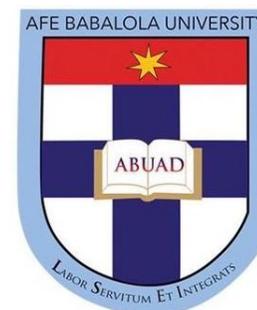




The Journal of Sustainable Development Law and Policy



ISSN: 2467-8406 (Print) 2467-8392 (Online) Journal homepage: <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/jsdlp>

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To cite this article: Kelechi Johnmary Ani (2023). Enyigba-Izzi -Echalike-Ikwo Land Crisis and Implications for Sustainable Development. The Journal of Sustainable Development, Law and Policy. Vol. 14:2. 168-184, DOI: [10.4314/jsdlp.v14i2.9](https://doi.org/10.4314/jsdlp.v14i2.9)

To link this article: DOI: [10.4314/jsdlp.v14i2.9](https://doi.org/10.4314/jsdlp.v14i2.9)



Published online: December 1, 2023.

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ENYIGBA-IZZI -ECHALIKE-IKWO LAND CRISIS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Citation:

Kelechi Johnmary Ani (2023).
Enyigba-Izzi -Echalike-Ikwo
Land Crisis and Implications for
Sustainable Development. *The
Journal of Sustainable
Development, Law and Policy*.
Vol. 14:2. 168-184.

Submitted:

09 August 2023

Final version received:

29 October 2023

ISSN: 2467-8406 (Print)

2467-8392 (Online)

ABSTRACT

In African modern states, boundary demarcations were artificially created during independence by the colonial imperialist. This was because the colonial imperialists who led Africans to the path of independence sat at the comfort of their offices and drew the map of Africa. While it could be said that our nationalists were only interested in freedom, their failure to clearly define inter-state borders has continued to challenge the security of their lives and property. This study focuses on Enyigba-Izzi and Echalike-Ikwo crisis and its implications for societal development in Nigeria. The study which was rooted on the human need theory used key informant interviews in collecting data from the field. The study found that the armed conflict has been recurrent and intermittent in the area from 1961 till 2021. It documents the multiple negative effects of the conflict in relations to the sustainable development of that environment. The study finally recommends multi-dimensional post conflict peacebuilding strategies that would bring peace and development to the area.

Key words: Land, armed conflict, peace, development, Enyigba-Izzi and Echalike-Ikwo

1. INTRODUCTION

Land remains a fundamental driver of insecurity in different parts of the globe. It was one of the factors that brought about wars and armed conflicts between or amongst nations, states, communities, kingdoms and empires from pre-colonial times to present in Africa¹. The manifestation of land conflict and its impact on sustainable development differs from one environment to another. Thus, different societies experience different forms of land resource conflict. However, in the Nigerian geo-political space, land resource conflict is a major driver of violent competition and armed confrontation which negatively undermines development. For instance, mineral resource conflict is currently undermining sustainable development in the Niger Delta region, while in Zamfara and some states of Nigeria, competition for natural resources has promoted resource wars amongst the people. The South Eastern part of the country is characterized by land resource conflict. Unfortunately land resource conflict is a popular problem that has undermined the Nigerian developmental history. It has continued to undermine development in many societies within the country and beyond.

However, many of the architects of this form of armed conflict sustains it because of the important place of land as a factor of production. It is also highly symbolic in the political geography of every society². Land shapes the economic status of many people in Igboland because it is a major source of income and agricultural output. It also determines the settlement patterns of the people in a community and enhances their agricultural development through farming³. Land determines the nature of structural

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¹ Kelechi Johnmary Ani, 'Political Economy of Resource, Human Security and Environmental Conflicts in Africa: A Concluding Remark' in Kelechi Johnmary Ani, Victor Ojajorotu & Kelvin Bribena (Eds) *Political Economy of Resource, Human Security and Environmental Conflicts in Africa*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021)

² Maano Ramutsindela, 'Greening Africa's borderlands: the symbolic politics of land and borders in peace parks' (2017) 56 *Political Geography* 106,113

³ Kelechi Johnmary Ani, 'Sustainable Peacebuilding Strategies for the Management of Ezza Conflicts in Nigeria and the Barolong Land Disputes in South Africa', (PhD thesis, North West University, South Africa, 2017)

development in a given geopolitical area. Similarly, land related issues are also central in many violent disputes around the world⁴. Many of the ongoing communal conflicts in Nigeria are tied to competition over fertile land⁵. It is widely believed that one of the greatest possessions of an Igbo man is land and it is transmitted from one generation to another as a trans-generational heritage. Land is handed over from the descendants of one kindred to another. The struggle over access to land and valuable mineral resources there-in that are used for development purposes drove wars in different parts of Africa⁶. This has manifested in many African countries especially in Liberia, Sierra Leone and parts of Angola⁷.

Thus, evaluating the role played by land in the conflicts history of many nations helps policy makers to develop strategies towards easing of societal tensions⁸. It also help in aborting the trap of poverty that comes from cyclical organised violence⁹ as well as armed conflicts, emanating from land resource. Land dispute is remains a source of conflict between groups of people in Igboland, especially in Ebonyi communities. Hence, to address land related conflicts, it is essential to correctly identify the role played by land in a given conflict. There are fundamental issues that would be investigated in all land conflicts. They include, but are not limited to the factors that heighten violent competition and exacerbate land tensions, the origins of the conflict and the effect it has generated on the immediate society?

In the past decades, some communities in Ebonyi State Nigeria had embarked on series of inter-communal conflicts and if all the crisis are to be scrutinized, it will be realized that many of them

⁴ Kelechi Johnmary Ani, 'Gabriel Tiobo Wose Kinge and Victor Ojatorotu, Nigeria-Cameroon Relations: Focus on Economic History and Border Diplomacy' (2018)5 *Journal of African Foreign Affairs* 147, 166

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Kelechi Johnmary Ani, Victor Ojatorotu, and Timi Legend Asuelime, 'Ezza and Kwahu-Ewe Land Dispute in Nigeria and Ghana: Unfolding the Road to Peace and Development' (2019)6 *Journal of African Foreign Affairs* 45, 64

⁷ Phillip Le Billion, *Fueliling War: natural resource and Armed conflict*, (Routledge, 2013)

⁸ Paul Diehl, 'Exploring peace:looking beyound war and negative peace' (2016) 60 *International Studies Quarterly* 1,10

⁹ Therese Petterson and Magnus Oberg, 'Organised violence 1989-2019' (2020) 57 *Journal of Peace Research*, 597, 613

are as a result of land resource conflict. This study is centered on land conflict between Izzi and Ikwo people of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. It is an indisputable fact that land has become one of the key factors that led to the conflicts between Izzi and her neighbors, like the Ikwo and Cross River people of Ukelle, Ogamala, Ofonekum and Idoro thereby undermining societal development. This can be further buttressed with the fact that both Ikwo and Izzi communities are farming communities and they keep on looking for expansion of their land and these of course resulted in violence or conflict between each other. The article is divided into seven sections. The first part is a general introduction, which is followed by the statement of problem and methodology. The third part situates the conflict within a theoretical framework. This is followed by the discussions on the historic inter-group relations and development of the conflict amongst both communities. The next part presents the implications of the conflict in relations to sustainable development of affected societies. This is followed by the failure of government policy and lastly the section on conclusion and recommendations.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND METHODOLOGY

The objectives of this study is to unravel the dynamics of Izzi and Ikwo land crisis and how it affected societal building in the country. Land conflicts have remained a continuous source of threat to the sustainable development, unity and harmony of the Ebonyi people especially in Ikwo, Izzi, Ezza, and Ezillo border communities, where it has led to the continuous loss of lives and destruction of properties worth billions from the colonial era to present. One could join Azar to ask, how then can these protracted social conflicts be managed¹⁰? Since the inception of these conflicts, it could be argued that appropriate measures has not been taken by institutions and groups to ensure that the conflict came to an end.

¹⁰ Edward Azar, *The Management of Protracted Social Conflict: Theory and Causes*, (Aldershoot, 1990)

Therefore, many people have not taken proactive and reactive steps in reviewing and documenting the appropriate measures needed to stop these land conflicts, so that peace and tranquility will reign in Ebonyi state. While scholars have gradually started interrogating these conflicts, the institutions that need to implement peace processes on how these inter-communal land issues will be resolved are often incapacitated and are not even well equipped to dispense their assigned duties on the issues of land dispute. And the issues of land dispute have continued to consume the lives of innocent people, while properties worth millions of lives are being destroyed in their billions, thereby further violently affecting the life of the poor¹¹.

In relation to this study, primary sources, especially oral key informant interviews (KII) on the origin and development of the land dispute between Izzi and Ikwo were conducted. Respondents were purposively selected from the conflict setting. Their identity are kept anonymous using focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interview one (i) to ten (x). Written secondary sources were also consulted and used in complementing the facts gathered or gotten from oral interviews. These collected primary and secondary data were interpreted thematically and presented in developing the study.

3. THEORISING THE CONFLICT

The conflict between the peoples of Enyigba in Izzi Local Government Area and Echalike Ikwo could be interpreted using the human needs theory. Maslow in his earliest writing has come up with the hierarchy of human needs. It could be argued that man has ontological needs that must be certainly pursued. The human need theory argues that conflicts are driven by needs of men. The basic need approach will definitely consider water, air, shelter etc¹². But Rist maintained that there are basic questions about human needs¹³. For instance, why do these communities

¹¹ Richard Nixon, *Slow violence and environmentalism of the poor*, (Cambridge, 2011)

¹² Johan Galtung, 'The basic need approach' in Lederer K. *Human Needs*, (Cambridge, 1980)

¹³ Gilbert Rist, 'Basic Questions about Human Needs' in Lederer K. *Human Needs*, (Cambridge, 1980)

need this land that they would fight and kill themselves as well as their hitherto brothers? The answer is that the fundamental needs of the traditional brothers that led to this conflict include the need to acquire more land for agricultural production and secondly the need for the protection of civilisation and the people's traditional heritage of the two communities within the contested areas.

The first need arose from the fact that both people or communities were traditionally agriculturalists and farmers, hence they need all the necessary land to expand their shifting cultivation culture of farming. Moreover, holding claim to a particular piece of land helps them to conserve their appetite for peace and secure their historic inheritance¹⁴. Unfortunately, this traditional culture of shifting cultivation has been undermined by the challenge of increased population in both communities due to birth as well as growth in societal development that has placed undue demands on the people, thereby turning land into a scarce commodity. The latter quest to protect the people's heritage remains a contested issue. This is because both communities claims that the area has relics of their traditional cultural artifacts. The most logical aspect of this claim is that their ancestors and forefathers were buried in the hitherto contested land, hence it is a moral burden for the living to protect the generational heritage of their kinsmen by protecting the burial sites of their ancestors.

4. FINDINGS ON INTER GROUP RELATIONS AND CONFLICT DEVELOPMENT

Geographically, the conflict between the Ikwo and Izzih was carried out specifically by Enyigba Izzih and Echialike Ikwo villages of Ebonyi state. Enyibichiri and Echialike are two political wards according to the Federal Government of Nigeria but they fall under one autonomous clan of Alike- meaning that both can be referred as one Ikwo clan. Enyigba on the other hand is a sub-group of Igbebu autonomous community who are found on the

¹⁴ Mathew Richard, Halle Mark and Switzer Jason, Conserving the peace, resources, livelihood and security, (International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2002)

flank of Abakaliki Igbo sub-group. They are all located in the Northern side of Ebonyi State and they share common boundary. The proximity between the two communities has continued to influence their inter-group marriages that during the struggle for the creation of Ebonyi State, leaders from the two clans (Ikwo and Izzih) proposed that Ikwo and Izzi should come under one geopolitical zone. This is because both clans has a historical origin and they have a history of sharing labour for agricultural purposes in the traditional cooperative societies that cut across both clans. They also bought and sold while still buying and selling their goods in markets located across both clans.

Their historic inter-group relations promoted cultural, social and political exchanges. This relations between the people of Ikwo and Izzi had spanned from the period of colonialism up to the independence of the Nigerian State, when tribalism, clannish and kindred politics became the bane of Nigerian politics. Since then, group relations and understanding among the various communities and clans in Ebonyi State gradually graduated into communal skirmishes except in some areas of political interests. Izzi and Ikwo had hitherto maintained brotherly relationship trading on commodities such as pepper, potatoes, yam, cassava, and vegetables until recently when political struggle for control occasioned by land resources became the bane of communal clash between the two clans. Over the years, the relations amongst the two people deteriorated into communal conflict where both sides mobilized resources to prosecute armed conflict against each other. The armed conflict was said to have occurred as a result of land dispute between the two communities of Enyigba Izzi and the people of Enyibichiri Ikwo Local Council. Amiara on side, opined that the conflict between Ikwo and Izzi, which culminated to the all-out armed conflict, was fought by Echalike and Enyigba¹⁵.

The conflict occurred as a result of misunderstanding over a portion of land located along Onu Nwida Uko. The size of the land is estimated to be about 100,000 hectares comprising both swamp and upland for the cultivating of both rice and yam as the

¹⁵ Solomon Amiara, 'Conflict of Origin, Myths and Realities: An Ikwo Experience', in Nwokike, I. K. and Okonkwo, U. U.(eds), *Aspects of Ebonyi History, Culture and Development*, (Gregory University Press, 2017)

case may. Both communities maintained that the land belongs to them and have the authority to farm on the hand. According to a respondent “the said portions of land belonged to Alike people, particularly to the Echalike and Enyibichiri Alike before population expansion caused the Izzi to migrate southerly until they encountered the Enyibichiri and the Echalike peoples” (KII-II, KII-IV). However, the Izzih people also maintain that the land belonged to them but was a neglected farmland, which gave fillip for the encroachment of the Ikwo descendants. Originally, they had no interest in the land except that their interests were drawn to the land by the fertility of the soil (KII-III, 2022: KII-I, 2022). It is the competition and quest to exploit the rich resource that has led to organised violence¹⁶. The discovery of the rich nutrient and resources of the land became a major driver of the armed conflict. Enyigba and Echalike together with Enyibichiri have had series of crises emanating from the land dispute.

The first of the armed conflict occurred around 1960s and continued till the period of Nigeria-Biafran war in 1967-1970. Aliuna maintains that the crisis began since 1961 but at a time appeared to have been settled some time in 1974 and nobody raised the matter again till 1993¹⁷. He further stressed that since 1993, nobody has touched the land and peace appeared to have returned between the two brothers after the two communities had fought and settled their differences in 1962¹⁸.

However, Ikwo people restarted the armed conflict because their own son was elected the governor of the state¹⁹. Thus, they desired to prosecute the conflict and attain victory when their son was in power as governor of the state. The second phase of the conflict was the spill-over effect of Ikwo-Nsobo conflict that started in 1983²⁰. The conflict was between the people of Ofenekpa in Ikwo Local Government Area and the people of Nsobo in Obubra, Cross River State. The conflict occurred when the Nsobo crossed over to Izzi to ambush the Ikwo traders who were enroute from

¹⁶ Peterson and Oberg (N9)

¹⁷ Godwin Aliuna, Killings: Ebonyi Deputy Governor, Speaker on War, and Communal Crisis, Daily Post (Lagos, 7 October, 2018)

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Amiara (N 17)

Nwanwu to Abakaliki²¹. Around 7 am, they were attacked by Nsobo people who thought that the vehicle they boarded was carrying Ofenekpa people. The Alike people accused the Izzi of corroborating with the Nsobo and on the next day, the Alike responded by killing scores of Enyigba people²². Though, the conflict did not last that time, as community leaders quickly got into the matter and brokered peace between them.

The third phase of the conflict occurred in 1993, the conflict was only for some days and normalcy returned to the people. Since then, the two communities had jointly pursued their peace up to 2018, when political rancor arising from sheer determination to win 2019 elections surfaced among the big political wigs. Within this context, political gladiators cashed in on the political maltreatment and began to incite their youths towards armed conflict. According to Aliuna, since 1961 when the crisis started up till date, the Izzi people on their side never violated instructions given to them by the Ebonyi State Government²³. His assertion tries to politicize the conflict by exonerating the Izzi from the cause of the conflict. His assertion depicts that Ikwo were more or less responsible for the outbreak of the conflict considering that their son was in power. Aliuna alluded to Ogbonnaya Nwifuru- the then Speaker, Ebonyi State House of Assembly and current Governor of the state as saying that this crisis started since 2008, because Elechi was elected governor²⁴. Nevertheless, it could be recalled that the crisis stopped in 1974. And nobody raised the matter till that 2008. Ikwo people according to Aliuna started the crisis because Elechi, their own son was made the governor of the state²⁵. But the account of Aliuna will be appreciated more as singular story or a mono-causal analysis of conflict escalation, which will not be strong enough to lead two hitherto blood brother communities to armed conflict.

Each of the two communities had continued to accuse one another for the outbreak of the conflict. For a respondent, there was

²¹ Ibid

²² Ibid

²³ Aliuna (N 17)

²⁴ ibid

²⁵ Ibid

nothing at stake between the two communities before the outbreak of the war in 2018 except that some groups in Izzi had accused Elechi of not being patriotic and fair to them as the then governor (KII-VI). A number of persons in Izzih during focus group discussion held that Elechi's decision to favour his wife's kindred informed the political gang up that stopped him from producing a successor in 2015 and led to the incitement that further divided Izzi clan. In some quarters, there were allegations that the outbreak of the armed conflict was not unconnected with politics while in some other areas; it was asserted that the long enmity and Elechi's political activities combined to contribute to the outbreak of the conflict. Analyzing the former, the group held that Elechi in his press conferences as the governor of the state supported power rotation among the three senatorial zones, which by implication showed that power must be handed over to the Ebonyi South in 2015 elections, but only rescinded his decision to hand over to an Izzi man when it was clear that the national government was not in his support. For this group, the decision was frivolous and a make-up of political discrimination usually meted out them (FGDs).

As a political build-up continued, the disgruntled group joined forces with the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) backed by the Federal Government to win the 2015 general elections and they enthroned their loyalists. Hence, some Izzih men, holds that their decisions to support PDP against their own son were deliberately geared towards revenge. This assertion was corroborated by Martin Elechi who maintained that the conflict is politically motivated²⁶.

In 2018, the two communities clashed again killing six persons with houses and properties worth millions of naira destroyed. Inya reported that the two communities have been at war since thirty years. He maintains that a market jointly owned by the communities was razed down in the renewed hostilities²⁷. Accordingly, the two communities have no justifications for armed conflict; as they have been involved in historic inter-group

²⁶ Marthin Nwanchor Elechi, *The 39 Road to Ebonyi State: A personal Account of the Struggle for the Creation of Ebonyi State*, (Snaap Press, 2000)

²⁷ Uchenna Inya, 'Theatre of War' *New Telegraph*, (Lagos, May 3, 2018) <<http://www.newtelegraph.com>>

relations, sharing common markets such as Iboko, rice mill, Nwelem, Nwanu among others. There is no doubt that the background to the conflict stemmed from land dispute but the context to which the conflict broke out might have little link to political considerations otherwise, one would probably ask why did the conflict suddenly begin after several years of relative peace among the people? Political and other interests that drive conflict and undermine development became the fueling factors²⁸.

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF AFFECTED SOCIETIES

The warring communities of Enyigba in Abakaliki local government area and Enyibichiri in Echi-Alike, Ikwo having had this history or recurrent conflict have created a hostile environment that sustained conflict and crisis thereby affecting their societal development. It is that consciousness that the armed conflict often undermined their societal development quest that gives fillip for peacemaking after each phase of the conflict. However, that does not negate the massive economic loss that they have experienced in both sides due to the armed conflict. This is because the conflict has serious negative effect on the economy²⁹. The farmers in the conflict zones has been badly affected by the conflict.

Foods products such as rice, yam cassava, cocoyam, and others were destroyed during the conflicts partly by militia activities of digging trenches as well as the culture of abandonment by the farmers who would neglect their farms and struggle for survival first (KII-X). Animals such as goats, cow, dog, and were also destroyed thereby denying their owners of the dividends of its economic importance (KII-VII). People were subjected to abject poverty as they were often forced to abandon their source of

²⁸ Le Billion, (N 7)

²⁹ Lawrence Gomez, 'Evaluating The Impact of Cassamance Conflict On The Senegambia' (Masters Dissertation, International Relations and Diplomacy, University of The Gambia 2022)

livelihood. Scarcity of food and livestock paved way for increase in the price of commodities available in the nearby villages where they settled as internally displaced persons (KII-VI). Agriculture formed the main stay of the economic life of the people. Some of the crops produced in the conflict area before the coming of the European includes the following yam, coco yam, palm oil, edu and akidi among others. Production was on small scale basis during the conflict period.

Even some of the social amenities that enhances the economic and developmental life of the people were often vandalized during the conflicts thereby making life miserable to people. Many were exposed to illness of different kind such as kwashiokor that resulted to many people rushing to hospitals nearby to receive treatment.

Crafts was also an important aspect of the people's economic life that was affected by the conflict. Among the hand craft engaged by the local people as a means of survival includes blacksmithing, wood carving, basket making, pottery, oil processing and lots more. Whenever this conflict breaks-out, the people would just loose the opportunity to continue with the vocation that places food on their table.

The Ikwo and Izzi people also engaged themselves in trading. Many of the indigenous people of Ikwo and Izzi saw the lucrative nature of trade and saw it as their major occupation thereby investing more of their realized capital in it to make a bountiful profit but the businesses were suspended during the period of the conflict. Economically, the Ikwo and Izzi people are well known within the region for their prowess in farming and they have used the money gotten from the farm products to train their respective children to attain high level of degree in various field of studies. Unfortunately, nearly the whole income from trade and agriculture were often suspended during the conflict escalation.

The Christian association of Nigeria did call on the people of Enyigba Izzi and Enyibichiri Ikwo to end their conflict. They maintain that the conflict undermined the peace, love and brotherhood teachings of Christ. The conflict was seen to be a random one because it touches all spheres of human lives including religious aspects. According to oral interview of a respondent, he said that roughly 56 churches were burnt down at the expense of the conflicts expedition. It also affected both the

clergies, pastors, evangelist and host of other anointed men of God. People no longer feel comfortable to attend churches let alone to talk of offering which will be used to engineer church building and other ministerial functions. So it poses a serious threat to the religious bodies and some men of God were also killed as a result of the conflicts.

Furthermore, those church building that was destroyed when the conflict was still on was costing people of these communities money, time and resources to rebuild it again. Some of these minor churches that can't afford to withstand the psychological and economic problems generated by the armed conflict folded instantly. Men of God don't feel free to embark on their ministerial functions in that area during conflict uprising as they are always afraid because of the incessant shooting from different places. This was caused by the continuous increase in the level of insecurity within the region. People don't feel free to close their eyes and worship as a result of fear and anxiety; neither do they have the courage to embark on nights carol or any other ministerial outreach that also yielded money for their churches. People were always on alert to protect their life.

Again, the conflicts had huge impact negatively on the lives of the people. The conflict affects all spheres of the people social life, there was massive destruction of the traditional religious tools and implement which paved way for apathy of the majority of the people of the affected communities from social involvement. People don't even gather again to celebrate social and traditional functions as the people were very careful with their life to avoid the story that touches the heart.

Currently, people around Ebonyi state have known Ikwo and Izzi people to be warriors, so many hardly attend functions in the conflict communities and they are working assiduously to desist from any engagement that will take them to that area especially at night. For instance, some of the cultural festival that often take place before the conflicts became recurrent was given some questions mark weather to continue or not as the gathering of the people might results to fresh attack in the sense that the people in the premises cannot guarantee the protection of others. Many persons in the conflict prone communities both old and young ones are well equipped with different degree of arms and weapons for self-protection unto safety.

6. THE FAILURE OF GOVERNMENT POLICY

In 2020, the Ebonyi State Government initiated processes that they aimed would resolve the crisis through its peace committee. The state government's Peace Committee demarcated the disputed land. Oginyi maintained that the crisis restarted in 2021 after the 2020 demarcation of the contested land by the Ebonyi State government³⁰. The Ebonyi state government issued an Executive Order from the then Governor, David Umahi ordering the demarcation of the land. Unfortunately, months after the demarcation of the disputed land by the government, the crisis restarted.

The reason for the reemergence of the crisis was the abduction and disappearance of little children who were abducted by alleged Ikwo warlords within the conflict zone. This phase of the armed crisis became more devastating and spread its sphere of influence to the state capital in Abakaliki. The period witnessed the burning of houses in different parts of Enyigba and Enyibichiri at a time the state governor has issued a seven-day ultimatum for the abducted children to be returned back to their parents whether alive or dead³¹.

Consequently, the Izzi people threatened the Ikwo people to vacate their land in Abakaliki urban, which hitherto belongs to the ancestors of the Izzi irrespective of the fact that the Ikwo people have bought the land and obtained certificate of occupancy from the Ebonyi State Government. The refusal of the Ikwo people to vacate the area led to massive destruction of their properties in Abakaliki town as well as the loathing of the properties of non-Ikwo people settling there-in.

The Ebonyi State Government also gave another Executive Order that residents of the state should go about their normal businesses, while the people who ran out from Abakaliki, especially Ikwo

³⁰ Oginyi Ruth, 'Land Dispute: CAN Sues for Peace' Orient Daily News, (Lagos, 8 June 2021)

³¹ Ibid

people should return. The governor also demanded that those found breaking stores, shops or houses, intimidating or threatening the residents, visitors and other people in Abakaliki urban, the state capital; is taking laws into their hands and whenever they are apprehended, will follow the due process of the law³². The 2021 crisis did not only cause the massive loss of lives and properties, it also created deep rooted cleavages, tensions and inter-group fear within the state capital as non-Izzih residents became terribly afraid of the destruction of their properties and the economic loss there-in. Politically, the state was also affected as the conflict became a tool for political campaign within state by the opposition political parties. There was widespread fear of discrimination, marginalization, victimization and hatred among the people depending of which side of the conflict divide they defended.

However, there is therefore need for environmental peacebuilding and peacemaking³³. The quest for the sustainable management of the armed conflict³⁴ within the state should also be promoted. Similarly, environmental cooperation³⁵ and the need to look beyond negative peace is fundamental in healing the psychology of the multiple armed conflicts in Ebonyi State as a part to sustainable development.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

COVID-19 paved the way for Since the inception of earth, there has been a consensus among scholars that conflicts of any kind often have major negative impact on the people and society more than positive one. Conflicts especially on land have left many nations underdeveloped, many economy have been crippled as a result of conflicts there by leading to retard development of some

³² Ibid

³³ Ken Conca and Geoffrey Dabelko, *Environmental Peacemaking*, (John Hopkins University Press, 2002)

³⁴ Le Billion, (N 7)

³⁵ Tobias Ide, 'The impact of environmental cooperation on peacemaking, definitions and mechanisms and empirical evidence' (2019)21 *International Studies Review* 317, 346

region, increasing the high level of poverty in the society, increasing level of unemployment in the country as well as many offices, parastatals and ministries of government were deserted to conflicts, thereby leaving many people with the option of losing their jobs and starting life afresh from the scratch which is not contributing anything to the economic status of both the country, society and the family of such victims.

Land disputes have become part and parcel of African social and developmental history. There are land disputes among family members, between one community and another community, one village with another village as well as one state with another state. In many cases, boundary demarcations are often adopted as government approach but that does not emanate from the traditional natural features of communal demarcations in Africa hence, it is often difficult for an advantaged party to hold claim of the new government boundary.

Aside that, it did appear that the African nationalists and earliest sellers on a parcel of land, on their own parts never anticipated that there would be crises arising from land as a result of population expansion and the discovery of mineral resources. More so, it is further understood that in bid to protect communal land, members of the community usually undertake to buy weapons of war in advance thereby leading to the misuse of arms.

Therefore, the Enyigba-Izzi and Echalike-Ikwo armed conflict could be approached from this stand point. The two communities have been living in peace and claimed to have descended from one ancestral father, which means ordinarily the conflict would have been averted if government had utilized the option of entrusting the traditional authorities with the powers of delineating their boundaries before population explosion. Thousands of people were displaced in their houses and they went far away from home in search of refuge. In order to save their lives from the hands of unsatisfied and selfish individuals who have chosen to place much value on land more than the lives and blood of their fellow human beings.

So there are countless reasons we should always strive to go for peace irrespective of our status, goals and our insatiable wants and needs. The two conflict societies need to learn to live through peaceful coexistence, love and care for others. Modern adage stipulates that united we stand divided we fall, any state that the

citizenry are not united or bond together would hardly strive for both good governance and welfare of the general populace.

Land issues and related ones have denied many people access to enjoy the dividends of their investment. It is high time we realize that land in contention is a fixed asset, which has been in existence before we came to this world and will definitely be there till death push us away for others to live. In worst case scenario, the land will remain constant but will swallow all the proponents of land conflict. Thus, there is need to shun violence, greediness, selfishness, and discrimination of any kind that will result in armed conflict and embrace peace so that our society will be a safer place for human co-existence.