

1 Farmland Sale in Ikwerre Selected Communities & Rural 2 Economy; An Emerging Perspective

3 Dr. Eze Wosu¹

4 ¹ University of Port Harcourt

5 *Received: 5 February 2012 Accepted: 2 March 2012 Published: 15 March 2012*

6 **Abstract**

7 The paper examined the act of outright farmland sale in the Ikwerre rural communities to
8 non-agricultural purposes and the increasing decline in agricultural food production. The
9 paper argued that the process of farmland sale to non agricultural purposes will further
10 impoverish the people and hamper development. We deplored the interview and observation
11 methods of eliciting data. The use of Ikwerre dialect became an effective communication tool
12 in gathering data; as the rural peasant people are predominantly illiterates. The theoretical
13 framework is the Political Economy Approach which served as a study and method. The
14 findings are that the increase in sale of farm land to non agricultural activities had destroyed
15 the livelihood of the rural economy and hampered development. Also, that the decision of
16 communities to share farmland for sale to avert the forceful taken their lands with little or no
17 benefits by the government had created paucity of land, scarcity of food, communal conflict,
18 enmity and death mortality rate.

21 **Index terms**— Rural Economy, Land, Livelihood, Ikwerre, Peasant.

22 **1 The Problem**

23 Rivers State government in 2010 embarked on massive acquisition of the Land of Ikwerre people through the
24 Greater Port Harcourt. The vast land acquisition by the government for non agricultural activities created doubt
25 and fear in the minds of the people. Moreso, the Ikwerre people are more of agrarian society. While policy
26 makers, sociologist are busy thinking on the need to strengthen initiatives to diversify our economies, others are
27 busy directly or indirectly depleting the only means of production (farmland).

28 As an explorative study, the youths in Ikwerre communities are agitating for the various communities to share
29 remaining farmland for sale since; the government is in a bid to acquire their land without compensation. This
30 affects the declining rate of agricultural production. However, some study had been done on the land tenure
31 system in Ikwerre ??Okodudu edited 1998 ?? Ekong 1983), but no study has been carried out on the increase
32 sale of farmland. Some people uphold the view that land tenure problems were of no importance and therefore
33 require no consideration or the process of economic development will automatically solve any land tenure problem
34 that exist Author : Lecturer,Department of Sociology,University of Port Harcourt . E-mail : ewosu@yahoo.com
35 (Wosu, 1999). But the present case proves contrary to this assertion as the economic and cultural heritage of the
36 people is eroded.

37 Ikwerre people are predominantly an agrarian community and like every agricultural community, if the people's
38 farmland are sold or acquired by external authority like the government for purposes other than those that could
39 promote agricultural and related activities; the people are likely to be adversely affected. We had argued elsewhere
40 that the citing of projects by the government in Akpor and Rivers State government (Greater Port Harcourt)
41 without adequate compensation nor aid in modernising the traditional agricultural system of the people has
42 helped not only displacing people from their land, but communities have decided to share and sell their farmland
43 to non agricultural purposes.

4 FINDINGS

44 Generally speaking, peasant rural dwellers have always been the looser because of their disposition, hence
45 expanse of arable land has been sold and some converted to non agricultural uses. Consequently, dispossession,
46 loss of farm incomes, and agricultural production of the people is the outcome.

47 Onwulala (2010) asserted that farming and cultivating are carried out using predominantly traditional methods
48 with hand tools thereby limiting agricultural production to subsistence level. Also, lack of technology and non
49 application or research funding, make it extremely difficult to achieve the desired level of rural development.
50 Other factors are poor state of infrastructure, poor access to market, low income/livelihood.

51 Against the backdrop of poor state of the rural economy, and the incursion of government on farmland led to
52 communities to sell out their lands for non agricultural purposes. What will be the consequences of this land
53 sale to the rural economy? Will the sale of farmland be sustainable and what will happen to the livelihood of
54 future generation? These hypothetical questions will guide this study.

55 2 II. The Political Economy Approach as A Theoretical Frame- 56 work

57 The Political Economy Approach (PEA) as a theoretical framework is a method which has material conditions,
58 particularly economic factors as its major tool for the explanation and cognition of human life.

59 3 Year

60 Once we understand the material conditions and constraints of a society, how the society produces goods to
61 meet its material needs, how the goods are distributed, and what type of social relations arise from the society of
62 production, brings us to understanding the culture of the society, its laws, its religious systems, its political, social
63 and even its mode of thoughtconsciousness. Again, the political economy examines the economy and its interplay
64 with socio-political institutions with particular emphasis on the internal dynamics and factors of change. This
65 enables us to understand the historical changes in the Ikwerre kingdom. Also, it enables us to take account of
66 the systematic interactions of the different structures in society, especially the economic, political, social and
67 belief systems. According to this theory, it is the economic factor which is the most decisive of these elements of
68 society and which largely determines the characteristics of others. The method therefore offers the opportunity
69 to understand what goes in the society as a result of change in the traditional (material) productive process.
70 Thus Marx asserts that:

71 In the social production of their existence, man enters into definite, necessary relations of production:
72 corresponding to a determinate stage of development of their material forces of production. Consequently, the
73 totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structures of society. The mode of production of
74 material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of
75 man that determines their being, but on the contrary it is their social being that determines their consciousness.
76 At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the
77 existing relations of production (Lenin, 1978 ??ited in Wosu, 1999). This contradiction constitutes the bane of
78 the rural economy in Ikwerre communities. We deplored the interview methods and observation technique of
79 data collection. We interviewed one thousand, two hundred respondents. Those interviewed were rural peasant
80 women, men and able bodied youths on some selected Ikwerre communities. The interview was informal and
81 unstructured which did not limit the respondents to confined questions. Issues of living conditions, community
82 development, land sale, etc. The interview method was used because the farming population was largely non-
83 literate. More so, the illiterate women were interviewed to prod them into unveiling their inner most minds on
84 their alienation from land and the increase in land sale dispossessing them from farming.

85 The selection of the towns were purely based on the condition of the presence of companies, institutions of
86 higher learning and other government projects which in totality give insight into the degree of diversion of land to
87 non-agricultural purposes. Ogbogoro, Choba and Rumuolumeni are the most populous towns. Incidentally, Rivers
88 State College of Education (now Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Port Harcourt) is sited at Rumuolumeni
89 whereas the University of Port Harcourt is sited at Choba. Thus, both Choba and Rumuolumeni had to be chosen
90 on the bases of the presence of the tertiary institutions and companies for which Ogbogoro was also chosen.
91 Ozuoba, Rumuosi, Alakahia, Rumuokwachi, Rumuekini and Aluu were included because they lost reasonable
92 acreage to the University and the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), channel 10 Port Harcourt and African
93 Independent Television (AIT).

94 4 Findings

95 Our findings are as follows : The table explains the acreage of farming land lost and these are rural peasant people.
96 They cannot cater for the upkeep of their families having been dispossessed of their means of livelihood. Another
97 phenomenon about the acquisition of farm lands for building of schools is that neither the Federal nor the State
98 government pays compensation probably due to the assumption that the community where the school is charge.
99 The logical implication is that land was build has the responsibility of providing land free of appropriated to build
100 primary and secondary schools, but how many people were allowed or have the capacity to go to school. Or what
101 alternative means of livelihood do the parents possess to cater and train their children. Hence, the Ikwerre people

102 lost the colonial education and equally lost their farm lands. This was corroborated by the Paramount Ruler of
103 Ogbogoro community; that the Ikwerre indigenes were late comers in the white man's education. The essence
104 was a trade off for anticipated educational and employment opportunities for the people. According to a survey
105 by Anikpo, the decision of the lost of farm land was formally taken by the traditional council of chiefs and elders
106 teleguided by younger business merchants to become contractors, without due requisite qualification to work in
107 the new organisation. By the time the survey began, bitter complaints from the various communities revealed
108 that very few individuals had reaped the type of benefits that were anticipated. The then Nye-nwe-ali Akpor
109 bitterly complained if they had told us ?, if only I had known I would rather die than agree to the acquisition of
110 vast land. Meanwhile, University admissions were to be based on tangible qualifications and not on manipulation
111 of friendly networks of patronage (man knows man) or on the basis of host communities syndrome. The indigenes
112 had demanded that 50% admission quota be reserved for the communities; by 1980 only 3 Choba youths had in
113 fact gained admission into the university. Also, contrary to expectations, only three Choba contractors had been
114 registered by that time Messrs T. Ohakwu, J. Agbara and S. Owume; respectively. The answer for the agitation
115 was that the University operates on a federal principles and character and not on pre-bendal politics. Even
116 the earlier 'gentleman' agreement of 50% admission quota had never being implemented by any administration.
117 Presently, vast expansion of arable land beyond the earlier acquired acres of the people are being taken by the
118 university without due compensation. Rather, the communities' wallows in abject poverty having been alienated
119 from their farm land. Hence, they resort to land sale to individuals and companies rather than government taken
120 their lands without compensation of any sort. and only 38 men and women were in the University employment
121 mostly women in catering, cleaners and elderly men in security. This has being the problem till date. The Ikwerre
122 sons and daughters have being agitating for been marginalized in terms of admission, employment, contracts and
123 above all becoming for once - These companies settle and operate on land and not in the air. Their presence
124 involves land lost. From the land acquired, compensation and rent on damaged crops and economic trees were
125 not adequately paid. The emergence of the multi national corporations totally changed and disarticulated the
126 rural economy. The people became alien in their own land. The cultural values of the people became destroyed
127 and no more communal sense of social cohesion. The land has been desecrated by the activities of foreigners
128 with their culture. We have argued elsewhere that urbanization and/or industrialization has eroded the cultural
129 heritage of the Akpor kingdom (Wosu, 2012). We now witness high level of crime in the communities as our
130 norms have given way to urban life. (D D D D) C Year

131 The only compensation by the multinational corporation was the pollution of the land and rivers by oil spills
132 and other toxic chemicals which have seriously affected and destroyed the rural peasant economy. They only
133 engage the indigenes as casual workers like security men, tea girls, cleaners etc. Objectively speaking, the land
134 lost to the MNCs cannot be equated with the benefits meted to the people if any. This has been the bane of
135 communal conflicts between the host communities and multinational corporations.

136 In the light of the above, the people decide to sale off their remaining portions of land to individuals and
137 corporate organisation for non agricultural project. They claimed that these individuals pay them more than
138 the government or companies under the instrumentality of the state government. The climax of this was the
139 acquisition of mass Ikwerre land by the Rivers State Government christened the Greater Port Harcourt. The
140 situation is that government without due recourse to the people take vast portions of their farmland with a paltry
141 sum of three hundred thousand naira as compensation. Meanwhile, a plot of land is sold for N1.5m depending
142 on the place said one elder in Choba community. This has created violent and sharp reactions by individuals and
143 communities. Some communities have resorted to litigations as the land tenure system in Ikwerre land is either
144 individually or communally owned. A cross section of interviews conducted by some community paramount
145 rulers and elders attest to this fact. Thus, the communities resolved to share and sell their lands on high price
146 to private individual organisation instead of losing them to strangers. An interview with one of the chiefs from
147 Ogbogoro -Egbelu community asserted that he sold his own portion of land to an individual who established a
148 filing station.

149 The implication is that the rural economy (agriculture) of the people is disarticulated. The people are alienated
150 from their farm land and the synthesis is the decision to share and sell the remaining land to wealthy and 'powerful'
151 individuals for non agricultural purposes. We now witness paucity of land and low food production. The people
152 are no longer interested in farming. A cross interview with rural peasant women opined that they now prefer
153 to rent a market stall and trade in the urban city rather than remaining in the rural communities toiling from
154 morning till night in the name of farming without food sufficiency. Our interview with the women revealed that a
155 basin of garri now cost as much as N2, 500 and above. This is because they are dispossessed from cultivating their
156 staple food. They travel to far communities to buy garri. This has equally Farmland Sale in Ikwerre Selected
157 Communities & Rural Economy; An Emerging Perspective affected other agricultural products -vegetables, okoro,
158 yam, corn, pepper etc.

159 5 Conclusion

160 The decision to sell farm land by Ikwerre communities to non agricultural purposes was a contradiction by
161 the acquisition of land by state and corporate organisation without due benefits and recourse to the people's
162 livelihood. This has created not only paucity of land, but food scarcity. It has also created inter and intra
163 communal conflicts over boundary and rightful land owners. In some cases they are subject of litigation. The

5 CONCLUSION

164 youths now engage themselves as land agents, a job or occupation not sustainable but lucrative in terms of the
165 money involved. A plot of land is sold for over N1.5m with its commission for the agent. So the number of
166 plots of land the higher the commission fee. They sell and resell a land earlier bought because no more land to
167 sell. Rather than investing the money in a meaningful project, they live flamboyant and ostentatious lives. The
168 serious contradiction therefore is that the federal government is clamouring to revert to agriculture in the face of
169 communities' land being sold out rightly to individual and corporate organisation. What will happen to future
170 generations when the only means of livelihood of the people (Land) is destroyed? This negates the principles of
171 sustainable development. The question is where do we go from here? Will negation keep on negating? (D D D
D) ^{1 2 3}



Figure 1: Farmland

1

Community	No. of Schools			Acquiring Authority	Remarks
	Primary	Secondary	Primary		
Ozuoba	1	1	7.00	10.00	State Govt.
Rumuosi/Rumuekini	1	1	4.00	6.00	do
Rumuokwachi	1	Nil	4.678	nil	do
Alakahia	1	Nil	3.009	nil	do
Choba	2		5.515		do
Ogbogboro	2	1	6.00	10.00	do
Rumuolumeni	3		9.671		do
Total	11	3	43.00	26.00	

Figure 2: Table 1 :

172

¹© 2012 Global Journals Inc. (US)

²© 2012 Global Journals Inc. (US)

³© 2012 Global Journals Inc. (US)

2

Community	Hectare Ac- quired
Rumuekini	657.725
Alakahia	179.604
Choba	125.466
Rumuokwachi	2.51
Ozuoba	31.85
Rumuosi	405.00
Rumuolumeni	42.52
Total	1,502.145

Source : Ofoma Associates and Phil Annia and company, 1988 culled from Wosu, 1999.

Now, a critical look at the hectare of land lost for the establishment of tertiary institutions by the government stunts the imagination. A total of 42.52 hectares were acquired from Rumuolumeni community 1971 on which was built the then College of Education, now Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt. Of this land area, only about one fourth is presently developed. Similarly, in 1975, the state government acquired approximately 9.500 acres or 3.800 hectares of farm land for the establishment of University of Port Harcourt. The land belongs to different communities in Akpor kingdom.

Figure 3: Table 2 :

3

Community	Name of company	Acreage Acquired	Remarks
Choba	Wilbros	4.079	Data not available (n.a) as at the time of this study, but the companies occupies a vast portion of the community's land
	Horizon Fibres	19.00	
	Indomie Noddles	n.a.	
Ogbogoro	Tidex	3.137	
	WAOS	n.a.	
	Eagle Cement	15.500	
	Aker	n.a	
	Saipiem	n.a	
	Nissco	n.a	
Ozuoba	Mordant Marine	n.a	
	NTA	n.a	
	AIT	n.a	

Figure 4: Table 3 :

5 CONCLUSION

173 [Pan African Social Sciences Review (PASSR) No (1984)] , *Pan African Social Sciences Review (PASSR) No 1*
174 October, 1984.

175 [Lenin ()] , V I Lenin . 1978. Perking: Marx. Engels. Marxism. Foreign Language Press.

176 [Okodudu ()] , S Okodudu . *Issues in Community Development* 1988. Emhai Printing and Publishing Co. (Port
177 Harcourt)

178 [Ake ()] *A Political Economy of Africa*, C Ake . 1981. Longman, Nigeria.

179 [Dudwick et al. ()] *From Farm to Firm: Rural -Urban Transaction in Developing countries*, Nora Dudwick ,
180 Katy Hull , Roy Katayanina , Forhad Shupi , Kenneth Similer . 2011. World Bank Washington, D.C.

181 [Management in Nigeria: perspectives on Global Economic Meltdown-April -June 2010 a publication of Nigerian Institute of Man
182 *Management in Nigeria: perspectives on Global Economic Meltdown-April -June 2010 a publication of*
183 *Nigerian Institute of Management*, 46.

184 [Wosu (2012)] ‘The End of Culture in Akpor: An Emerging Perspective’ E Wosu . *Journal of Social Sciences
and Development* 2012. May 2012. 1 (3) . (published in)

185 [Wosu ()] *Women and Access to Land in Akpor*, E Wosu . 1999. (unpublished M.Sc thesis)