

Fostering Social Innovation and Youth Entrepreneurship for the Achievement of the UN 2030 Agenda: The Chinese Way



Liangrong Zu

The new agenda is a universal, integrated and transformative vision for a better world... An agenda for shared prosperity, peace and partnership... Above all, it pledges to leave no one behind.

Ban Ki-Moon, former UN Secretary-General
All our hopes for a better world rest on young people. The world is home to the largest generation of young people. Sustainable development, human rights, peace and security can only be achieved if we empower these young people as leaders.

Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary-General
Making the best use of anyone, no one is left behind, Making the most use of anything, nothing is left to waste.

Laozi, Tao Te Ching, Chapter 27

1 Introduction: Leave no One Behind, Chinese Wisdom and SDGs

Today, our world faces a multiplicity of complex challenges, including climate change, the erosion of human rights, inequalities and exclusion, migration and displacement, demographic transitions, rapid urbanization and other global mega trends. The world needs a powerful and influential institution which is able to address those twenty-first century challenges. The United Nations is the one we believe has a distinct and crucial role to play in leaving nobody behind and leaving nothing to waste. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the framework for advancing the well-being of humankind and the moral obligation for the United Nations to support all nations in eradicating poverty and setting the world on a sustainable path. The ambition and purpose of the Agenda is to ensure peace and prosperity for all on a healthy planet. One of the fundamental principles of the Agenda for making

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the greatest impact for people and planet is to ensure no one will be left behind. The United Nations declares in the Agenda “*As we embark on this great collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind. Recognizing that the dignity of the human person is fundamental, we wish to see the goals and targets met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society. And we will endeavour to reach the furthest behind first.*” (The United Nations 2015). The pledge to leave no one behind is a fundamental guiding principle for its implementation. The pledge of the Agenda embraces the wisdom of Laozi, our ancient Chinese sage, a great philosopher of Taoism in more than 2500 years ago. In his masterpiece of Tao Te Ching, Laozi says, “*make the best use of anyone, no one is left behind, make the most use of anything, nothing is left to waste.*”¹ Laozi was concerned not only about people, but about the planet, not only about human resources, but about natural resources. It embodies the core and guiding principle of sustainable development for the modern leaders to hold onto. It provides a shared roadmap to build a world that is inclusive, fair, sustainable, stable and prosperous.

“Ensuring no one is left behind” encompasses multiple meanings. For some, it will mean focusing action on disadvantaged groups of society, for example, people living in poverty, women, indigenous people, youth, older people, persons with disabilities, migrants, or people in conflict and post-conflicts situations. Others will focus on reducing inequalities between countries, including focusing action on countries at the lowest stages of development or facing challenging circumstances. It means that decades years from now, when the current and the next generations together assess the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, a key measure of success will be the extent to which it has allowed every single person to thrive, regardless of gender, race, age, religion, place of residence, or any other factor. The call to leave no one behind has been heeded—many organizations have already started to work on the implications of this principle for the delivery of the 2030 Agenda¹ and for their missions.

In this Chapter, ‘Ensuring no one is left behind’ will focus on the youth, particularly in the case of China. At the conceptual and practical levels, the Chapter will address four broad questions. First, who are those left behind? Second, why are they left behind? Third, what methods and mechanisms exist to reach and involve them? And fourth, what types of strategies and policies the Chinese authority has developed would be appropriate in order to leave no one behind? Figure 1 shows the framework of the core concepts and relationships of the concepts. The purpose of the UNSDGs is to realize the commitment of leaving no one behind. Succeeding in achieving the purpose of SDGs requires national authorities to engage and empower youth in SDGs, particularly to create an enabling environment that promotes innovation and youth entrepreneurship. Fostering innovation and youth entrepreneurship calls for multi-pronged strategies, implementation and involvement at all levels including government, industry, political, social and as well as educational sectors. The Chapter will examine the implications of ‘ensuring no one is left behind’ for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It will briefly discuss the connections between the commitment to leave no one behind and three related strategies for achievement

¹Laozi, Tao Te Ching, Chapter 27.

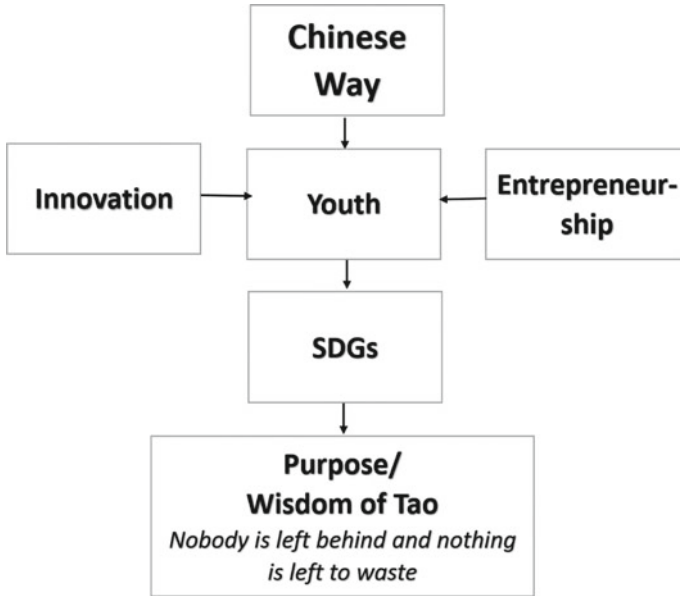


Fig. 1 The framework of SDGs, innovation, youth entrepreneurship and Chinese way

of the SDGs: innovation, youth, and entrepreneurship. The Chapter then reviews some of the concepts and methods used to identify those left behind, as well as some of the methods that are used to reach them in practice. Finally, the Chapter highlights examples of development strategies that Chinese government has used in the achievement of sustainable development goals.

2 Why Youths Matter? The Challenges and Drivers of Economic Growth

The pledge to leave no one behind places a focus on youth, women and girls, persons with disabilities, indigenous people and other vulnerable groups who continue to see their potential undermined by poverty and exclusion. Ensuring that these commitments are translated into effective action requires a precise understanding of target populations. The Chapter will shed some light on the particular situations of young peoples. According to UN data, the world today is home to 1.8 billion people between the ages of 10 and 24. Close to 90% of them live in developing countries, where they make up a large proportion of the population. Their numbers are expected to grow—between 2015 and 2030 alone, about 1.9 billion young people are projected to turn 15 years old. Populations in many regions are still comparatively young. In Africa, children under age 15 account for 41% of the population in 2017 and young persons

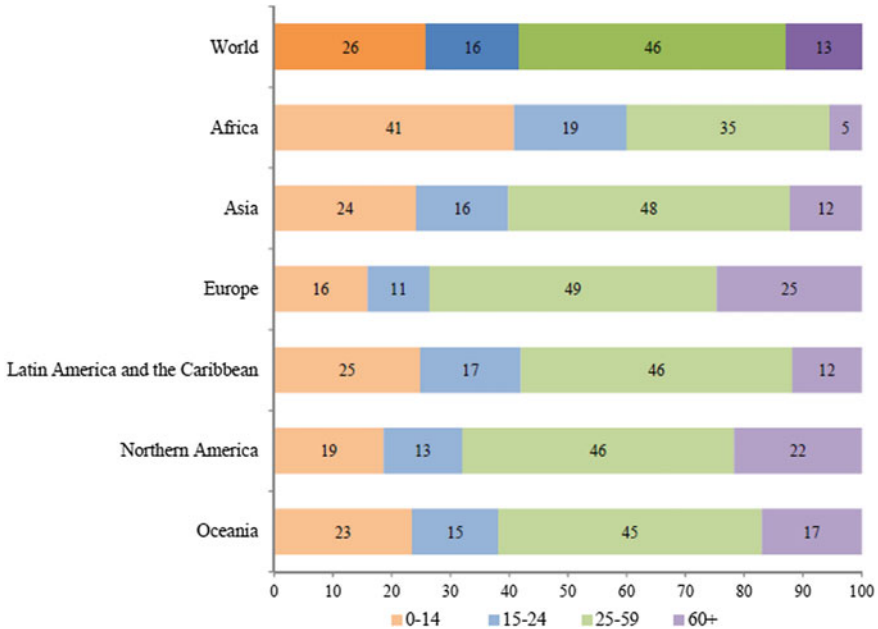


Fig. 2 Percentage of population in broad age groups for the World and by Region, 2017. *Source* United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2017). *World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision*. New York

aged 15–24 account for an additional 19% (Fig. 2). Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia, which have experienced greater declines in fertility, have smaller percentages of children (25 and 24%, respectively) but similar percentages of youth (17 and 16%, respectively). In total, these three regions are home to 1.8 billion children and 1.1 billion young persons in 2017.

Therefore, providing these generations of children and youth with health care, education, and employment opportunities, including in the poorest countries and groups, will be critical for the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Because young people want to and already contribute to the resilience of their communities, proposing innovative solutions, driving social progress and inspiring political change. They are also agents of change, mobilizing to advance the Sustainable Development Goals to improve the lives of people and the health of the planet. However, the benefits of development are not equally shared by the youth.

Young people are over-represented among the direct and indirect victims of violence. Some 200,000 homicides each year—43% of all homicides globally—involve children and adults aged 10–29 years. Young men have the highest risk of becoming homicide victims and the highest rates, by far, of being suspected homicide perpetrators (The United Nations 2016). Children are among those most affected by human trafficking and, in several regions, they make up the majority of trafficking

Table 1 Youth unemployment 2007–2017

	Youth unemployment rate, 2007–17 (percentages)				Unemployed youth, 2015–17 (millions)		
	2007–14	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017
World	12.9	13.1	13.1		70.5	71.0	71.0
Developed countries	15.0	14.5	14.3		10.2	9.8	9.6
Emerging countries	13.3	13.6	13.7		52.9	53.5	53.5
Developing countries	9.4	9.5	9.4		7.4	7.7	7.9
	Youth working poverty rate, 2007–17 (percentages)				Youth working poverty, 2015–17 (millions)		
	2007–14	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017
Total emerging and developing	38.4	37.7	36.9		159.9	156.0	152.2
Emerging countries	31.2	30.2	29.3		107.3	102.7	98.4
Developing countries	73.3	72.2	71.0		52.6	53.3	53.8

Source The ILO (2016)

victims. In sub-Saharan Africa and South-Eastern Asia, children comprise 65 and 57%, respectively, of total human trafficking victims (The United Nations 2017b). In addition, the youth is also facing the tough employment. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that the global youth unemployment rate is expected to reach 13.1% in 2016 and remain at that level through to 2017 (up from 12.9% in 2015). The ILO’s World Employment and Social Outlook 2016, Trends for Youth report shows that as a result, the global number of unemployed youth is set to rise by half a million this year to reach 71 million (Table 1)—the first such increase in 3 years (ILO 2016). Of greater concern is the share and number of young people, often in emerging and developing countries, who live in extreme or moderate poverty despite having a job. In fact, 156 million or 37.7% of working youth are in extreme or moderate poverty (compared to 26% of working adults).

In the case of China, in 2017, the estimated youth unemployment rate in China was at 10.8% (see Fig. 3) (Statista 2017). It is much higher than the average rate of developing countries, and extremely higher than the average rate of 4% of total unemployment in China. The youth employment is becoming one of the top priorities of Chinese government. To address the big challenge, Chinese central authorities released a detailed 10-year youth development plan in 2017, vowing better education, employment and healthcare for the nation’s youth. China has formulated the Medium and Long-Term Youth Development Program (2016–2025), which sets a general goal of establishing a “youth development policy system and work mechanism” by 2020 and improving the system by 2025. It requires expanding areas of employment for young people and fully leveraging fiscal, financial, tax, subsidy and other policy tools to support them in finding various forms of employment through multiple channels or starting their own businesses. Specifically, the plan sets educational goals of an average 13.5 years of education for the newly added labor force and a gross higher education enrollment rate of over 50% within 10 years.

Young people on one hand are facing incredible challenges, and on the other, they are main drivers of economic growth. They can take a lead in driving SDGs in a bid to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth. The international community and national authorities cannot achieve their missions and goals without partnering with young people. We must ensure they are not only heard but understood,

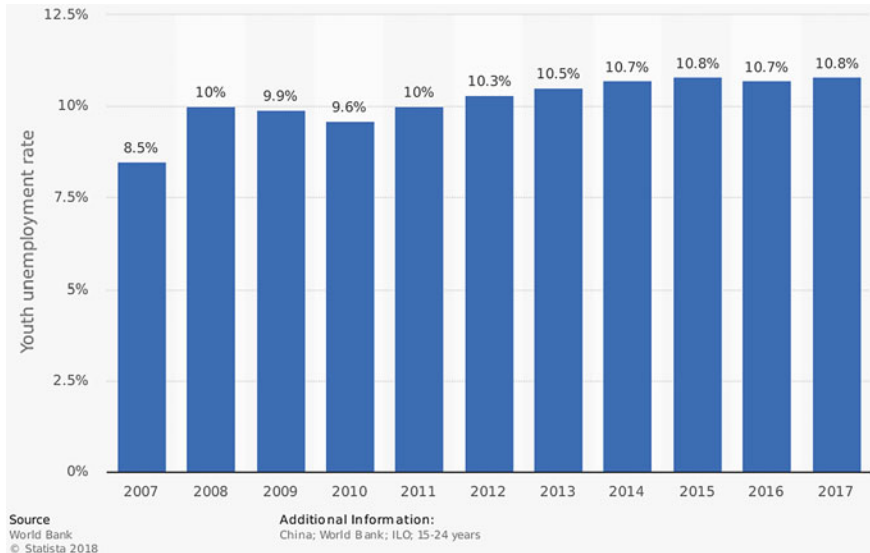


Fig. 3 China: youths unemployment rate from 2007 to 2017

not only engaged but empowered, and not only supporting but leading to be full-fledged partners in the work of international community and national authorities to build a better world for all, as they are both beneficial and partners. Therefore, if we provide young people with the necessary skills and opportunities needed to reach their potential, young people will be able to be a driving force for supporting development and contributing to peace and security. Youth-led organizations need to be encouraged and empowered to participate in translating the 2030 Agenda into local, national and regional policy. They play a significant role in the implementation, monitoring and review of the Agenda as well as in holding governments accountable. With political commitment and adequate resources, young people have the potential to make the most effective transformation of the world into a better place for all.

3 Why Youth Entrepreneurs Matters? The Change-Makers of Society and Driving Force of SDGs

In China, people have a saying “young people are the hope of a nation, and the future of the world.” This statement stands true in every sense. When a country has a healthy youth population, you will find the country making headway in terms of overall development and progress. A country with high aging population and lower youth population has many problems to content with that can slow its growth. Because young people are critical thinkers. They involve making sense of personal

experiences and asking questions about the world around you. They have the capacity to identify and challenge existing power structures and barriers to change, and to expose contradictions and biases. Young people are change-makers. They also have the power to act and mobilize others. Youth activism is on the rise the world over, bolstered by broader connectivity and access to social media. Young people are innovators. They often have direct knowledge of and insights into issues that are not accessible to adults. They best understand the problems they face and can offer new ideas and alternative solutions. Young people are communicators. Outside the international development sector, few people are aware that world leaders have come to a historic, far-reaching agreement to improve the lives of people and the planet by 2030. Young people can be partners in communicating the development agenda to their peers and communities at the local level, as well as across countries and regions. And finally, young people are leaders. When they are empowered with the knowledge of their rights and equipped with leadership skills, young people can drive change in their communities and countries. As young leaders of tomorrow, it is pivotal that youth are informed and engaged with the global vision for the future. Over the next fifteen years, youth will not only directly experience the outcome of SDGs and plans, but will also be the key driver for their successful implementation. For this reason, it is vital to raise awareness about the recently adopted 17 SDGs and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development among youth, build a platform for discussion, and create the conditions for active engagement.

As we discussed preceding section, one of the major challenges faced by China and other countries in the world today is to do with youth unemployment. The current global youth population is estimated to be at 1.2 billion aged 15–24 years, of which 620 million are employable and ninety percent of this population live in developing countries. Countries like China have a fast increasing youth population and the rate of unemployment too is rising rapidly. As per ILO's prediction approximately 660 million youth will be seeking employment by 2015. The youth unemployment is higher measuring up to 50–60% in Asia (MSG 2018). Chinese authorities and governments in other countries have focused on looking at framework and strategies to creating new jobs and increasing employment rates. In this context, fostering youth entrepreneurship has gained importance on the global and national policy agendas as a way to expand employment and earning opportunities. Youth entrepreneurship can help sustain growing economies; integrate youth into the workforce besides leading to overall development of society and is being recognized as a promising alternative and is being actively promoted by various agencies.

Entrepreneurship has become a key focus of research over the past three decades. With the focus on entrepreneurship and its potential for economic development and job creation, the recognition of entrepreneurs as having an important role in the economy has emerged. Entrepreneurship is widely acknowledged as a driver of sustainable economic growth as entrepreneurs create new businesses, drive and shape innovation, speed up structural changes in the economy, and introduce new competition—thereby contributing to productivity. Entrepreneurship also drives job creation and hence entrepreneurship is a critical contributor to economic growth that is inclusive and reduces poverty. The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) defines

entrepreneurship as “any attempt at new business or new venture creation, such as self-employment, a new business organization, or the expansion of an existing business, by an individual, a team of individuals, or an established business”.

In low-and middle-income countries, self-employment is the dominant form of entrepreneurship and accounts for an important share of youth employment. According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), a significant proportion of the youth population aged 18–24 were nascent entrepreneurs or owners-managers of a new business in 2016—about 10% in Asia and Oceania, 15% in Africa and 17% in Latin America and the Caribbean. For many people in these regions, including youth, entrepreneurial activity is the sole entry point into the labour market and the only way out of poverty. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, approximately one third of all youth with a new or nascent business were pushed towards entrepreneurship out of necessity. Often this involved small-scale self-employed subsistence activities, in farming or outside the agricultural sector. Therefore it is important for the international community and national authorities to actively engage youth in sustainable development efforts through fostering entrepreneurship is central to achieving sustainable, inclusive and stable societies by the target date, and to averting the worst threats and challenges to sustainable development, including the impacts of climate change, unemployment, poverty, gender inequality, conflict, and migration. The study shows that youth entrepreneurship has many great advantages in contribution to social progress and environmental sustainability. For instance, young entrepreneurship is an option to create employment for the youth; young entrepreneurs are more likely to hire fellow youths; young entrepreneurs are particularly responsive to new economic opportunities and trends; young people are active in high growth sectors; young people with entrepreneurial skills are better employees; young people are more innovative and often create new forms of independent work; young people who are self-employed have higher “life satisfaction” (African Economic Outlook 2013); entrepreneurship offers unemployed or discouraged youth an opportunity to build sustainable livelihoods and a chance to integrate themselves into society (The United Nations 2013); entrepreneurial experience and/or education help youth develop new skills that can be applied to other challenges in life. Non-cognitive skills, such as opportunity recognition, innovation, critical thinking, resilience, decision-making, teamwork, and leadership will benefit all youth whether or not they intend to become or continue as entrepreneurs.

4 Why Social Innovation Matters? The Engine of Social Change

Traditionally when we talk about innovation, we immediately think of technical innovation, service innovation, organizational innovation, etc. However, these innovations alone have proven to be insufficient to address the pressing challenges of today such as climate change, resource depletion, economic deprivation, poverty

alleviation, increased migration and improved life quality. We need a brand new innovation to address these problems, and to enable transitions to more sustainable solutions. Social innovations are new strategies, concepts, ideas and organizations that aim to meet social needs resulting from working conditions, education, community development, and health. From the academic perspective, social innovation is defined as 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. Social Innovation happens in the process of innovation, and it also happens in new work and new forms of cooperation, especially those that work towards a sustainable society. The Centre for Social Innovation at the Stanford Graduate School of Business defines social innovation as “the process of inventing, securing support for, and implementing novel solutions to social needs and problems.” OECD defines it as concerning conceptual, process or product change, organisational change and changes in financing, and dealing with new relationships with stakeholders and territories. From the European perspective, social innovations are defined as new ideas that meet social needs, create social relationships and form new collaborations. These innovations can be products, services or models addressing unmet needs more effectively. The World Economic Forum’s Global Agenda Council on Social Innovation, an advisory body comprised of leading practitioners, thought leaders and academics, defines social innovation as “the application of innovative, practical, sustainable, market-based approaches to benefit society in general, and low-income or underserved populations in particular”. Social innovation means being more strategic, more ambitious and more collaborative in how access and opportunity can be provided for billions of low-income people to participate in the global economy.

Social innovation often emerges through companies that seek more than pure profits or when nonprofit foundations find more secure funding models. In other words, social innovation can be achieved through hybrid organizations that combine aspects of nonprofits and for-profits to achieve social impact. Therefore, an important aspect of social innovation is to discover new organizational models that have social concerns, but also have sustainable revenue generation.

Business cannot succeed in ecologies and societies that fail. Social innovators are invited to go into training to become regenerative practitioners. They need to go to the very heart of the markets and align new revenue opportunities with a value-generating capability that make both people and the rest of the natural world stronger, more vibrant, and more resilient. Social innovators’ ecological and economic decisions should coincide with ecosystem boundaries. Using natural resources efficiently within the system in regenerative loops is both profitable and better for the environment, on which all business is dependent. The carbon-intensive waste economy concentrated in narrow bands of the population has had its day. Business models that harness environmental performance are engines of competitive advantage. Innovation should balance new sustainable consumption and production patterns with protection of terrestrial ecosystems.

5 Social Innovation, Social Entrepreneurship and SDGs

5.1 *Social Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship*

We understand from the preceding section that the purpose of social innovation is to look for new ideas and methods of solving social and environmental problems. It is also the effective ways to meet the ambitious challenges, like the SDG 2030 Agenda. The main driver for social innovation is the need to address unmet social needs. Most social innovations are initiated through entrepreneurial activities from the bottom up, by organizations and actors with roots in civil society and the third sector (such as cooperatives, associations and foundations). One of the most exciting sectors of social innovation today are a group of social entrepreneurship startup companies that have sustainable business models and apply emerging technologies to achieve social impact. The social entrepreneurship companies attempt to tackle problems from scratch to develop approaches that might be difficult to implement in more established organizations. The commonality that can be found in all these social innovation approaches is a desire to find new organizational models to achieve social impact. We need bolder and more ambitious efforts to achieve the SDG 2030 Agenda. And we can look for novel solutions among the various practitioners of social innovation around the world.

Social entrepreneurs can pursue social innovation opportunities which SDGs will create, particularly in the social and environmental areas. The opportunities can be grouped into four broad clusters such as building future markets, strengthening supply chains, investing in talent and leveraging finance. Each cluster offers a starting point for entrepreneurs and companies to look for social innovation opportunities most relevant to them. Specific opportunities will be driven by multiple factors including a company's operating environment, geographic footprint, product portfolio, supplier base and raw material dependencies, and talent models. For example, market-facing companies from sectors such as healthcare or consumer goods have embraced business growth through innovations in products, services or distribution channels targeting underserved consumers. Companies heavily reliant on supply chains, including from food, agriculture or textiles, have pursued strategies that secure raw material supply, increase product quality and engage customers, while companies in professional services or IT focus on building future talent pools and enhancing employee loyalty.

Companies that successfully pursue social innovation as an opportunity for developing new markets typically innovate in three specific ways. First, they design products and services that respond to the unique needs and behaviours of low-income customers. This can include developing new products and services or adapting existing product lines for their needs (e.g. food brands fortifying existing products with micronutrients to address malnutrition). Second, the products and services must offer strong value for money despite—or because of—low purchasing power, necessitating the design of cost-effective products. Third, products must be made accessible

across large geographies with poor infrastructure, which requires thinking creatively about distribution channels.

There are three major strategic benefits for social innovation in a corporate supply chain. The first motivation is to ensure the stability of access to raw materials. Many supply chains, particularly those in the agriculture, food and consumer goods industries, are laced with intermediaries, all of whom take a share of the price paid by the consumer. Unless small suppliers can increase productivity or volumes, households may abandon crops that have become unviable, threatening the supply of raw materials. Extreme weather is another driver of supply volatility. Diversification of and investment into a supplier base can create direct and trusted relationships with farmers, which help maintain stability in supplies and prices in the face of extreme weather events. The second strategic benefit revolves around improving the quality of raw materials, which supports a company's ability to achieve a price premium while strengthening consumer loyalty. A third motivation is reputation and proactively responding to changing consumer preferences. An increasing number of consumers are willing to pay a premium for products sourced through socially responsible supply chains.

Increasing levels of diversity in the workforce can present a significant social innovation opportunity. Seeking a more diverse workforce both increases the size of the recruiting pool and can introduce new capabilities into an organization. Many companies have realized the opportunity this can bring—according to the “2011 Fostering Innovation Through a Diverse Workforce survey” by Forbes, 85% of companies agree talent diversification results in more innovative product generation ideas. Firms have recognized that “new” talent pools (other examples might be immigrants, the long-term unemployed and the disabled) can bring new strengths and perspectives to their team. However, to successfully tap into these groups, firms need to assess how existing hiring approaches and work procedures will need to be adapted. Firms have approached the issue by searching for allies who share the same mission and are willing to enter into partnerships. Governments or educational institutions—or even competitors—are often willing to co-invest or bring in their expertise and teaching infrastructure. At the same time, companies can play an active role by (co-)designing the curricula, bringing in their practical experiences and ensuring a targeted skill development that matches the demands of business.

Finance can be a key tool for a company to engage in social innovation. Companies have helped grow social enterprises by managing impact investment funds or incubators. In addition to generating financial returns, such investments can offer a pipeline of ideas to support a company's innovation agenda and can become future partners, or even future customers. To benefit the most from its impact investments, a company should invest in start-ups that are strongly aligned with the company's business strategy or operating in adjacent markets. Targeted investments into social entrepreneurs can generate new business opportunities for the company.

5.2 *Social Innovation and Sustainable Development*

The UN now acknowledges that social innovation approaches are needed as mainstream tools for delivering sustainable development, alongside large-scale public and private funding. Today, the role of bottom-up social innovation in designing and delivering public services to income-poor and marginalized people in a gender sensitive manner, especially when based on local acceptance and advocacy campaigns, is seen as an important issue in achieving the SDGs by 2030. In reality, social innovation and sustainable development go hand-in-hand. For example, the United Nations Social Development Network is supporting Asia-Pacific countries' use of social innovation to tackle ageing population and gender inequality (The United Nations 2017a). In India, building a mass social movement around the lack of basic utilities and services, through the mobilization of opinion and advocacy across as many groups and interests as possible, can help change the behaviour and attitudes of both citizens and service providers to issues like public health. The potential benefits of public-civil partnerships in northern Ghana, where the former provides the framework and expertise and the latter provides community activism, knowledge and resources, is a core issue addressed in the high impact 'School for Life' basic education initiative in rural areas. In 2001, a bottom-up social innovation was launched in Brazil's dry Northeast by a network of civil society institutions and small farmers working to promote co-existence and local empowerment. One million cisterns were built for capturing rainwater to provide rural families with healthy drinking water year round, regardless of when the rains come. This was undertaken in partnership with the government and the private sector, but retained its strong focus on ensuring the democratization of access to water in order to ease the lives of the poor and especially women whose task it normally is to obtain water for family use. The experimental cistern was designed to capture rainwater, and is easy to build at low cost, using local knowledge and support from local authorities, universities and companies for technical assistance. The result is not only good quality drinking water but also the empowerment of family farmers, women and local organizations, as well as their capacity to influence public policy.

Social innovation is thus increasingly recognized as an important component of the new innovation framework necessary for sustainable development. In addition to most developed countries, it is starting to become embedded and recognized in many developing countries and emerging economies. It helps to meet social needs (for example for an education or health service) in a new way that also involves collaboration with, and the empowerment of, the service user or beneficiary. It works with them rather than just doing something to them as passive recipients, also developing their own capabilities around and ownership of the service, and thereby transforming their social relations and improving their access to power and resources.



Fig. 4 Business opportunity and SDGs. *Source* Better Business, Better World, Business and Sustainable Development Commission (2017)

5.3 SDGs Create Business Opportunities for Youth Entrepreneurs

“ The SDGs provide all businesses with a new lens through which to translate the world’s needs and ambitions into business solutions. These solutions will enable companies to better manage their risks, anticipate consumer demand, build positions in growth markets, secure access to needed resources, and strengthen their supply chains, while moving the world towards a sustainable and inclusive development path” (UN, 2017).

According to a report by the Business and Sustainable Development Commission, the SDGs could generate US\$12 trillion in business savings and revenue across four sectors by 2030 (see Fig. 4): energy, cities, food and agriculture, and health and well-being. It points out the 60 biggest market opportunities related to delivering the SDGs, such as sustainable aquaculture and mine rehabilitation. The report also estimates the creation of 380 million new jobs linked to these four sectors in the next ten or fifteen years due to alignment of business strategy to the SDGs.

Business leaders and entrepreneurs can unlock new market opportunities worth US\$5 trillion and generate 230 million jobs in Asia by 2030 through sustainable business models, according to Better Business, Better World Asia, a new report released today by the Business and Sustainable Development Commission (BSDC). The research also shows that, instead of being a constraint to growth, companies pursuing strategies aligned with the Global Goals could open economic opportunities across 60 “hot spots” worth up to US\$12 trillion and increase employment by up to 380 million jobs globally by 2030. Asia represents 40% of the global value, and nearly two-thirds of total jobs. In terms of the impact of SDGs on business in Asia and China, BSDC estimated in its 2017 Report, SDGs will generate US\$5 trillion of economic value across four key systems: food and agriculture: US\$1 trillion for food and agriculture; US\$1.5 trillion for cities, US\$1.9 trillion for energy and minerals, and US\$670 billion for Health and Well-being. Of the total value for Asia, around US\$2.3 trillion could be found in China alone, US\$1.1 trillion in India, US\$1.1 trillion in developing and emerging Asia, and US\$0.7 trillion in developed Asia, which include Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and South Korea. The estimated value of US\$5 trillion is conservative. Additional value could be released from other sectors, including information communication technologies (ICT), education, and consumer goods. Globally, these sectors could add a further 66% to the global value of US\$12 trillion. Pricing in environmental costs such as climate change could increase the ‘real’ size of the prize by a further 40%. And making progress on the single global goal of gender equality in countries in Asia where women are not strongly engaged in the economy is likely to add an additional 30% to the economic growth of these countries. According to the report, 230 million jobs could be generated through SDGs-aligned business models in Asia, however, these jobs will only meet Global Goals targets if they provide decent work that creates sufficient reward and development opportunities for workers. It is obvious that on one hand, SDG creates enormous opportunities for business, on the other; it demands strategies for tackling urgent environmental and social challenges so that market value can be successfully unlocked. Aligning these strategies with the Global Goals is not just good for society and the environment, but makes strategic business sense.

If we want to identify the impact of the specific SDGs on business, we can take a look at the study which was undertaken by Frost and Sullivan and GlobeScan on behalf of CSR Europe. The study demonstrates that while the SDGs have already been embraced by many business leaders, middle-management remains disconnected from their narrative. The study warns that while progress has been made, collaborative efforts must be reinforced in order to meet the UN 2030 Agenda. The SDGs not only provide a common language for the private and public sector to communicate, they also offer Europe a critical opportunity to foster sustainable and inclusive growth and secure trust in Europe. Figure 5 showcases the market value that four sustainable development goals will generate in the future: *SDG4: Quality Education, SDG 5: Gender Equality, SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy, SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities* (Frost and Sullivan 2017).

Education is always an important area that influences business. ‘Education for all’ has been a global campaign since 2000 when UNESCO set in motion the movement

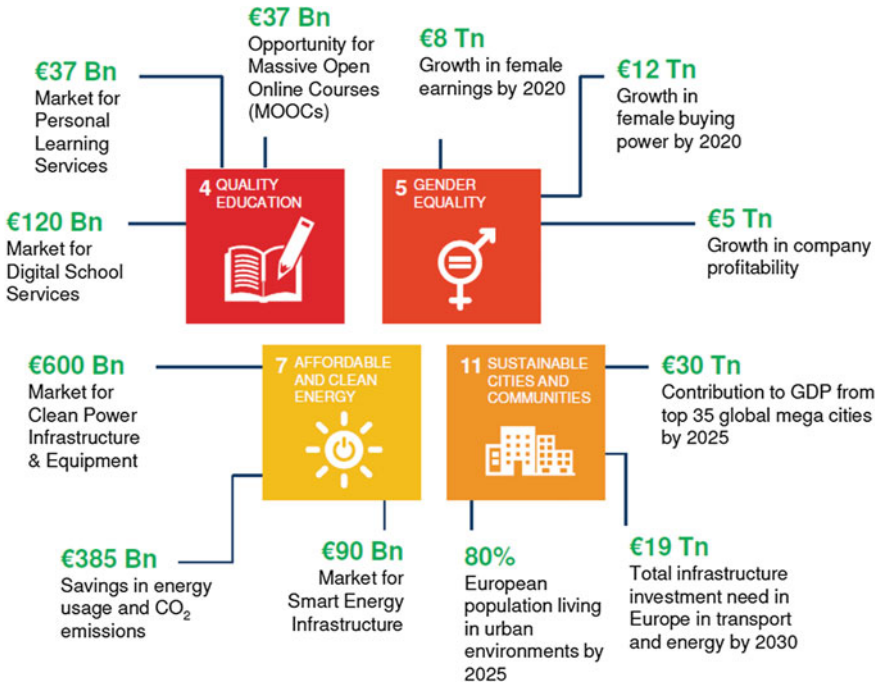


Fig. 5 Economic business opportunities from selected SDGs. *Source* Frost and Sullivan and GlobalScan (2017)

with over 160 countries pledging to achieve six education related goals by 2015. Two years have passed since the desired timeline and sadly only a third of the countries have achieved six goals with many still struggling to provide basic education. 58 million children are out of school and over 100 million without a primary education. In addition to the problem of access, the quality of education has also suffered with poor teacher-student ratios (1–47 in Pakistan) and low conversion rates to higher education (30% dropout from secondary school globally).

It is believed that a more unexpected and consequently untapped source of growth is the so called ‘gender dividend’. This is the growing body of evidence that by addressing female consumers and harnessing the power of females within private industry, businesses will yield significant returns. Equality and empowerment for women and girls is not just the right thing to do but essential to achieve our most promising and sustainable future. By 2025, women will change the workforce landscape with an average participation rate of more than 40%—an additional 250 million women workers. This will close the gender gap in labour participation rates by 25%, which, in turn, will have a huge economic impact across both developing and developed nations. Equal male and female employment rates would boost the economy of European nations by 5–9%.

Energy is a key enabler of economic growth, a driver of industrial output and business, and also a crucial ingredient to bringing progress in sectors such as transportation and healthcare. Energy is also a critical factor in guaranteeing access to clean water, sanitation and education in developing countries, as well as bringing essentials such as warmth, light and safety to people's homes. In essence, the security and efficiency of energy is one of the most essential components of improving the lives of individuals while also securing a sustainable and dynamic future for society.

Providing for smart and sustainable solutions is vital for cities. Urban migration along with city expansion is resulting in resources becoming scarce. Frost and Sullivan estimates project that, by 2025, the global urban population is expected to breach the 4.6 billion mark, which will roughly account for 58% of the total population.

6 The Chinese Way for SDGs

6.1 *The Chinese Way Demystified*

I discussed the role of youth, entrepreneurship, and social innovation that play in achieving the UN 2030 Agenda, and in the meantime, I also showcased the great business opportunities that SDGs will create for private sectors and youth entrepreneurs. I will concentrate on the Chinese way and its relationship with the achievement of SDGs in this section.

I have the impression of whenever we talk China, and whatever we touch on China, we immediately think of the Chinese way. What is the Chinese way? Let's look at it from the perspective of life and culture. Min and Xu (2014) explored the Chinese Way and culture through the examination of the nine core concepts that best represent the Chinese way of life: *doctrine of mean, tribalism, hierarchicalism, polymorphism, usefulness, emotionalism, wealthism, effortlessness, and cynicism* (Min and Xu 2014). Doctrine of Mean (DoM) is fundamental to the Chinese way of life. It requires people not go to extremes and instead strive to be in the middle. Finding equilibrium is not the same as finding the mean, and most certainly, finding the mean should not be the objective. On social issues, DoM is reflected in a collective desire to seek a middle ground solution when there is a difference of opinion on a particular topic.

At the core of tribalism is the "*us versus them*" mentality. As long as one's own tribe can survive, another tribe's fortune or misery is inconsequential. People behave differently when they are within a circle than when they are outside a circle. Within a tribe (circle), one exhibits dedication, loyalty, and sacrifice, but the opposite is likely true towards people outside the tribe. One trusts people within the same tribe, but not outsiders. Within the tribe, collectivism reigns supreme; but outside the tribe, the Chinese are quite individualistic—even more so than their American counterparts. Tribalism also impacts how the Chinese view other countries. The guiding principle of Chinese foreign policy—non-interference—can be traced back to tribalism, where one is not supposed to interfere with other tribes' internal affairs and vice versa.

Polymorphism in China takes two forms: across individuals and within an individual. Polymorphism across individuals is essentially the heterogeneity that exists among the Chinese. Polymorphism within an individual is more complex, yet integral to the Chinese way of life. In essence, the Chinese are taught and expected to behave differently in different situations, and they do not consistently follow the same principles in all contexts (Min and Jie 2014). The author claims that understanding of Chinese Way can equip international business students, scholars, and practitioners with a deep understanding of a society that is a major player in global business today and offers a foundation for successful business interactions with Chinese companies, organizations, and people.

The Chinese Way of Life (CWoL) is a little different from the Chinese Way of Governance (CWoG). For the purpose of this Chapter, particularly for the SDGs, I will focus on the second way. I interpret CWoG as the processes of interaction and decision-making among the actors involved in a collective problem that lead to the creation, reinforcement, or reproduction of social norms and institutions in China, it combines the top-down and bottom-up approach. These strategic approaches lead to increased insight, effective project management, and clear lines of communication across a company or a project. Top down approach starts with the big picture. It breaks down from there into smaller segments. The top-down approach relies on the higher authority figures to determine larger goals that will filter down to the tasks of lower level employees. In comparison, the bottom-up style of communication features a decision-making process that gives the entire people a voice in company goals. Each task remains fluid as employees achieve their goals. Therefore, I believe that CWoG is effective, efficient and productive. Let's take a look at the role of CWoG played in the achievement of SDGs.

6.2 The Chinese Way for the UN 2030 Agenda: The Top-Down Approach

In September 2015, Mr. Jinping Xi, President of China, attended the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit and joined other leaders in endorsing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As the largest developing countries in the world, China has always place development as the first priority. According to the 13th Five-Year Plan approved in 2016, it defines the development concept featuring innovative, coordinated, green, open, and shared development. China will pursue innovative development and improve the quality and efficiency of development in the future. Coordinated development will be promoted to form a balanced structure of development. China has developed the strategies and taken measures to implement the 2030 Agenda in accordance with national conditions and respective characteristics. For example, the Chinese way of the seven approaches were developed: *synergy of strategies, institutional guarantee, social mobilization, resource input, risk management, international cooperation, and oversight and review.*

Synergy of Strategies aims at integrating the 2030 Agenda into China's mid-and-long term development strategies and creating synergy and complementarity between international agenda and domestic strategies. The focus in this synergy includes the following three aspects:

First, integrating the 17 SDGs and 169 targets into China's overall development planning and break down, incorporate, or link them in specialized plans. The China's 13th Five-Year Plan commits to the "active implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". Government departments of China have turned the SDGs into specific tasks in the economic, social and environmental areas. In the economic field, the Chinese government has formulated the National Outline for Innovation-Driven Development Strategy, the National Sustainable Agricultural Development Plan (2015–2030), and the National Outline for Information Technology Development Strategy and. In the social field, it has published the Decision of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and the State Council on Winning the Tough Battle in Poverty Reduction and the Healthy China Outline (2030). In the environmental field, it has prepared the China Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Plan of Action (2011–2030) and the National Climate Change Program (2014–2020). Second, bringing the development objectives of local governments in line with the 2030 Agenda. Based on the Outline of the 13th Five-Year Plan, the 31 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the central government in China have formulated their own five-year plans, and the cities and counties have completed their road maps and annual plans. In this way, the central and local governments have created synergy for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Third, pushing multilateral mechanisms to formulate action plan for the 2030 Agenda to create synergy at international level. China plays a leading role in facilitating the G20 to draw up action plan on implementation of the 2030 Agenda. China also initiated the "Belt and Road" strategy for assisting other countries in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. And China intends to support the concerted efforts that regional commissions and specialized agencies of the United Nations have made to formulate actions plans for the goals and targets that fall within their respective regions or fields.

The second approach is institutional guarantee. It refers to the institutions, mechanisms and policies that will support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and it includes the four aspects: first, promoting targeted reforms to establish an institutional framework for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The Chinese government will step up the improvement of institutions and systems to ensure that the market plays the decisive role in resource allocation and the government better plays its role, and remove all institutional barriers to scientific development, and to provide institutional impetus for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. China will also advance the construction of innovation demonstration zones for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda to accumulate best practices. Second, the rule of law must be improved to provide legal guarantee for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. China will step up the legislative work to improve the market economic system, develop democratic political system, foster advanced socialist culture, innovate on social governance, safe-guard citizens' rights and enhance people's livelihood, safe-

guard national security, protect the environment and improve government functions. It will also take efforts to build a comprehensive, scientific, effective and law-based government administration system. Third, ensuring to provide policy guarantee for the 2030 Agenda. The Chinese government will establish a comprehensive policy system, which is led by national policies and supported by specialized policies and local policies, with emphasis on the ten aspects: eliminating poverty and hunger, maintaining economic growth, advancing industrialization, improving social security and social services, safeguarding equity and justice, strengthening environmental protection, addressing the climate change, enhancing energy and resource efficiency, improving national governance and promoting international cooperation. Fourth, the responsibilities and accountability for governments must be articulated at all levels. China will not only enhance the horizontal cross-region and inter-agency coordination, but also establish a vertical implementation mechanism linking the central, local and grassroots levels. China's domestic inter-agency coordination mechanism comprised of 43 government departments has been established for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and its local governments will set up corresponding working mechanisms to ensure smooth implementation.

The third approach is social mobilization. Effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires better understanding, recognition and participation of people in SDGs, particularly, focusing on the three aspects: First, enhancing the sense of responsibility in participating in the implementation. Adhering to the principle of putting people first, China will implement the 2030 Agenda by the people and for the people. China will help its people fully appreciate the personal and public interests in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and enhance their initiative and sense of responsibility in the implementation. Second, extensive use of the media for social mobilization. China will make the 2030 Agenda more accessible to people and create an enabling environment for the implementation via social media and public campaigns. Third, promoting public participation. China will engage non-governmental groups, the private sector and individuals especially the youth in training courses, networking and management activities related to the 2030 Agenda, to help them realize the importance of coordinated economic, social and environmental sustainability and build a broad-based social consensus on the 2030 Agenda. Governments at all levels will play their due role in coordination, mobilization, implementation and supervision to form the social synergy for the Agenda.

In alignment with the strategies, China proposed nine key areas as the top priorities in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

- Goal 1 and 2: Eradicating poverty and hunger through targeted measures to alleviate and eliminate poverty, and enhancing agricultural production capacities and food security.
- Goal 8: Implementing innovation-driven development strategies and generating momentum for sustainable, healthy and stable economic growth.
- Goal 9: Advancing industrialization to inject impetus to coordinated development between urban and rural areas and among the three dimensions of sustainable development.

- Goal 10: Improving social security and social services to ensure equal access to basic public services.
- Goal 16: Safeguarding equity and social justice to improve people's well-being and promoting all-round human development.
- Goal 14–15: Protecting the environment and building protective barriers for eco-security.
- Goal 13: Addressing climate change actively and integrating climate change response into national development strategies.
- Goal 7: Promoting efficient utilization of resources and sustainable energy.
- Goal 16: Improving national governance and ensuring economic and social development in line with the rule of law.

Committing to delivering all 17 goals, China has identified several top priorities within the agenda: sustainable consumption and production, health and education, equality, employment, and migration. Implementing the 2030 Agenda is a systemic project. Chinese authorities are also determined to provide sound support from five dimensions:

- Strengthening capacity building of governments to improve institution building, increase public resources, and generate internal growth momentum.
- Creating an enabling international environment for development, building a balanced, win-win and inclusive multilateral trading system and improving economic governance.
- Engaging with all stakeholders, and working towards a more equitable and balanced partnership for development.
- Promoting coordination mechanism and incorporating development policy into macroeconomic policy coordination.
- Improving evaluation and assessment of performance by conducting regular reviews of implementation progress while review of national implementation would be done according to respective national conditions and the principle of voluntary action.

The year of 2016 is the first year of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. China has made great efforts in its implementation, linking the 2030 Agenda with domestic mid-and-long term development strategies. The domestic coordination mechanism for the implementation, comprised of 43 government departments, has been established to guarantee the implementation. Great efforts has been made to publicize the 2030 Agenda nationwide in order to mobilize domestic resources, raise public awareness, and creating favorable social environment for the implementation. China will also strengthen inter-sector policy coordination, review and revise relevant laws and regulations to provide policy and legislative guarantee for the implementation. In the next 5 years, China is determined to lift all the 55.75 million rural residents living below the current poverty line out of poverty, and to double its GDP and people's per capita income of 2010. China has already released the Position Paper on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which reflects China's views on the principles, priorities, policies

and progress made in the implementation of the 2030 agenda. China will also issue its national plan of implementing the 2030 Agenda this year and share its development experience with other countries.

6.3 The Chinese Way for Innovation and Entrepreneurship: The Bottom-up Approach

Creativity and innovation are drivers of economic growth as China looks to young entrepreneurs to steer it away from an investment-led model. Over the past two decades, entrepreneurship in China has grown at an exponential rate. It is bringing forth disruptive changes not only to China but increasingly also to the rest of the world. As economic growth slows and the property sector cools, China is relying on more people, especially young people, to be creative and innovative enough to turn their ideas into economic benefit. The government hopes young entrepreneurs will help transform China from productivity-driven into innovation-driven economy. Innovation and entrepreneurship is always the driving force of economic growth in China. The future growth in China can come from innovation, not just in the use of technology but through imaginative ways of managing businesses and processes. Capturing these gains would make China a principal contributor to global growth (Daniel 2015).

Mass entrepreneurship and innovation is the leading agenda of China's national economic strategy. It has been an effective driver for both economic growth and the consistent transition between traditional and new growth engines. It has also significantly contributed to the creation of new jobs and the increase in incomes. China issued a policy to boost mass entrepreneurship and innovation in 2015, and adopted a guideline in 2017 to further enhance the support for innovation and entrepreneurship. The purpose of the policy is to intensify structural reform, boost efforts to implement the strategy of pursuing innovation-driven development, and removed all institutional obstacles which impede mass entrepreneurship and innovation. The government is determined to innovate its institutional mechanisms to facilitate mass entrepreneurship and innovation. It aims at creating a better environment for fair competition, deepening business system reforms, strengthening intellectual property protection and establishing a mechanism for the training and hiring of talented professionals; related government bodies are optimizing their financial policies to support mass entrepreneurship and innovation. China will also strengthen financial support policies, inclusive funding measures and more government purchasing in the near future. Statistics of the State Administration for Industry and Commerce show that the country saw the registration of more than 13 million new enterprises between March 2014 and February 2017, 94.6% of which are in the private sector, adding an average of 15,600 new enterprises on a daily basis in the first five months of this year, giving employment a major boost (Xu 2017).

Social entrepreneurs and social enterprises have been also growing in China over past years. The consensus about social enterprise is that this new type of organization, possessing both social purpose and business traits, and combining innovation with entrepreneurship, can play an important role in poverty alleviation. It can also enhance participation and capacity building for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, establishing social capital and ensuring sustainable development. More and more NGO leaders and intellectuals believe that social enterprise will be a remedy for many social problems and unmet social needs, and a boost for social sector development in China. As a result, hundreds of social enterprises have emerged in the last eight years. The findings of SEFORIS research in 2015 show that Chinese social entrepreneurial activities span a wide variety of fields, but the majority of these activities fall in to three broad categories: Education, (21%), Community and Social Services (21%), and Business Services for SMEs (29%). It also found that over 75% of social entrepreneurs are under 39 years old (Ding 2017).

Social enterprise in its current form is a new phenomenon in China. But as an old Chinese saying goes: a little spark may kindle a great fire. Many social enterprises are rising stars with great potential due to their unique positioning and innovative approach to tackling societal challenges, and satisfying unmet social needs, especially from underprivileged groups in China.

7 Conclusion

The SDGs set out the UN agenda for people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership achieving a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable society for all by 2030. The purpose and vision of the Agenda can only be achieved if people's mindset is changed and people's trust in today's capitalism is restored. The former Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon once said, "*The SDGs represent the change we need in order to restore people's trust in the global economy. The SDGs represent an enormous opportunity to make our economy work with dignity for all, prosperity for all and a better planet for all... The SDGs aim to end poverty in all its forms everywhere, ensuring people live in dignity and prosperity while protecting the planet.*"² Creating a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable society where everyone can live in dignity and prosperity is always a great challenge and a long way to go. The challenge is how we are able to create a new economic system and model that unleashes innovation and entrepreneurship potential in young people as a creative force, and particularly, empower young people as leaders and engage them in the achievement of the SDGs. We believe that it might be the most important responsibility for the United Nations to shoulder in its attempt to strengthen and increase commitments at the global, regional and national levels so that young people's needs can be met, help them realize their rights, and recognize their positive contributions as agents of change. Because "*All our hopes for a better*

²Ban Ki Moon, 17 July 2016. <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2016-07-17/secretary-general%E2%80%99s-remarks-opening-unctad-14-prepared-delivery>.

*world rest on young people. The world is home to the largest generation of young people. Sustainable development, human rights, peace and security can only be achieved if we empower these young people as leaders*³. Young people of today are the ones who will lead the world in creating the new civilization we desperately need. They are already hard at work, looking for ideas and an action agenda. Once they know what they want, they can achieve it much more easily than it could have been done thirty years back. Today's youth are remarkably well equipped for any big task. They are better educated than any generation in history; they are highly diverse and globally connected. Today's youths have only a blurred picture of what kind of world they want. However, they have realized that neither have the academic world and political world given them a roadmap to the better world they desperately want, nor have they been provided the tools they need to design a roadmap of their own (Muhammad 2017).

In September 2018, the United Nations launched Youth 2030: The United Nations Youth Strategy at a high-level event of the 73rd session of the General Assembly. We have observed the momentum of great progress that young people have made in transforming the economic and social systems in the last decade. Thousands of people and organizations have already embraced the new economic model through their own social action groups in the world, launching innovative social businesses designed to serve human needs rather than accumulate wealth. They are bringing solar energy to millions of homes in Bangladesh; turning thousands of unemployed young people into entrepreneurs through equity investments; financing female-owned businesses in cities across the United States; bringing mobility, shelter, and other services to the rural poor in France; and creating a global support network to help young entrepreneurs launch their start-ups (Muhammad 2017).

I have not forgotten the wisdom of Peter Drucker, the founder of modern management style when discussing innovation and entrepreneurship. His famous quote for his thoughts on entrepreneurship is *"The entrepreneur always searches for change, responds to it, and exploits it as an opportunity."* The implication is obvious, the international community and national authorities should ensure to empower young people as leaders, innovators and entrepreneurs for social change in their communities, and society as a whole. Specifically, young entrepreneurs should be on the look out for change that the UN 2030 Agenda may bring about, and respond to SDGs, take advantage of SDGs and exploit SDGs as the opportunity, and make the most of it.

Realization of SDGs requires young people to start businesses that are more socially and ecologically inclined. Social entrepreneurship provides viable and innovative solutions to social and environmental issues at the local, national and regional levels. It can also showcase the benefits and value of social business to policymakers and other relevant stakeholders, the ecosystem will be strengthened, and young social entrepreneurs will be able to trigger social transformation in their communities, and thereby contribute to sustainable development.

³Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary-General at UN SG Launches Young 2030 Strategy, 2018. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2018/09/youth2030-launch/>.

As I discussed previously, to achieve the UN 2030 Agenda, SDGs and each target must be translated into action plans at country level. As the largest developing country in the world, China has always given a top priority to development. China attaches great importance to the 2030 Agenda. For example, the UN 2030 Agenda has been closely integrated in domestic mid-and-long term development strategies of the 13th Five-Year Plan. The Chinese authority also recognizes that the achievement of SDGs largely relies on innovation and youth entrepreneurs in the future. Since 2015, the Chinese authority has encouraged young people to engage in mass entrepreneurship and innovation campaign. The strategy of mass entrepreneurship and innovation will not only boosts employment, social innovation, and the development of industries, but also transform economic development mode from efficiency-driven economy, which exhibits scale-intensity as a major driver of development, to the innovation-driven stage of development, which is characterized by their production of new and unique goods and services that are created via sophisticated, and often pioneering, methods.

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