

REMOTE SENSING FOR ANALYZING LANDUSE CHANGE, LAND RE-DISTRIBUTION AND COMMUNAL CONFLICTS IN A PART OF CENTRAL NIGERIA

Fanan Ujoh¹, Denen B. Hom², Olarewaju O. Ifatimehin³, Isa D. Kwabe¹ and John van Genderen⁴

1 Department of Geography & Environmental Management, University of Abuja, Nigeria

2 Department of Sociology, University of Abuja, Nigeria

3 Department of Geography & Planning, Kogi State University, Anyigba, Nigeria

4 Chinese Academy of Science, Beijing, China

ABSTRACT

The reality of landuse/cover change and its attendant effect on the environment and livelihood of inhabitants in developing countries is no longer an issue in doubt. The paper examined the complex impact of landuse/cover change and population expansion which have proven to be a formidable dual force in driving environmental and socio-economic changes in parts of Benue state, North Central Nigeria. Census figures of the study area for 1953, 1991 and 2006 were used to reveal population growth while landuse/cover changes were detected using remote sensing images of 1986, 1996 and 2006 (the images were classified using ILWIS 3.2 Version). Also, interviews, observations and field visits were conducted in all 14 Local Government Areas comprising the study area. The study revealed that land degradation due to large-scale loss of vegetal cover is most responsible for the conflict over marginal land resource. It was concluded that the increase in the spate of communal conflicts within the region is directly caused by the need for and scarcity of cultivable land in the face of

increasing need for food production for the expanding population. The study recommended State's intervention in the environmental and socio-economic problems of the communities.

Index Terms: Remote sensing, landuse change, population expansion, communal conflicts, Tiv Region