



ADDRESSING MULTIPLE SALES OF LAND TO MITIGATE CONFLICT IN TOGO'S MARITIME REGION

AFODA KOUMATEH TAWOU-HIDA, JULY 2024



Figure 1: LAND CONFLICTS: How it started and why it still occurs properties. picture posted on March 27, 2017, by Adeyinka Badewa.

KEY MESSAGES



Multiple sales of land in Togo's Maritime Region exacerbate conflicts and tensions among communities, threatening social cohesion and economic development, including agricultural productivity of men and women in rural and urban of Togo's Maritime Region.



This issue is rooted in unclear land tenure systems, weak governance, and inadequate regulation enforcement, corruption, necessitating comprehensive reforms and community engagement.



Implementing land governance policies that secure land ownership and management and promote community participation, mainly among women and the poor, must be prioritised as strategies for resolving multiple land sale conflicts.



To address multiple sale conflicts in the region, collaborative efforts involving government, civil society, investors, media, researchers, traditional and religious chiefs, and international partners are necessary.



An early economic researcher specialising in Development and Agricultural Economics, Climate change, and Land governance.

Tawou-Hida was born in 1987 in Dapaong, in Togo's Savannah Region. She received her PhD from the University of Ghana, where she worked on a dissertation titled Climate Change, Time Preference, and Integrated crop residue management in Togo. She also received her master's degree from the University of Ouagadougou 2, Burkina Faso. Tawou-Hida is a Network of Excellence on Land Governance in Africa (NELGA) member.



BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Land conflicts have been a persistent issue in Togo, particularly in the Maritime region, where multiple land sales often lead to disputes and tensions among communities, individuals, and authorities. The Maritime region of Togo is characterised by its economic significance, hosting major ports and industrial activities. The demand for land in this region has surged due to (1) population growth (UNDP, 2020) and (2) rapid urbanisation and commercial ventures (World Bank, 2019).

However, the allocation and ownership of land have been marred by ambiguity, corruption, and overlapping claims, leading to frequent disputes. Inadequate land governance mechanisms, including unclear land tenure systems, corruption, and lack of enforcement of land regulations, create opportunities for fraudulent land transactions and speculation (Human Rights Watch, 2023).

Corruption within land administration institutions further exacerbates the problem, as officials may engage in bribery and collusion, facilitating illicit land deals and undermining the rule of law. The 1974 land laws have been criticised for their ambiguity and lack of effectiveness in addressing land disputes and protecting the rights of vulnerable groups (Human Rights Watch, 2023). The Land Law Code enacted in 2018 represents a significant step towards addressing land conflict in Togo. However, effective implementation and enforcement of this law remain essential to mitigate conflicts and promote sustainable land management practices in the Maritime Region (World Bank, 2019). Additionally, a nuanced approach that combines customary practices with formal legal frameworks and social cohesions must be adopted to solve land conflict in the Maritime Region (UNDP, 2020; Smith et al., 2018)

Methodology

This policy brief draws on various sources, including field interviews, case studies, and reports from local NGOs and international organisations to analyse the causes, impacts and solutions of land conflicts in Togo's maritime region. For example, interviews conducted with community leaders and government officials in the Aného and Agbodrafo areas provided insights into multiple land sales' underlying causes and consequences. Additionally, reports from organizations such as the World Bank and UNDP were reviewed to understand global best practices in conflict resolution and synthesised data from academic research, reports from international organisations, and case studies to explore the impact of multiple land sale conflicts in Togo's Maritime region.

Findings

The results of this research show that poor people, including smallholder farmers, women and marginalised communities, are disproportionately affected by multiple land sale conflicts.

Multiple land sales breed confusion and mistrust among community members, fracturing social cohesion. For instance, in Kpando, conflicting claims over land led to prolonged disputes and strained inter-community relations.

Conflicts over land ownership have strained relations between ethnic groups, undermining social cohesion and cultural identity in Aného. Disagreements over land ownership stalled potential investment and job creation in agriculture. A series of land disputes in community members increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression, affecting their overall well-being and productivity.

Failure to address land-related grievances undermines trust in government institutions and fuels discontent. Protests in Lomé over alleged corruption in land deals highlight public frustration with opaque governance practices.

In the village of Agbodrafo, families of local farmers and fishermen who have farmed the land for generations were forcibly evicted to make way for a new industrial park. This leads to the loss of their primary source of income and livelihood and exacerbates poverty, as they lack alternative sources of income (Smith et al., 2018).

Mr. Kofi, a small-scale farmer in the town of Kpémé, has invested his savings in purchasing land for agricultural purposes. However, conflicting claims to the land by multiple parties have left him uncertain about his ownership rights and reluctant to make further investments.



Figure 2: This picture shows an order by a court to stop building activities because of multiple sale conflicts over the land in Logoté, Ségbé road Lomé-Togo. The author posted this picture.

Ms. Afi, a widow in Lomé, has been embroiled in a legal battle over her family's ancestral land, which was sold without her consent. The legal fees and emotional toll of the dispute have placed a heavy burden on her and her children.

In Agbodrafo, widows and female-headed households struggle to retain land rights in the face of patriarchal customs and land grabbing by male relatives. Dispossession of land deprives women of economic independence, exacerbating gender inequalities and perpetuating cycles of poverty (UN Women, 2017; UNDP, 2020).

Recommendations

Multiple land sale conflicts have led to various consequences, including displacement and loss of livelihoods, social cohesion and identity, economic instability, social disruption, insecurity of land tenure, health issues, and legal and financial burdens. Based on these findings, the following recommendations are formulated to address land conflict issues in Maritime region of Togo.



The study recommends that Togo's government and Policymakers should strengthen legal frameworks, anti-corruption measures and regulatory mechanisms to ensure transparency, accountability, and fairness in land transactions. They should enhance capacity-building initiatives for land administration institutions to improve enforcement and dispute resolution mechanisms. Develop and enact legislation to regulate land sales, clarify property rights, and establish mechanisms for dispute resolution. As mentioned in Article 8 of the land code of 2018, the government must protect women from land conflicts and facilitate their access to land. The government must support legal aid clinics and awareness campaigns to empower vulnerable individuals such as widows and women-headed households.

As actions, the government could (1) establish community land committees to oversee land transactions and resolve disputes at the local level; (2) conduct training programs for government officials, community leaders, civil society organisations, women, on land management and conflict resolution using universities, schools, social media, radios and televisions; (3) facilitate multi-stakeholder dialogues to develop consensus-based approaches for sustainable land management; (4) provide legal assistance and support to vulnerable groups in asserting their land rights and accessing justice.

Community leaders and Civil Society Organizations should facilitate community participation and consultation in land decision-making processes to promote inclusivity and mitigate conflicts. The inclusion of women in land decision-making and conflict resolution must be especially effective and compulsory. They must provide education and

awareness programs to empower communities to assert their land rights and resist land grabbing. This can be done in schools, farmers and women associations or cooperatives, universities and local institutions. Education can be based on conditions under which people can access land titles and how they can learn from the new code and use it properly to defend their rights. These courses must be translated into local languages such as ewe, Kabye, Kotokoli, Moba, etc.

Then, for investors and foreign companies, the study recommends that they must adhere to ethical land acquisition practices, respect the rights of local communities in land transactions and engage in transparent and consultative processes with affected communities to address grievances and mitigate conflicts. These investors must compensate local people who lost their land for their case.

Finally, for **International Organizations and Donors,** the study recommends (1) strengthening transparent land registration systems and anti-corruption measures and supporting capacity-building initiatives and technical assistance programs to strengthen land governance and administration, (3) conduct educational programs and public forums to increase understanding of land rights and responsibilities, (4) engage traditional authorities, religious chiefs, and national decision-makers in policy formulation and implementation; (5) collaborate with researchers working on African land governance to inform evidence-based policies. Finally, (6) to facilitate partnerships with civil society organisations, international institutions, media, donors, diplomats, and researchers to support sustainable land management initiatives.



REFERENCES AND APPENDICES

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