

# Social Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Development: The Nigerian Conservation Foundation Phenomenon

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## Abstract

The study was designed to explore the relationship of social entrepreneurship and sustainable development in Nigeria, using the Nigerian Conservation Foundation as the point of analysis. Even though this type of study is very scanty in Nigeria, social entrepreneurship has gained significant recognition as an important phenomenon for social change and sustainable development. As a multidimensional movement social entrepreneurs through their social enterprises often perceive huge opportunities resulting from market failures, and whether operating as a profit or not for profit organizations aim at building and sustaining a social enterprise to enhance generational social change and sustainable development. Since the 1980s the Nigerian Conservation Foundation has been focusing on sustainable development indicators like poverty alleviation, halting environmental degradation, soil conservation and reforestation as efforts to reduce meaningless and unsustainable development activities in Nigeria. Case study research design was used for the study, and through data analysis the study found high positive association between the activity of the Nigerian Conservation Foundation and UN SDGs agenda. On the basis of the result, it was recommended among others that government should support SEOs in efforts to promote sustainable development in Nigeria.

## Keywords

Social Entrepreneur, Sustainable Entrepreneurship, Serendipity, NCF, Yunus, Edu, Social and Environmental El Dorado

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## 1. Introduction

The UN realizes that the world needs holistic development in terms of economic, political, social and environmental progress for sustainable coexistence on earth. The body believes that achieving sustainable development by the year 2030 among other things requires the strengthening and implementation of global partnerships, sustainable forest management, land and environmental protection and to conserve and sustainably use the seas, oceans, and marine resources for sustainable development. On a growing scale, in addition to the various economic and developmental problems many nations of the world contend with, they also

face significant challenges with huge social dimensions that equally offer economic and social opportunities. While economic entrepreneurship has a primary focus on wealth creation, social entrepreneurship (SE) focuses primarily on environmental protection and provision of social services. Both economic entrepreneurship and SE are often led by creative entrepreneurs. An entrepreneur is a person who undertakes innovations, finances new ventures in an effort to transform innovations into economic goods and who accepts the risks associated with them [1]. According to Pandey and Modhsocial entrepreneurs are concerned with promoting social change [2]. They opine that they are entrepreneurs with a social mission. In this case, their challenge becomes how to make social related impact, and not wealth creation.

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Social entrepreneurs argue that wealth is just a means to an end and not an end in itself. Kirzner suggests that the products of SE are different from traditional entrepreneurship and measurement of these actions is also different [3]. Nicholls argues that social entrepreneurs tackle market failures, which resembles the function of economic entrepreneurs [4]. He opines that for social entrepreneurs, market failures are not only related to price disequilibria or the inability of some people to access certain products or services. Pandey and Modh report that a rapidly growing area in the field of social economy is social enterprises, as an outcome of social innovation. According to BEPA SE is a process, the logic of action, which can occur in a variety of organizational contexts: not-for-profit, for-profit, a government organization, a community-based organization, or through a new venture. The report emphasizes that SE works on its own set of principles; focuses on value creation, not capture, focuses on innovation, not the status quo, focuses on the sustainable solution, not a sustainable organization, and focuses on empowerment of participants in the value chain not control of industry or economic forces. Therefore the social entrepreneur as a pioneer, mindful of social performance focuses on his passion, perceptions, principles and pursuits to achieve the desired outcomes for the benefit of society [5]. Pandey and Modh postulate that SE builds on the assumption that social innovations provide one good way to achieve sustainable development in society. Also social innovations complement economic innovations, and their focus lies primarily on assuring social welfare. Equally, it is believed that community development is of key importance for overcoming the economic and social problems of society [6]. According to Lehner SE is a form of entrepreneurship where social entrepreneurs create and deliver social value by employing market based structures and approaches for client and income generation [7]. SE involves recognizing social problems and finding ways to solve them so as to enhance sustainable development. Sustainable development is the development that meets current needs of the people without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own need [8]. By this definition, sustainable development involves sustainable management. Sustainable management takes the concepts from sustainability and synthesizes them with the concepts of management. Sustainability has three branches; the environment, the needs of present and future generations, and the economy. Using these three branches, SE creates the ability of a system to thrive by maintaining economic viability and also nourishing the needs of the present and future generations by limiting unnecessary resource depletion. SE focuses on the application of sustainable practices in the categories of ecology, business, social work, agriculture, society, environment, economy, forest, seas and

waters and personal life, by managing them in a way that will benefit current generation and the future generation [9, 10]. According to Ouattarapromotion of action aimed at mitigating or avoiding the health and other direct welfare impacts of environmental degradation is central to sustainable development, and requires global support [11]. The Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF) is perhaps the first Nigerian social organization with the vision to drive social change and sustainable development. An organization with uncommon values, founded by the late visionary business leader, S. L. Edu, in 1982, the organization has made monumental impacts in social and economic development in Nigeria, including governance for natural resources management, forest conservation and rehabilitation programmes. Mulgan suggests that two major sources exist to drive a social change, either by heroic and energetic individuals, or movements of millions of people [12]. He insists that one more source is business or commercial opportunity within a social innovation that might also serve as an origin to develop positive social change. However, Lehner posits that social enterprises often emerge from non-profit organizations (NPOs) or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which often are identical in scope. Therefore, context must always be taken into consideration while exploring the foundational motivations and incentives for the development of SE in its different form [13]. The late S. L. Edu and his SE work through the NCF deserve global acknowledgement for realizing early enough in Nigeria to protect wildlife, fauna and flora among others in the West African sub-region, necessary for sustainable development. According to the UN Secretary-General, Guterres more than a century ago, some 100,000 wild tigers roamed Asia, while fewer than 4000 remained today. According to him, all the big cats are collectively under threat from habitat loss, climate change, poaching, illicit trafficking and human-wildlife conflict. While appealing for the protection of wildlife around the world, he states that the SDGs include specific targets to end the poaching and illegal trafficking to protected species of wild fauna and flora. He suggests that wildlife conservation is a shared responsibility, and that biodiversity protection, protecting ecosystems and ensuring access to ecosystem services by poor and vulnerable groups are therefore essential to eradicating extreme poverty and hunger and to achieve SDGs 2030 targets. Maintaining the UN position, he further states that conservation, restoration and sustainable use of biological diversity remains an effective anti-poverty strategy needed to better maintain the natural resources on which billions of poor people depend, because in many cases, poverty, hunger and biodiversity loss are intrinsically connected [14]. Postulants of natural resources conservation and management believe that wealth must trickle down through SE to the citizens rather than

remaining in the hands of the few people who monopolize it [15-20]. The late S. L. Edu was one of the first Africans to understand way back in the early 1980s that environmental conservation and sustainability and gender equality, poverty reduction, are important for sustainable development as now canvassed for the UN.



Figure 1. Late S. L. Edu.

Social entrepreneurs challenge traditional developmental strategies in their quest to address market failures for the common good. Sometimes the common assumptions on which economic policies are based fail to satisfy the aspirations of the people and other environmental perspectives because of the inherent capitalist posture and profit motives. Social entrepreneurs within the context of NPOs dedicate their services to fill the resultant gaps. S. L. Edu's career in the private sector commenced in 1930 as an employee of Holland West African Line. His experience in the organization provided the opportunity to be exposed to different levels of international business, management and entrepreneurship and also helped him to build strong relationships with the Dutch. Inspired by the success stories of successful business people of the time he decided to become an entrepreneur in 1945. Initially starting as a ship chandler and food supplier, he later diversified into stevedoring, transportation, and the supply and distribution of products as diverse as timber and airplanes. His resilience and strong determination in entrepreneurship pursuits immediately elevated his business empire into the global environment. After playing a leading role in the indigenization of the Lagos Chamber of Commerce after independence in 1960, he became its President in 1962. Late S. L. Edu also served as the President of the Nigerian Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture, and the Federation of Commonwealth Chambers of Commerce. With his wide exposure, entrepreneurship success and a social purpose he transformed into a legendary social entrepreneur through his vision of The NCF. His deeper understanding of the creator of the universe strongly stimulated his love and admiration for the environment and nature. He had the passion to perceive the challenges and opportunities within the environment, and based on principles, built relevant partnerships to pursue the challenges and opportunities. He believed that the environment as a deliberate work of divine

will is critical for unity, collaboration, balance, order and harmony in society. To actualize his dreams for a better environment his meeting with Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands in 1962 helped to develop a strong mutual relationship with the Wildlife Foundation (WWF) for nature of which he joined as the Executive Director (ED) in 1967. Consequently, he began to share his convictions about nature, conservation and the ideals of the WWF and joined the campaign against the meaningless destruction of wildlife and ecological resources. He vigorously participated in many global conferences related to climate change, nature and conservation. Building on his robust experience with the conservation movement worldwide, and his personal passion for nature and social good, he convened a meeting of the Friends of the Earth to discuss his plans to start an initiative dedicated to the protection, and conservation of nature and ecological resources in all ramifications, including: fauna, flora, soil, air and water, as a movement with a vision to reduce therapid depletion of Nigeria's natural resources and unsustainable development activities. On 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 1982 the NCF was formally incorporated as a charitable trust with a focus on promoting education, research and conservation, enlightening the public on conservation issues, and to encourage and support conservation projects, among others, and with the late S. L. Edu as its first chairman. In 1983, by a visit to the Yankari National Park, the NCF drew international attention to the environmental and conservation needs of Nigeria. This facilitated a closer relationship between the NCF and WWF international and sparked the launch of a range of conservation projects, and in 1984 the NCF launched its first conservation project tagged "Save the Yankari Game Reserve Campaign". The NCF realized then that to manage its affairs effectively required significant entrepreneurial skills, and therefore, had to depend largely on Edu's entrepreneurial serendipity and sagacity for the desired social change. The NCF's legislative advocacy and policy intervention strategies, efforts and pursuits led to the promulgation of the endangered species Decree No. 11 of 1985. During the same period, the NCF worked very closely with the Federal Department of Forestry (FDF) to produce the National Conservation Strategy. Also the NCF supported the establishment of the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) and the National Resource Conservation (NARESCON) in 1986 and 1988 respectively. The NCF early enough in Nigeria thought that social change is positively associated with sustainable development and prosperity. The NCF has a social vision that the environment in which organizations operate is constantly, rapidly and radically changing, and that organizations can only remain aligned with their environment and thus survive by continuously transforming their operations [21]. All over the world several reforms and social change programmes are

undertaken by donor and aid agencies, NGOs, economic entrepreneurs, ecological entrepreneurs and social entrepreneurs, in collaboration with their governments, with the intention of providing goods and services with social values to move their nations forward [22]. Edu's vision for social good qualifies him as an outstanding social entrepreneur through the establishment of the NCF, as Pandey and Modh suggest the behavioural theory of SE studies the background factors that lead to social venture creation, the underlying organization dynamics and how it measures social impact, mobilizes social capital and brings out sustainable social change. Like the ecological entrepreneur, the social entrepreneur is one who ranks environment more than or equal to profits as his most effective criteria as a business owner or whose primary focus is not only to make profit, but also to serve humanity and to ensure that the world's resources are available for the new generation. In perceiving market failures, social entrepreneurs realize that enhancement in social dimensions and factors complement economic, noneconomic, and nontraditional factors in improving social change and development. Individuals make substantial contributions to social and economic development through more nontraditional ways such as NGOs, NPOs or other social enterprises (OSEs) as in the cases of Edu and NCF in Nigeria, and Yunus and Grameen Bank in Bangladesh among others. Therefore, to achieve desirable social cohesion, there has to be conscious effort to establish the concept of a more predictable social context of human actions which can be best demonstrated through the establishment and operation of a unique social enterprise with the possibility and focus on equitable and regularized social relationships based on acceptable cultural and social norms [23]. Edu in his efforts to protect the environment and enhance social good was persuaded by the belief that individuals as practitioners are not to plunder the earth or wantonly destroy its creatures because every individual is only a temporal possessor of the environment and therefore should not behave as an absolute owner without the interest of other people at heart. According to Okonkwo NGOs in Nigeria empower women, vulnerable children and others in society to acquire economic power, education, improved health status and other social welfare indicators that help to ensure social sustainability. To continuously promote sustainability and to enhance development in line with the United Nations SDGs, charitable organizations in Nigeria have come together in a synergy to support goals like poverty alleviation and zero hunger, reduced inequality and knowledge sharing that help in nation building and sustainability of the future generation [24]. Through a social enterprise, Grameen bank, established in Bangladesh in 1976, Yunus started with Mufiya Khatoon, a poor illiterate young woman in rural Bangladesh, engaged in

bamboo works, to make small loans available to those who wanted desperately to start micro trades but could not afford to obtain micro credit. Grameen bank that focuses on social change, sustainability and poverty reduction has impacted positively on the status of half of the world's population of nearly three billion poor people who lack access to social or micro finance [25, 26]. Without a primary focus on profit, Edu, like Yunus brought about significant social change, value creation, empowerment of the people, and very importantly, contrary to the postulation of BEPA, built sustainable social organizations (SSOs) [27-44].

## 2. Methodology

The case study method was used for this study. This author considers this method of qualitative research to be most suitable because it enables the researcher to explore issues from multiple sources of information including personal experience, case studies, observations, interviews, documents and records. In the study, the collection and analysis of data were done concurrently [45-47].

### 2.1. Objective of the Study

The study was designed to explore the relationship of SE and sustainable development in Nigeria using the NCF as the point of analysis.

### 2.2. Limitation of the Study

The study was constrained by lack of local reports on SE and social entrepreneurs in Nigeria. To this extent, the researcher had to rely heavily on literature from other places. However, this limitation did not dilute the academic potency of the study.

### 2.3. Significance of the Study

The study will enable students of management and entrepreneurship sciences to appreciate the relevance of social entrepreneurs and social enterprises in social and sustainable development. It will provide the basis for further studies in the areas by other local researchers who hitherto could not lay their hands on local reports of this stature. It is also expected that other individuals with SE curiosity will learn from the experiences of Edu, Drayton, Harrison, Yunus, and others in attempts to actualize their dreams, in this important area of human endeavour and adventure.

## 3. Conceptual Framework of the Study

The conceptual framework of this study was developed based on the model previously developed by [48]. The model

included only one dependent variable Sustainable Development (SD), and many independent variables as the proxies of SE. A conceptual framework represents a structure of the research idea or concept and how it is arranged which elaborates the research problem in relation to relevant

literature. This is frequently summarized in a schematic model that presents the major variables and their hypothesized relationships [49]. The conceptual model of this study is shown in figure 2.

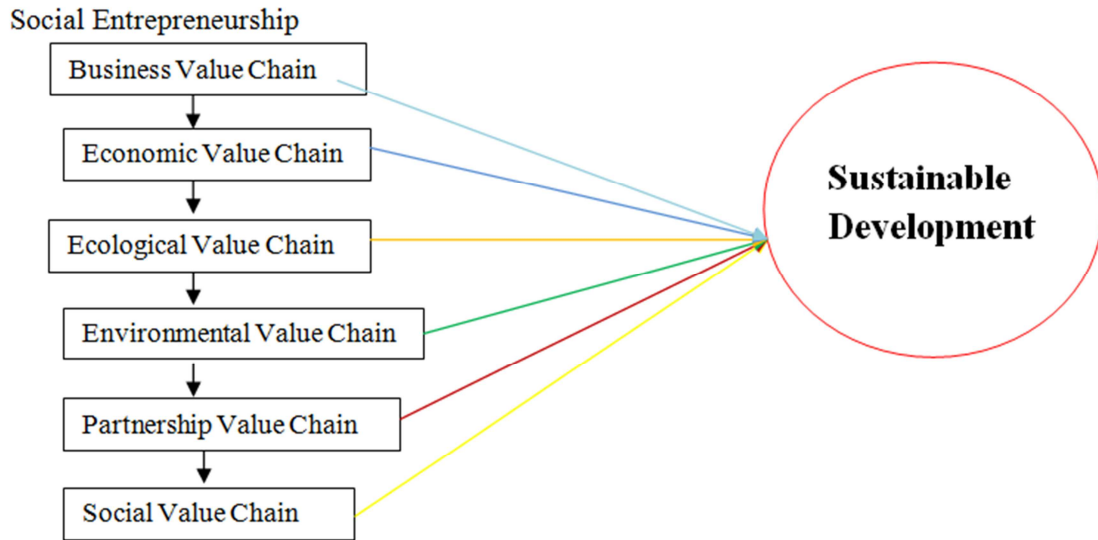


Figure 2. Social Entrepreneurship & Sustainable Development Model.

Source: Author Designed (2018)

The various categorizations of SE suggest that social enterprises are often conceptualized at both individual and organizational levels with a primary focus on the provision of social services which neither the government nor the private sector is able to provide. Social enterprises as conceived by social entrepreneurs usually focus on economic value chain creation, environmental value chain creation, partnership value chain creation, social value chain creation, among others that lead ultimately to social and sustainable development. Sustainable social enterprises are founded by individuals and organizations with a passion for finding solutions to social problems in the face of apparent market inadequacies and failures in society. Mair and Marti emphasize that social entrepreneurs embark on a process of creating value by combining resources in novel ways and manners with the primary intention to perceive, explore and exploit opportunities in society to create social value by stimulating social change or enhancing social value chain. Social enterprises with social preferences as an organizational subset of SE, which often have social entrepreneurs as pioneers with a social value focus is a unique model for social value creation that is multidimensional and can involve the architecture of operations in economic, ecological, environmental, partnership and social value terms [50]. Like the concept and operations of the NCF, SE often focuses on activities to provide social services to humanity in different spheres of life including but not limited to the provision of

environmental justice, equality, women empowerment, quality education, good healthcare services, wildlife protection, among others. Successful SE must assume a multidimensional context because it has become a concept that has refocused attention on the meaning of the goods and social practices valued by people in the global society [51]. Improving the economic power of the people, avoiding environmental degradation, forest protections as well as poverty and hunger reduction are among the sustainability indicators that lie at the heart of SE, with the building of multinational strategic partnerships and alliances as the driver of activities. Through enlightenment, SE seeks to address fundamental changes in attitudes, values, strategies and policies that make a vast majority of the citizens to become aware and to participate in activities for their own good and betterment of society at large. By so doing it brings about social innovation and new practices that adequately respond to major processing of economic, ecological and social needs of the jeopardized and excluded as well as other vulnerable groups in society not fully mitigated by the government, political or the business class. Pandey and Modh argue that comprehensive social innovations are primarily innovations that are not only good for society but also enhance society's capacity to act. They insist that social innovations imply a conceptual process or product change, organizational change and also changes in financing and can equally deal with new mutual relationships with governments, stakeholders, as well as other cross-territorial

partnerships [52]. In this case of NCF, Edu as a private businessman through his business value chain gained experience from notable businessmen like the late Josiah Doherty, Adeolu Odutola, W. A. Dawodu, S. G. O. Gbadamosi and Mobolaji Bank-Anthony. He was also one of the pioneers of the insurance business in Nigeria when he established the African Alliance Company among others. His business connections across the border provided the opportunities for financial and in-kind contributions towards the actualization of WWF's objectives that can equally be credited for the impetus for the realization of the NCF vision. Due to his participation in WWF's activities globally he was meritoriously elected as the first African to the WWF's council in 1982. This forum provided him the indispensable platform to interface with business managers and leaders of the conservation movement around the world and to gain significant understanding about particular environmental challenges facing different parts of the global community. Business people by empowering themselves through entrepreneurship create value for other people. According to Ma and Tan like business entrepreneurs, social entrepreneurs also rise where there is an opportunity to satisfy an unmet need and create value, because essentially the primary aim of SE is about serving people [53]. Business value chain is critical to SE and as Lehner believes: SE is the creation of viable socio-economic structures, relations, institutions, organizations and practices that yield and sustain social benefits. In addressing perceived social problems, the social entrepreneur often combines the primary passion of a social mission with an image of a business entrepreneur, business-like discipline, change innovation, determination and dexterity to create social impact, social change and social transformation [54-69].

## 4. Pioneer Council of NCF

In 1982, NCF constituted its pioneer council, comprised of ten members, including five trustees. The other five members were Chief P. C., Asiodu, Mr. A. Yon-da-kolo, Mr. O. Fisher, Mr. Banjo Solem, and Alhaji Abba Kyari. According to Nwuneli the council was divided into three Committees: the Fund Raising, Public Awareness and Scientific Committees. From the beginning NCF depended on its founder, pioneer council and international agencies for funding and technical assistance. Very particularly, the NCF partnered with the World Bank, WWF, MacArthur Foundation and the Ford Foundation. The Foundation also generated funds from subscriptions and periodic donations of cash and gifts from corporate organizations like banks, A. P. Leventis Group, Oil majors like: Chevron Nigeria Limited, Mobil Nigeria Unlimited, and Statoil. Other groups that provided support for the Foundation at the early stages include: Shell

Petroleum Development Company Ltd, Nigerian Bottling Company Plc, Nigerian Breweries Plc, among others. One major contributor was Chief A. P. Leventis. According to Nwuneli at the teething stages of NCF, Chief A. P. Leventis was also instrumental in procuring the Mainland Hotel, as the Headquarters of the Foundation on the shortest possible time. He equally dedicated a lot of his time and resources to NCF with which the Foundation executed many of its initial projects [70].

### 4.1. Leadership Model in SE

With the passage of time, S. L. Edu during his 77<sup>th</sup> year on earth, in 1988, decided to relinquish his position as the Chairman of the National Executive Council of the NCF and formally handed over to Chief P. C. Asiodu, and became the only honorary life president of NCF. Chief S. L. Edu, because of his sterling leadership qualities was at that time described as a living example of good and responsible leadership. He had formed the NCF; put it on sound footing before he invited others to join as founder members. According to Nwuneli for many someyears, S. L. Edu combined his offices of president and chairman of the council in his person but in 1988 he stepped aside to allow younger men to steer the affairs of the foundation. A leadership worthy of emulation, after his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday anniversary, Chief S. L. Edu ceased participating in the International Annual Congresses of WWF national organizations and affiliates but still continued to attend council meetings and was always ready to receive and entertain important foreign visitors and founder-members on behalf of the NCF. Consequently, Chief S. L. Edu provided Chief P. C. Asiodu with the great opportunity to play a very significant role in the leadership of the NCF. Chief P. C. Asiodu became the accredited representative of the NCF at both local and international engagements on conservation matters and receiving many awards for good leadership, including the 1995 WWF Award of Member of Honour on behalf of Chief S. L. Edu.

### 4.2. Socio-Environmental Impact

The NCF provides environmental services (ES) using NGO model to create quick solutions to environmental problems in the country. The NCF has a group of experts in different areas of social, environmental, and management sciences that provide quality professional advice to help organizations and communities to comply with rules, regulations, and requirements for a sustainable socio-cultural environment. The NCF works nationwide to save the country's flora and fauna from extinction protect the environment from pollution and degradation and to improve the quality of life of the rural custodians of Nigeria's wildlife heritage, with the basic aim of ensuring that Nigerians live a better life defined by a

harmonious relationship with nature and custom. The NCF as an associate of WWF is also a full partner of Bird Life International and equally has continued to work closely in collaboration with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and the World Conservation Union (WCU). The NCF is actively involved in ecological assessments, interpretations and solutions for management, and development projects. It handles climate change assessments, adaptations as well as strategic advice on policy and regulations. It is conversant with carbon management, measurement, auditing, fort-printing and low carbon strategy development and implementation. The NCF has made tremendous impacts in the critical areas of ecosystem assessments, valuation and environmental economics. It helps in skill development on methods of wildlife management, environmental education, park planning, spatial studies and analysis and natural resources management. In the Niger Delta areas, for example, the NCF focuses on forest regeneration, livelihood enterprises, development and community-based governance for natural resources management. The NCF empowers the active poor and women through micro credits to run poultry enterprises, planting of economic trees, and cassava production among others. It helps many farmers in forest conservation to increase yield and improve the quality of cassava projects, halt threats to deforestations, uncontrolled subsistence farming, illegal hunting, wild fires and over grazing. The Forest Rehabilitation Programme of the NCF covers an area of about 36,300 hectares and drained by a dense network of rivers and also demarcated into core conservation and buffer zones. The Forest Reserve has mosaic vegetation ranging from mangrove and fresh water swamp to tropical rainforests and secondary forests re-growth. The Forest Rehabilitation Nursery has produced over 50,000 indigenous seedlings. A total of 12.1 kilometer perimeter boundary and over 16 hectares of buffer zone have been planted. The indigenous species planted include *khayagrandifolia*, called red mahogany, *khayasenegalensis*, also called white mahogany, *terminaliaivorensis*, called black afara, and others known as Lagos wood.

### 5. Contextual Framework of the Study

Lehnerin his thesis about approaches to hybridity in SE suggests that SE is a multidimensional phenomenon that can operate within different contextual frameworks, and that much depends on the perception of the social enterprise and the level of social business. He opines that social entrepreneurial ventures and social enterprises are not the same. While the former can have a profit motive, the later comes as a NPO to provide purely social services through a multitude of disciplines and perspectives. Social enterprises rather use entrepreneurial behavior for social ends and not for profit objectives, or alternatively, that the profits generated from market activities are used for the benefit of a special disadvantaged group [71]. Lehner emphasizes that social entrepreneurs are driven by a direct link between their actions and an improvement in the quality of life for the people with whom they work and those that they seek to serve. He believes that social entrepreneurs aim to produce solutions which are sustainable economically, ecologically, socially, financially, organizationally, environmentally and culturally. Darby and Jenkins opine that social entrepreneurs create social value through innovation and leveraging on business and financial resources, for social, economic and community development [72]. Hockerts et al suggest that SE is the creation of viable socio-economic structures, relations, institutions, organizations and practices that yield and sustain social benefits [73]. The contextual framework of this study reflected in figure 2 emphasizes SE as a process in which pioneers for innovation, creativity and change, with a passion for social values perceive problems and opportunities inherent in market failures and based on principle partner with others to pursue opportunities and provide solutions to problems for the desired performance in society [74-78]. Weerawardena and Mort suggest that the investigation of the process of SE should be based on a multidimensional model [79]. Zahra and Covin insist that the contextual structure has significant influence on entrepreneurship performance. It is also believed that pioneer capability and focus on positive social change and people explain the basis of SE [80-83].

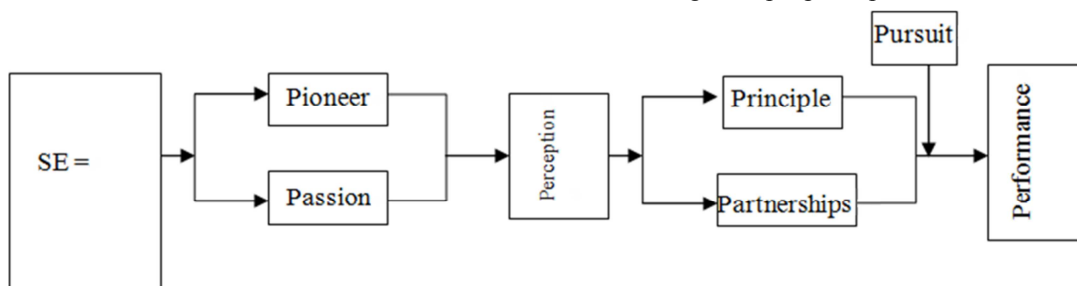


Figure 3. 7ps of Social Entrepreneurship Model.

In view of the dynamism of social change, Bull believes that the conceptual and contextual perspectives of the social enterprise can be challenging, tension-laden and critical in terms of theoretical and empirical dimensions. Social entrepreneurs understand and use ideas and models that simultaneously meet social needs more effectively than alternatives and create new social change relationships and partnerships'. SE relates closely to social innovations by using management practices in NPOs to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the production of social good. S. L. Edu who was a successful business man of his era, to the extent of distributing airplanes among others, was however, motivated to solve social problems. He leveraged on his extensive business value chain to mobilize necessary social capital to realize his curiosity for social and environmental betterment of society [84]. Like late S. L. Edu most outstanding standalone social entrepreneurs around the world like Yunus, Drayton, Harrison, Hollender, Helgensen, among others are pioneers who through their innovative ideas are trying to make the world a better place. They have all developed leading social businesses not devoted to profit but for the benefit of mankind and the environment [85]. The pioneer perspective is instructive because almost all the outstanding social enterprises were founded by single individuals with a heart for social service. With a passion to serve they are able to perceive what the society and environment require for a harmonious society. These pioneers with passion and perception, often based on personal ethical principles strive to collaborate and partner with individuals and organizations with similar objectives in their relentless pursuit of their social programmes. In a manner similar to economic entrepreneurs, habitual social entrepreneurs pursue only the best opportunities for social and environmental change. They focus on essential SE activities with the primary objectives of obtaining superior performance for society. Performance not the profit, dominates the faculty of the social entrepreneur. According to Lehner for the social entrepreneur, the work of community, voluntary and public organizations as well as private firms working for social rather than only for profit objectives is critical. The pursuit of social objectives is an important perspective in ultimately achieving a desirable performance. Late S. L. Edu, highly determined in his pursuit of social and environmental change once stated: *I am amazed that some people cannot understand the point about conservation. Some people say they cannot be bothered because they would have been long dead before the desert gets to their doorstep. He went on to state: "I think that is a selfish attitude. We should all be concerned about what becomes of the world after we are gone. The cold truth is that without plants, we cannot have drugs; the survival of human race depends on*

*nature"*. S. L. Edu's founding of NCF was strongly motivated by his early understanding of the necessity for sustainable development; he actually said that much by emphasizing that people must be concerned about what becomes of the world long after their departure. Based on his unequivocal conviction on the importance of nature and social good he exhibited outstanding accountability and transparency in his dealings with his members and partners and created outstanding outcomes in terms of performance. NCF epitomizes a unique SE in Nigeria and sub-Saharan Africa. For example, SE is expressed where a person or group aims at creating social value, shows a capacity to recognize and take advantage of opportunities, employ innovation, accept an above average degree of risk, and are unusually resourceful, in pursuing a social venture. The NCF is a household name in Nigeria on social change characterized by its relentless and courageous pursuit of its goals. For example, during the turbulent Abacharegime when it lost a large pool of financial support from the European Union, it forged ahead with most of its critical social projects. The clustering or arrangement of the 7ps in SE is not a random approach but conceptually and contextually derived and suggests the competencies that precede each other so as to achieve a desired level of performance. Boyatzis et al suggest that while using a framework within a contextual competency model that competency should be grouped in the order that they are most closely related and to operate in a synergistic and synchronous precision. They insist that clusters are behavioural groups of the desired competencies, which are often linked conceptually and defined by a theory as a convenient way to describe which competencies are closely associated with each other so as to produce desired performance [86]. A model is a good representative of reality and has been used in management research for many years. A model helps to clarify issues that would otherwise be hidden in an excess of words (Cleary, 1992). The contextual model of this study strongly suggests that successful SE equal to: pioneer + passion + perception + principle + partnership + pursuit + performance. It also argues that when social entrepreneurs demonstrate these abilities and they flow in a synergistic manner superior performance as the hallmark of successful SE will become noticeable. For example, Yunus as a pioneer social entrepreneur located the illiterate bamboo woman in rural Bangladesh in 1976, and after studying her needs and those of other rural women for microfinance he developed the passion for microfinance in Bangladesh. Drayton as a pioneer social entrepreneur is the founder of Ashoka, a successful social entrepreneurship organization (SEO). Mycoskie, the founder of TOMS has a passion for people without shoes. AkhtarHameed Khan had the ability to perceive the need to build local infrastructure in rural



communities for social good. Others like Smits collaborated with other organizations in his pursuit to make local people learn about sustainable farming and the benefits of reforestation. Through his Masarang Foundation, Smits, based on strong professional and ethical principles is credited for using thermal energy to turn sugar palm juice into sugar and ethanol thereby, providing jobs and power to the community while at the same time preserving the environment and the local forests. Pioneers are noted for innovations and creativity. They are often not averse to risk. Most of them like Yunus left his job as a university professor to establish Grameen Bank primarily for social change in rural Bangladesh. According to Ma and Tanpioneers' love action in the field. They take calculated risks, and they actively work to shape and change the future. Visualizing and changing the future bring about sustainable generational development. Exploitation of any opportunity requires passion. People with a passion for high achievement distinguish themselves, because they have the urge to create something very great, the passion to exert an undelatable mark on society, and the passion to create history. Pioneer social entrepreneurs are very passionate about whatever they set out to achieve. For example S. L. Edu with a profitable business had to establish the NCF in a passionate effort to improve the society through environmental conservation, among other social services. Social entrepreneurs have the vigour to perceive opportunities in the environment, and when they so do, they rely on principles and

other legal frameworks to partner and collaborate with significant others to solve any problems, and take advantage of available opportunities for the benefit of society. Entrepreneurs are optimistic, very resilient and often resolute particularly when working in a new environment. In the case of NCF, Edu had to patiently cultivate the support of oil giants like Shell, Chevron and Mobil for financial and moral support in view of the huge risks inherent in the volatile areas like environmental conservation and natural resources protection and management. To achieve the desired performance, entrepreneurs pursue opportunity without concern for available resources or capabilities. They take great risks and make decisions quickly even when information and resources are not available. Like Edu, social entrepreneurs are performance driven. They are often determined to discover something new and find ways to make society happier. They are result oriented and always aspire to impose their own vision and try hard to create the future. Social entrepreneurs leave personal legacies for society and secure it through sustainable development. Edu through SE changed the way Nigerians handle issues of environmental degradation, deforestation, wildlife activities, water conservation, among others. Also Yunus has created the awareness of how to create a world without poverty, and others like Hollender is trying to shape a sustainable society through his Social Venture Network and the Community Capital Bank.

**Table 1.** NCF SE Performance.

S/No	Description	Activities
1	Environmental Services	The NCF provides environmental service (ES) using NGO model to create solutions to environmental challenges in Nigeria.
2	Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)	The BAP aims at strengthening governance for biodiversity, conservation and livelihood support on the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria.
3	Livelihood Enterprises Development	The NCF livelihood component of the BAP aims to empower communities through agro-based small business enterprises to reduce poverty
4	Governance for Natural Resources Management	This structure seeks to build communities local capacity to take charge of the management of vast forest reserves.
5	Forest Conservation and Rehabilitation Programmes	Forest Reserves having mammals, birds belonging to various species, halting deforestation, uncontrolled subsistence farming, illegal hunting, grazing, fires, etc.
6	The Living on the Edge Project	The project is designed to improve livelihood and habitat for migratory birds in the Sahel areas of four countries in West Africa, namely- Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Senegal, and Mauritania. The project is funded by the Dutch Nationals Postcode Loteris, Other partners include Bird life international and vosietbescherming Nederland.
7	Finima Nature Park	The 1000 hectares park is run by NCF in collaboration with the Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas Company (NLNGC) to protect the forests, for its integrity, its biodiversity and the normal functioning of the natural environment to provide and protect the human settlements. It aims to rebuild new frontiers for conservation, build stronger community institutionalization and inject renewed energy on research, biodiversity protection, promote environmental education and research, good environmental management, developing park infrastructure and its management system, and public education.

Source: Author Fieldwork (2018)

## 6. Contextual Comparative Analysis in Global SE

Successful SE aims to protect the integrity of the environment and to drive social change within the context of

the global environmentally and socially sustainable development. for example, the focus of the NCF is directed towards halting environmental degradation, protection of wildlife within the West African region, among other social sustainability activities. Because of the need for environmental protection in Nigeria major stakeholders like

Total Exploration and Production (E&P) has joined to promote the creation of entrepreneurs who will use the resources available in the environment to chart new courses for the future of the people, and enhance commitment to environmental sustainability [89]. The World Bank's new initiative through West African Agricultural Transformation Programme (WAATP) in Nigeria supports climate change programmes and sustainable agriculture to cut across: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d' Ivore, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. WAATP operating on NGO model aims to address social challenges such as youth unemployment, climate change, migration, gender, nutrition, and to encourage collaboration across borders [90-92]. The personal values and principles of sustainable social entrepreneurs like Edu, serve as a catalyst for embarking on social change and entrepreneurship. The late S. L. Edu through the NCF wedged a total war against wildlife, environmental and ecological destruction in Nigeria and other West African countries. He had the passion to create and sustain the tempo of social change, to improve the socio-economic status of the people, and protection of animals through collaboration within and across the borders [93, 94]. In a multiethnic, multi-religious and multicultural nation like Nigeria, Edu, a man noted for great religiosity and generosity, made great detours from economic entrepreneurship to ecological and social entrepreneurship [95]. Through extraordinary creativity the late Edu was able to build sustainable social and cultural harmony despite the multicultural and multi-religious diversity of Nigeria. He was also able to reinvent and build sustainable social alliances through visionary leadership. He expoused an uncommon SE spirit embedded in transparency, accountability and social corporate responsibility that gave way to sustainable social governance. He made the boldest move to entice the people of different backgrounds in moving Nigeria toward a social and environmental EL Dorado [96-98]. By thinking and collaborating across the borders like other outstanding social entrepreneurs as Drayton of Ashoka, Yunus of Grameen Bank, Hollender, Helgesen, Roy, among others, Edu's SE zeal had a global focus aimed at enhancing and sustaining the opportunity of the future generation to live a quality life. Successful social entrepreneurship around the globe have achieved unique milestones critical for generational sustainability. For example, while NCF has the legacy of environmental conservation in Nigeria, and other West African countries like Burkina Faso and Senegal, Drayton through Ashoka has a wonderful legacy of sponsoring social entrepreneurship in more than 73 countries, while Yunus is pursuing an incredible mission of creating a world without poverty through microfinance. Mycoskie through TOMS believes that every human being has a right to wear shoes and also needs the sight to see what goes around, and

Khan thought that sanitation, housing and family planning among others would help in driving social change around the world. Other successful social entrepreneurs like Harrison believe that clean drinking water is necessary for social and environmental sustainability. Hollender through Seventh Generationis providing millions of dollars to provide items for community, and environmental protection. Hollender and his associates help in the publication of books on responsible business practices. Helgensen and his associates are working to improve the level of literacy in the world through donations. Abouleish through SEKEM is developing biodynamic farming, providing training and medical care as well as helping to repair the environment to encourage positive social change and sustainable development. Smits through the Masarang Foundation helps to create employment by using thermal energy to produce sugar. Roy founded the Barefoot College as a NPO to help the economic production and quality of life of women throughout India and other parts of Africa where most poor people in the world reside. This comparative analysis of the content, concept, context, convergence and divergence of SE goes to show that it almost always focuses on environmental change for the benefit of the human beings and other creatures around the world. It is a global phenomenon that operates across the borders. SE is about a dynamic process applying practical innovative and socially and environmentally sustainable approaches to benefit society in general and with a focus and emphasis on those who are excluded, marginalized and poor in society [99-101].

## 6.1. Discussion

Exploration of the basic elements of social entrepreneurs and SE emerges a striking fact that social entrepreneurs as pioneers and critical social change agents often possess the competences to do a new thing for the social good and also deploy the appropriate competencies to pursue their objectives to a logical conclusion. Great social entrepreneurs like Edu and Yunus had the incredible vision to execute a social mission to enhance sustainable development. For example, by the time NCF was incorporated by S. L. Edu as a Charitable Organization (CO) both the government and people of Nigeria had little regard for the environment, and among his aims was to reduce the rapid depletion of Nigeria's natural resources and unsustainable development activities initiated during the oil boom of the 1970s. His ideas today reflect the UN SDGs target to protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss. It is estimated that about 3 billion people, about half of the global population live in poverty. Yunus in his pioneering effort in microfinance starting from his native Bangladesh aims at

creating a world without poverty. This is a very tough task for sustainable development that captures the UN ambition to end poverty in all its ramifications everywhere by 2030. Building sustainable social organizations is Drayton, who through Ashoka Foundation is helping social entrepreneurs around the world to promote social good and inclusion. This is in tandem with UN's desire to ensure healthy living, promote wellbeing for all at all ages, ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all, as well as strengthening the strategies of implementation and revitalization of global partnerships for sustainable development. TOMS promoted by Mycoskie since 2006 wants to mitigate the sufferings of sick children and others with disabilities. The UN believes in the reduction of inequality within and among countries and to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. During a tour of Argentina Mycoskie learnt that many children often got sick or injured because they never had shoes to wear. Since founding TOMS over one million pairs of shoes have been donated for these wretched of the world. It is estimated that more than a billion people worldwide lack access to clean drinking water, and Harrison through his charity wants to change the situation. Among the most successful entrepreneurs of the century, his NPO has delivered clean drinking water to over one million people in more than 17 different countries of the world. His SE activities is clearly in alignment with the UN's attempts to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns, conserve, and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. The Seventh Generation founded by Hollender supports the community, the environment and other socially responsible practices, including the promotion of other NPOs to sustain economic growth. The UN SDGs target sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all by 2030. Roy founded the Barefoot College which specializes in teaching illiterate women from poor homes and villages to become professionals like medical doctors, engineers, among others. The organization primarily aims to improve the economic production and quality of life of women in India and other parts of the world. For sustainable development, the UN wants to achieve gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls throughout the world by 2030. The Better World Books of Helgesen and others aims at reducing illiteracy around the world. Reduction of the rate of illiteracy, promotion of sustainable agriculture, building resilient natural infrastructure, promotion of inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and fostering creativity and innovation are critical for sustainable development. This study found that SE in the form of NCF and others often is the creation of

individual pioneers, with the competences to achieve social good. The study found a heap of critical evidence to support the study assumption that SE is very important and necessary for sustainable development. The finding of this study supports the classic view of Lehner that SE is a multidimensional construct involving the expression of entrepreneurially virtuous behavior to achieve the social mission, the ability to recognize social value, creating opportunities and key decision-making characteristics of innovation, proactiveness and risk-taking. This result also lends credence to the findings of Paredo and Mcleanthat SE is exercised where some people or group aim at creating social value, show a capacity to recognize and take advantage of opportunities, employ innovation, accept an above average degree of risk, and are unusually successful, in pursuing their social venture [102-109].

## 6.2. Scope of Further Study

Further study should examine the relationship of SE and good governance. This is imperative because the UN SDGs 2030 target envisages the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, the provision of access to justice for all and the building of effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

## 6.3. Recommendations

- i The government needs to give support to SEOs seeking to promote environmentally and socially sustainable environment. This will help in realizing the UNs target to combate climate change and its impacts by 2030.
- ii More business entrepreneurs in Nigeria can learn from history and try to devote part of their profit to sustainable social change like the case of the late S. L. Edu. This will help in building resilient social infrastructure that will enhance sustainable development in Nigeria.
- iii Governments at all levels can partner with reputable NGOs and NPOs worldwide like the WWF and other donor agencies like the World Bank to establish organizations purely for the pursuit of social change and sustainable development.
- iv The Federal Government of Nigeria should use part of the billions of dollars and huge estates recovered from corrupt high net worth individuals (HNIs) for the development of social infrastructure to mitigate the suffering of the over 70 percent Nigerians who live on less than \$1.25 per day. This is important because the estimated more than 800 million people who do not have enough food to eat around the world today include Nigerians.
- v NPOs need to focus more on critical sustainability

indicators like environmental conservation to ensure that the future generation will have enough ground to pursue their own development imperatives.

## 7. Conclusion

Social entrepreneurship has gained acceptance as a phenomenon critical for driving social change and innovation in many parts of the world. However, most of the relevant literature in this area emanate from the developed countries thereby making it difficult for students and researchers in the other parts of the world to have a firm knowledge of its contributions to the changing global environment. The impact of social entrepreneurship can easily be measured by the sustainability of such social enterprises as can be seen through the NCF, Grameen Bank, Ashoka, among others. Sustainable social entrepreneurs create their own universe by thinking and doing social things in innovative ways to drive social change and transformation that lead to sustainable development. Because social entrepreneurs are essentially pioneers and critical social change agents they have the passion to perceive problems and opportunities, have the moral and ethical principle to partner with others to pursue only what they believe is important for the social good. Social entrepreneurship is a dynamic process that requires a multidimensional model and perspective for its sustainability. Whether a social entrepreneurship is for-profit or not-for-profit, the sustainable social entrepreneur aims at building and sustaining a social enterprise so as to enhance generational social change and sustainable development. The present study conceptualized within the framework of business value chain, social value chain, ecological value chain among others strongly suggests that social entrepreneurship performance can be better achieved when contextualized within the 7ps model. The model is imperative to focus attention on the fact that sustainable social entrepreneurs are often pioneers, they are passionate about their vision and mission, they have the serendipity and sagacity to perceive opportunities, they are highly principled, they have the capacity for relevant partnerships and alliances, they relentlessly pursue their mission for sustainable performance, social change and sustainable development. The 7ps framework of this study suggests that a typical sustainable social entrepreneurship operates within the context, competence and competencies for social good and sustainability. Social entrepreneurs are pioneers who have the social will to think about how to do something new or add value to old things in society. SE can be conceived from different dimensions, either as a NPO or for-profit organizations, while to a large extent the primary objective is to provide social good. Through ingenuity some successful social entrepreneurs incredibly try to change the face of the

world. For example, Yunus through his Grameen Bank, Microfinance started in Bangladesh has made unprecedented impact over his mission to create a world without poverty. Others like Drayton of Ashoka Foundation is even going a step further to building sustainable SE by finding and helping other social entrepreneurs around the world to contribute to social change. Without any major exceptions, the activities of major social entrepreneurs are not-for-profit; focus on innovation based on high ethical and moral personal values to create desirable social change. This study found huge evidence that in a vast majority of cases, the vision and mission of the social entrepreneurs meet the requirements for the UN SDGs 2030 target. For example, since inception in the 1980s the NCF has a focus on environmental conservation, forest regeneration, community-based governance for natural resources management, forest reserves for mammals, among others. These it has done successfully in collaboration with both national and multinational agencies and donors, with a critical aim to reduce the rapid depletion and destruction of Nigeria's natural resources as well as meaningless unsustainable development activities arising from oil exploration. Through comprehensive review and analysis this study found a positive association between the performance of NCF and sustainable development imperatives as contemplated by the UNs SDGs 2030 agenda. This is the interest of the study.

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