

# Social Entrepreneurship Activities in Kerala: A Case Study of She Taxi

## OPEN ACCESS

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### Abstract

*Social entrepreneurship is a venture that has been set up to find innovative solutions to social and economic problems prevailing in society. Social entrepreneurs apply business principles and leadership skills to address social issues. In India there are several social entrepreneurship programmes hosted by different individuals and institutions. Following this trend the government of Kerala, with the participation of women, constituted a social entrepreneurship programme "She Taxi" to address the security issues of women and also to provide entrepreneurial skills to educated women in Kerala. It helps to address the ever-growing threats on the safety and security of women's lives while contributing to the social and economic empowerment of women in the State on a massive scale.*

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### Introduction

Social entrepreneurship is the process of pursuing innovative solutions to deal with social problems. The term social entrepreneur and entrepreneurship entered common parlance in the early 1980s, when Bill Dreyfus identified this process as a form of entrepreneurship, which tried to find solutions to varied problems of humankind, especially the poor and the marginalized in the entrepreneurial way.

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According to David Bornstein and Susan Davis(2010), "Social entrepreneurship is a process by which citizens build or transform institutions to advance solutions to social problems, such as poverty, illness, illiteracy, environmental destruction, human rights abuses and corruption, in order to make life better for many" (pg no 16). Social entrepreneurs apply business principles and leadership skills to address social issues. They build mission-driven businesses aimed at solving social problems through their professional skills and training, to help people in need, or touse their entrepreneurial skills in non-profit innovative business models.

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"She Taxi" is a fleet of taxicabs, owned and operated by women, exclusively for transporting women commuters. Considering the increasing incidents of atrocities against women travellers in the country, the establishment of the fleet was initiated by Gender Park, an autonomous institution promoted by the Department of Social Justice, Government of Kerala State, India. The services of the fleet were launched on 19 November 2013 in Thiruvananthapuram with a fleet of five cars. "Safe, secure and responsible" travel for women is the main objective of the service.

## Statement of the Problem

Social entrepreneurship is a model that has been gaining momentum in recent years as an answer to social problems on a global scale and to address the question of scarce resources. At present the world is witnessing a social enterprise movement. Unlike conventional industries, social enterprise is about developing solutions against pressing societal challenges. Social entrepreneurs apply business principles and leadership skills to address social issues. They present user-friendly, understandable, and ethical ideas that engage in mobilising widespread support in order to maximize the number of citizens that will stand up, seize their ideas, and implement them.

In India there are several social entrepreneurship programmes hosted by different individuals and institutions. Following this trend, the Government of Kerala, with the participation of women, constituted a social entrepreneurship programme, “She Taxi,” to address the security issues of women and also to provide entrepreneurial skills to educated women in Kerala. She Taxi is aimed at providing employment to educated women and at the same time ensuring safe transportation for women. It addresses social problems and provides solutions to them through women’s enterprises. The success of such a scheme would depend on women running She Taxis and society accepting it as a mode of transportation. In Kerala, the initial years of She Taxi were marked by several problems in terms of inadequate women entrepreneurs, a lack of willingness to drive at all hours during the day, and lack of acceptance from the general public.

## Objectives of the Study

### The Objectives of this Study are Two-Fold

1. To understand the problems which prevent the growth of She Taxi
2. To examine the socio-economic changes among women entrepreneurs under the “She Taxi” scheme

## Methodology

The study is both descriptive and analytical. The study made use of both secondary and primary data. Secondary data was collected from

books, organizations and websites. A structured questionnaire was prepared to collect primary data. A sample of 15 She Taxi drivers was selected from Thiruvananthapuram district on the basis of segments in the population. Variables identified for the study are socio-economic changes in the lives of the women drivers, changes in decision-making power, changes in asset holding, and also the problems faced when operating She Taxis. Data collected was analysed using simple mathematical and statistical tools like mean, ranking table, and Spearman’s ranking correlation.

The analysis of the survey details are done in two parts. The first part deals with the profile of respondents and the second part deals with other details.

## Analysis and Results

The major findings with regard to the objective of studying problems encountered by women entrepreneurs under “She Taxi” schemes are as below:

**Table Ranking of Problems which Prevents the Growth of She Taxi**

S. No.	Problem	Point	Rank
1	Lack of proper infrastructure	170	IV
2	High rate of bank interest	400	I
3	Lack of fund	390	II
4	complexities and delays in Sanctioning	370	III
5	Traveling at night	0	0
6	Lack of support from family	100	V

**Source:** Primary Data

The survey revealed that the high rate of bank interest is biggest challenge to the growth of She Taxis, as it had been ranked first with 400 points. Lack of fund was the second major problem with 390 points. The complexities and delays in Sanctioning was another problem which was ranked third with 370 points. Lack of proper infrastructure was yet another problem faced by She Taxi drivers. It was ranked fourth with 170 points. The least important factor was lack of support from family.

**Table Ranking of Economic Benefits Derived from She Taxi**

S. No.	Benefit	Point	Rank
1	Increase in income	250	I
2	Better education for children	210	II
3	More spending on health	195	III
4	Increased holding of assets	160	IV

**Source:** Primary Data

It was observed that increase in income is the most important economic benefit derived from She Taxi. It was ranked first with 250 points, followed by better education for children which secured 210 points. Better health care due to more spending capability secured 195 points. Increased holding of assets was the fourth benefit with 160 points

**Table Ranking of Social Benefits Derived from She Taxi**

Sl.No.	Benefit	Point	Rank
1	More involvement in community	230	I
2	Competence to take up leadership roles	215	II
3	Better status of family	180	III
4	Membership in social groups	160	IV

**Source:** Primary Data

The analysis revealed that an increased involvement in the community was the most important social benefit received from the She Taxi initiative as it had a highest of 230 points. "Competence to take up leadership role" was the second important benefit with 215 points. Next was "Better status of family" which secured 180 points. Membership in social group was the least important benefit with 160 points.

**Table Decision Making Power within the Family**

S. No.	Decision	Before joining She Taxi		After joining She Taxi		Total	
		Point	Rank	Point	Rank	Point	Rank
1	Small purchase	420	I	430	I	850	I
2	Big purchase	250	VI	410	IV	660	V
3	Education of children	320	III	425	II	745	III
4	Marriage of children	310	IV	370	V	680	IV
5	Medical treatment	375	II	420	III	795	II
6	Visit to places	305	V	305	VI	610	VI

**Source:** Primary Data

A ranking table was used in order to find out the most important decision-making parameters before and after operating She Taxi. The factor which came first was given 30 points, the second one was given 25 points, the third one was given 20 points, and so on. The analysis revealed that the most important parameter in decision-making was that of small purchase which was followed by medical treatment. Being able to participate in matters relating to the education of children was the third parameter.

**Correlation Analysis**

An attempt was made to find whether there is any association in the ranking before and after operating the She Taxi.

**Table Rank Correlation Table**

Association of decision making power between before joining and after joining she taxi	Rank correlation value
	+0.7717

Spearman's rank correlation was used to ascertain the association in ranking. The rank correlation value between the decision-making power of respondents before joining and after joining the She Taxi scheme was positively calculated as +0.7717.

**Table Enhancement of Developmental Skill**

S.No.	Skill	Significantly	Neutral	Not Significantly	Total
1	Leadership	12 (80)	2 (13)	1 (7)	15 (100)
2	Communication	14 (93)	1 (7)	0	15 (100)
3	General awareness	10 (67)	3 (20)	2 (13)	15 (100)
4	Overall personality	13 (87)	1 (7)	1 (7)	15 (100)
5	Decision making competence	9 (60)	5 (33)	1 (7)	15(100)

**Source:** Primary Data

The study revealed that leadership skill was significantly enhanced in the case of twelve percent of the respondents. One per cent of the respondents were of the opinion that their leadership skill was not enhanced, and while thirteen per cent were neutral. In the case of communication, fourteen per cent of the respondents claimed that it was significantly enhanced, and the remaining one per cent was neutral. Ten percent of the respondents said that their general awareness was significantly increased after joining She Taxi, two per cent said that it was not significantly enhanced, and three percent were neutral in their opinion. Thirteen percent of the respondents were of the opinion that their overall personality was considerably enhanced, one per cent was neutral in their opinion, and the remaining said that it was not significantly enhanced. The decision-making competence of nine per cent of the respondents was significantly enhanced, while five per cent was neutral on their opinion, and the one per cent said that their decision making competence did not significantly increase.

### Major Findings of the Study

- With regard to economic benefit, a majority of the respondents are of the opinion that their income considerably increased after joining She Taxi.
- Regarding the social benefit of the She Taxi drivers, the major benefit was that they were able to be more involved in the community, followed by acquiring competence in taking up leadership roles.
- Respondents are of the opinion that they earn on an average an amount of Rs.7000 per day.
- With regard to the income-wise classification of respondents, there are no respondents in the above 25000 income category. But since

joining She Taxi as a driver, their income has increased. Only 13 per cent of the respondents were in the income group of 15000-20000 prior joining the initiative. But after joining She Taxi, 27 percent of the respondents are in the income bracket of 15000-20000.

- Most of the respondents are of the opinion that their decision-making power within the family has considerably increased.
- A majority of the respondents face the problem of high interest rates in operating She Taxi, followed by lack of funds, sanctioning formality, etc.
- Regarding using the media for information about government sponsored programmes, most of the employees prefer using newspapers.
- A majority of the respondents are in the age group of 49-58.
- Most of the respondents have had previous employment experience in fields like driving, agriculture, self-employment, etc.
- Among the different sources of fund, the respondents used only two sources; personal funds and funds from banks.

### Suggestions

- Social entrepreneurs operating She Taxi had a firm belief that support from the public is the most important factor for the success of the enterprise. Support from the public must be ensured in terms of cultural and social values, including gender equity.
- The public must be sensitized to the need for safe travelling for women, and of being protective, cordial, and friendly to them.
- She Taxi is an entrepreneurial activity run by women for women. Here, the entrepreneurs

are mobile and so is the enterprise (taxi). Such ventures need proper infrastructure facilities like sanitation, drinking water, emergency support, etc. Such facility points must be available at convenient locations on highways and in cities.

- The beneficiaries can be provided loans for buying vehicles at subsidized rates of interest. This is very helpful for them as it will decrease the burden of paying off their loans. Support from the members of the family is crucial for the success of the She Taxis, as women have to work when called and at odd times.
- The government should also provide the drivers with adequate pension and other welfare measures, from the Welfare Board.

### Conclusion

There are social entrepreneurs among us, although they are rare; they are exceptionally successful in solving social problems, combining passion and visionary thinking with down-to-earth planning and strategizing. She Taxi is a project which is an exclusive taxi network programme for

women with the aim to promote entrepreneurship, self-employment and security among women. As a social entrepreneurship She Taxi does good service because it takes into consideration the important problem of atrocities against women. Besides the safety aspect, it also contributes to the social and economic empowerment of women in Kerala.

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