

**RESOURCE BASE NEEDS AND LAND-USE CONFLICTS AMONG
RURAL FARMERS IN ABIA STATE, NIGERIA**

¹Anyim, C. O. and ²Odoemelam, L. E.

¹External Relations Department, Shell Development Petroleum Corporation. Rivers state, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.

²Department of Rural Sociology and Extension, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike, Abia state, Nigeria.

Email: lovinasteve@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The study investigated resource-base needs and land use conflict experienced by rural farmers in communities of Abia State. It also examined their resource needs, causes of conflicts, and conflict resolution strategies adopted by the communities where agricultural land use conflicts have been reported. Multistage sampling procedure was used to select 180 farm households. The first stage involves selection of three agricultural zones, Aba, Ohafia and Umuahia and the second stage involves the selection of 1 local government area from each zone and selection of 3 communities using purposive sampling (on experience of land use conflict) and the forth stage involved the purposive selection of 20 farm households who have experienced land use conflict in each of the communities. Data were collected using interview schedule and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and later analyzed with descriptive statistics. The results indicated resource base needs of the respondents as land (26%), water (18%), oil (16%), gas ((18%), fuelwood (22%). Eight causes of conflicts were identified; political and economic support (M = 2.9), increasing land price (M = 3.9), marginalization and exclusion (M = 3.3), unregistered land transaction (M=1.9), unclearly defined plots and village boundaries (M = 3.3), insufficient implementation of regulations (M = 2.7), inheritance (M = 3.0), allocation of poor cultivated plots (M = 2.9), and Non allocation of choice plots (M = 3.2). On land conflicts resolution the result shows that, facilitation with mean score of (M = 3.0), moderation (M =2.85), consultation (M= 2.9), arbitration (M= 3.2), mediation (M = 3.1) and conciliation (M = 2.5) were employed in resolving conflicts among household in the study area. The study therefore concludes that a coordinated system of land dispute resolution bodies has to be established to provide wide range of options for resolution and recommend establishment of traditional values that will create incentives as well as sanctions aiming at positively influencing people's behaviour.

Keywords: Resource-base needs, Land-use, Conflicts, Abia State

INTRODUCTION

A conflict as defined by sociologist, is a social fact in which at least two parties are involved and whose origins are different either in interests or in the social position of the parties (GTZ, 1998). Consequently, a land conflict can be defined as a social fact in which at least two parties are involved, the roots of which are different interests over property rights to land, the right to use the land, to manage the land, to generate income from the land, to transfer it and the right to compensation for it. A land conflicts therefore can be understood as misuse, restriction or dispute over property rights to land (Wehreman, 2005).

Land is increasingly becoming a source of conflicts in Nigeria and Abia State in particular where land access had been traditionally characterized as relatively egalitarian. Land resources are very important to man as they provide people with living space, raw materials for obtaining satisfaction from material needs and constitute man's physical environment (Alawode, 2013). Man, depends on land for sustenance, food, clothing, shelter, manufactured goods etc. Land is not only crucial for rural people who have their livelihood based in agriculture, but also a basis of wealth and power. Thus, there is potential conflict where people do not have equal access to productive land resources. The presence of infrastructural facilities and accessible routes play a great role in infusing land use. However, land in rural areas of Nigeria is mainly for agricultural production as the rural people depend manly on agriculture as the source of their needs. According to USAID (2007), agricultural use for food production is influenced by other land uses, including forest, residential, commercial, industrial, recreational and open space. The interaction among these sometimes-incompatible uses can lead to social conflict.

Ouadros, (1991) stated that land use conflict can occur when there is disagreement or dispute as to the use of and/or feelings that a person's right or well-being or the rights of the environment are being threatened by an action or undertaking of another or inaction of another. Land use conflict can also result when a land use is incompatible with the views, expectations and values of people living and working in an environment.

Conflicts in behavioral terms is a purposeful struggle between collective actors who use social powers to gain status power, resources and other scare values. Ekong (2003) defined conflicts as that form of social interaction in which the actors seek to obtain scare reward by eliminating or weakening other contenders.

Resource base conflicts, especially over rights of access to land, are increasing in frequency and intensity, generating high level of refugees and internally displaced persons. Weather caused by greed on grievances, land conflicts cause serious social dislocations, destroy income

opportunities, create food insecurity; damage the environment, and frequently result in the loss of life.

It has been shown that local land conflict can erupt into large scale civil strife and political movements (Daudelin, 2002). Some underlying factors such as population pressure, agricultural commercialization and industrialization have contributed to the increasing number of land conflicts (Cotula *et al.*, 2004).

Further, land degradation due to desertification, soil erosion and deforestation is accelerating at an unprecedented rate, leading to loss of productivity, increased poverty and subsequently, conflict on available land (USAID, 2007).

Three quarters of world's poor and hungry are located in rural areas (USAID, 2005). These people depend directly and indirectly, on agriculture and agriculture related activities for their food and income. As population increases, access to land resources dwindles for these rural dwellers. However, with rapid population increases, and a finite land area, available land per individual shrinks continuously. Resources based conflicts, especially over right access to land and land use, are therefore increasing in frequency and intensity (Yamano and Deininger, 2005).

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the resource base needs and land use conflicts among farmers in Abia State, Nigeria with the following specific objectives; to

1. identify the resource base needs of the respondents in the study area.
2. ascertain causes of land-use conflicts in the study area
3. examine the perceived actions to transform land-use related conflicts
4. identify suitable form of conflict resolution.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Abia State. The State is located within the South-eastern Nigeria and lies between longitude $04^{\circ} 45^1$ and $06^{\circ} 07^1$ North and latitude $07^{\circ} 00$ and $08^{\circ} 10^1$ East. Abia State is bounded by Imo State at the North; Cross River and Akwa-Ibom States at the east and Rivers State at about 2,883,999 persons with relatively high density at 580 persons per square kilometer (NPC, 2007).

Abia State is divided into administrative blocks called Local Government Areas which is grouped into three (3) agricultural zones namely Ohafia, Umuahia and Aba zones. In terms of occupation, about 70 Abians are farmers and have the potentials for the off crops, livestock, fish and also engage in food processing (ABSS, 1992).

The study employed two sources for data collection viz primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected with the use of pre-tested and structured questionnaire administered on rural

households. Secondary data were collected from literature, local government areas, customary courts of appeal and Ndi-eze in council.

The study applied multistage sampling technique in the selection of households from the agricultural zones of the state (Ohafia, Aba and Umuahia). In stratum one, 2 LGAs each selected randomly stratum involved random selection of 2 communities each from the 6 LGAs, set aside for the research (i.e. 12 communities). The last stratum entailed selection of 15 households each from the communities giving a sample size of 180 respondents. For the purpose of resource base needs and land conflict male and female headed households were selected. Focus Group Discussion were used to collect community level data for complementing household level data. The households drawn for the study were selected communities that have suffered from land conflicts resulting from resource base needs. The study focused on some selected namely Ukwa-east, Ukwa-west Ariam, Ohafia and Obiomangwa. We were judicious and conscious in selecting these LGAs because they are typical of representative of the crisis ridden communities.

We adopted the sample survey method, the data collection technique employed were interview schedule and focus group discussion (FGD). We had 20 FGDs in all; there were 5 FGDs in each community. Each FGD participants, with an interviewer and a recorder who recorded the discussion. On the whole, there is participants of household heads.

Data collected were analyzed with simple descriptive statistics for objective 1, while for objective 2 – 4, data were generated with the aid of 4-point likert type scale and analyzed using mean scores and ranking order. The explicit form of the 4-point likert type scale is expressed below.

$$Xs = \frac{\sum fn}{N}$$

Where, Xs = Mean scores

Σ = Summation

f = Frequency

n = Likert nominal value

N = Number of respondents

$$Xs = \frac{1 + 2 + 3 + 4}{4} = \frac{10}{4} = 2.5$$

$$Xs = \frac{10}{4} = 2.5$$

The mean score of 2.5 is the bench mark for decision making. Any response hat has a mean score below 2.5 is regarded as not being significant and any mean response between 2.5 and above is regarded being significant.



Fig. 1. Map of Abia State showing the 17 Local Government Areas

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Resource needs of the respondents

Resource-based conflicts especially over right of access are increasing in frequency and intensity. Table 1, indicates resource-based needs of the respondents. About (26%) of the respondents complained about the tenure system in farming communities in the state. According to Theisen (2010), incomplete understanding, ignorance or disregard for complex relationships in the general, are often at the root of failed policy prescription and frequently fuel resource conflicts, obstructing the efforts of farmers especially women because of weak legal systems and customary practices. From the table 1, also about (18%) of the farmers trek several hours a day just to find water may be outside their communities. The table further reveals that (16%) and

(18%) of the farmers need oil and gas, but those are increasingly sought after by outside parties, bringing different understandings of development and conservation into conflict. The table 1 also indicated that about (22%) of the respondents complained about fuel wood. During the FGD, some of the farmers stated that “women equally block oil companies access roads in demand for certain things or against marginalization or alienation from their farm land.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents based on resource needs

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Land	168	26.2
Water	118	18.4
Oil	102	15.9
Gas	116	18.1
Fuel wood	138	21.5

Source: Field survey, 2015

Therefore, has the potential to drive communities into a self-reinforcing spiral of violence, institutional dysfunction and social fragmentation (De Soysa, 2002).

The positive correlation between resource scarcity and conflicts corroborates the findings of Aredo and Ame (2004) environmental conflict.

Paradigm, which suggests that unfilled needs of scarce water and pasture fuel conflict (Sulim, 1999).

Also, in a survey carried out by Idowu (2001). It was found out that the root causes of all communal conflicts surveyed can be traced to the problem of access gained to productive opportunities in land and the control of resources.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents based on causes of conflicts among them

Variables	Total	Mean	Rank
Political and economic support for by farmers to the disadvantage of the poorer peasant farmers	522	2.9	
Increasing land price	608	3.9	
Marginalization and exclusion	597	3.3	
Unregistered land transaction	342	1.9	

Strong population growth	536	3.0
Unclearly defined plots and village boundaries	592	3.3
Insufficient implementation of regulations in the community	477	2.7
Inheritance	544	3.0
Allocation of cultivating pilots for farming	523	2.9
Non allocation of choice	463	2.6
Plots	572	3.2

Source: Field survey, 2015

Results on table 2 revealed different causes of land conflicts in the study area. Deininger and Castagini (2005) explained that conflicts in many parts of the developing world can be traced to dispute over land ownership and use. It is expected that land sales will develop over time. However, property rights are not defined, there could be more. As the value of land increases due to population pressure, agricultural commercialization cases of land conflicted related to land sales. From results on table 3 explained that conflicts arise among and resource users due to political and economic support (X=2.9) for bug farmers to the disadvantage of poorer farmers, increasing land price (X=3.9) marginalization and exclusion (X = 3.3). Poor households bear the heaviest burdens of land related conflicts for the simple reason that daily needs and future livelihood are directly tied to property rights. Their land dependency ratio is high; so face a risk of becoming victims of conflicts if their fragile access to land, is threatened further. Extremely unequal distribution of power and resources (X = 3.2), unregistered land (X = 1.9). the level of concern could be due to expectations of potential conflicts with siblings or other relatives who might be interested in claiming the ownership of the parcel left by the decades percent other causes include, strong population growth (X = 3.0), this is as a result of the scrambling for use of land resources generates conflicts, undefined boundaries (X = 3.3), insufficient implementation of regulations in the community (X = 2.7) this is when a land use is incompatible with the views, expectations and values of people living and working the community and inheritance (X= 3.0) which exclusively occurs among relatives.

Conflicts highlight and potentially escalate discriminatory practices that exist within communities. Women along with other socially marginalized group may be further disadvantaged.

Table 3: Perceived actions to transform land related conflicts

Variables	Total	Mean	Rank
Increasing public participation in land demarcation	573	3.2	3
Improving the ability of mediation to identifying the root of land related conflicts	552	3.1	4
Increasing peoples awareness of their rights and development actions	354	1.10	6
Providing opportunities for communities to co-manage resources	571	3.2	3
Assessing the needs of land resource users	600	3.3	2
Respecting human rights	502	2.8	5
Strengthening the negotiation position of poor men and women	569	3.2	3
Ensuring peace agreements	624	3.5	1

Source: Field survey, 2015

Table 2 reveals perceived ways to manage and transform land-relate conflicts. Increasing public participation in land demarcation had a mean score of (M = 3.2), this will improve the information available for land-use planning, such as the use of participatory community mapping, improving the ability of mediators to identify the roots of land-related conflicts (M=3.1) which can be achieved through stakeholder analysis or conflict mapping. Increasing people’s awareness and right to development options (M=1.10) through land literacy, campaign or community based action research, assessing the needs of land users (M = 3.5). This can be achieved using community-based policy forum and for determining whether or how existing system are adapting or need to change, strengthening the negotiating position of poor man and women (M = 3.3) through community organizing, network building and collective action. Providing opportunities for communities to co-manage their resources (M = 3.2) this will help to establish mutually beneficial resource agreements; ensuring peace agreements (M = 3.5) which right take the form of meaningful provision to reform institutions and practices that fuel-land related conflicts and that implemented of such measures will be full and timely.

The approaches described above require not only time and financial resources, but also change in organization culture and working methods, skill-building for local and national institutions, and improved access to knowledge and information for all actions involved (ICARRD, 2006).

Table 4: Suitable form of conflict resolution as perceived by the respondents

Variables	Total	Mean	Rank
Facilitation	544	3.0	3
Moderation	513	2.85	5
Consultation	539	2.9	4
Arbitration	581	3.2	1
Mediation	559	3.1	2
Conciliation	455	2.5	6

Results on table 4 show conflicts resulting from resource base needs to be resolved. The respondents stated that facilitation with mean score of (M= 3.0) can be applied in a very early stage of pre-conflicts to defuse the conflict in time and avoid escalation, moderation (M = 2.9) implies that a moderator can help the parties come together to clarify and settle rumor differences, the parties still being able to solve the problems by themselves, consultation (M= 2.9) according to the respondents is another approach useful during the stage of pre-conflict to stop the conflict progressing toward becoming a full-brown crisis some of the respondents claimed it to be more appropriate than simple moderate in a situation where a latent conflict has manifested itself for a longer time. Conciliation with mean score of (M = 2.6) according to the respondents can help the parties to negotiate while whenever necessary addressing internalized perceptions with the objective of reaching prejudices and hostility. Another form of conflict resolution was mediation with a mean score of (M = 3.1). the respondents expressed that each party is given an opportunity to explain its perceptions and feelings, forcing the other party to listen and finally moderate a discussion ached at finding a solution with which both parties can live. Arbitration (M = 2.5), in this case a direct suggestion on how to settle the conflict is made by the arbitrator who is accepted and trusted by both parties involved.

CONCLUSION

The complexity of causes leading to land conflicts as well as their diversity and the number of different actors involved requires integrated approaches for solving land disputes.

- A co-ordinated system of land dispute resolution bodies has to be established to provide wide range of options for resolutions.
- The first and most important steps in actively and consistently preventing land dispute will always be to establish traditional values by creating incentives as well as sanctions aiming positively influencing people's behavior.

REFERENCES

- Alawode, O. O. (2013). Determinants of land use conflicts among farmers in Southwestern Nigeria, *Journal of Research in Peace, Gender and Development (IRPGD)* Vol. 3 (4) Pp 8 – 67. <http://www.interestjournals.org/JRPGD>
- Aredo, D. and Anne, A. (2004). The root causes of conflict among the Southern pastoral communities of Ethiopia. A case study of Borana and Degodia. OSSREA.
- Cotula, L. C., Toulmin and C. Hesse (2004). Land tenure and administration in Africa: Lessons of experience and emerging issues, interaction. Institute for environment and development, London.
- Daudeline, J. (2002). 'Land as a source of conflict and in post conflict settlements'. World Bank Regional Workshops on Land Issues in Africa and the Middle East, Kampala, Uganda.
- De Soysa, I. (2002). Eco-violence: Shrinking pie or honey pot? *Global Environmental Politics* 2 (4), the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- Deininger, R. and R. Casagininini (2005). Incidence and impact of land conflict in Ugabda", *Journal of Economic Behaviour and Organization* 10 (4).
- GTZ, (1998). Land tenure in development cooperation, guiding principles. Wiesbaden.
- ICARRD (2006). Reform and Rural Development. Land-Related Conflicts. International Conference on Agrarian. Porto Aligre, Brazil.

- Idowu, E. O. (2001). Land use conflicts between crop and livestock producers in the Guinea Savannah zone of Nigeria; *Nigeria Journal of Animal Production* 29 (2): 234 – 244.
- Otsuka K. and F-Place (2001). *Land Tenure and Natural Resource Management: A comparative study of Agrarian communities in Asia and Africa*. Baltimore Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Suliman, M. (1999). The rationality and irrationality of violence in sub-saharan Africa in Mohamed Suliman (Ed) *Ecology, politics and violent conflict* London: Zed.
- Thelsen, O. M. (2010). Scarcity and organized violence in Kenya, 1989 – 2004. A fitting or a ‘mis-fitting’ case of environmental security theory? Paper presented at conference on climate change and security, Trondheim.
- Vamano, T. and T. S. Jayne (2004). Measuring the impact of working-age adult mortality on small-scale farm households in Kenya, ‘*World Development*. Vol. 32 (1).
- Wehramann, B. (2006). Inclusiveness and inequality in Phnom Penh: An analysis of the housing market. Presentation at the University of Dortmund, Spring Lectures.
- Wose, E. (2007). *Livelihood coping strategies of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Rivers State, Nigeria* (Unpublished PhD Dissertation).