

Social entrepreneurs need an extra push to scale up and be sustainable

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or entities looking to solve SIN (spillover, important, neglected) problems and aiming to bring about social change, the going is not always easy, specially when it comes to scaling up and becoming sustainable.

Safeena Husain of Educate Girls (EG), a Mumbai-based non-profit, says that to solve SIN problems, while social entrepreneurs must have a combination of passion and expertise, they still need something more to propel them.

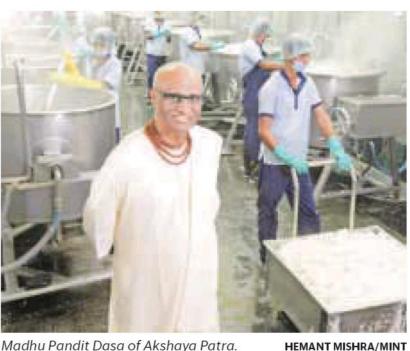
"To give you an analogy, passion is like the seed that requires expertise, knowledge and the right skill-set for its growth. I would also add 'effort' as the third factor towards bringing maximum impact. One calls for the other until success is achieved," she

It is at this crucial stage

where Social Entrepreneur of the Year (SEOY) Award, conducted by the Jubilant Bhartia Foundation, a not-for-profit organization established by the Jubilant Bhartia Group, in association with the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship, a Switzerlandbased global non-profit promoting social enterprise, comes into play.

"Winning the SEOY award was a huge acknowledgement of the work we do in the most difficult geographical and social terrain. Personally, to be able to access the World Economic Forum (WEF) platform has helped me understand the global picture and enlarge my vision," says Neichute Doulo, CEO, Entrepreneurs Associates (EA), a Kohima-based organization, who won last vear.

The SEOY Award has been in existence in India for 13 years now, with 2017 being the eighth year of partnership between the Schwab Foundation and Jubilant Bhartia



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The three finalists vying for this year's award, which will be announced on 4 October, are Madhu Pandit Dasa of Akshaya Patra Foundation, Urvashi Sahni of the Lucknow-based Study Hall Education Foundation (SHEF) and Husain of Educate Girls (EG).

All three work in the field of education and are at a critical juncture where they are looking for their organizations to become sustainable, scale up, and meet targets they have set for themselves in the next three years.

Ajay Khanna, chief, strategic and public affairs, Jubilant Bhartia Group, says it is a coincidence that all three finalists this year are directly/indirectly engaged in education since only 18% of the applications received from social enterprises worked in the field.

"The noteworthy aspect is that while all the three finalists are championing the cause of education, they have a uniqueness in their model. Akshava Patra Foundation has revolutionised the idea of mid-day meal; SHEF utilizes existing and dormant resources of a private school to teach children from underprivileged background while Educate Girls is addressing gender inequality in education," he says.

Among the many challenges faced by social entrepreneurs, becoming sustainable while scaling up is the most difficult to deal with.

Besides, the rules of the game have changed. "It is not just enough to do good work, but also important to create awareness about what you do so that people out there, who seek to do their bit for the society, know that there is no dearth of opportunities," says Dasa. Awards like SEOY do their bit for spreading awareness too.

"I believe that recognition in the form of awards and grants definitely helps to build awareness of the sector and highlight social innovation. Awards and grants also tend not to be risk averse and are not linked to milestones making their use very flexible," says Naina Subberwal Batra, CEO of the Singapore-based Asia Venture Philanthropy Network (AVPN).

The SEOY framework has seven parameters based on which an independent jury selects the winner. These parameters include innovation, sustainability, whether the initiative directly affects poor or marginalized beneficiaries/stakeholders, and if the idea is scalable and transferable to other regions.

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