

## Role of Social Innovation in Alleviating Poverty and Achieving Sustainable Development

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### Abstract

Poverty reduction and sustainable development are among the most pressing global challenges today. Governments, local institutions, civil society organizations, academia, and companies are all working towards alleviating poverty and achieving sustainable development. However, despite these efforts, it is evident that traditional approaches to addressing poverty and sustainability are insufficient, given the ever-changing and evolving world. Thus, there is a need to evaluate and solve these issues with an "innovative perspective." In this context, countries have started using social innovation, defined as "new ways of solving social problems," to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development. This study aims to examine the concept of social innovation as a tool that can be used for poverty reduction and regional development, by exploring successful case studies of its application. This qualitative research first evaluates what social innovation means in the context of poverty and development, including its features and processes. The study also assesses the role of social innovation solutions in poverty reduction and sustainable rural development, by analyzing two case studies of successful applications: the KIVA Microcredit System, which provides small-scale credit to poor or low-income individuals, and Community-Supported Agriculture, which offers farmers pre-purchase guarantees for their produce. These two case studies are analyzed in terms of innovation, sustainability, social impact, target audience, and institutional structure. In conclusion, it is revealed that the cases mentioned above contribute to poverty reduction and regional development in terms of innovation, target audience, sustainability, and social impact.

**Keywords:** Social innovation, poverty, sustainable development, KIVA microcredit, community-supported agriculture

### Yoksullukla Mücadele Etme ve Sürdürülebilir Kalkınmaya Ulaşmada Sosyal İnovatif Uygulamaların Rolü

#### Öz

Günümüzde yoksullukla mücadele ve sürdürülebilir kalkınma konuları çözülmesi gereken en önemli sorunların başında gelmektedir. Başta devletler olmak üzere, yerel kurum ve kuruluşlar, sivil toplum kuruluşları, akademi ve şirketler yoksulluğun azaltılması ve sürdürülebilir kalkınmanın sağlanmasında çaba göstermektedirler. Her anlamda değişen ve gelişen dünyada, tüm bu çabaların istenilen seviyeye çıkamadığı görülmektedir. Dolayısıyla geleneksel yollarla çözülmeye çalışılan bu meselenin "yenilikçi bakış açıları ile" değerlendirilmesi ve çözüme kavuşturulması gerekliliği ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu kapsamda ülkeler, en geniş manada "toplumsal sorunların çözümünde yeni yollar" şeklinde tanımlanan sosyal inovasyonu yoksulluğun azaltılması ve sürdürülebilir kalkınma hedeflerine ulaşmada bir araç olarak kullanmaya başlamıştır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, genelde toplumsal sorunlara çözüm üreten bir bakış açısı, özelde ise yoksullukla mücadele ve bölgesel kalkınmada bir araç olarak kullanılacak sosyal inovasyon konseptini başarılı uygulama örnekleri ile ele almaktadır. Nitel araştırma yönteminin kullanıldığı bu çalışmada, öncelikle sosyal inovasyonun yoksulluk ve kalkınmada alanında ne anlama geldiği, özellikleri ve süreçleri değerlendirilmiştir. Bu çalışma ayrıca sosyal inovasyon uygulama ve çözümlerinin yoksulluğun azaltılması ve sürdürülebilir kırsal kalkınmadaki rolünü iki iyi uygulama vakası analiz ederek değerlendirmektedir. Bu kapsamda yoksul veya düşük gelirli kişilere küçük ölçekli kredi sağlayan "KİVA Mikrokredi" sistemi ve çiftçilere ürettiklerini önceden alım garantisi imkânı sunan "Toplum Destekli Tarım" uygulamaları ayrıntılı olarak ele alınmıştır. Bu iki iyi uygulama örneği yenilikçilik, sürdürülebilirlik, sosyal etki, hedef kitle ve kurumsal yapı açısından incelenmiş ve analiz edilmiştir. Sonuç olarak bahsekonu vaka örneklerinin hem yenilikçilik ve hedef kitle hem de sürdürülebilirlik ve sosyal etki açısından yoksulluğun azaltılmasına ve bölgesel gelişime katkı sundukları söylenebilir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** sosyal inovasyon, yoksulluk, sürdürülebilir kalkınma, KİVA mikrokredi, toplum destekli tarım

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## **Introduction**

Identification and application of the most suitable strategies to alleviate poverty and achieving sustainable development are some of the hot topics discussed widely by politicians, pundits, and practitioners around the world. Conventional tools have proved to be not sufficient to overcome this challenge as it entails, along with the high-level bottom-up initiative, innovative grassroots approaches, namely social innovations.

Social innovation as a concept dates to the early twentieth century whereas its practice reaches back to ancient history. In recent decades, the concept has increasingly appeared in a variety of sectors, including the private, public, household, and third sectors. In terms of public policy, the issue of social innovation is gradually gaining more attention. Rapid changes in technology, competitiveness, and ideas are triggering innovation in many areas (O'Sullivan & Dooley, 2008). As a result, new products and services in many fields, practices, methods, and forms of collaboration have emerged, contributing to the enhanced quality of life and welfare of individuals and communities. In other words, “these innovative solutions” play an essential role in achieving sustainable development worldwide and alleviating the poverty that humanity faces today. The elimination of poverty has always been an important unsolved problem of countries' social policies. Thus, innovative ways that could offer more effective solutions are needed to overcome these challenges and enable a better life for humanity.

From the perspective of international literature, the ‘social’ dimension of innovation has been previously considered mostly in technological and economic areas. However, since the 1990s, various studies have been conducted on the theory and practice of ‘social innovation’. Within this context, the concept of social innovation is beginning to appear more and more in public policies for/to growth and poverty reduction in many developed countries, too. In this sense, countries are aiming to use a social innovation approach in regional, national, and international policies to secure and consolidate social justice and welfare (Ateş, 2019). However, in terms of poverty eradication and promoting sustainable development, the potential of social innovation has been largely overlooked by decision-makers (Jeremy Millard et al., 2016).

Social innovation can be broadly described as new ways of doing things (products, services, collaborations, combinations, processes) that aim to find effective and efficient solutions to address the challenges of societies. Some examples of social innovation that have been successful in the recent past and have reached large numbers of people include the fair-trade movement, the promulgation of international labor standards (ILO), microcredit, charter

schools, community-based planning, and corporate social responsibility programs (Phills et al., 2008). This work aims to discuss the social innovation notion in terms of poverty and development. This work would also make explicit the successful innovative cases in the field of poverty reduction as well as sustainable development. The plan of the work is as follows: The first chapter deals with defining Social Innovation in the field of poverty alleviation and sustainable development. The second chapter discusses the case analysis of poverty eradication and sustainable development. Finally, the last part involves discussion and conclusion.

## **1 Defining Social Innovation in the Field of Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development**

Poverty is one of the crucial challenges for almost all developing as well as developed countries. The main goal of the social innovation approach is to provide innovative and effective solutions to social, environmental, and economic problems with a particular emphasis on poverty, unemployment, environmental pollution, and the rapid depletion of existing resources. Existing literature on social innovation and poverty alleviation points out three distinctive characteristics of original solutions. The first characteristic is about the extent to which new solutions are applied and spread out (Cooperrider & Pasmore, 1991; Mulgan et al., 2007). The original solution for a social problem is considered new and original as long as it is more convenient, advantageous in terms of cost, and easier to implement than existing solutions that provide the same service (Christensen, 2006). The Aravind Eyecare System initiative in India, for example, meets the needs of more than 300,000 poor people around the world by executing eye surgery and reducing the cost of lens production from around \$200 to \$3 (Dodgson et al., 2013).

According to literature, there is no commonly agreed definition on social innovation. However, to explore the concept of social innovation in various fields and perspectives, some selected definitions are listed as follows:

**Table 1:** Definitions of social Innovation from Various Perspectives

	<b>Author</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Sociological Perspective</b>	(Heiskala, 2007, p.52)	"...social innovations that would transform the regulative, normative, and cultural aspects of social systems, and their interplay with each other..."
	(Howaldt & Schwarz, 2010, p.54)	"[Social innovation is] an intentional, targeted recombination or reconfiguration of social practices based on specific actors or groups of actors"
	(Nicholls & Ziegler, 2014, p. 4)	"The development and delivery of new ideas and solutions (products, services, models, modes of provision, processes) at different socio-structural levels that intentionally seek to change power relations and improve human capabilities, as well as the processes via which these solutions are carried out"
<b>User-led Perspective</b>	(Hochgerner, 2012, p.91)	"Social innovation may be considered any activity that expands the capability to act (of parts or the whole of society), and enables or leads to concrete action"
	(Pol & Ville, 2009, p.881)	"...an innovation is termed a social innovation if the implied new idea has the potential to improve either the quality or the quantity of life"
	(Mulgan, et al./Young Foundation, 2007, p.8)	"..innovative activities and services that are motivated by the goal of meeting a social need and that are predominantly developed and diffused through organizations whose primary purposes are social"
	(Hubert et.al., 2010, p.9)	"...social innovations as new ideas (products, services, and models) that simultaneously meet social needs (more effectively than alternatives) and create new social relationships or collaborations. They are innovations that are not only good for society but also enhance society's capacity to act"
<b>Creativity Perspective</b>	(Mumford, 2002, p.253)	"[Social innovation] refers to the generation and implementation of new ideas about how people should organize interpersonal activities, or social interactions, to meet one or more common goals"
	(Marcy & Mumford, 2007, p.123)	"New ideas about social systems and social interactions, while rare, can have a tremendous impact on our lives and our world"
<b>Entrepreneurship Perspective</b>	(Phills et al., 2008, p.36)	"Social innovation is a novel solution to a social problem that is more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just than existing solutions and for which the value created accrues primarily to society as a whole rather than private individuals"
	(Westley, 2008, p.1)	"Social innovation is an initiative, product or process or program that profoundly changes the basic routines, resource and authority flows or beliefs of any social system"

Source: (Ates, 2020)

Regarding socially innovative solutions to combat poverty, association with technology is pointed out as the second characteristic feature. Production and use of low battery-power laptops for children's education in poor areas without proper electricity connection might be an example of this kind of social innovation. The Internet, as another example, plays a crucial role both in developing and dissemination new solutions. On the other hand, digital media also supports the production and dissemination of many new and original solutions in various areas such as the emergence of social communication networks, the creation of online support networks that bring together friends and families of disadvantaged people, access to information or providing distance education, and so on (Huddart, 2010).

The third characteristic that is emphasized when designing socially innovative solutions is the participation of people in the process of developing and implementing the solution. People who are exposed to the problem are seen as the most competent person in giving feedback and suggestions about the product or services (Mulgan et al., 2007). In this context, it is crucial to specify the general characteristics of social innovation, which are of interest to many different disciplines and approaches and emerge in different dimensions. Many of these features, some of which are inclusive and some of which are tightly interconnected, do not need to be present at the same time in social innovation, but at least a few of them are expected to be present.

Although the characteristics of social innovation are not precise and complete, they can be listed as follows (Murray, Mulgan, & Caulier-Grice, 2009);

- Cross-sectoral (cross-sectoral)
- Open to diverse collaborations,
- Grassroots or bottom-up
- Enabling co-production,
- Mutualism,
- Establishing/creating new roles and relationships,
- Allow better use of capital and resources,
- Improving personal skills and social capital.

Concerning the potential of grassroots innovations to overcome poverty, EU Commission considers social innovations as 'new ideas that meet social needs, create social relationships, and form new collaborations which can be products, services, or models addressing unmet needs more effectively' related official EU papers outline actions to facilitate

the inducement, uptake, and scaling-up of social innovation solutions. The main objectives are: Promoting social innovation as a source of growth and jobs, sharing information about social innovation in Europe, supporting innovative entrepreneurs, and mobilizing investors and public organizations.

In line with this view, the EU has created a new funding mechanism called as Employment and Social Innovation Fund (EaSI) which strives to promote sustainable and high-quality employment, combat poverty, and social exclusion, guarantee adequate social protection, and improve working conditions. Besides, through the EU Structural and Financial Investment Funds, financial resources are provided for social innovations related to poverty and social inclusion.<sup>†</sup>

Social innovation actors focus also on the contribution of socially innovative goods or services to sustainable development. (J. Millard, 2017) names economic, social, environmental, and cross-cutting aspects of sustainable development as follows;

- Economic; financial security, income, jobs, and vocational training, etc.
- Social; tackling social exclusion, inequity, and quality of life issues like health, education, knowledge, skills and capabilities, and capacities, etc.
- Environmental; the human-constructed environment (habitation, infrastructures, utilities) and the natural environment (pollution, climate change, and biodiversity).
- Cross-cutting: given that most poor and marginalized people experience multiple challenges (low employment, poor education and health, financial insecurity, and so on).

## 2 Case Analysis in the Field of Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development

The quest towards understanding how to increase the role of civil society in solving social problems, sustaining, and improving the wellbeing of the people beyond increasing profits has triggered interest in the concept (Ates et al., 2019). For some developed countries, including the EU, U.S.A., Great Britain, and Japan, social innovation is considered to be key to realizing sustainable and inclusive growth (Eriksson et al., 2014; Fujisawa et al., 2015). For a more systemic diffusion of social innovation notion, theories, methods, and practices, we need to understand the power of social innovation perspective. In this sense, there are many successful innovative practices, particularly in reducing poverty and empowering

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<sup>†</sup> Retrieved from “EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI)”, Avrupa Komisyonu, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1081>, 18 August 2022.

disadvantaged groups. Unlike the more traditional top-down implications, social innovation is more likely to be bottom-up and driven by civil society and/or with social actors' collaborations (Jeremy Millard et al., 2016).

To further understand the extent to which social innovation contributes to overcoming poverty and achieving sustainable development, this study aims at analyzing two initiatives, namely the KIVA microcredit system and Community Supported Agriculture from the various perspectives including innovativeness, sustainability, social impact, target group, and institutional structure.

## **2.1 KIVA Microcredit System**

The microcredit system was first initiated in the 1970s by a Bangladeshi economist Mohammed Yunus who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Today different forms of the Grameen Bank model are applied in many countries, especially in Asia. As of 2013, there are 211 million members of the microcredit community worldwide, 114 million of whom are living in extreme poverty. In contrast to conventional finance and loan systems, microfinance extends usually small loans to poor people with no collateral. It is designed to promote entrepreneurial activities of vulnerable people combatting poverty. With the help of microcredit, poor people can provide their livelihoods against potential risks and shocks to build more resilience in the community.

As a non-profit organization, Kiva.org(KIVA) creatively improves the existing microcredit system and enables people to take small loans, which can be counted as a successful example of social innovation. As a successful social innovation, KIVA envisages bringing together people who seek to establish their small-scale businesses and volunteers (individuals or groups) who are committed to supporting them financially. The main problem for poor people is the lack of access to obtain small amounts of capital from conventional banking and related services. On the other hand, there is a crowd ready to financially support (they can also ask for their credit back) their start-ups/ventures. At this point, KIVA creatively combines with available supply and demand by bringing backers and poor people together. Throughout this system, many people in need can reach out for support to their small and medium-sized initiatives. Thus, KIVA is an efficient instrument for alleviating poverty and contributing to sustainable development, especially in poor/marginalized regions.

### **a. Innovativeness**

As far as innovativeness concerned, KIVA differs from other forms of similar systems by using internet facilities efficiently, enabling small amounts of aid or loan, and combining

the online crowdfunding methods with the microcredit system (Ates, 2020). The innovative characteristics of the KIVA Crowdlending platform include:

- Using online Informational Technologies(IT) effectively to extend its services to a great number of people in need across the globe
- Peer to peer support/aid model that allows the lender to find directly entrepreneurs
- Enabling interaction and communication between lender and borrower (i.e. KIVA Zip model) compared to the traditional KIVA model

These innovative functions of this grassroots crowdlending strategy involve elements and features on social innovation such as better use of resources, developing capacities and assets, mutualism, effective, open, and collaborative. It also enhances society's capacity to act, create new relationships as well as creatively meet social needs.

#### **b. Sustainability**

As a unique lending system, KIVA collects capital from individuals and groups from wealthy countries and transfers them via its local partners in the form of microcredit loans. These partners sometimes require a proportion of interest payments for their costs to sustain their operations. Although providing direct free loans or food aid makes receivers more aid independent, this model provides sustainable local solutions to the societies by teaching them how to catch fish instead of just giving it out.

With the help of KIVA micro-credit model, poor people can start their own businesses and provide childcare, micro-farms, grocery stores, etc. acquire the necessary capital for such businesses. These borrowers tend to be low-income individuals, who are mostly both financially and socially excluded, especially come from less-developed regions and countries (Africa, the Middle East, and Asia). In this sense, KIVA provides loans inspiring its borrowers to create something to get a better life. Both KIVA and its local partner allow the borrower to use their fund by building local micro enterprises. The increased capital they created stays within the local economy and thus more capital is cycling through the local economy.

In contrast to the traditional funding mechanism, the online lending platform KIVA acts more sustainably and better. The sustainability of the KIVA requires a related business model to help the system become more efficient and reach a greater number of borrowers in need. In this case, all of the administrative costs are compensated by the optional transaction fees from backers, the revenue from expired gift certificates, and the float (the revenue from the interest accruing in KIVA's bank account) (Flannery, 2009). Moreover, according to achieving the U.N.



Millennium Development Goal: To Reduce by Half Extreme Poverty by 2015, such a non-profit lending system has been seen as a great instrument to contribute to for-profit structures and businesses to reduce poverty around the world.

**c. Social impact**

First of all, KIVI has both economic and social impacts. Thanks to this grassroots practice, improving the welfare of low-income individuals and families due to financial contributions in every corner of the world. As of 2016, Kiva operates in approximately 80 countries. KIVA has delivered so far over \$800 million of small scale credits to people in need through crowdfunding methods. The number of people who have benefited from these funds provided by KIVA is around \$1.4 million. Although limited access to the internet and repayment risk of credits, this innovative crowd lending system makes a significant contribution to the improvement of people's quality of life and well-being, especially in developing countries and emerging economies, borrowers. In this respect, Kiva creates not only economic value but also social impact beyond the aforementioned numbers.

**d. Target Audience**

KIVA's services are not limited to any particular geographic region or demographic group, and that individuals from all backgrounds and locations may benefit from their microfinance lending platform. However, the main target group of KIVA is mainly fragile groups and individuals located mainly in developing or underdeveloped countries. In other words, KIVA's commitment to empowering vulnerable individuals and communities, particularly women in developing and underdeveloped countries.

**e. Structure**

Kiva is mainly an online platform bringing together various stakeholders. It collaborates with NGOs around the world which are called “field partners.”



Figure 1: The Kiva model

On Kiva, prospective individual lenders can browse through entrepreneurs' profiles and create a user account (formally becoming a "Kiva lender") to lend. It also contributes to funding projects where Kiva acts as an intermediary between individual lenders and the field partners who aggregate funds on behalf of their entrepreneurs. (Ly & Mason, 2012). Field partners are expected to analyze the eligibility of people seeking funding and later on post their projects and profiles on the KIVA platform.

## **2.2 Community-Supported Agriculture**

Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) approach has its origins in the 1960s in various countries such as Japan and Europe (Cone & Myhre, 2000). CSA is gathering rural farmers (producers) and non-farmers (consumers). A growing number of CSA initiatives worldwide vary depending on the local political-economic and cultural context (Plank et al., 2020). It represents a regular trading system created in line with common requests between the consumer and the farmer both economically and socially. Moreover, in contrast to conventional farming, the CSA movement is envisioned by some authors as a "social movement" (Allen & Kovach, 2000; Ostrom, 2007; Volz et al., 2016).

The statistical data of the U.S. Department of Agriculture shows that 7,398 farms in the United States sold products directly to consumers through a CSA arrangement, accounted for \$226 million (or 7 percent) of the \$3 billion in direct-to-consumer sales by farms. ‡ According to (Volz et al., 2016), in 2015 the estimated number of CSAs 2,783 operate in Europe, producing food for almost half a million (474,455) consumers. Another data indicate these figures to approximately 6,300 CSA initiatives and one million consumers in Europa.

In the CSA crops sharing model, consumers pay typically seasonal fees in advance for a weekly proportion of seasonal crops that farmers can afford to plant safely. On the other side, a weekly supply of fresh vegetables and fruits is offered to them by farmers. Consumers can also join in everyday activities and special events (share pick-ups, harvesting, potluck, field trip, meetings, etc.) on the farm. Thus, CSA as a new and alternative concept of fair agriculture, meets some characteristics of the social innovation approach. In this sense, the concept will be evaluated in terms of innovativeness, sustainability, social impact, target group, and institutionalizing.

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‡ [https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/Highlights/2016/LocalFoodsMarketingPractices\\_Highlights.pdf](https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/Highlights/2016/LocalFoodsMarketingPractices_Highlights.pdf), Accessed date: 09.09.2022

### **a. Innovativeness**

The way CSA markets its products and interacts with customers is considered as a new social form of agriculture given that CSA as a food production and distribution system directly connects farmers and consumers, presents a “new social form of agriculture” (Volz et al., 2016). It has thereby the potential to create “new markets” for products of local farmers and earn higher profits by bypassing all intermediaries of the existing market system (like fair trade). Additionally, Krul & Ho (2017) indicate CSA as an innovative farming model for tackling food safety issues, addressing sustainability. It builds consumer’s trust and guarantees that products are produced in an environmentally friendly way. This innovative agriculture model including its marketing and distribution channels refers to the main issues of countries’ conventional food system (Krul & Ho, 2017);

- food safety issues (by re-establishing trust and thus making more institutionalized mechanisms efficient),
- environmental issues (by proposing organic and environmentally-friendly standards to the farming process),
- Fulfilling the more demanding diets of growing urban populations by operating close to urban centers and utilizing a diverse set of distribution channels.

These aforementioned issues (new market, new distribution channels, new processes, and collaborations) give support/contribute to the innovative characteristics of the CSA model.

### **b. Sustainability**

The concept of sustainability in the business sector considers mainly the integration between three dimensions; environmental, social, and economic (Carew & Mitchell, 2008). In the context of sustainable agriculture, the CSA model ensures regional and organic vegetables and fruits, the promotion of shorter supply chains, healthy diets, and consumer awareness of ecological food production. In other words, the social, environmental, and economic objectives of sustainability notion promote a healthy diet, sustainable agriculture, and social transformation to producers and consumers. With the CSA business model, consumers associate farmers as members before harvest. In the food production process, farmers and non-farmers generally share potential risks and benefits (Ernst & Woods, 2013; Henderson & Van En, 2007). By promoting higher incomes and avoiding rural exodus, farmers help to sustain local communities through consumer associations and contracts. Additionally, by ensuring safe working conditions and diversifying production to meet the needs of non-farmers, farmers can

increase their autonomy and contribute to a more sustainable and equitable food system (Matzembacher & Meira, 2019a).

CSA concept might be seen as a learning field where experiences can be transferred to other fields (Plank et al., 2020). The education aspect of sustainability for consumers is also strongly emphasized. It happens basically through face-to-face contact between participants, visits during production, and on-site interaction activities (information exchange, cooking classes, and healthy recipes, etc.) on farms and online interactions among them (Matzembacher & Meira, 2019b).

#### **c. Social impact**

CSA farming model has recently gained more attention due to its potential in affecting food consumption behaviors and health outcomes. However, more studies on many aspects of CSA are needed, especially considering its potential environmental and social impacts (Brown & Miller, 2008). Along with the gain in cooking skills to prepare and consume CSA products, there is also the emergence of behavior that supports the decision on sustainable choices (Matzembacher & Meira, 2019b).

CSA demands a new set of knowledge and skills which refers to the term “social capital”. Social capital is information, trust, and norms of reciprocity derived from one’s social networks. CSA's social capital is based on values such as solidarity or a clear connection with society (Plank et al., 2020). In other words, CSA builds a stronger “community” and “environment” among farmers and non-farmers. Enhancing consumer confidence in local food systems and farmers can contribute to reducing conflict and increasing social awareness among Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) participants at the rural-urban interface (Sharp et al., 2002). This, in turn, can lead to a more transparent, sustainable, and resilient food system in the country. By promoting a greater sense of ownership and control over the local food market, communities can work towards creating a more equitable and environmentally conscious food system.

#### **d. Target Audience**

In the context of sustainable development, CSA offers benefits to both consumers and farmers. On the one hand, consumers could eat fresh healthy local food and learn new skills in farming, cooking, etc. On the other side, farmers benefit by receiving a more stable and secure income and building a closer connection with their community. In this sense, the target group of the CSA business model is local farmers as vulnerable groups for many countries and consumers who can reach healthy and organic foods.

### e. Institutional Structure

As stated above, CSA is a social movement initiated by farmers and consumers. CSA initiations have been started either by farmers, by consumers, or by both. Sometimes they are initiated by associations, foundations, businesses, or institutions. Many CSA initiations operate as individual enterprise and need institutionalized structure over the long term. Institutionalized structures can provide CSA initiatives with various benefits, such as access to resources, legal protections, and funding opportunities. By setting a formalized framework, CSA initiatives can better manage their operations and coordinate with other partners. Moreover, it contributes to CSA initiatives' ability to scale up and expand their impact, so they can more easily attract new members, partner with other organizations, and secure funding for growth and development.

### 2.3 Results

This study explored the potential of social innovation in poverty alleviation and sustainable development through the examination of two cases, KIVA Microcredit System and Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA). The analysis reveals these socially innovative initiatives can open up new horizons for understanding and addressing poverty and development in innovative ways. The table summarizes the findings on the innovativeness, sustainability, social impact, target audience, and institutional structure of KIVA and CSA.

**Table 2:** Some Criteria of KIVA and CSA

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>KIVA (Microcredit)</b>	<b>CSA (Community- Supported Agriculture)</b>
<b>Innovativeness</b>	Collaboration, a new form of financing, create new market, enhancing societies' capacity to act	New relationships, fair trade, effectiveness
<b>Sustainability</b>	Collaboration with local actors, working method, corporate structure, professionalism, due diligence by third parties.	Enabling co-creation, improving institutionalization, business strategy (payment in advance), information flow/sharing among farmers, improving efficiency, increase in employment technology, Investment in social capital, improving production processes
<b>Social impact</b>	Empowering, alleviating poverty, and fighting inequality	Promoting farmers and sustainable development of regions, healthy lifestyle, change consumer behavior

<b>Target audience</b>	Poor, marginalized, vulnerable, disadvantaged groups, mostly women	Consumers from the urban area, farmers in rural areas, especially poor regions
<b>Institutional Structure</b>	Social entrepreneurs, non-profit organizations	Cooperatives, individual efforts, social entrepreneurs

Given the numbers, \$800 million of small-scale credits to around \$1.4 million, KIVA played a vital role globally by incorporating technological advances, bringing together small amounts borrowed by average citizens innovatively and transparently. When it comes to Community-Supported Agriculture, the social fabric of rural communities around the world is continuing to change, become vulnerable given the immense change in the structure of food production and delivery which is mainly provided by large enterprises. CSA seems to be a socially innovative response to these challenges which eventually increased the wellbeing of the farmers and rural communities, contributed to their vitality and sustainability.

The growing interest in both KIVA and CSA shows that grassroots initiatives seem to be embraced by the people around the world and have proved to be productive, efficient, and sustainable alternatives when compared to the conventional means provided by the public bodies and other institutions. In other words, these cases can be regarded as successful social innovation practices in the field of poverty reduction and sustainable development for emerging economies and developing countries in particular.

### 3 Conclusion

Poverty reduction and achieving sustainable development are complex and ongoing challenges faced by societies worldwide. While governments, organizations, and institutions have made progress in addressing these challenges, traditional approaches alone may not be sufficient in the ever-changing world. Therefore, it is necessary to adopt innovative perspectives to evaluate and solve these issues. This is where social innovation comes into play, offering new ways of solving social problems to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development.

This study evaluates successful case studies of social innovation in poverty reduction and regional development, using the KIVA Microcredit System and Community-Supported Agriculture as examples. There is a growing interest in these types of initiatives from various stakeholders around the world, including actors of private market, governmental bodies, non-profit organizations, and civil society. The analysis reveals that these cases contribute to poverty

reduction and regional development in terms of innovation, sustainability, social impact, target audience, and institutional structure. Ultimately, social innovation has great potential to drive progress in poverty reduction and sustainable development, and its importance cannot be overstated.

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## GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Yoksullukla mücadele ve sürdürülebilir kalkınmada yaşanan zorluklar, insanlığın üstesinden gelmesi gereken en önemli sorunların başında gelmektedir. Devletler, yerel kamu kurumları, kar amacı gütmeyen kuruluşlar, akademi ve şirketler yoksulluğu azaltmak ve sürdürülebilir kalkınmayı sağlamak için büyük çaba harcamaktadırlar. Ancak bu çabalar, her anlamda değişen ve dönüşen dünyada istenilen düzeye henüz gelememiştir. Dolayısıyla çoğunlukla geleneksel yöntemlerle çözülmeye çalışılan bu sorunların “yenilikçi bakış açıları” ile ele alınması gerekmektedir. Kemikleşmiş toplumsal sorunlara yeni çözümler bulma çabasında olan “sosyal inovasyon” yaklaşımı başta yoksulluk, işsizlik, çevre kirliliği, mevcut kaynakların hızla tükenmesi gibi sosyal, çevresel ve ekonomik çıkmazlara yeni olmasa bile etkin çözümler sunma potansiyeli vardır.

Sosyal inovasyon kavramı olarak yirminci yüzyılın başlarına kadar uzansa da uygulamada insanlık tarihi kadar eskidir. Son yıllarda kavram, özel, kamu ve sivil toplum sektörleri tarafından farklı boyutlarda tartışılmakta ve uygulama alanı bulmaktadır. Kamu politikası açısından, sosyal inovasyon toplumsal ihtiyaçların üstesinden gelmede giderek daha fazla dikkat çekmektedir. Globalleşme, bilgi ve iletişim alanındaki teknolojik ilerlemeler birçok alanda yeniliğin itici gücünü oluşturmaktadır. Bu bağlamda pek çok alanda yeni ürünler ve hizmetler, uygulamalar, yöntemler ve işbirliği biçimleri ortaya çıkmış, bireylerin ve toplulukların yaşam kalitesinin ve refahının artmasına katkıda bulunmuştur. Başka bir deyişle, toplumsal sorunların giderilmesinde geliştirilen yenilikçi uygulamalar, dünya çapında sürdürülebilir kalkınmanın sağlanmasında ve bugün insanlığın karşı karşıya olduğu yoksulluğun hafifletilmesinde önemli bir rol oynamaktadır.

Yoksulluk gelişmiş ve gelişmekte olan tüm ülkelerin bir türlü üstesinden gelinebilen en önemli sorunlarından biridir. Bu nedenle, bahse konu zorlukları aşmak ve insanlık için daha iyi bir yaşam sağlamak için etkili çözümler sunabilecek yenilikçi yollara her zamankinden fazla ihtiyaç duyulmaktadır.

Uluslararası literatür incelendiğinde inovasyon kavramı önceleri “sosyal” boyutundan öte çoğunlukla “teknolojik” ve “ekonomik” bağlamlarda ele alınmaktaydı. Ancak 1990'lardan bu yana 'sosyal inovasyon' teorisi ve pratiği üzerine çeşitli çalışmalar yapılmıştır. Bu bağlamda, birçok gelişmiş ülkede de büyüme ve yoksulluğun azaltılmasına yönelik kamu politikalarında sosyal inovasyon bakış açısı giderek daha fazla yer almaya başlamıştır. Bu anlamda ülkeler, sosyal refahı sağlamak ve pekiştirmek için bölgesel, ulusal ve uluslararası politikalarda sosyal

inovasyon yaklaşımını dikkate almaya başlamışlardır. Ancak, yoksulluğun ortadan kaldırılması ve sürdürülebilir kalkınmanın teşvik edilmesi açısından, sosyal inovasyonun potansiyeli karar vericiler tarafından büyük ölçüde göz ardı edildiği söylenebilir.

En genel tanımıyla “toplumsal sorunları çözmeye yenilikçi yollar” olarak tanımlanan sosyal inovasyonun toplumsal sorunları çözmeye potansiyelini anlamak için, sosyal inovasyon kavram ve uygulamalarını daha sistematik bir biçimde incelemek yerinde olacaktır. Bu anlamda, özellikle yoksulluğun azaltılması ve dezavantajlı grupların güçlendirilmesi konusunda başarılı pek çok yenilikçi uygulama örnekleri bulunmaktadır. Bu çalışma, yoksulluğun azaltılması ve bölgesel kalkınmaya yönelik toplumsal sorunların çözümünde önemli bir araç olarak görülen “sosyal inovasyon” kavramını tartışmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu anlamda öncelikle yoksulluğun azaltılması ve sürdürülebilir kalkınma açısından sosyal inovasyon kavramı, tanımı ve özellikleri ele alınmıştır. Yoksulluğun azaltılması ve sürdürülebilir kalkınmada sosyal inovasyon çözümlerinin rolünü daha iyi anlamak için, dünyadan başarılı olmuş bazı iyi uygulama örnekleri ayrıntılı olarak incelenmiştir. Nitel araştırma yönteminin kullanıldığı bu çalışma kapsamında iki sosyal yenilik vakasının, yani KİVA mikrokredi sistemi ve Toplum Destekli Tarım(TDT)'ın yoksulluğun azaltılmasına ve sürdürülebilir kalkınmanın sağlanmasına ne ölçüde katkıda bulunduğunu ele alınmıştır. Bu kapsamda vakalar yenilikçilik, sürdürülebilirlik, sosyal etki, hedef kitle ve kurumsal yapı açısından incelenmiştir.

Mikrokredi sistemi ilk olarak Nobel Barış Ödülü sahibi Bangladeşli iktisatçı Muhammed Yunus tarafından 1970'lerde yoksul kesimlerin nakit ihtiyacını karşılamak için başlatılmıştır. Günümüzde başta Asya olmak üzere birçok ülkede “Grameen Bank” modelinin farklı biçimleri uygulanmaktadır. 2013 itibariyle, dünya çapında 211 milyon mikro kredi topluluğu üyesi bulunmaktadır ve bunların 114 milyonu aşırı yoksulluk içinde yaşamaktadır. Geleneksel finans ve kredi sisteminin aksine, mikrofinans genellikle yoksul insanlara teminatsız küçük krediler sunmakta dahası yoksullukla mücadele eden savunmasız insanların girişimcilik faaliyetlerini teşvik etmek için tasarlanmıştır.

Dünya çapında faaliyet gösteren bir sivil toplum kuruluşu olan Kiva.org (KİVA), yenilikçi ve şeffaf bir şekilde küçük ölçekli ticari faaliyette bulunmak isteyen ihtiyaç sahipleri ile yine küçük miktarlarda destek vermek isteyen destekçileri bir araya getirmektedir. Bu sayede mevcut kaynakları yaratıcı bir şekilde tasarlayarak toplumsal bir ihtiyacın giderilmesine katkı sağlamaktadır. Dolayısıyla KİVA, özellikle yoksul ve kırsal bölgelerde, yoksulluğu

azaltmak ve sürdürülebilir kalkınmaya katkıda bulunmak için etkili bir araç olarak görülmektedir.

Temelde yerelde çeşitli paydaşların dahil olduğu çevrimiçi bir platform olan KİVA, dünyanın dört bir yanından yerel STK'larla işbirliği yapmaktadır. Kurduğu online ağ yoluyla ihtiyaç sahibi kişilerin isimlerini, ülkelerini ve parayı kullanacakları girişimi ayrıntılı olarak tanımlamakta ve görünürlüklerini sağlamaktadır. Yerelde birlikte çalıştığı ortaklarından, finansal destek arayan kişilerin uygunluğunu analiz etmeleri ve daha sonra projelerini ve profillerini KİVA platformunda yayınlamaları beklenmektedir.

Çalışma kapsamında ele alınan Toplum Destekli Tarım (TDT) yaklaşımının kökenleri, Japonya ve Avrupa gibi çeşitli ülkelerde 1960'lara kadar dayanmaktadır. TDT, tarımsal faaliyette bulunan çiftçileri (üreticileri) ve çiftçi olmayanları (tüketicileri) bir araya getirmektedir. Bu paylaşım modelinde tüketiciler/destekçiler, çiftçilerin güvenli bir şekilde üretmeye gücü yettiği mevsimlik mahsullerin haftalık tedariki için gerekli ücreti önceden ödemektedir. Bunun karşılığında destekçilere çiftçiler tarafından haftalık olarak taze sebze ve meyve tedarik edilmektedir. Tüketiciler ayrıca çiftlikte günlük aktivitelere ve özel etkinliklere (sebze meyve hasadı, yemek yeme, gezi, atölye, toplantılar vb.) katılma imkanı da elde etmektedirler.

Yerel politik-ekonomik ve kültürel yapıya bağlı olarak dünya çapında oldukça fazla toplum destekli girişim bulunmaktadır. ABD Tarım Bakanlığı istatistiklerine göre, 2020 yılında ABD'deki 7.398 çiftliğin doğrudan tüketicilere ürün sattığı ve çiftliklerin doğrudan tüketiciye yaptığı 3 milyar dolarlık satışın %7'sini toplum destekli tarım uygulayıcısı çiftlikler tarafından gerçekleştirildiği bildirilmektedir. Hem ekonomik hem de sosyal olarak tüketici ve çiftçi arasındaki ortak istekler doğrultusunda oluşturulmuş düzenli bir ticaret sistemini temsil eden bu uygulama, bazı yazarlar tarafından bir "sosyal hareket" olarak adlandırılmaktadır

Günümüzde yerelde tarım ile uğraşan toplulukların teknolojik dönüşümlerle giderek daha savunmasız hale geldiği göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, toplum destekli butür girişimlerin önemi daha da artmaktadır. Zira, dünyanın dört bir yanındaki kırsal toplulukların sosyal dokusu zamanla değişmekte; gıda üretimi ve dağıtımı konusunda büyük işletmelerin rolü artmaktadır. İşte bu noktada TDT, çiftçilerin ve kırsal toplulukların refahını artıracak, sürdürülebilirliklerine katkıda bulunabilecek yenilikçi bir uygulama olarak değerlendirilebilir.

Sonuç olarak, Sosyal inovasyon konusu gelişmiş ve gelişmekte olan ülkeler ve ekonomiler dahil tüm dünyada gün geçtikçe daha çok kesimin ilgisini çekmektedir. Son on

yılda, sivil toplumdan devlet kurumlarına, özel sektörden akademiye kadar pek çok aktörün toplumsal sorunların üstesinden gelebilmek için sosyal alanda yenilikçi çözüm arayışlarına odaklandığı görülmektedir. Dahası gelişmiş pek çok ülke için sosyal inovasyon uygulamaları, sürdürülebilir ve kapsayıcı büyümeyi gerçekleştirmenin yollarından biri olarak görülmektedir.

Hem KİVA Mikrokredi sistemi hem de Toplum Destekli Tarım (TDT) uygulamalarına artan ilgi göz önüne alındığında, tabandan gelişen bu yenilikçi girişimler, dünyanın dört bir yanındaki insanlar tarafından benimsenmekte ve uygulama alanı bulmaktadır. Zira bahse konu uygulamaların, kamu kurumları ve diğer kuruluşlar tarafından sağlanan geleneksel yöntemlerle/araçlarla karşılaştırıldığında daha üretken, verimli ve sürdürülebilir alternatifler oldukları görülmektedir. Başka bir deyişle, bu örnekler, özellikle gelişmekte olan ekonomiler ve ülkeler için yoksulluğun azaltılması ve sürdürülebilir kalkınma alanında başarılı sosyal inovasyon uygulamaları olarak değerlendirilebilir.