

Women Empowerment through Social Entrepreneurship Activities in Kerala: A Case Study of She Taxi

*RAISON SAM RAJU, **DR.K S CHANDRASEKHAR

*Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, MarThoma College, Tiruvalla, India.

E-mail: raisonsamraju@marthomacollege.org

** Professor and Head, Institute of Management in Kerala University of Kerala, India.

Abstract - Social entrepreneurship is a venture that has been set up to find innovative solutions to social and economic problems prevailing in the society. Social entrepreneurs apply business principles and leadership skills to address social issues. In India there are several social entrepreneurship programs hosted by different individuals and institutions. Following this trend the govt. of Kerala, with the participation of women, constituted a social entrepreneurship programme 'She Taxi' to address the security issues against women and also to give entrepreneurial skills to educated women in Kerala. It helps to address the ever-growing threats on the safety and security of women lives while contributing the social and economic empowerment of women in the State on a massive scale.

Keywords: Social entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial skills, women empowerment, Economic Problems

I. INTRODUCTION

Social entrepreneurship is the process of pursuing the innovative solutions to social problems. The term social entrepreneur and entrepreneurship emerged into common parlance in the early 1980s, when Bill Dreyton identified this process as a form of entrepreneurship, which tried to find solutions to varied problems of humankind, especially the poor and the marginalized in the entrepreneurial way.

According to David Bornstein and Susan Davis(2010) “Social entrepreneurship is a process by which citizens build or transform institutions to advance solutions to social problems, such as poverty, illness, illiteracy, environmental destruction, human rights abuses and corruption, in order to make life better of many.”

Social entrepreneurs apply business principles and leadership skills to address social issues. They build mission driven businesses aimed at solving social problems through their professional skills and training towards helping people in need , or use their entrepreneurial skills in non-profits innovative business models.

She Taxi is a fleet of taxicabs, owned and operated by women, for transporting women commuters exclusively. Considering the increasing incidents of atrocities against women travellers in the country, the establishment of the fleet was initiated by Gender Park, an autonomous institution promoted by the Department of Social Justice, Government of Kerala State, India. The services of the fleet were launched on 19 November 2013 in Thiruvananthapuram with a fleet of five cars. 'Safe, secure

and responsible' travel for women is the main objective of the service.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Social entrepreneurship is a model that has been gaining momentum in recent years as an answer to social problems on a global scale and scarce resources to address them. Social entrepreneurs apply business principles and leadership skills to address social issues. They present user friendly, understandable, and ethical ideas that engage widespread support in order to maximize the number of citizens that will stand up, seize their idea, and implement it. World is witnessing a social enterprise movement. Unlike conventional industries, social enterprise is about developing solutions against pressing societal challenges. In India there are several social entrepreneurship programs hosted by different individuals and institutions. Following this trend the Government of Kerala , with the participation of women, constituted a social entrepreneurship programme “she taxi” to address the security issues against women and also to give entrepreneurial skills to educated women in Kerala. She taxi is aimed at providing employment to educated women and at the same time ensuring safe transportation to women. It addresses social problems and provides the solution to the same through women enterprises. The success of such a scheme would depend on women running she taxis and society accepting it as a mode of transportation. In Kerala, the initial years of she taxi is marked by several problems in terms of inadequate women entrepreneurs, lack of willingness to drive during all times and lack of acceptance from the general public.

Objectives of the study

1. To understand the problems which prevent the growth of SHE taxi
2. To examine the socio-economic changes among women entrepreneurs under ‘She taxi’.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study is both descriptive and analytical. The study made use of both secondary and primary data. Secondary data was collected from books, organization and websites. A structured questionnaire was prepared to collect primary data. A sample of 15 She Taxi drivers was selected from Thiruvananthapuram district on the basis of segments in the population. Variables identified for the study are socio-economic changes in the lives, change in decision making power, change in asset holding, and also the problems faced when operating she taxi. Data collected was analysed using simple mathematical and statistical tools like mean, ranking table, Spearman’s ranking correlation.

Analysis of the survey details are done in two parts. The first part deals with the profile of respondents and the second part deals with other details.

IV. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The major findings with regard to the objective of studying problems encountered by women entrepreneurs under ‘She Taxi’ schemes is as below:

Table 1: Ranking of Problems which Prevents the Growth of She Taxi

Sl. No.	Problem	Point	Rank
1	Lack of proper infrastructure	170	IV
2	High rate of bank interest	400	I
3	Lack of interest in project	390	II
4	Sanctioning formality	370	III
5	Traveling at night	0	0
6	Lack of support from family	100	V

Source : primary data

The survey revealed that high rate of bank interest was the most important problem which prevent the growth of she taxi as it had secured first rank with the 400 points. Lack of

Table 4: Decision Making Power Within The Family

sl	Decision	Before joining she taxi		After joining she taxi		Total	
		Point	Rank	Point	Rank	Point	Rank
1	Small purchase	420	I	430	I	850	I
2	Big purchase	250	VI	410	IV	660	V
3	Education of children	320	III	425	II	745	III

fund had given second position with 390 points. Sanctioning formality was also another problem which secured third rank with 370 points. Lack of proper infrastructure was yet another problem faced by she taxi drivers. So it got forth rank with 170 points. Least importance goes to lack of support from family.

Table 2: Ranking of Economic Benefit derived from SHE Taxi

Sl. No.	Benefit	Point	Rank
1	Increase in income	250	I
2	Better education for children	210	II
3	More spending on health	195	III
4	Increased holding of asset	160	IV

Source: primary data

It was observed that increase in income is the most important economic benefit derived from She Taxi. It was secured first rank with 250 points followed by better education for children, got second rank having 210 points and more spending on health which secured third rank having 195 points. Increased holding of asset is the fourth benefit which got forth rank with 160 points

Table 3: Ranking of Social Benefit Derived from SHE Taxi

Sl.No.	Benefit	Point	Rank
1	More involvement in community	230	I
2	Competence to take up leadership role	215	II
3	Better status of family	180	III
4	Membership in social groups	160	IV

Source: primary data

The analysis revealed that ‘more involvement in the community’ was the most important social benefit received from She Taxi as it was secured first rank with 230 points. ‘Competence to take up leadership role’ was the second important benefit which got second rank with 215 points. Next came ‘better status of family’ it was secured third rank with 180 points. Less importance goes to membership in social group with 160 points. Details are

4	Marriage of children	310	IV	370	V	680	IV
5	Medical treatment	375	II	420	III	795	II
6	Visit to places	305	V	305	VI	610	VI

Source: primary data

Ranking table was used in order to find out the most important decision making parameters before and after operating she taxi. The factor which came first was given 30 points, second was given 25 points, the third one was given 20 points and so on. The analysis revealed that the most important decision parameter was making small purchase, this was followed by decision in medical treatment. The third position was obtained by education of children.

Correlation analysis

An attempt was made to find whether there is any association in the ranking before and after operating the She Taxi.

Table 5: Rank Correlation Table

Association of decision making power between before joining and after joining she taxi	Rank correlation value
	+0.7717

Source: primary data

Spearman's rank correlation was used to ascertain the association in ranking. The rank correlation between decision making power of respondents before joining and after joining She Taxi was positively correlated as its value is +0.7717.

Table 6: Enhancement of Developmental Skill

Sl. No.	skill	Significantly	Neutral	Not significantly	Total
1	Leadership	12 (80)	2 (13)	1 (7)	15 (100)
2	communication	14 (93)	1 (7)	0	15 (100)
3	General awareness	10 (67)	3 (20)	2 (13)	15 (100)
4	Overall personality	13 (87)	1 (7)	1 (7)	15 (100)
5	Decision making competence	9 (60)	5 (33)	1 (7)	15(100)

Source: primary data

The study revealed that, leadership skill was significantly enhanced in the case of twelve percent of the respondents, one per cent of respondents was on the opinion that their leadership skill was not enhanced and the thirteen per cent was neutral. In the case of communication, fourteen per cent was significantly enhanced, and the rest one per cent was neutral. Ten percent of respondents said that their General awareness was significantly increased after joining She Taxi, two per cent was not significantly enhanced and three percent was neutral in their opinion. Thirteen per cent of respondents were on the opinion that their overall personality was considerably enhanced, one per cent was neutral in their opinion and the balance said that it was not significantly enhanced. The decision making competence of nine per cent respondents was significantly enhanced, the five per cent was neutral on their opinion and the one per cent said that their decision making competence did not significantly increased.

V. MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- With regard to economic benefit majority of the respondents are of the opinion that their income considerably increased after joining She Taxi.
- Regarding social benefit of She Taxi drivers, the most preferred more involvement in community followed by competence to take up leadership roles.
- Respondents are on the opinion that they earn on an average amount of rs.7000 per day.
- With regard to the income wise classification of respondents, there is no respondents in above 25000 income category. But they join as a She Taxi driver, their income has increased. Only 13 per cent of respondents are in the income group of 15000-20000. But after joining she taxi 27 per cent of the respondents are in the group of 15000-20000.
- Most of the respondents are in the opinion that the decision making power within the family are considerably increased.

- Majority of the respondents face the problem of high rate of interest as the main problem faced by them while operating She Taxi, followed by lack of funds, sanctioning formality etc.
- Regarding the media used for getting information about Govt. sponsored programmes Most of the employees prefer newspaper.
- Majority of the respondents are in the age group of 49-58.
- Most of the respondents have previous employment experience in the fields including driving field, agriculture, self-employment etc.
- Among the sources of fund, the respondents used only two sources; own fund and funds from bank.

VI. SUGGESTIONS

- Social entrepreneurs operating She Taxi had a firm belief that a support from the public is the most important factor for the success of the enterprise. Support from the public must be ensured in terms of cultural and social values including gender equity. Public must be sensitized on the need for safe travelling for women and on being protective cordial and friendly to them.
- She Taxi is the entrepreneurial activity run by women for women. Here the entrepreneurs are mobile and so is the enterprise (taxi). Such ventures need proper infrastructure facilities like sanitation facility, drinking water, emergency support etc. Such points must be avail at convenient location at highways and cities.
- The beneficiaries can be provided loans for buying vehicles at subsidized rates of interest. It is very helpful for them to decrease the burden of paying off their loans. Support from the members of the family is crucial for the success of the She Taxis as women have to work when called and at odd times.
- The govt. should also give adequate pension and other welfare measures to the drivers from the Welfare Board.

VII. CONCLUSION

Social entrepreneurs are among us, although they are rare; they are exceptionally successful in solving social problems, combining passion and visionary thinking with down-to-earth planning and strategizing. She Taxi is a project which is an exclusive taxi network programme for women with an aim to promote entrepreneurship, self-employment and security among women. As a social entrepreneurship She Taxi is doing a good job because it is taking into consideration the most important problem of atrocities against women. Besides the safety aspect, it also contributes to social and economic empowerment of women in Kerala.

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