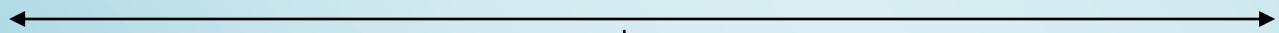


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LAND SCARCITY AND COMMUNAL LAND CONFLICTS: IMPLICATION FOR FOOD SECURITY IN SELECTED COMMUNITIES IN OBU DU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study examined land scarcity leading to communal land conflict and its effect on food security in selected communities in Obudu Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. One null hypothesis was formulated based on the independent variable of land scarcity leading to communal land conflict. The theoretical framework used in the study was Lewis Corser's conflict theory, while the research design adopted was the cross-sectional survey design. Data for testing the hypothesis were gotten using a 15-item focus group discussion guide (FGDG). Data were gotten from 40 respondents selected through cluster, purpose and snow balling sampling techniques from the 10 wards. The tested hypotheses show that there is a significant relationship between land scarcity leading to communal land conflict and food scarcity. We recommend among other things, that to curb communal land conflicts resulting from land scarcity, communities should engage themselves in dialogue with one another to develop mutual respect and co-operation that will lead to peaceful coexistence and boost food security because without peace, food security will be threatened with devastating effect on the people.

KEYWORDS: Land scarcity, communal land conflicts, food security, Agricultural productivity/activities

INTRODUCTION

Land means many things to the people in Africa. It is the burial place for the dead, a place to live on and make a living. It is seen as the most important resource to the people. Land is an indispensable means of production and it is the core of most communal conflicts in Nigeria, it also holds cultural significance for the people in most African communities (Uyang, Nwagbara, undelikwo & Eneji, 2013).

One of the most serious obstacles to increasing agricultural productivity in Africa is land scarcity. Where there is land scarcity, livelihood can be constrained and negative food security trends are exacerbated. Land is central to promoting rural livelihood in Africa because access to land and security of tenure are the main means through which food security and sustainable development can be realized. Struggles over land due to scarcity have been growing in Africa which has led to several communal land conflicts which have affected food security negatively in the region (Moyo, 1999).

Montalvo and Reynal – Querol (2005) argued that land scarcity is a significant determinant of communal land conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa. A high percentage of the population of in-habitant migrates from conflicting

communities to non-conflict areas. The resultant effect of this is that, food production is adversely affected. Shaw-Taylor (2008), averred from a land scarcity resulting to communal land conflict has a significant negative effect on agricultural productivity.

Willem (2011) stressed that it is a regular thing, for communities to fight over land, during planting seasons, there is bound to be continuous uprising among peasants, the use of force in the acquisition of farm lands, the tendencies for family members to fight and kill for land, and adjacent communities fighting for livelihood. This struggle for land due to scarcity affects agricultural production. Communal land conflicts resulting from land scarcity in many developing nations has constituted a major constraint to sustainable food security and development in the last few decades. There is a growing awareness now that attaining global food security has gone beyond the question of availability of improved production technologies. The more important factor is that the land upon which crop production ultimately depends must be appropriately, managed, conserved, available and free from dispute (IFPRI, 1995).

Land scarcity in most African states has generated numerous challenges including the problem of food security. Countries and communities faced with land scarcity are likely to be engaged in command land conflict and as well likely to faced food insecurity problem and malnutrition. Land scarcity has given rise to frequent communal conflict and litigations which negatively affect food security (Omotola, 1988; Sanou, 2002).

Despite the fact that land's attribute are fundamentally gifts from God to humanity, man has waged war against fellow human beings over these gifts due to scarcity. Empires and kingdoms etc; have been founded and lost in external battle of men to posses more authority over landed property. As a result, ownership claims to land rights have turned brothers against each other, communities, states and even nations against one another. In Nigeria, land scarcity resulting to communal land conflicts has remained unresolved with bloody feuds as outcome and this is passed on to generations resulting to food insecurity since agricultural activities are halted (Osu, 2010).

The primary constraint on making land available for cultivation is its scarcity. Land scarcity maybe the leading cause of communal conflicts with negative effect on food security. Land owning families and communities are extremely reluctant to allocate lands to others, due to a fear that they may make claims which may result to conflict, as such, food security is threaten (Remer-Thomas, 2004). In a number of Kenyan regions, land scarcity and land use rights are often in dispute resulting to communal land conflicts. These conflicts have far reaching negative effects on food security, agricultural productivity, economic production and reduction of poverty. Communal land conflicts resulting from land scarcity are the strains that have in recent past threaten the cultural and ethnic harming and brought the Kenyan food security to it knees (Dale, 2007; Nyadimo, 2005). Land scarcity in Kenya has heightened communal land conflicts. Communal land conflicts have been bloody and often characterized by massive population displacement and extensive destruction of farms which culminated into food security problem (Rolfes, 2006). Similarly, Ojienda (2008) maintained that land scarcity leading to communal land conflict leads to civil strife, loss of lives, population displacement and destruction of farm land which are all serious problems that affects food security.

Mwangi (2007) noted that land is very crucial for livelihoods and also a key to food security. He maintained that if people do not have access to land, especially in rural communities, they will be food insecure. He argued that access to land and rights over land encourages continued production of crops which will help ensure both food security and a steady supply of products to the local market. He argued further that land availability enhance food security from the individual to the national level. Pinstrop -Andersen (1993) observed that land availability aid food security and nutrition. He is of the view that land scarcity affects food security and could lead to communal conflict with consequent problem on food availability. He maintained that government intervention for land availability is an issue that will facilitate food security, he warns against the long term problem of land scarcity and nutritional diet.

According to Oriola (2008), the past years in Nigeria has witnessed an alarming upsurge in the level of violence resulting from several disputes claiming avoidable and uncountable innocent lives. Some of the disputes have been fuelled by land as a result of scarcity or non availability at adequate quantity amongst other factors. Several communal land clashes resulting from land scarcity have registered the death of hundreds of people and many residents still fleeing the area as fears of renewed clashes linger (Adedipe, Olawoye, Olarinde & Okedian, 1997). This affects agricultural activities, thus undermining food security in the nation.

Kariaba (2002) asserted that land scarcity is major problem in Burundi. He maintained that land problems have ethnic and cultural dimensions. He argued that in Rwanda, Burundi and Western Kenya, land scarcity has been an issue of concern. He concluded that land scarcity could lead to conflict and affect agricultural productivity. Increasing demand for land as well as competition for the control of land resources have increased the incidence of communal land conflicts. Land scarcity leading to communal land conflicts has the potentials to undermine food security. While conflicts are normal in society, their consequences are challenging and affect food security in any given society (Widstrand,1980). The scarcity of land in Malawi has resulted to communal conflicts. Leasehold and freehold land are often targeted by land-hungry citizens and this trend is mainly observed in the tea growing areas of Mulanje and Thyolo, and the tobacco estates in Kasunga which affects agricultural activities in the areas (Government of Malawi, 2000).

West African region has been characterized by major population shifts as people migrate from the drier sahelians to coastal regions. This immigration has largely escalated land scarcity problem resulting to communal land conflicts compounding the problem of food insecurity in the region (Delville, 2002). Communal land conflicts resulting from land conflicts, scramble and partition of limited lands have affected farming population, land fertility, struggle for livelihood and food security (Ayissi, 2001). “ The exponential increase in human population without a corresponding increase in land, coupled with devastating natural disasters, worsen the problem of scramble for land and other scarce economic resources. The population of Obudu, according to the 2006 census figures was 161, 457 and this figure was projected to increase to 322, 914 by 2040. Ironically, while the annual increase in population of the area is about 3 percent, land, the vital resource at the heart of most communal conflicts remain static or even depreciates” (Uyang, Nwagbara, Undelikwu & Eneji, 2013). In this study, we examined the relationship between land scarcity leading to communal land conflict and food security in selected communities in Obudu Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

1. Land scarcity leading to communal land conflict has no significant relationship with food security.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Lewis Corser's Conflict Theory

Lewis Corser's Conflict Theory (1956) grew out of dissatisfaction with Talcott Parsons Structural functionalism. Corser argued in support of the positive functions of social conflict in the maintenance of the social system. Conflict, he maintained, was both pathological rather, he saw a lot of functions performed by conflict (Ritzer, 2008).

Corser's theory posits that social order presents a system of variously interrelated and integrated parts. In spite of the interrelationships, all social systems are fraught with tensions, imbalances and oppositions. These various conflicts, violent disruptions and seemingly overt deviant behavior which are necessary view as disruptive to the system are also necessary integrative stimulants to strengthen and energize the system. With such stimulations, the system could adjust better to the environmental demands where it exists.

Corser's conflict theory implies that communal land conflict resulting from land scarcity is inevitable because it performs social functions. The society or community or social system is composed of integrated and interrelated parts. However, the theory indicates that no matter how integrated the communities in Obudu Local Government Area, tensions, frictions, imbalances and scramble for scarce economic resource are expected. Though communal land conflicts are disruptive to communities involved, they are seen as necessary or vital integrative stimulates for the survival of the system. Communal land conflicts help affected communities adjust properly to environmental demands.

Secondly, communal land conflicts in Obudu Local Government Area performs a stabilizing and integrative function in affected communities, particularly, it helps to bring to the fore, various areas of discontent in affected communities and suggested solutions to reach consensus and achieve equilibrium or social order in the communities. The overall effect of communal land conflict resulting from land scarcity is the threat to food security.

METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for this study was cross-sectional survey design. Through this design, the researchers attempted to use the independent variable (Land scarcity leading to communal conflict) to observe the dependent variable (food security). It was a qualitative study. It also allowed the researchers to restrict the study to a selected sample population rather than the whole (Uyang, Akwaji & Ezekeudu, 2015).

STUDY AREA

The study area was Obudu Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. Its headquarter is Obudu Urban. It has an area of 379, 164 square kilometers and population of 161, 457 (FRN, 2009). It is located in Northern Senatorial District. It consists of ten (10) political wards: Obudu urban 1 ward, Obudu Urban II ward, Begiading ward, Ipong ward, Agiaba/Begiaka ward, Alege/urbang ward, Ukpe ward, Utugwang South Ward, Utugwang central ward, Utugwang North ward.

POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The population of the study consisted of all farmers in the selected communities in Obudu Local Government Area who have been involved in communal land conflict resulting from land scarcity. This informed the target. The target population of those who have been involved in communal land conflicts was extracted from this overall population.

SAMPLING PROCEDURE

The first sampling procedure considered for the study was purposive sampling since the researchers were only concerned with selected communities involved in communal land conflict resulting from land scarcity with attendant effect on food security.

Four wards involved in communal land conflicts resulting from land scarcity with negative effect on food security were purposively studied. These are: Utugwang North, Obudu Urban 1, Obudu Urban II, Begiading. The researchers were concerned with these wards to the exclusion of the others. These formed the 4 clusters of the study. In selecting the communities, the researchers purposively went for communities that were involved in communal land conflicts resulting from land scarcity and its attendant effect on food security. One community was selected from each cluster.

Therefore, four (4) communities participated in the study. For the respondents of the study, snowballing sampling procedure was adopted. Based on the fact that it was a qualitative study, the researchers selected between 10 respondents per community. It was 40 respondents in all.

INSTRUMENT FOR DATA COLLECTION

The instrument for data collection was focus group discussion guide (FGDG), the maximum number of respondents were ten (10). It composed of adult men and women. The FGD guide was made of three sections: A, B, and C each section had five items, with a total of 15 items. The communities where FGD were conducted were purposively selected based on their involvement in communal land conflicts resulting from land scarcity. These were Okorotung, Kikwomkwu, Kutiah, and Atiekpe. A total number of four FGDs were carried out in four (4) Communities.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSS OF FINDINGS

General Description of Data

TABLE 1: Distribution of Respondents' Socio-Demographic data

| VARIABLE | NO. OF RESPONDENTS | PERCENTAGE% |
|----------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| A. SEX | | |
| MALE | 30 | 75 |
| FEMALE | 10 | 25 |
| TOTAL | 40 | 100 |
| B. AGE | | |
| UNDER 20 YEARS | 5 | 12.5 |
| 20-30 | 12 | 30 |
| 31-40 | 15 | 37.5 |
| 41-50 | 6 | 15 |
| 50 AND ABOVE | 2 | 5 |
| TOTAL | 40 | 100 |
| C. EDUCATIONAL LEVEL | | |
| FORMAL EDUCATION | 8 | 20 |
| NO FORMAL EDUCATION | 32 | 80 |
| TOTAL | 40 | 100 |
| D. MARITAL STATUS | | |
| MARRIED | 25 | 62.5 |
| SINGLE | 6 | 15 |
| SEPERATED | 2 | 5 |
| DIVORCE | 4 | 10 |
| WIDOE | 3 | 7.5 |
| TOTAL | 40 | 100 |

Source: Fieldwork, 2015

Table 1 indicates the socio-demographic data of respondents. The table shows that males were 75 percent (N=30), while females were 25 percent (N=10). This implies that males participated in the study than females. Males were readily available in the study than females; this is based on the fact that land issues in Obudu are handled by men based on tradition and culture of the people. Respondents below 20 years were 12.5 percent (N=5), 20-30 were 30 percent (N=12), 31-40 were 37.5 percent (N=15), 41-50 were 15 percent (N=2). This shows that the highest number of respondents who participated in the study belonged to the age bracket 31-40 years. The table also shows that 20 percent (N=8) acquired formal education while 80 percent (N=32) did not acquire formal education. The implication therefore is that most of the community members are illiterate, that is, have not acquired formal education. For marital status, 62.5 percent (N=25) were married, 15 percent (N=6) were single, 5 percent (N=2) were separated, 10 percent (N=4) were divorce, while 7.5 percent (N=3) were widow. This implied that the greatest number of respondents were married men and women.

TEST OF HYPOTHESIS

Hypothesis one

Land scarcity leading to communal land conflict has no significant relationship with food security.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Land scarcity and communal land conflict: Implication for food security.

In the focus group discussion carried out, the discussant unanimously responded that:

Land is scarce for farming. That they don't have land to farm, that their land have been taken over by their neighbouring communities, and any attempt to take over back their land had led to series of communal land conflicts like the one that happen in December, 2009. Farms were destroyed which had devastating effects on food security.

The discussants stressed that: *land scarcity is a very serious problem they are facing in their communities. They maintained that even when they begged communities with large hectares of land to farm for sustenance, they refuse. Sometimes, people may farm in land sharing boundary with neighboring communities and may cross knowingly or unknowingly as a result of scarcity of land which end result is tension, leading to communal land conflict which will result to food society problem.*

Another set of discussants in another community stated:

As it is now, it is very difficult for us to cultivate large farm size. We don't have land any longer; our land has been taken over by our neighbor. Several attempts to get back our land had led to several communal land conflicts which farms were destroyed. The destruction of farms during communal land conflict has negative effect on food security and agricultural productivity.

The findings are in agreement with the research findings of Shaw-Taylor (2008) who found that land scarcity has significant negative relationship with communal land conflict which has consequent effect on agricultural productivity. Equally, the findings agree with Willem (2011) that it is a regular things for communities to fight over land, during planting seasons, there is bound to be continuous uprising among peasants, the use of force in the acquisition of farm lands, the tendencies for family members to fight and kill for land, and adjacent communities fighting for livelihood. He concluded that struggle for land due to scarcity affects agricultural production.

The findings are accentuated by Moyo (1999). He asserted that one of the most serious obstacles to increasing agricultural productivity is land scarcity. He posited that where there is land scarcity, livelihoods can be constrained and negative food security trends are exacerbated. He argued that struggles over land due to scarcity have been growing in Africa which had led to several communal land conflicts which had affected food security negatively in the region.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Land scarcity resulting to communal land conflict has assumed a worrisome dimension Nigeria. It escalates the level of food insecurity in the area prone to conflict due to scarcity of land. Communal land conflicts occasioned by land scarcity have made most Nigeria households not to afford the food they need to remain healthy. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Communities with large hectares of land should lease some parcels to other neighboring communities with limited land in other to boost food security and avert communal land conflict resulting from land scarcity.
2. Communities and families with large hectares of land should not be reluctant to allocate land to others with limited lands due to fear that they may make claims which may result to conflict. In other to avert claims, there should be agreement backed by witnesses and laws of the land by both parties involved, as this will avert communal conflict caused by land scarcity and boost food security in the area.
3. To curb communal land conflicts resulting from land scarcity, communities should engage themselves in dialogue with one another to develop mutual respect and co-operation that will lead to peaceful coexistence and boost food security because without peace, food security will be threaten with devastating effect on the people.

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