

Towards an African Model: A Survey of Social Enterprises in South Africa

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Abstract : Social entrepreneurship offers the opportunity to simultaneously address both social and economic inequality in South Africa. Its appeal across racial groups, its attractiveness to young people, its applicability in rural and peri-urban markets, and its acceleration in middle income, large-business economies suits the South African context. However, the potential to deliver much-needed developmental benefits has not been realised because the social entrepreneurship debate lacks evidence as to who social entrepreneurs are, their goals and operations and the socio-economic results they achieve. As a result, policy development has been stunted, and legislative barriers and red tape remain. Social entrepreneurs are isolated from the mainstream economy, and struggle to access funding because of limitations in legislative and organisational structures. The objective of the study is to strengthen the ecosystem for social entrepreneurship in South Africa by producing robust, policy-rich information from and about social enterprises currently in operation across the country. The study employs a quantitative survey methodology, using online and telephonic data collection methods. A purposive sample of 1000 social enterprises was included in the first large-scale study of social entrepreneurship in South Africa. The results offer deep insight into the characteristics of social enterprises; the activities they undertake and the markets they serve; their modes of operation and funding sources as well as key challenges and support systems. The results contribute towards developing a model of social enterprise in the African context.

Keywords : social enterprise, key characteristics, challenges and enablers, towards an African model

Conference Title : ICSEI 2017 : International Conference on Social Enterprise and Innovation

Conference Location : Rome, Italy

Conference Dates : September 18-19, 2017