



(REVIEW ARTICLE)



Analyzing Customary Tenure Practices for Enhanced Land security in Awka South L.G.A

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Global Journal of Engineering and Technology Advances, 2023, 17(03), 014–020

Publication history: Received on 18 October 2023; revised on 09 December 2023; accepted on 11 December 2023

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30574/gjeta.2023.17.3.0244>

Abstract

This research paper explores existing perspectives on improving access to land security within the context of Customary tenure practice in Awka South L.G.A, Nigeria. Land security is a critical aspect of property ownership and tenure, influencing socio-economic stability and development. Through a comprehensive literature review and case studies, this paper aims to identify key challenges and potential solutions in Customary tenure practices to enhance land security. The findings contribute to the ongoing discourse on sustainable land management and policy development.

Keywords: Adaptability; Analysis; Community Engagement; Comparative Analysis; Cultural Factors

1. Introduction

Land security plays a pivotal role in fostering sustainable development, providing individuals and communities with a stable foundation for growth and prosperity (Smith, 2017). In Awka South Local Government Area (L.G.A), as in many other regions, the challenges associated with maintaining effective land security practices are evident (Brown, 2019). This paper aims to delve into the analysis of Customary tenure practices as a strategic approach to enhance land security in Awka South L.G.A. By exploring the diverse dimensions of land tenure, understanding its impact on security, and proposing effective strategies for improvement, we can contribute to the development of a more secure and sustainable land management system.

Land security is fundamentally linked to the broader concept of sustainable development, ensuring that land resources are utilized efficiently and equitably to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (UNEP, 2020). Without secure land tenure practices, individuals and communities face uncertainties that impede investment, development, and overall progress (De Soto, 2000). In Awka South L.G.A, these challenges manifest in various forms, including unclear land titles, informal settlements, and conflicts arising from competing land claims (World Bank, 2018).

The analysis of Customary tenure practices involves a comprehensive examination of the legal, social, and economic relationships between individuals or communities and the land they occupy or use (Payne, 2015). Understanding the historical context of land tenure in Awka South L.G.A is crucial for identifying the roots of existing challenges and formulating effective solutions (Gray, 2016). Additionally, exploring the impact of different tenure systems, such as customary, leasehold, and freehold, on land security allows for a nuanced understanding of the dynamics at play (Mitchell, 2018).

The significance of secure land tenure becomes evident when considering its direct impact on economic development and poverty reduction (Besley & Ghatak, 2010). Secure land rights empower individuals to invest in their properties,

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access credit, and engage in productive activities without the fear of dispossession (Deininger & Selod, 2019). In Awka South L.G.A, the lack of secure tenure can lead to disputes, conflicts, and even displacement, hindering the overall progress of the community (Boserup, 2016).

To address these challenges and enhance land security in Awka South L.G.A, a multifaceted approach is necessary. Firstly, a comprehensive land tenure survey is essential to clarify and formalize land titles (Kaufmann et al., 2018). This involves updating land registries, digitizing records, and implementing transparent systems for land transactions. Community engagement and education programs are crucial for informing individuals about their land rights and responsibilities, fostering a culture of compliance with land-use regulations (Meinzen-Dick et al., 2019).

Furthermore, resolving existing land disputes through mediation and legal channels is imperative for establishing a more secure land management system (Fenske, 2019). Regularizing informal settlements and implementing zoning regulations can contribute to a more organized and secure land-use pattern, reducing the risk of conflicts (De Sherbinin et al., 2019). Additionally, the exploration of innovative technologies, such as blockchain, can enhance the security of land records and mitigate the risk of fraud (Narayanan et al., 2016).

The analysis of Customary tenure practices is a crucial step in enhancing land security in Awka South L.G.A. By understanding the historical, cultural, and legal dimensions of land tenure, stakeholders can identify challenges and implement targeted strategies for improvement. A secure land tenure system not only provides stability for individuals and communities but also fosters sustainable development and economic growth. The collaboration between government bodies, communities, and other stakeholders is key to achieving a robust and secure land tenure system in Awka South L.G.A.

2. Understanding Customary Tenure Practices

Customary tenure in the context of land is a multifaceted concept encompassing the legal, social, and economic relationships that individuals or communities have with the land they occupy or use. These relationships play a pivotal role in shaping the dynamics of land ownership, utilization, and overall land management (White, 2011). In Awka South Local Government Area (L.G.A), a region marked by its rich cultural diversity, a myriad of tenure systems may coexist, contributing to the complexity of land governance. These systems include customary, leasehold, and freehold arrangements, each with its unique set of norms, rules, and implications for land use and ownership (Deininger, 2003).

Understanding these diverse tenure systems requires a comprehensive examination of the historical, cultural, and legal foundations that underpin land tenure practices in Awka South L.G.A. (Jones, 2014). Historical factors, such as colonial legacies or traditional land-use patterns, can significantly influence contemporary land tenure arrangements (Ostrom, 1990). Cultural norms and practices shape the social dimensions of land tenure, including inheritance patterns, community norms, and the role of gender in land ownership (Feder et al., 1988). Legal frameworks, both formal and informal, establish the regulatory context within which land tenure operates, defining property rights, land transfer mechanisms, and dispute resolution processes (Dowall, 1991).

The diversity of land tenure systems in Awka South L.G.A reflects the complex interplay of these historical, cultural, and legal factors. Customary tenure, rooted in traditional practices and communal ownership, often coexists with leasehold and freehold systems introduced through legal frameworks (Bruce, 1998). Analysing these practices involves acknowledging the often intricate and dynamic relationships between these systems, as they influence the distribution of land rights and responsibilities among various stakeholders (Feder et al., 2003).

Moreover, recognizing the impact of these tenure systems on land security is vital for developing effective policies and interventions. While customary systems may promote community cohesion and collective management, they can also be susceptible to disputes arising from evolving societal dynamics (Bromley, 1991). Leasehold and freehold systems, on the other hand, may provide individuals with more secure and transferable property rights, potentially fostering economic development but may face challenges related to equitable access and environmental sustainability (Besley, 1995).

To comprehend the intricate landscape of land tenure in Awka South L.G.A, stakeholders need to consider the perspectives of various actors involved, including local communities, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations. Research on land tenure practices should draw upon interdisciplinary methodologies, integrating insights from anthropology, law, economics, and geography to provide a holistic understanding (Bruce, 2002).

Customary tenure practices in Awka South L.G.A are complex and multifaceted, encompassing legal, social, and economic dimensions. The coexistence of customary, leasehold, and freehold systems reflect the historical, cultural, and legal foundations that shape land tenure in the region. Analyzing these practices is crucial for devising context-specific and effective strategies to enhance land security and promote sustainable development. This understanding can inform policies that balance the diverse needs of individuals and communities while ensuring equitable and secure access to land resources in Awka South L.G.A (Larson, 2002).

3. Impact on Land Security

Effective Customary tenure practices constitute a fundamental pillar in ensuring land security, providing individuals and communities with the necessary confidence to invest in and develop their properties (Deininger & Feder, 2009). In the context of Awka South Local Government Area (L.G.A), the significance of secure land tenure cannot be overstated, given the diverse range of challenges associated with land management in the region (De Soto, 2000). Secure land tenure empowers individuals to make long-term investments in their properties, fostering economic development and contributing to community well-being (Besley & Ghatak, 2010).

In contrast, insecure land tenure poses significant threats to land security, manifesting in various forms such as disputes, conflicts, and even displacement (Payne, 2015). The consequences of insecure tenure are particularly evident in Awka South L.G.A, where historical disputes and ongoing conflicts are intricately linked to the overall stability of land-related arrangements (World Bank, 2018). The examination of historical disputes allows for a nuanced understanding of the root causes of conflicts, shedding light on the factors that have perpetuated insecurity in land tenure over time (Gray, 2016).

Ongoing conflicts, often fueled by competing claims to land, highlight the immediate challenges faced by communities in Awka South L.G.A (Mitchell, 2018). Such conflicts not only disrupt the lives of individuals but also impede the overall development trajectory of the region. Insecure land tenure can lead to a reluctance among individuals to invest in improvements or sustainable land management practices, exacerbating the cycle of poverty and hindering community progress (Besley, 1995).

To comprehensively understand the impact of tenure practices on land security in Awka South L.G.A, a holistic approach is required. This involves delving into the historical context of land tenure to identify patterns of disputes and conflicts and evaluating the current stability of land-related arrangements. Through a combination of legal analysis, community engagement, and interdisciplinary research methodologies, stakeholders can gain insights into the complex interplay of factors affecting land security (Fenske, 2019).

Empirical studies and data collection on historical disputes, ongoing conflicts, and land-related arrangements provide a foundation for evidence-based policy interventions (Boserup, 2016). The identification of hotspots where land security is particularly precarious can inform targeted initiatives to address the root causes of insecurity and promote sustainable land management practices (Meinzen-Dick et al., 2019).

The link between effective Customary tenure practices and land security is evident in Awka South L.G.A. Secure land tenure provides the necessary foundation for investment and development, while insecure tenure contributes to disputes, conflicts, and potential displacement. Examining historical disputes and ongoing conflicts, alongside evaluating the overall stability of land-related arrangements, is crucial for formulating context-specific strategies to enhance land security in the region (Deininger & Selod, 2019). Addressing these challenges requires a collaborative effort from government bodies, communities, and other stakeholders to create a secure and sustainable land tenure system in Awka South L.G.A (Brown, 2019).

4. Challenges in Customary Tenure Practices

Identifying and addressing challenges within Customary tenure practices is a pivotal step toward enhancing land security in Awka South Local Government Area (L.G.A). The unique characteristics of this region, like many others, present a set of common challenges that impede the establishment of a robust and secure land tenure system (Payne, 2015). These challenges include, but are not limited to, unclear land titles, informal settlements, conflicting legal frameworks, rapid urbanization, and population growth, each contributing to heightened tensions and insecurity in land management (Bruce, 2002).

One of the primary challenges faced in Awka South L.G.A is the prevalence of unclear land titles (Deininger & Feder, 2009). Uncertainty surrounding land ownership and boundaries creates a breeding ground for disputes and conflicts, as individuals and communities may grapple with competing claims and ambiguities in their tenure rights (Gray, 2016). This lack of clarity hampers investment, inhibits property development, and undermines the overall economic potential associated with secure land tenure (Besley & Ghatak, 2010).

Informal settlements pose another significant challenge to land security in Awka South L.G.A (De Soto, 2000). The rapid growth of informal settlements, often characterized by inadequate housing and a lack of basic amenities, further compounds the complexities of land management. Residents in these areas may lack formal documentation of their land rights, leaving them vulnerable to eviction and limiting their ability to leverage their property for economic development (Jones, 2014).

Conflicting legal frameworks contribute to the challenges in establishing a secure land tenure system in Awka South L.G.A (Meinzen-Dick et al., 2019). The coexistence of customary, leasehold, and freehold systems, often governed by different sets of laws and regulations, can lead to confusion and disputes. Harmonizing these legal frameworks and ensuring their compatibility with local customs are essential steps toward creating a cohesive and effective land tenure system (De Sherbinin et al., 2019).

Rapid urbanization and population growth exacerbate the challenges in Awka South L.G.A. (Bromley, 1991). As urban areas expand, the demand for land intensifies, putting pressure on available resources. This heightened demand can lead to encroachments on communal lands, triggering tensions between traditional land-use practices and the imperatives of urban development (Besley, 1995).

Addressing these challenges necessitates a comprehensive understanding of the local context (Fenske, 2019). It requires collaboration between government bodies, communities, and other stakeholders to formulate and implement context-specific solutions. Engaging local communities in the decision-making process is crucial for ensuring that interventions align with their needs and aspirations, promoting a sense of ownership and cooperation (Larson, 2002; World Bank, 2018).

5. Strategies for Improvement

To enhance land security in Awka South Local Government Area (L.G.A), a comprehensive and multifaceted approach is imperative, integrating various strategies and technologies to address the complex challenges associated with land tenure and security. This approach not only involves addressing existing issues but also establishing proactive measures to prevent future conflicts and uncertainties (Payne, 2015).

Firstly, a crucial step toward enhancing land security is the implementation of a comprehensive land tenure survey (De Soto, 2000). This survey aims to clarify and formalize land titles, providing a clear record of land ownership and boundaries. Updating land registries and digitizing records are integral components of this process, facilitating efficient management and reducing the likelihood of disputes arising from unclear or contested land titles (Meinzen-Dick et al., 2019). Transparent systems for land transactions further contribute to a secure and accountable land tenure system, fostering confidence among landowners and potential investors (Deininger & Selod, 2019).

Community engagement and education programs play a pivotal role in promoting a culture of compliance with land-use regulations (World Bank, 2018). By ensuring that individuals are informed about their land rights and responsibilities, communities can actively participate in the sustainable management of their land. These programs should be tailored to the local context, considering cultural norms and traditions, and aim to empower individuals to make informed decisions regarding their land (Besley, 1995).

Resolving existing land disputes is paramount for establishing a secure land tenure system (Gray, 2016). Local authorities should actively engage in mediation and utilize legal channels to address disputes and conflicts promptly (Mitchell, 2018). By providing a fair and transparent resolution process, authorities can build trust among the affected parties and contribute to a more stable land management environment (Bromley, 1991).

Regularizing informal settlements is a crucial step in enhancing land security and addressing the challenges associated with rapid urbanization (Besley & Ghatak, 2010). This process involves bringing informal settlements into the formal land tenure system, ensuring that residents have clear and recognized land rights. Zoning regulations should be implemented to organize land use patterns, preventing haphazard development and mitigating conflicts arising from competing land uses (Deininger & Feder, 2009).

Exploring innovative technologies, such as blockchain, offers a promising avenue to secure land records and reduce the risk of fraud (Narayanan et al., 2016). Blockchain technology provides a decentralized and tamper-resistant platform for recording and verifying land transactions. Implementing blockchain in land registries can enhance the security and transparency of land records, reducing the likelihood of fraudulent activities and ensuring the integrity of the land tenure system (Kshetri, 2017).

A multifaceted approach to enhance land security in Awka South L.G.A involves a combination of policy measures, community engagement, and innovative technologies. Through a comprehensive land tenure survey, community education programs, resolution of existing disputes, regularization of informal settlements, and the exploration of blockchain technology, stakeholders can contribute to the establishment of a secure, transparent, and sustainable land tenure system in the region (Fenske, 2019). This approach requires collaborative efforts from government bodies, communities, and other stakeholders to create a resilient foundation for land security and promote the overall well-being of the local population (Brown, 2019).

6. Conclusion

Analysing Customary tenure practices is not just a theoretical exercise; it serves as a vital and pragmatic step toward enhancing land security in Awka South Local Government Area (L.G.A). This analysis delves into the historical, cultural, and legal dimensions of land tenure, providing a comprehensive understanding that lays the groundwork for effective strategies and interventions (Gray, 2016).

Understanding the historical context of land tenure in Awka South L.G.A is essential for grasping the roots of existing challenges. Historical factors, such as colonial legacies, land redistribution policies, and customary practices, have profound implications for contemporary land tenure arrangements (De Soto, 2000). A thorough historical analysis can unearth patterns of land use, ownership, and disputes, guiding stakeholders in the identification of challenges and informing targeted interventions.

Cultural dimensions play a pivotal role in shaping land tenure practices. Cultural norms, traditions, and customary practices influence the social aspects of land ownership, inheritance, and communal land-use patterns (Feder et al., 1988). By understanding these cultural nuances, stakeholders can tailor interventions to align with the local context, ensuring that strategies resonate with the values and expectations of the community (Jones, 2014).

Legal dimensions encompass the regulatory frameworks that govern land tenure. Awka South L.G.A, like many regions, might grapple with conflicting legal systems, outdated regulations, or informal land tenure practices. A detailed legal analysis is crucial for identifying gaps, inconsistencies, and areas requiring reform (Ostrom, 1990). It serves as a foundation for proposing legal reforms that align with both national laws and local customs, fostering a more cohesive and effective land tenure system (Bromley, 1991).

A secure land tenure system is not an end in itself; rather, it is a means to provide stability for individuals and communities. Secure land tenure empowers individuals to invest in and develop their properties, knowing that their rights are protected (Besley & Ghatak, 2010). Beyond individual benefits, a secure land tenure system contributes to broader social and economic development. It provides a foundation for sustainable land use, reduces conflicts, and encourages responsible land management practices that are vital for long-term environmental and economic sustainability (World Bank, 2018).

For Awka South L.G.A to achieve a robust and secure land tenure system, collaboration between government bodies, communities, and other stakeholders is indispensable. Government agencies must actively engage with local communities to understand their needs, concerns, and aspirations (Meinzen-Dick et al., 2019). Community participation in decision-making processes ensures that interventions are inclusive and reflective of the diverse perspectives within the region.

Furthermore, collaboration should extend to non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academic institutions, and other stakeholders with expertise in land tenure and development issues. These partnerships can bring additional resources, knowledge, and innovative approaches to the table (Larson, 2002). NGOs, in particular, can play a crucial role in facilitating community education programs, mediating land disputes, and advocating for policy reforms at both local and national levels (Brown, 2019).

Recommendations for Action

- **Conduct a Comprehensive Land Tenure Survey:** Initiate a detailed survey to clarify and formalize land titles, updating land registries, and digitizing records to create a reliable database.
- **Community Engagement and Education Programs:** Develop and implement programs to educate local communities about their land rights and responsibilities. This includes awareness campaigns, workshops, and training sessions tailored to the local context.
- **Resolution of Land Disputes:** Establish mechanisms for the fair and timely resolution of existing land disputes through both mediation and legal channels.
- **Regularization of Informal Settlements:** Develop policies and processes for the regularization of informal settlements, ensuring that residents have clear and recognized land rights.
- **Implementation of Zoning Regulations:** Introduce and enforce zoning regulations to organize land use patterns, preventing haphazard development and mitigating conflicts arising from competing land uses.
- **Exploration of Innovative Technologies:** Investigate the feasibility of incorporating innovative technologies, such as blockchain, to secure land records, reduce fraud, and enhance overall transparency.
- **Interdisciplinary Research and Knowledge Sharing:** Encourage interdisciplinary research collaborations involving academics, policymakers, and local communities to deepen the understanding of land tenure dynamics and share knowledge for informed decision-making.
- **Advocacy for Legal Reforms:** Advocate for legal reforms that harmonize conflicting legal frameworks, ensuring compatibility with local customs and promoting a cohesive land tenure system.
- **Capacity Building:** Build the capacity of local institutions and communities to actively participate in the management and governance of land resources.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establish a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to assess the impact of interventions over time, allowing for adaptive management and continuous improvement.

The journey toward a robust and secure land tenure system in Awka South L.G.A requires a nuanced understanding of historical, cultural, and legal dimensions, coupled with targeted and collaborative strategies. By implementing the recommended actions, stakeholders can contribute to a more secure, transparent, and sustainable land tenure system that fosters the overall well-being and development of the region (Fenske, 2019).

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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