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## An Alternative Strategy of Social Entrepreneurship Initiative for Food Security in Nigeria: The Role of Relevant Stakeholders

**Aminu Nassir Brimah\***

Ph. D. Candidate, Department of Business Administration, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

**Wahid Damilola Olanipekun**

Department of Management and Accounting, Ladoké Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomoso, Nigeria.

**Azeez Tunbosun Lawal**

Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Business Administration, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

**Abstract:** The thrust of this paper is to provide an alternative strategy for solving the problem of food insecurity in Nigeria through the social entrepreneurship initiative which is gaining prominence in recent times. The paper explains the numerous efforts adopted by government to engender food security in the country but which yielded infinitesimal results. It concludes that the problem of food insecurity in Nigeria can be solved with collective efforts of the relevant stakeholders: international donors, government, professional institutions, banks, nongovernmental organisations, faith based institutions, schools, families, farmers, and media. The paper recommends the adoption of social entrepreneurship initiative by all stakeholders as an alternative strategy for achieving the dream of food security in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Social entrepreneurship; Food security; Strategy; Nigeria.

### 1. Introduction

Food has been defined as something good to eat. It could be in liquid, semi solid and solid forms and are necessary to carry out one or more of the life functions and the body in terms of health, growth, and normal functions of living organism (Ricketts, 1983). The greatest major world problem today is how to eliminate hunger and poverty. Food security has been described as an important aspect in any consideration of wealth and economic development. Food is important to human survival and development. (Iyiola, 1998) opined that in Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, food is among the primary need to be satisfied before thinking about all other needs such as national progress and development. Thus, without sufficient food production in quality and quantity, satisfying other developmental needs will be hindered. Poor feeding will produce unhealthy citizens.

An estimated 70 percent of Nigerians live on less than one dollar per day. Nigeria was ranked 40<sup>th</sup> out of 79 on the 2012 global hunger index. According to the report, Nigeria was revealed amongst countries with low development index at 153 out of 186 countries that were ranked. Life expectancy in Nigeria is placed at 52 years old while other health indicators reveal that only 1.9% of the nation's budget is expended on health. Similarly 68% of Nigerians are stated to be living below \$1.25 daily while adult illiteracy rate for adult (both sexes) is 61.3%. Despite the reported growth in the economy, it did not make the list of 11 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa that recorded more than 2% annual human development index (HDI) gains since year 2000 (UNDP, 2013). In a separate report by African Union Commission in 2012, the MDG rating had placed 15 African countries ahead of the 20 countries that made the greatest progress globally and Nigeria was not even listed among the 15 African countries.

Nigeria ranked 80<sup>th</sup> on food security out of 185 countries with national integrated food security strategy affordability, availability and quality. Food insecurity rose from about 18 percent in 1986 to about 41 percent in 2004 (Sanusi *et al.*, 2006). This implies that over 61 million Nigerian are food insecure that is are either hungry, under nourished or starving.. Agriculture is the mainstay of Nigeria's economy, employing approximately two- third of the country's labour force and contributing 40 percent to Nigeria's GDP (International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), 2012). Nigeria is the world's largest producer of cassava, yam and cowpea; yet it is a food deficit nation and depends on import of grains, livestock, fish (International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), 2012). Furthermore, of an estimated 71 million hectare of cultivable land, only half is currently used. Pressure from growing population is also impacting the already diminished resources, further threatening food production. Achievement of good security is an insurance against hunger and malnutrition both of which hindered economic development, (Davies, 2009). This is why all countries make a considerable effort to increase their production capacity. The root problem of inadequate access to food is poverty. This is as a result of the failure of the economic system to generate sufficient income enough to meet the household basic need and distribute it broadly.

\*Corresponding Author

Food insecurity and hunger are forerunners to nutritional health, human and economic development problem. They connote deprivation of basic necessities of life. Food security is a universal indicator of household and individuals personal wellbeing. [Gembremendhin \(2000\)](#) opined that the consequences of hunger and nutrition are adversely affecting the livelihood and wellbeing of a massive number of people and inhibiting the development of many poor countries.

[Akinola \(2010\)](#) opined that the danger of food insecurity was first noticed in the 1970s when agricultural production began to deteriorate. Various government efforts have been directed towards making food production available to all. Examples include National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP), Agricultural Development Programme (ADP), Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Green Revolution Programme (GRP), Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), River Basin Development Programme, etc. The 7 point agenda of the late President Yar'Adua emphasized on food security and agriculture as one of the cardinal programme. Similarly, the transformation agenda of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan which focuses on the project, programmes and key priority policies also emphasises on agriculture and rural development. The declared aims of Nigeria's national agricultural policy are to attain food security, increase production and productivity, generate employment and income, and expand exports and reduce food imports. The agricultural transformation action plan launched in August 2011 seeks to develop the value chain of five key commodities i.e rice, cassava, sorghum, cocoa and cotton.

All these efforts by government are geared towards encouraging agricultural cooperative societies, agricultural credit and loan scheme, distribution of fertilizers etc. However, little could be shown for them in terms of securing food for the populace and this abysmal performance has left Nigeria in a state of helplessness. [Adegbola \(2010\)](#) opined that lack of proper focus, inadequate coordination, corruption and mismanagement, infrastructural inadequacies etc are some of the reasons that accounts for their failure. It is In view of its global dimension and importance to have a food secured planet that the international community has placed the elimination of famine and hunger on its agenda. The participation at the food summit organised by Food and Agricultural Organisation in 1996 pledged to reduce number of hungry people by half of the year 2015 ([Food Summit, 1996](#)). In this paper, we propose an alternative strategy for solving the problem of food insecurity in Nigeria through the social entrepreneurship initiative.

## **2. Conceptual Clarifications**

### **2.1. Food Security**

World Food Conference defined food security as availability at all times of adequate world supplies of basic stuffs ([United Nations, 1975](#)). World Bank defines food security as access by all people at all times to enough food secure when a majority of its population have access to food in sufficient quantity and quality consistent with decent existence at all times ([Idachaba, 2004](#)). [Food & Agricultural Organisation \(2005\)](#) defined food security as a situation whereby all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences and an active and healthy life. [United States Department of Agriculture \(USDA\) \(2003\)](#) defined food security as access by all members at all times to have enough food for an active and healthy life. [United States Department of Agriculture \(USDA\) \(2003\)](#) opined food security is built on three principles

1. Food availability which implies that there is sufficient quantities of food available on a consistent basis.
2. Food access which implies that there is sufficient resources to obtain appropriate foods for a nutritious diet.
3. Food use which implies that there is appropriate utilization based on knowledge of basic nutritional and care as well as adequate water and sanitation.

### **2.2. Social Entrepreneurship**

Social entrepreneurship is the process of pursuing innovative solutions to social problem, ([Wikipedia Online, 2013](#)). It involves applying commercial practices to social problems. [Thierry \(2008\)](#) opined that social entrepreneurship represents the practice of responding to market failures and transformative financially sustainable innovations aimed at solving social problems. [Abrams \(2012\)](#) refers to social entrepreneurship as social ventures or companies whose primary mission is to address a social problem or concern using entrepreneurial approaches, while still maintaining a profit motive. Social entrepreneurship serves as one of the suitable panacea to this problem without leaving everything to the government or industry to solve ([Rahim and Akinwale, 2012](#)). Social entrepreneurship focuses on creating wealth for the development of the society; and helps to curb societal hills of hunger, disease and illiteracy ([Unegbu et al., 2012](#)). It is also seen as putting social objectives first and utilizing commercial skills to achieve them in an entrepreneurial way ([Kuratco, 2009](#)).

From the above, social entrepreneurs are individuals or organizations that have the potential to transform people's lives with innovative solutions to society's most pressing social problems. They act as change agents for society, seizing opportunities and others means in order to improve systems, invent and disseminate new approaches and advance sustainable solution that create social value.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

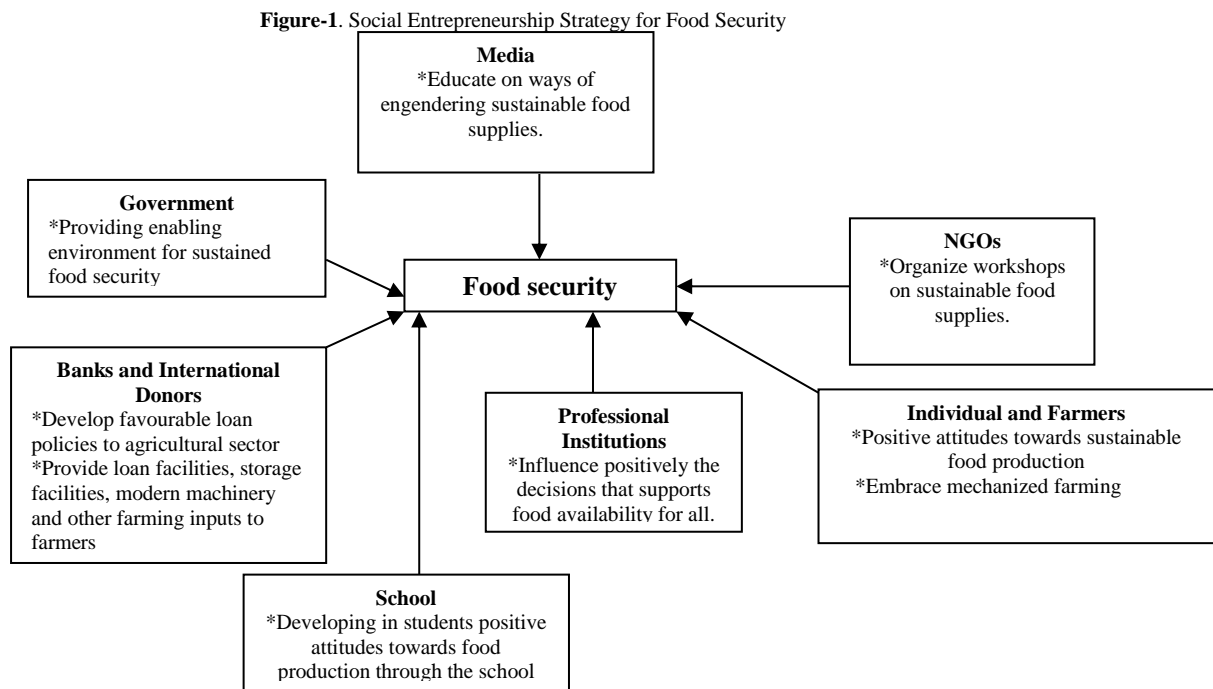
#### 3.1. Social Contract Theory

According to this theory, entrepreneurs must act in a responsible manner not only because it is in its commercial interest to do so, but because it is part of how society implicitly expects them to operate (Moir, 2001). Furthermore, according to the social contract paradigm, individuals and organisations are regarded as a social institution and should join with other social structures like the family, educational system and religious institutions, to help enhance life and meet needs. In other words, the social contract theory holds that organisations and society are equal partners, each enjoying a set of rights and having reciprocal responsibilities. There is direct and indirect mutual need between organisations and society. While the former requires continuous support from the latter in terms of resources and sales, the latter might expect the former to operate in a socially responsible manner since the corporations control huge amounts of economic and productive resources such as technology, finances and labour, which directly or indirectly may affect the society in which they operate (Lantos, 2002).

### 4. Alternative Strategy of Social Entrepreneurship for Food Security

It is well established that strategy is very crucial to the development and performance of any nation. Strategy occupies a central position in the focus and proper functioning of any country. This is because it is a plan that integrates the nation’s major goals, policies and actions into a cohesive whole. A well formulated strategy should therefore help to marshal and allocate the nations resources into a unique and viable posture based on its relative internal competencies and shortcomings and anticipated changes in the environment (Igbuzor, 2012). Alternative strategy of social entrepreneurship initiatives is expected to promote the participation of all stakeholders in the efforts aimed at engendering food security in Nigeria. The stakeholders in this social entrepreneurship initiative, from the above diagram, are individuals, farmers, schools, media, family, institutions, banks, professional institutions, non -governmental organisations, international donors and government.

It is the responsibility of all citizens to be disposed towards food security. Individuals should develop positive attitudes towards sustainable food production. Farmers should embrace mechanized farming. School should develop in students positive attitudes towards food production through the school curriculum. The media has a pivotal role of educating citizens on ways of engendering sustainable food supplies. Non-governmental organisations should organize workshops on sustainable food supplies. Professional institutions also have a role of influencing positively the decisions that supports food availability for all. The banks must develop favourable loan policies to agricultural sector to ensure that farmers have access to adequate financing. International donors need to provide loan facilities, storage facilities, modern machinery and other farming inputs to farmers. The government above all must provide an enabling environment that will make all stakeholders participate and contribute their own quota through imbibing social entrepreneurship initiative so that food security can be attained, maintained and sustained.



Source: Brimah, Olanipekun & Lawal (2015)

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendation

The paper concludes that the problem of food insecurity in Nigeria can be solved with collective efforts of the relevant stakeholders: international donors, government, professional institutions, banks, nongovernmental organisations, faith based institutions, schools, families, farmers, and media. It recommends the adoption of social entrepreneurship initiative by all stakeholders as an alternative strategy for achieving the dream of food security in Nigeria.

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