

The Development of Social Entrepreneurship in Remote Communities: A Case Study in Sidenreng Rappang

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ABSTRACT

Background. Social entrepreneurship has emerged as a strategic approach to address socio-economic disparities, especially in remote communities where access to economic opportunities and institutional support is limited.

Purpose. This study aims to explore the development of social entrepreneurship in the remote region of Sidenreng Rappang, Indonesia, focusing on community-driven initiatives and their socio-economic impacts.

Method. Employing a qualitative case study methodology, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis involving local entrepreneurs, community leaders, and development agencies.

Results. The findings reveal that successful social entrepreneurship in the region is driven by strong local leadership, the utilization of indigenous knowledge, and adaptive strategies that align with the community's cultural and ecological context. Challenges identified include limited access to capital, insufficient training in entrepreneurial skills, and weak institutional support.

Conclusion. The study concludes that fostering social entrepreneurship in remote areas requires a hybrid support system involving education, mentorship, policy facilitation, and community empowerment. This research contributes to the growing body of literature on inclusive development by highlighting the contextual dynamics of entrepreneurial ecosystems in marginalized areas.

KEYWORDS

Social Entrepreneurship, Remote Communities, Local Development, Community Empowerment, Sidenreng Rappang

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INTRODUCTION

Social inequality and economic marginalization continue to afflict remote communities across the developing world. These communities often face compounded challenges such as geographic isolation, limited access to formal markets, inadequate educational facilities, and a lack of governmental infrastructure. As a result, traditional economic development models have frequently failed to address the systemic constraints that hinder sustainable growth in these areas. Amidst this



backdrop, social entrepreneurship has emerged as a viable alternative, offering innovative and community-centric solutions to socio-economic problems. Unlike conventional entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship emphasizes social value creation over mere profit-making, aligning business objectives with communal welfare.

Within the Indonesian context, numerous rural and peripheral regions remain underserved despite the country's growing economy and decentralization reforms. One such area is Sidenreng Rappang, a regency in South Sulawesi characterized by rich cultural traditions and strong social cohesion, yet grappling with persistent poverty and limited employment opportunities. The local population, largely dependent on agriculture and informal labor, experiences frequent economic volatility, further exacerbating social vulnerability (Köroğlu & Reid, 2025; Nickens, 2025; Sarabdeen et al., 2025). The emergence of community-led entrepreneurial initiatives, however, signals a shift toward localized resilience and innovation. These initiatives, rooted in indigenous knowledge and collective action, present a fertile ground for exploring the dynamics of social entrepreneurship in marginalized settings.

The development of social entrepreneurship in Sidenreng Rappang raises critical questions about its mechanisms, sustainability, and broader implications. It becomes necessary to investigate how local actors mobilize resources, foster innovation, and negotiate institutional constraints in a context shaped by socio-cultural uniqueness and economic precarity. Understanding this phenomenon contributes not only to theoretical enrichment but also to practical strategies for rural development and inclusive economic growth (Fuentelsaz et al., 2025; Jayanna et al., 2025; Nascimento et al., 2025). This background sets the stage for a focused inquiry into the conditions, challenges, and outcomes of social entrepreneurship in remote areas.

The research problem addressed in this study revolves around the limited empirical understanding of how social entrepreneurship unfolds in geographically isolated and economically marginalized communities such as Sidenreng Rappang. Despite the growing popularity of social enterprise frameworks in urban centers and international development discourse, rural-based models remain underexplored (Scaffidi et al., 2025; Scartozzi et al., 2025). Moreover, there is scant documentation of the role of local agency, cultural values, and adaptive strategies in shaping entrepreneurial efforts in such contexts. This lack of specificity hinders policymakers, NGOs, and practitioners from tailoring effective interventions to promote sustainable livelihoods in similar regions.

Another layer of complexity lies in the disconnection between national entrepreneurship policies and grassroots realities. Many existing programs are top-down in nature, often failing to resonate with the lived experiences and immediate needs of remote populations. The absence of contextualized approaches has led to low participation rates and poor scalability of entrepreneurial projects in rural Indonesia (Fitouri & Zouaoui, 2025; Gigauri, 2025; Gigauri et al., 2025; Kinzelbach, 2025). Consequently, the development trajectory of social enterprises in areas like Sidenreng Rappang remains fragmented and highly dependent on individual or community-level initiative rather than structural support.

Addressing this research gap necessitates a grounded, context-sensitive exploration of entrepreneurial processes from the perspective of the communities themselves. This entails unpacking the motivations, strategies, and institutional negotiations undertaken by local social entrepreneurs. It also requires an understanding of how socio-cultural capital, informal networks, and collective memory contribute to the sustainability and legitimacy of such ventures. Only through this lens can a comprehensive picture emerge of how social entrepreneurship functions as both an economic and cultural practice in remote settings.

This study aims to examine the development of social entrepreneurship in the Sidenreng Rappang region through a detailed case study approach. The main objective is to analyze how community-based social enterprises originate, operate, and sustain themselves within a challenging socio-economic environment. Special attention is paid to the roles of local leadership, indigenous knowledge, and collaborative networks in shaping the success or failure of these ventures (Ballesteros-Ballesteros & Zárate-Torres, 2025; Ferreira & Dinis, 2025). The research also seeks to identify the enablers and barriers that influence the evolution of entrepreneurial initiatives in peripheral areas.

Through this investigation, the study aspires to contribute actionable insights for community development practitioners, local governments, and policymakers interested in fostering inclusive rural economies. By elucidating the pathways and patterns of social entrepreneurship in Sidenreng Rappang, the research aims to bridge the divide between macro-level policy frameworks and micro-level grassroots innovation (Hidrobo-Morales et al., 2025; Willys et al., 2025). The outcomes of this study are expected to inform strategies that enhance the scalability, resilience, and social impact of rural entrepreneurship models.

Ultimately, the study is designed to promote a deeper understanding of how social entrepreneurship can serve as a transformative force in marginalized regions. By documenting and analyzing the lived experiences of local actors, the research foregrounds the importance of culturally embedded, community-driven solutions to persistent development challenges (Bongiorno et al., 2025; Junussova et al., 2025; Mendoza et al., 2025). In doing so, it positions social entrepreneurship not merely as an economic mechanism but as a form of social empowerment and collective agency.

A growing body of literature has examined social entrepreneurship in urban or semi-urban settings, often emphasizing digital innovation, policy environments, and institutional ecosystems. However, research focused on remote or rural communities remains sparse, particularly in the Indonesian context. Existing studies tend to generalize findings across diverse geographic and cultural landscapes, which risks overlooking the nuanced conditions that define entrepreneurial action in localized settings (Pelova & Hristova, 2025; Uduji & Okolo-Obasi, 2025). As a result, there is a gap in understanding how remoteness, social capital, and indigenous knowledge systems interact to facilitate or inhibit entrepreneurial success.

Most theoretical models on social entrepreneurship are grounded in Western-centric frameworks that may not fully capture the socio-cultural dimensions of entrepreneurship in the Global South. Concepts such as “scaling up” or “impact measurement” are often ill-suited to the realities of informal economies and culturally embedded practices. This mismatch reveals a gap in theoretical adaptability and practical applicability, especially when addressing communities with low infrastructure, educational constraints, and deeply ingrained communal values. Addressing this gap requires rethinking dominant paradigms and embracing bottom-up, ethnographic, and interdisciplinary approaches.

The current study aims to fill this void by providing an empirically rich, context-specific account of social entrepreneurship in Sidenreng Rappang. By doing so, it offers a counter-narrative to mainstream entrepreneurship literature, emphasizing the value of localized knowledge, adaptive governance, and community-led innovation. This contribution not only enhances academic discourse but also strengthens the case for reimagining development practices in remote and marginalized settings.

The novelty of this study lies in its integrated approach to examining the socio-cultural, economic, and institutional dimensions of social entrepreneurship in a rural Indonesian context.

Unlike previous research that focuses predominantly on urban social enterprises or externally funded initiatives, this study centers on locally initiated ventures that operate with minimal external intervention. This bottom-up perspective offers a fresh lens through which to assess the dynamics of self-reliance, resilience, and indigenous innovation.

In addition, the study introduces the concept of “cultural entrepreneurship resilience” as an analytical framework for understanding how local communities harness their traditions, values, and social networks to sustain entrepreneurial activities. This concept expands existing literature by highlighting how non-economic resources contribute to economic outcomes in resource-constrained settings. The integration of cultural variables with economic and institutional factors provides a more holistic understanding of entrepreneurial sustainability.

This research is justified not only by its theoretical contribution but also by its potential to inform more effective policy-making and community development strategies. It advocates for a shift from standardized interventions toward participatory, co-designed models that respect and leverage the unique assets of each community. In doing so, the study positions itself at the intersection of development studies, entrepreneurship theory, and rural sociology-providing a valuable addition to interdisciplinary scholarship and practice.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design using a case study approach to explore the dynamics of social entrepreneurship in a remote community. The case study method was selected to provide an in-depth understanding of contextual factors, stakeholder experiences, and localized practices related to the emergence and sustainability of social enterprises (Audretsch et al., 2025; Konieczna, 2025). Through a qualitative lens, the research emphasized narrative construction, participant perspectives, and the meaning-making processes embedded within the socio-economic and cultural realities of Sidenreng Rappang.

The population of this study included community members engaged in social entrepreneurial activities, local leaders, representatives of community-based organizations (CBOs), and regional development facilitators operating in the Sidenreng Rappang regency. Purposive sampling was used to select participants who possessed rich and relevant experiences in initiating or managing community-driven entrepreneurial initiatives. A total of 15 key informants were selected, including five active social entrepreneurs, four village leaders, three representatives from non-governmental organizations, and three officials from local government departments associated with community development.

Data collection was facilitated through multiple instruments to ensure triangulation and validity. The primary instrument was the semi-structured interview guide, which was designed to elicit insights about motivations, operational strategies, and perceived challenges in developing social enterprises. Additional instruments included field observation sheets and document analysis protocols. Observational data were collected during site visits to entrepreneurial ventures, while official documents, community reports, and organizational records were reviewed to contextualize and support interview findings.

Data collection procedures followed a systematic process to maintain consistency and ethical standards. Initial contact was made through community gatekeepers to gain trust and access to potential participants. After obtaining informed consent, interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia and recorded with participant permission. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and was transcribed verbatim for analysis. Field notes and reflective journals were maintained to capture contextual impressions and researcher observations. Thematic analysis was

applied to categorize and interpret the data, focusing on patterns of entrepreneurial behavior, social value creation, and contextual enablers and constraints. All research procedures adhered to ethical principles, including confidentiality, voluntary participation, and cultural sensitivity.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The statistical and secondary data used in this study were drawn from the Sidenreng Rappang District Development Report (2023), official data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS), and documentation from local NGOs. These sources indicate that 63% of the population in Sidenreng Rappang is engaged in agriculture, while only 7% are involved in small-scale businesses or entrepreneurship. The poverty rate stands at 14.2%, with the majority of rural communities classified as economically vulnerable. Based on regional government records, only three out of 11 sub-districts have access to consistent entrepreneurial assistance programs.

Table 1.
Socio-Economic Indicators in Sidenreng Rappang

Indicator	Value	Description
Poverty Rate (%)	14.2	Higher than the provincial average (12.1%)
Agriculture-Based Workforce	63%	Primary livelihood sector
Entrepreneurial Engagement	7%	Indicates low business development
Active Social Enterprises	5	Community-led and non-governmental
Villages with Entrepreneurial Support	3/11	Limited program outreach

The data shows that entrepreneurial participation remains marginal, and institutional support is inconsistently distributed. The low number of active social enterprises suggests a gap in development facilitation and capacity-building programs. Despite these limitations, the emergence of grassroots initiatives in select villages demonstrates the community's latent potential and willingness to pursue alternative economic pathways.

In explaining the primary data collected through interviews, several recurring themes were identified. Participants emphasized a strong sense of community identity, mutual trust, and religious motivation as foundational values in establishing social ventures. Local entrepreneurs reported initiating their activities in response to shared needs such as food security, educational access, and sustainable farming practices. These themes were reinforced by observational data, where social cohesion and informal leadership played a critical role in venture formation.

The role of traditional leaders and informal mentorship networks appeared crucial in bridging the knowledge and resource gap. Interviewees consistently pointed to figures such as village elders, religious leaders, and retired civil servants as enablers of entrepreneurial action. These actors facilitated access to community labor, land, and small capital—factors that replaced the formal institutional infrastructure typically required in urban entrepreneurship ecosystems.

The analysis of qualitative data also revealed a pattern of hybrid economic behavior among social entrepreneurs. Most of them operated businesses that combined commercial activities with philanthropic or service-oriented goals. For example, a women’s cooperative in Watang Pulu produced organic fertilizers not only for sale but also for free distribution to poor farmers. This pattern illustrates the dual function of economic sustainability and social responsibility.

Inferential analysis based on narrative coding and cross-comparison across interview data identified three main drivers of social enterprise success: adaptive use of local resources, collective

participation, and culturally aligned leadership. These elements, when present, correlated with greater stability and growth of social enterprises. Conversely, ventures that lacked these elements tended to stagnate or dissolve within two years. The interplay between cultural capital and economic practice emerged as a significant predictor of enterprise longevity.

The relationships between contextual variables were also explored through thematic mapping. Communities with higher levels of social trust and participation tended to exhibit stronger entrepreneurial outcomes, even in the absence of external funding. A positive correlation was noted between participation in religious and community activities and the willingness to engage in joint business ventures. In contrast, regions with a more fragmented social fabric reported difficulties in sustaining collective efforts and higher dependency on short-term aid.

Case study analysis of three villages-Dua Pitue, Panca Lautang, and Watang Pulu-offered deeper insights into the community-based social enterprise models. In Dua Pitue, a youth-led initiative transformed unused land into a profitable organic farm, involving 25 families in a profit-sharing scheme. In Panca Lautang, a women's weaving collective revived traditional textile production for export, while reinvesting profits into local schooling (Castro Mejia et al., 2025; Malenica & Kovačević, 2025). Watang Pulu showcased a hybrid model where a cooperative served both as a training center and micro-credit provider.

These localized examples show that social entrepreneurship in Sidenreng Rappang is shaped not by access to technology or capital, but by trust, shared history, and collective resilience. Each case exhibited creative strategies for navigating resource scarcity, including the use of barter systems, collaborative labor exchange, and reinvestment of profits into social services (Shara & Narsa, 2025; Solorzano Bajiña, 2025; Vörös & Kehl, 2025). This emphasizes that economic innovation in marginalized settings is driven more by adaptive culture than by external interventions.

The data interpretation highlights a critical insight: the viability of social entrepreneurship in remote communities hinges on aligning business models with community values and informal governance structures. The effectiveness of social enterprises cannot be measured solely by profit or growth but must include their role in strengthening community cohesion and responding to social needs. These findings suggest the need for a revised metric of entrepreneurial success when evaluating impact in rural and marginalized contexts.

The findings of this study reveal that social entrepreneurship in remote communities such as Sidenreng Rappang emerges from a unique convergence of cultural cohesion, informal leadership, and adaptive use of local resources. Community-led enterprises are largely driven by collective values rather than individual profit motives. The data illustrate how local actors leverage social trust and indigenous knowledge to respond to communal needs through sustainable ventures (Essers et al., 2025; Fouad et al., 2025; Hidrobo-Morales et al., 2025). Although institutional support remains minimal, localized initiatives demonstrate a remarkable capacity to sustain economic activity and social solidarity.

Social enterprises in Sidenreng Rappang differ in significant ways from models found in urban or externally facilitated contexts. Previous research by Zahra et al. (2009) and Desa and Basu (2013) often centers on resource-rich environments or institutional ecosystems that enable structured innovation and scalability. In contrast, the enterprises studied in Sidenreng Rappang operate with limited access to formal education, capital, or technological infrastructure. This research supports findings by Peredo and Chrisman (2006), who emphasize the role of social embeddedness in shaping entrepreneurial behavior in marginalized settings, yet adds a regional dimension by focusing on Sulawesi's distinctive socio-cultural dynamics.

This study marks an important signal in the discourse of rural development and inclusive innovation. The findings suggest that entrepreneurial agency is not solely a function of market access or technological sophistication but can emerge from traditional knowledge systems and collective resilience. The development of social entrepreneurship in Sidenreng Rappang challenges dominant narratives that associate innovation with urban-centric frameworks or high-resource environments. The sustainability of community ventures highlights the relevance of cultural compatibility and social capital as drivers of rural economic transformation.

Social entrepreneurship in such communities serves as an indicator of shifting development paradigms. The emergence of these enterprises is emblematic of a broader trend toward self-reliance and bottom-up innovation. It reflects the increasing importance of locally driven solutions in contexts where centralized interventions often fail to address complex, multifaceted poverty. The presence of resilient social enterprises in resource-poor areas calls for a reevaluation of how development success is measured and what forms of knowledge are legitimized in the process.

The implications of these findings extend to policy, practice, and theory. For policymakers, it becomes clear that fostering rural entrepreneurship requires more than subsidies or infrastructure—it necessitates engaging with cultural frameworks and supporting informal institutions. Development practitioners must shift from a top-down delivery model to a facilitative approach that strengthens endogenous capacities. Academically, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of social entrepreneurship by integrating cultural and relational variables into the analysis of enterprise sustainability.

In areas like Sidenreng Rappang, conventional development models that emphasize individual entrepreneurship and market liberalization are inadequate. The success of social enterprises in these contexts is rooted in collective identity and community orientation. Ignoring these foundations risks the failure of externally imposed programs. Programs that disregard the social structures and historical ties of communities often result in low adoption rates and unsustainable outcomes. The evidence points to a need for designing development frameworks that are both participatory and culturally anchored.

Social entrepreneurs in this study succeeded because their ventures were embedded in the social and moral fabric of the community. These entrepreneurs did not operate as isolated innovators but as community members accountable to shared goals. Their decisions were informed by social relationships, communal memory, and the aspiration to serve rather than to accumulate. These conditions diverge from classical entrepreneurship theory, which prioritizes individual agency, competition, and resource maximization. A community-centric view of entrepreneurship thus emerges as a distinct model in rural development.

The reasons for these outcomes are closely tied to the socio-cultural context of Sidenreng Rappang. The strong presence of communal leadership, religious norms, and intergenerational support systems creates a favorable environment for social entrepreneurship. Economic necessity alone does not account for the resilience of these ventures; rather, it is the cultural imperative to support one another that sustains them. The limited involvement of external actors also allows for greater local ownership and flexibility in adapting business models to local needs.

Social cohesion acts as a protective factor against failure, providing a buffer in times of crisis and facilitating rapid mobilization of resources. The integration of social ventures into daily life—through education, agriculture, or religious practice—ensures their relevance and continued support. These findings suggest that success in remote contexts cannot be replicated simply by transferring models from different regions. Effective interventions must begin by understanding the community as both a site of needs and a source of solutions.

Moving forward, future research must explore how these localized models can inform broader development strategies. There is a need to investigate how support mechanisms-such as microfinance, training, or cooperative legislation-can be tailored to fit the cultural and economic realities of rural Indonesia. Researchers should also examine how these ventures evolve over time and respond to generational shifts or climate pressures. Building a longitudinal understanding of social entrepreneurship in such settings will deepen insights into their transformative potential.

Development agencies and educational institutions should consider co-designing programs with community members to ensure relevance and sustainability. Academic curricula in entrepreneurship and development studies should incorporate case studies like this to challenge universalist assumptions and promote culturally responsive frameworks. Institutions that aim to replicate success from urban to rural areas must be prepared to adapt rather than transplant. The path to inclusive and sustainable development lies not in scaling uniform models, but in amplifying the voices and innovations of communities themselves.

CONCLUSION

The most significant finding of this study lies in the identification of community-based cultural capital as a core driver of social entrepreneurship in remote areas. Unlike conventional models that emphasize external funding, technological innovation, or formal education, the social enterprises in Sidenreng Rappang thrive on indigenous knowledge, mutual trust, and informal leadership structures. This discovery highlights a distinctive pathway of rural entrepreneurship where economic sustainability is achieved through the reinforcement of collective values and local wisdom, rather than through market-oriented mechanisms alone.

This research contributes conceptually by introducing a culturally embedded framework for understanding social entrepreneurship in marginalized settings. The study advances the discourse by shifting the analytical lens from individual entrepreneurial traits to community-driven dynamics, thereby expanding the theoretical scope of social enterprise literature. Methodologically, the use of case-based narrative analysis, combined with field observation and document triangulation, offers a robust model for examining entrepreneurship in contexts with limited formal data. This approach serves as a replicable model for future studies on localized development innovation.

One limitation of this study is its geographic specificity, as the findings are grounded in the socio-cultural realities of Sidenreng Rappang and may not be directly generalizable to other rural communities with different historical and institutional backgrounds. Future research should explore comparative studies across various provinces or countries to examine how local values interact with different types of development interventions. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to assess how these community enterprises evolve over time and respond to external shocks such as climate change or policy shifts.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Sam Hermansyah: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Erwin: Conceptualization; Data curation; Investigation; Data curation; Investigation.

Roya Zahir: Formal analysis; Methodology; Writing - original draft.

Zulkifili F: Supervision; Validation; Other contribution; Resources; Visualization; Writing - original draft.

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