

Synopsis: Scrutinizing the status quo: Rural transformation and land tenure security in Nigeria

Hosaena Ghebru and Fikirte Girmachew

RESEARCH OVERVIEW

Despite growing consensus on the socio-economic benefits emanating from enhanced land tenure security, how best to measure it and what constitute universal indicators of tenure (in)security remain open questions. As a result, what drives tenure security is poorly understood.

This study examines the drivers of perceived tenure insecurity in Nigeria. The determinants of perceived tenure insecurity are assessed across two indicators: private (idiosyncratic) tenure risk and collective (covariate) tenure security risk (Figure 1). The analysis shows that both private and collective tenure risk are higher for land parcels acquired via the traditional customary system, in contrast to purchased parcels. Private tenure

risk/insecurity is higher in communities with vibrant land markets and for households that are located close to urban centers. On the other hand, collective tenure risk is lower in communities with improved economic status.¹

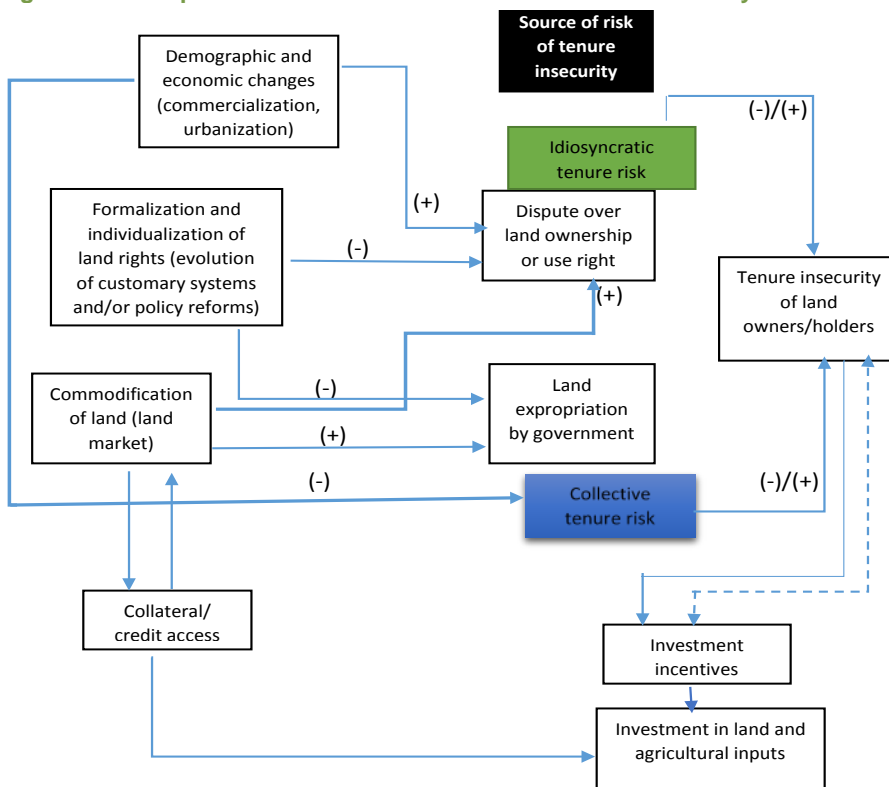
BACKGROUND

Decisions by farmers on agricultural investments to their land to enhance long term agricultural production rest significantly on expectations regarding the length of time over which the benefits will be realized. These expectations depend mainly on farmers' sense of land tenure security, which can be influenced by two potential sources, namely: i) risk of losing land ownership or use-rights due to dispute or eviction by individuals, i.e., private tenure risk; or, ii) due to expropriation by the government, i.e., collective tenure risk. The perception of households regarding tenure security is assumed to be influenced by three main elements: formalization and individualization of land rights; commodification or commercialization of land; or economic and demographic changes in rural areas. Hence, the factors that determine perceived tenure (in)security might have distinct effects depending on the source of the perceived tenure insecurity.

RESEARCH APPROACH AND RESULTS

The study used the second wave of the Nigeria Living Standards Measurement Study-Integrated Surveys on

Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the drivers of tenure insecurity



Source: Adapted from Ghebru & Lambrecht (2017).

¹ A detailed discussion of this research can be found in NSSP Working Paper 43, *Scrutinizing the status quo: Rural transformation and land tenure security in Nigeria*. <http://ebrary.ifpri.org/cdm/ref/collection/p15738coll2/id/131363>

Agriculture (LSMS-ISA) panel survey collected by the National Bureau of Statistics in collaboration with the World Bank in 2012 and 2013. The sample is made up of the 2,976 households that were eligible to respond to the land tenure module. These households manage 5,893 plots. However, the main analysis is done by excluding rented-in plots, since such plots are characterized by temporary access to land and, hence, a greater likelihood of tenure insecurity. Probit estimation techniques are used for the econometric analysis. Tenure insecurity is proxied by perception-based indicators, namely, private (idiosyncratic) or collective (covariate) tenure risk/insecurity.

The results from plot-level regression analyses show that the probability of perceptions of private land dispute is higher for female plot managers within female-headed households (Table 1). Even though women's inheritance rights are acknowledged in statutory law, these rights are not assured in implementation or in integration with customary law. The probability of private land dispute and land expropriation is lower for plots acquired through purchase as compared to plots acquired via customary means of allocation.

At community-level, perceived risk of private land dispute is higher in communities where the land market is more vibrant. On the other hand, perceived risk of land expropriation by the government is lower in communities with improved economic situations.

CONCLUSIONS

These results reinforce the growing consensus that property rights under traditional or customary tenure systems are weakening due to social (migration, urbanization) and economic (commercialization, land commodification) transformations. Over the last decade or so, Nigeria has been at the forefront among countries in pursuing reforms to enhance land tenure security, particularly through the systematic land tenure regularization (SLTR) program. However, as

Table 1. Factors associated with perceived land tenure insecurity-plot level (marginal effects)

Explanatory variables	Model 1 Private idiosyn- cratic risk	Model 2 Collective covariate risk
Female plot manager*Female head	-0.134 (0.11)	0.135** (0.07)
Community-level prevalence of land market †	0.034* (0.02)	0.014 (0.01)
Economic vibrancy ††	0.006 (0.02)	-0.028** (0.01)
Community-level years since plot acquisition †††	-0.056*** (0.02)	0.004 (0.01)
Plot is used free of charge	0.156**** (0.04)	0.135**** (0.03)
Plot is distributed by community or family	0.075** (0.04)	0.053*** (0.02)
Pseudo R ²	0.032	0.050
Prob > Chi ²	0.000	0.000

Source: LSMS-ISA (2012/13). Observations; 4,930.

Notes:

† | if proportion of households in community who participate in the land market is greater than the median proportion; 0 otherwise.

†† | if proportion of households in community with modern roofing materials is greater than the median proportion; 0 otherwise.

††† | if proportion of households in community who acquired their first plot within the last 10 years is greater than the median proportion; 0 otherwise.

For Model 1 and Model 2, dependent variables are perceived risk of private land dispute; and perceived risk of land expropriation by the government, respectively.

Figure in parenthesis are standard errors; **** significant at 0.1%; *** significant at 1%; ** significant at 5%; * significant at 10%.

programs like SLTR tend to provide blanket solutions, such mega-projects may not necessarily guarantee success in securing land rights.

Showing the importance of having context and location specific interventions in safeguarding land tenure rights, our gender-disaggregated analyses shows that tenure security is relatively higher on female-managed plots of female-headed households, while the opposite is the case for female-managed plots of male-headed households. Such findings are indicative of the need for SLTR implementation in Nigeria to operationalize parcel-based land registration rather than household-based land titling, so that such intra-household dimensions of land tenure security will be addressed.

INTERNATIONAL FOOD POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE | 1201 Eye Street, NW | Washington, DC 20005-3915 USA
T: +1.202.862.5600 | F: +1.202.862.5606 | Email: ifpri@cgiar.org | www.ifpri.org

IFPRI-ABUJA | c/o International Fertilizer Development Center | No.6 Ogbagi Street | Off Oro-Ago Crescent, Garki II | Abuja, Nigeria | Email: ifpri-nigeria@cgiar.org | nssp.ifpri.org

The Nigeria Strategy Support Program (NSSP) is managed by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and is financially made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in connection with the Feed the Future Nigeria Agricultural Policy Project. The research presented here was conducted as part of the CGIAR Research Program on Policies, Institutions, and Markets (PIM), which is led by IFPRI. This publication has been prepared as an output of NSSP. It has not been independently peer reviewed. Any opinions expressed here belong to the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of IFPRI, USAID, PIM, or CGIAR.

Copyright © 2017. Remains with the author(s). All rights reserved.