Activist to entrepreneur: The role of social enterprise in supporting women’s empowerment
Gender inequality exists...

...in politics, where only 23 per cent of members of parliaments are women.

...in pay, where, on average, women earn 24 per cent less than men.

...in work, where only 50 per cent of women are in the labour force compared to 75 per cent of men.

...in entrepreneurship, where there are only ten countries in the world where as many women start businesses as men.

...in business, where just 7 per cent of FTSE 100 and four per cent of Fortune 500 companies are led by women.

...in society, where one in three women experiences physical or sexual violence.
Organisations fighting gender inequality are under-funded – particularly at the grass roots

Less than five per cent of OECD members’ aid budgets go towards projects that explicitly target gender equality and women’s empowerment, and of this only 0.5% goes to women’s rights organisations. The median income of women’s rights organisations is just $20,000.
Globally, only 29 per cent of women’s rights organisations use income generation activities. Many lack the knowledge, skills, assets and resources to take advantage of social enterprise.
Social entrepreneurs are the R&D lab for women’s empowerment...

GLOBALLY
THERE ARE AN ESTIMATED
210 Million
social entrepreneurs,
ALL DEVELOPING AND TRYING DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO SOLVE THE WORLD’S SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

IN THE UK 4%
OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISES FOCUS ON WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT

IN INDIA
THIS FIGURE IS 33%
Even when not explicitly focussed on women’s empowerment the social enterprise sector is providing greater opportunities in employment than the wider economy:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Brazil</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Pakistan</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>USA</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women (% of total workforce)</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women (% of social enterprise workforce)</td>
<td>55%*</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>65%</td>
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* Estimated based on surveys, leadership statistics, and non-profit sector statistics

And more opportunities for Women’s leadership than the for-profit sector:

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women (% leaders in for-profit sector)</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women (% leaders in social enterprise)</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>55%</td>
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</table>
And women starting a social enterprise is itself contributing to women’s empowerment:

- 75% reported an increased sense of self-worth
- 64% reported increased confidence
- 56% said it had made them feel like they could make their own choices
Social enterprise both challenges and reflects gender inequalities in wider society. Governments, funders, social enterprises and women’s organisations need to work together to realise the potential of social enterprise.
BUT, in the five countries considered for this research, the social enterprise sector still has a long way to go before it can claim gender equality.

46% of women said they encountered barriers in running their social enterprise because of their gender.

Women are under-represented in leadership of social enterprise in 4/5 countries studied.

And this is worse the larger the organisation.

Data from the UK suggests the pay gap between men and women in social enterprise is 24%, the same as the global average.