



# EFFICIENT LAND ADMINISTRATION SYSTEMS FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN UMUNNEOCHI L.G.A, ABIA STATE, NIGERIA

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## Article History

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**Abstract:** Efficient land administration systems (LAS) are critical for promoting socio-economic development, particularly in rural areas like Umunneochi Local Government Area (L.G.A.) in Abia State, Nigeria. This study explores the role of LAS in facilitating secure land tenure, economic growth, and sustainable development in Umunneochi. Using a mixed-method approach, including surveys, interviews, and secondary data analysis, the study identifies challenges such as outdated land records, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and lack of digitalization. It proposes strategies for improving LAS, including the adoption of Geographic Information Systems (GIS), legal reforms, and community engagement. The findings highlight that an efficient LAS can enhance agricultural productivity, attract investments, and reduce land disputes, thereby fostering socio-economic development in Umunneochi.

**Keywords:** Land Administration System (LAS), Socio-Economic Development, Umunneochi, Nigeria, GIS, Land Tenure.

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## I. Introduction

Land is a fundamental resource for socio-economic development, serving as the foundation for agriculture, housing, and infrastructure (Opaluwa & Yusuf, 2015). In Nigeria, inefficient land administration systems have hindered economic progress, particularly in rural areas where land is central to livelihoods (Babalola et al., 2023). Umunneochi L.G.A. in Abia State, predominantly rural, faces challenges such as land disputes, insecure tenure, and limited access to land information, which impede development.

This study aims to examine how efficient LAS can drive socio-economic development in Umunneochi by addressing the following objectives:

- To assess the current state of land administration in Umunneochi L.G.A.
- To identify challenges hindering effective land administration.
- To propose strategies for implementing efficient LAS to promote socio-economic development.

The research questions include: What is the current state of LAS in Umunneochi? What are the barriers to efficient land administration? How can LAS improvements contribute to socio-economic development? The study is significant as it provides

insights for policymakers, local governments, and development practitioners seeking to enhance land governance in rural Nigeria.

## II. Literature Review

### a. Concept of Land Administration Systems

Land administration systems encompass processes and institutions responsible for managing land tenure, land use, land value, and land development (Williamson et al., 2010). An efficient LAS ensures secure tenure, reduces disputes, and supports economic activities by providing reliable land information (Enemark et al., 2005). Globally, modern LAS leverage technology, such as GIS, to enhance transparency and accessibility (Daniel, 2005).

### b. Land Administration in Nigeria

Nigeria's land administration is governed by the Land Use Act (LUA) of 1978, which vests land ownership in state governors, creating a dual system of statutory and customary tenure (Babalola & Hull, 2019). This has led to inefficiencies, including bureaucratic delays, corruption, and lack of integration between agencies (Egbu et al., 2008). Studies in Ekiti and Delta States highlight underdeveloped LAS, characterized by manual record-keeping and limited stakeholder collaboration (Ojo et al., 2023).

### c. Socio-Economic Impacts of Efficient LAS

Efficient LAS contribute to socio-economic development by:

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- Enhancing Tenure Security: Secure land titles encourage investment in agriculture and infrastructure (Mabogunje, 2009).
- Reducing Land Disputes: Clear land records minimize conflicts, fostering social stability (Masum, 2011).
- Facilitating Economic Growth: Accessible land information attracts investors and supports urban planning (Rajabifard, 2006).

- Promoting Sustainable Development: LAS support land-use planning, preserving resources for future generations (Williamson et al., 2010).

**d. Gaps in Literature**

While studies have explored LAS in urban Nigeria (e.g., Lagos), rural areas like Umunneochi are under-researched. The unique socio-cultural and economic context of Umunneochi, including its agrarian economy and customary tenure systems, necessitates localized studies. This research fills this gap by focusing on Umunneochi's LAS and its socio-economic implications.

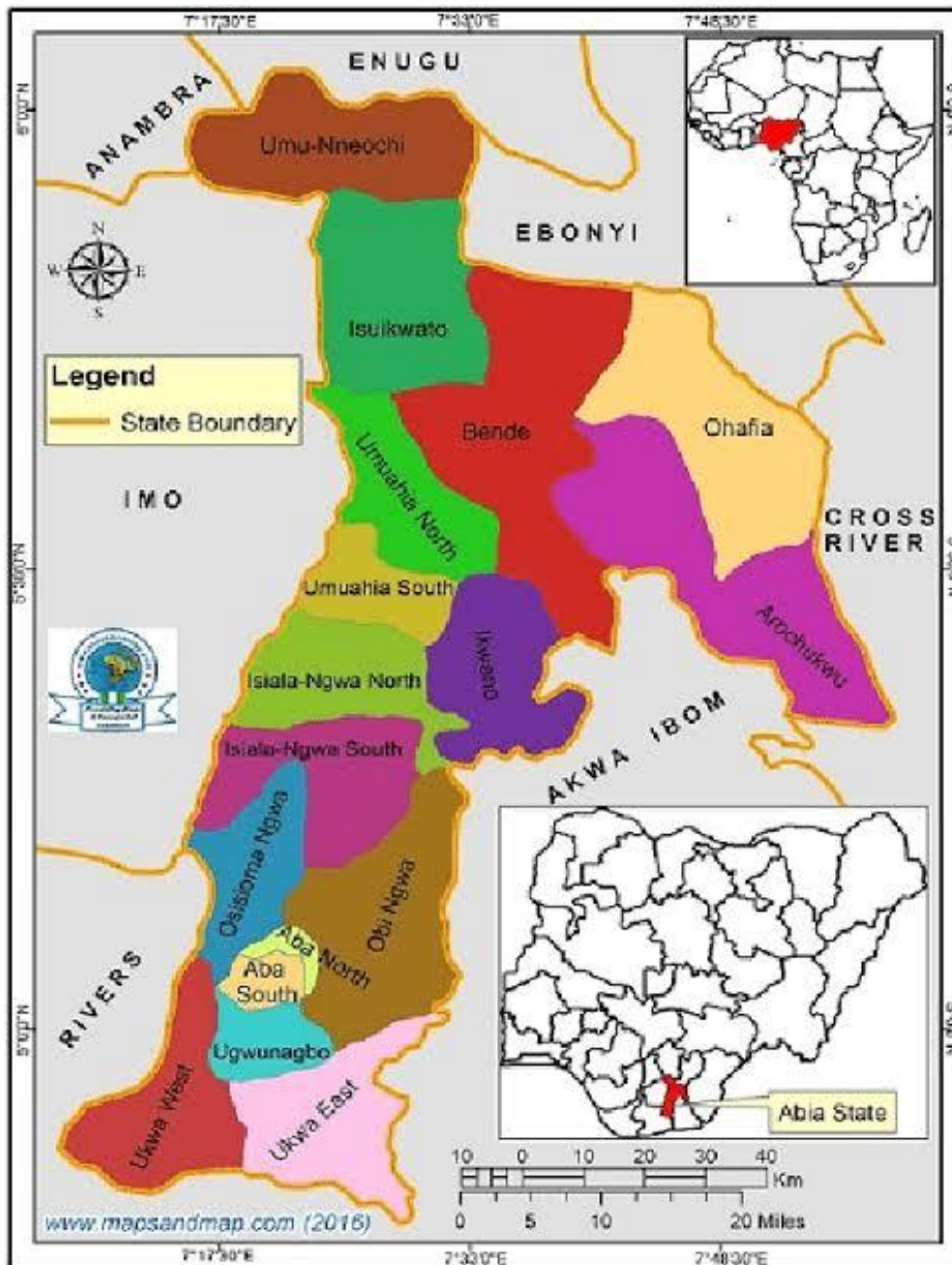


Fig 1 map of Abia State

### III. Study Area

Umunneochi L.G.A. is located in Abia State, Southeast Nigeria, with its headquarters in Nkwoagu. It comprises towns and villages such as Isuochi, Amuda, Ihie, and Mbala (Nigeria Zip Codes, 2014). Coordinates: approximately 5.94° N, 7.41° E .

Borders: Enugu State (Awgu & Oji River LGAs), Ebonyi, Imo (Okigwe), and Anambra. The area spans approximately 368 km<sup>2</sup>

and has a population of about 163,928 (NPC, 2006). Umunneochi is predominantly rural, with agriculture (yam, cassava, and palm oil production) as the mainstay of the economy. Land is managed under customary systems, with community leaders and family heads playing significant roles. Challenges include land fragmentation, disputes, and limited access to formal titles, which affect agricultural productivity and investment.

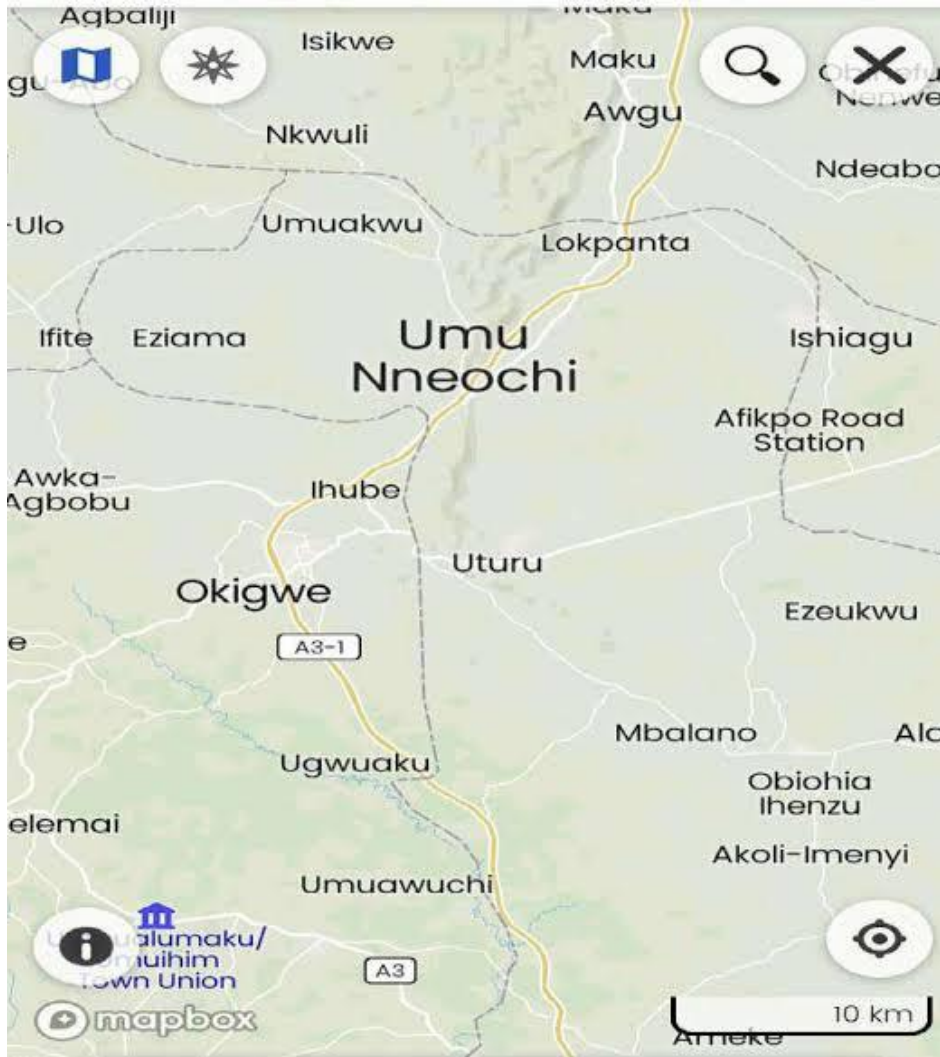


Fig 2 Google map of the study area

### IV. Methodology

#### a. Research Design

A mixed-method approach was adopted, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques to provide a comprehensive analysis of LAS in Umunneochi. The descriptive research design allowed for an in-depth exploration of the current system and its socio-economic impacts (Ojo et al., 2023).

#### b. Data Collection

- **Primary Data:**  
Questionnaire: A structured questionnaire was administered to 150 respondents, including land officers,

farmers, and community leaders, selected through purposive and random sampling. Questions covered land tenure practices, access to titles, and socio-economic impacts.

Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 key informants, including traditional rulers, land registry officials, and local government staff, to gain insights into LAS challenges and opportunities.

- **Secondary Data:** Literature from journals, government reports, and online databases (e.g., ResearchGate, Springer) was reviewed to contextualize findings.

### c. Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages) with SPSS software. Qualitative data from interviews were thematically analyzed to identify recurring themes, such as bureaucratic inefficiencies and digitalization needs. The Framework for Effective Land Administration (FELA) was used to evaluate LAS processes (Ojo *et al.*, 2023).

## V. Results and Discussion

### a. Current State of Land Administration in Umunneochi

The study revealed that Umunneochi's LAS is predominantly manual, with land records maintained in paper-based registries at the local government and state levels. Key findings include:

**Tenure Systems:** 80% of respondents rely on customary tenure, with land allocated by family heads or community leaders. Only 15% possess formal titles (e.g., Certificate of Occupancy).

**Land Disputes:** 65% of respondents reported land disputes, often due to unclear boundaries and overlapping claims.

**Access to Information:** 70% found it difficult to access land records, citing bureaucratic delays and high costs.

These findings align with studies in other Nigerian states, where manual LAS limit efficiency and transparency (Babalola *et al.*, 2023).

### b. Challenges of Land Administration in Umunneochi

The following challenges were identified:

**Outdated Records:** Paper-based systems are prone to loss, damage, and manipulation, hindering accurate land documentation.

**Bureaucratic Inefficiencies:** The process of obtaining titles is lengthy (6–12 months) and costly, discouraging formalization.

**Lack of Digitalization:** Unlike urban areas like Lagos, Umunneochi lacks GIS-based land information systems (Merem & Twumasi, 2015).

**Socio-Cultural Barriers:** Customary tenure systems resist formalization due to cultural beliefs and distrust of government institutions.

**Limited Capacity:** Land officers lack training in modern LAS tools, reducing operational efficiency.

These challenges mirror those in Ekiti State, where underdeveloped LAS constrain development (Ojo *et al.*, 2023).

### c. Socio-Economic Impacts of Inefficient LAS

The inefficiencies in Umunneochi's LAS have significant socio-economic consequences:

**Agricultural Productivity:** Insecure tenure discourages long-term investments in farming, reducing yields. Only 30% of farmers reported using titled land for commercial agriculture.

**Investment Barriers:** Investors avoid Umunneochi due to unclear land ownership, limiting job creation.

**Social Conflicts:** Land disputes strain community cohesion, with 50% of respondents linking conflicts to economic losses.

**Poverty Perpetuation:** Limited access to titled land restricts collateral for loans, trapping farmers in subsistence agriculture.

These findings corroborate Williamson *et al.* (2010), who emphasize that inefficient LAS undermine economic growth and social stability.

### d. Opportunities for Efficient LAS in Umunneochi

Despite challenges, opportunities exist to enhance LAS:

**Digitalization:** Adopting GIS and Land Information Systems (LIS) can improve record-keeping and accessibility, as demonstrated in Akwa Ibom State (Daniel, 2005).

**Legal Reforms:** Amending the LUA to recognize customary tenure could bridge statutory and customary systems (Babalola & Hull, 2019).

**Capacity Building:** Training land officers in modern tools can enhance efficiency.

**Community Engagement:** Involving traditional leaders in LAS reforms can build trust and encourage formalization.

**Public-Private Partnerships:** Collaborating with tech firms can support digital infrastructure development.

### e. Proposed Framework for Efficient LAS

Based on the findings, a framework for efficient LAS in Umunneochi is proposed:

**Institutional Reforms:** Establish a local land administration unit to decentralize services.

**Technological Integration:** Implement GIS-based LIS to digitize land records.

**Legal Harmonization:** Integrate customary and statutory tenure systems through policy reforms.

**Stakeholder Collaboration:** Engage communities, government, and private sector in LAS design and implementation.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** Use FELA to assess LAS performance regularly.

This framework draws on successful LAS reforms in Rwanda and Ghana, where digitalization and community involvement enhanced land governance (Daniel, 2024).

## Recommendations

To achieve efficient LAS in Umunneochi, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Invest in Digital Infrastructure:** The Abia State government should partner with tech firms to develop GIS-based LIS, starting with a pilot in Umunneochi.
2. **Simplify Title Processes:** Reduce costs and timelines for obtaining Certificates of Occupancy to encourage formalization.
3. **Train Land Officers:** Organize workshops on GIS, LIS, and FELA for land administration staff.
4. **Engage Communities:** Conduct awareness campaigns to educate residents on the benefits of formal titles.

5. Reform Legal Frameworks: Advocate for amendments to the LUA to recognize customary tenure, reducing conflicts.
6. Establish Dispute Resolution Mechanisms: Create local land tribunals to resolve disputes efficiently.

These recommendations align with global best practices for LAS reform (Williamson *et al.*, 2010).

## Conclusion

Efficient land administration systems are pivotal for socio-economic development in Umunneochi L.G.A. The current LAS, characterized by manual processes, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and socio-cultural barriers, hinders agricultural productivity, investment, and social stability. However, opportunities exist to transform LAS through digitalization, legal reforms, and community engagement. By implementing the proposed framework, Umunneochi can achieve secure tenure, reduce disputes, and attract investments, fostering sustainable development. Future research should explore the cost-benefit analysis of digital LAS implementation in rural Nigeria.

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