

# Entrepreneurship in the Sustainable Development Goals

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Entrepreneurship plays a prominent and noteworthy role in promoting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Entrepreneurship, through the creation of new businesses, is recognized as a vital driver in providing employment, reducing inequalities, alleviating poverty, and fostering sustainable growth.

entrepreneurial intention

global entrepreneurship monitor

social worker

sustainable development goals

## 1. Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a fundamental part of the UN's Agenda 2030 and shape the early 21st century in the context of global development <sup>[1]</sup>. The SDGs are based on three thematic pillars, social, economic, and environmental, encompassing 17 goals and 169 indicators to measure progress towards these objectives <sup>[1]</sup>. The interconnectedness of the SDGs requires a global strategy for their implementation, as all goals are interrelated and cannot be achieved in isolation. The SDGs provide a comprehensive framework for addressing a wide range of social, economic, and environmental issues, including poverty, education, health, gender equality, the environment, and human rights <sup>[2]</sup>. The SDGs create challenges for both public and private social interventions, including those in the social work sector, which often tend to be fragmented in their approach to social issues <sup>[2]</sup>.

Social work has positioned itself as a profession with a crucial role in attaining the desired outcomes of SDGs <sup>[3]</sup>. Social workers can use the SDGs as a guide to address complex issues that affect the communities in which they work. The values and principles of social work, such as equality, diversity, empowerment, respect for human rights, and social justice, align with the underlying principles of the SDGs <sup>[3][4][5]</sup>. This makes the SDGs an effective tool for social workers in the implementation of their professional values in practice. This congruence between the values of social work and the principles of the SDGs allows social workers to promote social justice, respect for human rights, and equality while working to achieve the goals set by the SDGs <sup>[3][5]</sup>. However, there are significant challenges, such as climate crises, poverty, growing inequalities, economic recessions, and unemployment, which affect the implementation of the SDGs and present opportunities and challenges for professionals <sup>[2][6]</sup>.

A stable occupation gives individuals a sense of security, despite the variety of opportunities for a career change <sup>[7]</sup>. A career change allows individuals to gain more experience and versatility. This change is associated with more autonomy, a greater willingness to take risks, a greater professional social network and more experience <sup>[8][9]</sup>.

Entrepreneurs are individuals who spot and seize new opportunities through new products, production methods, sources of raw materials, markets, and new forms of organization [10]. Entrepreneurial activity translates into wealth creation, innovative technological progress, and business expansion [11]. Innovative individuals with the will to enterprise represent a tremendous contribution and value to society, being perceived as drivers of social and economic development, thus acquiring respect and status within their areas of action [12]. Entrepreneurs have opposite mindsets from those of conventional organizations, as they have the ability to perceive problems that others cannot and provide innovative solutions to solve them [13]. In this way, organizations can benefit from understanding and identifying what drives employees to have entrepreneurial attitudes, thus providing higher levels of self-employment, leading to social and economic benefits [14].

## 2. Entrepreneurial Intention and SDGs

Entrepreneurial intention has been a topic much studied by researchers. Despite several definitions, there is consensus that entrepreneurial intention translates into the will of an individual to start a business or become self-employed [15][16][17]. Several models and theoretical lenses have been employed in studying this topic [18][19][20][21][22]. Entrepreneurial behavior is complex and depends on several factors, including a critical approach to the environment, the ability to explore innovative ideas and creativity, and providing and building the right conditions for creating and exploiting opportunities [23][24].

Entrepreneurship plays a prominent and noteworthy role in promoting the SDGs (e.g., [25][26]). Entrepreneurship, through the creation of new businesses, is recognized as a vital driver in providing employment, reducing inequalities, alleviating poverty, and fostering sustainable growth [6]. Governments in developing economies are increasingly acknowledging the potential of entrepreneurs, leading to accelerated initiatives in curriculum development and entrepreneurship education programs in higher education institutions since the 1980s [27]. Like entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial intention can be intrinsically linked to the SDGs in various ways, contributing to initiatives that address socioeconomic and environmental issues [28][29]. Thus, entrepreneurial intention can catalyze the advancement of various goals and objectives outlined in the SDGs, providing a dynamic approach to tackling social and environmental challenges [28][29].

By establishing new businesses, entrepreneurship makes a substantial contribution to SDG 8, fostering sustainable economic growth and generating employment opportunities [28][29][30][31]. Simultaneously, entrepreneurial activities positively impact reducing inequality (SDG 10) and combating poverty (SDG 1) by providing economic opportunities and empowering communities [2][32][33]. Fostering a culture of entrepreneurship, especially among marginalized populations, offers access to resources and avenues for upward mobility, contributing to more inclusive societies [30]. Entrepreneurs innovate solutions that address social disparities, create businesses that generate economic value, and actively contribute to social equity [6]. This aligns with the SDG 10 goal of fostering a just and inclusive global community [2][32][33]. Additionally, as entrepreneurial ventures expand, they uplift local economies, providing sustainable livelihoods and supporting the SDG 1 objective of poverty eradication [6][32][33].

The recognition of the transformative potential of entrepreneurs has led to the accelerated development of curricula and entrepreneurship education programs, thereby supporting SDG 4, ensuring quality education [29][33]. Entrepreneurship education not only equips individuals with the skills to navigate the dynamic business landscape but also fosters critical thinking and problem-solving abilities [28][29][32]. By incorporating practical experiences and real-world challenges into educational frameworks, entrepreneurship education becomes a powerful tool for preparing individuals to contribute meaningfully to society. The emphasis on innovation, creativity, and adaptability in entrepreneurship education further supports the broader goals of SDG 4, creating a learning environment that prepares students for the complexities of the modern world.

Entrepreneurial intention can positively influence SDG 3 by driving initiatives aimed at disease prevention, promoting mental health, ensuring equitable access to healthcare services, and developing innovative solutions for medical challenges [28][29][32][33]. Moreover, entrepreneurs can play a crucial role in establishing social enterprises focused on health, addressing issues such as basic sanitation, access to clean water, and disseminating information about healthy practices [6][28][32]. This aligns with the goals outlined in SDG 3, fostering a healthier and more sustainable society.

Furthermore, entrepreneurship assumes a critical role in the pursuit of SDG 9, which aims to foster innovation and construct a resilient infrastructure [28][33]. Entrepreneurs, through their endeavors, contribute substantially to the realization of this goal by promoting technological advancements, creating sustainable solutions, and enhancing overall infrastructure development [33]. Additionally, their commitment to socially and environmentally responsible business practices aligns with the objectives of SDG 13, emphasizing climate action [33]. Entrepreneurial initiatives that prioritize sustainability, resource efficiency, and environmental consciousness contribute significantly to mitigating the impact of climate change, aligning with the broader global effort to address environmental challenges [2][6].

Finally, entrepreneurship also plays a pivotal role in advancing SDG 17, which underscores the importance of partnerships for the achievement of sustainable development [33]. Entrepreneurs, by nature, foster collaboration and partnerships, both locally and globally, driving innovation and collective efforts toward addressing complex challenges [34][35]. Their ability to create networks, engage in cross-sectoral collaborations, and leverage resources contributes to the development of a supportive ecosystem for sustainable development initiatives. Entrepreneurial ventures often thrive on collaborative relationships with governments, nonprofits, and other businesses, embodying the spirit of SDG 17 by forging partnerships that enhance the overall impact and effectiveness of sustainable development efforts.

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