

Land Service Delivery and Its Challenges in Nigeria: Case study of eight states

This paper assesses the nature of land administrative service delivery in Nigeria using data of three clusters: 76 service providers, 253 beneficiary and 172 professionals. The data was collected from 8 states randomly selected from eight geopolitical zones of the country, namely: Cross River State, Benue State, Kaduna State, Bauchi State, Enugu State, Lagos State, Abuja FCT and Ekiti State. Roughly, each of the three clusters is proportionally distributed across the 8 states.

Findings show that nearly all male (98.54%) and female (97.87) beneficiaries have owned land of different forms, which might signify that gender disparity in possessing land property is somehow narrow. In terms of means of acquisition, one-third and one-fourth of the beneficiaries acquired their lands by outright purchase and from inheritance, respectively. Only few (less than 10%) acquired their lands through leasehold & customary and gift & statutory. This indicates that outright purchase is a dominant means of land acquisition in Nigeria.

With significant difference between beneficiaries and professionals, land registration information guidelines seem to be rarely available to public. For instance, only half of the beneficiaries have ever seen land registration information guideline, with a considerable difference among states. That is, land administration and registration process are highly concentrated at higher tiers of the government, mainly at state level of the country. This can also be ascertained by the fact that on average about 78.26 % of both the beneficiaries and professionals have responded that property registration is carried out at state level, which ascertain that land administration is largely state dominated activity, with very limited participation of lower tiers of authorities such as at LGA.

In terms of time efficiency, it is found that land registration takes very a long time, where nearly 80% of the beneficiaries and 41.3% of the professionals responded that an application for land registration took more than 2 years. The difference between beneficiaries and professionals is however statistically significant in that professionals have experienced relatively short period of land registration comparing to their beneficiary counter parts. The short period in the case of professionals may come from the fact many of the professional are better educated (where 41.9% of them are with post-graduate studies) and might be as the result well aware of the process of application as compared to the beneficiaries (where nearly half of them are with less than university degree).

The dominant means of access to land administration institutions is a direct contact (90.6%), with 88.3% for beneficiaries and 93.9% for professionals. On-line means of communication

appears to be very limited, even for the professional where only 5.5% of them used this means to contact land administration institutions. Communication via Service Providers (Lawyers, Agents, or Person) is also very limited in scope in that only small proportion beneficiaries used this means of communication. In terms of accountability although about 80.9% of the respondents have said that they received official receipt for service charge in their registration processes, there seems a widespread of corruption and unofficial fee payments in the land registration process, where on average about 40% of both beneficiaries and professionals paid unofficial fees for the services they got in the land registration process. It also appears to be the case that only 30% of the beneficiaries and professionals responded that they are satisfied with the service of land registration process. This could be due to the considerably high unofficial fee payment and delayed registration processes. What makes things worse is that majority of the respondents also don't even know and are not aware of any mechanism for public feedback to express their anger and their level of satisfaction. The involvement of land agency in dispute resolution activities also appeared to be very low, where only 27.5% of both beneficiaries and professionals said that they got dispute resolution services from land agencies, with a statistically significant difference between the two groups, however. This gap might arise from the fact that the professionals could have better access to land administration institutions and they may have better negotiation power over their rights than the general public beneficiaries. About one-fourth of the respondents also claimed that they had a case that requires compensation, but have not yet got a response from land authorities. About 75% and 25% of the beneficiaries also respectively pointed out for the land administration guidelines to be improved in language and layout. All in all, the key findings from the demand side respondents show that the land administrative system in Nigeria is somehow weak, where 60.33% of the professionals specifically do think that the dispute resolution services or system is ineffective to deal with land issue.

On the flip side, we also tried to examine the nature of land service delivery from the perspective of land Service providers (agencies) such as Deed Registry, GIS office, Office of the Surveyor General and Lands Department. It appears to be the case that majority of the offices are centralized at state level, with a few exceptions at LGA offices to serve the interest of the rural areas. This is in line with the response we got from the demand side respondents, where land administration activities are highly concentrated at state level, with little decentralization to LGA. Many of the agencies also follow different procedures for land registration, which could be one of contributing factors for the delayed land registration process across the states. In fact, it is apparent to observe that about 87.84% of the agencies introduced land reform program in the past 10 years, mainly related to GIS (44%), SLTR (28%) and one-stop shop (20%), but it has not been clear yet as to how those newly introduced reforms have benefited the general land users.

Co-ordination and/or governance structures put in place by states in relation to land administration reforms also seem to be poor, especially in States like Bauchi and Enugu in which very level of cooperation in issues related to land administration reforms is observed. In spite of the low level of co-ordination, Service providers are engaged in some sort of efforts to improve communications between tax authorities. This is especially the case for States like Lagos State, Abuja FCT, Ekiti State, Benue state and Bauchi, although agencies located in Kaduna State and Cross River State don't have any clear information as to what is happening regarding communication with tax authorities. This implies there is a considerable information gap in the land administration reforms among the regional states, where significant number of agencies "don't know" whether there are any kind of efforts being undertaken to improve communications between different stakeholders such as Technical Committees, Joint Task Force on Stamp duty and Joint Board of Internal Revenue. It is also evident to see that the participation of donor agencies in the process of land administration reform is quite different by state. While there is fairly high level of donor agencies involvement in Ekiti State, Kaduna State, Benue State, Lagos and Abuja FCT, this is very low in Bauchi State and Cross River state.

Regarding guidelines availability, about 80% of the land agencies responded that guidelines are available in English language, while nearly 20% of them don't have any. More specifically, while almost all agencies located in Lagos State and Abuja FCT have guidelines in the English language, those located in Bauchi State and Enugu States have the guidelines in local languages such as Hausa and Igbo, respectively. The gap in response between the demand side respondent (beneficiaries and professionals) and the supply side respondents (Service providers) might indicate that there is considerable information asymmetric in the Nigerian land market.