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Unveiling sustainable success in social enterprises: insights through the case of thriving green in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the visionary reality of social entrepreneurship, analyzing how it drives to positive social change. It`s been introduced, then, a final case study on Thriving Green, a social start-up that aims to fight malnutrition in Turkana (Kenya) through the cultivation and commercialization of spirulina. In more detail, it explicates the fundamental disparity between social enterprises and traditional businesses, informing on how social enterprises converge their profits towards reinvestment for societal benefits, thus earning the definition of mission-related enterprises. The necessity of integrating social responsibility into business operations, emphasizes the deep interconnection that there is between the interests of shareholders and stakeholders. This integration assumes cardinal importance when companies play significant roles within local communities, and influence the perceptions of investors, customers and other stakeholders. Moreover, the article provides a comprehensive analysis of the landscape of social business, covering various aspects from initial challenges to political frameworks and financing. Emphasis is placed on understanding local demography and cultural habits to ensure sustainable processes. Additionally, it highlights the evolving role of the third sector, particularly social businesses, in facing social challenges and fostering innovation. The growth of social entrepreneurship and the associated challenges, such as securing financing and establishing suitable regulations, are also examined in depth. Finally, a case study on Thriving Green is presented, as a compelling success story in the field of social entrepreneurship.

Questo articolo esplora la realtà visionaria dell'imprenditoria sociale, analizzando come essa porti a un cambiamento sociale positivo. È stato presentato, poi, un ultimo case study su Thriving Green, una start-up sociale che mira a combattere la malnutrizione in Turkana (Kenya) attraverso la coltivazione e la commercializzazione della spirulina. Più in dettaglio, spiega la disparità fondamentale tra le imprese sociali e le imprese tradizionali, fornendo informazioni su come le imprese sociali convergono i loro profitti verso il reinvestimento per benefici sociali, guadagnandosi così la definizione di imprese legate alla missione. La necessità di integrare la responsabilità sociale nell'operatività aziendale sottolinea la profonda interconnessione che esiste tra gli interessi degli azionisti e quelli degli stakeholder. Questa integrazione assume un'importanza cardinale quando le aziende svolgono un ruolo significativo all'interno delle comunità locali e influenzano le percezioni di investitori, clienti e altri stakeholder. Inoltre, l'articolo fornisce un'analisi completa del panorama del social business, coprendo vari aspetti, dalle sfide iniziali ai quadri politici e ai finanziamenti. L'accento è posto sulla comprensione della demografia locale e delle abitudini culturali per garantire processi sostenibili. Inoltre, evidenzia l'evoluzione del ruolo del terzo settore, in particolare delle imprese sociali, nell'affrontare le sfide sociali e nel promuovere l'innovazione. Vengono inoltre esaminati in modo approfondito la crescita dell'imprenditoria sociale e le sfide ad essa associate, come la garanzia di finanziamenti e l'istituzione di normative adeguate. Infine, viene presentato un caso di studio su Thriving Green, come un'avvincente storia di successo nel campo dell'imprenditoria sociale.

Keywords: social enterprises, shared value social responsibility, CSR, stakeholder analysis, thriving green growth mission-related enterprise

1 – Introduction

The focus of this article is on the outstanding sphere of social enterprises, where businesses put the benefit of society ahead of pure profit.

Many businesses in today's corporate environment prioritize financial gain over sustainability or the needs of the disadvantaged. There's an important difference, indeed, between companies who sacrifice ethical concerns in pursuit of their goals and those who seek to achieve positive impact while maintaining economic viability.

The impetus for exploring this topic came from the discovery of Thriving Green, a German social enterprise that set out to find innovative solutions to apparently insurmountable problems. In fact examining the development, challenges, and effects of Thriving Green provides insightful empirical information that may be used to develop frameworks, theories, and best practices for social entrepreneurship.

The modern world is full of urgent problems that require creative and long-lasting solutions, such as poverty, economic injustice, and environmental sustainability. Social firms have become promising change agents because of their simultaneous focus on societal impact and financial sustainability.

The aim of this article, so, is to delve into the wider landscape of social enterprises, including their historical context, origins, and challenges.

The opening chapter of this thesis provides a broad overview of social enterprises, describing their nature and unique characteristics. It then introduces the concepts of social entrepreneurs and social entrepreneurship, concluding with an exploration of social innovation and its connection to social enterprise. The analysis explores subsequently the concept of shared value, social responsibility and sustainability, as social enterprises put people first and seek to create value that can be shared among them. To conclude this chapter, subsequent topics such as corporate social responsibility, essential for this type of business, and stakeholder theory, which if implemented effectively, offer significant opportunities for growth and internal cohesion, are considered.

The narrative extends subsequently to an exploration of the multifaceted challenges and issues that social startups face during their early-stage.

With this aim, chapter 2 of the article is designed to fully explore the crucial factors influencing the development and functioning of social enterprises, especially those with operations in developing countries. It navigates a complex field that includes elements of successful expansion, the impact of innovation and policy frameworks, and the complex dynamics of funding that supports day-to-day operations.

After these considerations, the third and final chapter of the article focuses on Thriving Green, a business addressing critical social issues in Turkana, Kenya. The harsh climate of Turkana, with temperatures up to 35°C, makes conventional agriculture nearly impossible, and the area's main lake has highly saline and alkaline water. Alexander Zacharuk, CEO of Thriving Green, identified an opportunity to grow spirulina, a nutrient-rich microalgae, in this environment. In 2016, Thriving Green collaborated with the local community to establish a spirulina farming facility, aiming to combat malnutrition in the region.

2 – Getting deeper into social enterprises: identity and environment

Social enterprises, while seemingly similar to traditional businesses, have unique traits that focus on addressing social or environmental issues while maintaining profitability for reinvestment (Alter, 2007). Embodying a blend of entrepreneurship and social mission, they operate with a commitment to societal welfare and sustainability (Kogut & Bugg-Levine, 2012, p.10).

According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2020) originating in the cooperative movement that started in nineteenth-century Europe, social entrepreneurship gained popularity in the 1980s and 1990s as the social innovation and schools of thinking and practice related to social enterprise. Nonetheless, for centuries, philanthropists—including those who are today known as venture philanthropists—have operated on the tenets of social entrepreneurship.

Such ventures prioritize social purpose, ownership that involves stakeholders, and an enterprising approach (DTI, 2002). These enterprises bridge the gap between for-profit and nonprofit sectors, contributing to inclusive societal development (Alter, 2007). That because if on one side they address social or environmental issues alongside generating financial returns, they also differ from traditional nonprofit organizations because their aim is to be financially self-sustaining, rather than relying solely on donations or grants. Exemplified by Yunus (1983) and Thriving Green (2016), despite their long-standing presence, social enterprises continue to evolve, offering innovative solutions to enduring societal challenges.

Social entrepreneurs manage risk, prioritize social impact and embrace innovation to create change (Buchholtz & Carroll, 2014). One of the most important qualities of social entrepreneurs is resilience, or the capacity to "bounce back," which enables them to have a significant influence. As their social venture expands, they frequently encounter challenges and disappointments. Financial sustainability is ensured by resilience, which helps people bounce back from setbacks, maintain motivation, and stay committed to their goal. It entails continuing to be dedicated to the cause during difficult times and seeing setbacks as opportunities for improvement. By keeping themselves healthy, creating a solid support system, and cultivating an optimistic outlook, social entrepreneurs can increase resilience (Pepperdine University, 2024). While profit is essential, reinvestment in social missions is prioritized over shareholder dividends (Deakin, 2001).

Social entrepreneurship blurs sector boundaries and emphasizes social value creation (Phillips et al , 2015). In the midst of economic challenges, social innovation is becoming increasingly important and requires institutional support, as it promotes systemic innovation and emphasizes collective learning and interaction (O'Regan et al., 2015, p.14). This dynamic interplay is reshaping traditional business paradigms and highlighting the symbiotic relationship between entrepreneurship, innovation and societal change.

Corporate Social Entrepreneurship (CSE) prioritizes the creation of shared value within companies, aiming to generate both social and economic value simultaneously (Bosma et al., 2016). It integrates the principles of social entrepreneurship (SE) and corporate entrepreneurship, focusing on innovation to renew organizations and maintain competitive advantage (Bosma et al., 2016). SE involves launching projects that address societal needs or improve communities, while CSE expands organizational capabilities by exploring novel resources for social and economic value creation (Bosma et al., 2016). Combining SE and CSE represents a strategic approach to business that highlights social impact alongside financial growth, fostering a symbiotic relationship between corporate success and societal benefit.

Shared value creation, thanks to CSE, aligns business decisions with societal needs, fostering mutual benefit (Bartlett & Le Gran, 1993). This concept, introduced by Michael Porter, focuses on generating economic value in addition to environmental and social benefits (Porter & Kramer, 2011). Seeing a cooperation between welfare and economic success, shared value acknowledges society's influence on markets (Porter & Kramer, 2011). It involves innovative approaches to enhance productivity, sustainability, and market reach (Michelini & Fiorentino, 2011). Emphasizing stakeholder communication and transparency, shared value creation integrates social value activities into business strategies (Porter & Kramer, 2011). So, as companies increasingly navigate global challenges, they must consider shared value creation as a core business strategy to drive innovation, growth, and societal benefits (Corazza et al., 2014).

This paradigm shift underscores the evolving role of businesses in addressing societal needs, which began with the mid-20th-century transition from sporadic philanthropy to a structured model of corporate social responsibility (CSR).

In the mid-20th century, there was a shift from sporadic philanthropy to a structured model of corporate social responsibility (CSR), characterized by companies taking on broader societal responsibilities (Caroli, 2016). Milton Friedman advocated profit maximization as a social responsibility in the 1960s (Friedman, 1970). However, concerns arose about businesses prioritizing profits over social welfare (Caroli, 2016). Thus, Porter and Kramer introduced shared value, which links economic success with societal progress (Porter & Kramer, 2011). Today, businesses are viewed as socially responsible institutions, advancing societal goals alongside economic objectives (Caroli, 2016).

Where once the corporation occupied a central position in society, influencing everything from social inequalities to private lives (Leadbeater, 2007), today corporate governance has shifted to prioritize stakeholder value over mere profit (Hill & Jones, 1992). This shift is consistent with the concept of sustainable value creation, which highlight outcomes that benefit all stakeholders and the environment (Elkington & Fennell, 1998). Social responsibility now extends beyond stakeholder expectations to encompass ethical corporate citizenship (Keeley, 1988), since such citizenship involves proactive measures to enhance society, culture, and the environment (Mucelli, 2000). Integrating sustainability into business operations fosters a better work environment and enhances brand value (Bennet & James, 1999). Ultimately, embracing shared value principles enables long-term success and innovation (Clarkson, 1995).

In a new landscape, where executives and managers face evolving roles shaped by technological innovation and globalization (Cantwell, 2014) and traditional business paradigms are challenged by stakeholder theory emphasizing relationships beyond shareholders (Hill &

Jones, 1992), a concept like social responsibility extends to corporate citizenship, necessitating moral principles and stakeholder engagement (Vaccari, 1998).

While socially responsible behavior builds credibility and competitive advantage (Harrison & Jones, 2018), stakeholder theory underlines the importance of CSR in business strategy (Lantos, 2001). Integrating CSR into corporate objectives ensures alignment with stakeholder interests (Areal et al., 2016) and companies recognize the need for CSR departments to balance shareholder and stakeholder needs (Pearce & Doh, 2005). Stakeholder theory, indeed, advocates for a reevaluation of business's societal role and CSR communication (Mella, 2014).

As the landscape of business evolves, the roles of executives and managers are thus being reshaped by concepts like stakeholder theory, which emphasizes the importance of considering the interests of all impacted parties.

Stakeholder theory, pioneered by Freeman (1984), revolutionized business perspectives by recognizing all affected parties as equal stakeholders and it contrasts with the shareholder theory championed by Friedman (1970), which emphasizes profit maximization for shareholders only. Freeman's multi-stakeholder view advocates sustainable business models that take into account different stakeholder interests (Phillips, 2003).

Businesses are seen as systems that foster value creation through stakeholder collaboration (Freeman, 1984). Managing stakeholder relationships is not only a strategic imperative but also a moral obligation, balancing values and interests for sustainable growth (Phillips, 2003). Leaders must navigate conflicting stakeholder interests to maximize value creation and maintain ethical integrity (Walsh, 2005). As stakeholder theory continues to evolve, businesses are increasingly recognizing the importance of considering the interests of all parties involved, whether they are shareholders, employees, customers, or the community.

Employees who are treated as valued partners produce better work, which increases production volume and quality, and ultimately customer satisfaction and sales (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). This approach produces collaborative relationships and sustainable practices, aiming to balance the interests of different stakeholders for long-term growth and ethical integrity.

However, critics argue stakeholder theory's inability to fairly balance diverse stakeholder interests (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). That`s why a good stakeholder management plans would mitigate conflicts by outlining stakeholder expectations and communication guidelines (Walsh, 2005). Stakeholder mapping, for example, would identify key stakeholders based on influence and interest (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). The stakeholder model acknowledges the complex network of stakeholders surrounding a company, which requires a nuanced understanding for successful corporate governance (Baker et al., 2014).

3 – Considerations for social enterprises- Background analysis

3.1 – *Critical factors for social enterprises expanding into developing countries: factors for successful growth*

There are several issues that social enterprises need to carefully consider before embarking on their journey. There must be done key considerations, emphasizing the importance of the people involved, the business opportunity, the broader context and a comprehensive assessment of risks and rewards (Sahlman 1997). In addition, the global economic landscape, particularly in developing regions, offers promising prospects for social enterprises, driven by private investment and entrepreneurial activity (Rabie, 2021).

When venturing into a developing country, understanding the local social context becomes paramount. This entails researching the intricacies of social, cultural, and political interactions in great detail in addition to looking outside the legal framework (Unterberg & Jahnke, 2016). Demographic analysis, for instance, is essential for customizing goods and services to suit regional demands and preferences (Unterberg & Jahnke, 2016). Moreover, to guarantee conformity with regional standards, knowledge of religious beliefs, lifestyle practices, and current economic endeavors is necessary (Unterberg & Jahnke, 2016). Failure to take these important steps would have the effect of alienating the community from the company and hindering the company's success.

Businesses need to carefully deal with culture since it has a significant influence on how society behaves (Michelini & Fiorentino, 2011). According to Osborne P. (2006), it has an impact on societal norms, organizational cultures, and work orientations. Cultural diversity can also pose challenges, for example when it comes to religious behaviors at work (Osborne P., 2006). Fair organizational policies must be established in order to effectively accommodate a variety of practices and beliefs.

Political stability is another critical factor influencing business operations, with unstable environments posing significant risks (Heminway J., 2013). For example, corruption, prevalent in many developing countries, further complicates the business landscape (Alice for Children, 2023). Addressing corruption requires concerted efforts from governments, civil society, and international cooperation (Alice for Children, 2023). Furthermore, a nation's development trajectory is significantly impacted by the interaction between politics and economy (Rabie, 2021). Political unrest impedes socioeconomic advancement, making efficient political and economic frameworks necessary for long-term viability (Rabie, 2021).

Although historically crucial to social and economic development, governments are coming under more and more strain as a result of slow growth and budgetary constraints. Numerous people have been forced to adopt cost-cutting strategies, such as privatizing public functions. Charity groups and other NGOs that rely on grants and subsidies have been significantly impacted by this public belt tightening. The area that was formerly dominated by NGOs and charity is now being filled by social entrepreneurs (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2020).

Ultimately, for social entrepreneurs to create profitable and long-lasting enterprises, a thorough understanding of the local community is essential. Businesses may build trust, succeed financially, and positively impact their communities by adhering to local values, appreciating cultural peculiarities, and navigating political environments (Unterberg Jahnke, 2016). On the other hand, ignoring these elements may result in monetary losses and harm to one's reputation, especially in situations where reputation is at risk (Michelini & Fiorentino, 2011).

The relatively low (and dwindling) level of trust in public and political institutions is also linked to the growing significance of social capital, as business leaders are being urged to fill the perceived leadership hole (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2020).

For social companies to have the greatest possible impact and maintain long-term sustainability, careful study and meaningful interaction with the local context are therefore essential.

By shifting the focus to the third sector after discussing the challenges faced by social enterprises, the conversation expands to include the larger landscape of organizations dedicated to addressing societal issues. This shift highlights the interconnectedness between social enterprises and the wider ecosystem of non-profit organizations, and how their efforts collectively contribute to tackling complex social challenges.

Since 1990, the third sector has expanded significantly, moving from the economic periphery to a central position where it works with both the public and private sectors to implement various government initiatives. This sector, which includes organizations that are neither for-profit nor statutory, has become instrumental in addressing societal issues such as marginalization, poverty, health and environmental policy (Haugh & Kitson, 2007).

Unlike the profit-driven private sector, social enterprises in the third sector prioritize social and environmental benefits over financial gain. These organizations, which include social corporations, trade in order to achieve financial independence and then reinvest the surplus in order to carry out their social mission (Haugh & Kitson, 2007).

Social businesses endeavor to establish social capital by means of networks, trust-building, and democratic decision-making procedures. These complex goals are classified into socio-political, economic, and social domains (Putnam, 1993). Furthermore, these groups challenge the traditional division of these domains by acting as a crucial conduit between the public, private, and civil society sectors (Evers & Laville, 2004).

One notable example of successful social enterprise is the Grameen Bank, founded in 1983 by Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus. By providing microloans primarily to women, Grameen has empowered millions to lift themselves out of poverty, demonstrating the potential of social enterprises to drive significant social change.

Looking ahead, the future of social entrepreneurship lies in fostering innovation and collaboration across sectors. In general, the private sector is better suited to support public sector development initiatives rather than take their place. This strategy is in line with the 2030 Agenda's tenets, particularly Sustainable Development Goal 17, which emphasizes bolstering implementation tools and reviving the international cooperation for sustainable development (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2020).

Policymakers must create an enabling environment for social entrepreneurship to thrive by promoting initiatives such as venture philanthropy, increased volunteerism, and legislative support (Phillips et al., 2015).

In addition, governments contribute significantly to collaborative social innovation processes by identifying societal problems, setting policy, and motivating group activity (Osborne, 2006). By redefining societal issues and enlisting the help of diverse stakeholders, policymakers can create frameworks that enable social enterprises to drive constructive change on a larger scale.

In summary, the development of the third sector signifies a paradigm change toward cooperative, socially conscious methods of tackling difficult societal issues. Policymakers can leverage the potential of the social enterprise sector to generate equitable economic growth and make significant impacts by providing support and growth opportunities for these businesses.

3.2 – *Funding social enterprises*

After the introduction of the paradigm change that the growth of the third sector represents, governments may investigate ways to finance social companies. This change in emphasis enables a more thorough analysis of the financial processes and support networks required to maintain and expand these socially conscious companies.

In recent years, there has been a significant rise in social entrepreneurship, particularly in sectors such as energy efficiency, education, and sustainable consumption. These enterprises, driven by a blend of economic value chains and social impact, are redefining the traditional notion of entrepreneurship. Their success is measured not only by financial gains, but also by their contributions to society (Alter, 2007).

Social entrepreneurs encompass both for-profit and nonprofit ventures that seek to combine financial gain with social good (Kogut & Bugg-Levine, 2012). Despite their diverse nature, all social enterprises face a common challenge: generating sufficient revenue to sustain and expand their operations.

A widely accepted definition characterizes social enterprises as businesses with dual social and economic objectives, using trade to achieve both financial sustainability and social missions (DTI, 2001). These enterprises often strive to be self-sustaining and autonomous, prioritizing social impact over profit maximization.

The financing landscape for social firms is complicated, with obstacles including legal requirements and restricted access to regular financial markets (Schott et al., 2016). Many rely on money from government grants, private donations, and individual investors, which may hinder their capacity to accomplish their social objectives (Kogut & Bugg-Levine, 2012).

Innovative financing strategies though, such as quasi-equity debt, social impact bonds, and loan guarantees, have been developed to solve these issues (Royet al., 2014). These strategies seek to balance social goals with financial incentives while offering consistent funding.

Even if social entrepreneurship is becoming more popular, more governmental assistance and standardized performance indicators are still required to encourage continued expansion (McAbee, 2022). Furthermore, utilizing technology and investor cooperation can improve capital allocation and promote the growth of the social enterprise industry (Monitor Institute, 2008).

Future prospects for social companies are anticipated to be brought about by changes in government regulations, technology breakthroughs, and demographic shifts (Rangan et al., 2008). But for the industry to continue growing and having an impact, research, knowledge exchange, and creative financing options are going to be essential.

A growing number of youth are challenging conventional wisdom about the function of the private sector. Businesses are aware that the paradigm shift can lead to a whole new set of opportunities and that it is generating new expectations among young people (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2020).

4 – Sustainable success: exposing the impact of Thriving Green in a thoughtful interview

This paragraph is dedicated to Thriving Green, a German startup whose main goal is to address the high levels of malnutrition in a region of Kenya called Turkana.

With 388 million people living below the poverty line of USD 1.90 per day in Sub-Saharan Africa, the public sector is finding it more and more difficult to provide basic services like energy, water, sanitation, healthcare, and education. These needs have proven difficult for traditional actors—governments, the commercial sector, and civil society—to meet. In this sector, social entrepreneurs (SEs) have shown great promise, particularly in nations like

South Africa and Kenya. They frequently use adaptable, creative strategies to reach underprivileged populations because to their strong local presence. Strict regulations, a lack of funding, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of public sector support are some of the challenges SEs must overcome in order to scale up (Navarrete & Agapitova, 2017).

Following a failed legal challenge by Raila Odinga, the leading opposition candidate, Kenya had a contentious presidential election in August 2022. William Samoei Ruto emerged victorious and formed a new administration. The opposition organized rallies in the streets after rejecting the court's ruling. Kenya's human rights situation has gotten worse over the past year, despite President Ruto's campaign pledges to uphold human rights. International and Kenyan organizations have persisted in accusing police and other security forces of grave violations of human rights, such as extrajudicial executions. By neglecting to look into and bring charges against police officers involved in the abuses during opposition protests in 2023, the authorities have failed to ensure accountability for these violations (Human Rights Watch, 2024).

The choice of analyzing Thriving Green has been taken into consideration because it provides an excellent illustration of how social enterprises mostly function in unfortunate areas of the world like Kenya, by highlighting the intricate connections between corporate strategy, society expectations, and cultural influences. Analyzing Thriving Green's origins, obstacles, and outcomes yields useful empirical data that may be applied to the creation of social entrepreneurship frameworks, theories, and best practices. Turkana's typical temperature is about 35 °C, making it impossible to grow vegetables, wheat, or corn. Moreover, the Turkana main lake's water is extremely salted and highly alkaline. The CEO of Thriving Green, Alexander Zacharuk discovered that these environmental conditions were perfect for the growth of spirulina, a very healthy micro-algae that could exponentially help the nutrition of this population. In 2016 he and his team decided, so, to build cultivation facilities for the microalgae spirulina in the Kenyan desert together with the locals.

Turkana is a highly impoverished location, which is why the goal is to discover a nutritious food to aid the local population. At the time of the discovery, the local people depended on the importation of cereals, beans, and corn as well as goat husbandry. The average salary per day was a pitiful $1.66. with a 48% unemployment rate and a child mortality rate of 23.6%, or nearly one in every four children dying before reaching five (Thriving Green, 2020).

The theory behind this new project was that the money it generated would have encouraged an economic boom, opening doors for people to access new opportunities like improved healthcare and education. Indeed, human rights, such as access to healthcare and education, are jeopardized by the country's corrupt political landscape. Since Kenya gained its independence in the 1960s, corruption has been pervasive in both politics and public service. Bribery, extortion, and kickbacks are prevalent in the provision of public services, and they affect vital services like healthcare, education, and water at all governmental levels. This corruption hinders economic growth, takes funds away from vital areas, and raises the national debt. According to a 2016 Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission report, corruption costs Kenya some $6 billion a year. Three out of four Kenyans have either witnessed or participated in police corruption, according to studies that illustrate the pervasiveness of corruption in the public sector. Afrobarometer reports that a higher percentage of Kenyans—51.6%—than the African average think that some civil personnel are corrupt (Onyango, 2024).

To make sure the project went well, training programs were included. The initial focus was on the construction of the ponds. The project process begins with the construction of a concrete foundation. The ponds are then filled with water using a pump and the mother culture is introduced to initiate growth. Attention then shifts to optimizing the algae culture, which includes practices such as stirring the water. The training covered essential aspects such as water agitation techniques and quality management using a microscope to detect potential contamination.

The harvesting process was also a key component. Initially, they started with a sieve, but later in the larger facilities, they switched to using a microfiber towel. The microfiber towel is placed in the water to trap the algae, allowing for easy retrieval and subsequent processing. The algae can be dried, crushed into a durable powder, or compressed into pills. The powder can be incorporated into traditional dishes, while the pills provide a convenient option for consumption with water.

Moreover in terms of the business aspect, they also provided training encompassing basic accounting and marketing, particularly focusing on product communication. The emphasis was placed on presenting the product's advantages tailored to the target demographic, such as highlighting the high protein content for robust and physically demanding tasks. The training emphasized how the protein and vitamins contribute to enhancing the immune system, reducing the incidence of diseases, and improving concentration, particularly for academic pursuits. The approach centered on presenting the impact of the product on the community's daily lives.

In terms of sales and pricing, since people were living on a very low daily budget, they initially decided to distribute spirulina for free. For now, their main strategy would be to sell the surplus in local markets in cities like Nairobi and Mombasa. However, in regions with significantly lower income levels, such as Turkana, where maintaining local salaries is a priority, they decided to continue providing Spirulina free of charge. This underscores the fact that, as explained in Chapter 2, social enterprises really need to invest time in making sure the community understands the project 100%. Then comes the whole duty of making sure that the people the company wants to help learn how to do the job, always respecting their culture and way of life. It also shows how a social business should always have empathy for the people they are working with, because one of the main goals of a social business should always be to respect the people they are trying to help.

The environmental sustainability of the technical solution has been validated by the WWF and TÜV Nord. It has also been awarded the Bayer Foundation's Social Innovation Award and the GreenTec Award 2017, the world's largest and most important environmental prize.

5 – Conclusions

In conclusion, this research provides a complete panorama of the entire social business environment with a final study case on Thriving Green.

The concept of social business represents a convergence of traditional business concepts with a commitment to addressing social and environmental issues. Unlike traditional for-profit and non-profit organizations, social businesses combine innovation, entrepreneurship, and market-driven strategies to achieve a distinct social mission through social ownership models and business strategies. They emphasize financial sustainability and independence, reinvesting profits to advance social goals, and involving stakeholders in ownership and governance.

The notion of social enterprise has been around for a while, and leaders like Muhammad Yunus and initiatives like Thriving Green serve as examples and add to the larger story of corporate social responsibility (CSR). Social companies serve as examples of how creative business strategies can promote progress and offer long-term fixes for pressing global issues. Social entrepreneurship seeks to combine innovation with both economic and social goals, requiring risk-taking, adaptability, and a dedication to social impact. While social entrepreneurs look into novel approaches to social change, social enterprises use economic activities to address societal issues. A diverse range of organizations that integrate social benefits into business goals are included in the field of social entrepreneurship, underscoring the dynamic character of corporate responsibility. This responsibility now encompasses a wider range of social, economic, and environmental aspects rather than just financial and legal requirements.

Stakeholder theory offers a framework for comprehending the interactions between companies and their stakeholders, placing a focus on openness, reassessing the place of companies in society, and fostering greater acceptance of corporate social responsibility. The potential of private capital and entrepreneurial endeavors to push economic progress and social benefits is exemplified by social businesses in developing countries; nevertheless, this is dependent upon a comprehensive comprehension of the local social context.

Conducting a comprehensive social environment analysis is essential in order to launch a business in a developing country. A company's input and output flows connect it to its surroundings, operating as part of a macrosystem (Gazzola, 2006). Local lifestyles, legal considerations, cultural peculiarities, and demography are all included in this analysis. Comprehending factors such as age, gender, income, education, and religion facilitates the customization of goods and services to suit local needs.

Understanding population features is made possible by surveys and demographic data, and the dynamics of population expansion highlight the necessity of sustainable development. Respecting local ways of life and ongoing business ventures is essential to preventing disagreements in the community. Furthermore, everyday life and business activities are influenced by elements like religious beliefs, cultural standards, and political stability (Baldassarre, 2021). Business functionality is influenced by the socio-political environment, which includes concerns about corruption and governance. Strong community ties and trust are developed by thriving businesses (Chong & Kleemann, 2011). To promote socio-economic growth and commercial success, social enterprises operating in developing countries need to consider cultural nuances, socio-political environments and ethical collaborations (Keeley, 1988).

The development of the third sector highlights the importance of social enterprises in the areas of employment, health, education and the environment. Unlike traditional non-profit organizations, social enterprises have a variety of socio-political, economic and social objectives and focus on building social capital. The Grameen Bank is an example of how social entrepreneurs can empower neglected communities.

To fully realize the potential of social entrepreneurs, strategic directions include policy-making that strikes a balance, a focus on networks and partnerships, and creative public service commissioning. This strategy is in line with new ideas about health and wellbeing that emphasize community processes and social connections (Needle & Burns, 2019). The development of social enterprise urges stakeholders to use strategic policy frameworks, social innovation, and teamwork to encourage the expansion of social enterprises. It draws attention to the flexibility, creative financing approaches, and fortitude of social entrepreneurship in confronting situations of adversity. Creative funding methods like quasi-equity loans and social impact bonds are crucial for aligning financial and social goals (Chong & Kleemann, 2011).

Thriving Green's case study underscores the importance of adapting social enterprise projects to local conditions, focusing on community engagement and knowledge transfer to promote economic development, poverty reduction, and improved nutrition.

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