
**FAMILY BUSINESSES
ON A MISSION**

**ATTAINING
THE 2030
SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOAL OF
NO POVERTY**

EDITED BY

**NAOMI
BIRDTISTLE**

Attaining the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal of No Poverty

FAMILY BUSINESSES ON A MISSION



Series Editor:

Naomi Birdthistle

The Family Businesses on a Mission series examines how the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) can be applied in family businesses around the world, providing insights into cultural and societal differences and displaying innovative approaches to complex environmental and societal issues.

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Attaining the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal of No Poverty

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Contents

List of Figures and Tables	vii
About the Editor	ix
About the Contributors	xi
Foreword	xv
Acknowledgements	xvii
Chapter 1 The Sustainable Development Goals: SDG#1 and Family Business	1
<i>Rob Hales</i>	
Chapter 2 The Heart of Business: Understanding Family-Owned Ventures	13
<i>Naomi Birdthistle</i>	
Chapter 3 England: The Warm Age Wood Company	27
<i>Antoinette Flynn</i>	
Chapter 4 Zambia: SBM	41
<i>Sylvia B. Mwansa, Brian Gregory and Allan Discua Cruz</i>	
Chapter 5 Lebanon: Fig Holding and SDG#1 No Poverty	55
<i>Poh Yen Ng, Bettina Lynda Bastian and Bronwyn Wood</i>	
Chapter 6 India: From Poverty to Decent Living – A Case of Pune, India	69
<i>Aditi Mishra and Niharika Singh</i>	

Chapter 7 UAE: Food ATM – Addressing Poverty and Hunger Through Empathy	83
<i>Jacinta Dsilva</i>	
Index	93

List of Figures and Tables

Figures

Fig. 1.1.	17 Sustainable Development Goals.	2
Fig. 2.1.	Defining Family Business: The Family Business Bull's-Eye.	15
Fig. 2.2.	Bullseye 2021. (Pieper et al., 2021, p. 15).	17
Fig. 2.3.	Global Assessment of Family-Owned Businesses: National GDP Contribution and Workforce Participation.	19
Fig. 3.1.	Dave Watson and Geraldine O'Connor Holding Briquettes and Knitting in Front of Their Fire.	28
Fig. 3.2.	2019 Good Neighbour Award in the Window of the Warm Age Wood Shop.	29
Fig. 3.3.	The Annual Carbon Performance of the Warm Age Wood Company.	33
Fig. 3.4.	The Number of People the Warm Age Wood Company Engaged With on a Yearly Basis.	34
Fig. 5.1.	Mayrig Restaurant.	60
Fig. 5.2.	Lahmajun.	62
Fig. 6.1.	Naani's Litti Chokha Menu.	71
Fig. 7.1.	The Founders of Food ATM Ayesha Khan and Sajid Along With Their Staff.	87
Fig. 7.2.	Guinness Book of Records Award.	88

Tables

Table 1.1.	SDG#1 Targets.	2
Table 2.1.	Definitions of Family Businesses With a Structural or Process Lens Applied.	14

viii *List of Figures and Tables*

Table 2.2.	Oldest Family Businesses in the World.	20
Table 4.1.	Product Range of SBM.	43
Table 5.1.	Timeline of Fig Holding's Companies.	56
Table 6.1.	SDG#1 and Activities to Address the Goal.	78

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Foreword

Prof. Walter Leal Filho (PhD, DSc, DPhil, DTech, DEd)

Chair, Inter-University Sustainable Development Research Programme

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015 provide a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

They also entail elements of importance towards a strategic business engagement with sustainability issues. These offer a framework which provides businesses with a systematic approach to identify new business opportunities while contributing to the solution of the grand sustainability challenges facing the world today, including climate change. Each SDG, if achieved, will have a direct and significant positive impact on millions of people's lives around the world and the environment in which they live. Businesses have an opportunity to widen the purpose of business through adopting the SDGs as targets for their operations. Thus, they can make a meaningful contribution to the greater good through achieving their operational objectives.

Family businesses are uniquely placed to contribute to SDGs for many reasons. Firstly, because family business models have longer time perspectives, and this allows the family business to link with the longer term SDG time frame – 2030. Second, family businesses often focus on aspects of business operation which do not have an immediate return on investment such as relationship building with stakeholder groups. Thirdly, family businesses tend to rate the importance of ethics higher than standard businesses and thus align well with the social dimensions of the SDGs. Lastly, family businesses have intergenerational perspectives which is a core principle of sustainability.

This book provides insights into how family business operationalises SDG#1: No Poverty. The book uses a rigorous case study approach for family businesses to detail aspects of their business which help to overcome poverty. The cases provided here are living proof that family businesses that operate for the greater good actually work! Non-family businesses can take a leaf out of the family businesses portrayed in this book as they can provide different perspectives on how businesses can successfully align SDGs and business strategy.

Despite many businesses having adopted environmental social governance strategies and environmental management systems, the effect of this activity has not been reflected in a healthier planet. Many 'state of the environment' reports

indicate that planetary health is decreasing, and planetary boundaries are being crossed or are about to be crossed. While the cause of this decline is not entirely the fault of business, there still needs to be a greater effort to address the decline. The challenge for family businesses is to use their unique characteristics and set ambitious programmes of work that make a meaningful contribution to achieving global goals. This book provides insights into how family businesses can achieve such a mission and how non-family businesses can be inspired to do the same.

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Associate Professor Antoinette Flynn, author of Chapter 3, wishes to sincerely thank Tom Watson and Geraldine O'Connor for their valued contribution and input to this chapter.

Dr Mishra and Dr Singh, authors of Chapter 6, have stated that their chapter would not have been possible without the contributions of the staff at 'Naani's Litti Chokha'. They extend their sincere appreciation to Mr Abhishek Kumar, the business owner, for his invaluable support and willingness to provide the detailed information necessary to refine this chapter.

Dr Jacinta Dsilva, the author of Chapter 7, would like to take this opportunity to express her heartfelt gratitude to Ayesha Khan for generously sharing her valuable time for the interview and giving her valuable information to complete this case. Dr Dsilva would also like to sincerely thank Lydia Cherian for her unwavering support as a research assistant, which greatly contributed to the success of this case. Thank you both for your invaluable contributions.

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Chapter 1

The Sustainable Development Goals: SDG#1 and Family Business

Rob Hales

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Introduction

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all member states of the United Nations in 2015, is a shared blueprint for people and the planet, intending to achieve peace and prosperity for all. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a call to action to develop innovative solutions to some of the world's most complex, societal and environmental challenges. Businesses play a crucial role in forging this path. Family businesses account for more than two-thirds of businesses worldwide and contribute to 70–90% of the world's gross domestic product (GDP), and because of this, we believe it is important to showcase the role they play in facilitating the achievement of these SDGs. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a call to action for all countries to address the global challenges of poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice. These challenges are identified by 17 SDGs as depicted in [Fig. 1.1](#) and within the SDGs are a total of 169 targets.

The 17 SDGs acknowledge that ending poverty and other global challenges need strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests ([United Nations, 2021](#)). When using the SDG goals as a strategy to improve the elements within any goal it is vital to use specific targets of each goal. These targets then need to be translated into business action. The main targets within SDG#1 *End poverty in all its forms everywhere* are shown in [Table 1.1](#).

How Family Businesses Make Contributions to the SDG#1 Target

This book makes an important contribution to research on family businesses by highlighting how businesses can make valuable contributions towards these targets.

Attaining the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal of No Poverty, 1–12

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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Fig. 1.1. 17 Sustainable Development Goals. *Source:* United Nations (2021). <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/> *Notes:* The content of this publication has not been approved by the United Nations and does not reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials or Member States.

Table 1.1. SDG#1 Targets.

SDG#1 Targets	SDG#1 Indicators
1.1 By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day	1.1.1 Proportion of the population living below the international poverty line by sex, age, employment status and geographic location (urban/rural)
1.2 By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions	1.2.1 Proportion of population living below the national poverty line, by sex and age 1.2.2 Proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions
1.3 Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030, achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable	1.3.1 Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems, by sex, distinguishing children, unemployed persons, older persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women,

Table 1.1. (Continued)

SDG#1 Targets	SDG#1 Indicators
	newborns, work-injury victims and the poor and the vulnerable
1.4 By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance	1.4.1 Proportion of population living in households with access to basic services 1.4.2 Proportion of total adult population with secure tenure rights to land, (a) with legally recognised documentation, and (b) who perceive their rights to land as secure, by sex and by type of tenure
1.5 By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters	1.5.1 Number of deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons attributed to disasters per 100,000 population 1.5.2 Direct economic loss attributed to disasters in relation to global gross domestic product (GDP) 1.5.3 Number of countries that adopt and implement national disaster risk reduction strategies in line with the Sendai framework for Disaster risk reduction 2015–2030 1.5.4 Proportion of local governments that adopt and implement local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national disaster risk reduction strategies
1.a Ensure significant mobilisation of resources from a variety of sources, including through enhanced development cooperation, in order to provide adequate and predictable means for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, to implement programmes and policies to end poverty in all its dimensions	1.a.1 Total official development assistance grants from all donors that focus on poverty reduction as a share of the recipient country’s gross national income 1.a.2 Proportion of total government spending on essential services (education, health and social protection)

(Continued)

Table 1.1. (*Continued*)

SDG#1 Targets	SDG#1 Indicators
1.b Create sound policy frameworks at the national, regional and international levels, based on pro-poor and gender-sensitive development strategies, to support accelerated investment in poverty eradication actions	1.b.1 Pro-poor public social spending

Source: [United Nations \(n.d.\)](#).

Family businesses can make a significant contribution to SDG#1 through specific actions that align with SDG#1 targets. Family businesses can use their influence and resources to advance the agenda of SDG#1, contributing not only to their organisational success but also to the broader societal goal of poverty eradication. Some of the ways family businesses can do this are as follows:

Target 1.1 Eradicating Extreme Poverty

Family firms can directly contribute to eradicating extreme poverty by implementing inclusive employment practices that provide decent work and fair wages. Their long-term orientation and social embeddedness make family businesses more likely to engage in socially responsible practices aimed at uplifting local communities from extreme poverty ([Memili et al., 2018](#)). Providing stable employment opportunities is a direct pathway out of extreme poverty for many. However, providing decent employment opportunities at scale remains a major challenge, especially in developing economies with high poverty rates and limited formal job markets. Family businesses may also struggle with capacity constraints and lack of resources to implement large-scale poverty alleviation initiatives. It is also difficult to overcome cultural and social biases and ensure inclusive hiring practices.

Target 1.2 Reducing Poverty in all Dimensions

The holistic and socially oriented nature of family businesses positions them well to tackle multidimensional poverty through initiatives addressing diverse deprivations like lack of education, healthcare, housing, etc. ([Irava & Moores, 2010](#)). Their community ties motivate family firms to adopt a comprehensive approach to poverty alleviation beyond just income poverty. Tackling multidimensional poverty requires a holistic understanding of the interlinked deprivations as well as coordinated efforts across multiple domains like education, health, housing etc. Mobilising resources and expertise for such comprehensive programs can strain family business capacities.

Target 1.3 Implementing Social Protection

Family businesses tend to have a stronger commitment to employee welfare stemming from their socioemotional wealth priorities (Cennamo et al., 2012). This increases their propensity to offer robust social protection schemes like healthcare benefits, insurance, childcare support and other social safety net measures for employees and communities. Offering robust social protection benefits can be costly and complex, especially for smaller family businesses with limited resources and capabilities. Designing and administering comprehensive schemes like healthcare, insurance, childcare etc. requires specialised expertise that may not be readily available.

Target 1.4 Equal Economic Rights

The ethical values and diversity goals of many family businesses drive them to promote equal economic rights and opportunities irrespective of gender or other status (Campopiano et al., 2017). They can provide equal access to resources like training, career growth, financial services and asset ownership for vulnerable groups. Deeply entrenched societal norms, discrimination and unequal power dynamics can hinder family firms' efforts to promote equal economic rights and opportunities. Overcoming unconscious biases and implementing truly inclusive policies requires deliberate effort and accountability. Access to resources like training, finance and assets is often restricted for vulnerable groups.

Target 1.5 Building Resilience

With their long-term sustainability mindset, family businesses are more inclined to implement eco-friendly practices that build resilience against economic disruption and climate impacts for the poor (Berrone et al., 2010). Their community ties also make them well-positioned partners for local resilience efforts like disaster preparedness and relief. Transitioning to eco-friendly and climate-resilient practices involves significant investments, technological upgradation and strategic reorientation which can be challenging for family businesses. Limited expertise, financial constraints and short-term pressures can disincentivise resilience-building measures.

Target 1.A Mobilising Resources

Family business' propensity for stakeholder engagement extends to partnerships that mobilise resources for poverty programs (Campopiano & De Massis, 2015). Their networks, political ties and commitment to social responsibility can facilitate collaborations channelling financing and technical resources for poverty eradication. Establishing productive cross-sector partnerships and mobilising resources like financing and technical know-how at a sufficient scale is a major obstacle. Family firms may lack experience in large-scale collaborations and face difficulties in attracting external partners and funders aligned with their poverty initiatives.

Target 1.B Pro-Poor Policy Frameworks

The societal embeddedness of family businesses often manifests in policy advocacy through industry associations and lobbying. This positions family businesses to constructively influence pro-poor and gender-sensitive policies enabling accelerated investment in poverty reduction strategies. Influencing policy making requires dedicated efforts in advocacy, lobbying and stakeholder engagement which can stretch family business capacities. Lack of unified voice and diverging priorities can dilute their policy impact ([Tehubijuluw et al., 2021](#)).

The research highlighted above identifies key issues relevant to each SDG target. There are several streams of research emerging in the literature on family business and sustainability that are relevant to this book. [Ferreira et al. \(2021\)](#) identify four streams of research in family business and sustainability: family business capital, family business strategy, family business social responsibility and family business succession. Family businesses that are aligned with the SDGs are more likely to have a positive impact on their financial performance ([Rahim et al., 2022](#)). Consumers and investors increasingly favour companies that demonstrate a commitment to sustainability. Lastly, many family businesses see themselves as ethical leaders and their commitment to ethical decision-making and responsible business conduct is enacted through business alignment and contribution to SDG#1.

The case study approach of this book provides insights into how SDG targets can be used to advance the family business's sustainability strategy and social responsibility concerning SDG#1. How a family's trans-generational sustainability intentions positively influence the strategy of the business and the family's concern for its reputation has been identified as a driver of sustainability in family businesses. Additionally, family businesses routinely combine innovation and tradition to achieve and maintain a sustainable competitive advantage.

Response Post-COVID-19 Pandemic

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many family businesses have shown to be more resilient and operate more sustainably than standard businesses (such as the shareholder approach). The reason for this lies in family businesses generally taking a long-term perspective on stakeholder relationships and the real need for long-term continuity planning to sustain the people within their businesses. The people in their business are most likely to be family members. However, like all businesses, the COVID-19 pandemic has placed financial pressures on family businesses. Based on these problems, we asked the question: How then can family businesses extend their capacity to operate more sustainably and with more social impact during times of business stress? We believe family businesses can offer unique insights into how sustainability and social impact can be part of the regenerative response to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This has implications for future business management and leadership in disruptive times.

The idea for the book came from two observations. The first observation was that family businesses that had sustainability at their core were performing well despite the impacts of the pandemic. The second observation was that the SDGs were being used as a framework for regeneration after the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The global pandemic of COVID-19 has presented challenges to those working towards achieving the goals. Effects of COVID-19 on the SDGs have had a negative effect. The social and economic impacts of COVID-19 have increased the divide between people living in rich and poor countries (Yuan et al., 2023). However, if there can be concerted action using the blueprint of the SDGs then human development can exceed pre-COVID-19 development trajectories (United Nations Environment Programme, 2021). What is needed is a combination of political commitment from all levels of government, investment in green economy initiatives, socially oriented innovation and a (re)focus on the purpose of business to align with the SDGs.

The importance of family businesses in their contribution to SDGs can be envisaged in several ways. First, many family business owners emphasise that the SDGs align with their core values and legacy-building efforts. They use the goals as a chance to align their business activities with a greater purpose and create a positive impact in their communities. Because of the nature of family businesses, they adopt a business purpose that provides a legacy for future generations. This results in a long-term perspective on business development and strategy. Family businesses also recognise that addressing the SDGs can enhance relationships with stakeholders, including customers, employees and local communities. Contributing to the achievement of the SDGs can foster goodwill and strengthen their reputation because of the external focus on global goals as opposed to just their own business goals (Barrett, 2017).

Challenges Facing Businesses in the Achievement of SDG#1

Family businesses are well-positioned to contribute to SDG#1 by promoting poverty eradication, but they face various challenges in their efforts. Overcoming these challenges will ensure a larger contribution to SDG#1. Many of the following challenges are noted by the family businesses showcased in this book. The first challenge is about resources. Resource constraints pose a significant challenge for many family businesses due to their relatively modest scale compared to larger corporations. These businesses often contend with limited financial means and a smaller workforce, which can hinder their capacity to invest comprehensively in initiatives centred on poverty alleviation. Striking a balance between these aspirations and other pressing demands becomes difficult, given the myriad competing priorities that family businesses must navigate. While pursuing profitability, growth and generational succession, achieving poverty eradication objectives necessitates careful planning to harmonise the priorities and multiple objectives.

Lack of expertise further compounds the challenge, as the implementation of effective poverty alleviation programs often requires specialised knowledge that might be beyond the reach of family businesses. Constraints on resources can hinder the hiring of experts or the development of in-house capabilities to adeptly

design and manage such initiatives. Furthermore, resistance to change emerges as a notable hurdle, particularly for family businesses with long-term established operational traditions. Introducing new poverty-related policies, practices or cultural shifts may meet resistance from both employees and family members, impeding the integration of poverty eradication measures.

Family businesses, in contrast to larger corporations, often encounter limited access to networks that could otherwise assist with their sustainability activities. The broader collaborations and partnerships that large companies can establish might not be as readily accessible for family businesses, affecting their ability to achieve poverty eradication objectives. Despite their long-term perspective, these businesses also face the pressure to demonstrate short-term results. This leads to the reduced prioritisation of poverty alleviation initiatives that are not going to bring immediate financial returns. The distinctive dynamics inherent in family-owned enterprises, particularly concerning family members as employees and potential successors, can influence the implementation of poverty eradication initiatives.

Managing relationships, addressing expectations and mitigating potential conflicts among family members can impact the introduction of effective poverty alleviation measures. Additionally, regulations pose a formidable hurdle, especially in industries with stringent labour and social welfare regulations. Family businesses, often constrained by limited legal and compliance resources, are challenged by adhering to complex regulatory frameworks. Engaging with external stakeholders for poverty-related initiatives requires concerted effort, time and proficient communication. Despite their strong community ties, family businesses must devote considerable resources to effectively engage with their communities in endeavours to promote poverty eradication. Finally, the measurement of impact emerges as a challenging endeavour, one that family businesses might find particularly difficult due to limitations in tools and expertise. Despite these challenges, family businesses can overcome them by focusing on their strengths, values and commitment to long-term sustainability. Engaging in partnerships and aligning poverty eradication initiatives with core business values can help family businesses make meaningful contributions to SDG#1 while addressing the challenges they may encounter.

The Chapters and Contribution to SDG#1

Chapter 3 in this book is the case study on the Warm Age Wood Company which is a family-run social enterprise in County Durham, England. The way in which it contributes to SDG#1 is through combatting fuel poverty by combining the sale of sustainable wood briquettes with a community-driven knitting initiative. The Warm Age Wood Company's business model is intricately tied to achieving SDG#1 by providing free or subsidised heating fuel to those in need. They also engage a network of volunteer knitters who create woolen items for sale with proceeds funding the purchase of more briquettes for distribution. This approach fosters community engagement and provides meaningful activity for local older