

1. INTRODUCTION

Land titles registration is germane to providing proof of individual ownership of land. It is the only genuine and recognized document to ascertain the authenticity of the interest in land. In recognition of its importance in enhancing property rights, efforts at improving land title registration have increased significantly. Land as a fixed and non-renewable resource by nature is prone to several illegal and unethical activities among all stakeholders in land sectors (Barrya and Whittal, 2016). Hence, title registration helps to ascertain possession of interest in land with the approved authorized government agencies in a particular state. This legalises the title document, facilitates real estate transaction, promotes legal developments, encourages regularization in land related matters and prevents unlawful disposal which varies according to jurisdictions.

Corruption in Africa land sector is a complex phenomenon, yet unabated (The World Bank, 2014). UN-Habitat (2004) elucidates that corruption is the misuse of office for private gain. Thus, corruption in land administration in African countries emanates from different directions which include bribes, illegal payments for title registration, illegal acquisition of official documents and approval of building permits, among others, as a result of self-desires, favouritism, nepotism and clientelism. Understanding the level, pattern and nature of corruption is necessary to provide effective measure to combat it (The World Bank, 2013). Although, the operation is not conspicuous but its evidence is observable and destructive. In order to totally combat corruption different strategies and measures must be introduced to the entire system. Therefore, transparency in land governance is a principal strategic tool. This is needed in sharing information and acting in an open manner while permitting critical information to uncover abuses, unethical and illegal activities.

One African country in which concerted efforts are being made to address the issue is Nigeria. In terms of economic size and population, in 2018, Nigeria's population was 198.2 million which was 15.9 percent of Africa's population while the country's GDP was \$397.3 billion equivalent to 17.1 percent of Africa's GDP. As regards land, Nigeria has a land area of approximately 923,768 km², minus the 3000 km² ceded to the Cameroons in Bakassi. Thus, with the large population size and enormous economic potentials, the demand for land is very high in the face of a fixed supply of land in the country. Hence, the invention of Land registration in Nigeria can be traced back to the era of British Colonial Administration in 1863 (Federal Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 2006). Ever since this invention, it is mandatory for all land owners to register their portions of land under the appropriate authority within the state where the land is situated. Generally, land title is often insured by a state or municipal government to identify the owner(s) of the interest in a portion of land.

Since the physical, social and economic development of every area depends greatly on the proper usefulness of the Land resources, Land has formed the basis of any development of non-land and land related matters. Therefore, the existence of corruption in the land sector has exposed end-users in Africa countries to numerous challenging processes to title registration due to lack of good administration and governance (Nwuba and Nuhu, 2018). Also, lengthy period of title registration process, frivolity and government officials' unethical attitude, multiple owners to single land title document, domestic external and internal chaos,

among others, do not encourage transparency. These occurrences originated from the unstructured system that permits inequity in the land sector regardless of individual personality among stakeholder.

A strategic tool to effectively improve land title registration process and also promote economy growth is transparency (Van der molen, 2006). Therefore, formalisation of property right is mandatory as it will aid reduction in the level of unethical activities in the land sector (Sjaastada and Cousins, 2008). In order to formalise property right, there are three principal methods of recording the rights/ownership to land. These are: Private conveyance, Registration of titles and Registration of Deeds (Nuhu, 2009). Thus, the procedure for formalising land transactions after acquisition in most sub-region of African countries such as Northern, Western, Central, Eastern, and Southern Africa is cumbersome, bureaucratic, costly and lengthy (Aluko et al., 2004).

Consequentially, the impact of corruption has fierce effect on any economic and societal growth. The drives to involve in corrupt behavior are complex and they are the outcome of diverse connections. Astoundingly, corruption has not been given quantity of attention, but rather has been considered as crime. Since 1980s, corruption was chiefly an issue of political, sociological, historical and criminal law while land sector is not considered (Lambsdorff and Schulze, 2015). Thus, the aim of this research is to examine transparency in land title registration while providing strategies to eliminate corruption in the African land sector. This insight will assist policy makers to generate reasonable strategies to create anti-corruption policy measures to encourage transparency in the land registry which will aid annihilation of corruption in the land sector of African countries.

2.0. The concept of Land Title Registration in Africa

Land registration is the procedure of official documentation of rights in land through deeds or title on the interest in land (Aravind and Christmann, 2011). This connotes an official record (the land register) of right on land or deed of changes in the legal state. The title helps to define the rightful owner of a parcel of land (Addai, Owusu, poku-Gyamfi and Gyambibi, 2011). However, in many African countries, there are challenges related to corruption in land sector. The challenges oftentimes manifest in non-transparency in land title registration. The unprecedented pressures on land have been made as new environments are cultivated, taken over by expanding urban centres or are dump due to squalor, land conflict and climate change (Transparency International, 2011). These improvements have strained the rules, processes and institutions that determine which land resources are used, by whom, for how long and under what circumstances.

Several laws guiding the title registration and control of land were established from the Northern, Southern, Western, Central and Eastern Africa to protect customary land rights and registration of title of both rural and urban land. In Nigeria, Land Use Act (LUA)1978 was basically established to regulate land issues. In Uganda's Land Act 1998; Mozambique's Land Act 1997; Tanzania's Land Act and Village Land Act 1999; Niger's Code Rural 1993; Namibia's Communal Land Reform Act 2002 and others from the five sub-regions in Africa Country. Also in Ethiopia, Mozambique and Namibia Use or lease rights over state-owned

land may be registered. Where customary rights are protected, contrary to the systematic land registration and titling programmes of the past, customary right holders usually may obtain land titles in country like Ghana, Niger, Mozambique and Tanzania but the effect of corruption is still visible in the process. However, it must also be noted that some African countries have maintained or embraced policies abrogating customary systems, as in Eritrea's Land Proclamation 1994 and Burkina Faso's Réorganisation Agraire et Foncière 1984, as amended in 1991 and 1996 (FAO, 2002).

In Nigeria, the law regulating registration of land instruments in is Land Registration Act No. 36 of 1924 which was enacted for the whole country adopted and re-enacted in some states under several terms. Hence, the Land Registration Law 2015 (LRL) help to facilitate registration in land registry under a land registrar charged with the responsibilities of registering instruments affecting land in the state and to keep registered books and file in relation thereto. Hence, modern methods of registration include computerization of the whole process in addition to the use of Geographic information system (GIS) and Land Information System (LIS). These methods have helped to enhance the process/system of registration and also gives well-defined details, measurements and design efficiency (Kombe, Manyilizu and Mvuma, 2017).

2.1. Assessment of Corruption in Africa Land Governance.

Land governance and proper administration of land related matters are critical for accomplishing economic growth and physical advancement in any country (World Bank, 2012). There is no contravening the fact that corruption is very endemic in most Africa land registry governance. According to Transparency International (2019), Nigeria is ranked 144 (out of 180) with a score of 27 percent in the Corruption Perceptions Index 2018. Corruption is so endemic in the administration and registration of land titles that potential land title seeker is ready to cough out adequate bribes beyond the request, just to have his parcel of land registered and proceed. For instance in Nigeria, some segments of land sector reek of corrupt practices in land and housing from the conception stage to completion. Purchases of land from individuals in almost all the African countries rural and urban centres promotes deceit by greedy landowners and their agents. Many of them sell same plot of land to many prospective buyers and also forge land title to present to others and if the buyers' are not knowledgeable about his right to visit the land registry to confirm the authenticity of the land then the illegal transaction will be perfectly concluded. This has taken the lives of numerous victims in such situation. Therefore for the strategies to curb corruption in land sector to be effective, the following should be properly supervised, monitored and restructured:

- Land tenure
- Urban land use planning and development
- Rural land use and land policy
- Land valuation and taxation
- Public land management
- Public provision of land information

- Dispute resolution
- Large scale land acquisition

2.2. Forms of Corruption in Africa Land Sector.

Land is an exceptional resource immovable by any means. Therefore, by nature it is incapable of expansion. Otherwise, there are marginal increases through reclamation. Corruption in land sector at several stages in our societies is a behavioural consequence of power and greed. With no rubric, corruption is covert, unscrupulous, monotonous, powerful and reliant upon dominance. According to TI data presented in Table below there are a number of areas of land sectors that are prone to corruption in various forms. The most important areas vulnerable to corruptions are: land administration, customary land tenure, management of state-owned land, land use planning, conversion and investments and payments for environmental services. Main risk factors are inadequate land laws and procedures and unclear institutional tasks or property rights, absence of transparency in several stages, procedures and bureaucracy.

Table 1. Areas, Risks and Forms of Corruption in the Land Sector

AREAS PRONE TO CORRUPTION	RISK FACTORS OF CORRUPTION	FORMS CORRUPTION
Land use planning, conversion and investments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lack of transparency of planning processes and land allocation procedures; - Opaque, slow and bureaucratic processes for issuing building development permits; - Unclear land use and property rights; - Lack of effective complaint, grievance, independent oversight and enforcement mechanisms; - Lack of an independent media. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capture of rents and profits originating from land conversion and re-zoning by government officials and investors; - Abuse of government official's discretionary power to propose real estate and land developments that increase the value of her/his personal property; - Acquisition of land through state capture and/or by investors and developers having received insider information from government officials; - Bribery of government officials by Individual, Investors and/or Developers.

Land Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Inadequate land laws and procedures; - Excessive or unpublished fees for land services; - Lack of recognition of land uses and rights; - Under-developed and non-transparent land registration systems; - Existence of multiple land management authorities; - Irregular practices in the collection of land taxes; - Lack of active compliant, grievance and oversight mechanisms; - Absence of a code of conduct 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Bribery of land administration officials and law enforcement authorities; - Fraud and production of false land claim documentation
Payments for environmental services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of legal recognition of tenure rights; - Lack of recognition of protected areas and lands reserved for environmental protection; - Opaque, slow and bureaucratic payment systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capture of funds by developers, investors and government officials; - Acquisition of parcels eligible for payments by developers, investors, and government officials.
Customary land tenure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lack of legal recognition and delineation of customary land; -Traditional practices of payments and exchanges; - Opaque systems, absence of outside control and lack of clarity in allocation of land; - Monetarisaton and speculation on land sales. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Abuse of power by chiefs; - Conversion of property and capture of revenues by chiefs and powerful personnel; - National institutions and business interests override local land rights.
Management of state-owned land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lack of inventory, delineation and management of state land; - Irregularity of land prices for disposal and acquisition; - Unclear institutional responsibilities and decision mechanisms; - Absence or lack of clarity of regulations for leasing land or exercising eminent domain; - Lack of effective compliant, grievance and oversight mechanisms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Bribery of government officials to obtain public land at a fraction of market value; - Manipulation of compulsory land acquisition and compensation processes. - Irregular conversion of property and land classification status by government workers.

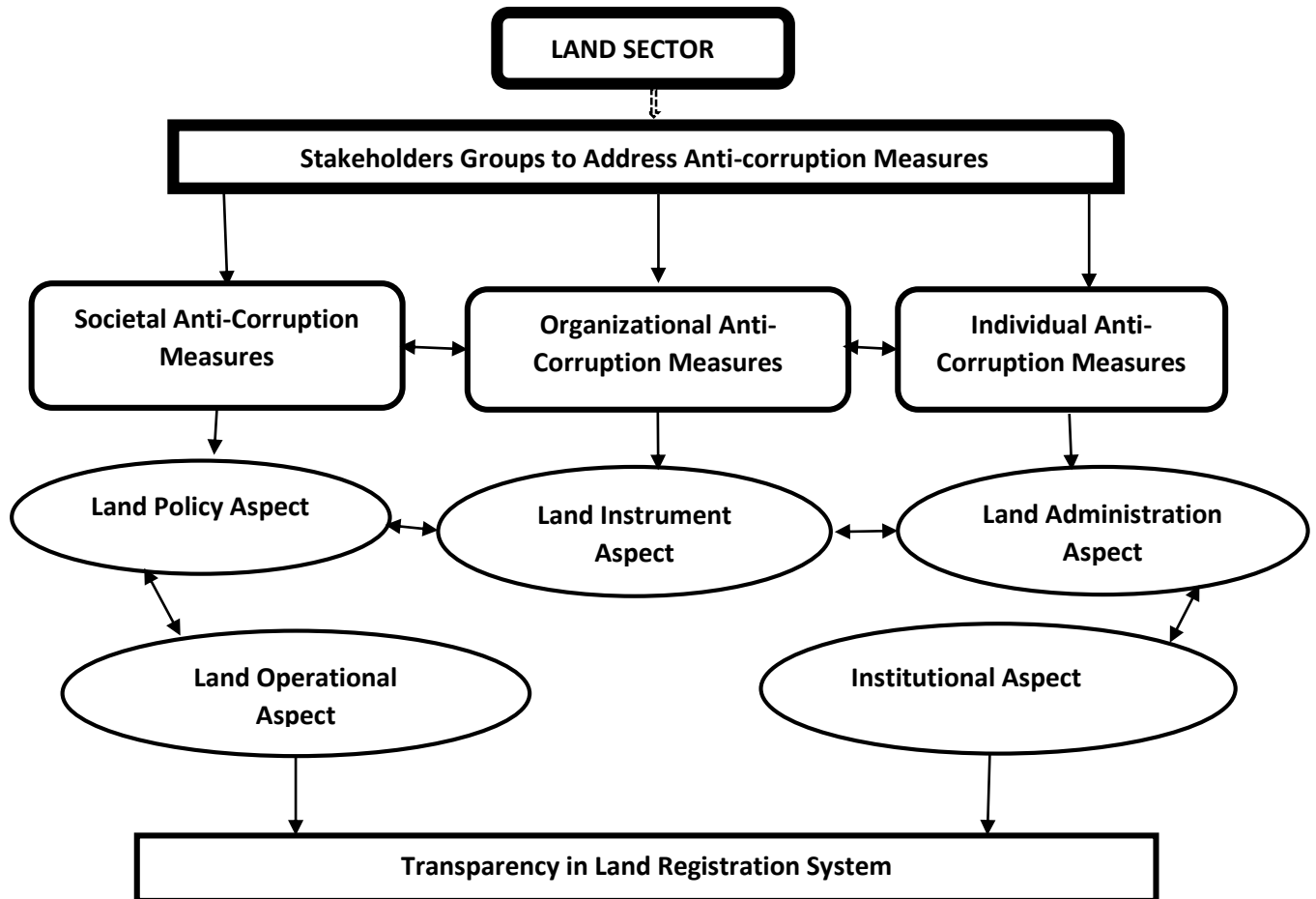
Source: Author, 2019

2.3. Detrimental Consequence of Corruption in Land Sector

Corruption has the greatest devastating effects in majority of African developing countries because it obstructs several advances in economic advancement and democracy (UNDP, 1998). Global complexity of land sector has permitted diverse atrocity in land-related issues. Transparency in Land title registration should not be treated in isolation when corruption in land sector is to be examined. For instance, in rural and urban centres of Nigeria, western region of Africa, land information is documented, managed and disseminated in an emblematic structure as hard-copy, indicating that contemporary land information administrative system is at infancy level which promote bribery(Gupta et al. 2002; Rose-Ackerman and Palifka 2016). Therefore, if the level of transparency in the land registry is of little significance, rural and urban land sector will encounter development interruption which might not be favourable to the society at large. Hence, the level of land information should not be limited as it conspicuously promotes dissemination of all vital information to stakeholders involved.

2.4. Measures to Improve Transparency in Land Sector/Strategies to Curb Corruption.

Adoption of anti-corruption measures to ensure possibility of corrupt-free system should be encouraged in all Africa sub-regions. This should be measures that are capable of been effectively rooted, reasonable and well-defined at a wider level of law and regulations, operational process and procedure level (Babatunde, Kemiki, Abdulkareem and Fabunmi, 2014). Such measures should be capable of safeguarding land tenure security, regulating the dynamism of land market, land use control and development, land reform, land taxation and management of natural resources among others. Focusing on stakeholders from different levels in the land sector. Using the chat below is the classification of anti-corruption measures into groups such as societal anti-corruption measures, organization anti-corruption measures and individual anti-corruption measures.



Source: Author, 2019. Classification of Individual Stakeholders

2.4.1. Formation of inventory of registered land tenure

Creation of inventory will help to ascertain the ownership of every unit of land in the land registry. This will aid prevention of land grabbing. The nature of corruption in all sectors in which land sector is not exempted is that it is hidden. The practice of fraud, bribery and nepotism, among others, occurs in an atmosphere of secrecy. Ownership of interest in land is only determined by possession alone which cannot be for two different entities. This is the principal rationale for the existence of land registers, where rights to land and their right-holders are registered under the certified authority.

2.4.2 Open access to information on ownership, value and use of land

An achievement of open access of ownership, value and original land use can be ascertained through the adoption of blockchain technology. Blockchain is a technological application that involves creating verification records for digital files, such as documents or transactions. These verification registers are the uniquely identifiable 'fingerprints' of the actual files. The verification records are grouped into categories called Block (Luisanna et.al. 2014). Each block is then added to a chain of blocks such that it bears a verification record of the block that preceded it. This creates a chain of fingerprints tracing back to the first block. The information stored will be intact in previous blocks without changing the succeeding blocks. Therefore, if blockchain technology is adopted in all Africa land registry, there will be transparency, accountability and simplicity of every single transaction because it make verification records approachable without jeopardizing the security of the original documents. Therefore, everyone can trust that the person who has the original document and who can recreate the verification records, is telling the truth. The following can be considered as merits of block chain technology.

- i. It gives open access for public inspection which promotes monitoring of illegal land-related transactions.
- ii. It also limits personal privacy protection to avoiding hiding of illegal interests.
- iii. It regulates procedures for decision making, recording and dissemination of information.
- iv. There is no change in inventory without source document that justifies the change (title application, deed, other document), to prevent double registration of single parcel of land and several illegal land transactions.
- v. It limits discretionary proficiencies to prevent concentration of powers.

2.4.3 Computerization

Availability of information and access to data are peculiar in land registry especially in land systems where large amounts of data are involved is hardly possible without adoption of information and communication technology (ICT). The benefits of automation in our recent world cannot be overlooked. It reduces land officials' bulky operational assignment, reducing direct contacts between officials and customers, guaranteeing easy access, and monitoring of processes becomes possible and improves transparency. The aim of the possession rights of registration system in Nigeria was one of the establishment of a corruption-free land sector, security of tenure, transparent and secure system of land registry in the country, through a balanced framework of institutional, legal, administrative, financial and technological reforms.

3. Methodology

The data used in this research were sourced from the targeted population, basically stakeholders in the Land sector. The study population consisted of individual land owners/land holding families, professional groups involved in land transaction such as lawyers, estate surveyors and land surveyors, and officials of the land registries and other agencies of government responsible for land title registration in Lagos state, Nigeria. Simple

random sampling technique without replacement was adopted for all respondents. The data was analysed using appropriate analytical tools. Furthermore, primary data and secondary was adopted, using both qualitative and quantitative analytical tools to examine the level of inadequate practice of land title registration.

4. Summary of Discussions of Findings

This study realized that corruption has persisted as an unrelenting global challenge that has been implicated as the foundational cause of numerous social and economic difficulties. High levels of corruption in Africa countries suffer from higher levels of poverty and income inequality because corruption reduces the resources available to fund public services. Although, the issue of land titling in sub-Saharan Africa raises major challenges. But, If transparency can be achieved in land registry it will encourage a corrupt free system

5. Conclusions

The most vital areas vulnerable to misconduct in land sector include land administration, customary land tenure, management of state-owned land, land use planning, family land inheritance, conversion of land use, investments for both present period and speculative purpose. Thus, access to genuine information, complex laws and procedures regulating land ownership, and insufficient access to justice create uneven distribution of land and its resources. Several activities are carried out by the masses, majority of whom are peasants and if there is no access to land, the consequences are dire. Transparency in land title registration is attainable only if there is a change in the traditional mode of operation in the land sector. Over the years, land registry conventional style of operation encourages unorganized system. However, if there is opportunity for new innovations such as adoption of blockchain technology it will improve the style of operation, land registration procedure, bureaucracy, reduce unethical behaviors of stakeholders, and promote strategic implementation of law guiding allocation and title registration. This will support measures to address the challenges that promote corruption in the land sector. In order to achieve a corruption-free system in Africa land sector the following framework should be executed; transparency; established service standards; advance in capacity building and in the development of a human resource policy; advance systems and processes; secure financing, establish audits; make effective use of information technology and efficient and effective communications; include stakeholders and less positive experience as well as being effective, efficient and consensus-oriented.

6. Recommendation

Land sectors requires a comprehensive development strategy involving legal reform in areas other than land (property ownership and management, contract, family, and succession law), and concerted policy formulation in all areas relating to agriculture, rural development and food security (access to credit, training/awareness and extension; marketing and trade; etc. Hence, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools and their impact on corruption were analysed among others. An adoption of methods like Digital Public Services, Crowdsourcing Platforms, Whistleblowing Tools, Transparency Portals, Grass Root Awareness, Big Data, Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT), and Artificial Intelligence (AI).

The newly emerging distributed ledger technology (DLT) and blockchain technologies are also anticipated to have great potential for promoting transparency and accountability in the land sector. Although, the impact and added value of blockchain technology is yet to be determined as its implementation in land sector is yet to be experiment in Africa. Inventions of ICT in land title registration system in all Africa sub-regions will promote anti-corruption measures in variety of ways. Therefore, government should collectively empower, encourage and create an implementation measure to achieve a corrupt free land sectors system in Africa sub-region.

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