

[Abstract]

In this presentation, I talk about business models that address the needs of the poor in a financially sustainable manner. While traditionally the needs of the poor have been fulfilled by the government and not-for-profit organizations, the last two decades have seen the emergence of social enterprises in domains such as microlending, healthcare and waste management. These enterprises create innovative business models to provide livelihood, goods and services to the poor without depending on any kind of grants or subsidies. Based on qualitative field research that I conducted on such organizations in India, Nepal and Bangladesh, I explain the key drivers of sustainability and inclusivity as well as some of the challenges that these organizations face while sustaining and scaling their business models. I conclude by explaining the complementary role that these organizations play in solving problems of poverty and inequality that are endemic in countries such as India.