

**SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS A VERITABLE TOOLS FOR SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT
IN NIGERIA: A NECESSARY AGENDA FOR GOVERNMENT.**

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ABSTRACT

Until recently, the global concern is how to ensure speedy rural transformation and development. This shift is the concern of many researchers and even governments, most especially of the underdeveloped and developing countries are emphasising on the need for holistic engagements and stakeholder collaborations as measures for ensuring rapid and sustainable rural development. This led to the proliferations of many social enterprising, particularly, the Non-profit organizations operating juxtaposedly by the government in effort to ensure effective rural development in developing countries and Nigeria in particular. This paper investigates the role expected of social entrepreneurship as measures for enhancing rural transformation and sustainable development in Nigeria. It was concluded that, unless there are deliberate attempts by government to creating enabling environment for smooth and successful engagements and collaborations with the social entrepreneurs to meeting the rural needs; all efforts and governmental strides to ensuring speedy rural transformation and sustainable development will remain slow and unattained.

Keywords: Social Entrepreneurship, Sustainable Rural Development, Rural Development, Complementary Measures, Stakeholder Engagements And Collaborations, Necessary Agenda For Nigerian Government

INTRODUCTION

In most of the underdeveloped and developing countries (Nigeria inclusive) development remain one of the major challenges and have been described as the major bottleneck to their socio-economic growth, and sustainable development; most especially at the rural level. The government of these countries had over-times designed strategies and several measures to tackle these menaces, in improving the quality of life and wellbeing of the people. Yet, development remained insignificant or completely absent, particularly at rural level. This shift the concerns of many researchers and even governments, most especially of the underdeveloped and developing countries emphasising on the need for holistic engagements and stakeholder collaborations as measures to ensuring rapid and sustainable rural development. This brings to the fore the emergence and proliferations of many social enterprising, particularly, the Non-profit organizations operating juxtaposedly by the government to ensuring effective rural development in those countries and Nigeria in particular. Social entrepreneurship is considered as one of the measures that may be viable to complementing the government strides in enhancing efficient, sustainable and rapid rural development in Nigeria. This is necessary because, the government alone cannot be sufficient in providing all the needed apparatus meant for development. There is need for private sector and NGO engagements and collaborations in achieving that. It is in this light that Gbenga (2006) says “....Africa’s present socio-economic predicament needs a lot of deliberate efforts; which should be focused on the role of civil society actors in their role as the mediator between the people (grassroots) and opportunities”.

This makes it imperative for this paper to discuss, the social entrepreneurship as a measures to complementing sustainable rural development in Nigeria. This is in the sense that, social entrepreneurship stands as those entrepreneurs; who are delivering value within society, with main focus on people and development, rather than profit.

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES: SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP, RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Social entrepreneurship

A social entrepreneur is someone who recognizes a social problem and uses entrepreneurial principles to organize, create, and manage a venture to make social change. Whereas business entrepreneurs typically measure performance in terms of profit and return, social entrepreneurs assess their success in terms of the impact they have on society. Dees (1998) as cited in Ogunyemi (2012) however, defines it as characteristic of people who adopt a mission to create and sustain social value (as opposed to just private value); who recognize and relentlessly pursue new opportunities to serve that mission; who continuously innovate, adapt, and learn; who act boldly and beyond the resources they possess; and who exhibit a high sense of accountability for their results to the society. In a similar vein, Seelos, Mari, Battilana, and Dacin (2014) maintained that, a Social enterprise organization arises from entrepreneurial activities with the aim to achieve social goals. They have been identified as alternative and or complementary to the actions of government and international organizations to address poverty and poverty related social needs. While, Dacin and Matear (2010) opined that, social entrepreneurship is unique in that, it involves a hierarchical ordering of social and economic value whereby social value takes precedence over generation of economic rents. Looking from same perspective, Maris and Marti (2006) says, it entails activities with the aim to build organizations that achieve social goals. This shows the preferences of social entrepreneur to social services other than the profit.

Looking at it from individual perspective, Truran (2014) says, social entrepreneurs are those individuals who have created a new way of using their existing and latent entrepreneurial skills to address opportunities and the challenges of social issues that surround them. This tells us the over-jealousness of social entrepreneurs to see that the social challenges confronting society are being tackled through their latent skills and resources.

Looking at it from the perspectives championed by the two divergent schools of thought, the UNICEF (2007) maintained that, social entrepreneurship can be better understood by explanations offered by the 'Social Enterprise School' and the 'Social Innovation School'. Whereas "**The Social Enterprise School**" presents social entrepreneurship as "social enterprise" initiatives. That is, "any organization, in any sector, that uses earned income strategies to pursue a double bottom line or a triple bottom line, either alone (as a social sector business) or as part of a mixed revenue stream that includes charitable contributions and public sector subsidies." while, **The Social Innovation School** views social entrepreneurship as the initiatives of innovators pursuing social change and aiming to alleviate a particular social problem. The emphasis here is more about social outcomes rather than income generation. This paper basically adopts the explanations pose by the social innovation school, that emphasizes on the social re-engineering and changes to alleviating social problems in the society, most especially on the Nigerian rural sector, that is bedevilled with myriads of social problems ranging from poverty, unemployment, rural health related problem, illiteracy with many more sorts of deprivations. This calls for serious concern and collaboration among government and the social entrepreneurs to alleviating such menaces.

Rural development

Over the years, rural development has been considered a veritable tool for enhancing development, particularly in the developing and undeveloped societies. Rural development is often used interchangeably with agricultural development. This actually is a misconception; as it is broader, but rather, agricultural development can serve as one of the strategies for enhancing rural development. Chino, (2000) maintains that, there is a considerable change on emphasis to determine rural development beyond changes and improvement in income, growth and output. It is basically, concerns about a review and assessment of the improvement in the quality of life of rural people; which is broadly measured with the sufficient provision of health and social services, good living conditions and bridging of income inequalities amongst others. These leads to universal concerns that, rural development rests upon the improvement of quality of life of the rural populace.

Otaki, (2005) argues that increase in crime in our major cities may not be unconnected to the existing harsh conditions in rural areas leading to rural- urban migration. Many of these migrant peasants who cannot secure white collar jobs in the cities becomes urban nuisance and take to all forms of socially unacceptable behaviours. On his own part, Idris, (2011) sees rural development as a continued set of actions by government agencies, NGO's and the rural populace to improving the living conditions of the rural people and also as a process which lead to series of changes within the confine of a given rural setting and which eventually result in the improvement in the general conditions of the rural dwellers. The changes in living conditions depend on a variety of factors such as improvement in education, health, water supply, feeder road networks, electrification amongst others. Provision of these does not necessarily depends on government alone, but by any other development partners and stakeholders. Social entrepreneurs are important partners in that respect in Nigeria, as they are basically out to provides social change and services in the society side by side with government.

Rural development could furthermore, be seen as a comprehensive mode of social transformation, a socio-economic change seeking to bring about more equitable distribution of resources within the society, and a veritable acceptance of the principle of growth from below. This emphasized on the need to ensure socio-economic balance and equitable distribution of wealth and resources among people and among the rural populace. Failure to do so makes an economy yet underdeveloped. Nigeria for example experienced an unprecedented economic growth in recent times; but without commensurate development. Recently, World Bank (2014) rated Nigeria as the biggest economy in Africa but yet, among the poorest countries globally. This proves the claims that although the country is rich and the economy is growing, still majority of its population are poor. These pose a great challenge to the managers and drivers to the economy. The only way is to ensure equitable distribution among people and among the sectors and ensure that the growth witnessed by the economy is all inclusive. In the real sense of things, failure to involve the rural populace in carrying out developmental projects in their localities in the name of rural development usually leads such projects to become a wasted effort.

Effective rural development also, lies in implementation of the programmes and policies initiated. This has been the problem in Nigeria; in the sense that successive government came up with various programmes that were laudable but marred with implementation problems which left rural communities undeveloped. Any effort therefore, by social entrepreneurs is appreciative to complementing government effort, due to lopsidedness and inconsistency in policy and program execution in Nigeria.

Sustainable Rural Development

According to the International Food and Agricultural Development (2009) sustainable rural development is the institutional support through which the rural development projects are maintained and continued after its execution. This indicates that, for a sustained development of rural areas; projects and programmes executed must be maintained and continued for maximum societal wellbeing. In their own submission however, Baldock, Dwyer, Lome, Peterein and Ward (2001) maintained that:

Sustainability concepts in rural development seeks to bridge not only the conventional divide between economic development and environmental protection, but also embraces the viability of localities and communities on which the maintenance of both the environment and economic activity ultimately depends. Thus, a conserved countryside must be socially viable and is therefore dependent on the viability of rural communities (Baldock et'al, 2001).

The above shows the emphasis on the importance of socio-economic viability of rural development projects that are beneficial to rural communities. In a similar vein, Emmanuel, Samuel and Theophilus (2007) asserts that, sustainable rural development embraces the natural and social environment. The rural sustainability is attained through a well-planned and properly implemented initiatives that address the social, physical and economic facets of the environment in an integrated and participatory approach (Sandham and Van der Walt, 2004). From these therefore, suffice it to say that, the social entrepreneurs are important partners with the government to achieving sustainable rural development, as its stands for value creation and addition to social-economic change with a view to alleviating a particular social problems, which are manifold in the society without profit.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted for this paper is purely secondary sources of data obtained from literatures and internet sources that are having to do with the subject matter; social entrepreneurship and rural development generally and Nigeria in particular and content analysis method were used.

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP: A VERITABLE TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

The Nigerian rural sub-sector has suffered so many years of neglect and deprivations, this is in spite of array of policy decisions and programs embarked by successive governments over time to bring socio-economic development and enhance the quality of life of the rural populace. It is expected that, government provides basic amenities and improved socio-economic life of the rural people for example: the road networks, health-care facilities, good education, and employment generation etc. the social entrepreneurship therefore, being agent of social change and service provision as its focal points, do engage in provision of these services side by side with government. For example a lot of social entrepreneurs in form of Non-governmental organizations in Nigeria; some local and others international involved in Health-care services, educational development and human developments just to mention; most especially at grassroots level, worthy of mentions are **TY Danjuma foundation**, with the main goal of Enhancing community health care by providing free medical services to rural communities which lack adequate medical facilities; Improve the quality of education of children and young people (18 years and younger); Alleviate the extreme poverty in communities across the country by providing clean drinking water, and encouraging the education/empowerment of women. The foundation for example is focused on primarily on Community Health Initiatives, Enhancing Quality of Education, and Income Generation.

Secondly, **Paradigm Initiative Nigeria** is a social enterprise that connects underserved Nigerian Youth with Information and Communication Technology (ICT) opportunities; with specific concern about the ill-effects of unemployment and cybercrime among other vices that limit the potential contribution of young Nigerians to the nation's economy. Another, social entrepreneurship is the **Slum2School project** initiated by Otto Orondaam, where over 300 children in Makoko; slum/village in Lagos who have never been to school are enrolled to school. Also, **Making a Difference Positively (otherwise known as MAD+)** run by Naomi Ikhureigbe, about inspiring and motivating people toward a mind-shift, which causes them to take action and become positive change agents, has contributed immensely in shaping the mind set of Nigerian youths of been productive. More so, **Raising Young and Productive Entrepreneurs (RYPE)** by Grace Ihejamaizu is another social entrepreneurship initiative in Nigeria, the RYPE initiative she launched in 2011 had offered skills trainings, internship placements, volunteer activities, and peer mentoring to over 150 Nigerian youths (rural youths inclusive) to become transformational leaders and entrepreneurs. Just to mention.

More importantly, the activities of international agencies like United States Agency for International Development (USAID), with the main mandate to end extreme global poverty and enable resilient, democratic societies to realize their potential. USAID Nigeria is into wide range of projects basically on rural communities covering health, education,

poverty reduction and empowerment etc. More so, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) since 1985 has financed nine programmes and projects in Nigeria, with a total commitment of over US\$232.2 million.

IFAD's support to the Nigerian Government's poverty reduction programme in rural areas targets large numbers of smallholder farmers and is essentially people-centred. IFAD supports programmes and projects that work with communities, with smallholder farmers as the key players. At the government level, IFAD helps build capacity and strengthen institutions that provide services to poor rural people. It assists with necessary policy changes, developing local organizations to enhance their effective participation, and it promotes initiatives to foster rapid poverty reduction and economic growth led by the private sector. Many of such international agencies such as UNESCO, FAO etc. Also contributes to rural development in Nigeria. These shows the quantum of complementary measures that social entrepreneurs' vis-avis the non-governmental organizations can offer in augmenting governmental efforts towards rural development in Nigeria.

CONCLUDING REMARK

Thus far, the paper explores social entrepreneurship as measures to enhancing rural transformation and sustainable development in Nigeria. It was discovered that, the contributions made by social entrepreneurship in complementing government efforts at rural development cannot be over-emphasised. This is in the sense that, it stands for value creation and addition to bringing social changes and services to the society without necessarily profit motive. This is basically, the responsibility of any responsible government; as government is basically responsible for providing public goods and social services to the citizens. The activities of social entrepreneurs therefore, are found to be complementarities to that of the government. The paper concludes that, unless there are deliberate attempts by government to creating enabling environment for smooth and successful engagements and collaborations with the social entrepreneurs to meeting the rural needs; all efforts and governmental strides to ensuring speedy rural transformation and sustainable development will remain slow and unattained.

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