

# Understanding Social Entrepreneurship in the African Context: An Exploratory Review of Evidence from Nigeria

**Bamidele A. Wale-Oshinowo**  
University of Lagos, Nigeria

**Chijioke Dike Uba**  
University of Northampton, United Kingdom.

**Mercy Adeyeye,**  
Federal University of Technology, Minna. Nigeria

**Ayokunle O. Omobowale**  
University of Ibadan, Nigeria

## ABSTRACT

*Social enterprises are organisations created with the aim of applying entrepreneurial skills and innovations to solving social problems. They are managed by “individuals who combine pragmatic and result-oriented methods of a business entrepreneur with the goals of a social reformer” (Hsu, 2005:61). Such enterprises combine resources in innovative ways to create social value in and for the society. However, Social Enterprises may face challenges that impact on their ability to accomplish social goals. For instance, when confronted with the harsh realities of economic recession, teaming poor population and the need to profit for social intervention, social enterprises existing in hostile economic environment in developing countries may face possibilities of shut-down. This chapter examines the concept of social entrepreneurship in a subsisting economy in Sub-Saharan Africa. Specifically, it draws from relevant primary and secondary data to explore the nature of social entrepreneurship in the Nigeria context and the potential role that social entrepreneurship can play in addressing social problems in Nigeria. The chapter discussions gravitate towards extrapolating the findings and discussions to the broader African countries’ context, contributing to the literature on Social Entrepreneurship in Nigeria and the broader African context*

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**Key Words: Entrepreneurship, Social Entrepreneurship, Africa, Nigeria, Social Problems, Poverty, Small Business, Innovation, Developing Countries**

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## INTRODUCTION

The word entrepreneurship, entrepreneur and small businesses have been in existence for many years, but people have diverse perspectives about them. They mean different things to different people depending on the context (Vecianna, 2008). Entrepreneurship can be perceived in terms of process, behaviour as well as outcomes (Stokes, Wilson & Mador, 2010); and they are the backbone of economic development for major countries all over the world. They play a significant role in alleviating poverty while acting as major drivers for social and economic change, particularly for emerging economies in Asia, South America and Africa (Audretsch & Thurik, 2001; Ihugba & Njoku, 2013). In developing African countries, it has been recorded that small-scale entrepreneurs engage mostly in small business activities. These oftentimes translate into income generating ventures for urban and rural dwellers, particularly the unemployed youth, who constitutes a significant percentage of the population of these countries (Ihugba & Njoku, 2013). Therefore, the place of small-scale businesses in any economy as drivers of entrepreneurship, agent of economic growth, employment creation, wealth generation and poverty alleviation, cannot be overlooked (Audretsch & Thurik, 2001). Sadly, despite the role of small businesses in major economies, they have not been properly coordinated in most African countries due to several factors which revolve around lack of interest, little understanding and government support. This is unfortunate given that the development of entrepreneurship in the small business sector has the potential of reducing unemployment and poverty significantly for developing African economies; especially when the historical economic and social growth of great economies such as the USA, UK, Japan, India, Canada and even China can be traced down to entrepreneurship development in this sector. It has therefore become imperative for developing economies such as Nigeria to refocus their attention on the potential role of entrepreneurs as the required change agents for these countries (Adeyeye, 2008; Wale-Oshinowo & Kuye, 2016).

## **BACKGROUND**

While entrepreneurship is rightly identified as a major vehicle for economic growth, it needs to be considered and operationalised as a vehicle with the potential of creating values (e.g. social and environmental) that can simultaneously address the different dimensions of societal sustainability. The role that Social Entrepreneurship (SE) could play in this regard becomes worthy of consideration in the sense that SE extends the discussion and application of entrepreneurship to addressing social problems. The crux of our argument here is that although Nigeria is connected to the vision of entrepreneurship, the emergence of an entrepreneurial economy in Nigeria that combines the commercial and social dimensions of enterprise will, no doubt, enhance economic and social sustainability in the country. This is consistent with the view that the entrepreneurial economy is not only about commercial enterprise but also the social enterprise, and echoes the core assumptions of Social Entrepreneurship, i.e., that entrepreneur can create organisations that make profits and offer social benefit simultaneously for the community (Alberto, 2014). A fundamental issue worth exploring, therefore, pertains to understanding the nature of Social Entrepreneurship and the potential roles that it can play in addressing social problems in Nigeria and, correspondingly, other developing African countries. This chapter aims to address this two-fold issue. Focusing on Nigeria, a significant economy and political force within the region, as done in this Chapter, provides a broad view of the nature of social entrepreneurship in the broader African (and potentially, wider African perspective) region.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Evolution of Social Entrepreneurship**

Social entrepreneurship is not new and can be traced to some early efforts at reducing social inequality. Such efforts included those spearheaded by notable individuals such as Robert Owen (1771-1858); Florence Nightingale (1820-1910); Henry Durant (1829-1910); William Booth (1829-1912); Frederick Olmstead (1822-1903); Maria Montessori

(1870-1952) and John Muir (1838-1914) and others (see Nayab, 2011) that supported the less privileged in their own ways. These men and women practiced social entrepreneurship without necessarily describing their efforts in such terms. Bill Drayton, the founder of Ashoka, was the first to use the term 'Social Entrepreneurship'. He got motivated by the Vinoba Bhave's Land Gift Movement that championed and advocated for wealth redistribution and land transfer to the poor people in India. His focus of social entrepreneurship is basically not-for-profit with a dynamic influence in 93 countries. Leadbeater (1997) supported and lauded this concept; that apart from the motivation to make money, ideas and design, great products could be used to change the world through innovation. Thus, a pace was set that entrepreneurs could create organisations to do good in the world because life is not just about profit maximization. An entrepreneur could offer a social benefit for the community from the business that is created (Alberto, 2014). Business entrepreneurship focuses on wealth generation while social entrepreneurship is about making the world a better place in terms of social value through entrepreneurship (Cukier et al., 2011), Since then the word has been attracting attention among scholars and researchers. Social entrepreneurship is rapidly finding its way into the dictionary and language of politicians, philanthropists, journalists, academics and public. What does social entrepreneurship depict, we may ask?

### **The Concept of Social Entrepreneurship**

Social entrepreneurship has diverse definitions (Martin and Osberg, 2007; Adeyeye, 2015). Wolke (2007) described social entrepreneurship as the practice of responding to market failures with innovative, transformative and sustainable interventions that are aimed at solving social problems through the nexus of the public, private and non-profit sectors. It is a response to the market failure that attributes less value to social improvements, provision of public wares and rendering assistance to people who cannot afford payment for needed services (Dees, 2006). Market failure occurs, due to three apparent reasons: lack of market at all, or limited market or low-profit market/non-maximisation of profit market. Market failure exists in most Africa countries as many people are needy and cannot afford payment; the under-employed and those motivated into entrepreneurship because of necessity are unable to make full payment, and there

are very few that can afford full payment, but the services are not available. Thus, social entrepreneurship is, potentially, an intervention programme that emphasises more on assisting those who cannot afford to pay at all or pay fully. Mair & Marti (2006) corroborated this by asserting that social entrepreneurship is an innovative approach that aims to provide basic products and services that aid human survival and developmental needs that are left unaddressed by the state.

For Austin, Stephenson & Wei-Skillern (2006), it is an innovative, social value-creating activity that can occur within or across the non-profit, commercial or governmental sectors. Therefore, the key concept of social entrepreneurship is the identification of opportunity to satisfy neglected social needs. This might be done by introducing a new or improved product, process, distribution outlet, methods of organisation, or new supply source of raw materials for activities that create social value and impact life. However, social innovation slightly differs from economic innovation because it is not the introduction of new product, process or exploitation of new markets, but it is about innovation in seeking to satisfy new needs not provided for by the market (even if markets intervene later) or creation of new ways of insertion in terms of giving people a place and role in production (Noya, 2011). It is the use of commercial initiatives to deliver a 'not-for-profit' or 'for-profit' social mission. A relevant example of such social mission is the provision of health care facilities like a family bed size of treated mosquito nets and the sale of family planning products at subsidized rate by some Non-Governmental Organizations to enable even the poor the opportunity to have access to this service/product.

Social entrepreneurship is perceived as a concept as well as an instrument for addressing society's problems to realise the optimum level of well-being in the society (Iyortsuun, 2016). It can be summed up as the introduction of innovative solutions to improve the social wellbeing of the disadvantaged people without the aim of profit maximisation/selfish motive that is context dependent (Adeyeye, 2015). Social entrepreneurship can be carried out by individuals, public organisations, private organisations or the civil society, which is referred to as Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs), Community-Based

Organisations (CBOs) and other interest groups ranging from small informal groups to large formal agencies (Ball & Dunn, 2013). These groups are the main drivers of social entrepreneurship globally including Africa and Nigeria in particular.

### **Models of Social Entrepreneurship**

There are many models that can be employed in operating a viable social entrepreneurship but the most often used is the social innovation and social enterprise models. First is the social innovation model that is based on Schumpeter's (1934) theory of innovation. It focuses on the social entrepreneur initiatives, that is, creativity and innovation. Social innovation is an innovative reaction to unresolved social problems and needs, which the government or market have not been able to handle successfully due to the resistance of the social challenges to orthodox solutions. New approaches are needed to harness different kinds of tangibles and intangible assets, skills and expertise. This involves doing novel things which is characterised by innovation rather than mere replication of existing enterprise or methods (Austin et al, 2006) in the same place. Social innovation aimed at producing social change, social value or social goods rather than creating personal wealth (Zadek & Thake, 1997; Morris et al., 2012) perhaps, of diverse intensities: incrementally or radically, but more often incremental in nature (Noya, 2011; Morris et al., 2012). It is a new and better way of addressing social needs without primary profit motive. Social entrepreneurship creates unique resources to produce new social wealth or enhance existing resources with aptitudes for a social value (Drucker, 1985).

Second is the social enterprise school of thought that emphasises on the 'enterprise' as a for-profit organisation that generates subsidiary 'earned- income' for support, beside grants and subsidies to satisfy un-met needs (Massarsky, 2006; Skloot, 1983) that the state welfare system will not or cannot meet (Thompson et al., 2000). Social enterprise are firms with basically social objectives whose surpluses are mainly reinvested for the social purpose in business or the community, rather than being driven by the motive to maximize profit for sharing as dividends by stakeholders. It is a model that places some price on the dissemination of the social goods since people attach more value to what is

paid for than free goods. The enterprise profit is ploughed back into the business for sustainability and expansion of the venture as well as the personnel.

Building on these models, social entrepreneurs must include innovation in the quest to meet social needs or/and employ business methods to solve social problems for effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the social mission. Hence, the current study leans on these two schools of thoughts commonly used in social entrepreneurship (Defourny & Nyssens, 2010). The social innovation focuses on innovation in the social venture and the social enterprise sources income from mild and fair trading. The choice of the model to employ is dependent on the social mission and form of parent organisations of the enterprise. However, because of the poverty level in many developing African countries, it is most likely the case that the innovation and earned income is combined as usual social entrepreneurship models but the departure from the earned-income model is the real commercialization of social values to maximise profit.

### **Understanding Social Entrepreneurship in the Nigerian Context**

In the Nigerian context, Entrepreneurship dates to ancestral days in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, as different localities have certain products and services in which they are specialised and renowned for. For instance, Abeokuta is known for enterprise in tie and dye; Bida for Bronze making; Benin for carvings while Saki is renowned for enterprise in pottery. Furthermore, the cities of Zaria, Ekiti and Ipoti are renowned for leather works, weaving *aso oke* and mat making, respectively. Similarly, is the production of food such as yam, rice, maize that occurs in specific parts of the country.

Despite that Nigeria has a history highlighting high-level entrepreneurial orientation, it is only recently that Entrepreneurship as a concept been focused on and explored as a field of study. Interestingly, evidence from the literature shows that over the years, government policies have strongly supported and fostered the development and growth of entrepreneurship and small business operations as vehicle for eradicating absolute poverty (see Obadan, 2001). It is worth mentioning at this point that poverty does not relate to low level of income only but also to factors that are not associated to

income/wages such as economic, environmental, technology, physical, infrastructural, institutional, political, socio-cultural, ethnicity and gender inequality (Collier, 2007; Prahalad, 2010). Unsurprisingly, these indices are more prominent in Africa where majority of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) of the world are based (Olatomide, 2012).

Although Nigeria is not one of the LDCs but as global poor hits 1 billion, recent data from the National Bureau of Statistics show that more than 67% of Nigerians population of over 170 million people live below the poverty line (National Bureau of statistics, 2017), making poverty a key issue for government and the citizenry. Many factors such as slow development of human resources, minute wages and productivity in the informal sector, sluggish economic growth, inappropriate micro-economic policies and imperfection in labour market that has led to unemployment (Adeyeye, 2008). These factors are mostly accountable for the high poverty level in the country. Other causes as enumerated by Owolabi (2009) include corruption, poor governance, and population growth rate, the economic nature, absence of basic infrastructure among others that needs urgent attention to salvage the masses from penury. Other indices include food shortage, shelter, climate changes, erratic energy problem, natural disasters, health care inadequacies, poor infrastructural facilities, and pitiable educational institutional structures and such likes are manifest with the baseline as poverty (OECD, 2011).

To address the problem of poverty, over the years, the Nigerian government designed many programmes and economic plans towards eradicating poverty through empowering small-scale businesses grooming and supporting unemployed and under-employed persons to establish and operate their own small-scale businesses or entrepreneurship has been a key intervention approach adopted by the government. However, for various reasons, including a lack of coordination due to ignorance about the operational know-what and technical know-how, these market-based policy initiatives have not been able to adequately address the pressing need of alleviating poverty. A detailed discussion on the reasons for the failure of the said policies and measures aimed to counter the effects of the recessions are beyond the scope of this chapter but have been explored in detail in other studies (e.g., Easterly, 2002; Momoh, 1996). Be that as it may, this failure



highlights that other innovative interventions are required to address poverty from more holistic positions.

Specific to Nigeria, small-scale industries have a significant role to play in the country's economic and social development (Adeyeye, 2008). Presently, Nigeria is connected to the vision of entrepreneurship and the emergence of an entrepreneurial economy is, perhaps, one of the most significant and hopeful events in recent times. However, entrepreneurial economy is not only about commercial enterprise/entrepreneurship but also about social enterprise/entrepreneurship. Correspondingly, Social enterprise/entrepreneurship arises as an option to meet the need that the economic and political institutions as well as commercial entrepreneurship have not been able to satisfy. In other words, market-based approach alone is insufficient to alleviate poverty in people's lives; hence a gap exists that requires other innovative interventions which in this study is conceptualised as 'social entrepreneurship'.

The literature on Social Entrepreneurship in the Nigerian context is limited to those that have explored a social entrepreneurial model from Nigeria (Ogunyemi, 2012); social entrepreneurship as an effective tool for meeting social challenges and sustainable development (Moses & Olokundun, 2014); motivational drivers towards social entrepreneurship (Adesuwa, 2014), and; impact of social entrepreneurship on poverty reduction in Nigeria (Mohammed & Ndulue, 2017). Within other African country contexts, Littlewood and Holt (2015) studied social entrepreneurship in South Africa, focusing on the influence of environment on SE and how SEs can exploit their environment while Ghalwash et al. (2016) explored the motivations for Egyptians entrepreneurs to start social ventures. However, none but none had an overview of social entrepreneurship in Africa with a focus on Nigeria. We extend the scope of the discussion, making two key contributions to the literature in the area. Specifically, we achieve this by; 1) drawing from the self-explicated accounts of budding social entrepreneurs whose operations span a range of sectors to uncover the nature of SE in the Nigerian context, and; 2) extrapolating to the broader African context by linking findings from the empirical data to cases.

## METHODOLOGY

The following subsection presents findings from a qualitative methodological approach based on a triangulation of primary and secondary data, including extensive interviews from five budding social entrepreneurs and industry experts.

**Table 1: Overview of Respondents**

Respondent's ID Code	Gender	Sector	Social Problem Addressed	Target Recipient	Location
MC	Female	Training /Education	Empowerment and literacy	Women	Minna
ND	Female	Food Processing and Distribution	Malnutrition and Post-Harvest Loss	General Public and Smallholder Farmers and Public	Lagos
UC	Male	Mobile-based commerce	Food availability and supply	Farmers, Producers, vendors and traders	Port Harcourt
LE	Male	ICT Consultancy	ICT App. Development	Businesses and other organisations	Port Harcourt
EA	Male	Tech-Preneurship (Technology Education)	Skills Development	Graduate, Undergraduates and those not privileged to acquire Tertiary education	Port Harcourt

*Wale-Oshinowo, Uba, Adeyeye & Omobowale, 2018*

The respondents were interviewed at agreed locations (office or home); the interviews lasted approximately one hour and were tape recorded. Since our study is exploratory and aimed to uncover issues specific to the nature and role of SE for addressing poverty in Nigeria, we used direct question (Massey, 2011). The use of direct questions also enabled us to identify corresponding themes and report them thematically. Consistent with (Uba & Chatzidakis, 2016) a naming convention is used to anonymise the views of respondents.

The interviews started with questions that required respondents to introduce themselves and what they do as Social Entrepreneurs: all respondents had at least a university

degree and were the founders of the Social Enterprises that they manage). Subsequently, the interviewer requested respondents to account for the following; 1) their understanding of the concept of Social Entrepreneurship (SE); 2) the nature and state of SE in Nigeria; 3) SE and its application in the Nigerian context; 4) the role of SE in addressing Social Problems in Nigeria, and; 5) the challenges faced by Nigerian Social Entrepreneurs. Subsequently, the interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysis using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Uba & Chatzidakis, 2016), where we identified themes that cut across the entire interview sessions and capture the essence of the interview questions.

## **FINDINGS**

The findings are presented and discussed thematically under three sections; 1) Understanding of the Social Entrepreneurship concept and its nature in the Nigerian Context; 2) Application of Social Entrepreneurship in the Nigerian context, and; 3) The role of Social Enterprises in addressing poverty.

### **Understanding of the Social Entrepreneurship Concept and its Nature in the Nigerian Context**

Respondents' accounts for the driver of entrepreneurship in the Nigerian context diverged along the quest for profit and need to solve social problems continuum. As evidenced in the following representative quote, some of the respondents consider survival (self-sustenance via profit yielding economic activity) as the core driver of entrepreneurship in Nigeria:

*The level of poverty in Nigeria makes me feel that the driver of entrepreneurship in Nigeria is more of profit making (MC)*

The view above are consistent with those of Obadan (2001) and discussions in the preceding sections on the import of poverty entrepreneurial activity and small business development, including how entrepreneurship can be used to address poverty.

Interestingly, some other respondents highlighted the interconnectedness between profit making and solving social problems in their account of the main drivers of entrepreneurship in Nigeria. EA opines that the main driver of entrepreneurship is:

*To survive first. Survival is to me, the main driver for most Nigerian entrepreneurs as the Business environment is tough and the consequences of failing in Business will hugely affect the Business owner, their family and the families of the employees. Most do not readily have the urge to solve society's problems at the start. They most of the time have that as an afterthought, as a form of CSR (EA)*

The argument here is that entrepreneurs may subsequently see themselves as addressing the social issues or that they seek to address social issues by incorporating socially responsible activities as part of their business operation.

While respondents shared slightly divergent views on the drivers of Entrepreneurship, evidence from the data suggest a detailed understanding of the concept of Social Entrepreneurship among the respondents. All respondents (except LE) reported that they had a good understanding of the concept and offered a detailed and accurate account of the concept. Despite their response, it is interesting to note that LE considered Entrepreneurship to be driven by both profit making and solving social problems. When discussing the driver of Entrepreneurship in Nigeria, LE argued that "I think it is both because they think of solutions to social problems and in return expect profit from the given solutions". Thus, while he claims not to be familiar with the concept, he explains entrepreneurial activity in terms of their social dimension. The implication is that while the idea of Social Entrepreneurship is gaining momentum in Nigeria, some Entrepreneurs engaged in SE may not ascribe this concept, e.g., as label, to self or in relation to what they do. However, this is likely to be due to a lack of understanding of the concept than its application in the Nigerian. This view was confirmed by all other respondents as evidenced in the following representative quotes:

*This (SE) is a relatively misunderstood area, but it is emerging and there is a growing community of social entrepreneurs (ND)*

*Social Entrepreneurship is relatively new in Nigeria and still at the infant stage in understanding. Nevertheless, most people take philanthropists as Social Entrepreneurs (MC)*

In sum, respondents' accounts highlight that Social Entrepreneurship is emerging in Nigeria, albeit the level of understanding and application of the essence of the concept to entrepreneurial activity may not be the same across board. While the study's respondents (budding Social Entrepreneurs) have a clear understanding of the concept and can relate their activities to the essence of SE, it may be the case that some others who may be engaged in SE may not recognise or label themselves as Social Entrepreneurs. This is likely to depend on their levels of education since the more educated are likely to have encountered the concept e.g., in school, books etc. This corresponds with the findings of Visser's (2011) study; that South African social entrepreneurs tended to have at least a college degree.

### **Application of Social Entrepreneurship in the Nigerian context**

The four respondents who identified themselves as Social Entrepreneurs are engaged in activities consistent with the assumptions of the two schools of thought discussed in the preceding section (i.e., social innovation and social enterprise). When discussing their own activities as well as those of other Social Entrepreneurs, the innovative and social dimensions of SE are captured in respondents' accounts. For example, in discussing the activities of Achenyo Idachaba (a Nigerian social entrepreneur), MC reported as follows:

*Achenyo Idachaba, is one of the social entrepreneurs in Nigeria, who in her quest to find solution to an ecological*

*problem affecting some local communities in Lagos adversely created a unique business which is empowering poor women all over Lagos especially those close to the riverine areas. When she observed that the highly destructive water hyacinth plants had almost taken over the Nigerian waterway, she searched inwards and came up with an innovative way of using these nuisance weeds to create an economic advantage. Rather than advocating for their mere destruction, she created a unique business MitiMeth, where the otherwise useless water hyacinth are transformed into various useful and beautiful handcrafted products such as jewellery, table ware and baskets. MitiMeth now trains different communities on harvesting and processing these invasive weeds as a means of specialisation and also developing a livelihood that is sustainable.*

Consistent with the quote above, the other respondents discussed their activities and those of other entrepreneurs, highlighting how innovation is applied to entrepreneurial activity to address social problems. Another interesting finding related to the scope of the activities. The profile of the respondents and further evidence from the analysed interview data shows that Nigerian social entrepreneurs are involved in a wide range of activities aimed at addressing social problems of diverse natures. While the evidence from five respondents does not comprehensively cover the entire range of activities embarked upon by Nigerian Social Entrepreneurs, it does highlight that the key dimension and indices of poverty (OECD 2011) are being addressed by Nigerian Social Entrepreneurs. Along this line, some of the social problems identified as being addressed by SEs in Nigeria include; food shortage, shelter, climate change and environmental issues, health care inadequacies, women and youth empowerment/unemployment, education and skills development etc. Respondents were also categorical in their claims that SE has the potential to address social problems and address poverty related issues in the country. Their views along this line are explored in the following section

### **The Role of Social Enterprises in Addressing Poverty**

Respondents' views on the role of SE for addressing poverty tie-in with those of Massarsky (2006) and Thompson et al, (2000) that Nigerian SEs generate subsidiary

'earned- income' for support, beside grants and subsidies to satisfy un-met needs that the Nigerian government will not or cannot meet. The findings from the study of Ghalwash et al., (2016) which explored the motivations for Egyptians entrepreneurs to start social ventures found similarly. Specifically, respondents acknowledge that "government have their roles and aspects of social problems they can address, however, social entrepreneurs can complement government roles" (UC). However, as suggested in the quote below, the activities of SEs in the Nigerian context are largely underpinned by a need to respond to the failing of the government:

*It can be observed that most responsibilities of the Government have not been sufficiently handled, leaving individuals to take up certain responsibilities by themselves such as providing their own water, electric power supply etc. This further points to the need for another form of support in tackling Society's problem asides the Government or the individual citizens (EA).*

Correspondingly, respondents tend to see SEs as "moral partners" i.e., individuals who step up to address social issues and problems that would normally be considered government responsibility. However, respondents noted a range of challenges and factors that limit Nigerian SEs' ability and potential to achieve set objectives. Some of the challenges include:

*a lack of "recognition and acceptance since there are lots of dubious acts so everyone is being suspected" (MC);*

*"access to talent, funding and partnerships" (ND),*

*"lack of basic infrastructure such as Power supply, Water, Good access roads, poor funding for education (research), unpredictable Government policies, etc. (EA).*

*Funding, awareness, corruption and lack of institutional support from Government and big corporation (UC*

Most of the challenges highlighted above reflect issues and factors that underpin poverty and other social problems in other developing African countries (OECD, 2011), highlighting that trends discussed in relation to Nigeria span across other African countries.

To conclude this section, we note key findings; 1) SE is gaining momentum in the Nigerian context and arises, at least partly, as a response to social problems that are not adequately addressed by the Nigerian state. However, the concepts and its application is not as fully developed and appreciated in comparison with/to developed countries in the Global North; 2) SE has the potential of addressing poverty in the Nigerian context; 3) the key theories (innovation and social enterprise) can be used to explain SE understanding and application in the specific Nigerian context in terms of how SE is understood and applied; 4) the challenges that impede the ability of Nigerian SEs to fulfil their economic and social mission are multifaceted, and resonate with the key poverty causes of other developing countries. Many of these key findings have been found to be applicable for other African countries (e.g., see Ghalwash et al., 2016: Visser, 2011)

Drawing from the foregoing discussion on Nigeria, we extrapolate to the broader African context by linking findings from the empirical data to cases from select African countries.

### **Africa Social Entrepreneurship Initiatives in the Contemporary**

Consistent with the discussions in the concluding section of the foregoing section, the causes of poverty in developing African are similar. Like the Nigerian context, the poverty level in Africa calls for a social intervention whilst the concerned private individuals, philanthropists, returning immigrants from developed economies, Non-Governmental Organisations and others are taking the bull at the horn by diving into the provision of the social needs of the people (“If government will not help, we can help ourselves attitude”). The following initiatives are being undertaken in Africa to foster social entrepreneurship. There are many of them, but few examples are taken from few countries as evidence across African nations



Firstly, the establishment of Social Enterprise Academy in Nigeria to sensitise citizens on social entrepreneurship is a clear evidence of SE gaining momentum in Nigeria. They provide improved enlightenment, acceleration of community impact initiatives and promotion of equal opportunity for social entrepreneurs. It is sponsored by the Nigerian Capital Development Fund, licensed by Social Enterprise Europe and given recognition by the Federal Ministry of Education in Nigeria as an educational and capacity development institution on social enterprises. They furnish organisations and individuals with the practical and sociological tools to the creation of innovative yet community-driven solutions to major socio-economic inadequacies. Such enterprise exists in only five countries – Scotland, Wales, South Africa, Australia and China. It is a giant stride in Nigeria and hopefully, other countries in Africa will take steps to establish one to enhance social entrepreneurship activities. Second, is the inclusion of entrepreneurship into the curriculum of all universities irrespective of the discipline by National University Commission of Nigeria and the mandate to have a Centre for Entrepreneurship in all tertiary institutions in Nigeria. This embraces a clear understanding of entrepreneurship and by default social entrepreneurship, which is on-going in the nation.

Thirdly, January of every year has been declared as the social entrepreneurship month in Africa, during which highly inspirational and committed social entrepreneurs are recognised and given awards for the positive impacts they are making in different communities through improving the quality of people's lives. Here are some of such individuals from selected countries in Africa and their activities. For instance, Bilikiss Adebisi-Abiola, is a *Nigerian* whose social enterprise concentrates on giving low-income communities in developing countries the opportunity to overcome waste and clean-up their neighborhoods through an incentive-based recycling programme, WeCylers (Mohammed & Ndulue, 2017). Her highly innovative approach to solving a major environmental problem in poor communities led to her receiving the prestigious Cartier Women's Awards Laureate on social entrepreneurship. WeCylers is an initiative that is genuinely changing lives for the better and simultaneously empowering a new generation of micro-entrepreneurs with great potentials through the process. Another highly innovative and passionate Nigerian Social Entrepreneur who is also solving another

environmental issue is Achenyo Idachaba. She has been working tirelessly to reduce the invasion of the Nigerian waterways by the highly destructive water hyacinth plants. Achenyo Idachaba created a unique business called MitiMeth; her unique approach takes these otherwise useless nuisance weeds and converts them into beautiful and highly useful hand-crafted products like baskets, table ware and even jewelry. MitiMeth is now training communities living next to Nigerian waterways on harvesting and processing these invasive weeds as a means of specialisation and livelihood.

South Africa is also a host to some highly innovative social entrepreneurs such as Sue Barnes, who started Subz in response to a request for donation of washable sanitary pads and panties for about 7million girls in South Africa between the ages 10 and 19 years. These girls miss school regularly for 3months in a year due to their monthly flow. She designed and patented sustainable washable sanitary pads that will last five years in response to solving this highly sensitive but disturbing problem. This unique innovation by Sue Barnes has solved a great feminine and educational challenge for under privileged girls living in her area in South Africa. Another South African, Thato Kgatlihanye, repurposed school bags from up-cycled plastic bags. This very distinct innovation solved multiple challenges for school children in South Africa by integrating solar technology into their school bags. The repurposed school bag (with the integrated solar energy) changes during the day by transforming into light for school children to study after dark at home as well as lighting for them while trekking back from school to their homes in places where electric light does not exist. This is a combination of innovation and for-profit social enterprise (see -Lionesses of Africa Website, 2016).

Furthermore, Joy Ndungutse and Janet Nkubana, post-*Rwanda* genocide returning immigrants, co-founded Gahaya links Cooperatives. They taught thousands of suffering rural women the way of turning ancient basket weaving skills with new design techniques into a source of livelihood. They manage more than 4000 weavers organised into about 72 cooperative societies for stability and provision of income. In Tunisia, Essma ben Hamida of Enda Inter Arabe established a best practice microfinance institution in the country with a staff of 13,000 in 79 branches. Her microfinance institution grants loan to over 270,000 micro entrepreneurs (70% women, 35% youth, and 40% rural areas) for

education, housing, and agriculture and start-ups. She also provides business development services such as financial literacy classes, vocational training, marketing and workplace guidance through the same enterprise. In rural Kenya another Social Entrepreneur is changing lives through her world-class social enterprise eye clinic. Jacqueline Kiage provides life-enhancing, affordable and easily accessible eye surgery and specialist eye care to patients through her Innovation Eye Centre (see -Lionesses of Africa Website, 2016).

Likewise, Ellen Chilemba of *Malawi*, founded Tiwale to offer grants, loans, training on traditional fabric dyeing and printing, and lessons for empowerment and independence. The proceeds are used to fund school grants for women tuition fees, transportation cost, school supplies and small living stipend. This social enterprise falls in line with the models of this study where the profit is ploughed back for other social purpose (see -Lionesses of Africa Website, 2016).

Krupa Patel of Tanzania is the brain behind Anza, another highly innovative Social Enterprise. Anza works is a business incubator that provides diverse services to start-ups; the enterprise supports and scale social impact businesses in Tanzania. Krupa Patel has provided mentorship and financing about 104 businesses in Tanzania with mentorship and financing (see -Lionesses of Africa Website, 2016).

In Ethiopia is Birikit Terefe Birikiis, a women's health association that trains women in life skills as well as health matters. The association employs grassroots knowledge-building approach to empower women in order to enrich their lives. It also focuses in empowering a particularly marginalized group of women's businesses (see -Lionesses of Africa Website, 2016).

Lastly, in Morocco, is Amina Slaoui, a versatile and passionate woman who founded a high impact social enterprise with the sole aim of creating an enabling environment for disabled people to integrate into the society. She was recognized in 2015 for the impact that she is making in Morocco. Amina had a tragic accident and was flown abroad where she received excellent health care and physiotherapy. However, when she returned to

Morocco, she observed that poor Moroccans who suffered similar circumstances cannot access quality health care. This led to her creating Groupe AMH, a social enterprise that provides good health care and services for over 1,400 patients. They offer physiotherapy, speech therapy, occupational therapy and psychotherapy. They also fit prostheses and wheelchairs for patients while offering up to 80% discount for low-income patients. Under her unique leadership, Groupe AMH, has received many awards including the Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur in 2006. One clear contribution of Amina Slaoui to the Moroccan society is the support she provides to people (mostly the poor) living with disabilities. This she does in a country that does not place priority on supporting people living with disabilities. At present, Groupe AMH runs six ongoing projects and enterprises, has about 200 employees and 25,000 beneficiaries (see -Lionesses of Africa Website, 2016).

Africa has some truly dedicated and inspirational social entrepreneurs who want to make a real and positive difference to the lives of others. These are making waves and the impact being made is alleviating poverty especially among the neglected poor.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Although some progress is being made, most African countries hardly have and largely do not have policies on Social Entrepreneurship. Thus, Social entrepreneurs often operate largely without policy frameworks and are therefore open to governance challenges. It is important for African governments to design and implement social entrepreneurship policy frames to advance both individual and organisational non-state actors' involvement in social entrepreneurship for African development. For instance, by providing incentives such tax reliefs and access to finance, governments can make the engagement and/or adoption of social entrepreneurship attractive to prospective entrepreneurs.

In addition, the training programmes and schemes designed and delivered by government institutions and schools may well incorporate the logic of shared value in the training content. Making "shared value", a business and strategy whereby companies find business opportunities in social problems (Porter and Kramer, 2011), more salient in

training programmes and formal educational settings has the capacity to stimulate interest and adoption of this way of doing enterprise among trainees of various training schemes. As discussed in the preceding section, Nigeria, and indeed most African countries, has existing institutions that can drive and deliver the required changes.

Other institutions, especially schools, have the capacity to champion the course. Incorporating Social Entrepreneurship in the university curriculum and embedding the idea of social and shared value in the curriculum will go a long way in stimulating among university students a similar sort of interest and adoption of the “shared value” way of doing business that we highlighted for trainees in government-led training schemes and programme. While social enterprise is primarily about creating and adding social value, it is also about creating other relevant values (e.g., profit) that are beneficial and aligned to the individual entrepreneur’s self-interest point of view. Specifically, it is important to note that business by providing goods and services that societies require are addressing social issues. In this sense, all enterprises could be argued as having a social-orientation. What social entrepreneurship does is to make salient how business’ can actively and proactively seek out solutions to specific social problems by being innovative in business. Interestingly, there is evidence that the shared value approach to doing business is gaining momentum in the Nigerian business landscape. For instance, a growing number of teledoctors (entrepreneurs) are in liaison with MTN (one of the major telecom providers in the country). By dialling 191 on the phones, individuals are put through to teledoctors who can aid patients from a distance (Oputa, 2013). The findings from the qualitative study provide more examples showcasing how social problems have underpinned innovation.

## **RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

The role that the academic community (African and non-African) should play in enhancing understanding and applicability of Social Entrepreneurship for specific nationality contexts cannot be overemphasised. This chapter’s findings and discussions, it is hoped, flag up the need for more studies in this area, particularly those that identify and categorise the different dimensions of existing shared/social value creation initiatives in

different sectors, industries etc. Furthermore, the findings from the qualitative study open areas and/or avenues for further research. For instance, using quantitative approaches that make generalisation possible can help ascertain the extent that some of the findings apply to wider populations.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This chapter has explored the nature of entrepreneurship in Nigerian and broader African context, including the potential role that social entrepreneurship can play in addressing social, most especially poverty in Nigeria and other developing African countries.

In discussing entrepreneurship in Nigeria, a key issue that is emphasised in the chapter is the economic role that is assigned to entrepreneurship by government. Specific to this is the emphasis on using entrepreneurship as a vehicle of alleviating poverty. The underpinning assumption is that by getting people involved in private enterprise, they will become more self-sustaining and help grow the national economy. However, this approach even if successful, may not be enough in addressing poverty from a holistic perspective. This is because poverty is a broad concept with a multiplicity of dimensions, and the economic dimension that is emphasised is but one of these numerous dimensions. The discussion gravitated towards exploring social entrepreneurship as a concept and strategy to doing business with the primary objective of creating social value that addresses social problems. As evidenced from findings of the qualitative study of Nigerian Social Entrepreneurs and the cases from a range of African countries, this way of engaging in entrepreneurship has the potential of addressing a multiplicity of social problems, particularly those linked poverty. In fact, the scope of the potential of addressing a range of social problems from engaging in social entrepreneurship in countries such as Nigeria is extensive. In a nut shell, social entrepreneurship has the capacity to grow the economies of developing African countries such as Nigeria while simultaneously addressing a range of other social problems. However, the extent that this will be achieved depends on the roles played by relevant stakeholders in addressing key challenges and their ability to foster mutually beneficial partnerships.

The example of teledoctors highlight that social entrepreneurship underpinned by shared value and joined-up collaboration between large businesses and entrepreneurs is currently happening and gaining momentum in Nigeria. This example also highlights the immense benefits for large businesses and individual entrepreneurs in delivering products and services that deliver economic and social value. It also highlights the role of partnerships that are mutually beneficial, i.e., when big businesses (MNEs) partner with indigenous social enterprises to create social value and enhance profit maximisation.

Finally, it is important to note that the essence of social entrepreneurship ties-in with indigenous Africa social assistance values that prioritise social survival over individual profit making, especially those attained at the expense of the larger population. By way of essence, the primary goal of the African entrepreneur can, therefore, be seen to be linked to the imperative to innovate and produce to secure social survival, thus transcending the confines of profit generation (Lepoutre et al., 2013; Young & Grinsfelder's (2011). This strongly suggests that with the right support from relevant stakeholders, indigenous Africans in their different countries can drive sustainable businesses, i.e., those that deliver benefits that go over and beyond economic ones. In the light of the development challenges in Africa and the shortcomings of African governments at attending to survival challenges, social entrepreneurship presents a possible panacea.

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## KEY TERMS

**Entrepreneurship:** This is the process of creating a new product/service or re-invention of an existing product or service. It is a phenomenon embedded in entrepreneurial activities that usually involves creating something new or re-inventing an existing process.

**Entrepreneur:** This is an individual who creates, establishes or initiates a new process or business venture by innovatively identifying and harnessing resources to generate value.

**Social Entrepreneurship:** It is an entrepreneurial activity that innovatively addresses social needs within a society.

**Social Entrepreneur:** A social entrepreneur is someone who uses innovative and creative approaches or technology to address identified social problems within the society.

**Social Problems:** This is an array of general factors that directly and indirectly affect the society negatively.

**Context:** This describes and explains the circumstances or setting in which something can be understood

**Qualitative Methodology:** This is a methodological approach that employs a scientific way to gather non-numerical data.