

# The Daily Star

12:00 AM, October 13, 2015 / LAST MODIFIED: 12:00 AM, October 13, 2015

## Impact of social business to expand with time

[Suntu Kumar Ghosh](#)

Society, the aggregate of people living together in a more or less ordered community, is an inevitable part of our life. Every society has its peaks and lows even in this 21st century.

Dictators and slavery are mostly gone, no caste system is visible anymore, but differences in the people in a society and their standards of living are clearly visible.

Now that our society has gone through continuous developments and evolution, business not only serves the purpose of supplying money, but also improves the living standards of the underprivileged people and reduces the gap between different classes.

Now, what exactly is social business? Let's imagine a world where every child goes to school; no child dies of hunger or malnutrition; no mother loses her life while giving birth; water, gas and electricity reach even the most rural areas of Bangladesh, and every man can afford at least the five basic necessities.

It all might seem too utopian to be true, but it is not impossible. Social business is designed to respond to these challenges. Each social business addresses a specific social problem.

These are usually not-for-profit organisations but that does not mean they do not make profits at all.

But rather, the profit goes into the operations of the business again and no personal gain is redeemed by the investors.

Social businesses have always existed in our society but those lacked discipline in the past. However, now it is taking a proper shape and the impact is even more forceful.

Yunus Centre organises Social Business Day and Social Business Youth Summit every year to promote social business and motivate young professionals to enter this industry. Many universities around the world have opened Yunus Centre on their campuses to practise and learn about social business and its practical and positive implications on the society.

Thus, young entrepreneurs with new ideas and plans are stepping into this industry to bring change, and to be the next big changemakers.

Social business can be a very small venture by one person who wants to make a difference in his surroundings. Or, it can also grow into a large organisation that changes lives every moment, like Grameen Bank and Brac.

The advent of microcredit has revolutionised the scene for rural agricultural workers and small business entrepreneurs.

Grameen Bank being the pioneer of microcredit opportunities has spread the model and many organisations are now giving similar services.

Together, the organisations are reaching thousands of people in need around the country. When no financial institutions stood beside them, social business did.

With similar goals in mind another giant brand in Bangladesh started its journey -- Aarong.

Aarong, a concern of Brac, began by engaging a small number of rural women to make handicrafts. The only buyers at that time were a few small retailers in Dhaka.

But now Aarong has 15 extraordinary outlets all over Bangladesh and is known as one of the biggest fashion retail chains.

Behind this huge success are the stories of 65,000 artisans—85 percent of whom are women and supported by Aarong.

Aarong took the initiative to engage them directly with handicraft works and created a direct effect on their lives. Aarong also provides free education to the children of the underprivileged artisans.

Health and nutrition have always been a prime focus of social organisations because for all other challenges to be met, good health and nutrition are unavoidable.

The supply of nutritious and hygienic food has also reached impoverished areas of Bangladesh through social organisations. Grameen and global nutrition brand Danone collaborated to provide nutrition, especially to the children, in impoverished areas.

The number of schools has also increased impressively from the involvement of social organisations with the goal to provide every child with a minimum level of education. More children are now sent to school for education.

Social organisations like Brac play a vital role in the development and education sectors. Schools have reached even the remotest areas of our country.

Social businesses have also changed mindsets towards these necessities and guided people on how to reach them.

Women empowerment schemes have changed the ideas and standards of women in Bangladesh. The number of working women has increased notably through women empowerment initiatives.

The impact of social business will only expand with time, as charities do not solve social problems, but social businesses do.

**The writer is an assistant professor at Brac Business School under Brac University. He can be reached at: [suntu\\_ghosh@yahoo.com](mailto:suntu_ghosh@yahoo.com).**