

**COMPREHENSIVE
CAPACITY
BUILDING IN SOCIAL
ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

Right to Life Human Rights Center

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COMPREHENSIVE CAPACITY BUILDING IN SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

**Training Curriculum: From "Aid" to
"Enterprise"**

**Building Sustainable Human Rights First Aid
Centers (HRFACs)**

Introduction & Training Philosophy

The Context: The Sustainability Crisis

Grassroots human rights advocacy in Sri Lanka faces a dual threat: shrinking civic space and dwindling foreign funding. The traditional model of relying solely on project grants to fund essential services—such as legal aid for torture victims, documentation, and community protection—is no longer sustainable. If the grant ends, the protection stops. This is unacceptable.

The Objective

This 2-day residential training is designed to equip HRFAC coordinators not just with business skills, but with a fundamentally new mindset. The goal is to transition HRFACs from purely donor-dependent entities into "hybrid" organizations—Social Enterprises—that generate their own income to cross-subsidize their core human rights mission. This ensures that the fight for justice continues regardless of the external funding landscape.

Theoretical Framework: Effectuation & Bricolage

Standard business training teaches "Causation" (setting a goal and raising massive capital to achieve it). This fails in resource-poor environments.

This curriculum is built on advanced concepts suited for activists:

- **Effectuation (The Saras Sarasvathy Method):** Taught at top global universities, this approach teaches entrepreneurs to start not with what they *need*, but with their available "means" (Who they are, What they know, Whom they know).
- **Social Bricolage (Making Do):** The art of using existing, often overlooked resources for new purposes to solve problems. HRDs are already masters of "making do" in the justice sector; this training applies that skill to income generation.

Detailed Curriculum Modules

[PARTICIPANT READING MATERIAL:
MODULE 1]

The Activist Entrepreneur's Secret: How to Start When You Think You Can't

As Human Rights Defenders, we are often treated as if we lack resources. We are conditioned to wait—for the next grant, the next donor, the next big project approval. We often suffer from the paralyzing belief: *"We cannot start because we do not have funding."*

But what if that belief is wrong?

Professor Saras D. Sarasvathy, an award-winning researcher, studied expert entrepreneurs—people who built successful ventures over decades through massive uncertainty. She discovered that these experts don't think like traditional managers. They use a different approach called "**Effectuation.**"

This method is powerful because it validates a simple truth: **Who you are and what you already have right now is enough to start.**

The Mindset Shift: The Cooking Analogy

To understand how an entrepreneur thinks versus how an NGO typically thinks, imagine you need to cook dinner.

1. The Causal (NGO) Way: "Cooking Lasagna" You decide you want Lasagna (The Goal). You find a recipe (The Plan). You need expensive ingredients like specific cheeses, meats, and sauces. You go to the supermarket (The Donor) to get them.

- **The problem:** If the supermarket is closed, or you don't have money, you cannot cook. You starve while waiting.

2. The Effectual (Entrepreneur) Way: "Opening the Fridge" You are hungry. You don't have a specific plan. You just open your fridge to see what is there right now (Your Means). You find three eggs, leftover rice, and a bell pepper. You ask: *"What can I create with this?"* You invent a new fried rice dish.

- **The result:** You didn't plan it, but you got fed using what you had.

For years, HRFACs have been trying to cook Lasagna, waiting for the donor supermarket to open. Effectuation is learning to open your own fridge.

The 5 Principles of the Expert Entrepreneur

Professor Sarasvathy identified five simple principles that experts use to navigate uncertainty. You can start using these today.

1. The "Bird-in-Hand" Principle (Start With Your Means)

Don't wait for the perfect opportunity or massive funding. Start immediately with what you have available. Ask yourself three questions:

- **Who am I?** (My traits, abilities, reputation).
- **What do I know?** (My training, legal expertise, community experience).
- **Whom do I know?** (My social and professional networks).

HRD Context: You are not resource-poor. Your legal knowledge, community trust, and office space are valuable assets.

2. The "Affordable Loss" Principle (Risk Only What You Can Lose)

Traditional business tells you to calculate how much profit you *might* make. Entrepreneurs calculate what they can *afford to lose*.

HRD Context: Don't take a huge loan to build a factory. Test your idea by spending only Rs. 5,000. If it fails, the

HRFAC must still be able to open its doors tomorrow. This eliminates fear and encourages trying.

3. The "Crazy Quilt" Principle (Build Partnerships Now)

Forget about "competition" or waiting for the perfect partners. Build a "quilt" with whoever is willing to commit resources right now. Action is driven by whoever shows up.

HRD Context: Who will commit today? A local shop willing to sell your product? A three-wheeler driver willing to offer discounted transport? Stitch them into your plan.

4. The "Lemonade" Principle (Embrace Surprises)

"When life gives you lemons, make lemonade." Bad news isn't the end of the plan; it's part of the new plan.

HRD Context: A sudden ban on foreign NGO funding is a massive "lemon." The entrepreneur asks: "How can this crisis force us to build a local membership model that actually strengthens our political legitimacy?"

5. The "Pilot-in-the-Plane" Principle (Control vs. Predict)

A pilot doesn't just rely on weather forecasts (predictions). They have their hands on the controls, making

adjustments based on what they see out the window right now.

The future isn't something you predict; it's something you create through your actions today.

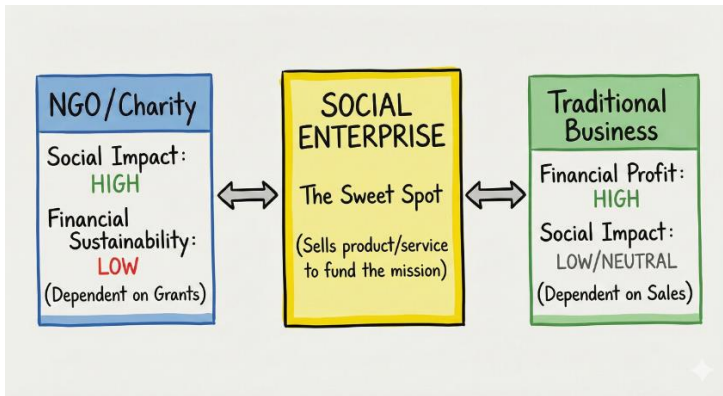
MODULE 1: What is Social Entrepreneurship?

Theme: From "Beneficiary" to "Partner" - Redefining the Human Rights Defender

Goal: To fundamentally shift participants' mindset from aid dependency to "Effectuation" (creating value with what exists).

Key Topics & Activities:

1. **The Paradigm Shift:** Moving from the "Project Mindset" (waiting for funds to help beneficiaries) to the "Enterprise Mindset" (generating funds to serve partners/customers).
2. **Defining the "Hybrid" Model:** Using the spectrum diagram to locate HRFACs not as pure NGOs or pure businesses, but in the "Sweet Spot" where profit is reinvested into the mission.



3. **Theoretical Deep Dive: Effectuation:** Introducing the "Bird-in-Hand" principle. Instead of focusing on missing capital, focus on existing means (trust, legal knowledge, physical space, networks).
4. **Theoretical Deep Dive: Social Bricolage:** Using local examples (e.g., the "Helmet Repair Lady") to illustrate how to solve problems by combining existing skills and overlooked resources.
5. **Activity: The Asset Audit.** Working in groups, participants use the Effectuation mindset to map their current underutilized assets (Physical, Intellectual, and Social) that could be monetized.

"Commercial banks spend millions of rupees on advertising just to get people to trust them. You have that trust for free. That is a form of capital. If you sell a product, people will buy it because they trust you, even if they don't know the brand. Do not undervalue this."

[PARTICIPANT READING MATERIAL:
MODULE 2]

The Art of "Making Do": Turning Scarcity into Opportunity (Social Bricolage)

If Effectuation teaches us to "open the fridge and see what's inside," the concept of **Social Bricolage** teaches us how to cook an amazing meal even when the fridge seems empty.

In the NGO world, we are used to hearing the phrase: "*We don't have the budget for that.*" This phrase usually stops all action.

But for a Social Entrepreneur, lack of resources is not a stop sign. It is an invitation to be creative.

What is "Bricolage"?

The word comes from the French term *bricoleur*—a handyman or tinkerer who fixes things using whatever odds and ends happen to be lying around in the shed.

In the context of social entrepreneurship, **Social Bricolage** means:

The creative use of resources that others ignore, discard, or consider useless, to solve a problem and create value.

It is the refusal to be constrained by limitations. When the world says, "You need brand new materials to build this," the Bricoleur says, "No, I can build it with what I find here."

The Mindset shift: "What *else* could this be?"

The key to becoming a Bricoleur is changing how you look at the things around your HRFAC. You must stop seeing objects and spaces just for their intended use.

- A normal person sees an empty cardboard box as trash. A Bricoleur sees material for product packaging.
- A normal person sees an office that is closed on weekends as "dead space." A Bricoleur sees a potential tuition center or paid meeting hall.
- A normal person sees village elders with old stories as just "the elderly." A Bricoleur sees them as tour guides for a paid "cultural history walk."

A Sri Lankan Example: The Helmet Mender

Consider the story of the woman who started fixing motorbike helmets.

- **The Problem:** Many people had expensive helmets with broken straps or worn-out padding. There were no spare parts available in shops.
- **The Normal Response:** "I can't fix this because there are no new parts."

- **The Bricolage Response:** She looked around. She found sponge, leftover rexine fabric from upholstery, and plastic buckles etc. She used her existing sewing skills to combine these items.
- **The Result:** She created a valuable new service that solved a community pain point, using almost zero new resources.

HRDs are Natural Bricoleurs

As human rights activists, you already do this every day. When you cannot afford a hotel conference room for a victim consultation, you borrow the back room of a temple or a church. That is Bricolage.

You have spent years "making do" to survive. Now, we will use that same skill to thrive financially. Look around your HRFAC today. What resources are lying around that others are ignoring? That is where your business begins.

MODULE 2: Opportunity Discovery & Prototyping

Theme: Don't write a business plan; design an experiment.

Goal: To guide participants in identifying viable opportunities at the intersection of community needs and HRFAC assets, and how to test them without risk.

Key Topics & Activities:

1. **The Activist's Advantage:** Leveraging the innate empathy of HRDs to identify community "pain points" that can be translated into market opportunities (e.g., lack of affordable paralegal services, farmers unable to access markets).
2. **Activity: The Ideation Matrix.** Groups intersect their "Asset List" (from Module 1) with daily community "Pain Points" to generate concrete social enterprise ideas (Social Bricolage in action).
3. **Concept: Pre-totyping:** Building the absolute minimum version of an idea just to see if people are interested.
4. **Activity: The Paper Prototype.** Groups create a tangible representation of their best idea (a storyboard for a service, a label for a product, or a floor plan for a space) for peer feedback, with a focus on the 'Affordable Loss'.

[PARTICIPANT READING MATERIAL:
MODULE 3]

A Blueprint for Sustainability: The Social Business Model Canvas (SBMC)

You have learned about changing your mindset (Effectuation) and finding creative resources (Bricolage). You have an idea for a Social Innovation.

Now comes the hard part: How do you turn that idea into a working machine that generates money *and* creates impact?

You need a blueprint. In the world of social entrepreneurship, that blueprint is called the **Social Business Model Canvas (SBMC)**.

Why do we need a Canvas?

In the old NGO world, when we wanted to start a project, we wrote a 50-page proposal with a logframe. It took weeks to write and no one ever read it again once the project started.

The business world moves too fast for 50-page plans. They use a "Canvas"—a single-page map that shows how your entire organization works at a glance.

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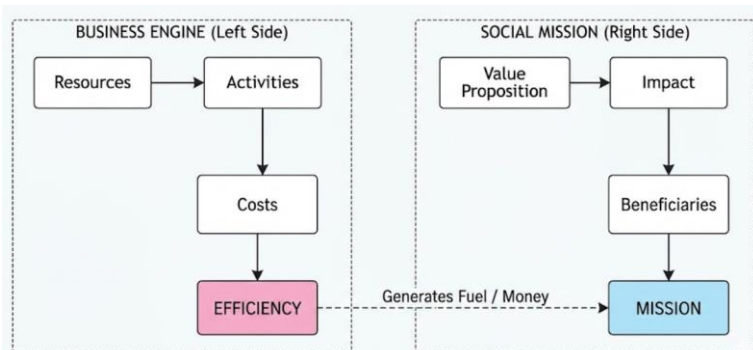
But a standard business canvas only cares about profit. As Human Rights Defenders, that is useless to us.

We use a **Social Business Model Canvas**. It is special because it forces you to answer two questions simultaneously:

1. How does this make money?
2. How does the money serve the human rights mission?

It is the bridge between your activist heart and your business head.

The Core Blocks of the Social Canvas



A full canvas has many parts, but for an HRFAC starting its journey, we focus on the essential building blocks of your "sustainability engine."

Think of it as a map of how value flows through your organization.

1. The Value Proposition (What are you offering?)

This is the center of the canvas. What problem are you solving for someone else?

- Don't just list your product (e.g., "We sell coconut oil").
- Describe the value (e.g., "We provide pure, trustworthy, locally-sourced coconut oil to health-conscious families in Colombo, carrying the story of rural empowerment.").

2. The Two "Whos": Customers vs. Beneficiaries

This is the most critical distinction for a social enterprise. Often, they are not the same people.

- **The Customer:** The person who *pays* you money for the product or service.
- **The Beneficiary:** The person whose life improves because your organization exists.

Example: If an HRFAC runs a paid paralegal training course for local three-wheeler drivers:

- The Drivers are the **Customers** (they pay fees).
- The community members who get better advice from those drivers, and the torture victims whose cases are funded by the profits, are the **Beneficiaries**.

Scenario: "Imagine an HRFAC sells coconut oil to a wealthy lady in Colombo. The profit is used to pay for a lawyer to represent a torture victim in court."

Question: "Who is the Customer?"

(The Customer is the Wealthy Lady. If you don't make her happy, the business dies.)

Lesson: You serve the Beneficiary, but you must satisfy the Customer.

3. Key Resources & Activities (The "Bricolage" Section)

How will you deliver the value?

- **Resources:** What do you need to have? (Remember "Bird-in-Hand"—use what your HRFAC already owns: office space, legal knowledge, community trust).
- **Activities:** What do you need to *do* every day? (e.g., processing raw materials, conducting training, marketing).

4. The Financial Engine: Cost vs. Revenue

This is where reality hits. You must balance the books.

- **Cost Structure:** What are your major expenses? (Rent, electricity, raw materials, transport). You must know exactly how much it costs to produce one unit of your product.

- **Revenue Streams:** How exactly does cash enter the bank account? (Product sales, service fees, training registration fees).

5. The Social Impact (The "Why")

This is what separates us from a normal business. How does the activity above lead to better human rights protection?

- Does it provide funding for free legal aid?
- Does it employ vulnerable community members?
- Does it reduce reliance on donors, making your advocacy voice stronger?

MODULE 3: The Business Engine & Financial Viability

Theme: If the math doesn't work, the mission won't survive.

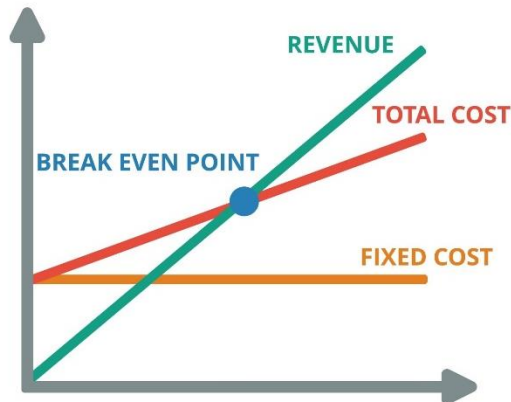
Goal: To translate prototypes into a structured business model and equip participants with basic financial literacy to ensure the enterprise generates a surplus for the mission.

Key Topics & Activities:

1. **Framework: The Social Business Model Canvas (SBMC):** Mapping the prototype onto key business blocks: Value Proposition, Key Resources (Bricolage), Cost Structure, and Revenue Streams.

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2. **Deep Knowledge: Unit Economics.** Moving beyond vague estimates. Understanding the true "Cost of Goods Sold" (COGS) including hidden costs like labor and overhead.
3. **Activity: The "One Unit" Calculation.** Groups calculate the exact cost, required price, and profit margin for *one single unit* of their proposed product or service (e.g., one jar of produce, one hour of consultation).
4. **The Break-Even Reality:** Determining exactly how many units must be sold monthly just to cover the HRFAC's basic operating costs (rent/electricity), linking business activity directly to organizational survival.



MODULE 4: Storytelling, Risk, and Action Planning

Theme: Selling the story without selling out the mission.

Goal: To prepare HRFACs to market their products effectively (linking to the Colombo Exhibition Hub), manage ethical risks, and commit to immediate action.

Key Topics & Activities:

1. **Marketing Justice (Emotional Branding):** Preparing for the Colombo Hub. Understanding that customers buy the *change* the product represents, not just the product itself.
2. **Activity: Labeling Justice.** Groups craft a "pitch" for their prototype that connects the product to the human rights mission (e.g., "This product funds legal aid for Vanni women").
3. **Risk Management & Ethics:** Addressing the "elephant in the room." How to manage conflicts of interest, community confusion regarding paid vs. free services, and potential backlash from local power structures.

The Danger of Success: "Mission Drift"

What happens if your coconut business becomes too successful?

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The Risk: You might stop documenting torture cases because you are too busy in the business.

The "Mission Check" Rule: Teach participants to ask every month: "Does this business activity still serve our human rights mandate, or has it become a distraction?" If it stops funding or aiding the mission, it must be fixed or closed.

4. **Activity: The 30-Day Sprint.** Stop planning, start doing. Groups define concrete, effectual steps for the next 4 weeks to launch their pilot *without waiting for new funds.*
5. **Closing Commitment:** Each coordinator defines the very first action they will take within 48 hours of returning to their district.