LAND DISPUTES AND COMMUNAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

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Abstract
The unique nature of land and its so many uses has made land a highly essential commodity in every society and as such it has been a commodity of very high dispute, this study adopted interview and documentary methods of investigation and its findings reveal, that conflicts and related disputes is a very common and regular phenomenon but with the study findings and recommendation of alternative dispute resolution as a technique for a peaceful co-existence among the peoples of igbo-ukwu in other to avoid escalation of tension and to enable the community achieve greater potential.

Keywords: land, igbo-ukwu community, socio-economic development, and alternative dispute resolution.

Introduction
Land is a vital natural resource that hosts and sustains all living things namely; plants, animals and man. It is a fixed socio-economic asset that aids production of goods and services and hosts virtually all activities that take place on earth (Magel, 2001). The nature of land and types of its components dictate what must exist on it. Hence, savannah land hosts grasses while tropical land is characterised with hardwood forest among others. To an extent, land influences climate and dictates lifestyles of settlers on it cut across the globe. Land host houses and towns where origin of a man is traced. This is because all communities are located on land and their territories are defined by it. In another dimension, the sovereignty of a kingdom is a function of the area of land it occupies. This is an indication that territorial defence is with the purpose of securing or retaining certain piece of land.

The above mentioned arguments reveal that land is central to continuity of life, indispensable in physical development and complex in social relations of production in the economic world. In other words, to every land, there is the socio-cultural dimension to it. As a result, conflict over land is often combined with strong economic, spatial, cultural and emotional values. There are indications that man’s complex socio-economic, cultural and physical attachments to land have placed land in a sensitive and unique position. Conflict interests among communities to secure territories, conserve socio-economic resources and carryout physical development activities and practice customs and traditions on land have given birth to untold crises over the ages (Abegunde, 2010). In another dimension, these have resulted in conflicts that have affected millions of people and resulted in lost opportunities in terms of social disorder, economic depression and destruction of housing and basic infrastructure in the physical development of communities (Girezewski and Homer-Dixon, 1995; Justino, 2004). In another dimension, all types of conflicts on land entail significant private and social costs in human environment.

Direct losses on land can be reflected in loss of farmland, waste of land based mineral resources, urban land degradation during and after conflict, inability to conserve landed properties with cultural or historical values, inaccessibility to urban land for meaningful socio-economic or physical development programmes among others (Schock 1996; Addison, 2001; Abegunde, 2010). Of significance here is that conflicts initiated by tussle over land often results in further losses on land and its related resources. In other words, land as an impetus of development can become impediment to same in the built environment. This could be disgusting where much value is attached to land by the local people without government regulations.

Land disputes have been the major impediments to Peace and growth in many Nigerian Communities. (Gakunzi, 2005). Their effects on residents are reflected on destruction of community’s infrastructure, trade,
social interaction and physical development. As pointed out by Hettne (2002), conflicts create states of turbulence in the environments and in particular, in the minds of people. This often leads to a destruction of physical and social infrastructure including roads, electricity, schools and hospitals. Housing is essential to the well-being and development of most societies. As a complex asset, it provides links to livelihoods, health, education, security and social and family stability. It also acts as a social centre for family and friends, a source of pride and cultural identity, and a resource of both political and economic importance (Sultan, 2003). During conflict, it is an extremely vulnerable asset, and the destruction of homes or their loss through displacement or dispossession is one of the most visible effects of conflict and natural disaster. In the same vein, infrastructural facilities which are life wires of communities are key targets during conflicts. Many difficulties are faced by infrastructure providers in post-conflict situations. Apart from making communities lively through infrastructural provision in post conflict areas, their physical development in terms of acceptable locations and meeting specific choice of the people are issues necessary to be considered in housing and infrastructural development in conflict regions.

Study Problem
Land dispute is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria as a whole and specifically, in Igbo-Ukwu where the central theme of this research is.

The history of land dispute in Igbo-Ukwu dates back to the British colonial era, where land disputes are caused by the ownership, use and administration of land. Disputes about ownership of land and about land boundaries were the major causes of community war, inter-village conflict, eventual war and murder. A situation whereby the land in question was a fertile ground for farming and for such economic trees as raffia palm, palm trees, Iroko, oil bean, among others, the disputes were intensified.

What made land disputes more complex is that all land is usually owned; whether it is cultivated or not, it belongs to somebody or community. Hence claims and counter claims over land ownership became the order of the day in pre-colonial Igbo society. That Chinua Achebe (1964) centers a major part of his novel, Arrow of God, on the land dispute between Umuaro and Okperi is a clear illustration and confirmation of the fact that land is a major source of unrests and crises in most societies.

Land ownership and territorial boundaries generated a lot of conflict in the Igbo society in the pre-colonial period. Increase in population which necessitated the pressure on land accounted for the majority of the crises especially wars that erupted in pre-colonial Igbo society, wars were fought mostly over land issues.

We are told that in the early days, there were few people in the clan and these had no need to quarrel over land. When the population of the clan grew, land became very scarce. And as no one could be told to build his home in the air, the people of the clan began to share the available land space more equitably... soon, however, this honest and peace-loving generation died off and the few that remained either got confused about the actual boundaries or were overwhelmed by the majority who preferred the might is right approach. This was the major reason for wars (Isichei, 1976:79). The name by which the conflict is remembered is Ogu Mkpura Oka (the war of the grains of corn) (Ibid.). Not much is known about the number of casualties that were recorded due to paucity of information.

Community Development
Community development is often linked with community work or community planning, and may involve stakeholders, foundations, governments, or contracted entities including non-government organisations (NGOs), universities or government agencies to progress the social well-being of local, regional and, sometimes, national communities. More grassroots efforts, called community building or community organizing, seek to empower individuals and groups of people by providing them with the skills they need to effect change in their own communities. These skills often assist in building political power through the formation of large social groups working for a common agenda. Community development practitioners must understand both how to work with individuals and how to affect communities' positions within the context of larger social institutions. Public administrators, in contrast, need to understand community development in the context of rural and urban development, housing and economic development, and community, organizational and business development.

Formal accredited programs conducted by universities, as part of degree granting institutions, are often used to build a knowledge base to drive curricula in public administration, sociology and community studies. The General Social Survey from the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago and the Saguaro Seminar at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University are examples of national community development in the United States. The Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public
Affairs at Syracuse University in New York State offers core courses in community and economic development, and in areas ranging from non-profit development to US budgeting (federal to local, community funds). In the United Kingdom, Oxford University has led in providing extensive research in the field through its Community Development Journal,[38] used worldwide by sociologists and community development practitioners.

At the intersection between community development and community building are a number of programs and organizations with community development tools. One example of this is the program of the Asset Based Community Development Institute of Northwestern University. The institute makes available downloadable tools to assess community assets and make connections between non-profit groups and other organizations that can help in community building. The institute focuses on helping communities develop by "mobilizing neighborhood assets" — building from the inside out rather than the outside in.[40] In the disability field, community building was prevalent in the 1980s and 1990s with roots in John McKnight's approaches.

**Land reform** (also agrarian reform, though that can have a broader meaning) involves the changing of laws, regulations or customs regarding land ownership. Land reform may consist of a government-initiated or government-backed property redistribution, generally of agricultural land. Land reform can, therefore, refer to transfer of ownership from the more powerful to the less powerful, such as from a relatively small number of wealthy (or noble) owners with extensive land holdings (e.g., plantations, large ranches, or agricultural business plots) to individual ownership by those who work the land. Such transfers of ownership may be with or without compensation; compensation may vary from token amounts to the full value of the land. Land reform may also entail the transfer of land from individual ownership—even peasant ownership in smallholdings—to government-owned collective farms; it has also, in other times and places, referred to the exact opposite: division of government-owned collective farms into smallholdings.[4] The common characteristic of all land reforms, however, is modification or replacement of existing institutional arrangements governing possession and use of land. Thus, while land reform may be radical in nature, such as through large-scale transfers of land from one group to another, it can also be less dramatic, such as regulatory reforms aimed at improving land administration.

Nonetheless, any revision or reform of a country's land laws can still be an intensely political process, as reforming land policies serves to change relationships within and between communities, as well as between communities and the state. Thus even small-scale land reforms and legal modifications may be subject to intense debate or conflict.

**Land Usage**

Land ownership and tenure can be perceived as controversial in part because ideas defining what it means to access or control land, such as through "land ownership" or "land tenure", can vary considerably across regions and even within countries. Land reforms, which change what it means to control land, therefore create tensions and conflicts between those who lose and those who gain from these redefinitions (see next section).

Western conceptions of land have evolved over the past several centuries to place greater emphasis on individual land ownership, formalized through documents such as land titles. Control over land, however, may also be perceived less in terms of individual ownership and more in terms land use, or through what is known as land tenure. Historically, in many parts of Africa for example, land was not owned by an individual, but rather used by an extended family or a village community. Different people in a family or community had different rights to access this land for different purposes and at different times. Such rights were often conveyed through oral history and not formally documented.

These different ideas of land ownership and tenure are sometimes referred to using different terminology. For example, "formal" or "statutory" land systems refer to ideas of land control more closely affiliated with individual land ownership. "Informal" or "customary" land systems refer to ideas of land control more closely affiliated with land tenure.

Terms dictating control over and use of land can therefore take many forms. Some specific examples of present-day or historic forms of formal and informal land ownership include:

- Traditional land tenure, as in the indigenous tribes of Pre-Columbian America in the territory where currently North America is located.
- Feudal land ownership, through fiefdoms
- Life estate, interest in real property that ends at death.
- Fee tail, hereditary, non-transferable ownership of real property.
- Fee simple. Under common law, this is the most complete ownership interest one can have in real property.
Leasehold or rental
Rights to use a common
Sharecropping
Easements
Agricultural labour – under which someone works the land in exchange for money, payment in kind, or some combination of the two
Collective ownership
Access to land through a membership in a cooperative, or shares in a corporation, which owns the land (typically by fee simple or its equivalent, but possibly under other arrangements).
Government collectives, such as those that might be found in communist states, whereby government ownership of most agricultural land is combined in various ways with tenure for farming collectives.

Conflict refers to some form of friction, disagreement, or discord arising within a group when the beliefs or actions of one or more members of the group are either resisted by or unacceptable to one or more members of another group. Conflict can arise between members of the same group, known as intra-group conflict, or it can occur between members of two or more groups, and involve violence, interpersonal discord, and psychological tension, known as intergroup conflict. Conflict in groups often follows a specific course. Routine group interaction is first disrupted by an initial conflict, often caused by differences of opinion, disagreements between members, or scarcity of resources. At this point, the group is no longer united, and may split into coalitions. This period of conflict escalation in some cases gives way to a conflict resolution stage, after which the group can eventually return to routine group interaction once again.

Socioeconomics (also known as social economics) is the social science that studies how economic activity affects and is shaped by social processes. In general it analyzes how societies progress, stagnate, or regress because of their local or regional economy, or the global economy. Socioeconomics is sometimes used as an umbrella term with different usages. The term 'social economics' may refer broadly to the "use of economics in the study of society." More narrowly, contemporary practice considers behavioral interactions of individuals and groups through social capital and social "markets" (not excluding for example, sorting by marriage) and the formation of social norms. In the latter, it studies the relation of economics to social values. A distinct supplemental usage describes social economics as "a discipline studying the reciprocal relationship between economic science on the one hand and social philosophy, ethics, and human dignity on the other" toward social reconstruction and improvement or as also emphasizing multidisciplinary methods from such fields as sociology, history, and political science. In criticizing mainstream economics for its alleged faulty philosophical premises (for example the pursuit of self-interest) and neglect of dysfunctional economic relationships, such advocates tend to classify social economics as heterodox.

LAND TENURE
In common law systems, land tenure is the legal regime in which land is owned by an individual, who is said to "hold" the land. The French verb "tenure" means "to hold" and "tenant" is the present participle of "tenure". The sovereign monarch, known as The Crown, held land in its own right. All private owners are either its tenants or sub-tenants. Tenure signifies the relationship between tenant and lord, not the relationship between tenant and land. Over history, many different forms of land ownership, i.e., ways of owning land, have been established. A landholder/landowner is a holder of the estate in land with considerable rights of ownership or, simply put, an owner of land.

FEUDAL TENURE
Historically in the system of feudalism, the lords who received land directly from the Crown were called tenants-in-chief. They doled out portions of their land to lesser tenants in exchange for services, who in turn divided it among even lesser tenants. This process—that of granting subordinate tenancies—In this way, all individuals except the monarch were said to hold the land "of" someone else.

MODES OF OWNERSHIP AND TENURE
There is a great variety of modes of land ownership and tenure:
- Traditional land tenure. For example, most of the indigenous nations or tribes of North America had differing notions of land ownership. Whereas European land ownership centered around control, Indigenous notions were based on stewardship. When Europeans first came to North America, they sometimes disregarded traditional land tenure and simply seized land, or they accommodated...
traditional land tenure by recognizing it as aboriginal title. This theory formed the basis for treaties with indigenous peoples.

- Ownership of land by swearing to make productive use of it. In several developing countries as Egypt, Senegal, ... this method is still presently in use. In Senegal, it is mentioned as "mise en valeur des zones du terroir"[1] and in Egypt, it is called Wadaa al-yad.

- Alodial title, a system in which real property is owned absolutely free and clear of any superior landlord or sovereign. True alodial title is rare, with most property ownership in the common law world (Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States) being in fee simple. Alodial title is inalienable, in that it may be conveyed, devised, gifted, or mortgaged by the owner, but it may not be distressed and restrained for collection of taxes or private debts, or condemned (eminent domain) by the government.

- Feudal land tenure, a system of mutual obligations under which a royal or noble personage granted a fiefdom — some degree of interest in the use or revenues of a given parcel of land — in exchange for a claim on services such as military service or simply maintenance of the land in which the lord continued to have an interest. This pattern obtained from the level of high nobility as vassals of a monarch down to lesser nobility whose only vassals were their serfs.

- Fee simple. Under common law, this is the most complete ownership interest one can have in real property, other than the rare Alodial title. The holder can typically freely sell or otherwise transfer that interest or use it to secure a mortgage loan. This picture of "complete ownership" is, of course, complicated by the obligation in most places to pay a property tax and by the fact that if the land is mortgaged, there will be a claim on it in the form of a lien. In modern societies, this is the most common form of land ownership. Land can also be owned by more than one party and there are various concurrent estate rules.

- Native title. In Australia, native title is a common law concept that recognizes that some indigenous people have certain land rights that derive from their traditional laws and customs.[3] Native title can co-exist with non-indigenous proprietary rights and in some cases different indigenous groups can exercise their native title over the same land.

- Life estate. Under common law, this is an interest in real property that ends at death. The holder has the use of the land for life, but typically no ability to transfer that interest or to use it to secure a mortgage loan.

- Fee tail. Under common law, this is hereditary, non-transferable ownership of real property. A similar concept, the *legitime*, exists in civil and Roman law; the *legitime* limits the extent to which one may disinherit an heir.

ENVIRONMENT
In science and engineering, a system is the part of the universe that is being studied, while the environment is the remainder of the universe that lies outside the boundaries of the system. It is also known as the surroundings, and in thermodynamics, as the reservoir. Depending on the type of system, it may interact with the environment by exchanging mass, energy (including heat and work), linear momentum, angular momentum, electric charge, or other conserved properties. In some disciplines, such as information theory, information may also be exchanged. The environment is ignored in analysis of the system, except in regard to these interactions.

SOCIAL RELATION
In social science, a social relation or social interaction is any relationship between two or more individuals. Social relations derived from individual agency form the basis of social structure and the basic object for analysis by social scientists. Fundamental inquiries into the nature of social relations feature in the work of sociologists such as Max Weber in his theory of social action. Categorizing social interactions enables observational and other social research, such as Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft ("Community and Society"), collective consciousness, etc. However different schools and theories of sociology and other social sciences dispute the methods used for such investigations.

IGBO-UKWU COMMUNITY
*Igbo-Ukwu* (Igbo: Great Igbo) is a town in the Nigerian state of Anambra in the southeastern part of the country. The town is made up of seven villages, called Obiuno, Ngo, Akukwa, Umudege, Ezihu, Ezigbo and Etiti.
It was in Igbo-Ukwu that Uchenna Nwosu founded the Apex Medical Center.

Archaeological significance
Igbo-Ukwu is notable for three archaeological sites, where excavations have found bronze artifacts from a highly sophisticated bronze metal-working culture dating perhaps to the ninth or tenth century, centuries before other known bronzes of the region.

The first, called Igbo Isaiah, was uncovered in 1938 by Isaiah Anozie, a local villager, who found the bronze works while digging beside his home. Five bronze artefacts from the original excavation are now in the British Museum's collection. They include a small staff, a head of a ram, a large manilla, an intricately designed crescent-shaped vessel and a small pendant in the shape of a tribal chief’s head with tattoo marks on the face.

Formal excavations by the archaeologist Thurstan Shaw in 1959 at the request of the Nigerian government, resulted in the discovery of two other sites, Igbo Richard and Igbo Jonah, containing the remains of an ancient culture. Later, these were excavated as well. Artifacts have included jewelry, ceramics, a corpse adorned in what appears to be regalia, and many assorted bronze, copper, and iron objects. Some of these contain materials that are evidence of a long-distance trading system extending to Egypt.

Radiocarbon dating placed the sites around the tenth century or earlier, which would make the Igbo-Ukwu culture the earliest-known example of bronze casting in the region. The craftsmen were working centuries before those who made the more well-known Ife bronzes. The archaeological sites in south-eastern Nigeria are associated with the Nri-Igbo. The three sites include Igbo Isaiah (a shrine), Igbo Richard (a burial chamber), and Igbo Jonah (a cache).

History

Bronzes
Alice Apley writes about the work:

"The inhabitants of Igbo-Ukwu had a metalworking art that flourished as early as the ninth century. Three sites have been excavated, revealing hundreds of ritual vessels and regalia castings of bronze or leaded bronze that are among the most inventive and technically accomplished bronzes ever made. The people of Igbo-Ukwu, ancestors of present-day Igbo, were the earliest smelters of copper and its alloys in West Africa, working the metal through hammering, bending, twisting, and incising. They are likely among the earliest groups of West Africans to employ the lost-wax casting techniques in the production of bronze sculptures. Oddly, evidence suggests that their metalworking repertory was limited and Igbo smiths were not familiar with techniques such as raising, soldering, riveting, and wire making, though these techniques were used elsewhere on the continent."

Archaeology of Igbo-Ukwu

The **archaeology of Igbo-Ukwu** revealed bronze artifacts dated to the 9th century A.D. which were initially discovered by Isiah Anozie in 1939 while digging a well in his compound in Igbo-Ukwu, an Igbo town in Anambra State, Nigeria. As a result of these finds, three archaeological sites were excavated in 1959 and 1964 by Thurstan Shaw which revealed more than 700 high quality artifacts of copper, bronze and iron, as well as about 165000 glass, carnelian and stone beads, pottery, textiles and ivory. They are the oldest bronze artifacts known in West African and were manufactured centuries before the emergence of other known bronze producing centers such as those of Ife and Benin. The bronzes include numerous ritual vessels, pendants, crowns, breastplates, staff ornaments, swords, and fly-whisk handles.

Obtaining A Certificate of Occupancy

This becomes necessary only where land purchased is not already covered by a registered document. The common procedure is to obtain and fill the necessary form and accompany the same with other documents which may include:

i. Land Information  
ii. Survey Plan.  
iii. Evidence of title (e.g. purchase receipt etc) duly stamped.  
iv. Tax clearance certificate of applicant.  
v. Passport Photograph of the Applicant (4 copies).  
vi. Bank Draft for the publication fee. An advert is placed in the national newspaper asking for any objection to the transaction.  
vii. Bank draft for capital contribution.
viii. Approved Building plan (if property is developed).
ix. Covering letter forwarding the documents.

The above requirements are essentially those stipulated by Lagos State. The stipulations differ from state to state and are subject to review from time to time.

The average processing time for obtaining a C of O or Governor's consent is six months from the submission of the application, all other things being equal. This, as usual, is subject to variation from state to state.

Investigation of Title

Before a person accepts to buy a property, it is proper to determine the authenticity and validity of the seller's title. Where the title to the property is covered by a registered document, a search will be conducted at the Lands Registry to investigate the same. The search will reveal the name of the registered owner of the property or persons) entitled by law to deal with the same. Its size, in some cases, its history, and any encumbrances such as a mortgage, charge, caution or caveat, if any. Where land is not covered by a registered document, investigation is informal. This is done by making inquiries from those expected to know about the history of the land, and around the locality of its situation, with a view to determining who is legally entitled to deal with the land.

Conclusion of Transaction

Where a search reveals any encumbrances, the buyer will be advised to tread with caution. Where all doubts have been allayed and title found to be clean and satisfactory, the process continues to the negotiation of the purchase price (if not previously agreed) and preparation of an Agreement to sell and a Deed of Assignment. The documents are, normally, prepared by the purchaser's solicitors. The execution of the transfer documents then follows, accompanied by the surrender to the buyer of all documents relating to the property by the seller.

Obtaining The Governor's Consent

After the exchange of the payment for the purchase price with the executed Deed of Assignment and other relevant documents, the purchaser must take steps to obtain the Governor's consent to the transaction. An application is made on the prescribed form to the Governor's office. In Lagos State, for instance, an application is made on Land Form 1C and is accompanied by the following:

i. A covering letter forwarding the documents.
ii. Certified true Copy of the title document.
iii. 6 copies of the Deed of Assignment.
iv. Receipt for the payment of tenement rate (where land is developed) or affidavit in lieu.
v. Initial deposit on consent fee (final payment determinable upon independent valuation of property by the Governor's office).
vi. Tax clearance certificate of parties to the transaction.
vii. Evidence of payment of ground rent.
viii. Payment of Development Levy, Charting and endorsement fees.
ix. 6 copies of survey plan.

Land is an essential part of human life. It represents not only physical but also intangible elements of human relations. Land is regarded not simply as an economic or environmental asset, but as a social and cultural resource. As such, it is one of the key subjects of interactions between state and society. How land is used, managed, and disputed affects the quality of social stability and development.

This paper presents a number of key issues regarding the interactions between state laws and social rules in resolving land disputes. Settlement of land conflicts is always complex, and it reflects the historical, political, and cultural conditions of the nations in which disputes happen. Furthermore, domestic land disputes are not entirely isolated from the regional and international environment in the era of globalisation. It is not possible to discuss all of these factors in one article, or to generate a universal framework for land dispute resolution. The paper only sets to provide a snapshot of the most important issues in understanding the settlement of land disputes. It starts with a summary of major approaches to dispute resolution. After that, it examines recent trend in land law reform in developing countries. Finally, it introduces a potential model for land dispute resolution.

State laws and social norms that govern land relations are collectively referred to as land regulations. Social norms imply all customary norms or traditional practices in relation to land that are widely accepted.
Mapping approaches to dispute resolution

This section briefly presents a number of key approaches to understand dispute resolution. Disputes are inevitable to any society. They occur, develop, and get resolved as a part of social evolution. However, unsatisfactory settlement of disputes can hinder social development, and is a potential source of social instability. Effective resolution requires sound understanding about the nature of the subject matter. Below are the four main traditions that study the role of state and social institutions in resolving disputes.

Alternative Dispute Resolution

Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) is a contemporary trend in the field of dispute resolution. The term itself suggests methods of dispute resolution that avoid litigation. ADR refers to a range of non-adversarial methods for resolving disputes such as mediation, conciliation, arbitration, and negotiation.

The idea of ADR first evolved in America in the 1920s. The founders of ADR were interested in studying patterns of social ordering. They were concerned that the capacity of court and adversarial litigation to adapt to changes in social conditions. Specifically, the binary nature of litigation may limit its usefulness for complicated disputes that involve deep social conflicts. They acknowledged that different disputes require different types of processes. Law’s function was to set out ideals and standards for civic participation, to provide a means for settling disputes and to preserve social harmony. Law was enforced by legal institutions. Other non-law processes were driven by the necessity of cooperation in social life. For example, mediation was the administration of social norms. It was a site for private rule making, not state-made law.

Conclusion

From the result of the analysis; we conclude that land dispute is the major cause of war and unrest in our modern day society. We hear news of communal clashes caused by boundary disputes, a family member killing another family member because of land inheritance, community fighting over a piece of land because of its economic values etc. These wars and unrests caused by land disputes in our society deprive us peace. The increasing pressure to use customary land for different transactions by individuals, a lack of knowledge about land legislation and the difficulty in obtaining property have left many people in our society vulnerable to their property rights being abused. If left unaddressed, the land disputes could cause a return to violent conflict. Already in several communities, there has been an increase in violence. For example, in some areas people have armed themselves with weapons, such as machetes and spears, to protect their land.

The increase in these conflicts over land to a very large extent threatens communal peace. Hence something has to be done.

Recommendation

A number of steps should be taken urgently to avoid escalation of tensions and to enable Igbo-Ukwu community to achieve its great potential.

1. Companies and individual investors seeking land for investment in Igbo-Ukwu should adopt more conflict-sensitive approaches to community engagement. They need to conduct context and conflict analysis on the sites that they have identified for investment in order to establish existing land ownership patterns/history, key actors, and any potential or actual conflicts. Dialogue and wide community consultations should be carried out as part of the process of acquiring surface rights. Furthermore, companies should be transparent and accountable in the way they conduct business and relate to local communities.

2. Land governance structures in the community should be strengthened to enable them to play their role effectively. These structures lack adequate funding, and in some communities of Aguata Local Government Area are not fully constituted. There is also a need for all actors intervening in land conflicts to coordinate efforts, and to reduce ‘forum shopping’ – a situation where people take advantage of the lack of coordination to file the same cases in multiple courts in search of ‘favourable justice’.

3. Local governments and cultural institutions should encourage effective land use. Clearly, there is a vast amount of fertile land that, if used, could make Igbo-Ukwu a food basket for the region and the country. Government should encourage this by implementing land use policies and designing programmes to help communities open up land for agriculture. In order to enhance this, the Government should provide mechanized equipment and make sustainable agricultural support services available to districts. Your land is only as good as what it produces.
References