

# Traditional silverwork “Filigree” in Odisha, India: Action research on the possibilities for social business

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## Research background and purpose:

Social business, which aims to solve social problems such as “poverty,” has attracted a lot of attention, especially after Mr. Yunus Muhammad received the Nobel Prize for his efforts to improve the living standard of the poor. He defined and proposed two different types of social businesses in his book *Creating a World without Poverty – Social Business and the Future of Capitalism*:

*Type I social business focuses on providing a product and/or service with a specific social, ethical or environmental goal. Type II social business is a profit-oriented business that is owned by the poor or other underprivileged parts of the society, who can gain through receiving direct dividends or by indirect benefits. Grameen Bank, being owned by the poor, is the prime example of this type, although it would also classify as a Type I social business.*

However, Mr. Muhammad’s book did not mention the necessary conditions for making social businesses sustainable.

Therefore, the objective of this research is to identify the conditions needed for sustainable success of social business through action research on production of filigree, a traditional silverwork in Cuttack, India.

## Observations and Result:

In this fieldwork, I observed and compared two kinds of social businesses based on traditional crafts in Odisha: filigree and brass accessories. Through this action research, I found that the local NGO performs important roles in the sustainability

of social business. The local NGO plays three significant roles in creating innovation for the success of social businesses:

- 1) To reduce transaction costs
- 2) To create an open society
- 3) To give poor people free access to Property Rights

Implications for future research:

In this fieldwork, I was able to observe and document that the local NGO is crucial for the success of social business, but I did not identify a negative impact. In the process of writing my thesis, I should also consider negative impacts that the local NGO may have on the success of social business.



**Figure 1: Filigree**



**Figure 2: Silversmith in Cuttack**



**Figure 3: Social business for brass accessories**

