

Role of Land Tenure Policy in Achieving the Global Goals in Nigeria

Thomas U. Omali*

Department of Geoinformatics and Surveying, University of Nigeria Enugu Campus Enugu, Nigeria.

Corresponding Author: Thomas U. Omali, Department of Geoinformatics and Surveying University of Nigeria Enugu Campus Enugu, Nigeria.

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Abstract

Embracing the 2030 Programme for Sustainable Development suggests a novel paradigm for international development policy and partnership. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) address all nations and emphasize the integration of economic, social, and ecological goals. This represents an action plan for people, the planet and prosperity intended to strengthen universal peace in greater freedom. Specifically, five SDGs prove the importance of land to sustainable human development relying on eight targets and 12 quantifiable indicators in the SDGs scheme. This review focused on the role of land tenure policy in achieving SDGs in Nigeria. It is indicated in this paper that more than one land tenure system has developed in Nigeria under the influence of historical, cultural and economic dynamics. In the past two centuries, most lands in Nigeria were properties of the traditional societies and communities or to the upper authorities of monarchs. However, the rise of colonialism in the 19th century gave rise to changes in the dimensions of land ownership, title, and management, through different sets of laws. Furthermore, the post-independence era and government in Nigeria inherited the colonial system, which has been subjected to many adjustments and readjustments over the years. Summarily, this review found that access to land or securing tenure rights is central to eradicating poverty (SDG 1), contributing to food security (SDG 2), eradicating gender inequality and empowering women (SDG 5), building inclusive, resilient, and sustainable urban areas (SDG 11), and reducing land degradation (SDG 15).

Keywords: Freehold, Land, Leasehold, Nigeria, SDGs

1. Introduction

Land is characterized by imperative natural resources and space for the survival and prosperity of humanity. It plays a vital role in the life of man including their food, clothing, and shelter, etc.. [1-4]. Though land is defined in various ways, Baltazr et al., see it as a specific area of the earth's surface comprising forest and water (surface and underground). For Legesse et al., land is a fundamental asset of social, economic, and political sustainability; providing ecosystem services, sustainability, and accumulating richness for rural communities in developing nations [5,6]. In agrarian economies that greatly depend on land and agriculture, personal or household wealth is a function of control and access to land [7]. In other words, land is a major resource upon which the economy of any nation depends as demonstrated by Nigeria's economic growth in the 1970s and 1980s [8-13]. Thus, land policy affects a nation's economy either positively or negatively depending on whether the country initiates a right or wrong policy respectively [13]. The reason for this is that a nation's economic and social development is a function of its real (physical) resources expressed in the land mass and associated natural resources [14]. Though the land tenure system in Nigeria involves various actors including community leaders, families, middlemen, land surveyors, legal practitioners, estate

agents, and others; the degree of access to land and title ownership is largely determined by the government [15]. The Nigerian land tenure system like those of other countries in Africa evolved through the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods see [16-20]. In the pre-colonial era, land was solely owned by families and communities. At the time of colonialism, the ownership of land was controlled by the colonial authorities. Of course, property rights were taken off the reach of the community leaders. Furthermore, the post-independence authority in Nigeria inherited from the colonial government the power to regulate the land system. Consequently, two main legislations were enacted including the Northern Nigeria Land Tenure Law (NNLTL) of 1962 and the Land Use Decree (LUD [also known as the Land Use Act (LUA)]) of 1978 [21-26]. The latter serves the purpose of unifying the multiple land tenure systems that existed in the country. It was anticipated that the LUD of 1978 would make it easier for a larger number of citizens to have access to land. Yet, it is characterized by various issues giving rise to the establishment of a Presidential Technical Committee (PTC) in 2009 to undertake the land reform [16].

Paradoxically, the Nigerian human population rapidly increases while the available land remains fixed (except for a few areas reclaimed along the sea coast). This constant rise

in human population has resulted in competition for limited land resources in recent decades. Of course, most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) have experienced an exhaustive usage of arable land [27]. Furthermore, the competition for limited land has led to many conflicts in many places. In Nigeria where access to land had been traditionally characterized as relatively unrestricted, land is increasingly becoming a source of conflicts [28]. By and large, the declining ratio of the size of land per head has been a source of concern and the reason for the spate of conflicts over land across the globe [15]. The armed battles in Plateau, Benue, Anambra, Enugu, Ondo, Ekiti and almost every other state in Nigeria demonstrate how farmers-herdsmen relations have degenerated [29]. In response to increasing conflicts, some state governments in Nigeria instituted the Law that restricts the free movement of cattle and requires that livestock be bred in ranches see [20-32]. Regrettably, it is difficult for many herders to comply as they depend on communal lands that are not enclosed and also did not own any land. As a result, several people think that they have to fight, especially in rural areas where adequate security is lacking.

The economic importance of land tenure security from the land owner's perspective is apparent [33]. Of course, land is a vital resource for human existence and development. Accordingly, it must be managed well such that its utilization will not threaten the needs of future generations. The reason is that responsible actions that guarantee the long-term use of resources without jeopardizing future generations are fundamental within the concept of sustainable development [34,35]. Various issues were treated in this Review; the focus was on the Role of land tenure policy in achieving sustainable development goals in Nigeria. The first was the description of Nigeria's land tenure system with emphasis on the Customary and Statutory/Public land tenure systems and

the post-independence land policy in Nigeria covering the Land tenure law of 1962 and the Land Use Decree of 1978. This was followed by presentation of land policy implications for sustainable development in Nigeria with consideration to the land-related global goals; the importance of land policy for achieving global goals, and the limitations of Nigeria's land policy for achieving global goals. Furthermore, the review assessed the challenges of access to land in Nigeria concerning the land policy administration.

1.1. Nigeria's Land Tenure System

Land tenure system is a legal or customary authority or power on land. It is a combination or bundle of entitlements encompassing rights, duties and responsibilities regarding the use, transfer, alienation and ownership security of land resources [36,37]. Land tenure covers both formal and informal actors in decision-making, policy execution and the establishment/management of basic structures for such purposes. Consequently, there is a need to comprehend the land tenure system and its management practices in the rapidly growing population, increasing demand for food, and the consequence of climate change as demonstrated by many studies such as that by Adedayo [38].

Nigerian land law encourages formal and registered land transactions as appropriate documentation of land title, which is the best security for investment. Nevertheless, the communal land right that is frequently undocumented is also acceptable. The country's land policies are constructed on an overlaying mix of informal customary rules, and formal statutory/public regulations [39-41]. Also, the tenure system in Nigeria normally includes freehold and leasehold rights. This system is depicted in Figure 1 and discussed in the following subsections.

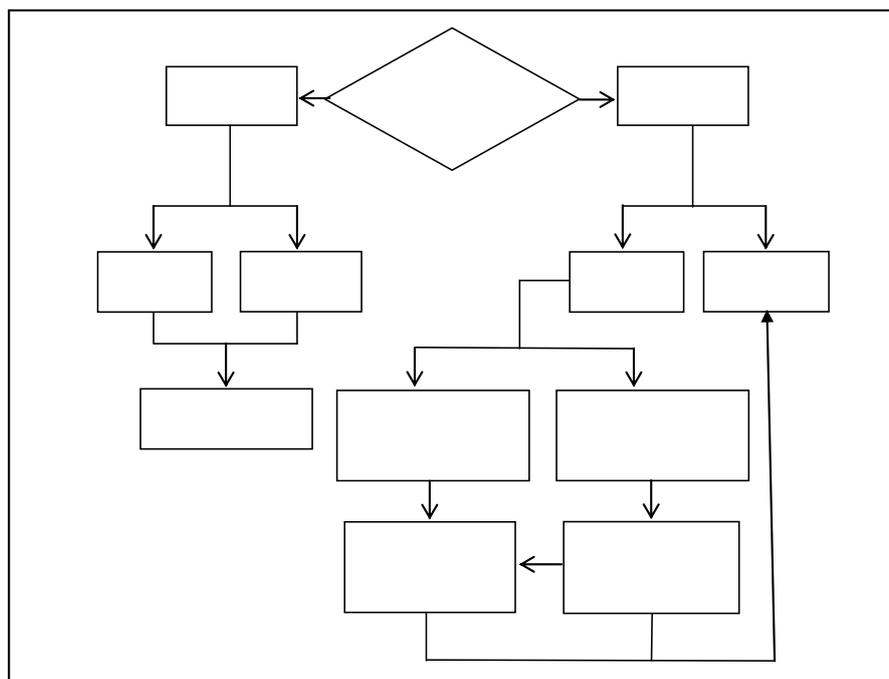


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of land tenure system in Nigeria

1.2. Customary Land Tenure System

The customary land tenure system refers to land ownership practices by ethnic communities under unwritten laws. This system is indigenous to Nigeria as opposed to the received system of English law. In this system, the principles regulating the land tenure system are broadly uniform throughout the federation of Nigeria but with varying degrees of peculiarity along tribal and ethno-cultural settings [42]. Under this tenure regime, people gain access to the land as a social right by their membership in the local community [43,44]. According to Chimhowu, customary tenure is an omnibus term that primarily means communally owned land under the traditional authority; yet, certain parcels of land are allotted to individuals [25]. Thus, some customary regimes serve two functions even where land is no longer held jointly; but where a local community retains control over the relationship between land and the community [5]. In other words, landholding is controlled by local traditional institutions, based on customary norms and practices [45]. In some perspectives, the state may approve the customary authorities that are legitimate and guarantee their authority; like the case documented by Babalola and Hull concerning the Asante region of central Ghana [46]. In other circumstances, the lack of the state or persistent resistance to it has aided in defining the institutions in the customary system; as is the case in the comarcas of Panama [47].

1.3. Statutory/Public Land Tenure System

Statutory land tenure systems depend on the power and control of the government over land. In general, the state or government often creates statutes (statutory laws) or policies to expedite changes when the socio-economic structural dynamics of the society are faster compared to the rate of change in the customary law [48]. The land sector or land tenure system is not exceptional. In Nigeria, the codes of statutory land tenure are prepared by the federal (central) government with consideration to the values and interests of the state government. As a consequence, they may not be legitimate at the village level and must bank on enforcement by government agents. Statutory/Public land tenure system negates outright private rights to land (i.e., by individuals, NGOs, associations, and religious organisations, etc.) since the government as the chief trustee holds absolute ownership of all lands and also manages the lands [49]. The citizens are given rights of occupancy by the Local Government (i.e., customary) or by the State Government (i.e., statutory). The current statutory land tenure system in Nigeria is being regulated by the Land Use Decree of 1978 [50-52]. This Act has made land more transferable, but remains a principle of transformation introduced by the colonial administrators. The principle converted traditional (communal) titles to individual ones bringing in the idea of land individualization.

1.4. Freehold and Leasehold Tenure System

The freehold and leasehold tenure systems are components of both the customary and statutory/public systems. specifies individual or group property rights [53]. Absolute ownership rights are envisaged under freehold land tenure, implying the right to own, control, manage, use and dispose of property [54]. Individuals who subscribe to the freehold

tenure pay a predetermined amount for the right to own a land parcel. Such land rights, while being held in perpetuity; may however be sequestered through State intervention in the case of overriding public interest comprising public purposes, projects or infrastructure, etc. [54]. On the other hand, the leasehold land tenure is that under which ownership of land is based on the notion of rentals for a given period. In other words, an individual is granted temporal ownership of a plot of land from the owner by some form of a title. In this case, the purchaser ('the leaseholder') is granted exclusive occupation and use of the property for some time as set out in the lease [55].

1.5. Post-independence Land Policies in Nigeria

Many institutional regimes and practices established during the colonial era have affected the lives and future of most nations in SSA [56]. For instance, most land tenure systems in Africa find their origin and trajectory in colonialism [57]. The inherited colonial practices that existed in most African post-colonial governments involved a prejudiced and oppressive land tenure policy that dispossessed and restricted access to native lands from local indigenous groups [58]. For example, the emergence of formal land titling laws under statutory land tenure systems in Nigeria resulted in numerous issues for holders of indigenous customary land rights. Furthermore, the land policy and management in Nigeria after independence (in 1960) were regionally-inclined. They were also guided by several statutes, customary norms, and conventions. In the North, the incorporeal interests were held as usufructuary interests while the allodial title prevailed in the South. Both interests were juxtaposed by the abstract, but confusing common law principles known as the doctrines of estates. Multiple legislations were enacted and others repealed. Furthermore, other laws operated alongside the customary laws governed by both statutory and traditional institutions. Thus, while the State Land Law of the Southern regions applied only to State lands, the Land Tenure Law of 1962 applied to all lands in the Northern region [9]. The major difference between the laws in the South and North was the fact that freehold was possible in the South while only leaseholds applied in the North. Yet, the land registration law applied equally to the Regions. Regrettably, different laws governed the tenure system while a single law governed land registration.

It is worthy of mentioning that colonialism restrained land ownership rights to a minority group. It also disrupted the communal tenure system and established dualistic systems that victimized local populations and impoverished their livelihoods [59]. Thus, land ownership rights in post-colonial African states are intricately linked to political and economic concerns including indigenous identity or citizenship, productivity and livelihood [60]. The action of repossessing land ownership rights for the Africans in the post-colonial era involved the confirmation of their sense of belonging in their homelands and restoring their source of livelihood. It became exigent at the emergence of independence to conduct land reforms in many African states. This was aimed at re-assigning land ownership rights to the majority who were dispossessed and marginalized during the colonial

regime. In post-colonial Nigeria, two significant land legislations emerged for achieving effective land delivery and accessibility to land. These include the land tenure law of 1962 and the land use decree of 1978.

1.6. Land Tenure Law of 1962

The existing tenure law (Land and Native Rights Proclamation of 1914) in Nigeria was replaced with the Land Tenure No. 25 Laws of Northern Nigeria, 1962 [60]. The predominant customary tenure systems were mainly of the trusteeship model. Also, loyalty and respect were accorded to the traditional institutions. The law introduced customary and statutory rights of occupancy with the customary rights being administered by the Emirate Council covering all public land while statutory rights of occupancy were administered by the government. The Land Tenure Law of 1962 brought in a slight change in the socio-political aspect of the legislation which relinquished custody of urban land to the Minister from the Governor. The law stipulates that the minister is responsible for land matters. He controls, holds and allocates land (unoccupied or occupied native lands) to natives of Northern Nigeria. The implication is that non-natives could not own land titles except with the authorization of the minister. On the other hand, the law granted the natives of Northern Nigeria the right to own land for a limited number of years [61]. In this case, the individual/native may sell, mortgage or transfer the land subject to the minister's approval.

1.7. Land Use Act of 1978

The Land Tenure Law of 1962, which operated for about 15 years was repealed in 1978 upon the promulgation of the Land Use Decree No. 6 of 1978 (later Land Use Act of 1978 and now Land Use Act Cap 202 LFN 2004). It is a government intervening measure (reform) to harmonise the existing land legislations, ensure the redistribution of land, and weed off the ills of land speculation. In other words, the LUA sought to unify the land tenure systems by extending the northern system to the rest of the country, with the aim of curbing land speculation in urban areas and promoting investment in agriculture through secure land rights. The Nigerian Land Use Act stipulates that all land belongs to the government with the responsibility of holding the land in trust for the public [62]. This means that the government allocates land to individuals and corporate entities in line with the objectives of interested parties [63]. The Land Use Act vested the management of land with state governors, replacing rights of ownership with rights of statutory occupancy and customary occupancy. Much of the responsibility for land management under the LUA lies with state and local governments. The Act divides all land into urban and rural lands with urban lands under the control of the State governors while rural land is controlled by the local government. Each state is supposed to establish an ad hoc body, known as the Land Use and Allocation Committee. The main function of the committee is to advise the governor on the management of urban land. All previous forms of land rights were superseded in urban areas, and landholders now simply need to obtain a statutory right of occupancy to prove their ownership. In the case of rural areas, the customary land rights are preserved

under the law. Here, the 'customary' rights of occupancy may be obtained.

Furthermore, the right of occupancy is simply State-lease of up to 99 years to the landholder. State Governors are authorized to allocate and issue statutory right of occupancy for land in urban areas, and other land under being controlled by the local governments within the jurisdiction of the state. On the other hand, the Local Government Councils have the mandate to allocate land and issue customary right of occupancy for lands located within rural areas, and to this end, are expected to establish Land Allocation Advisory Committees. These committees replace the traditional institutions in their roles as managers of communal land. Many papers on the Nigerian LUA and its effect on land possession are in the literature. Some researchers acknowledged that it is a successful policy. For example, Uzoamaka et al. [2] demonstrated that the LUA accomplished its purpose as it ensures accessibility to land, establish government control over land, thwart land speculation, reduce boundary disputes, and enable easy acquisition of land for agricultural purpose. Similarly, Onyia and Walter revealed that centralizing land ownership and streamlining land allocation processes has significant socio-economic impact as it influences increased agricultural productivity and facilitates rapid urban development [64]. However, there are many contrary perspectives in the literature. For instance, Adegbite and Oluwasegun did not see the Land Use Act as a perfect policy because its aims have not been fully achieved [65]. Also, Nwocha and Uzoamaka et al. [2] believed that two major obstacles hinder the success of the policy [2,66]. First, the law is characterized by intrinsic inconsistencies. Second, implementation of the Act is limited by institutional weakness and lack of political will. Furthermore, Okafor and Nwike showed that many people, particularly the inhabitants of rural communities are ignorant of the Act and its provisions regarding rural land as a factor for rural land development [67]. The consequence is a retardation of development in the rural areas and in the socio-economic conditions of the people. By and large, many studies reveal major issues relating to landlord and tenant relationships, the freehold to leasehold conversion, the astronomical rise in land values, and others. Finally, Stephen et al. revealed that the LUA is outdated and it is out of reach of the average citizen [68-70].

1.8. Land Policy Implication for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

On 25th September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the ambitious 2030 agenda for simultaneously confronting several major challenges of the 21st century. This came with a new set of development goals that are collectively referred to as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The agenda results from several years of negotiation and it was certified by 193 countries of the UN General Assembly including both developed and developing nations. The SDGs build on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that existed from 2000 to 2015 and expand them thematically and geographically [71,72]. Also, the Sustainable Development Goals were developed to explicitly and concurrently address three conceptual pillars

including economic, social, and ecological sustainability see [73,74]. The SDGs are concerned with the design of development that meets the present needs of society without compromising the needs of future generations [75]. Specifically, a total of 17 SDGs was defined and ratified as a transformation pathway to urgently tackle environmental, social and economic challenges facing our world [76]. The SDGs have five predominant themes, referred to as the five Ps: people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships, which span across the 17 SDGs [77-79]. Furthermore, Fu et al. abstracted the link between three categorizations of the SDGs as follows [80]:

- governance including effective regulation, equitable rules, and systems (see SDGs 9, 11, 12, 13, and 17)
- important human survival needs (see SDGs 2, 6, 7, 14, and 15)
- maximizing anticipated objectives (see SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, and 16)

The SDGs are not standalone goals but are rather linked to one another such that achieving one goal frequently leads to achieving another [81,82]. Research is thus required to comprehend the interconnections among SDG goals [83,84]. The emphasis on goal interaction responds in large part to the limitations of relying on single goal indicator-based systems that are not sufficient as decision support mechanisms because of their inability to provide adequate insights on possible synergies and trade-offs [85,86]. The 17 SDGs are further split into 169 targets that are more specific and tangible, and finally into 231 unique indicators to measure progress. SDG indicators constitute the measurable benchmarks via which the UN tracks each country's progress toward fulfilling the 2030 global agenda [87,88]. It is important to know that because of the complementarities of many of the goals and target areas, a single indicator may be suitable for measuring progress across some goals and targets. By and large, five SDGs recognise the importance of land to sustainable human development as shown in figure 2.

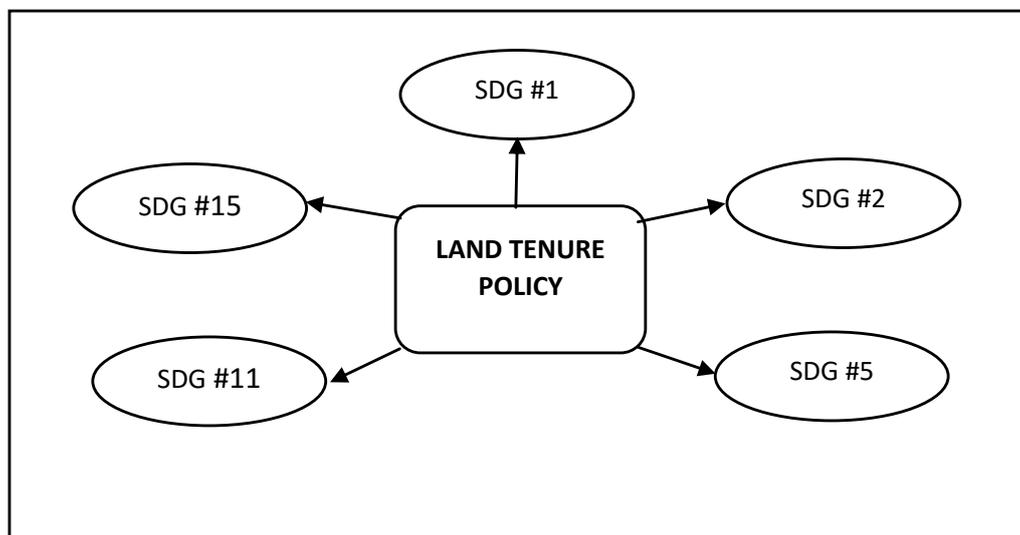


Figure 2: Nexus of land tenure system and SDGs.

1.9. No Poverty (SDG #1)

This goal certainly specifies “end poverty in all forms everywhere”, and it evidently shows the connection between elimination of poverty and poor access to resources that will fortify land tenure security. Land tenure security is the capacity to protect one's ownership, occupation, use, and access to land against outside interference. Unfortunately, almost one billion people around the world live under unstable land tenure arrangements. This has a significant impact on their ability to support themselves. Generally, it is a known fact that land tenure security has positive effects on agricultural investments, human well-being and environmental outcomes [89,90]. In other words, secured land tenure is a fundamental component towards accomplishing poverty reduction, household food security, and enhanced nutritional status for rural populace who depend majorly on agriculture for their livelihoods [91]. In a study on land tenure security, Oladehinde found that land tenure security is important for rural land use planning in many ways including sustainable land use, improvement

in land productivity, livelihood security, sustainable community, resolution of land dispute, poverty alleviation, reduction in environmental degradation, and food security. Many studies exist on the differences in urban and rural tenure perception [92]. According to Dodman et al., urban residents who has formal property documentation exhibit higher perceived security than their rural counterparts [93]. This urban advantage is credited to better access to formal registration systems and legal remedy. On the other hand, Nara et al. revealed that the reliance on customary land rights by the rural residents often results in lower perceived security [94]. Furthermore, perceived tenure security is significantly influenced by the classification of property documentation. Research by Dachaga and de Vries's shows that formal documents offer a stronger sense of security as compared to the informal ones.

The state monopoly over land ownership in Nigeria has made land tenure security to be very low [95]. Insecurity is mostly experienced in rural areas where the government has

acquired land for different projects and the affected people have not been compensated. It is also difficult to get and keep a title due to options for revocation by politicians; hence most people are without titles. It is however noteworthy that access to secured land can enhance poverty eradication or encourage economic growth [96]. This is because many people around the world depend on land, with its natural resources for their living and wellbeing. Therefore, it is widely believed that securing land tenure is essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals [97].

1.10. Zero Hunger (SDG #2)

The main aim of this goal is to end hunger, fulfil food security, and create sustainable agriculture. It emphasizes the importance of small-scale agricultural producers (Community Gardening) to feeding the world, especially the poor and vulnerable. Regrettably, agriculture in Nigeria is negatively affected due to lack of access to land and inefficient or corrupt systems of land administration. Of course, evidence in the literature indicates that households that owned their land are more likely to participate in agricultural programmes than those that did not [98]. Thus, land tilting has become essential for sustainable development because it protects ownership rights and land tenure in agriculture, especially in sub-Saharan Africa [99]. Land tenure plays an indispensable role in the livelihoods of farmers. Thus, the priority in land governance should be the livelihoods of people as it supports agricultural production through secure land tenure. It is indeed noteworthy that realistically strong markets can be financed by stable land tenure and can afford realistically good markets with extra benefits and prospects including production, input, and financial markets [100].

Land governance can significantly influence land use and the possibility of long-term sustainable investments. That is to say, land tenure is a major factor in decision-making in land use and agricultural management. For instance, the land registration and certification of smallholder farms and communal land will inspire land managers into higher value and more fruitful land uses. Secure rights will deliver incentives for longer-term investments to enhance land productivity, protect local communities, and generally safeguard the ecosystem [101,102]. There is a need for land management to allow for various stakeholders' involvement in government decisions and to also ensure the security of their livelihoods [103]. Therefore, land governance is a prerequisite for economic growth and the reduction of poverty in rural areas of developing countries [104]. Generally speaking, shared-use lands have a significant impact on the viability of social and environmental systems. The reason for this is that they can offer natural resources in the event of various crises and can also be used as an alternative source when crops are destroyed [105]. Land tenure and the condition of the environment are closely connected. This is because land tenure can encourage land use practices that harm the environment, or it can be used to enhance the environment [106].

1.11. Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls (SDG #5)

Gender equality indicates the elimination of any form of discrimination against any individual based on sex as regard the distribution of economic resources, political positions or access to social services [107]. Many studies reveal that gender inequality has devastating adverse effect on sustainable development [108]. The liberal feminists' argument suggest that our society is false by taking women to be inherently less intelligent and physically less strong than men [109]. They observed that male-controlled organizations and societies impose structural barriers that prevent women from benefiting from opportunities, power, and resources. Women are more likely than men to be deprived of opportunities [110]. Difficult access to land by women amplifies the already observable gender gap in Nigeria. Nigeria is largely characterized by a patrilineal social order with the males controlling nearly every sphere of life including landholding. Of course, the interest of women in land is not a subject of legal protection in Nigeria. This is so because certain customary laws and religious practices in Nigeria supports deprivation of women and preventing them from having a share in family and communal lands [111]. The implication of this is that many Nigerian women do not have ownership rights to land compared to their male counterparts [112]. Obi and Ifeamah examined the limits of the rights to inheritance of females over land under customary law and found out that there is still discrimination of women's property rights [113]. Yesufu and Nkomo explored gender discrimination in land and property rights and its implication for social work practice in Benin City, Nigeria [114]. The government, leaders, and elites are significant in the processes of providing land for investors with no consideration for women [115]. It is essential to have a legislative framework that makes the process transparent and promotes responsibilities and gender inclusion.

1.13. Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG #11)

Sustainable land management policies are of great importance for attaining sustainable cities and communities. Of course, it is important to consider land use efficiency and urban sprawl management in parallel with sustainable land management. Thus, sustainable land management could facilitate management between urban and rural areas in Nigeria with attention to land as the critical object in the process. The analysis of land has shed light on relationships with urban climatology and city planning through land-system architecture [116]. Land-use science is important in monitoring both regional and global urban changes, integrating expert knowledge in urban change detection and the dynamics of urban systems, predominantly in fast-growing regions of Asia and Africa [117].

1.14. Life on Land (SDG #15)

This goal when compared to others is the most related to land management. It encompasses many sectors, which could improve land management and prevent it in environmental, social and economic contexts. It aims to protect, restore, and promote the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems such as

lands and forests [118]. The fulfilment of SDG 15 is significant in delivering ecological services that are substantial for certifying safe and sustainable water supplies, supporting sustainable food systems, and mitigating or adapting to climate change. The disturbing rates of loss in biodiversity and degradation in several ecosystem services that are essential for humanity can be linked to land-use changes [119]. Sustainable land use, in turn, underpins ecosystem protection and the conservation of biodiversity [120,121].

1.15. Limitations of Nigeria's Land Policy for Achieving the Global Goals

In 2015, the international community agreed on the SDG Index to track the performances of a country on the 17 SDGs. In this regard, equal weight is assigned to all 17 global goals. The sustainable development report that was released in June 2020 indicates that the SDG Index score for Nigeria is 49.30. With this score, Nigeria occupies the 160th global position out of the assessed 166 nations. Norway clinched the first position in the world and Algeria occupy the first position in Africa with an SDG Index score of 72.30 at position 56/166 [122]. Nigeria's score signifies that the country is on average 49% towards accomplishing the best probable results across the 17 SDGs.

One of the fundamental objectives of Nigeria's Land Use Act is to make land readily available at an affordable rate to all Nigerians. Unfortunately, the Act has not achieved its objectives as there are inherent problems. According to Uzoamaka et al., the LUA is associated with some significant problems including the following [2]:

- lack of implementation guidelines
- entrenchment of the LUA in the Constitution
- inalienability of land in rural areas
- vesting of all land in government for the use and mutual advantage of Nigerians
- insufficient provisions of compensation
- compensation outside the jurisdiction of the courts
- clarification of the Act's age and rights to land for grazing

Also, the termination of the occupancy rights by the government is another problem faced by the landowners. The problem of implementation lies in the abuse of power by the governor, the inefficient public service, too much bureaucracy, and a lack of political will [123]. The sharp increase in land speculation and the phenomenal rise in land value in Nigeria are attributed to institutional weakness. Akintunde evaluated the LUA of 1978 and land administration in Nigeria [124]. The result demonstrates that although land administration is crucial to the sustainable use and management of land, the Nigerian Land Use Act's administrative structure lacks coherence and a clear understanding of its roles and objectives. The institutional framework for land policy administration in Nigeria is bureaucratic and ineffective, which usually results in more problems rather than anticipated solutions. Owing to bureaucratic bottlenecks in acquiring lands formally, which increase the time and monetary costs including informal costs such as gifts; only a few might be able to acquire land formally. The Land Use Act, which is meant to offer access

to land by all Nigerians irrespective of ethno-religious and cultural diversities is strange in some contexts as it clashes with the customary institutions and practices. Furthermore, there are neither administrative nor legal deadlines for the drawn-out processes involved in land allocation and title registration. A typical application may take months and, in most cases, years for a grant to be made by the state and applicants may have to sometimes be visiting the Lands Department for updates. In 2010, the World Bank rated Nigeria 178th among 183 countries in the world with enormous complications in registering properties. This constraint has limited a substantial number of the general population from transacting with the formal land market that is supported by the Land Use Act.

2. Conclusions

The preceding sections present the significance of land tenure policy towards attaining sustainable development goals in Nigeria. Existing literature shows that historical, cultural and economic factors have contributed immensely to Nigeria's land tenure system. Before the advent of colonization, Nigeria's traditional groups, villages, and kings' higher authorities held absolute power over the country's territory. The situation changed in the colonial period through various laws enacted by the colonial government. Similarly, the post-independence government in Nigeria inherited the colonial system, which has passed through many adjustments and readjustments over the years. The society's land ownership, development, and use patterns are shaped by its land policy. In other words, a good land policy is necessary for the sustainability of the land and its usage since it establishes rights, protection, and transfer regarding land. Several legislation, customary norms, and conventions governed land policies and administration in Nigeria before its independence in 1960, with a focus on regional groupings. As part of the nationalization strategy, the Land Use Act of 1978 was passed to harmonize the multiple land tenure regimes for convenience of management and oversight. Yet, the Act has not performed sufficiently in terms of creating viable and sustainable channels of land delivery. The Bureaucratic bottleneck and weak institutional framework for its administration have created multiple channels of land accessibility with their attendant problems. Of course, LUA, which is meant to enhance the nationalization of all land, has resulted in high inaccessibility, especially for smallholders. Property rights in estates are restricted to occupancy only, generating low incentives for investment. Summarily, this review found that access to land or securing tenure rights for all is central to ensuring sustainable social and economic opportunities needed to eradicate poverty (SDG 1), contribute to food security (SDG 2), eradicate gender equality and empower women (SDG 5), build inclusive, resilient, and sustainable urban areas (SDG 11), and to reduce land degradation (SDG 15).

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