

A Case Study of Six Land Conflicts in Bayelsa State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study started by giving an account of a brief history of land situations in the country Nigeria and subsequently land conflicts in Bayelsa State. Information on land matters was sought across the State and analyzed. Bayelsa State is a new state in the country and is undergoing serious land troubles which need not to be ignored. Various land troubles existed across the State for which some have been settled but not amicably resolved. There is no local government which has not one time or the other encountered land problems. The activities of land conflicts are more concentrated in the State Capital while the riverine areas are having such impacts on a lesser occurrence, more troublesome manner and of more magnitude in a communal way. The study was concluded by making recommendations on various findings.

Keywords: land conflicts, Bayelsa State, recommendations.

1.0 Introduction:

Yenagoa is the Bayelsa State capital where much of land transactions are performed at a large scale compared to the rural communities. Yenagoa has transformed from a local government headquarters to a state capital with myriad of commercial, developmental, social and few industrial activities going on. As noted, Yenagoa has a serious interplay of human factors to decide the existence of the people. The State is made up of eight Local Government Areas. The interactive activities are the major determinants of land conflicts because initially when Yenagoa has not been transformed into the present position as a State, those interactive forces of society were not so apparent and noted as they are now.

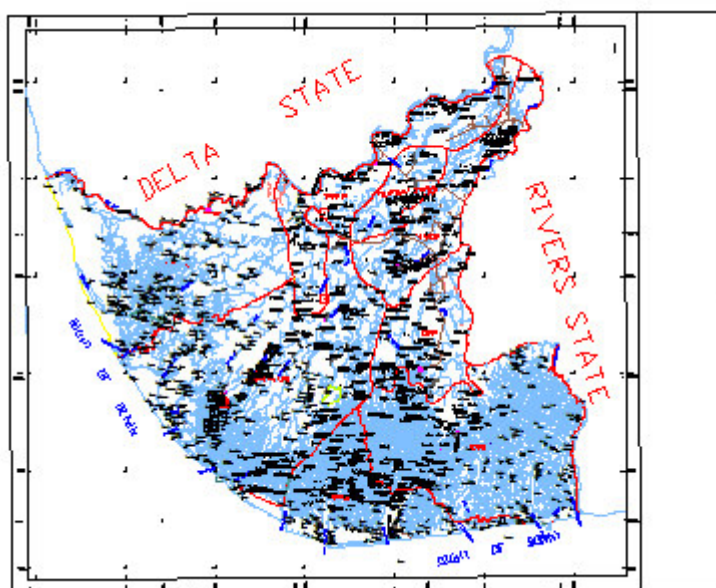


Figure 1 Map of Bayelsa State

Definition of land conflict was derived from a definition made on the term conflict by sociologists and the following definition was arrived at. "land conflict can be defined as a social fact in which at least two parties are involved, the roots of which are different interests over the property rights to land: the right to use the land, to manage the land, to generate an income from the land, to exclude others from the land, to transfer it and the right to compensation for it. A land conflict, therefore, can be understood as a misuse, restriction or dispute over property rights to land" (Wehrmann 2005).

Land conflicts are interactive situations noted from advancement of mankind. People have been recognized to be living peacefully without any form of disagreement according to ancient Greek myths but this harmonious relationship was short-lived. This Golden Age was succeeded by Iron Age during which land has been split into divisible quantities as private property and in turn given rise to crisis. Land is divisible in the sense that portions of land are spelt out in unit measures or in obvious demarcation by crude or scientific method of measurements. (Babettywehrmann 2008).

When the colonial administrators came to Nigeria, there were several systems of land tenure in the country. With their advent, the huge labour migration and needs for housing development, involvement into land

was indispensable. They encountered problems because of the ideology of the people towards land. In the bid to resolve this situation of land, special land committee was set up in 1912 to have an overview of the land policy of the people in West African. Much treat to issues of land was not noticeable in the northern Nigeria where the Maliki law conferred on the colonialists right to use of land. The governor had to hold land in trust for the people whereas in the southern Nigeria land ownership was based on lineages or extended family. The problem of land surrounding the colonialists sprang up due to what was obtainable in the south. Regardless of the difference between the north and the south, land was largely considered by the people according to pre capitalist social formation. This situation made it possible not to sell land during 20th century. Not selling land to strangers posed much problem to the colonialists. Land, as indispensable as it was, was a problem to them and which triggered the study of the area and how best the problem could be handled with bearing to its sensitiveness (Mabogunje, 2009).

In Nigeria, after the white people have gone during the period of independence, the problem of land still lingered. Before the coming into being of the land use act of 1978, increased population and urbanization brought the awareness that land transaction was a profitable investment. During this period there was not much land transaction in Yenagoa as the people were predominantly farmers, ownership of land was based on extended family or lineages. It was not as close as possible to the major cities like Port Harcourt, Owerri, and Warri etc where much economic activities were going on. Although, people who (had foresight that in the future, a state would be created) bought land at extremely low amount and sold subsequently at exorbitantly high amount compared to the cost price. It was a knowledge of the few who were economically buoyant and having political consciousness. In the course of time, customary tenure system (which was in operation) was not good to the government. The customary land tenure was at variance with the government in the bid to acquire land for developmental purposes (Uchendu, 1979). This situation forced the government to review the land policy at the time and the interest of the government was aroused towards making changes to the customary policy of land tenures system (Omotola 1980 -1985). The land problem started from the variance of government interest from that of the customary system. The land use Act was a product of this inconsistency. The land Use Act was a kind of proffering solution between the government interest and the customary system and making available land without trouble for various developmental purposes (James 1987, Ajayi 2001). It was promulgated to ensure easy acquisition of land for public purposes, putting the land in any state of the country under the custody of the governor of the concerned state and as well as unifying the land tenure systems operational ie, bringing the systems under one umbrella. The law, on its part, (in spite of its positive contribution in reducing court litigation with regard to land matters, working effectively towards minimizing the burden of land compensation) has posed some problems which need to be corrected. (Uchendu 1979, Mabogunje 2009). The problems discovered in land use act are making it necessary for reform of the law. Land is always causing problems as long as humanity aims at development.

Boundaries are indispensable in the issues of land conflicts and if they are not mentioned, it seems the matter has not arrived at conclusion. There are not much known boundaries in the State concerning local government areas and villages or communities. The predominant type of boundaries are the natural types. They are known to be surfaces, features which distinguish one property to another. Boundaries could be classified into general and fixed system. In the general system, features such as roads, streams, trees, footpath, mountains, walls, and fences are used in separating one portion of land from another (Didigwu, 2006). In the Yenagoa city, most of the communities are separated by streams or creek such as that of Opolo and Okutukutu communities, Edepie and Etegwé communities, Captain Ayeni road is separating Yenizue-Epie community from Kpansia community and a host of others. The fixed system of boundary employs the use of technology of surveying. It considers the use of survey beacons as demarcating boundaries which are legally accepted in showing boundaries of land positions (Didigwu, 2006). The later type of boundary is not in operation to a larger extent in the State and it is cost effective. It is only prompted when land conflicts arise where both parties want evidence to present in the court and on any other ground but if there is no problem, owners of land are not bothered to demarcate their land by means of surveying. Only the conscious and enlightened ones have the intention of demarcating their properties and ensure that they are registered in the relevant Department of lands.

2.0 Method of Study

The method was by finding facts concerning land conflicts using experiences got from the field of surveying and interactions among colleagues, clients, youth leaders, community elders and government officials. It is a very important, delicate matter which can disrupt the economy of any nation or claim lives and properties. Incorporating field experience to this study would enhance it as the information would not be distorted. Field experiences are those obtained in connection with surveying land for various clients and purposes. The interview was on question and answer session which looked into land conflicts in the study area. The question and answer sessions are necessary because the method of surveying, demarcation and title registration are not the only means of resolving land conflicts. There are other deeper issues involved in the transactions of land which were found

out through experiences (WehrmannB. 2008).

Table 1: Oral Interview

Class of people interviewed	Number of persons	Questions	Answers	No of days
Community elders	10	60	57	30
Youth leaders	30	50	50	30
Government officials	10	25	25	5

The oral interview was conducted on the ground that similar concepts were generalized while differences sorted out where they occurred. The various relevant government Departments were contacted to gather required information. The patterns of land conflicts and the various stages of land conflicts were investigated. The diagram below gives a picture of the various stages in land conflicts, Fisher et al (2000).

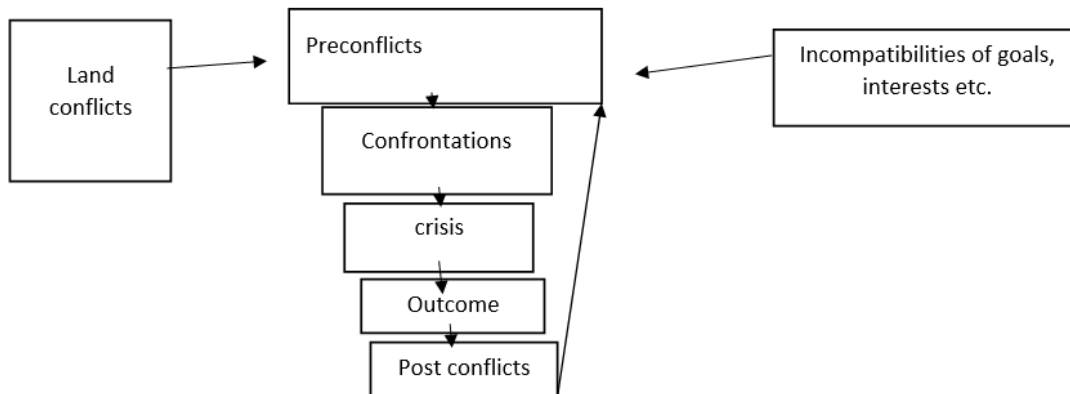


Figure 2 Showing the various stages of land conflict.

These stages of land conflicts were identified and spelt out for the various areas. That is, what stages the communities have undergone and where they are at present. Land conflicts after the outcome and if they are not resolved properly could go back to the pre conflicts phase from the post conflicts stage

Some constraints were met in the course of carrying out interviews with the people concerned such as youth leaders, elders and government officials because audience could not be easily granted to me. This was principally due to fear of being secretly working for either party so that the cases could be lost to any of the parties. I have to clarify issues with them that the exercise is not aimed at favouring any group of persons nor intended for purposes of litigation but is an academic assignment to find out critical issues relating to land conflicts, why land conflicts, how land conflicts could be eliminated, avoided and settled in the study area. The government officials were easily interrogated but they too also wanted to know the purpose of the assignment before allowing me audience. The responses were quite satisfactory except on some cases where some persons attempted to misconstrue the objective behind the interview as noted above. This was due to the fact that human society is complex and made up of so many problems which the careful ones have to avoid.

3.0 Six Land Conflicts in Bayelsa State

This section has been set aside to take a view of land conflicts which occurred from the date of the State creation to date (1996 –date), however, most of the land conflicts are older than the State; they resurfaced as a result of interest, fear of losing their portions of land to strangers, acquisitions of land related wealth, scarcely an attitude of greed wanting to have all land at the expense of the generality of the people. Attention at this point is devoted towards covering the land conflicts in the State as much as possible.

One land conflict is that in Kabeama community in Mein/Oyaokiri Local Government Area between two families namely Olomu Family and Korigha Family. Due to the troublesome situations surrounding the Kabeama community as regards land, the then Governor of Bayelsa State Chief D. S. Alamieyeseigha set up committees to investigate the matters relating to land in the Kabeama community and give recommendation with a view to putting an end to the crises emanating from the ownership of land. The Governor made the right move in accordance with the Land Use Act of 1978 which entrusted all land in the State to his custody. A committee was set up headed by H R M C. B. Ogujalata but they could not carryout the assignment because of language differences which led to another committee headed by HRM Joshua Igbagara. This later committee did the job and their report is investigated in this study. The committee was set up in April 2000. They went to the community Kabeama which is at the west of the State Capital and made enquiries from the two families as well as the community at large. From the report of the committee, the people involved lived peacefully, but in the history of time, they began to develop different opinions, interests. The conflict was brought about by Urhobo settlers in a place called Abapuo Bush. The Korigha family had tenants who were Urhobo people. In 1949, when Chief Okorodudu became the traditional ruler of Kabeama community, the community agreed to evict the

tenants from the land. However, some people from the Korigha family consented and evicted the tenants while kopa (who was also a member of the Korigha family) refused to do so which instigated the land conflicts in the land belonging to the Kabeama community (HRH King Igbagara J.I., 2000). Land conflict is an issue too complex to handle, although, the conflict (unpleasant as it is) is an avenue for bringing positive social change (Wehrmann2008). In the report, there was one boundary mentioned by Olomu family marked by black mango tree serving as boundary between Asoatu, a portion of land on the Kabeama side and that of Agoro community. That is, a boundary showing the land belonging to Kabeama and Agoro communities (HRH King Igbagara J.I., 2000). Boundaries are very important features whether man-made or natural and conflicts would help the people decide where best their boundaries could be located because there were no distinctive demarcations showing that a particular portion of land belongs to a given group. Boundary definition is a major deciding factor in land conflicts and interpretation of portions belonging to the different parties. This could lead to the success or failure of any party. This has been asserted to be the failure of Nigeria in her land conflict with Cameroun as experts were not employed in the Nigerian part to properly delineate the boundaries and interpret them (Fubara 2002).

A similar incidence occurred between the people of Koluama clan and Fish Town initially known as Beleugbene in the year 1999 towards the end of the year during which some youths in the Koluama clan invaded the other community that they should leave their territory. This act led the Koluama youths burning their houses. The Fish Town people later reinforced and attacked the Koluama people destroying their properties leading to deaths of both parties. The then Governor of Bayelsa State set up a commission of enquiries headed by Late Justice T.A Koroye to look into the case. The matter was successfully investigated and report submitted to the Governor. Both parties were invited to present their sides of land ownership. From the investigation, the Koluama people said that they were the original settlers of the place and the people of Fish Town came from Akassa clan. They paid rents to the Koluama people and subsequently got intermarried in the course of developing the settlement. It was initially a fishing settlement which transformed to a proper place of settlement. In the course of investigating, these people were living peacefully due to variation of interests, motives to acquire land freely and other land related benefits caused the incidence. The territory is known to be hosting a major oil company called Chevron Nigeria LTD. The fish Town people made claim that they were having boundary with neighbouring communities in the west of Koluama. The fish town is about 5km from Koluama while Akassa is more than 30km from Koluama. Boundaries are to be distinct but were not properly defined. Boundaries are very useful in terms of demarcating land for several people but in this case, boundary is not as old as these communities; it is rather a new concept because the fixed type of boundary was not used. Claim of ownership was exhibited by environmental features but permanent precise positions were not well defined.

The people of Opolo community and Okutukutu community had land in-dispute which moved from various courts up to Supreme Court. These communities are all in the State capital and houses have been built where the land was located; people from different parts of the State as well as the Epie people were living comfortably in their respective homes until the matter came up. The people are all from the same kingdom-Epie kingdom. They became rivals due to benefits from land. The matter resurfaced in 2015 after it was decided in favour of Opolo people by the Supreme Court of Nigeria. The other group did not agree to the judgment that there was inconsistency in the matter. When surveyors were sent to the site to properly demarcate the place, it resulted to serious trouble leading to the destruction of lives and properties. Demarcation of communal land for various aggrieved parties is a very serious matter which needs to be handled with extreme care unless a consensus is reached by both parties or the government organ concerned has concluded the matter in such a way that both parties have all agreed.



Figure 3: The Scene of The Conflict Between Opolo and Okutukutu Communities.

Recently, Foropa Community in Southern Ijaw Local Government Area, due to the presence of Con Oil Nigeria LTD located in OlouUgbo of Koluama Clan in the same Local Government Area, made claims in the month of October 2015 that the area (where the oil company is located) was in their territory. The matter was brought before the Deputy Governor, Rear admiral Rtd John Jonah, of Bayelsa State. The Koluama people provided evidences that they were the bona-fide land lords of the area before the Deputy Governor, but the Foropa people were unable. In the concluding part of the meeting, the Foropa people asked for a share of the wealth accruing to the Koluama people. It is not strange as to what the Foropa people asked for because the surrounding communities are also eyeing the company. The Olou Ugbo is closed to Tamazu community which is an autonomous community of Koluama Clan where the oil company is located and operating. The oil company is located at the heart or centre of Olou Ugbo..

Some of the experiences encountered in the field would be highlighted as follows but the issues in the Yenagoa capital are known to occur in a similar pattern, therefore, one, two and three cases can be generalized as the situations in the city. Multiple sale of same land is the common trend of land transaction in the state capital. One Ebi Government bought a portion of land with area 1163.670 square metres, according to the Yenagoa standard, it was equivalent to two and half plots of land in the year 2011 from Edepie people. This land was subsequently sold to two persons in the year 2015. After the survey of this portion of land using Ebi Government (who was the seller of land in this case) as title holder, the boundary beacons were displaced by unknown persons; thus rendering the land dimensionless, to be of no definite boundary positions. Destruction of boundary beacons is a serious problem which the landlords, speculators and the governments should give more attention.

There was a case in which a Union from Swali Market (the major market in the Yenagoa city) called progressive cooperative union bought a portion of land from a family in Kpansia community. Unknown to the buyers, the land has been previously sold to another person. The Union made a survey of the land but the survey beacons were destroyed by another set of people who claimed ownership. When the Union members went to the site to carry out construction work, they were hindered by the other party that the said portion of land has been sold earlier. Problem started between the Union members and the other sellers (those who sold the land to them). They even went to police station to resolve the matter, but the matter was settled on the ground that an interior site be made available to them bearing in mind the inconvenience encountered, locational disadvantage that would be met in the new site. Worst is the case where somebody, who does not own land, but claims he or she has land for sell. There are several cases where people, who do not have land, sold land to the unsuspecting buyers.

4.0 Findings Leading to Causes of Land Conflicts

1. Boundary: All the land conflicts investigated, much was not said about boundaries but where they were mentioned; they were destroyed and not properly maintained. The people could not properly demarcate their portions of land and surveying itself was not much known except where construction and Oil Company made

use of Surveyors. Survey beacons, which are permanent marks on ground defining boundaries, were intentionally excavated from the ground, thus rendering survey plan insignificant. They are, at times, removed so that land could be secretly sold to any unsuspecting buyer. Neighbours utilize the opportunity of removal of survey beacons to encroach into their neighbours' land who, may be at the moment, not around in the location. If survey beacons are not on ground, owners of land could not know what position is theirs without mistake or error. Removal of survey beacons is a very bad activity practised in Yenagoa! Survey beacons are not to be tampered with because any slightest shift would affect the accuracy of the job. Not only affecting the accuracy of the survey jobs but the dimensions would not be useful for purposes of development and planning. They are also being removed by people who are ignorant of their usefulness such as farmers who may use the beacons to their advantage. More serious is the case where aggrieved party removed them after discovering that some members of their family have sold a portion of land without their knowledge. This kind of situation is, at times, dangerous. The application of demarcation of land, title registration would go a long way minimizing land conflicts despite the fact that there are deep issues relating to land.

2. Economy: The Korigha family was enjoying land wealth from their tenants, while the other group was not part of it. Depriving the Olomu family from enjoying wealth was not spelt out, but this was apparent from the report. It could not be an important reason for the eviction, but it can be a contributory factor. This can be justified from the attitude of Chief Okorodudu who, after kopa failed in the case of the land where the Urhobo people resided, decided to acquire the place. This was resentful to the Kabeama community at large and a case was filed against him in which he failed. Chief Okorodudu had some interest in the land for monetary purposes like the Korigha family because the land could generate money from agriculture, sale, etc. Economy is a great contributor to land conflicts. Land, on its part, is an economic item as it involves demand and supply which on their part includes price. Land has wealth in it in form of oil which is the sole motivating factor in our current land conflicts. The oil wealth attracts conflicts due to different interests. Peaceful coexistence has turned around to hostility of the highest order due to oil wealth found in land. Apart from oil wealth leading to land conflicts, the state of unemployment, desire for material things, unseen circumstances are also observed to be contributing to the incessant land conflicts. Most of the unemployed youths whose family has enormous portions of land, resort to the sale of their land without the consent of the elders of the family. A problem has, therefore, been initiated for the buyers and the family. If such situations are not amicably resolved, they might lead to very unpleasant consequences. Contingencies also lead to the sale of land which is not meant for such purposes and mostly such land is sold secretly without consulting the appropriate avenue of doing so. Problems of land are consequently initiated for the various persons involved.

3. Power and Population: The people of Kabeama community asserted that the Urhobo people were becoming populous, powerful and were afraid they might overthrow and conquer their territory. If ownership is authenticated and legalized, such a move would not be fruitful; however, in those days awareness was not as it is today because the level of education is far from what was obtainable in the past. If the relevant document of ownership title is made available and properly documented; surveys are done and title registration process is complete such action would not be fruitful. It is, however, possible even at present power and population are wrongly used to oppress and victimize the minority but due to the awareness and level of education these could be suppressed.

4. Self centredness

If one group is opportune to benefits derivable from land, they would monopolize the situation at the expense of the others. This also leads to serious consequences in issues relating to land. Perhaps, the Korigha family did not involve the other family members (Olomu family) in terms of the proceeds from land as regards rent. This could cause the other group to revolt against whatever they were benefiting due to not including them. There might be no harmonious relationship between the various family members so that anyone who found a little wealth would try as much as possible to engulf it. It is not new in our society, it is a common phenomenon. It can be, otherwise, referred to as greed.

5. Insubordination or Independence

One major factor in the cause of Koluama and Fish Town crisis was fear of insubordination of the Fish Town people on the part of Koluama people. The Koluama people were afraid that the other people would no longer be subordinate to them and that they were trying to be independent in spite of the fact they were tenants in the territory. The Koluama people still wanted to maintain their position as of old. Militancy was at its peak when the crisis sprang up. This act of militancy was used in attacking the villages which was initially intended for fighting marginalization. They used it to fight themselves.

6. Rural/ Urban Migration :

The movement of people from the villages to the State capital increases the pressure of housing and which in turn leads to the high rising of the value of land. This movement also leads to the issue of multiple sale of same land because those who have sold their land resort to sell more of same land because of the pressure. Everybody in the village is pushed to the Yenagoa city for search of white collar jobs so that our predominant occupations

are abandoned- farming and fishing. Yenagoa is greatly populated due to this movement and due to this population the cost of livelihood is comparatively very high. All these activities have corresponding consequences on the land situations in the State especially having negative impact.

Land conflicts can also be analysed by either completing or “peeling” conflict union whose layers are positions, interests, needs, desires and fears.

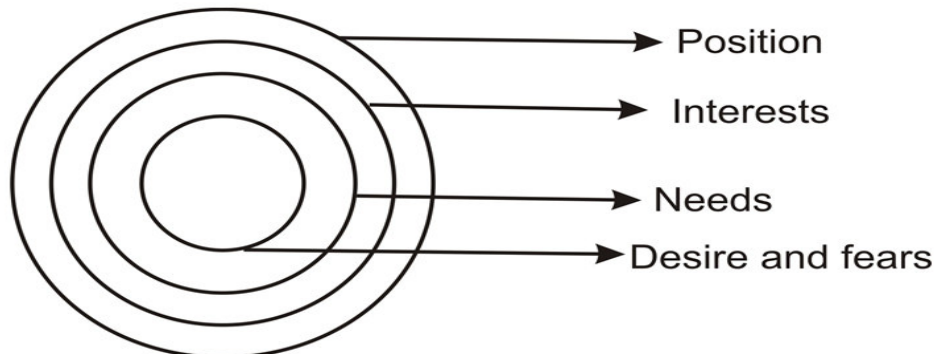


Figure 4: Conflict union

Table 2: Analysis of conflict

Conflict party	position	interests	Needs	Desire and fears
Olomu family	Claim of ownership	Removal of the tenants	They wanted to be participants in the proceeds of land.	To have their land intact. Tenants might become too populous and powerful.
Korigha family	Claim of ownership	Retaining the tenants	Sources of income	To secure source of income and the source of income would be hindered
Opolo community	Claim of ownership	Maintaining state of claim	Proceeds from land	To have land proceeds and fear of hindrance of land proceeds
Okutukutu community	Claim of ownership	Maintaining state of claim	Proceeds from land	To have land benefits and fear of hindrance of land proceeds
Foropa community	Claim of ownership	Oil money	Land benefits	To be involved in the money and fear of not getting the money
Koluama community	Claim of ownership	Trying to maintain the situations in the past	Land benefits	Trying to maintain the situations of the past and fear of losing their land
Fishtown community	Claim of ownership	Not to be subordinate	Land benefits	Claim of autonomy and fear of being evicted

4.1 Pattern of Land Conflicts

The pattern of land conflicts follows the value given to landed properties which is in terms of monetary value. Land is costly in Yenagoa and likewise in nearby, accessible (motor able) communities. The greater the value of land, the greater land fraud and problems. In the State Capital, there is hardly no land portion without misunderstanding between neighbours. It is, therefore, conspicuous that land conflicts occur at a higher frequency in the City of Yenagoa than the rural communities. Places like Ogbia town, Amassoama town, Tombia town, communities along the route to Okolobiri, Kaima town, Sagbama town, Odi town are all competing with the City capital in terms of land transactions.

Table: 3 showing cost of land per plot

LOCATION	COST OF LAND PER PLOT (500m ²)
YENAGOA CITY	#700,000-2MILLION naira depending on where the land is sited.
Ogbia Town	#500,000
Amassoama Town	#600,000
Tombia Town	#700,000
Elebele Town	#700,000
Imirigi Town	#700,000
Kaima Town	#400,000
Sagbam Town	#300,000
Odi Town	#300,000

The value of land diminishes towards those mentioned communities from the State Capital but high comparatively bearing in mind what is obtainable in the interior rural areas where land could be acquired with little money or be out rightly given to anyone who wants to develop for purposes of expansion and turning our rural settlements to urban setting. Land is acquired progressively from the State Capital to the rural communities. The reduced value of land is a product of the greater distance from the urban centre and low impact of urbanization. But one cannot compare the magnitude of land conflicts that occur from the State capital to the rural areas. This is due to the fact that in the rural areas, land conflicts seldom occur but if they happen and are related to oil money; the magnitude is very enormous. Individual rivalry in the rural areas as a result of interest in small portion of land is comparatively not serious as what is obtained in the city Yenagoa. 70% of the land cases in Bayelsa State occur in the State capital while 20% is allotted to the semi urban areas while the remaining 10% goes to the rural areas where most of the cases are communal.

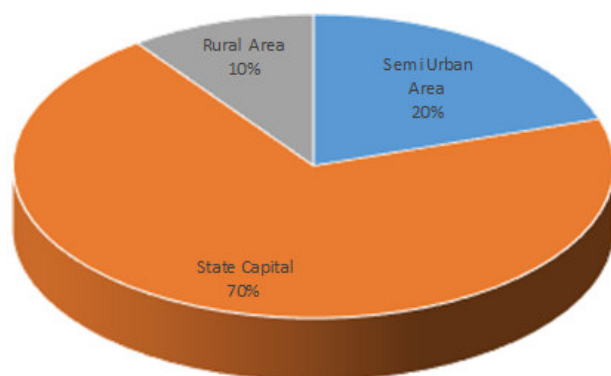


Figure 5 Percentage of land cases

4.2 Stages of the Land Conflicts

The land conflict in the Kabeama community passed through the various stages of conflict: Preconflict state sprang up due to variance of individual and communal interests which subsequently led to confrontation by way of fighting. Crisis stage could be ignored because it was not found out that there was destruction of lives and properties but there was confrontation in the form of fighting. It was found out from the report that there were cases of fighting but not as serious as to cause destruction of lives and properties. It finally went through the output stage when parties consented to the agreement reached or judgment passed in the courts and attained the stage of post conflict as normal life style has returned.

The stages of conflict in that between Koluama people and Fishtown people started with preconflict when both parties knew that something would happen but they were hiding it. It later surfaced as confrontation and crisis because it resulted to fighting, destruction of lives and properties. It also led to post conflict because

peaceful coexistence has returned after ignoring the output stage of conflict.

The stages of conflict in that between Opolo and Okutukutu communities went through the preconflict stage and later the crisis stage without confrontation. It is now in the post conflict stage after avoiding the output stage which has been decided in the court as so far seen in the discussion of conflicts.

The situation between the Foropa and Koluama communities went straight to the output stage without confrontation and crisis. It is now finally in the post conflict stage

The case of the Union members in Swali market and the land sellers went to the stages of output and post conflict stages without confrontation and crisis. The land conflict between that of Ebi Government and the buyer of the land went to the stage of post conflict without passing through any of the other stages.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Our communities do not know precise boundary positions whether precise or not there is no clear-cut demarcation among our communities. Rivers, trees are used as boundaries but proper recording should be conducted along our boundaries knowing the areas for a given group of people, even dimensions along the boundary line. The land registry department of the state government should be used maximally. Boundary positions should be clearly spelt out in Bayelsa State. Communities should try as much as possible to bring their land matters to the government and jointly put heads together so that such matters are resolved amicably. Committees are to be set up, if possible, to monitor boundary positions which are being established with the best instrumentation and highest order of accuracy. The people of the State should be informed of the importance of boundary beacons telling them that such things are permanent marks on ground which are not to be tampered with unless they are destroyed on their own without any external interference. By properly carrying out demarcations of land across the State, land matters would be reduced to the barest minimum and if they occur, they could be easily decided upon without any form of manipulation. This would involve all the communities and the government agencies. Although, it could be a tedious assignment but if achieved can be very helpful. If possible all the communities in Bayelsa State are meant to know their geographical portion accurately and the boundary corners be set out on ground for them to know. If portion of land is given to a particular set of people to live, the area should be demarcated properly, survey plans be made available, other relevant documents inclusive and be registered in the concerned Department of Government so that if the tenants become too powerful through growth or expansion in population or size to overpower the landlords; the landlords could have evidence of ownership. The availability of such documents would hinder such uprising because any move of such would be futile or unproductive. The demarcation exercise is cost effective, but the cost involved should be negligible because the consequences of land problems would far outweigh the cost. Most of the people in the state do not know that surveys are conducted on portions of land, this assignment should be put across the State; land use advisory committees be set up across all the local government areas in the State as well as that of the State government and it is only once that the one of the State government has been constituted since the creation of the State in 1996.

Poverty and unemployment have to be fought against so that the multiple sale of same portion of land could be overcome. The Bayelsa State Government should, at all point in time, put effort at ameliorating the impact of poverty and employing young graduates as well as other school leavers. Not only the Government but also the community people should find a way of helping themselves by setting up committees with good integrity to man the affairs of land transactions in their domain and possibly make a layout design of all their land. The land could, therefore, be sold according to the layout design and copies of the design be distributed to the whole community so that when purchase is made reference would be made to the design. Such a design would also help neighbours not to encroach into one another's land because neighbours are fond of taking portions of their neighbours especially if they are not residing in the place where the land is located.

The various tiers of Government should look into how the movement of rural/urban migration could be made less. Those amenities that have been sources of attraction to the urban communities be made available in the rural communities such as schools, good drinking water, affordable electricity, industries and factories, plantation farming. Farming and fishing are major occupations in Bayelsa State but they are being classified as jobs of poverty and they do not accord much respect. These jobs are no more done at a larger scale because of the ideology of the people who are ignoring the fact that the jobs are indispensable to the existence of mankind. The government should encourage these jobs which not only will provide food for the people but also be a source of income. There is no intensive commercial fishing in the State where there are rivers, streams, creeks and sea to perform such type of fishing. Plantain farming is not carried out and even the basic subsistence farming is abandoned. Mechanized farming, which involves large portions of land and enough labour, should be encouraged in the rural areas so that the issue of migration to urban community may be checked. It is important to construct roads from Yenagoa to our various communities so that most people would prefer to stay in the villages especially the three senatorial roads. For example most people working in the State capital could come to work from their communities and go back. This would not be possible with water transportation because it

takes longer time to travel to Yenagoa and it is very costly using this means of transportation.

The effort of oil companies in trying to make life meaningful is quite commendable but not commensurate with their impact on the environment. Their operation has caused more havoc than good because in spite of degrading the environment, they have caused hostility of the highest order. Neighbours no longer live in harmony because of inequitable distribution of oil wealth derived from land. Every oil company has maps defining their areas of operation, therefore, they are very conversant with the geographic information of such locations. They know their spatial coverage and such information has been used to contact the communities of operation. They are, therefore, advised to work within their confine of operation not trying to introduce areas which are beyond their spatial coverage. This attitude of the companies has resulted to clashes of communities. This is because those communities which are not within the area of operations would always want to be participants of the oil wealth. If the companies want to render help to those communities not within their areas operation, it is left for the companies to decide but not causing hostility among the communities.

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