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### Exploring Social Entrepreneurship as a Novel Strategy to Address Child Labour in Nigeria

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#### Abstract

In Nigeria, child labour has remained a critical issue that not only affects the overall development of the children but that of the nation as well with several unsuccessful attempts to address it thus, the demand for a novel solution to the problem. The study, therefore, explores social entrepreneurship as a novel strategy with the capacity to effectively address child labour in the country. Using a literature review approach, the study first looks into the concept of child labour in Nigeria, taking into cognisance its definitions, causes, and consequences; with a brief review of the current situation of child labour in the country coupled with past interventions to address it. In the same vein, the study reviews the concept of social entrepreneurship, encompassing its forms, and explores suitable social entrepreneurship initiatives to tackle the problem such as education and vocational training, community-based agricultural cooperatives, microfinance for women, etc. To aid in understanding the link between social entrepreneurship and its ability to address child labour, social capital theory was used. Though the study acknowledged obstacles in addressing child labour in Nigeria through social entrepreneurship, it, nevertheless, emphasized its effectiveness to include, among others, promotion of education, protection of children's rights, and economic growth and development. The study thus, proffers recommendations to tackle child labour, emphasizing the necessity for collaborative endeavours, among others. It then concludes by advocating for the adoption of social entrepreneurship initiatives as viable strategy for addressing child labour in Nigeria, with potential impacts on policy-making and implementation.

**Keywords:** Exploration, Social Entrepreneurship, Novel Strategy, Address, Child Labour

## Introduction

The term "child labour" as defined by the International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2017) is work that deprives children of their education, childhood, their potential and dignity, and that is harmful to their physical and mental development. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child [UN-CRC] (1989) as well as the ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No.182), set clear boundaries for child

labour and provide the legal grounds for international, regional and national actions against it (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2024).

Following the global conventions, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (AHG/ST.4 REV.I), as well as the ECOWAS Regional Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labour and Forced Labour in West Africa (2021), among others, clearly set out the actions required to achieve an end to child labour in the region in line with target 8.7 of the sustainable development goals [SDGs]

(NBS, 2024). SDGs target 8.7 seeks an end to child labour in all its forms including recruitment and use of child soldiers by 2025 (Catholic Diocese of Ijebu-Ode, 2016).

In response, the Federal Government of Nigeria ratified the international conventions and adopted the regional frameworks and enacted a number of laws to protect children in Nigeria. The laws are included in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as amended and the Child Rights Act (2003), among others. These cover various aspects of protection for children in Nigeria, such as child labour, forced labour, child prostitution, and child trafficking, etc (NBS, 2024).

Globally, the ILO estimated that 160 million children – 63 million girls and 97 million boys – were in child labour at the beginning of 2020, accounting for almost 1 in 10 of all children worldwide. It was further anticipated that the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the rise of child labour. The pandemic, it is argued, aggravated the risk factors associated with child labour through its effects on the economy and the withdrawal of children from schooling. Habib, et al (2024) confirmed that an estimated 8.9 million children were predicted to enter the workforce by the end of 2022 due to the pandemic thus, posing a threat to the international commitment to end child labour by 2025.

According to the ILO (2020), Nigeria has one of the highest rates of child labour in Africa, with approximately 15 million children engaged in various forms of labour, depriving them of their rights to education, health, and a childhood free from exploitation. UNICEF (2020) argued that this

prevalence of child labour reflects systemic challenges including poverty, lack of access to education, and inadequate enforcement of labour laws and this, (Edmonds & Pavcnik, 2005) believes, perpetuates cycles of poverty and social inequality and imposes a significant burden on society as a whole.

In an effort to tackle child labour, government initiatives, NGOs and Civil Society Organizations' efforts, and international collaborations, have been applied; yet, they have yielded limited success. This, therefore, has necessitated a new perspective to use social entrepreneurship as a novel approach to address the problem. Social entrepreneurship involves the creation of innovative business models that prioritize social impact alongside financial sustainability (Dees, 1998). It harnesses the power of entrepreneurial thinking and innovation, to develop solutions that address root causes of child labour. This is basically through education and skills development, microfinance for women, community-based agricultural cooperatives, among others.

To this end, it is the purpose of this study to explore social entrepreneurship as a novel and promising solution to child labour in Nigeria. This is due to its perceived effectiveness in combating societal vices that trigger child labour. Though there is limited literature on the use of social entrepreneurship to combat child labour in Nigerian, it is the intention of this study to fill this gap by proposing a number of social entrepreneurship initiatives targeting child labour in Nigeria and contributing to knowledge in the area. This will thus, provide insights to and recommendations for policymakers, practitioners, and other stakeholders seeking to combat the problem effectively and sustainably in the country.

## **Understanding Child Labour and Social Entrepreneurship**

### **Conceptualising Child Labour, its Forms, Causes and Consequences in Nigeria:**

According to the UN-CRC (1989), a child is someone who is under the age of 18 and should be free to enjoy fundamental human rights, including the right to education, the right to speech, the right of choice-of-life, and the right to association without discrimination based on colour, sex, race, religion, or language (Abiyawa & Awura, 2024). Thus, any work done by a child which violates the stated rights, and of course, affects the education and development of the child is termed “child labour.” It covers a range of work done by children (5-17 years) most of which are forced and exploitative, and by law, contravenes the Child Rights Act. Succinctly, the ILO (2017) defines child labour as work that deprives children of their education, childhood, their potential and dignity, and that is harmful to their physical and mental development. To make the concept more engaging, the Federal Government of Nigeria [FGN] (2022) sees it as the engagement of children below 18 years in any work that is essentially exploitative and injurious to the physical, social, cognitive, and moral development of the child. It acknowledges the ‘acceptable forms of work’ consisting of moderate involvement of children in household and occupational activities carried out in ‘safe conditions’ and ‘environments’ and constitute a ‘mechanism for socialising children in the norms, traditions, and skills necessary for their effective adjustment to their social and economic milieu.’ By implication, any household or occupational activity that deviates from the above standard, invariably, amounts to child labour. The UN-CRC (1989) as well as the ILO

Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No.182), set clear boundaries for child labour and provide the legal grounds for international, regional and national actions against it (NBS, 2024).

Specifically, the Child Rights Act (2003) prohibits children in the 5-11 age group from engaging in any economic activity but allows children 12 to 14 years old to engage in light work, while those in the 15-17 age group are allowed to be involved in economic activities that are not hazardous (NBS, 2024). Therefore, children below five years of age are assumed to be economically inactive while children (5- 11 years of age) working in economic activities are considered to be in child labour. Working children aged 12 to 14 are considered in child labour unless they perform light work, and for children aged 15 to 17, only those engaged in the worst forms of child labour are categorized as child labourers.

Child labour takes various forms. It could be paid or unpaid work whether in urban or rural areas, either in formal or informal sector, ranging from hazardous and exploitative work in manufacturing and industries, agriculture, mining, to domestic work, trafficking, armed conflict, and commercial sexual exploitation, etc UNICEF (2020) and according to Okojie (2004), street work such as street vending and begging. Children engaged in labour often endure long hours, low wages, and hazardous conditions, exposing them to physical injuries, health risks, and psychological trauma.

### **Causes and Consequences of Child Labour in Nigeria**

UNICEF (2020) holds that child labour in Nigeria stems from complex

factors, including poverty, limited access to education, cultural norms, urban migration, informal economy, conflict and displacement, and ineffective enforcement of child labour laws. Poverty, it remarked, pushes families to send children to work to support the household income, thus increases the chances of child labour. It continued that the lack of access to education further worsens the situation by preventing children from attending school and receiving quality education, leading to their involvement in labour activities, especially in rural areas.

Furthermore, cultural traditions in some communities expect children to contribute to household chores or family businesses from a young age, hindering their education and personal growth. Rural-urban migration and the growth of informal economy equally expose children to exploitative labour practices, pushing them into street vending, domestic work, or informal manufacturing due to limited job opportunities in urban centres (UNICEF, 2020).

Conflict and displacement, such as the impact of the Boko Haram insurgency in Northeast Nigeria, increase the vulnerability of children to labour exploitation as families face economic hardships, forcing children into hazardous work for survival. Additionally, weak enforcement of labour laws in Nigeria fails

to hold those engaging in child labour practices accountable, thereby perpetuating cycles of exploitation.

### Consequences

The UN (2020) and ILO (2017) observed that child labour has severe consequences, such as limited education, health risks, perpetuation of poverty cycles, and increased vulnerability to exploitation. They noted that it deprives children of their right to education, leading to higher dropout rates and lower literacy, perpetuating poverty and hindering socio-economic development. ILO further stressed that child labour exposes children to health hazards, physical injuries, harmful substances, and psychological trauma, with long-term health implications and equally perpetuates inter-generational poverty by denying children education and trapping families in economic deprivation.

While child labour, ILO continued, violates children's rights to education, protection from exploitation, and health, it equally undermines sustainable development goals like poverty eradication, education for all, and gender equality, indicating systemic failures in social protection, education, and labour regulation systems. This contravenes the UN-CRC which demands that children be protected from economic exploitation and hazardous work.

### Conceptualising Social Entrepreneurship and its Forms

Social entrepreneurship is the use of innovative business strategies to solve societal or environmental problems (such as child labour) while maintaining financial sustainability. According to Dees (1998), it is "the process of identifying, evaluating, and pursuing opportunities to create social

value." By "social value," emphasizes is on generating social impact rather than prioritizing profit as is the case with traditional business entrepreneurship. Its goal is to create social impact or value and profits generated from it are reinvested into the business (rather than shared among stakeholders) to pursue its goal thus, making it distinct from conventional businesses ventures (Global Social

enterprise, 2022). Social entrepreneurship is usually self-sustainable, independent of the government, established to solve social problems, impact-focused, not profit-oriented, and uses business models without relying solely on external grants and funds to execute its activities.

One key characteristic of social entrepreneurship is its focus on systemic change. In the case of child labour, rather than treating the symptoms, social entrepreneurship tackles its root causes such as poverty, unemployment, etc aiming for sustainable solutions. It combines the innovation, creativity, and risk-taking associated with traditional entrepreneurship to identify social problems and develop innovative solutions to address them while focusing on its goals. In its drive to address child labour, it can leverage social capital to mobilize resources and foster collective action through collaboration with diverse stakeholders, including government agencies, businesses, and communities to pool resources, expertise, and networks needed to achieve its goal.

Forms of social entrepreneurship vary widely and can include non-profit organizations like NGOs, cooperative societies, social enterprises, educational initiatives, micro finance institutions, public-private partnerships, social innovation hubs, impact investing, and technology-driven social enterprises, etc (Mair & Martí, 2006; Global Social Enterprise, 2022). As an innovative strategy created to find solutions to social problems it focuses on activities which promote humanity in all sectors to address child labour. These include provision of social and environmental justice, equality, women's empowerment, quality education, healthcare services, agriculture, and among other, community development which, in

the submission of Omeje and Nwaoha (2021), seeks to reduce poverty, suffering, develop healthy lifestyles, empower community members and create economic and employment opportunities to advance human wellbeing.

## Theoretical Framework

### Social Capital Theory

Understanding the theoretical underpinnings of social entrepreneurship and its potential role in addressing child labour can involve several theories like social capital theory, institutional theory, etc. However, social capital theory will suffice due to its significance.

Social capital theory emphasizes the idea that social relationships and networks have inherent value, which can facilitate and contribute to cooperation and support among individuals and groups to achieve a common goal. It includes elements such as social networks, social norms, trust, and reciprocity, which collectively enable individuals and groups to achieve shared objectives (Putnam, 1993). Though the history of social capital can be traced to classical economists, such as Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill, and sociologists, such as Max Weber; its entry into the academic debates can be attributed to the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1986) and James S. Coleman (1988). However, it was the pioneering work of Robert D. Putnam (1993) that heavily popularised it among social scientists and attracted the attention of researchers and policymakers (Bhandari & Yasunobu, 2009). It has applications in various fields like economic development, public health, education, and community development, exploring how networks and partnerships contribute to societal progress.

In the realm of social entrepreneurship and efforts to combat

child labour, the theory plays a crucial role through networks and partnerships to mobilizing resource needed to effectively address the issue of child labour. According to (Gedajlovic et al., 2013), social entrepreneurs leverage existing relationships, community networks, and trust to access funding, expertise, and support to implement initiatives aimed at addressing child labour. Networks and partnership can involve collaborating with diverse stakeholders such as parents, educators, and local organisations, etc, to create a support system for vulnerable families, and offer resources and mutual assistance to prevent child labour. Such collaboration can result to using education initiatives to keep children away from exploitative work environments through setting up community-run schools and after-school programmes to provide education and vocational training to at-risk children.

Guided by social capital theory, social entrepreneurs can also leverage cooperatives and microfinance services to empower women as financially independent mothers can contribute greatly to household income which significantly reduces child labour. They can as well advocate for enforcement of child labour laws by partnering other stakeholders and activists to create awareness on the harmful effects of child labour and push for implementation of measures to protect children in the country.

Social capital theory, therefore, can offers an insight to combat child labour in Nigeria by utilizing existing networks, fostering relationships, and building community trust. This can help to develop sustainable policy measures that protect children against forced and exploitative work.

## The State of Child Labour in Nigeria

In a survey carried out by the NBS in 2022 in collaboration with ILO and the federal Ministry of Labour and employment, report shows that 24,673,485 children 5 to 17 years old were in child labour. Of the children in child labour, 60.8 per cent (14,990,674) were in the 5-11 age groups, 20.8 per cent (5,132,574) were in the 12-14 age groups and 18.4 per cent (4,550,237) were in the 15-17 age groups. This figure represents 39.2 per cent of the total 62.9 million children population (aged 5-17 years) as of the year. However, in 2023, the federal government estimated that the figure could have increased to 43 per cent. The data shows that more boys (39.6%) than girls (38.8%) were in child labour with children living in rural areas more likely than those in urban areas to engage in child labour (NBS, 2024).

Lamenting further, the federal government, during the 2023 World Day Against Child Labour (WDACL) celebration (June 12, 2023) themed, “Social Justice for All: End Child Labour” raised the alarm on the staggering figure of Nigerian children engaged in child labour, equating the scourge to modern day slavery. It noted that human beings in their wicked nature, cash in on the high level of poverty to exploit children by engaging them in child labour, stressing that about 39% of the children engaged in child labour work in dangerous industries like mining, granite, quarrying and construction, as well as engage in commercial sexual exploitation, armed conflict and occasionally, becoming victims of human trafficking (Ikechukwu, 2023).

Corroborating the above view, Amina of the International Federation of Female Lawyers (FIDA), during the

WDACL celebration (2024), themed, “Let’s Act on our Commitments: End Child Labour”, admitted that the scourge of child labour has continued to devastate Nigeria in its various forms. She noted that the plight of the Nigerian child in the face of child labour is one of profound suffering and lost hope (FIDA, 2024). This brief account paints a picture of the reality of child labour in Nigeria necessitating the clamour for a new and promising approach to tackle the problem.

### **Exploring Social Entrepreneurships Initiatives Targeting Child Labour in Nigeria:**

This section identifies various social entrepreneurship initiatives that are capable of addressing child labour in Nigeria. They are discussed below:

- **Education-focused Initiatives:**

These refer to initiatives and enterprises that prioritize education as a means of addressing child labour by providing educational opportunities to children from impoverished backgrounds. These initiatives can include setting up community-based education centres to provide alternative learning opportunities for children who are unable to attend formal schools due to factors such as poverty, distance, or cultural barriers (ILO, 2008). This can cater to the diverse needs and interests of children from marginalized backgrounds, including those at risk of child labour by getting them off the streets and into schools through various interventions. ILO highlighted the interventions to include, among others, scholarships and sponsorship programmes to children from low-income families that enable them

to access educational opportunities. By covering school fees, uniforms, textbooks, and other educational expenses, these initiatives remove financial barriers to education and empower children to stay in school rather than engage in child labour to support their families.

- **Skill Development and Vocational Training:**

Addressing child labour through social entrepreneurship can come in the form of skill development and vocational training in areas such as trades, carpentry, tailoring, welding, agribusiness, plumbing, artisanal crafts, or other technical fields that can provide viable alternatives to child labour. These, ILO (2008) argued, provide skills and competencies to older children (14-17 years) who are at or above the legal minimum age of employment, to earn sustainable income, gainful employment, or start their own business in the future.

- **Microfinance for Women:** This involves providing small loans, financial services, and support to female entrepreneurs and small business owners, particularly those from low-income and marginalized communities. Babalola, et al (2023) argued that empowering women through microfinance initiatives enhances their financial independence and promotes their livelihood and this indirectly addresses child labour by improving household income and reducing the economic necessity for children to work. They further

maintained that this service, especially to those excluded from traditional banking systems empowers women to start small businesses, escape poverty, and improve their quality of life. This aligns with the position of the paper that microfinance for women enables them to support their families and empowers them to resist societal pressure to engage children in labour or rely on child labour for family survival. An example of this includes microfinance institutions like LAPO microfinance bank which supports women entrepreneurs through access to microloans.

▪ **Childcare Services for Working Parents:**

Childcare services are crucial for promoting child welfare and combating child labour by affording working parents, especially single parents or those from low-income families to work without depending on their children for support (ILO, 2023c). These services are manned by trained caregivers who provide a variety of affordable facilities and programmes focusing on care, supervision, and early childhood education to children while their parents are at work.

- Examples of such services in Nigeria include Day-care Centres, Pre-schools and Early Childhood Education programmes, After-school programmes, and Community-based Childcare Centres, among others. Day-care centres offer care for young children, allowing parents to work without involving their children in

exploitative labour. While, Preschools and Early Childhood Education Programmes prepare young children for formal schooling and cognitive development (ILO, 2023b), they also reduce the risk of dropout and involvement in child labour. After-School Programmes, on their own, provide supervised care for school-age children after school hours, helping parents to balance work responsibilities while ensuring their children's well-being. And, Community-based Childcare Centres offer affordable services through sliding-scale fees or subsidies that reduce barriers to employment and education for low-income families and provide safe environment that prevents child labour.

▪ **Community-based Agricultural Cooperatives:**

These are organizations established by farmers and community members to collectively manage agricultural activities for mutual benefit. They pool resources, share knowledge, and collaborate on farming practices, marketing, and distribution of agricultural products to enhance family income ILO (2022). These cooperatives play a vital role in addressing child labour by promoting sustainable agriculture, improving food security, and enhancing livelihoods in rural areas through youth empowerment programmes and empowering families and communities, among others. ILO asserts that by providing training in sustainable livelihoods to youths at risk of or engaged in child labour

and empowering families and communities through access to resources using agricultural cooperatives, social entrepreneurship breaks cycles of poverty and exploitation that perpetuate child labour.

- **Technology-driven Social Enterprise:** This includes launching innovative technologies such as e-learning apps (ILO, 2023a), digital libraries, mobile apps, web platforms, among other media content solutions to combat child labour. These technologies can monitor, report, track progress, coordinate response, and document child labour incidents in real-time while protecting whistleblowers. Additionally, blockchain platforms and digital traceability systems can help in ethical supply chain to ensure social, environmental, and ethically standards in sourcing, producing, and distributing goods particularly in sectors like agriculture, cocoa, textiles, mining, and manufacturing that are susceptible to child labour. This process tracks product origins to ensure compliance with labour standards thus reduces the rate of child labour. ILO equally noted that in the agricultural sector, technology is deployed as modern farming tools to reduce the use of manpower and this also reduces then use of child labour.
- **Legal Aid and Rehabilitation Services:** These address the legal, social, and psychological needs of children and families affected by child labour. This can be through legal aid organisations which offer

free or low-cost legal assistance to children and families to seek justice and uphold children's rights. Organizations like the Legal Aid Council of Nigeria and Child Protection Network or National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), Hauwai, et al. (2022) assert, can provide crucial legal support to indigent individuals, including children impacted by child labour.

The above assertion has further reinforced the believe of this paper that Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) and other non-profit organisations can operate rehabilitation centres to offer a safe environment for rescued child labourers, providing them medical care, counselling, education, and skills training to reintegrate them into formal schooling and equipping them with skills for better living.

### Why Addressing Child Labour in Nigeria through Social Entrepreneurship?

This has become imperative given the failure of several interventions to solve the problem in the country. These include government's initiatives such the National Policy on Child Labour and the National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labour; NGO and Civil Society efforts like Child Rights and Rehabilitation Network (CRARN) and ILO support initiatives; and international collaboration with organisations like UNICEF, ILO, and the World Bank. The failure, according to ILO (2017) and Okojie (2004), arises from implementation gaps in resources, enforcement of laws, access to education and social services, and support for vulnerable families, thus making child

labour a persistent challenge requiring innovative and sustainable solutions.

In light of this, a new perspective to use social entrepreneurship has become imperative with opinions indicating that it has the capacity to reduce child labour and improve the well-being of children and families (Orovwuje & Bakare, 2019; ILO, 2020). Babalola (2012) and UNDP (2012) equally noted that social entrepreneurship has, in recent years, gained momentum and emerged as a viable alternative to existing models to tackle social issues and needs in Nigeria hence, its consideration as discussed below:

- **Protection of Children's Rights:** UNICEF (1989) maintains that social entrepreneurship plays a critical role in protecting children's rights through education and skills training, especially to those from marginalized communities. It can also be achieved through creating economic opportunities for families to provide employment and income-generation for parents to reduce the need for children to contribute financially; working closely with government and NGOs to advocate for policy changes that protect the children; and, raising awareness about children's protection through campaigns and community engagements.
- **Promotion of Education:** According to ILO (2022) social entrepreneurship prioritizes education as its key intervention to child labour. It provides accessible and affordable educational opportunities and vocational/skills training programmes, through various platforms including

innovative technology for e-learning to equip children with knowledge and skills needed to break cycles of poverty and exploitation. Through this, children spend more time in school rather than working and being exploited.

- **Economic Growth and Development:** Social entrepreneurship fosters inclusive economic growth and development that empower communities to generate income and provide alternative to child labour. Children engaged in labour are less likely to receive education and skills training, limiting their future earning potential and contribution to the economy (ILO, 2020). Therefore, social entrepreneurship, through investment in education and training, can drive productivity and innovation needed for long-term economic prosperity and well-being for society as a whole.
- **Protection of Public Health and Social Cohesion:** ILO (2020) and UNICEF (2017) admit that child labour poses significant risks to public health and social cohesion. This perpetuates social inequalities and undermines community well-being as children engaged in hazardous work are exposed to physical injuries, psychological trauma, and long-term health consequences. UNDP (2021) thus, argues that addressing child labour through social entrepreneurship can help Nigeria promote social cohesion, equity, and inclusive

society where everyone, including children, can thrive.

- **Empowerment of Vulnerable Communities:** Child labour is worse among vulnerable and marginalized communities, especially in rural areas. Social entrepreneurship initiatives engage and empower vulnerable communities, including parents, caregivers, and local leaders, by providing them with education, skills training, access to resources, and alternative livelihoods to fight child labour. According to Handono and Febiola (2020) social entrepreneurship empowers vulnerable communities socially, environmentally and economically, and this helps to build resilience and sustainable solutions to address the root causes of child labour, such as poverty, cultural norms, lack of education etc.
- **Fostering Innovation and Creativity:** In the submission of ILO (2020), social entrepreneurship provides educational opportunities and skill development to children for critical thinking and problem-solving thus, enabling them to become more innovative and creative as they grow. Buttressing this point, Aminu, et al. (2014) add that children and their families can learn to identify opportunities, develop solutions, and think creatively to address local challenges. For instance, Co-Creation Hub (CcHUB), a social innovative organisation in Lagos plays this role by promoting creativity and innovation.

## Challenges of Addressing Child Labour in Nigeria through Social Entrepreneurship

Though social entrepreneurship in Nigeria, Global Social Enterprises (2022) remarks, is still an emerging concept, it is, however, currently demonstrating its potential by providing innovative solutions to tackle social challenges in diverse sectors across the country. Nevertheless, some of its challenges in tackling child labour in Nigeria include:

- **Limited Access to Resources:** In the view of UNICEF (2020), these include financial, human, and technological resources which impact start-up costs, operational expenses, interventions and delivery of programmes to marginalized communities mostly affected by child labour especially for grassroots and community-based organizations.
- **Inadequate Infrastructure and Support Systems:** These include poor transportation networks, unreliable electricity, limited access to basic services, and absence of supportive legal frameworks, regulatory mechanisms, and government incentives for social entrepreneurship to deliver interventions and function effectively (ILO, 2017; UNDP, 2021).
- **Cultural and Social Norms:** UNICEF (2017) argues that in many communities, child labour is normalized as a means of economic survival or traditional practice. Yet, social entrepreneurs, Mair and Martí (2006) argue, must

navigate these cultural sensitivities to effectively address child labour.

- **Sustainability:** Dees and Anderson (2003) contend that many initiatives struggle to transition from pilot projects to sustainable enterprises capable of generating social impact. UNDP (2021) also add that monitoring and evaluation frameworks to measure and demonstrate the impact of social entrepreneurship interventions on child labour reduction needed for sustainability may be lacking.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered to help strengthen the effectiveness of social entrepreneurship in addressing child labour in Nigeria:

- i Social entrepreneurs need to collaborate with diverse stakeholders such as government agencies, private sectors, and CBOs to pool expertise, resources, and networks to enhance their effective and sustainable interventions in tackling child labour.
- ii Government agencies and other stakeholders need to provide technical and financial assistance to social entrepreneurs working to address child labour in Nigeria. This will help to improve the implementation of social entrepreneurship initiatives targeting child labour.
- iii. Government at all levels need to create enabling policies for social entrepreneurship to thrive

and, as well, effectively implement and monitor legal frameworks targeting child labour in the country. This will help to strengthen the effectiveness of social entrepreneurs in the fight against child labour in the country.

Iv. Social entrepreneurs targeting child labour need to raise awareness about its dangers and the importance of education in tackling the problem. This can foster positive attitude towards education and norms around child labour and pave the way for innovative interventions.

## Conclusion

The study explores social entrepreneurship as a novel strategy to address child labour in Nigeria. This follows the failure of government initiatives and efforts of the international bodies to address the problem. Social entrepreneurship therefore uses creative and sustainable interventions to tackle the root causes of child labour and empower children to realize their full potential. The study believes that despite challenges posed by limited resources, cultural norms, and sustainability concerns, social entrepreneurship can effectively drive positive change that can engage child labour in the country.

Through the collaboration of social entrepreneurs with other stakeholders and the government's financial and technical assistance and supportive policies, among others, Nigeria can create an enabling environment for social entrepreneurship initiatives to thrive. This will ultimately contribute to the eradication of child labour and promotion of a society where every child can prosper.

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