



Analysis of Factors Responsible for the Spate of Land Sharing and Sale in Ikwerre Ethnic Nationality

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ABSTRACT

This study set out to investigate the factors responsible for the spate of land shares and sale in Ikwerre ethnic nationality. The study employed the Focus Group Discussion method as its instrument of data collection. A total of 36 discussants were randomly selected from the headquarters of each of the four local government areas that make up Ikwerre ethnic group. The study found that the prevalence of land sharing and sale of land by people of Ikwerre, particularly the youth, is occasioned by a number of factors, including government involvement in land acquisitions without due compensation, the usual huge profit and proceeds that accrue from land sale, and the increasing poverty rates in the areas of study, among others. The study recommended therefore that government should always pay reasonable compensation to real land owners for any parcel of land acquired. Government establishment built on such land should ensure the training and employment of youths of such area. Again, the sale of land at very cheap rate to real estate investors and land speculators should be discouraged, among others.

Keywords: Land sale, Ethnic nationality, Ikwerre, Land acquisition, Land sharing, Rivers State

INTRODUCTION

Land is the major determinant of man's livelihood and survival. As Fabiyi (2006) puts it; Land is humanity's most valuable resources without which man could never have existed and on which his continued existence and progress depend. It is important in both the countries of agricultural peasants such as Nigeria and countries of commercial agricultural such as the Americas where large expanse of land is used for agricultural purpose. Land is an asset and basic to the existence of both the present and future generation (Okodudu, 1998). The usefulness of it, in general, has made individuals, corporate organizations and government to acquire it in large.

The world over, the phenomenon of land sale and acquisition is seen as part of the characteristics of urban development. As a matter fact, land sale and acquisition trigger development. It throws up a mix of people from diversities who take residence in the area, on temporary or permanent basis, build structure and do businesses thereby contributing to the population as well as the GDPs of the area.

From the past few years till date, there has been a spate of land sale in Ikwerre ethnic nationality. The people of the nationality, particularly, the youths have been involved in the sale of their land with careless abandon. Sadly enough, some individuals have sold off all their land, including the ones to be inherited by their children. Others have even sold their children's share of the land while their children are still little. Yet, some have constituted themselves into gangs of land thieves, armed with guns and other dangerous weapons with which they harass, intimidate and maim other in order to grab and sell their land. If this is not constrained, the development of future generation with respect to access to land may be jeopardized in Ikwerre ethnic nationality.

Wosu (2012) asserted that the outright sale of farmland for non-agricultural purpose in Ikwerre rural communities will lead to scarcity of food and this will further impoverish the people and hamper development. The Ikwerre People of Rivers State of Nigeria are Indigenous Tribal People 1989, (No 169).

In the past, the Ikwerre people were not known for land sale. The right over land was that of the families and communities. Land was transferred from one generation to another on a family and community basis through inheritance. The idea of individual land ownership was out of the place. Community land was shared for only farming purposes and not for sale. This traditional land tenure system was stifled by the emergence of the Land Use Act of 1978.

With the Land Use Act, government was granted the right to acquire land for public use and reduce the burden of land compensation to the legitimate owners. With this, the coast was free for the acquisition of large hectares of 'Ikwerre Land' by both the federal and state governments for the construction/expansion of the Port Harcourt International Airport Omagwa, the University of Port Harcourt Choba, the University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital Alakahia, the Rivers State University Nkpolu – Orowhorukwo, the Ignatius Ajuru University Rumuolumeni, the Capt. Elechi Amadi Polytechnic Rumuola, the military base (Bori Camp) Rumuokoro, among others sited in 'Ikwerre Land' with little or no compensation. Famoriyo (1973) who examined various concepts relating to land tenure on one hand and land management and acquisition on the other hand, asserted that the Land Use Act of 1978 which made all land the property of government, displaced farmers in the oil producing areas and given to oil companies has affected farmers in various ways.

Inarguably, the rate at which land is sold by the people of Ikwerre ethnic nationality, particularly the youth is high. The question is; what factors are responsible for the spate of land sharing and sale in the nationality? It is against the backdrop of identifying such factors and making necessary recommendations that this study was embarked on.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) as its instrument of data collection.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of participants in the FGDs

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Age intervals</i>		
30 – 39	8	22.2
40 – 49	10	27.7
50 – 59	11	30.5
60 and above	7	19.4
<i>Total</i>	36	100%
<i>Sex</i>		
Male	36	100
Female	0	0
<i>Total</i>	36	100%
<i>Marital status</i>		
Single	6	16.6
Married	24	66.6
Divorced	2	5.5
Widower	4	11.1
<i>Total</i>	36	100
<i>Educational qualification</i>		
Primary	5	13.8
Secondary	6	16.6
Tertiary	25	69.4
<i>Total</i>	36	100%

Source: Field survey, 2022

A total of 36 participants were randomly selected from the headquarters of each of the four local government areas of Ikwerre ethnic nationality. These are the Rumuodomanya for Obio/Akpor, Emohua for Emohua, Isiokpo of Ikwerre and Port Harcourt for Port Harcourt City local government areas of Rivers State. In the simple random sampling, women were deliberately not included in the sample. This is because the Ikwerre custom and tradition do not allow or recognize women in property (land) inheritance. Elders, youths and property (land) agents were who have ideas on land shares and sale, were the main targets and were drawn to the sample.

RESULTS

Knowledge of the spate of land sale in Ikwerre ethnic nationality:

Result from the field as shown in the table below reveals that all participants in the FGDs are aware that the rate of land sale in the nationality is high.

Table 2: Awareness of the high rate of land sale in Ikwerre ethnic nationality

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Aware</i>	36	100
<i>Not aware</i>	0	0
<i>Total</i>	36	100%

Source: Field survey, 2022

Table 3: Factors responsible for the spate of land shares and sale in Ikwerre ethnic nationality

Factors responsible for land sale	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Government involvement in land grabbing</i>	14	39.1
<i>Resources that accrue from land sale</i>	11	30.5
<i>Level of poverty, a major factor</i>	5	13.8
<i>Level of education of youth, a major factor</i>	4	11.1
<i>Unemployment level of youths</i>	2	5.5
<i>Total</i>	36	100%

Source: Field survey, 2022

The result in table 3 reveals that the spate of land shares and sale in Ikwerre ethnic nationality (39.1%) is occasioned by government involvement in land acquisition/grabbing with little or no compensation. 30.5% believe that the huge resources or proceeds that accrue from land sale is responsible for the incessant sale of land in Ikwerre ethnic nationality. The share and sale of land with careless abandon in the nationality is engendered by the level of poverty of the people (13.8%) in the land. 11.1% of the participants think that the spate of land shares and sale in the nationality is due to the level of education of the people. For them, an educated population would not engage in indiscriminate sale of their land. In the same vein, 5.5% of the respondents also think that the unemployment level of the youths is a major factor responsible for the spate of land shares and sale in the nationality.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

It was observed that land is sold with careless abandon in Ikwerre ethnic nationality. The study set to investigate the factors responsible for the spate of land shares and sale in the nationality with the intent to reduce it. The finding of the study revealed that all the participants sampled from the four local government areas of 'Ikwerre' were aware of the spate of land shares and sale in the nationality.

The findings also revealed that from all the factors, government involvement in land acquisition with little or no compensation (39.1%) took center stage. It was revealed that in Ikwerre LGA of Rivers State, communities such as Omagwa, Ipo, Igwuruta and other surrounding communities suffer this fate. It revealed that the vast portion of land for the construction/expansion of the Port Harcourt International Airport was acquired by the federal government with little or no compensation. Fear of such acquisition

by government without compensation, according to the revelation of the study is the major reason people of Ikwerre ethnic nationality dispose off their land even at the lowest price.

The study also revealed that the situation is indifferent in Obio/Akpor LGA which houses almost all the higher institutions of learning, namely University of Port Harcourt (including the University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital), the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, the Rivers State University and the Capt. Elechi Amadi Polytechnic. The study further revealed the University of Port Harcourt and the University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital are even in court with their host communities over the large parcels of land acquired without compensation. This agrees with the study of Wosu (2012) which states that the decision of communities to share farmland for sale was to avert the forceful taking of their land by government with little or no compensation.

The study also revealed that the huge resources (30.5%) that accrues from land sale is also a major factor responsible for the indiscriminate land sale, particularly, by the youths of Ikwerre ethnic nationality. This, by extension, means that most people who sell their parcels of land, do so to have huge sums of money in their account and lead a better life. Land sale in this regards, fast tract a better life.

The study revealed that poverty is also a major factor responsible for the spate of land shares and sale in the Ikwerre ethnic nationality. This means that people could sell their property in order to attend to their basic needs of food, shelter and clothing. This does not imply that rich people do not sell-off their land but on the average, poverty can make people sell their land in order to attend to essential needs.

The findings of the study also revealed that an individual's level of education (11.1%) and the level of unemployment (5.5%) could influence the sale of their land with careless abandon. As much as the level of unemployment of an individual can make him sell his property (land), an educated population would not recklessly dispose off their property as this is the fate of some indigenes of communities within the environment of the University of Port Harcourt such as Alakahia, Choba, Rumuekini and Aluu.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The priority of every individual is to be successful and lead a good life. The people of Ikwerre ethnic nationality, particularly the youth, have been engaged in the sale of their land with careless abandon. The clamour for the share and subsequent sale of such land, has not only affected farming and food production, it has also led to apathy for higher education, vocational and entrepreneurial skills and increased chieftaincy crises and inter community war as some have constituted themselves into gangs of land thieves because of the huge resources that accrue from land sale. The youths of Ikwerre ethnic nationality had a distorted impression of land sale. As a result, they rely heavily on land sale as a source of income as they are apathetic to the acquisition of higher education that is more sustaining. This has created uneducated/ill-educated youths who cannot stand the Ikwerre ethnic nationality in good stead in the comity of ethnic nationalities in Nigeria.

Arising from the above, the following recommendations are made;

- a) Government should endeavour to pay reasonable compensations to land owners whose land is acquired.
- b) Any government establishment built on the land acquired should incorporate the concerns of the youths in terms of employment and acquisition of vocational and entrepreneurial skills that would help them tomorrow in life.
- c) Symposia, Seminars and other enlightenment campaigns and programmes aimed enlightening the youths on the need to acquire higher education rather engage in land sales as a source of quick money should be encouraged.
- d) Sale of large hectares of land at very cheap rate to real estate investors and land speculators in Ikwerre ethnic nationality should be discouraged as it is not really to the interest of the real land owners who are usually cheated in the deal.

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