Seferiadis, Anastasia-Alithia: Laboratoire Population Environnement Développement, Aix-Marseille Univ/IRD
anastasia.seferiadis@gmail.com
Authors: Anastasia-Alithia Seferiadis
Laboratoire Population Environnement Développement, Aix-Marseille Univ/IRD, Marseille, France
Title: Can we measure female social entrepreneurship performance?

Social entrepreneurs, acting as agents of change in territories with limited resources, represent a solution at the micro level to overcome poverty. Social entrepreneurship describes activities where individuals aim to create social value, while generating income in order to ensure sustainability. However, in all forms of social enterprises women are over-represented. This questions whether engaging in social enterprises is an empowerment mechanism or another form of social reproduction furthering gender discrimination. Moreover, if indicators of social entrepreneurship assess performance by applying assessment tools developed to measure traditional commercial entrepreneurship, these will fail to capture how social entrepreneurs are developing novel modes of economic action.

Taking the case of female driven social enterprises, this study considers how social entrepreneurship can be measured. This work is based on the analysis of theoretical and empirical research on social entrepreneurship, and on fieldwork carried in Bangladesh and in India between 2008 and 2018. This analysis shows that studies escape the narrow scope of assessing social entrepreneurship through productivist frameworks, and do attempt to capture long term pattern-breaking social change. However the data shows that two aspects put forward by the women interviewed during the field research lack from indicators; namely (1) the empowerment component of such trajectories and (2) the balance between two dichotomous purposes that is returns for the community versus individual returns.

This study contributes to the development of pluralistic economy. Entrepreneurs are innovators of the economical system therefore it is novel economical paradigm that needs to be developed in order to reflect the practice and capture the novelty. Moreover, as metrics influence behaviors, it appears necessary for the development practice to develop rigorous tools with which the novel economic modes of action of social entrepreneurship can be measured. This study contributes to the development of sustainable development goal indicators by questioning whether a performance indicator of female social entrepreneurship can be built.