

# **LAND REFORMS IN NIGERIA: ISSUES, PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Land Reform generally involves the changing of laws, regulations or customs regarding land ownership. It may consist of government initiated or government backed approach to property redistribution of land as in the case of Nigeria, an outright transfer of ownership of land from the citizens to the state. The common characteristic of land reforms is usually the modification or the replacement of existing institutional arrangements governing possession, use and title. Thus, while land reform may be radical in nature such as large scale confiscation and transfers of land from one group to another or from one group to the state, it can also be less drastic and conciliatory in nature such as less painful transfers of land to the state and regulatory reforms aimed at improving land administration (Dale, 2007).

Land is perhaps the single most important natural resource in the sense that it affects every aspect of a people's live; their food, clothing, and shelter. It is the base for producing raw material for the manufacturing industry. It is an important resource. No nation-city or rural area can survive as an entity without it. Thus, every person in a nation – the banker, the industrialist, the labourer, the educator, the student, the planner, the farmer- has a vital stake in the country's land problems and its proper utilization (Acquaye, 1976).

The Land Reform committee in Nigeria is aimed towards enabling the states to be effective managers of land. It is aimed to provide a systematic cadastral survey of land in the entire federation (a political entity called Nigeria). The Term of

Reference makes it an essential body to assist both states and local government to carry out the cadastre survey and codify the possessory rights of vast majority of the people access to land and landowners. The Term of Reference necessitate the body to collaborate and provide technical assistance to state and local government in undertaking cadastral survey and to ensure the demarcation of land boundaries and title holdings are demarcated in such a way that communities, hamlets, villages, towns etc are recognized. It was also saddled with the responsibility of encouraging and assisting states and local government to establish adjudication mechanism for land ownership conflict resolution and to make recommendation for mechanism for valuation in both rural and urban areas.

Security of tenure and land rights of citizens is an important foundation for economic development. For many of these, land titles are the main sources of collateralization for obtaining credit from informal and established financial institutions. Consequently, securing land rights and land titles is particularly relevant for all socio-economic classes in the nation's economy but especially to the farmers whose pervasive poverty to date derives from not having definitive property rights appropriate to a market economy. Furthermore, fees and taxes on such landed properties are very important sources of revenue for governments particularly at the State and Local Government levels. A national programme that thus sets out to enhance and secure the property rights of all groups in the society can only end up creating a economic empowerment. Funding Land Reform programme should therefore be a national effort to be borne by all three tiers of government in proportion to their capabilities (Mabogunje, 2007).

For a country striving to be one of the twenty largest economies in the world by the year 2020, the situation with respect to land rights and transactions in land still leaves very much to be desired. The World Bank publication on "Doing Business

in Nigeria 2010” rated Nigeria 178th out of 183 economies in respect of difficulties of registering properties in the country.

Mabogunje (2007) attributed this to the following reason “a large share of land in the country is not formally registered [whilst] informal titles cannot be used as security in obtaining loans which limits financing opportunities for businesses” especially small and medium-size enterprises. If Nigeria is to meet the challenges of competing effectively in an increasingly globalizing world, it is thus imperative that it gives very urgent and sustained attention to promoting its land reform program in all of its ramifications to facilitate property development.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Land Titling and Registration is essential for economic development of a Nation. The Nigerian nation had had a multiplicity of land tenure system until the 1978 Land Use Act which harmonized all the systems.

The land use pattern in Nigeria estimated arable land to be about 33% of the total land area, permanent pastures cover 44%, permanent crops cover 3%, forest and woodlands 12%, and others 8%. Thus land is still the main asset of the rural Nigerians where over 80% are peasant farmers; however this asset has not been fully utilized for economic empowerment because they do not have proper records and titles that can be used as collateral to raise capital. It is in an attempt to economically empower the vast majority of Nigerians, who are rural dwellers, by turning their land holdings to economic capital, that the current Federal Government of Nigeria initiated the Land Reform Agenda. However, the researcher is providing an overview of land reforms in Nigeria considering the issues and prospects.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The following are the objectives of this study:

1. To provide an overview on the issues of land reforms in Nigeria.
2. To examine the problems of land reforms in Nigeria.
3. To analyze the solution to the problems of land reform in Nigeria.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What are the issues of land reforms in Nigeria?
2. What are the problems of land reforms in Nigeria?
3. What are the solutions to the problems of land reform in Nigeria?

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The following are the significance of this study:

1. Outcome of this study will educate the general public and students on the issues, problems and solutions of land reforms in Nigeria with a view of identifying the inadequacies.
2. This research will also serve as a resource base to other scholars and researchers interested in carrying out further research in this field subsequently, if applied, it will go to an extent to provide new explanation to the topic.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study on land reforms in Nigeria covers all the issues and problems of land reform in Nigeria through the in-depth analysis of reforms in Ogun State as a case study. It will cover the activities of the regulatory framework and the accessibility of land to Nigerians for use.

Considering the need to drill down on this research, we have examined several states but with a focus on Ogun State for the purpose of this conference.

## **DEFINITION OF TERMS**

Reforms: make changes in (something, especially an institution or practice) in order to improve it.

Land: the part of the earth's surface that is not covered by water.

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**Keywords**

Land reforms, systematic land title registration, certificate of occupancy, tenure security, land-related investment, Ogun, Nigeria