

Assessing the Role of Good Governance and Policy Making in Land Use abuse Monitoring and Management in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Land-use abuse presents a significant challenge to sustainable development in Nigeria, with far-reaching implications for environmental sustainability, economic growth, and social equity. In view of the above premise, this paper critically examines the role of good governance and policy frameworks in monitoring and managing land use abuses across Nigeria. The study explores the multifaceted nature of land use challenges, including urban sprawl, deforestation, unregulated mining, and indiscriminate land conversion for industrial and residential purposes, which exacerbate environmental degradation and socio-economic disparities. By adopting a mixed-methods approach, this paper draws on case studies and policy reviews to evaluate the effectiveness of existing governance mechanisms and land use policies. Particular attention was given to the interplay between transparency, accountability, and community participation in addressing land use abuse. The analysis highlights the gaps in policy enforcement, institutional coordination, and resource allocation that hinder effective land use monitoring and management. This research then provides actionable insights for policymakers, land professionals, and other stakeholders, contributing to the discourse on sustainable land management in Nigeria and offering a blueprint for addressing similar challenges in other developing countries.

The specific objectives of this study are to: (a) examine existing land policies and governance structures to assess their effectiveness in addressing land use abuse and promoting sustainable management, (b) investigate the relationship between governance quality and land use outcomes, focusing on transparency, accountability, public participation, and institutional efficiency, (c) identify the technological, institutional, and policy innovations that can improve land use monitoring and management in Nigeria, and (d) provide a framework for multi-stakeholder collaboration in mitigating land use abuse and ensuring equitable land access.

Key Findings includes: i. Governance and Institutional Weaknesses: Weak enforcement of regulations, overlapping responsibilities among government agencies, and pervasive corruption are major barriers to effective land management. Institutional capacity is often undermined by inadequate funding and a lack of technical expertise. ii. Policy Gaps: The Land Use Act of 1978, which centralizes land ownership under state governors, has led to bureaucratic inefficiencies and inequities in land allocation. It lacks provisions for modern urban planning challenges and environmental sustainability. iii. Urban and Rural Disparities: In urban areas like Lagos and Abuja, rapid urbanization drives unauthorized developments, while rural regions face issues such as land grabbing, deforestation, and illegal mining. iv. Technological Shortfalls: While Geographic Information System (GIS) and satellite technologies are increasingly used, their adoption remains limited due to high costs, lack of expertise, and inadequate infrastructure. v. Community Exclusion: Limited stakeholder participation and public awareness contribute to the disconnect between policy objectives and ground realities.

The study concludes that good governance, characterized by clear accountability mechanisms, stakeholder collaboration, and the integration of digital technologies, is essential for addressing land use abuse in Nigeria.

Recommendations includes: i. Policy Overhaul: Amend the Land Use Act of 1978 to incorporate decentralized land governance, stronger environmental safeguards, and clearer guidelines for equitable land allocation. ii. Technological Integration: Expand the use of GIS, drones, and AI-driven monitoring tools to improve real-time

data collection, enhance transparency, and streamline enforcement mechanisms. iii. Institutional Reforms: Strengthen land governance institutions through increased funding, training, and capacity building. Establish a centralized, digital land registry to reduce conflicts and improve efficiency. iv. Public Engagement: Foster inclusive decision-making by involving community stakeholders in land governance processes. Conduct awareness campaigns to educate citizens on land rights and environmental conservation. iv. Inter-agency Collaboration: Harmonize the roles of government agencies involved in land management to eliminate overlaps and foster coordinated action. iv. Sustainable Financing: Develop financing models to support technological adoption and capacity-building programs, including public-private partnerships and international Aid.

Keywords: Land use, good governance, Urban sprawl, Deforestation, Environmental degradation, Policy frameworks

INTRODUCTION

Land is a finite and critical resource essential for various socio-economic activities, including agriculture, industrial development, housing, and environmental sustainability. In Nigeria, as in many other developing countries, the management and use of land are intrinsically tied to issues of governance, policy formulation, and socio-economic development. With a population exceeding 200 million and rapid urbanization rates, the pressure on Nigeria's land resources has intensified, leading to widespread land use conflicts, environmental degradation, and abuse of land allocation systems (FAO, 2020). The implications of poor land management are far-reaching, affecting everything from food security to the displacement of communities, deforestation, desertification, and the overall health of the country's ecosystems (World Bank, 2020). Land, as a critical natural resource, plays a pivotal role in the economic and social development of Nigeria. However, its management has been fraught with challenges, particularly land use abuse, which includes illegal land acquisitions, deforestation, unsustainable agricultural practices, and urban sprawl. Effective land use monitoring and management are essential for environmental sustainability and socio-economic growth. Good governance, coupled with well-implemented policies, is fundamental in tackling these issues.

Historically, land in Nigeria has been governed by complex and often inefficient legal and administrative systems that have contributed to its mismanagement (Rilwani, Bello, & Oenothera, 2015). One of the most significant laws governing land in Nigeria is the Land Use Act of 1978. While the act was intended to standardize land ownership, democratize access to land, and ensure that land serves the public interest, it has, in practice, exacerbated problems of land tenure insecurity, corruption, and inefficient land use (Buba & Oyerinde, 2021). This is largely due to governance failures, lack of transparency, and weak institutional frameworks responsible for enforcing land use policies. Over time, these challenges have led to widespread abuse in how land is allocated, used, and managed across the country, especially in urban areas and resource-rich regions like the South East and the Niger Delta (Murdock & Ogoniba, 2019; Bello, Chigbu & Agbaje, 2017). At the heart of the land use dilemma in Nigeria is the issue of governance. Good governance is crucial to the proper management of land resources, as it ensures that land is allocated fairly, used sustainably, and protected from illegal exploitation (Bello, Usman & Abubakar, 2022). Governance refers not only to the institutions and policies that manage land but also to the processes through which decisions regarding land use are made, the transparency and accountability of these decisions, and the participation of citizens in decision-making (Ojo, 2020). In many cases, the absence of these governance principles has led to the abuse of land resources, particularly by elites who exploit weak legal frameworks to acquire land illegally or through corrupt practices (Ayodele, 2020). Moreover, poor governance in land management often goes hand-in-hand with weak policy implementation. Although Nigeria has various policies and laws intended to regulate land use, these are often undermined by corruption, inadequate enforcement, and a lack of political will (Umeh, 2020). For instance, environmental impact assessments (EIAs) are meant to regulate the impact of development projects on the environment and ensure sustainable land use, are frequently ignored or by-passed, leading to unsustainable exploitation of land resources (Odumosu & Afolabi, 2021). Similarly, zoning laws and urban planning regulations are regularly flouted; contributing to chaotic urban sprawl, slum development, and the mis-allocation of land in urban areas.

The consequences of poor governance and weak land use policies in Nigeria are visible across various sectors (Bello et al., 2022). In agriculture, the mismanagement of land has resulted in reduced productivity, food insecurity, and rural poverty (NBS, 2020; Bello & Shaba, 2021). In urban areas, rapid and unregulated

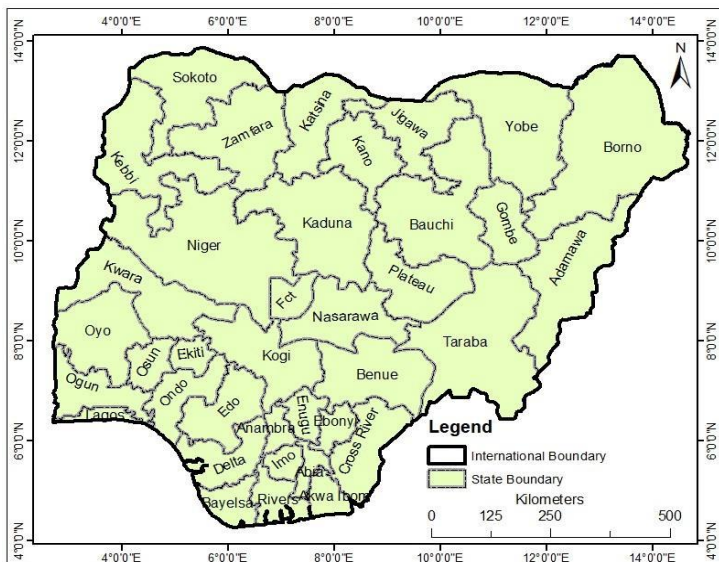
urbanization has led to the rise of informal settlements, inadequate infrastructure, and environmental degradation. For example, in resource-rich areas like the Niger Delta, the failure to enforce land use regulations has allowed for the uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources, resulting in pollution, loss of biodiversity, and widespread land degradation (Sambo, 2021). In recent years, however, there has been growing recognition of the need for improved governance and policy reforms in land use management. Both international organizations such as the World Bank and the United Nations, and local civil society groups have called for reforms that promote sustainable land use, equitable access to land, and the protection of Nigeria’s land resources from abuse and degradation (UNDP, 2019). These calls for reform are based on the understanding that good governance—characterized by transparency, accountability, inclusivity, and the rule of law—is essential to the successful monitoring and management of land use in Nigeria.

Historical Background to Land Governance in Nigeria

Understanding the current landscape of land governance in Nigeria requires a deep dive into its historical context. This is in-view of the landmass made up of different tribes and culture from north to south and east to west as encapsulated in the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (Fig. 1). Prior to colonial rule, land management was largely based on customary laws, with communities and traditional authorities governing land usage and ownership (Olujayetan & Bello, 2019). Under these systems, land was considered a communal resource, and usage rights were typically assigned based on family ties, social status, and local customs. This system promoted equitable access and sustainable practices, as communities depended on land for their livelihoods (Akinola, 2019). The introduction of British colonial rule in the late 19th century fundamentally altered the traditional land tenure system. Colonial authorities enacted laws that enabled them to exert control over land, primarily for economic exploitation. The most notable of these was the Crown Lands Ordinance of 1910, which declared all land not privately owned as belonging to the British Crown. This law effectively stripped local communities of their land rights, facilitating large-scale agricultural ventures and resource extraction that primarily benefited colonial interests (Bromley, 2020). The dislocation of local populations and the disregard for customary land rights laid the foundation for numerous land conflicts that persist to this day.

Post-independence Nigeria sought to reform its land tenure system to address the injustices created by colonial policies. The Land Use Act of 1978 represented a significant shift in land governance. It aimed to centralize land management, transferring authority from traditional rulers and local governments to state governors. While the act was intended to ensure equitable access to land and prevent land monopolization, it inadvertently concentrated power in the hands of state officials, leading to widespread corruption and abuse (Mabogunje, 2018). As a result, the act has been criticized for complicating land tenure security, particularly for rural communities that still relied on customary land systems (Buba & Oyerinde, 2021).

Fig 1. Map Of Nigeria Showing The 36 States and The Federal Capital Territory



Source: Open Street Map (OSM)

The Role of Good Governance in Land Use Management

Good governance is essential for sustainable land use management, as it establishes the frameworks and processes that guide how land resources are allocated and utilized (Bello, 2024). Effective governance involves principles such as transparency, accountability, inclusivity, and the rule of law, all of which are necessary for preventing land abuse and ensuring equitable land distribution (Ojo, 2020). These principles are examined below:

1. **Transparency:** Transparent governance ensures that land use decisions are made openly and that the processes for land allocation are clear to all stakeholders. This reduces the opportunities for corruption, as decisions are subject to public scrutiny. For example, when land leases are made public and subject to community input, it becomes more challenging for corrupt practices to thrive. This will also help to check-mate illegal land grabbing (Rilwani, Bello & Onothoja, 2015).
2. **Accountability:** Accountability mechanisms hold public officials responsible for their decisions and actions regarding land management. Establishing clear lines of accountability can deter corruption and encourage adherence to land use regulations. In Nigeria, mechanisms such as the Public Complaints Commission and anti-corruption agencies (EFCC) play a crucial role in holding officials accountable for land-related abuses (Transparency International, 2021).
3. **Inclusivity:** Good governance in land use management requires the active participation of all stakeholders, including local communities, civil society organizations, and marginalized groups. Involving communities in decision-making processes ensures that land use policies reflect local needs and perspectives. It also empowers communities to advocate for their rights and challenge unjust land allocations (Umeh, 2020; Rilwani, Bello & Onothoja, 2015).
4. **Rule of Law:** The rule of law is fundamental to good governance, as it ensures that land use regulations are enforced consistently and fairly. This requires a well-functioning judiciary that can adjudicate land disputes and uphold land rights. In Nigeria, weak judicial systems and delayed court processes often undermine land tenure security and exacerbate land conflicts which negates good governance (Ayodele, 2020; Bello, 2024).

Challenges to Good Governance in Land Use Management

Despite the recognized importance of good governance, numerous challenges hinder effective land use management in Nigeria. These challenges include:

- i. **Corruption:** Corruption remains one of the most significant barriers to good governance in land management. The allocation of land often involves bribery and favoritism, with officials misusing their powers for personal gain. For instance, investigations have revealed that land meant for public use is frequently allocated to private developers through corrupt practices, resulting in significant losses to the public (Sambo, 2021).
- ii. **Weak Institutional Frameworks:** Many institutions responsible for land management in Nigeria lack the capacity, resources, and political support to enforce land use policies effectively. This includes inadequate staff training, insufficient funding, and limited access to technology for monitoring land use changes (Bello, Usman & Abubakar, 2022). As a result, land management agencies often struggle to perform their roles, leading to unregulated land use and increased conflicts (Murdock & Ogoniba, 2019).
- iii. **Lack of Public Awareness:** There is a general lack of awareness among the public regarding their land rights and the legal frameworks governing land use. Many communities are unaware of the legal protections available to them, making them vulnerable to exploitation. This lack of awareness also extends to civil society organizations, which can play a crucial role in advocating for land rights (Odumosu & Afolabi, 2021).
- iv. **Political Will:** The lack of political will to implement necessary reforms and enforce land use regulations has contributed to the persistence of land abuse in Nigeria (Agbaje, Bello & Ojo, 2017). Political leaders often prioritize short-term gains over long-term sustainability, resulting in policies that favor immediate economic benefits at the expense of environmental protection and social equity (Oruonye, 2019).

The Impact of Poor Land Governance

The ramifications of poor land governance in Nigeria are significant and multifaceted, impacting various sectors of society and the environment (Bello, Uman & Abubakar, 2022). Some of the most pressing impacts include:

1. **Environmental Degradation:** Poorly managed land use practices have led to severe environmental consequences, including deforestation, soil erosion, and loss of biodiversity. The unregulated expansion of agriculture and urban development has resulted in the destruction of natural habitats and ecosystems, undermining the ecological balance (Nigerian Conservation Foundation, 2020).
2. **Land Conflicts:** Ineffective land governance has contributed to numerous land disputes and conflicts among communities, ethnic groups, and individuals. These conflicts often escalate into violence, resulting in loss of life, displacement of people, and destruction of property. The Niger Delta region, in particular, has experienced significant violence related to land and resource rights, driven by grievances over oil exploitation and environmental degradation (Ebeku, 2021).
3. **Food Insecurity:** Land mismanagement directly affects agricultural productivity, leading to food insecurity and poverty among rural communities. Inadequate land tenure security discourages investment in sustainable agricultural practices, resulting in decreased yields and livelihoods for smallholder farmers (FAO, 2020).
4. **Urban Challenges:** Rapid urbanization in Nigeria has resulted in informal settlements and inadequate infrastructure, as land use policies fail to keep pace with population growth. Poor urban planning has led to overcrowding, inadequate sanitation, and increased vulnerability to environmental hazards, such as flooding (Enogholase & Omowale, 2020).

Overview of Land Use in Nigeria

Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, covers approximately 923,768 square kilometers. The country is endowed with vast arable lands, forests, and mineral resources. Land use in Nigeria is diverse, encompassing agriculture, housing, industrial activities, and conservation. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), about 70% of Nigeria's land is used for agriculture, and over 25% is under forest cover (FAO, 2020). The rapid population growth and urbanization, however, have placed enormous pressure on land resources. Consequently, issues such as land degradation, deforestation, desertification, and illegal land transactions have become increasingly prominent. These forms of land use abuse exacerbate socio-economic inequalities and environmental degradation (United Nations, 2020).

Understanding Land Use Abuse in Nigeria

Land use abuse in Nigeria encompasses a range of practices that violate sustainable land management principles. These practices often stem from weak governance, ineffective policies, and the inability of regulatory institutions to enforce existing laws. The key forms of land use abuse include:

1. **Deforestation:** Nigeria has one of the highest deforestation rates in the world, losing approximately 400,000 hectares of forest annually. The primary drivers of deforestation are illegal logging, agricultural expansion, and urbanization (Nigerian Conservation Foundation, 2020).
2. **Urban Sprawl and Unplanned Development:** Uncontrolled urbanization leads to the conversion of agricultural and forest lands into residential and industrial areas without proper planning or consideration for environmental impacts (ERA/FoEN, 2019).
3. **Encroachment on Protected Areas:** Nigeria's protected forests and reserves are increasingly being encroached upon for farming, mining, and other economic activities (ERA/FoEN, 2019).
4. **Land Grabbing:** Illegal land acquisition by influential individuals, companies, or the government often

displaces local communities, leading to socio-economic conflicts and environmental degradation (Transparency International, 2021).

The Role of Governance in Land Use Monitoring

Good governance in land use management refers to the implementation of transparent, accountable, and inclusive practices that ensure the equitable distribution and sustainable utilization of land resources. In Nigeria, poor governance has been a significant contributing factor to land use abuse. The country's land tenure system, which is governed by the Land Use Act of 1978, places land ownership in the hands of state governors, making it prone to political manipulation and corruption (ERA/FoEN, 2019).

a) Characteristics of Good Governance

Good governance in land use management encompasses several key principles, including:

1. **Accountability:** Government institutions and land management authorities must be accountable to the public. Accountability mechanisms include regular reporting, audits, and public access to information concerning land allocations and land use planning (FAO, 2020).
2. **Transparency:** Land use policies and decisions must be transparent and easily accessible to the public. Transparent processes help reduce corruption and ensure that land resources are used in the best interest of society (ERA/FoEN, 2019).
3. **Participation:** Inclusive decision-making processes that involve local communities, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders are critical for ensuring that land use decisions reflect the needs of all groups, especially marginalized populations (FAO, 2020).
4. **Rule of Law:** Adherence to the rule of law is essential for effective land use management. Laws must be enforced consistently, and violators of land use regulations should face appropriate penalties (Transparency International, 2021).

b) Impact of Poor Governance on Land Use Abuse

The failure of governance structures in Nigeria has led to widespread land use abuse. Weak enforcement of land laws, corruption, and political interference have allowed individuals and organizations to engage in illegal land transactions and unsustainable land use practices with impunity. For example, in urban areas, the lack of proper planning regulations has led to the growth of informal settlements on lands designated for other uses, contributing to environmental degradation and health risks for residents (ERA/FoEN, 2019). Furthermore, corruption within land management institutions has resulted in the illegal allocation of land in forests, parks, and other protected areas for commercial purposes. This has had devastating effects on biodiversity, ecosystems, and the livelihoods of indigenous communities (Transparency International, 2021).

Policy Framework for Land Use Monitoring in Nigeria

The Nigerian government has established various policies and legal frameworks aimed at land use monitoring and management. However, the implementation of these policies has been inconsistent and often undermined by corruption, lack of capacity, and political interference.

i) The Land Use Act of 1978

The Land Use Act of 1978 is the primary legislation governing land ownership and use in Nigeria. It vests all land in the state under the control of the governor, who holds the land in trust for the people (ERA/FoEN, 2019). While the Act was intended to simplify land acquisition processes and promote equitable distribution, it has also facilitated land use abuse, especially when governors exercise their powers arbitrarily. Critics argue that the Act has led to the concentration of land in the hands of political elites and has made it difficult for local communities

to secure land rights. Additionally, the Act has contributed to inefficient land use monitoring, as state governors often allocate land without regard for environmental sustainability or community needs (Transparency International, 2021).

ii) National Land Policy

The Nigerian National Land Policy, introduced in 2012, aims to promote sustainable land use and equitable access to land resources. The policy emphasizes land tenure security, community participation in land management, and the protection of environmental resources (FAO, 2020). However, the lack of a comprehensive legal framework for enforcing the policy has limited its impact. The policy also highlights the importance of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) in land use monitoring, allowing for more accurate data collection and better land management practices. Despite the potential benefits of GIS, its adoption in Nigeria has been slow due to inadequate funding and technical expertise (FAO, 2020).

iii) Environmental Policies

Nigeria has also enacted various environmental policies aimed at promoting sustainable land use. These include the National Environmental Policy (1989), the Nigerian Forestry Act, and the National Policy on Desertification Control. These policies aim to curb deforestation, protect biodiversity, and promote sustainable agricultural practices (Nigerian Conservation Foundation, 2020). However, the implementation of these environmental policies has been weak, with limited coordination between federal, state, and local governments. Moreover, enforcement agencies often lack the resources and authority to monitor and regulate land use effectively (ERA/FoEN, 2019).

The Role of International Organizations in Land Use Monitoring

International organizations play a significant role in promoting good governance and sustainable land use practices in Nigeria. The United Nations (UN), the World Bank, and other international bodies have provided technical assistance, funding, and policy guidance to support land use monitoring efforts. For instance, the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 15, emphasize the importance of protecting, restoring, and promoting the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems (United Nations, 2020). The World Bank has also provided financial support for projects aimed at improving land governance and reducing land use conflicts in Nigeria (World Bank, 2020). International non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Conservation International have also worked to promote sustainable land use practices in Nigeria. These organizations have focused on protecting Nigeria's forests and promoting sustainable agriculture, often working with local communities to ensure that land use decisions are made inclusively and transparently (Nigerian Conservation Foundation, 2020).

Challenges of Land Use Monitoring and Management in Nigeria

Several challenges have hindered effective land use monitoring and management in Nigeria, including:

a) Inadequate Institutional Capacity

Many of Nigeria's land management institutions lack the technical expertise, funding, and human resources needed to effectively monitor and manage land use. For example, the country's land survey departments often rely on outdated maps and technologies, making it difficult to track illegal land transactions or monitor environmental degradation (FAO, 2020).

b) Corruption

Corruption is a significant obstacle to effective land use management in Nigeria. Government officials, land administrators, and political elites often engage in illegal land transactions, undermining the rule of law and perpetuating land use abuse. According to Transparency International, Nigeria ranks among the most corrupt countries globally, with land-related corruption being particularly rampant (Transparency International, 2021).

c) Weak Enforcement of Land Use Policies

Despite the existence of land use policies and laws, their enforcement remains weak. The lack of coordination between federal, state, and local governments has created gaps in the implementation of land use policies. Additionally, enforcement agencies often lack the authority or resources to hold violators accountable (ERA/FoEN, 2019).

d) Population Growth and Urbanization

Nigeria's rapid population growth, estimated at 2.6% annually, is placing immense pressure on land resources. This has led to uncontrolled urbanization, with cities expanding into agricultural lands, wetlands, and forests. The absence of proper urban planning has resulted in the emergence of informal settlements, contributing to environmental degradation and exacerbating land use abuse (FAO, 2020).

e) Land Tenure Insecurity

In Nigeria, land tenure insecurity is a significant issue that fuels land use abuse. Many citizens, especially those in rural areas, lack formal titles to the land they occupy, making them vulnerable to land grabbing by powerful elites or corporations. The absence of secure land tenure also discourages investment in sustainable land management practices, as farmers and landowners fear losing their land without compensation (ERA/FoEN, 2019).

Technological Solutions for Land Use Monitoring

In recent years, technology has emerged as a critical tool for monitoring and managing land use. The integration of modern technologies into land management systems can enhance transparency, accuracy, and accountability in land governance.

i) Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Remote Sensing

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and remote sensing are essential tools for monitoring and managing land use. They provide accurate and up-to-date spatial data that can inform land management decisions and help track illegal activities such as deforestation, land grabbing, and encroachment on protected areas. By integrating satellite imagery, GIS allows for the visualization and analysis of land use changes over time, offering a powerful tool for decision-makers (FAO, 2020). In Nigeria, the use of GIS and remote sensing has shown promise in forest monitoring, urban planning, and agricultural management. However, the adoption of these technologies has been limited due to several challenges, including insufficient technical expertise, high costs, and inadequate infrastructure. To address these issues, the Nigerian government and relevant institutions must invest in capacity-building programs that train personnel on the use of GIS and other land monitoring technologies (Nigerian Conservation Foundation, 2020).

ii) Role of Blockchain in Land Use Management

Blockchain technology offers potential in improving land governance, particularly in securing land tenure and preventing fraudulent land transactions. Through blockchain, land records can be digitized, ensuring that they are immutable, transparent, and easily verifiable. This would significantly reduce instances of land fraud and corruption in Nigeria (Transparency International, 2021). Some countries have already implemented blockchain-based land registries, which have proven effective in providing secure and transparent land records. For Nigeria, the adoption of blockchain in land governance would require reforms in the land registration process and investment in digital infrastructure (FAO, 2020).

Role of Civil Society in Land Use Monitoring

Civil society organizations (CSOs) and local communities play a vital role in land use monitoring and management in Nigeria. These organizations act as watchdogs, advocating for sustainable land use practices and holding government institutions accountable for illegal land allocations and deforestation (ERA/FoEN, 2019).

a) Advocacy for Land Rights and Environmental Sustainability

Civil society groups such as the Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth Nigeria (ERA/FoEN) and the Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF) have been at the forefront of advocating for sustainable land use practices. These organizations raise awareness about the environmental impacts of land use abuse and work to ensure that land use decisions are made in a transparent and inclusive manner (ERA/FoEN, 2019). Through advocacy campaigns, public protests, and legal actions, civil society groups have challenged illegal land acquisitions and deforestation in Nigeria. For example, ERA/FoEN has successfully challenged several land deals involving multinational companies that were found to be violating environmental laws and displacing local communities (ERA/FoEN, 2019).

b) Community-Based Monitoring Initiatives

Community-based monitoring initiatives involve local communities in tracking land use changes, reporting illegal activities, and participating in land management decisions. These initiatives empower communities to take ownership of their land and natural resources, ensuring that land use practices align with local needs and environmental conservation efforts (FAO, 2020). In Nigeria, several community-based organizations (CBOs) have been involved in monitoring land use practices, particularly in forested areas. By collaborating with government institutions and international organizations, CBOs can provide valuable on-the-ground data that informs land use policies and helps identify areas at risk of illegal deforestation or land degradation (Nigerian Conservation Foundation, 2020).

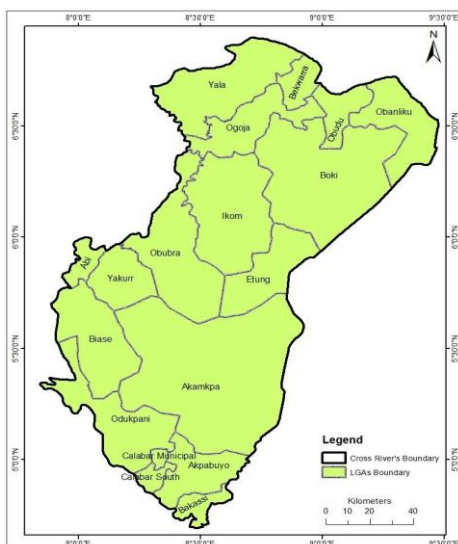
Case Studies of Land Use Abuse in Nigeria

To better understand the role of governance and policies in addressing land use abuse, it is essential to examine specific cases of land mismanagement in Nigeria. The following case studies highlight how weak governance, ineffective policies, and corruption contribute to land use abuse.

i) Deforestation in Cross River State

Cross River State in southern Nigeria is home to some of the country's last remaining rainforests, which are part of the larger Guinean Forests of West Africa biodiversity hotspot. However, the state's forests have been under significant threat due to illegal logging, agricultural expansion, and infrastructure development. Despite government efforts to designate parts of the forest as protected areas, weak enforcement of environmental laws and corruption within the forestry sector have allowed deforestation to continue unabated (ERA/FoEN, 2019). In recent years, local communities, supported by civil society organizations, have called for stronger governance and enforcement of forest protection laws. The implementation of community-based forest management programs has shown some success in curbing illegal logging, but the lack of political will and inadequate funding for forest monitoring remain significant challenges (Nigerian Conservation Foundation, 2020).

Fig 2: Map of Cross River State showing the Local Government Areas of the State



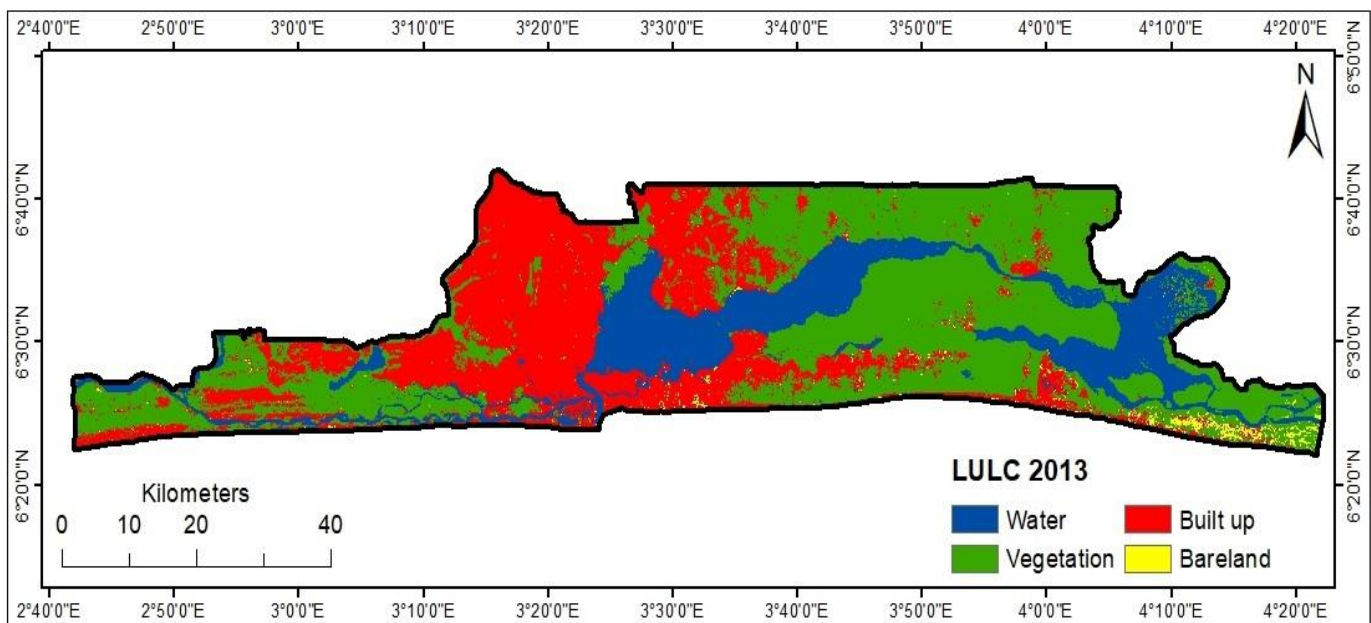
Source: GRID 3

ii) **Urban Sprawl in Lagos**

Lagos, Nigeria's largest city, has experienced rapid urbanization over the past few decades (Agbje, Bello & Ojo, 2017). This urban growth has been characterized by the unchecked expansion of informal settlements into agricultural lands, wetlands, and other ecologically sensitive areas. The lack of effective urban planning and land use policies has resulted in environmental degradation, flooding, and the displacement of local communities (ERA/FoEN, 2019). The Lagos State government has attempted to address these issues through various urban renewal projects and land reclamation efforts.

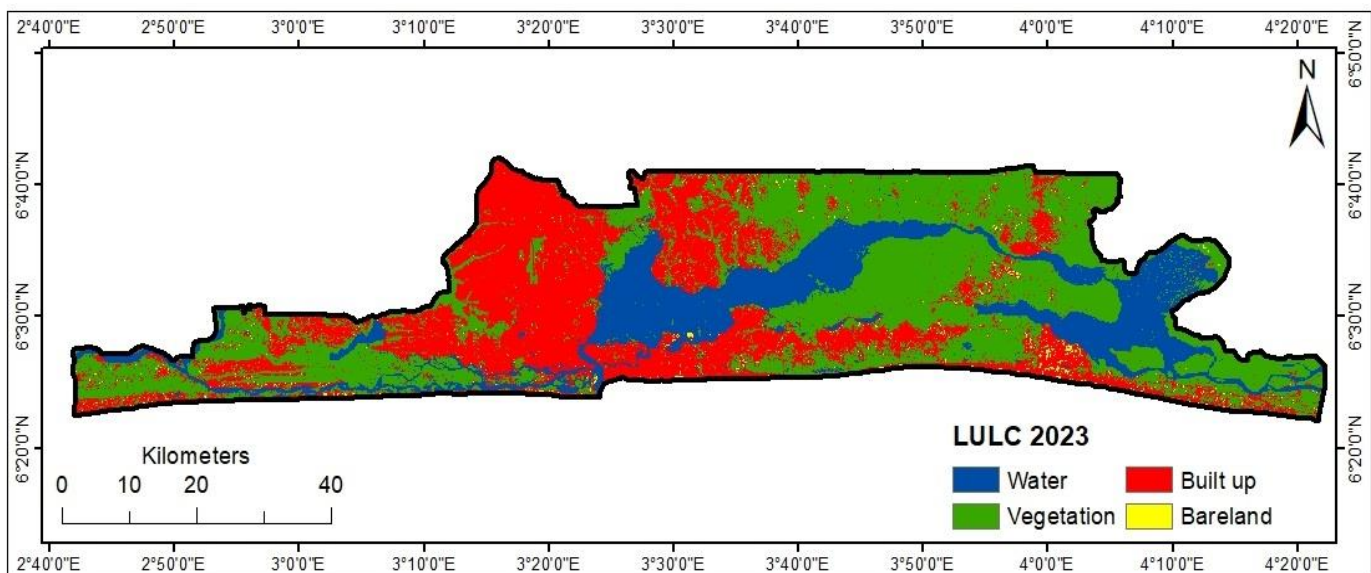
However, these initiatives have often been marred by corruption, political interference, and the exclusion of affected communities from decision-making processes. As a result, land use abuse in Lagos continues to be a major concern, with significant social and environmental consequences (FAO, 2020).

Fig 3: Land Use Land Cover in Lagos (2013)



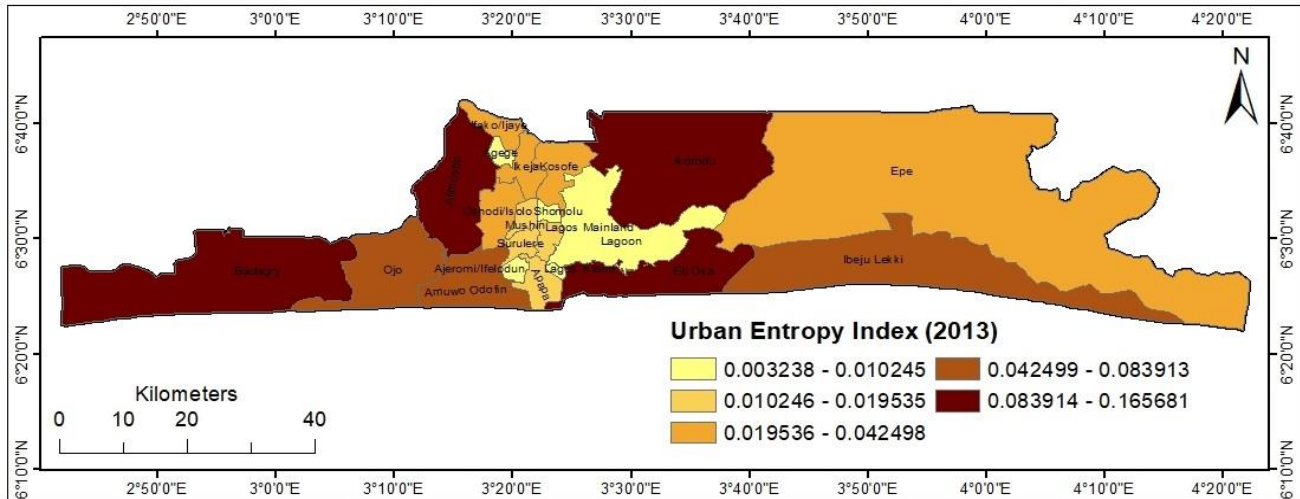
Source: GIS analysis from ArcGIS 10.8

Fig 4: Land Use Land Cover in Lagos (2023)



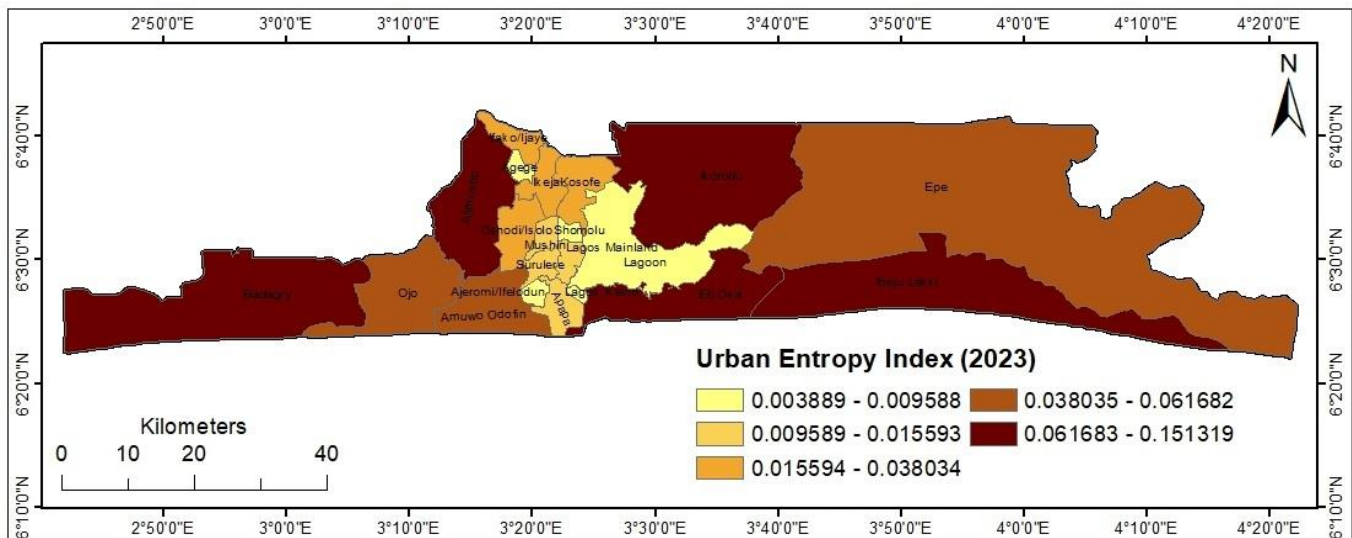
Source: GIS analysis from ArcGIS 10.8

Fig 5: Urban Entropy Index in Lagos (2013)



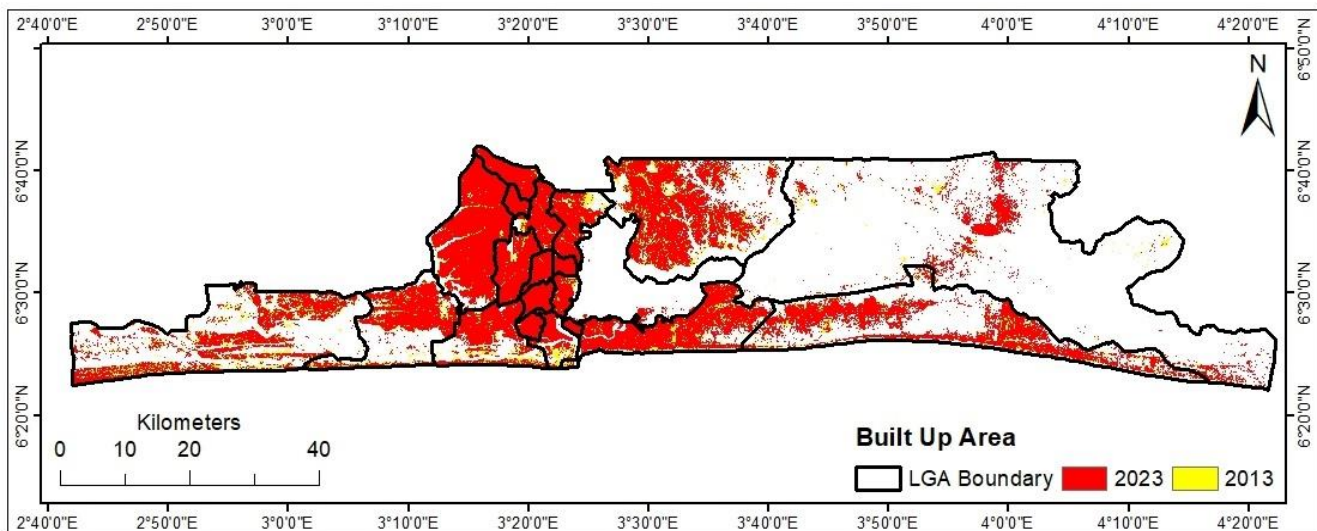
Source: GIS analysis from ArcGIS 10.8

Fig 6: Urban Entropy in Lagos (2023)



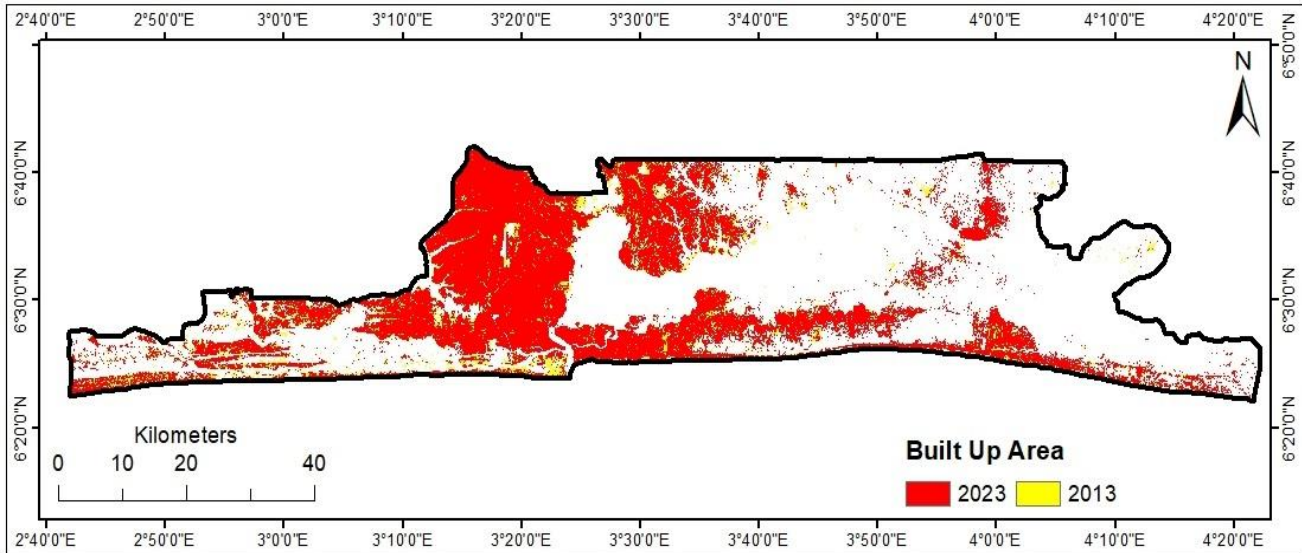
Source: GIS analysis from ArcGIS 10.8

Fig 7: Built Up Area of Lagos



Source: GIS analysis from ArcGIS 10.8

Fig 8: Built Up Areas of Lagos (2013 & 2023)



Source: GIS analysis from ArcGIS 10.8

Table 1: Analysis of Land Use Land Cover

Class Name	2013		2023	
	Area (Km ²)	%	Area (Km ²)	%
Water	759.76	20.21	772.87	20.55
Built up	1210.25	32.19	1282.64	34.11
Vegetation	1731.49	46.05	1660.01	44.15
Bareland	58.75	1.56	44.72	1.19
Total	3760.245	100.00	3760.245	100.00

Source: GIS analysis from ArcGIS 10.8

Table 2: Urban Sprawl in selected areas in Lagos State

SN	LGA Name	Urban Area (Km ²)		Urban Sprawl	
		2013	2023	2013	2023
1	Lagoon	3.9186	8.1612	0.0186	0.0322
2	Lagos Mainland	18.1935	16.6536	0.0631	0.0564
3	Lagos Island	4.9860	4.9878	0.0226	0.0216
4	Apapa	23.6421	19.9998	0.0769	0.0649
5	Mushin	16.9560	16.8003	0.0598	0.0568
6	Surulere	19.9071	19.7532	0.0676	0.0643

7	Shomolu	10.2411	10.1979	0.0404	0.0384
8	Agege	12.2157	12.1734	0.0464	0.0442
9	Oshodi/Isolo	50.4315	48.7836	0.1324	0.1243
10	Ajeromi/Fielden	12.3984	12.2985	0.0469	0.0446
11	Epe	34.9245	79.1163	0.1023	0.1718
12	AmuwoOdofin	69.6105	63.2484	0.1643	0.1484
13	Ibeju Lekki	101.5551	166.5027	0.2079	0.2650
14	EtiOsa	128.9997	131.6997	0.2386	0.2337
15	Kosofe	51.4332	44.8506	0.1342	0.1173
16	Alimosho	155.3742	153.1791	0.2635	0.2538
17	Ifako/Ijaye	32.0004	31.3110	0.0961	0.0906
18	Ikorodu	200.5146	194.0877	0.2978	0.2857
19	Ikeja	38.0808	36.0270	0.1088	0.1003
20	Ojo	85.0761	79.0803	0.1866	0.1718
21	Badagry	139.7889	133.7292	0.2493	0.2357
	Total	1210.2500	1282.6433	2.6242	2.6219

Source: GIS analysis from ArcGIS 10.8

iii) Land Grabbing in the Niger Delta and Nasarawa State

The Niger Delta region, rich in oil and gas resources, has been a hotspot for land grabbing by both private companies and government officials. Large tracts of land have been acquired for oil exploration, industrial development, and infrastructure projects, often without the consent of local communities or adequate compensation. Land grabbing in the Niger Delta has led to conflicts between local communities, government authorities, and multinational corporations (ERA/FoEN, 2019). These conflicts are fueled by the perception that land use decisions are made without transparency or consideration for the environmental and social impacts on local populations. Civil society organizations in the region have been actively working to expose illegal land deals and advocate for the rights of affected communities (ERA/FoEN, 2019).

iv) The Nasarawa Land Grabs

In Nasarawa State, land grabbing by large-scale commercial farmers has become a major issue. In recent years, vast tracts of land have been acquired by domestic and foreign investors for the cultivation of cash crops such as sugarcane and oil palm. While these investments are often justified as a means to boost agricultural production, they have come at the expense of smallholder farmers who rely on the land for subsistence farming. The displacement of smallholder farmers in Nasarawa has led to a decline in food production, as the large-scale farms are primarily focused on cash crops for export rather than food crops for local consumption. The loss of livelihoods has also increased poverty in the affected communities, leading to higher levels of food insecurity.

Moreover, the concentration of land in the hands of a few has created social tensions and conflicts, further undermining food security in the region.

v) **The Farmer-Herder Conflict in Benue State**

Benue State, often referred to as the "food basket" of Nigeria, has been a hotspot for the farmer-herder conflict, which has had devastating effects on food security in the region. Benue State is known for its fertile land and high agricultural productivity, producing crops such as yams, maize, and cassava in large quantities. However, over the past decade, the state has been plagued by violent clashes between farmers and nomadic herders. These conflicts are largely driven by competition for land and water resources, exacerbated by the encroachment of herders into farmlands due to desertification and climate change in northern Nigeria. The conflicts have resulted in the displacement of thousands of farmers, destruction of farmland, and loss of livestock. The insecurity has made it difficult for farmers to cultivate their lands, leading to a significant decline in food production. Additionally, many rural communities have been abandoned, further reducing the area available for agriculture. The overall impact has been a sharp increase in food insecurity, not just in Benue State, but across the entire Middle Belt region of Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

Good governance and effective policies are essential for addressing the complex challenges of land use abuse in Nigeria. The country's weak governance structures, inadequate enforcement of land use laws, and pervasive corruption have contributed to widespread land degradation, deforestation, and illegal land transactions. However, by strengthening governance mechanisms, investing in modern land use monitoring technologies, and promoting public participation in decision-making processes, Nigeria can significantly improve its land use management. Reforming key policies like the Land Use Act, enhancing the capacity of institutions responsible for land governance, and promoting transparency and accountability are critical steps towards curbing land use abuse. Additionally, technological advancements such as GIS, remote sensing, and blockchain can revolutionize how land is monitored and managed, ensuring that data is accurate and that land transactions are transparent and traceable. Moreover, the involvement of local communities and civil society organizations in land governance is essential for fostering sustainable land use practices that are both environmentally sound and socially equitable. International organizations and NGOs can continue to support Nigeria's efforts through technical assistance and advocacy for environmental sustainability. Ultimately, the success of land use monitoring and management in Nigeria depends on the government's commitment to good governance and the rule of law.

Recommendations for Strengthening Land Use Monitoring and Management

Addressing land use abuse in Nigeria requires a multifaceted approach that involves improving governance, enforcing existing policies, and promoting sustainable land use practices. The following recommendations highlight key strategies for enhancing land use monitoring and management in the country. By implementing these recommendations, Nigeria can safeguard its land resources, reduce environmental degradation, and promote sustainable development for future generations.

i. Reforming the Land Use Act

Reforming the Land Use Act of 1978 is crucial for addressing the governance challenges that contribute to land use abuse in Nigeria. The Act's current framework, which centralizes land ownership under state governors, has facilitated corruption and arbitrary land allocations. A more decentralized and transparent land tenure system would empower local communities, enhance accountability, and reduce political interference in land use decisions (Transparency International, 2021).

ii. Strengthening Institutional Capacity

Government institutions responsible for land use monitoring, such as the Federal Ministry of Environment and state-level land survey departments, must be equipped with the necessary resources, technology, and technical expertise to carry out their functions effectively. Investing in capacity-building programs, particularly in the use

of GIS and remote sensing technologies, is essential for improving land use monitoring and enforcement (FAO, 2020).

iii. Enhancing Public Participation in Land Use Decisions

Inclusive decision-making processes that involve local communities, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders are critical for ensuring that land use policies reflect the needs and priorities of all affected groups. Public participation can be enhanced by creating platforms for dialogue between government institutions and local communities, as well as by ensuring that land use information is accessible to the public (ERA/FoEN, 2019).

iv. Promoting Sustainable Land Use Practices

The Nigerian government, in collaboration with international organizations and civil society, should promote sustainable land use practices through public awareness campaigns, capacity-building programs, and incentives for conservation. Sustainable agricultural practices, reforestation efforts, and the protection of wetlands and other critical ecosystems must be prioritized to prevent further environmental degradation (FAO, 2020).

v. Strengthening Anti-Corruption Measures

Tackling corruption within land management institutions is essential for addressing land use abuse in Nigeria. Strengthening anti-corruption measures, including the enforcement of transparency and accountability mechanisms, will help reduce illegal land transactions and ensure that land resources are allocated equitably and sustainably (Transparency International, 2021).

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