



Effects of Communal Conflicts on Agricultural Extension Services Delivery in Imo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study assessed effects of communal conflicts on agricultural extension services delivery in Imo State. The specific objectives were : to identify types and causes of conflicts in Imo State, identify extension services rendered by the agents, examine effects of conflicts on extension services delivery, and to ascertain roles extension agents can play in reducing conflicts. A total of one hundred and thirty (130) extension personnel made up the sample size. Data were collected with structured questionnaire and were analyzed using simple descriptive statistics such as percentages presented in frequency tables and mean scores. The results revealed two major forms of conflict as farmer/pastoralist conflicts (75.4%) and politico-religious conflicts with (64.6%) response. Boundary dispute ($X=3.38$), encroachment on farmland ($X=3.42$) and scarcity of land ($X=3.51$) are major causes of violent conflict in the study area as revealed by high mean responses. Extension render services such as farmer education ($X=3.48$), organizing demonstration ($X=3.53$), linking farmers to credit points ($X=3.56$) and teaching farmers different methods and techniques of farming ($X=3.51$). The effects of conflicts on extension services delivery are many as shown by the following mean responses, hindering project implementation($X=3.73$), difficulty in programme execution $X=(3.42)$, and work abandonment ($X=3.53$). To help manage conflicts in agricultural areas, agents should be honest peace brokers(3.40) and enlighten farmers through seminars and workshops. Since access to land is the major cause of resource use conflicts, land tenure reform and land policy formulation be pursued by the government.

Key words : Conflicts, agriculture, extension, farmers, land.

Introduction

For a developing country to achieve sustainable development, a significant proportion of its development policies must be dedicated to the development of rural areas which often is anchored on agricultural development (Nji, 1981; 1995). Agriculture is the single largest contributor to the well-being of the rural poor in Nigeria, sustaining 90% and 70% of the rural and total labour force respectively. This is distributed between crop farming and livestock rearing, which has led to serious competition for farms and grazing lands between farmers and gazers over control and ownership of land. Land as a main factor of production is rapidly ditching in fertility while population is increasing at an annual rate of 2.5% in the face of decaling agricultural production (Nji, 1981; 1995).

Over the years in many parts of the world, conflict have been the major issues destroying the economics of the people and many factors contribute to conflicts in Africa in particular that have little or no link to environment, natural resources and rural development. These include political, religious, ethnic, economics, land tenure system and historical fends. In addition, where environment and natural resources management issues are important, they are generally contributing factor only not the sole cause for tension (Otsuka, 2006). Local clashes over range land and rain fed agricultural land have occurred in many parts of Africa. In the absence of demographic and environmental change, such conflicts have generally been considered a social, political or economic issue. However, environmental issues like desertification, land degradation and climate change are becoming major factors in these conflicts. The environmentally significant factors that contribute to conflict related to range land and rain fed agricultural land include:

- Supply (available resources)
- Demand (demand for resources).
- Land use (changes in the way land resources are shared).
- Institutional and development factors .

Land related conflicts are increasingly becoming a threat to rural economic activities such as agriculture in most sub-Saharan African Countries (Yamano and Deininger, 2005, Deininger and Castagini, 2006). The prevalence of these conflicts is escalating at a time when crop yields are stagnant or even declining for some countries in the region (Otsuka, 2006). It is therefore apparent that as governments grapple to enhance technology adoption and revamp the agriculture sectors performance to met the high and increasing demand for food, land tenure security becomes crucial in attaining this goal. However, Institutions governing Land, including the protection of property rights, conflict resolution mechanisms and enforcement of contracts are still weak in most African countries to curb the conflict threat (Fred-Mensah, 1999). Coupled with population pressure and hence, land scarcity, land conflicts have raised concerns over likely food insecurity and high poverty incidence in the affected areas (Andre and Plateau, 1998; Deininger and Castagnini, 2006). Also land conflicts affected portfolio choice of crops (fewer cash crops) and social capital. In addition, small scale land conflicts have a potential to turn into widespread civil wars, thereby threatening national security (Renner, 1997, Andre and Plateau, 1998).

In sub-Saharan Africa pervasive legal insecurity over land. Many studies have thus linked land conflicts to weak or no-existent formal land Institutions, and the failure of current customary land tenure systems to resolve conflicts (Fred-Mensah, 1999). Land is fundamental and represents a core value in African society. African people are emotionally

attached to “their” land, which represent an important source of their identity and is typically seen in a holistic perspective. As observed in many African countries, original inhabitants oppose the transfer of traditionally owned family and community land to “strangers” by committing acts of sabotage, looting, burning and thief of property and crops of new landholders (Fred-Mensha, 1999). To the extent the alienation of Land to ‘strangers’ violates social norms, resentment and tensions are aroused in case of immigration, which can translate into open violence and land conflicts. Across-community migrations, on the other hand, involve mixing of tribes with their specific values and internal land arrangements. This leads to breakdown of pre-existing informal institutions, which in the absence of formal institutions, lead to conflicts in host communities. Indeed, Fred-Mensha (1999) argues that host communities have been plagued by what he terms “Ubiquitous conflicts” in the form of land evictions.

Over years, increased attention has been given to agricultural development in Nigeria. For Instance the operation feed the nation (OFN) Green Revolution (GR) and Agricultural Development program (ADP) etc reflects this attention. The concern is purely justified because for a developing country like Nigeria, agriculture and extension service remain a requisite foundation for social and economic progress as well as rural transformation.

Agricultural extension is a science of social change with the basic purpose of increasing farmer’s productivity through efficient production. Hence it emphasizes among other things like the use of fertilizer, improved seeds and chemicals. Agricultural extension services help assist farm people through educational procedures, improving farming methods and technique increasing production, efficiency and income bettering their levels of living and lifting the social and educational standard of living of rural life. Agricultural extension services is a non formal system of education rendered to rural or urban farmers to effect change in their behavior hence improve their old styles of farming procedures and methods. The meaning of agricultural extension can be viewed from the aim which it strives to accomplish. The aim is to teach rural farmers how to determine the problems and be able to rise above such problems using their own resources.

Land is a vital natural resource that hosts and sustains living things namely, plants, animals and man. It is a fixed socio-economic asset that aids production of goods and services and hosts virtually all activities that take place on earth (Magel, 2001). The nature of land and types of its component dictate what must exist on it. Hence savannah land hosts grass while tropical land is characterized with hardwood forest among others. To an extent, land influences climate and dictates lifestyles of settlers on it cut across the globe. Land host houses and towns where origin of a man is traced. This is because all communities are located on land and their territories are defined by it. In another dimension, the sovereignty of a kingdom is a function of the area of land it occupies. This is an indication that territorial defense is with the purpose of securing or retaining certain piece of land.

The above mentioned arguments reveal that land is central to continuity of life, indispensable in physical development and complex in social relations of production in the economic world. In other words, to every land, there is the socio-cultural dimension to it. As a result, conflict over land is often combined with strong economic, spatial, cultural and emotional values. The land use Act also merges the merit in the customary land tenure law and the English legal system to be able to face off the shortcoming and the uncertainty in the customary law. It was also realized that because of population growth, the economics growth and advancement in technology, the traditional rulers and the customary trustees of land were unable to protect and control the use of land under their care property. This calls for a new direction in the use and administration of land in Nigeria.

Despite all these, right to land and properties in southwestern part of the country is grossly affected by the old customary tenure of land and property holdings. The practice of dividing land among families, allocating land in fragments and customary tenancy coupled with lack of respect tot eh land use Acts in southwestern Nigeria have made land to be adequate for the people. There seems not to be a given land without title. Conflicts over farm land, reserved zone and inter-community boundaries are common but unexpected, since the promulgation of the land use Act.

Considering the effect of conflict on the people and their farm, it becomes clear that once the farmers are displaced and their land abandoned, the extension operation suffers a great deal as there are virtually nothing left for the extension agent to work on. The extension agents are often at cross road between their job and loyalty to the communities, villages, kindred and individuals who are in conflict where the agents operate. It is not clear what are the effects of communal crises on the activities of extension agent in Imo State Therefore; there is a gap in knowledge. It is against this background that this study tends to investigate empirically the situation in Imo State with regards to the effect of communal conflict on extension agent performance.

The broad objective of the study was to determine the effect of communal conflict on extension agents operations in Imo State. The specific objectives of the study includes to:

1. identify the forms and causes of communal conflicts in the study area,
2. ascertain extension services rendered by respondents,
3. describe effect of communal conflicts on extension services delivery in the study area,
4. examine perceived extension roles in reducing communal conflicts in the study area

Methodology

The study was carried out in Imo State of Nigeria. Imo State is located in the Southeastern zone of Nigeria and lies between latitude $4^{\circ}45'N$ and $7^{\circ}15'N$ and longitude $6^{\circ}50'E$ with land area of 5,530 km². The population of the study consists of all extension technical Officers, extension supervisors and extension field agents of Imo Sate ADP. Stratified random sampling technique (a sampling technique used when the sample does not constitute a homogenous group) was used in selecting the extension respondents for the study. The first strata composed of 18 Technical Officers (ZEOs & SMSS), drawn from the three agricultural zones (see table). The second group comprised 39 Block Extension supervisors (BES), while the third strata comprised of 113 Extension Agents (EAs) as shown in table 1. Due to the small number of the ZESs/SMSs and BESs, all 18 and 39 were sampled, while 73 EAs were randomly selected from 113 EAs, making a total of 130 extension officers. Data collected with questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics. This includes use of percentages presented in frequency distribution table to achieve objective 1. While the remaining objectives were achieved on a four point likert-type scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly

disagree on a four point weighting scale of 4,3,2 and 1. The weighted index were added to give 10 divided by 4 to give 2.50. Any value less than 2.50 was not accepted while values of 2.5 and above was taken as positive.

Table 1: Distribution of Imo ADP Extension Personnel

Category	Owerri	Orlu	Okigwe
ZEOs/SMSs	9	4	5
BESs	20	8	11
EAs	56	25	32
Sum	84	37	48
Total			170

Source: Imo ADP, 2014

Results and Discussions

Types of Conflict

Table 2 shows the various types of conflicts in the study area. There are conflicts between individual families (15.4%), 20% on conflicts between farmers, 22.31% on conflicts between groups, 56.9% on conflicts between communities, political/religious conflicts (64.6%) and 75.4% on conflicts between farmers and nomads. From the results on the table, the most common form of conflict is resource use control that is conflict between farmers and nomads. What this means is that land is a conflict-ridden resource, and, due to its many meanings a sensitive issue in Africa. Disputes and conflicts about land occur at all levels: Conflicts between neighbours about field boundaries; between men, women, and generations about their respective land rights; between pastoralists and farmers; between states and indigenous peoples; between companies and local populations about rights to exploit mineral and other resources. The question about rights to land and territories has also been the source of civil wars as well as wars between nations. In Nigeria, the necessity to provide food and raw materials for industry and export in order to meet ever-growing demands has led to both “intensification and extensification” of land-use (Nyong & Fiki, 2005). Arable crop and cattle producers have not only intensified the use of their respective lands, they have also been exploring other land frontiers for farming and grazing. Farm lands that are normally allowed to fallow for natural rejuvenation of the soil are fast disappearing, while lands that traditionally provide dry season grazing to pastoralists are becoming shorter in supply (Gefu & Kolawole, 2002). This has heightened the frequency and intensity of competition among various land users. The Fulani herdsmen of lower Sahel and Sudan Savannah are now being found in the south (including the forest belt) in search of greener pasture for their herds (Oyesola, 2000; Ajuwon, 2004). Indeed, Ajuwon (2004) reported farmer-herdsmen conflict in Imo State, south east of Nigeria. Competition-driven conflicts between arable crop farmers and cattle herdsmen have become common occurrences in many parts of Nigeria (Ingawa, Ega, & Erhabor, 1999). The competition between these two agricultural land user-groups has often times turned into serious overt and covert hostilities and social friction in many parts of Nigeria. In a newspaper study of crises in Nigeria between 1991 and February 2005, Fasona and Omojola (2005) found that land-related conflicts accounted for about 51% of the major clashes reported by the selected newspapers. Specifically, conflicts involving agricultural land use between farmers and herdsmen accounted for 35% of all reported crises. Politico-religious and ethnic clashes occurred at lower frequencies. Another study of 27 communities in North Central Nigeria showed that over 40% of the households surveyed had experienced agricultural land related conflicts, with respondents recalling conflicts that were as far back as 1965 and as recent as 2005 (Nyong & Fiki, 2005). De Haan (2002) observed that no less than 20 villages were involved in farmer-herdsmen conflicts annually in the states covered by his study. Negedu (2005), while studying the constraints to cassava production in Kwara State found that over 90% of the farmers interviewed indicated that their greatest production problem is the destruction of their farms by cattle. On their own part, herdsmen have also identified conflicts arising from land use as the “most important” problem they face in their occupation (van’t Hooft, Millar, & Django, 2005).

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to conflict types

Conflict forms	*Frequency	Percentage (%)
Conflicts between Individual & families	20	15.4
Conflicts between farmers	26	20
Conflicts between groups	29	22.3
Conflicts between communities	74	56.9
Conflicts between farmers and nomads	98	75.4
Political/religious conflicts	84	64.6

*Multiple responses

Perceived Causes of Conflicts in Study Area

In the study area, the causes of conflicts are legion especially in the area of resource use conflicts. Table 3 shows high mean(x) score on the factors causing conflict such as boundary dispute(mean=3.38), mean value of 3.27 on lack of respect for customs, mean=3.58 on contested ownership, mean=3.42 on encroachment into farm land, mean=3.45 on non compliance with rules, mean=3.46 struggle for power, mean=3.39 on population pressure, mean=3.51 on scarcity of land and mean=3.45 on urbanization. The above shows that Yamano and Deininger, (2005) are right when they did a related work in Kenya. They opined that about half of the land conflicts are over boundaries that occur mainly with neighbors or relatives who live close by. The second most common reason for conflicts is over inheritance, which exclusively occurs among relatives. In the past five years, it appears that there are more conflicts related to land sales. As the value of land increases due to population pressure, agricultural commercialization, and urbanization, it is expected that the land sales

market will develop over time. However, if property rights are not clearly defined, there could be more cases of land conflicts related to land sales.

Table 3: Respondents perception on the causes of conflicts

Causes	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean(x)
Boundary dispute	85	20	15	10	3.38
Lack of respect for customs	72	30	20	8	3.27
Contested ownership	90	28	10	2	3.58
Encroachment into farm land	75	40	10	5	3.42
Non-compliance with rule	80	35	9	6	3.45
Struggle for power	82	38	6	4	3.46
Population pressure	74	39	11	6	3.39
Scarcity of land	80	40	7	3	3.51
Urbanization	75	45	7	3	3.45

The Extension Services Provided by Personnel

Table 4 shows that services rendered by the extension officers are many and varied. Results revealed the following services; education of the farmers(mean=3.48), training of farmers on new practices (mean=3.47), organizing demonstrations(mean=3.55), linking farmers to credit point(mean=3.56), linking farmers to input agencies(mean=3.54), keeping records of farm visit(mean=3.49), dissemination of information to farmers(mean=3.46), creating awareness on possible new techniques (mean=3.48), teaching farmers to improve productivity (mean=3.51), teaching farmers to improve quality of living (mean=3.51) and mean=3.55 on formation and organization of farmers groups.

Table 4: Respondents perception of extension services.

Extension Services	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean(X)
Education of farmer	74	48	5	3	3.48
Training on new practices	82	33	9	6	3.47
Organizing demonstrations	77	49	3	1	3.55
Linking farmers to credit point	83	40	4	3	3.56
Linking farmers to input agencies	76	50	2	2	3.54
Keeping records of farm visit	81	46	2	1	3.49
Dissemination of information to farmers	73	48	5	4	3.46
Creating awareness on possible new techniques	75	45	7	3	3.48
Teach farmers to improve productivity	72	48	6	4	3.45
Teach farmers to improve quality of living	83	35	7	5	3.51
Formation and organization of farmers groups	85	36	5	4	3.55

The Effects of Conflicts on Extension Services Delivery

Table 5 shows that conflicts affect extension services delivery. The first of these effects is difficulty in monitoring farmer's progress with (mean=3.35), difficulty in program evaluation (mean=3.42), disruption of agents extension work (mean=3.18), extension agent abandon work (mean=3.53), conflicts brings dissatisfaction among staff (3.47), mean =3.73 on hinders projects implementation, mean of 3.38 on reduce turnover of extension work, mean=3.38 on leads to boredom, mean=3.05 on lead to retrenchment of staff, mean = 3.52 on affect the general extension agents and farmers relationship, mean=3.32 on delays extension agents and farmers relationship, mean=3.45 on delays execution of rural development programs, mean= 3.45 on delays completion of extension work and 3.53 on hinders co-operative activities. This is in line with Robertson and Olson (2012), who states that agricultural extension whether in fragile or secure societies, can be defined as the provision of knowledge to agricultural producers so that they will make a positive change. Channels need to be available for the transmission of knowledge both from agents to agricultural producers and from producers.

Table 5: Effects of Conflicts Extension Services Delivery

Effects of conflict	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean (x)
Difficulty in monitory farmer's progress.	61	58	7	4	3.35
Difficulty in program evaluation.	70	50	4	6	3.42
Disruption of agents extension work.	68	34	12	16	3.18
Extension agents abandon work.	80	43	3	4	3.53
Brings dissatisfaction among staff.	73	48	6	3	3.47
Hinders projects implementation.	76	57	3	4	3.73
Reduces turnover of extension work.	75	40	4	11	3.38
Lead to boredom.	73	41	9	7	3.38
Reduce extension agents work	81	36		5	3.05
Affects general extension agents and farmers relationship.	78	43	7	2	3.52
Delays execution of rural development Programs.	71	39	11	9	3.32
Delays completion of extension work.	82	30	12	6	3.45
Hinders co-operative activities.	79	42	81	1	3.53

The Extension Roles in Reducing Communal Conflicts

Table 6 shows the various roles of extension in conflict reduction. The following roles of extension are; act as honest brokers between groups (mean=3.40), providing information that can reduce conflict (mean=2.67), organizing training/seminars for peace building purposes (mean=3.47), mean=3.48 on being transparent and accountable, mean=3.39 on linking farmers to government official for peace building and mean=3.52 act as facilitator to dialogue while mean=3.47 are on providing early warning on possible conflict issues. This is in line Robertson and Olson (2012), which says that the broad role of extension agents, who act more as facilitators than as problem solvers are to help agricultural producers gain access to knowledge, resources and services that will increase their productivity and well-being. They can help build both social and agricultural capital in post conflict settings and can help government agencies or non governmental organizations (NGOs) identify community needs for either development or security. Extension agents may help manage conflict in rural communities in many ways. They can organizer producer associations or advise managers of shared resources to be inclusive and transparent in order to avoid exacerbating conflict. By reducing conflict-related disruptions, they can enhance agricultural productivity and thus alleviate the material need that can drive conflict. Finally, their active presence in rural communities may enhance government credibility and encourage hope for a better future.

The role of extension agents in both agriculture and peace building, vary greatly, depending on the circumstances. In peace building, the local causes of conflict define the issues an extension agent may confront in the same way that local agricultural issues determine the most useful forms of extension services. Conflict issues in which agents may have a role include land disputes, disputes between herders and pastoralists, and reintegration of former combatants and displaced people in communities, Training in conflict analysis was identified as necessity for peace building work. Extension agents already have a full slate of responsibilities, and adding peace building activities could easily be overwhelming. A role in peace building therefore needs to be integrative and not additive. However, agents should already be engaging in activities that both directly and indirectly can serve peace building purposes. They should act as brokers of information and access to information among groups and between groups and government. (Unfortunately, however, extension agents often lack the skills and resources to function as brokers). They provide services that both increase agricultural productivity and enhance the economic security of agricultural producers and can serve as peace builders through these and other extension.

Table 6; The Roles of Extension in Conflict Management

Extension roles	Strongly agree	Agreed	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean (x)
Act as honest brokers between groups	68	51	6	5	3.40
Provide information that reduce conflicts.	70	50	7	3	2.67
Organizing training seminars for peace building purposes	76	43	7	4	3.47
Being transparent and accountable.	72	50	6	2	3.48
Linking farmers to government official for peace building	71	45	8	6	3.39
Act as facilitator to dialogue	75	48	6	1	3.52
Provide early warning on possible conflict Issues	84	30	9	7	3.47

Conclusion

Extension remains the only way through which agriculture could be beneficial to the rural poor. Its education and teaching nature helps improve the farmers. Conflicts hinder the smooth operation of extension personnel who transfers the knowledge. The agents are hindered by conflicts of various magnitude which makes it difficult to carry out extension services. Ending these conflicts will mean ensuring food security.

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