

**Abstract**

This discussion paper aims to better understand what social entrepreneurship means and how it contributes to overcoming some of the greatest social and environmental challenges of our times. Based on the work of Sen and Nussbaum, the idea basic human needs – and more in particular, the idea of increasing capabilities to fulfil these needs – creates a reference point to determine the meaning of 'social'. Apart from reinforcing these capabilities, an important dimension of 'socialness' is the extent to which the beneficiaries confirm that they are in a better position to fulfil these basic needs. The 18th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) deals with the improved set of capabilities. In order to contribute to the grand challenges of our times – as expressed in the 17 existing SDGs – certain conditions in terms of innovation, scalability, and (financial) sustainability have to be met. It will require that corporations, cooperatives, large business networks and institutional investors step in and promote socially entrepreneurial initiatives to contribute to the radical change needed to fulfil the basic needs of individuals and communities. Only then will human development and a life with human dignity be able to materialize.