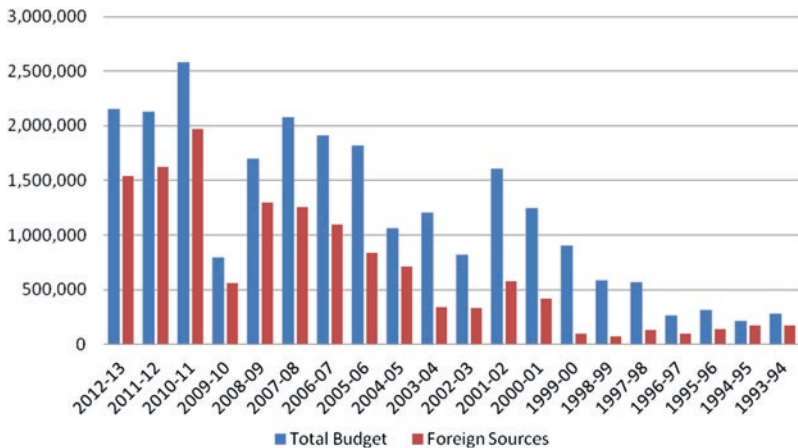


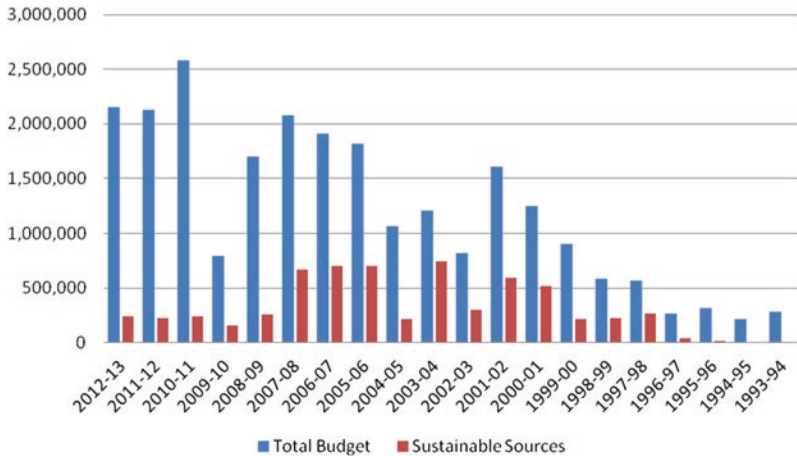
Fig. 6.2 Foreign Sources. *Source:* Annual Reports of Barefoot College 1993–2013

global financial service) help to run the night schools prominently. George Fisher Piping Systems, Switzerland, supports the construction of Rain Water Harvesting Tanks in Sikkim. Apart from them, Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), Afghanistan and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Ethiopia, have been offering funds for solar training and equipment to fix solar technologies in their respective countries. A small amount of funds are made available to Barefoot College by several other organisations in different capacities. While financial support from foreign and domestic sources is quite attractive for the College to take up various innovative initiatives, the resources independently raised by the social enterprise from local resources and the creation of enterprises to supplement the resources emerge is key for the sustenance of the social enterprise. In addition to resources from both national and international players, the College raises a significant portion of resources from local sources. The following section reviews the resources raised from local resources and shows how social enterprises compared with other types of organisations bring novelty and entrepreneurial orientation in order to sustain their venture.

### SUSTAINABLE SOURCES

So far, we have discussed how to run an organisation with typical external support, which is quite common in any kind of NGO. However, the significant added value that social entrepreneurship offers is related to creating space for its own innovations and entrepreneurial orientation. Barefoot College in this regard quite actively concentrates on communities and their capacities to contribute to the sustenance of the organisation and to creative entrepreneurship, where several ventures have been initiated in support of the larger social cause. The chart below highlights resources from sustainable sources and proportionately highlights its place in the larger budget (Fig. 6.3).

It is found that sustainable sources have lost their momentum in the recent past. It has been discussed in the last couple of chapters that Barefoot College focuses on creating initiatives not only to promote social value but also to make it sustainable. It is found that in 1992–1993 when the first reported financial data was available, sustainable sources were just around 1 % whereas it reached 40 % in 2008–2009. In fact, it was 2002–2003 that has seen momentum where the resources were as much as 62 %. However, in the recent past there has been a steady decline in raising sustainable sources. As a downfall in sales is quite common in the



**Fig. 6.3** Sustainable Sources, *Source:* Annual Reports of Barefoot College 1993–2013

market economy, Barefoot should seriously look into its marketing aspects in order to promote their sustainable value. Nevertheless, it is claimed that the organisation is capable of sustaining its initiatives without any support from external agencies. For example, “at present, as it stands, the organisation can sustain itself without any financial support from any external sources. We have made enough to maintain the organisation without any support from other sources,” (Roy in conversation with the researcher on 8 January 2010). In fact, this is the difference that any social enterprise brings on board. In most of the cases generally, when funding projects are closed down due to lack of funding or once the project is officially closed, the activities or initiatives involved are also closed. In other words, there is no take away from such initiatives. For example, when the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) initiated a project that aimed to promote clean living among school kids in Uganda, as part of the programme, the school kids were asked to wash their hands before eating their food. The kids did this for two years. Suddenly the project came to an end, which resulted in the schools stopping the practice due to lack of finances to purchase the detergent. As a result, children went back to their old routine. In addition to the availability of funding, UNICEF failed to create a hygienic culture among the kids and the villages. This is where social entrepreneurs bring added value. They not only create scope for sustaining their ventures

or initiatives by building on local resources, but they also create the culture among the communities. Making money independently gives them scope to innovative and create structures to move on without being constrained by external funders and other expertise. The same has happened in the case of Barefoot. Their confidence to make the most out of their innovations supports their value creation mechanism. This positive change not only promoted them to restrict their social value for a specific area of their interest, but it has been replicated in several other places, not only in India but also elsewhere. However, what became key to their success is the fact that they are embedded within the community culture in which they serve. However, some of the expensive projects including solar technologies would not have been possible without generous support from external financial sources. The way innovations are employed and fostered in the cultural context is what makes a social enterprise more committed than any other organisations to address social problems.

The evolution of the College and its growth towards the creation of sustainable value shows that value creation at society level requires much larger momentum and innovative space where communities come and participate in the whole process. In the late 1960s and early 1970s Roy was digging wells for water and spent several sleepless nights listening to the problems of the poor. He claimed that, whatever he learnt over the five years while digging the wells is immense in nature, which cannot be even taught by any global university; by real education started then, says Roy (2005).

This embeddedness and penetration offer entrepreneurs the opportunity to embed with the communities and make the most out of such associations. As a result of successful experimentation, the social enterprise receives continuous support from well-known global institutions and social entrepreneurial supporting organisations in the global context including, but not limited to, the World Bank, United Nations, Ashoka, Skoll Foundation, Schwab Foundation, and so on. In fact, such association has further created mechanisms to strengthen their practices in other parts of the country and globe.

We have discussed the sustainability issues that bring added value to the practice of social entrepreneurship in general and how the context of Barefoot College offered a clear case to understand the scenario. The next section offers a discussion based on a tree diagram which demonstrates on three key pillars to analyse the growth and success of Barefoot as an initiative. Three major dimensions emerge from the current research. The

dimensions and the various issues that emerge from each of these dimensions are discussed in detail in the tree diagrams below. The three pillars or contexts include (a) organisational, (b) social value and (c) financial contexts. Though the social entrepreneur as an agent has become instrumental in creating the context and structures, this research considers the fact that the actions are embedded within the local system and thus integrate the efforts in the systemic orientation of the social value being created (Fig. 6.4).

The three pillars i.e. organisational, social value and sustainable interconnected with each other to contribute to the creation and promotion of social entrepreneurship. While existing research has long agreed that these three issues are key to the successful existence of social entrepreneurship, current research grounds them in the rich practices of a community-based social enterprise and analyses how they relate to each other. While the organisational context offers scope for the creation of the social value, the sustainable elements bring them into practice. It is first the embeddedness of the social entrepreneurship as an agency in the structure that allows social value to be created. Thus, the enhanced embeddedness and penetra-

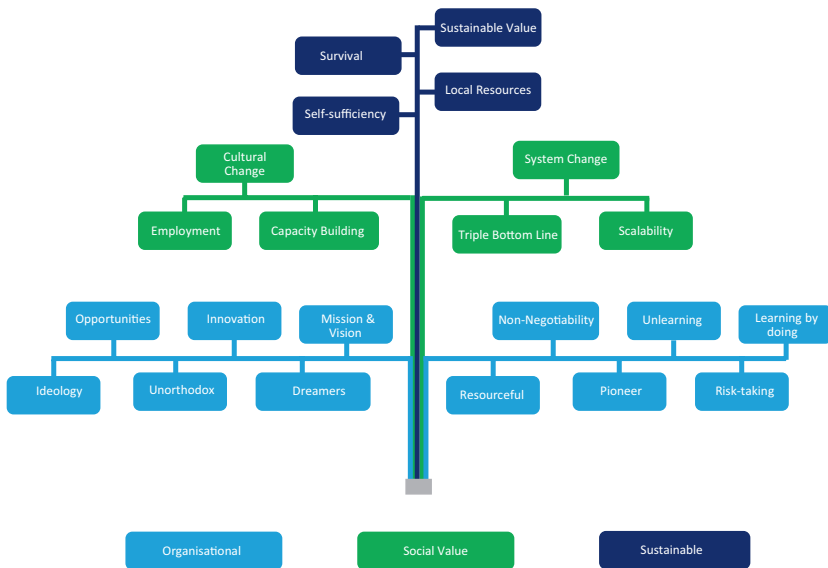


Fig. 6.4 Tree Diagram of Barefoot Working Scenario

tion enhance the scope for sustainability. As detailed in the tree diagram, we now discuss each of the activities as detailed against each pillar.

## ORGANISATIONAL PILLAR

It is found that organisation is first an agency, which is created by the active participation of the communities. While initially it was the social entrepreneur who ensured the rolling of the process, later the transition and the mission of the organisation ensured that the social enterprise gets a good grip of the communities. In fact, it took a radical turn where communities' active participation has revamped the way that organisation used to function initially. The transition and community participation influenced each other and created robust structures for the innovations to take place under the organisational pillar. As shown in the tree diagram, we have identified 12 key identities that enhanced the organisational existence. Each of these is discussed below.

### *Opportunities*

A famous saying about social entrepreneurship is that it is all about finding opportunities, where others see hurdles. While communities have been traditionally seen as passive beneficiaries by the initiatives, social entrepreneurship sees them as part of the problem that is being solved or opportunity being addressed. In fact, social entrepreneurship or any entrepreneurship starts with opportunity recognition. It is then the social entrepreneurs or their teams that take up and create systems that foster positive social change. The same happened in the case of Barefoot College. It was only when Roy visited these villages in rural Rajasthan that the whole momentum started to build. It is also realised that social entrepreneurship is all about not just being constrained to a single opportunity or a problem, but exploring and addressing a series of opportunities in the way that creates problems to the positive social change to roll. In the case of Barefoot College, all the opportunities have been co-identified by the social entrepreneurial team and communities who came forward and made significant contributions. What makes the case more interesting is the fact that more opportunities were identified during the times when it had undergone deeper crises both internally and externally. This made the organisation and communities trust and depend on each other in order to make the impossible possible.



Opportunities for social enterprise come from both state and market failure. The mainstream markets and state most likely do not allow excluded communities to represent themselves in the mainstream. Such markets do not likely produce goods or services required by poor communities. Though the Bottom of the Pyramid (BoP) literature long argued that operating in BoP markets will help the markets gain the most (Prahalad and Hart 2002), due to the numerous risks involved, markets rarely attempt to venture into them. The state, on the other hand, fails to get involved in these social systems due to its priorities elsewhere or its weaker capacities. Thus, the social entrepreneur in this background creates new markets and social systems that provide opportunities for the excluded to represent themselves and participate in the mainstream markets. In the case of Barefoot, the same thing has happened. Communities gained significantly by accessing basic amenities such as electricity, water, education and other services, and found their way into the mainstream social systems.

### *Mission and Vision*

As discussed earlier, social entrepreneurial interventions are all about creating value rather than capturing value (Santos 2012). Accordingly, in the case of Barefoot College, its mission is aligned with the social value being created. As shown in the tree diagram, the organisation and people who came together created the social value which then started to promote sustainable initiatives. Triple bottom line benefits have directed the functioning and overview of the venture. Though the vision of the organisation has transformed profoundly, as and when there is a need, the mission which is stable since the organisational inception has its implication on the functioning of the organisation. The mission of the organisation has been constantly aimed at enriching rural living. While the mission sets the overall ambition, the vision is proven to be an instrument that operationalises its practices. Vision gives scope to achieve the overall mission by undertaking various activities.

### *Ideology*

The research has had the chance to interact with several social entrepreneurs from different parts of the globe and it was opined by most of them that they have been driven by a particular ideology or a well-known per-

sonality. For example, in the case of Aravind Eye Care, which is one of the most prominent social enterprises in India, it is Sri Aurobindo, a spiritual guru, who influenced the existence and growth of the organisation. It was found that for Barefoot College, it is Mahatma Gandhi, the Indian freedom fighter, reformist and philosopher of non-violence, who offers the necessary ideology support. His ideas, such as being simple and the need for vesting the technologies in the hands of the rural communities who are in need of them etc. are simply followed. In addition, the working style adopted at Barefoot has been largely influenced by Gandhi. For example, everyone sits, eats and works together; hierarchies do not exist. He further emphasised the decentralisation of work and larger community participation as common practices to achieve empowerment. Accordingly, they are duly endorsed and practised in the case of Barefoot. The ideology has played a crucial role especially during critical times.

### *Unorthodox*

The passage of social entrepreneurs is unconventional; it is indeed proven time and again in several instances. They question the status quo of existing scenarios and practices and build their capacities in innovative ways. They approach problems differently and aim to address them from the roots, which might not leave any scope for their further existence. The way that several interventions have been taken up by the College received significant criticism due to its unorthodox nature. For example, when the College started questioning corruption charges of one of the local legislators, it had to receive blunt criticism from the local legislature, which asked the College to vacate from the government land where it is situated. In addition, internally, when there was an attempt to create a mechanism to equalise the status of the illiterate with the educated, it received strong criticism from the inside, which resulted them to be more stubborn and unorthodox, as a result of which several innovations emerged. For example, it resulted in promoting illiterate villagers to embark on a new journey of professionalism. In fact, their unorthodox approach opened a space to create and experiment with innovations. Such unorthodox thinking is one of the first steps that differentiate social entrepreneurship from that of existing social organisations. Considering the communities as a solution to the problems that are identified, rather than viewing them as passive beneficiaries, all attest to the unorthodox approach of social entrepreneurship.

### *Dreamers*

The unorthodox thinking and dreams set the dais rolling for social value. Vision gives orientation to dreams or dreams pave the way to the vision. Earlier, when the author was associated with a social incubator, several mentors who used to offer mentor services to the ventures opined that the social entrepreneur must create a space for dreaming as one of their first activities. Once entrepreneurs embed in the local context, it opens a space for them to imagine the context, which might be a result of the activities that they eventually take up. Such imagination then creates scope for dreams to form and work from there in order to get into the imagined futures. For example, in the case of Barefoot College, it was Roy who in his investigation of the field or social system in which he was present, imagined what could be done to improve the conditions of the communities. The dream or the intention was that the communities and professionals come together in order to build the capabilities of the rural masses. However, this particular attempt left the College in distress due to the failure of the professionals to adjust within the environment. This proves that the imaginary futures or dreams have no implication on the practice. While it is also a fact that social entrepreneurs, or their teams, have not been influenced by the critical environment existing at that particular point in time, rather it forced them to be more realistic, robust and dynamic in order to realise their dreams. Thus, it is to emphasise that social entrepreneurs or their teams should not ideally leave the initiatives that they take up. In order for this to happen they must relatively embed their activities with the imagination or dreams that drive the actual initiative. It is also necessary to argue that the social entrepreneur or his/her team needs to share their imagined future with the communities. This is to say that the imagined futures need to be co-created. It is to further pin it down to the case of this research, Barefoot would not have been in such a successful position, without the founder, core team and each and every one dreaming that the organisation would excel and the lives of the trained and employed would be inclusive over a period of time. They have succeeded from counting stars under the moonlight to fixing the solar systems and teaching children in the night schools, and so on.

### *Non-negotiability*

One of the key practices that this research found with regard to social entrepreneurship is that they are non-negotiable. In order to realise their dreams, they set out a strong commitment. The commitment enforces

them to be focused and leave no scope to negotiate on the principles they set out to achieve their dreams. This brings another dimension wherein social entrepreneurs differentiate themselves with other players in the sector. The author earlier interacted with several civil society organisations and they exist only because there is funding available from the government or some other source. The moment there is no funding for the activities they take up, their mission and vision change, as do the activities, in a direction where they might get funding. Instead, in the case of social entrepreneurship, it is found especially with regard to Barefoot College that the activities have been taken up based on the need within the communities and they continue, even when there is no funding available, provided that the communities deem them relevant for their existence. Barefoot College has never negotiated with their non-negotiable objectives that they indicate to funders, philanthropists and government agencies. It is up to them to decide whether to fund the organisation or not. In fact, the rejection of the Aga Khan award shows the role that non-negotiable values play in the organisational existence.

### *Innovation*

Bornstein (2007) once opined that social entrepreneurs are willing to break from established structures. Most entrepreneurial organisations start from scratch, rather than building on existing ones. This allows for the necessary innovations to take place and enhances the ability to see beyond the existing structures in a particular field. While existing organisations could also form the highest form of innovation and embrace social entrepreneurship, due to the rigid systems in place, it might require an additional push or strong commitment from the subjects to influence the established systems. The newer institutions can be easily influenced to adopt innovative culture. In the case of social entrepreneurship, which aims to bring sustainable social change, innovations play a key role. Dees (1998) emphasised that in order to sustain the mission of the social entrepreneur, engaging in a process of continuous innovation, its adaptation, and learning thereof are necessary for the process. Accordingly, in the case of Barefoot College, it has embarked upon innovative solutions for the problems that the rural areas face. The innovation is driven by the local knowledge, skills, and practical wisdom of the rural poor (Roy and Hartigan 2008). For example, its ventures such as night schools and transforming semi-

literates into engineers are a few examples to describe the degree of novelty and innovations that help them to achieve their objectives. The learning by doing mechanism is instrumental in bringing innovations in every step of its dynamic transition.

### *Resourcefulness*

The other aspect of a successful social entrepreneurship, relevant to this research is that they are open to be resourceful and help others to create mechanisms that help social transformation to take place. This particular mechanism is found in several instances in this particular research. Barefoot College accordingly helps different communities from different parts of the country and in a global context, especially from Asia, Africa and Latin America. Apart from training the local communities, with its resources and networks Barefoot help them to acquire the necessary resources to undertake several initiatives that are necessary for their inclusion. Barefoot College's connections and networks, especially in the global context, such as Skoll Foundation and Schwab Foundations etc. helped them to pioneer in the area in which they work. Being resourceful has also helped Barefoot in several instances. For example, the World Bank president's visit to the campus when it was in deep crisis was of great help to the College.

### *Pioneer*

Social entrepreneurs pioneer in areas in which the markets and state show the least interest. Thus, the innovations and the thinking outside the box allow the social entrepreneurs to set the basis for the social value creation to take place. This builds on Ashoka's novel perspective that social entrepreneurs would not rest until they had revolutionised the field that they enter. As a result, robust mechanisms pioneered the initiatives and attracted others to replicate these ideas and practices, which has resulted in its replication in several parts of the world. However, the key to replicating these activities remains vested in community participation and their degree of involvement in the entire process.

### *Risk-Taking*

Risk-taking becomes an inevitable act in the practice of social entrepreneurship due to the resource-constrained environment in which they operate. The literature argues that social entrepreneurs are generally

concerned about assembling resources from various sources in order to achieve their mission, and their success is measured by the social value created (Dees 1998; Pearce 2003). In fact, the general entrepreneurial breed is claimed to have a risk-taking propensity. For example, Cohen and Sahlman (2013) argue that many for-profits today would not have succeeded, had there been no risk-taking experimentation. Accordingly, Light (2006) argues that social entrepreneurs represent the highest form of risk-taking compared to their entrepreneurial counterparts due to their personal optimism and efficacy to enhance social value.

Social entrepreneurs in the current context of Barefoot College proved the theoretical understanding that social entrepreneurs take numerous risks in every aspect of their existence. In fact, the areas in which they operate are generally ignored by the markets and state due to the fear of distressed outcomes, in case if they venture into such areas. Thus, the very nature of social entrepreneurial endeavours is oriented towards undertaking risks. In addition, traditional organisations do not get involved in innovations, because those organisations are most likely not linked to risks and rewards. However, the rewards are minimal whereas the risk prospects are proportionately higher in the social entrepreneurial endeavour. Thus, it leaves social entrepreneurs to take risks by undertaking innovations. The operational style of Barefoot is a combination of numerous risks. For example, training an illiterate as a solar engineer, or standing against the will of the caste system in Indian society are some of the many risks that have been taken.

### *Unlearning*

In common with ethnographic researchers, when social entrepreneurs enter the area they want to venture into, they must unlearn the assumptions that they may have come up with and relearn everything from the field and communities. When Bunker and his teams visited the field, they were of the belief that the professional expertise would eventually help the communities to solve their problems. However, further down the line, the reverse was proven. It was the communities' traditional knowledge that came to their rescue. Thus, the knowledge which was already possessed by the social entrepreneur and his team was of hardly any use in this particular context.

### *Learning by Doing*

While unlearning and relearning remain key to entrepreneurial success in order to understand the realities at the grassroots level and reflect on, the learning by doing approach adopted by Barefoot College offered more scope for it to innovate and create a more robust social system. The illiterate professionals train the other illiterates. The learners learn by experimenting in the field. For example, the solar engineers train the trainee solar engineer in the field, where the learner acquires the necessary capabilities by actually practising the instrument. Similarly, a midwife trains a trainee midwife and a teacher trains a trainee teacher to undergo a similar learning curve and then later experiment on earning the necessary skills.

The very nature of the learning by doing method is capable of promoting people to make mistakes due to the fact that the illiterates involved in the process might require additional attempts of practice and reflection. However, it is claimed that Barefoot College promotes people to make mistakes. Mistakes are encouraged rather than discouraged. For example, Ramswaroop shared his personal experiences, “I manage my tasks in Tally (a software package mainly used for creating vouchers, financial statements, and taxation in several industries) without any support. Whatever information is available in the software, we learn it. Of course still, there is lot more to learn. We have Derna with us, who just has five years of formal education and she operates Tally excellently. Nemach Chand has also has eight years of formal schooling and works well with the computer. It is all about experience out of learning.” He further states that “They all, including myself commit mistakes, but learn several things out of the mistakes that we have committed.” In fact, they commit to not repeat the same mistake. Since it is all about illiterates understanding tally, they undertake it in code language. Thus, the learning by doing methods help them to learn quickly and perform their duties without much trouble.

The issues discussed under the broader organisational pillar articulate the nature of hard work and commitment invested in the organisations whereas the elements under social value creation relate its practices to the outcome oriented in the process of social entrepreneurship as discussed below.

## SOCIAL VALUE PILLAR

While the organisational pillar helps the organisation to maintain the organisational structures required to perform its activities and open space to build its initiatives, the social value pillar describes the role of the social enterprises in creating the social value. It describes the way that social value is achieved. This particular section has six areas, which are discussed in detail below.

### *Employment*

It is well understood in the literature that Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISE) exist to promote the integration of the excluded and poor population in the mainstream (Ebrahim et al. 2014). However, this research finds that social enterprises as such involve in creating employment for the most excluded. They do it not only to promote employment among the excluded but also to gain organisationally. It is to argue that social enterprises gain win-win scenarios by adopting employment generation as a strategy (Kummitha 2016). While communities gain by the fact that some of their members are provided with respectable employment, social enterprises also gain by the easy access into the communities by employing community members in their organisations. In the case of Barefoot College, since all the activities are dealt with by the communities, their participation is inevitable. An interesting aspect is that, deprived sections, those who are often vulnerable among the communities, as defined by the poverty and social exclusion theories, are given employment. It has been proven in almost all the ventures that those provided with employment have been able to come out of the poverty trap.

### *Capacity Building*

In addition to providing employment to a few individuals among the communities, it is found that Barefoot College has built capacities among community members. For example, various street plays performed by the communication division and community meetings ensure that the capacities of the communities are enhanced. For example, the puppet shows have successfully informed community members about various social taboos and cultural practices. As a result, communities started to question corruption at different levels including in Gram Sabhas.



### *Triple Bottom Line*

The research long argued that achieving the triple bottom (social, financial and environmental) line is a key contribution of social entrepreneurship. While social and financial value creation is the most common phenomenon in the practice of social entrepreneurship, the environmental contribution becomes an added value for the ventures relating to the environmental context. The literature argues that while the social value is a necessary context to name a practice as social enterprise, there are scholars who argue that social and financial value creation must go hand in hand with social entrepreneurial ventures. We found in the current research that Barefoot College contributes to all three contexts. While its social value benefits communities directly, financial value helps the organisation to be sustainable whereas the environmental value with regard to employing solar technologies and reducing the carbon emission helps it to contribute quite significantly for all the three areas.

### *System Change*

Ashoka demonstrates that social entrepreneurship is all about systemic change. It is all related to addressing social problems and influencing the systems to enable its processes in order to make sure that the change trickles down to the bottom of the layer where the most excluded live. While addressing rigid social systems which have not allowed the excluded to participate in the mainstream, there is a need to dismantle entire systems and build new ones, which would allow the excluded to take active part in the mainstream. For example, when the organisation depended on urban-based experts to come and improve the living of the rural masses, they refused, leaving the marginalised to look for an alternative. It was then that the existing prejudices were questioned which created a phenomenon that rural counterparts can tackle technologies. Thus, Barefoot College created their own parallel system, in which they dictate their lives and create a holistic living environment.

### *Scalability*

The social value and system level change is further enriched when such interventions reach out to more people. The global experience shows that the successful interventions are capable of creating major robust social

change and benefit a large section of people. For example, the successful existence of the microfinance movement which was started in Bangladesh has been copied in several contexts across the globe. Accordingly, Barefoot College took up the initiative to scale its success and established field centres in different parts of Rajasthan and other states. In addition, it also inspired others to replicate this idea in various countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America with the help of local NGO partners.

### *Cultural Change*

While system change asks the systems to become holistic in order to accept all sections of people to participate in the mainstream, cultural change works as a significant attributor for systems to change. Culture is embedded within a larger system which enforces and reinforces its ideology and practice. Thus, changing culture is an inevitable condition in order to change the system. As discussed initially, social entrepreneur embed in the local cultures and understand their cultures before influencing or reorienting them in accordance with the social transformation predicted. In the case of Barefoot College, Roy was influenced by the local culture initially, who then embedded himself into the culture before strated to change certain practices in it in order to enable inhabitants to realise their potential and address their own social problems. Thus, the cultural change influenced the local norms and customs in addition to practices resulted in their inclusion in mainstream.

The second pillar has offered how social value is created under Barefoot College, whereas the last pillar as discussed below will provide scope to analyse how the organisational level constructs and social value oriented mechanism help the organisation to achieve a sustainable orientation, which is conditioned here as sustainable value.

### SUSTAINABLE PILLAR

While the organisational and social value pillars bring both organisational structures and social value creation together, the sustainability pillar brings various elements which are necessary for the organisation to build on its innovations in order to promote sustainability of the activities being undertaken. As discussed, though the College after two decades of existence thrived phenomenally when it comes to entrepreneurship. However, further down the line its entrepreneurial existence seemed to be stuck due to the lack of entrepreneurial strategy. Despite the drawbacks in its entre-

preneurial endeavour, the community participation and their active roles in both the planning and execution of the projects opened further scope to bring innovations in order to enrich its entrepreneurial existence. The four key constructs which offer necessary understanding about its sustainable efforts are discussed below.

### *Survival*

Generally, civil society interventions which are rooted in the philanthropic origin last until the funding is exhausted. Though in several interventions initiated by social enterprises are funded by philanthropic organisations or government funding, in general, they last longer and sometimes they go on to become part of the local culture. It is particularly necessary for social entrepreneurship to make sure that the survival of the initiatives is taken care of. If the social entrepreneur is unable to facilitate the survival of such initiatives, it ideally does not result in sustainable social value. In case of Barefoot College, we have seen that the projects initiated have been rooted in community culture where their survival for a longer time is ensured. The communities own the initiatives and run them in order to build their own capabilities. For example, one of the respondents said that if there is no grain available to run the crèche schools, the communities support them, because they consider that crèches are necessary for their children. Such realisation or building ownership is of crucial importance for the social entrepreneurship in order to create long-lasting, sustainable social value.

Apart from the individual projects or initiatives, the survival of the organisation has to be taken care of by the organisation, especially during times when it faces critical dynamics in the external and internal environment. The College successfully negotiated with all such dynamics and existed for long in order to create the social change. The innovations they employ in turn helped them to attract communities on board and penetrate the entire initiative in the local culture.

### *Self-Sufficiency*

Apart from community contribution, the social enterprise also needs to explore other forms of revenue in order to attain self-sufficiency. Exploring all possibilities to raise finances from the local resources and building institutions that can support their financial endeavour offer self-sufficiency for the organisation. For example, Barefoot has ventured into

several enterprises, including handicrafts, which offer a sum of profits for the social enterprise to be utilised in case the need arises. Though there is funding from external as well internal sources, the increased earned incomes help to project the College as a self-sustained venture. Even communities are also asked to contribute in completing the project, and to nominate the most needy in order to provide employment to fulfil the project.

### *Local Resources*

Local resources need to be tapped into in order to make a difference. Resources like human and financial resources are of great use. We have already learned that the utilisation of human resources effectively offer win-win scenarios, the financial incentives will be necessary for keeping the organisation sustainable. For example, when it comes to human resources, local people, who have been ignored by traditional systems, are given high priority in this context. As much as 95 % of Barefoot College employees come from nearby rural areas. The financial resources such as community contributions in both cash and kind have been utilised in order to make the ventures sustainable.

This chapter has provided a clear understanding of Barefoot's finances and the various issues that contribute to the sustainable value creation which has been discussed in detail under the tree diagram. It is learned that the enhanced sustainable finances help Barefoot College make use of the local talent, knowledge and resources which will be a great asset in addressing the problems of the communities.

Although we have discussed the key constructs in relation to organisational, social value and sustainable pillars, the other major aspects of the book such as community participation, embeddedness and social inclusion in particular, which offered much necessary scope for the social transformation to happen irrespective of the pillar have been intentionally left out in this particular chapter. The particular tree diagram has specifically isolated several key issues such as community participation, embeddedness, social capital which have influenced every practice of the organisation. This is being intentionally left out because of the importance that they have in the overall functioning and influencing the activities in every aspect of the organisation. Thus, they have implication and manifestation for all the three pillars—organisational, social value and sustainable aspects of the organisation. The next chapter takes stock of these issues

and discusses their role in the overall functioning of the organisation. In fact, it opens up a discussion to understand how the embeddedness and community participation bring energy for the social enterprise to excel in a variety of contexts.

### *Sustainable Value*

As discussed earlier, sustainable value creation differentiates social ventures from the existing social organisations. Accordingly, mobilising resources from local context and raising its own revenues using different entrepreneurial mechanisms offer added value for social entrepreneurship. Barefoot College has been persistent in creating sustainable value by employing various innovations and the initiatives that enrich their financial stand. It has been identified by the existing research that the social entrepreneurs must develop a financial strategy that will allow them to carry out their social mission effectively. Their financial strategies could include a mix of government, philanthropic, and earned income sources. The elevated status of earned income represents the added value that social enterprises bring on board. In this regard, Dees and Anderson (2006) argue that earned income strategies should be presented, considered and pursued within the context of an overall financial strategy for social impact.

Barefoot College demonstrated its ability to maximise the earned incomes every year. As the financial data shows, at present its finances represent a mix of everything—philanthropy, government and sustainable resources raised from communities and within the ventures created for the purpose. Their earned incomes have steadily risen. However, there has been a decline in such sources in the recent past. Nevertheless, the organisation has been transcending towards a social enterprise from its original non-profit features. In this regard, as discussed in the Fig. 6.3 the income levels are raised several fold. Local resources tap into these incomes, though there are little fluctuations in the last few years. The College could revive its base with active market integration. Commercial activities such as solar lighting, handicrafts and sanitary pads, are a few things that are being promoted in order to project itself towards a self-sustained venture. Collection of resources from the communities is another option, when earned incomes are concerned. Thus the College requires a strong financial strategy in order to enrich its sustainable value.

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## Conclusion

The growing divide between the “included” and the “excluded” in and from the mainstream respectively poses a serious threat to the global social order, as every attempt to develop leaves a huge section of the population at the crossroads. However, there are various approaches that are hailed by a number of developmental experts such as community participation and bottom-up interventions etc. which have often been ignored and there has been a steady decline in the number of initiatives that would ensure the participation of communities or the excluded in the development process. While existing systems have attracted severe criticism due to their donor or philanthropic restricted governance and service delivery, the new breed of social organisations, such as social enterprises, offer a much-needed breakthrough in order to understand the context of vibrant social transformation at the grassroots level.

Accordingly, this monograph attempted to understand and analyse the attempts from a social enterprise in rural India and the grassroots level constructs in order to build an inclusive, coercive and sustainable social order which would bring different social sections together. We started the analysis by presenting on social exclusion and then created a platform in order to understand how social entrepreneurs facilitate the process of social inclusion. Accordingly, we further described the relevant knowledge in order to better place the processes within the larger contexts such as participation and embeddedness as discussed in the second chapter. We adopted a case study based research and had a successful case as the focus

of the study. Barefoot College in rural Rajasthan, which has been contributing to the purpose of social inclusion quite phenomenally by adopting both innovations and entrepreneurial ventures, was selected for the field research. The research is restricted to one case due to the fact that an in-depth understanding of the case and the subjects as part of the research would better result in a nuanced understanding of the social reality in which social inclusion is ensured, thereby offering a rich understanding of the context.

In order to understand the structures created and contexts promoted, both community participation and embeddedness have been helpful. It is found in this research that the social entrepreneur and his team members initially embed in the social systems in which they work. The social entrepreneurial team initially understood the problem from the first person point of view. Accordingly, they realised that local communities have enormous knowledge and skills, but they lack sufficient mechanisms or guidance to create holistic environments in which to thrive. Thus, Barefoot College wanted to facilitate such an atmosphere where interventions are created using bottom-up mechanisms in which in-depth knowledge from communities is utilised in both the planning and execution of such activities which aim at promoting their inclusion. As the research aimed to understand how social entrepreneurship creates contexts to fight against social exclusion and facilitate social inclusion, the discussion and analysis below offers a robust understanding of the role of embeddedness and community participation in achieving them, specifically in the context of Barefoot College.

## SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

It is found that community participation is essential for Barefoot College to run successfully. For Barefoot College it was quite easy to win the trust from communities due to the fact that the local realities were alarming as the villages were left with only women, children and the elderly, as most of the men and youth had travelled to the nearest cities in the search of employment. Though the Barefoot team, including Roy, had faced several questions from the communities regarding their intentions to serve in the villages, securing the trust of the villagers and inspiring villagers to think about coming back from the cities was not a big task for them. Unlike most social enterprises, for Barefoot College, it did not take long to build



trust among the communities. Though it was not difficult initially to win the trust of the communities, as and when the College attempted to enter into new communities, time and again it has to create a mechanism to influence communities and get them on board.

The study found that by engaging with the communities, social enterprises created structures to address the poverty and drudgery of the poor and deprived and achieve social inclusion. When the educated and those who were considered experts left the College, the excluded realised that it was probably foolish to expect that “expert” would come from cities to help those in the villages to address the problems and provide necessary services. Rather that particular phase has brought a sea change in the way in which the poor and those who remain at the College come together and create scope for something which is beyond imagination and never been practised elsewhere. It was a bold step to continue with the activities in the College that helped them. The illiterates who were expected to gain from this intervention have excelled beyond their capacity and shown that with sheer hard work and strong commitment, the impossible can be achieved.

This resulted in employing more innovations. Innovations in the way they view the problem and the way they include illiterates to become various key players in the entire work structure, and innovations in pulling resources from different sources and so on. It was proven that when basic existence is tested, then extreme realities force the organisation to take up innovations in order to survive during the testing times. In fact, innovations have become everyday practice under the Barefoot approach where communities are equipped with the tools to address their own problems.

The case discussed in the research provided a platform for communities to fight for themselves by articulating that rural knowledge and skills matter in order to promote inclusive growth and to build bottom-up interventions. It is also found that given the opportunity, illiterate communities can play a huge role in including themselves in the mainstream. It orients that preparing the poor to face poverty is the best available option to eradicate poverty and extreme exclusion, and this is what has been proven in the Barefoot discourse. In addition, it is also found that it is inevitable to take on board concerns and seek the participation of communities in the planning and execution of developmental activities that are meant to improve their living.

At the College, communities are organised in the form of village level committees in order to look after the developmental activities and be accountable to everyone. In fact, a meeting is organised with all con-

cerned communities before submitting any proposal for funding agencies to discuss the roles of communities, Barefoot College and funding agency. Accordingly, communities are expected to pay a certain part of the costs involved in initiating any project. Once the project is sanctioned, the concerned committees receive the funds in their accounts which are managed by their representatives and the concerned developmental activities are taken up accordingly. Community ideas and knowledge are used in multiple ways while preparing the proposal.

Unlike non-government or fund-based organisations, developmental activities are taken up at Barefoot College based on the actual need among the communities. In case any of the project proposals are turned down by the philanthropists or funders, then the communities contribute themselves in order to complete the projects. As described by one of the respondents, in the case of the non-availability of grain, communities contribute towards it to run the crèche for children. It is not that the communities are rich enough to contribute, but they recognise that the crèche is indeed necessary in the community. Thus, rather than waiting for an outsider to come and offer necessary services, the communities themselves come forward and solve their own problems.

As part of the various initiatives such as rain water harvesting tanks, solar electricity, or other activities communities are asked to take an active part, not only to contribute in cash or kind and to actively participate in its implementation and to make sure that accountability is maintained by those who complete the projects. Without the active involvement of the communities, the College would never venture into any activity. Thus it shows that the participation of the community is given the utmost priority. It is found that active community participation not only brings the local knowledge, skills and community culture into the planning of the activities or projects, but also integrates their participation at every stage of the planning and implementation. In the end, the communities also contribute to the sustainable aspects of the projects. While initially they are expected to contribute to undertaking the project, in the process, they make sure that such initiatives continue to exist as long as they continue to contribute for the developmental needs of the communities.

The philosophy of the College, to believe in community knowledge and skills, has played a crucial role in nurturing and promoting both the College and communities. The philosophy which is believed in both community culture and capabilities has been strongly influenced by Gandhian thought which argues for grassroots level development

and *gram swaraj*. On the other hand, social entrepreneurship has been inspirational for the College and to project its prominence in the global circles. Day-to-day operations are taken care by a team of second level social entrepreneurs. However, community participation and their stake in the entire social enterprise is what brings the necessary difference. In fact, embeddedness in the local college has worked well for the organisation.

### EMBEDDEDNESS AND SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

After a thorough understanding of the social realities and community knowledge, the College embedded itself in the community culture. The scenario was that the learned experts who were influenced by the local knowledge started to create a holistic framework or working environment in order to address the local problems, instead of dumping their line of thought on the communities. The philosophical construct of Barefoot College had been firmly rooted within the community culture. Thus by creating the working style of the College based on the local knowledge and culture, it is argued that its embeddedness is completely influenced by the communities, initially. However, after embedding, the College played a crucial role by influencing the communities to transform their routines and cultures in order to promote the probability of their inclusion in the social order. The sociology of structuration theory views, social enterprise as an agency that influence the structure. However, it is the agency which was influenced initially by the structure and positioned itself in a way which was not only appreciated by the structure, but also took it through the successful creation of social value.

However, it was the wise decision of the initial team members that made them more “native” in order to influence and bring change at a cultural level. Instead of just experimenting with their own ideas or knowledge, the team members started to understand the local cultures, people and their knowledge. It was such particular intention that helped the College to position itself strongly within the communities. Understanding local cultures has further helped them realise that the knowledge that the team of social entrepreneur comes with has to be unlearned in order for them to understand the local knowledge and culture. Accordingly, the first few years were spent learning and understanding the routines, local culture and their traditional knowledge. For example, Roy and his team interacted with communities to learn their plight and the likely skills that

they possessed. This was further enhanced when the communities could offer solutions to the water problems whereas the experts from the cities had failed to do so. Accordingly, the knowledge and skills of the illiterate communities were highly appreciated.

Embeddedness has also resulted in strengthening social capital among both the team members who initiated the initiative and the communities. However, the social capital created among the communities lasted longer and became a key construct in the success of the overall functioning, whereas the social capital which existed among the social entrepreneurial team suddenly disappeared when there was a clash between the interests of the communities and the team members. Thus, this research finds that social capital and networks among the top in the hierarchy may be shunted when there is a clash, whereas social capital at community level does not get distracted. In fact, this particular reality, when the initial team members left the College, made their interests more clear and created more stubbornness among communities to realise what they believed in.

### SOCIAL EXCLUSION, SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

The social exclusion and social entrepreneurship proved to be a phenomenal combination in bringing about significant social transformation. It is found in the study that the employees of the College were offered jobs when they were in real need. A variety of cases studied as part of the research show that the College adopted a need-based approach when recruiting people into different capacities. As most of those who were recruited as employees were illiterates, they were all provided with sufficient training in order to carry out their work effectively. In order to make sure that those who received training did not migrate to the cities in search of employment, they were not provided with any certificates to reflect the training they completed.

The most excluded sections such as women, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and the physically challenged gained quite significantly as they have not only been provided with employment, but also with other opportunities where their families and societies start to recognise their contribution and in turn, their existence. As a first step, girl children are provided with education in night schools as well as formal schools. Mothers of girl children have also gained quite significantly as they have learned several issues about awareness and social structures from

their girl children. In addition, women who have been trained to become employees gained an opportunity to improve their financial status. This has helped them to be financially independent and their presence is also highly appreciated by the communities. In fact, some of the women had to fight against existing cultural and societal taboos in order to come out of their respective houses and societies to gain larger social awareness.

It is considered that in the case where employment is available in the rural area, then it is easy to promote reverse migration. Accordingly, the villagers are being trained in various skills including computers, technologies, skilled professions, and they are provided with employment. In addition to the incremental improvements in the lifestyle of the excluded who have been provided with employment and the communities who have been provided with services by the College respectively claim that the elevated lifestyle has been as a result of their increased awareness levels on the social, cultural, political and financial fronts.

It is found that the bond of exclusion among the community members helps them to be together and work for everyone's active participation. When the excluded are provided with a platform, it is capable of creating strong social capital among the excluded and opens up new avenues that foster their development. Social inclusion has been attained in several contexts. While for some respondents it is just about getting respectable employment, for several others it is about the financial freedom they have gained after being employed by Barefoot. Whereas in the case of a few respondents, it is found they have got the opportunity to get married and to raise their own families. In fact, one of the respondents even feels proud and claims that he is very lucky because he gets the opportunity to travel to different places and interact with different people. Finally, a section of respondents claim that they consider themselves included because they are helping others to access services and have a dignified life.

### UNIQUE ORGANISATIONAL EXISTENCE

The principles of decentralised decision-making has been inculcated in the communities initially, and later they have been adopted and promoted in the organisational practices. The governance of the social enterprise has been decentralised with communities taking an active part. The activities have been divided into the administrative divisions within Barefoot College where education, groundwater, solar energy, health, women empowerment, communication, rural industry (*Hatheli Sansthan*) divi-

sions exist in order to facilitate the developmental process. Communities are actively made partners in the activities undertaken at community level. For example, the architectural team has contracted the entire structure of Barefoot College who were given about USD 21,000 to complete the task. Community members who are asked to complete the task are also expected to be accountable to the stakeholders.

Despite its existence for about four decades, it is the non-negotiable values that kept up the momentum for the College to continue. Several normative issues such as equality in caste, gender equality, religious equality etc. are duly followed. This is what influenced several employees' loyalty towards the organisation for decades. The College deals with the excluded in several ways ranging from (a) providing services and (b) offering jobs through its WISE approach. In addition, it creates awareness among the excluded sections through its communications division.

It is found that the transformation at Barefoot College has taken place in multiple contexts. To be precise, it is at both systems level and cultural level. At the systems level, the College and its involvement and innovative initiatives encouraged the transformation of existing systems in order to make sure that all the excluded gain significantly by participating in the systems. For example, social systems have been transformed wherein which different sections of the excluded such as women, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and the physically challenged gain quite significantly and take an active part in mainstream society. The political system has gained significantly where those who have been trained or associated with Barefoot College have benefited in two ways. Initially, the communication division benefited villagers to be aware of the importance of their vote and to cast it with the right intentions. Later, several Barefoot College associates successfully participated in the local body elections where they started to influence the local policy and implementation in order to benefit the excluded and deprived. The existing financial systems never used to allow women and the deprived to participate in the movement. However, the Barefoot approach opens a space for them to realise their skills and participate in activities in order to enrich their participation in the market.

In addition to the social value creation by adopting innovations in multiple contexts, Barefoot has proven to be a hybrid organisation by creating multiple value, where the financial value is created by initiating various ventures. The financial value created has been invested in the core mission of the organisation. As detailed in the previous chapter, the College at one point went on to create about 60 % of its total income from its own ven-

tures and community mobilisation. However, the momentum then slowed when the financial value creation fell sharply to about 11 % in the financial year 2012/2013. This required thorough scrutiny and understanding to find out why the financial value creation witnessed a setback whereas the foreign contributions have steadily risen. The College needed to employ robust entrepreneurial and marketing strategies.

The other aspect this research found interesting is the cultural change that social enterprise created. Communities that once felt incapable of doing anything are now equipped to address their own social problems. In addition, they are trained using local knowledge and wisdom in order to build their capacities and create holistic societies in which they live. As discussed in the last chapter, the three pillars as detailed in the tree diagram including organisational, social value and sustainable context related aspects played a key role in the success of Barefoot College as a social enterprise.

In addition to the internal transformation, Barefoot had been tested externally, when it questioned the corruption that exists in the government. However, believing in its non-negotiable values, Barefoot stood by what it believed. As a result, global visibility and other factors have supported its existence and the political nexus were not able to influence its existence. However, later through its sheer success, Barefoot College was able to acquire a range of resources from different government agencies and ministries. In fact, one of its major programmes related to training African women in solar engineering has been generously supported by one of the ministries in the government. In addition, several of the initiatives that Barefoot College initiated have been adopted by regional governments in order to expand the impact created by such initiatives. Thus, Barefoot has successfully created system level change where it could influence government systems and expand its endeavour to other parts of the globe.

The other major factor that helped Barefoot to pull necessary resources is employing innovations in multiple contexts. Barefoot has successfully won several awards and prizes in addition to attracting project oriented funding from several international agencies. Most of the resources it has acquired to date come from various foreign sources. The success of Barefoot has not been isolated to a single village. There has been a lot of interest from various groups from different parts of the globe to replicate the model. The African collaboration with various NGOs is one of the key aspects where the replication has become an easy task.

It is well understood altogether that Barefoot College which was initiated as a social work centre emerged as a hybrid venture which enhanced its prospects to sustain. Later, the initiative emerged to become a community-based social enterprise where communities manage the social enterprise, in order to control their own lives. However, as discussed, it is found that the College has been losing momentum to raise resources using sustainable methods. There is a need to strategically create avenues to promote such efforts that bring revenue and enhance their prospects to achieve sustainable orientation. We have learned in this research that when communities lack the necessary skills to build their confidence and form a community based social enterprise, it is the social entrepreneur who builds the necessary skills and fosters necessary networks among communities, which then helps members to build social capital and take control over the social entrepreneurial initiative. Thus, social enterprises, if properly fostered are capable of evolving as a community-based social enterprise over a period of time.

#### EXISTING GAPS IN PRACTICE AND SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

The research found the following gaps in the practice of social entrepreneurship. It is found that although women have been promoted under several initiatives of Barefoot, their participation in decision-making roles is restricted. For example, despite not having sufficient representation in the decision-making bodies of the College, the women empowerment division is headed by a man. In addition, it is found that other deprived sections such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and the physically challenged remain absent in the major decision-making committees in the organisation. While the social enterprise follows minimum wages set up by the government, there is a need to look into its wage structure. The organisation is internally headed by second level social entrepreneurs and has been externally represented by Roy alone. There is a need to take necessary steps to sustain the organisational existence in the external contexts, in case Roy were to leave the College. Thus, there is a need to create synergy between second level leaders and the external environment or ecosystem. As it has been discussed, the College is losing momentum in terms of reduced incomes. Thus there is a need to critically look into this specific aspect as this is one of the major factors that brings freedom to innovative and to create sustainable orientation.



Overall, the research brought an important contribution to the discourse of social entrepreneurship and social exclusion. The research bridges the gap between these two concepts and approaches and discovers that the gap created by social exclusion in society leads to the existence of social entrepreneurship. Social enterprises with their innovative existence create institutions and approaches that address the drudgery of the excluded and poor communities. This research further analysed how a rural social enterprise uses community participation and embeddedness as key constructs in order to build inclusive order. As a result, the marginalised and excluded have gained significantly by improving their existence in terms of their elevated skills and capabilities, the employment that they secured and the services that they have acquired. This research shows that the innovation and entrepreneurship put together helped the communities to include themselves in the mainstream.

By following Jack and Anderson (2002), this research came up with this study to understand how to draw a bigger picture in the practice of social entrepreneurship. It is shown in this research, apart from the agent who influences the structure at a later stage, it is the structure that actually influences and offers knowledge to the agent. Thus, this research provided sufficient knowledge as argued by Seelos et al. (2010) who invited structure oriented research in social entrepreneurship. The embeddedness based analysis helped the research to deal with the necessary contexts that could build up on the role of structure in carrying out the social transformation. The embeddedness based understanding helped to identify how culture is transformed by the agent's active participation in the structure and offers a novel understanding of how the actions are constrained and facilitated by behaviours that exist in the social context. As argued by Ashoka, the structure which is influenced and enacted by the entire process, opened a space for communities to experiment with their knowledge and capabilities, and transform their lives. While the research offers a significant contribution to understanding how social inclusion is achieved using embeddedness and community participation, this could be seen as beginning to understand the similar contexts in the bigger picture. Thus, future research could understand similar contexts in a variety of social enterprises coming from different geographical locations. In addition, it will also be interesting to understand the role of embeddedness in mitigating the conflicts exist while creating hybrid value in social enterprises.

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