

## PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN TO CUSTOMARY INHERITANCE IN IGBO LAND OF NIGERIA\*

### Abstract

*In many African societies, there are unwritten customary laws that are oppressive to women. This practice in Nigeria that violates women's property right exists both in the paternal and matrimonial families. There are pertinent issues such as discrimination against women and female children in inheriting property from their parents, loss of property due to divorce, total disinheritance from ownership of property and the ill treatment of widows will be duly considered in this paper. There will be recommendations for change in the biased cultural attitudes against females in Igbo land and also the need for strengthening laws that support and protect the rights of women in Igbo land and Nigeria as a whole.*

**Keywords:** Women's Right, Inheritance, Igbo land

### 1. Introduction

The term 'Igbo' is used as a double signifier. On the one hand, it refers to one of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. On the other hand, it is used to designate the language of this group, the Igbo people of Nigeria. In terms of location, the Igbo occupy the bulk of the south-eastern parts of Nigeria.<sup>1</sup> It is usually said that while the other two major ethnic groups in Nigeria (the Hausa and the Yoruba) also inhabit other countries in Africa, the Igbo are found as an indigenous population in no other country in the world than their present location in Nigeria and had not migrated from elsewhere to their present location.<sup>2</sup> Children belong to the man in Igbo society when divorce occurs. Young adults stay with their fathers, while the bride price is returned to the man. In this way, the financial burden persuades the woman's family to discourage their daughter/sister from doing anything that would incur divorce. In general, among the Igbo, a woman with a large number of children is unlikely to follow the option of divorce when things go bad in the marriage.<sup>3</sup>

Childbearing among the Igbo is the primary concern of the woman and her mother. The image of females as a nurturing agent is entrenched in the minds of the people. In the past, wealth and children were considered as, in one way, related. Children were more valued than money.<sup>4</sup> In the area of values, Igbo men and women are expected to have children, particularly male children. A barren woman is pitied and regarded as a failure. As Igbo kinship is patrilineal, relatives of the husband of a barren wife or a woman who has only daughters or whose children have died encourage and expect the man to marry an additional wife, to ensure that his lineage continues.<sup>5</sup>

The position of women among the Igbo is moderated by two considerations. The first is age while the second factor is marriage. Upon attaining the age of a grandmother, the female enjoys some of the exclusive male rights. In that way, when operating as a great-grandmother, she can even upbraid a male of younger age in public without shocking the community.<sup>6</sup> Being married is highly valued among the Igbo people as a married woman is recognized as an important personality in her father's lineage.<sup>7</sup> Her role becomes that of a lineage daughter in her father's house.

### 2. Discrimination against Women's Right to Own Property

At no period in time has the capacity of a customary law husband to acquire and own property been questionable. Rather, certain customary law rules regulate the acquisition and ownership of property by wives of customary law marriages.<sup>8</sup> The argument has been that a customary law wife is not capable of acquiring and owning property to the exclusion of her husband. It is believed that as a wife, a woman is not capable of acquiring and owning property independently of her husband.<sup>9</sup> The uncertainty about the rights of the customary law wife to own property is due

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\* **By Stella Uju OJUADE, LLB, BL LLM**, Lecturer, Department of Private and Property Law, Faculty of Law, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

<sup>1</sup> Nwoye, Chinwe M.A. Igbo cultural and religious worldview: An insider's perspective retrieved from [www.academicjournals.org/IJSA](http://www.academicjournals.org/IJSA), *Academic Journals*, 2011, p. 305 accessed on 31-12-2018.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 305

<sup>3</sup> Op. cit. P. 311 Nwoye

<sup>4</sup> Ibid p. 311 Nwoye

<sup>5</sup> Ibid p. 311 Nwoye

<sup>6</sup> Ibid p. 313 Nwoye

<sup>7</sup> Op cit. p. 313 Nwoye

<sup>8</sup> Onokah, M.C. *Family Law*, Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd. 2003 p. 251

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

partly to the fact that in pre-colonial times, a female child was married off to a man even before attaining puberty.<sup>10</sup> Thus, in some cases she looked to her husband for either the capital to start a trade or the portion of land for her work-these being same of the sources through which she acquired property.<sup>11</sup>

Throughout the world, ownership of land, housing, and other property provides direct and indirect benefits including a secure place to live, the means of a livelihood, and a measure of wealth or capital by which additional economic resources can be leveraged. Land itself has long been recognized as a primary source of wealth, social status, and power providing the basis for shelter, food, and economic activities.<sup>12</sup> Women have been active in virtually every economic sector. However, despite their active selves they have been frequently denied the right to inherit property. The inheritance rights of women are harbored by various cultural, social and political factors.<sup>13</sup> These factors combined with discriminatory legal framework for inheritance mean that women do not enjoy equal rights of inheritance in comparison with their male counterparts.<sup>14</sup>

There are certain limitation rights which place women at a strong disadvantage in terms of accessing economic opportunities and maintaining independence. For example, due to lack of land titles and real property ownership among women, they are disadvantaged in their ability to access loan and credit from financial institutions to start businesses or improve their lot in life.<sup>15</sup> Under the customary law of most ethnic groups in Kenya, a woman cannot inherit land and must live on the land as a guest of male relatives by blood or marriage.<sup>16</sup> Likewise under the Nigerian customary law, the right of a wife to acquire and own landed property is subject to her husband's prior consent and subsequent overall control. The control exists, whether or not she acquired the landed property through her husband. In essence, a married woman has no right to personally acquire landed property. She must acquire such property through her husband.<sup>17</sup>

### **3. International Conventions against Discrimination**

The convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is an international document that establishes standards of equality between women and men. This convention was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 18 December 1979, and was made binding on ratifying states on 3 September 1981. The preamble to the CEDAW convention states that, extensive discrimination against women continues to exist and it emphasizes that such discrimination violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity. Article 1 of the convention<sup>18</sup> defines discrimination against women as 'any distinction, exclusion, or restriction made on the basis of sex in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field'. The article further defines discrimination against women as anything that can bring about unequal treatment between men and women while carrying out their livelihood. This article groups married and unmarried women together.

Article 13<sup>19</sup> stipulates in part that women have the right to obtain family benefits, while article 15<sup>20</sup> states, *inter alia*, that women have equal rights with men in matters of law related to business contracts. Under article 16<sup>21</sup>, women are empowered to own and give away their property. Apart from CEDAW, other documents apply, such as the African Charter – a regional bill – and national constitutions that prohibit discrimination on ground of sex in all categories of rights.<sup>22</sup> Article 2 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights provides for the

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<sup>10</sup> Onokah, M.C. Ibid p. 251

<sup>11</sup> Onokah M.C. Ibid p. 252

<sup>12</sup> Richard S. Strickland. To have and to Hold: Women's Property and Inheritance Rights in the Context of HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa (working paper) The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS, June 2004, p. 13 retrieved online from [www.icrw.org](http://www.icrw.org).

<sup>13</sup> Nyariki, M.G. Critique of the Constitutionality of the Law of Succession Act and Inheritance Rights of Women in Kenya. A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of the Master of Laws (LL.M) in Law, Governance & Democracy, and University of Nairobi. November, 2014, p. 1 accessed on 30-12-2018

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> *ibid*

<sup>16</sup> Nyariki M.G. Op. cit p. 3

<sup>17</sup> Onokah M.C. Op. cit. p. 253

<sup>18</sup> CEDAW 1979 Article 1

<sup>19</sup> CEDAW 1979 Article 13

<sup>20</sup> CEDAW 1979 Article 15

<sup>21</sup> CEDAW 1979 Article 16

<sup>22</sup> Onuoha, R.A. Discriminatory Property Inheritance under Customary Law in Nigeria: NGOs to the Rescue retrieved from [www.findarticles.com](http://www.findarticles.com) accessed on 31-12-2018. P. 1

elimination of discrimination against women. The charter in this section clearly states, inter alia that state parties must combat all forms of discrimination against women and also ensure that the principle of equality is being applied effectively between women and men.<sup>23</sup> The protocol to the African charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, considered Article 2 of the African charter on Human and peoples' Right and enshrined the following principles that, there shall be non-discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnic group, colour, sex, language, religion, political or any other opinion, national and social origin, fortune, birth or other status. The above Article is self explanatory as the protocol to the African Charter clearly phases out any form of discrimination not only against women based on gender but rather extends to other criteria covering gender, tribes and nationalities. The Article 18 of the African charter<sup>24</sup> clearly calls on all state parties to eliminate every form of discrimination against women and to ensure the protection of the rights of women as stipulated in international declarations and conventions. The protocol<sup>25</sup> recognized that women have essential roles to play in the development of any nation, and does not undermine the full participation of African women as they are recognized as equal partners in Africa's development. Finally, the protocol alludes cognizance to the fact that women's rights have been recognized and guaranteed in all international human rights instruments, notably the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and political rights, the convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and its Optional protocol, the African charter on the Rights and Welfare of the child.

#### **4. What obtains in other African Countries on Women's Inheritance Rights**

##### **Property Acquisition in Tanzania**

Inheriting land whether through lineal descent, a will or religious norms, remains one of the most common means of acquiring an interest in land. Second, in areas where land is available, village governments also have the power to allocate village land to their citizens (both women and men). Such practices were historically associated with Ujamaa (African Socialism) and the villagization policies of the 1960s, but the Land Acts have continued to provide for villages to allocate land to this day.<sup>26</sup> Third, individuals or married couples may 'self-acquire' their interests in land through purchase, lease or by making permanent improvements to the land through clearance and cultivation on the basis of adverse possession. Across these various modes of acquisition, there is significant variation in the nature and extent of family and community interests over the land, and the degree of autonomy that an individual may have to use or dispose of it.<sup>27</sup> Individuals have a large measure of control over land they have acquired for themselves, and spouses have shared rights in jointly acquired matrimonial property. In practice, the availability of these modes of acquisition varies according to the social and economic resources of individuals and families, demographic and commercial pressures on land and practices of land holding in a particular area.<sup>28</sup> However, socioeconomic change, including greater educational and employment opportunities for men and women, commercial investment and rapid urbanization have generated markets for the sale and lease of land and a gradual loosening of lineal ties to the land in these and other areas. Around eighty percent (80%) of ethnic groups within Tanzania follow the patrilineal principles of marriage and inheritance, the remainder being based on matrilineal principles.<sup>29</sup> In a study conducted by some researchers in southeastern Tanzania, it was found that while lineage practices followed the female line, inheritance patterns were bilineal and marriage practices were patrilocal.<sup>30</sup>

In patrilineal areas in Tanzania, while practices vary, family and clan land is customarily heritable by men, with women acquiring their interests in land through their husbands. In both patrilineal and matrilineal systems, customary land tenure practices are closely linked to significant life events such as marriage, separation and divorce, or death of a husband or father. Land may be allocated inter vivos, for example, to a son at the time of his marriage or after the death a father. In some areas, case studies in patrilineal communities have also documented practices of allocating land to daughters.<sup>31</sup> The reason for allocating land to daughters was because they may remain unmarried or their father has no sons. For widows, unless she is appointed as the administrator

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<sup>23</sup> Article 2 (1) (a) of the African charter on Human and peoples' Rights.

<sup>24</sup> African charter on Human and peoples Rights

<sup>25</sup> Protocol to the African charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.

<sup>26</sup> Helen Dancer (2017) *An Equal Right to Inherit? Women's Land Rights, Customary Law and Constitutional Reform in Tanzania*. *Social and Legal studies* 26(3) at journals.sagepub.com/home/sls p.2 accessed on 31-12-2018

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

<sup>28</sup> Ibid Helen Dancer p. 2

<sup>29</sup> Tenga 1988 in Helen Dancer op. cit p. 3

<sup>30</sup> Helen Dancer op. cit p. 3

<sup>31</sup> Helen Dancer Ibid. p. 3

of her husband's estate, her access to land becomes contingent on her relations with the man appointed to take care of the family and land – often a son or brother of the deceased.

Interpretation of various customary laws of Tanzania were codified and enshrined in the Local Customary Law Declaration Orders (CLDOs).<sup>32</sup> These textual and codified sources set out norms concerning customary issues of marriage, divorce, guardianship, inheritance and other matters in patrilineal communities. This resulted in a highly patriarchal construction and codification of customary laws, which were enacted by many district councils in 1963, shortly after Tanzania's political independence. More recently, the Law Reform Commission of Tanzania made recommendations for reforming customary laws of inheritance and succession. These included a uniform law of succession, which would recognise but moderate tribal, customary and religious differences according to principles of justice and equity. The law Reform commission has also recommended that all customary laws that are repugnant to the Constitution, Bill of Rights and natural justice be removed from the CLDOs. However, to date, the CLDOs remain in force and legally applicable as local law in many patrilineal areas of Tanzania.<sup>33</sup>

### **Inheritance Rights of Women in Kenya**

The patterns of inheritance and succession in Kenya is based on the pluralist legislative and judicial systems in Kenya particularly under the customary law, Islamic law and the succession Act,<sup>34</sup> which are major pieces of laws governing provisions and they are discriminative in their application.<sup>35</sup>

### **5. Inheritance Rights under African Customary Law**

While one cannot talk of one customary law of inheritance given the fact of existence of different laws for different communities in Kenya, however, there are striking similarities. Central to the customary law is the rule of male primogeniture which is inheritance by the eldest surviving male child. This issue has been challenged as being discriminative and unfair on the grounds of age, birth and gender.<sup>36</sup> Under most of Kenya's ethnic customary laws, women are prohibited from owning land. This fact makes it impossible for women to inherit property of their deceased husbands. Women only have customary rights to access and cultivate land, and even those rights are dependent on men. Daughters could not inherit land or livestock because they remained under their mother until they got married. If they remained unmarried, they would get cultivation rights and a life interest. Upon death or subsequent marriage, property reverted to their father's sons. If they had children out of wedlock, they would inherit the property. This is further worsened by the popular understanding among many ethnic groups that daughters will marry into other families and therefore gain a home and access to land and property through their membership in their husband's family.<sup>37</sup> Women in Kenya also face the issue of intra-women discrimination. The local contexts of customary governance and community dynamics, including the attitudes and roles of specific local leaders, to understand the kinds of opportunities and challenges individuals face in securing their inheritance. A community study in Kenya found widows to be most vulnerable to land expropriation. A childless widow or one who did not give birth to sons could not lay claim to family land under customary law. This issue of women inheritance has brought immense suffering among the women folks in Kenya. Widow might be 'inherited' by a male relative of her deceased spouse, thus becoming his wife and property along with the land and tangible property from her husband's estate. This custom was excused as a way of protecting widows and ensuring their maintenance and survival upon the death of their husband who were perceived as providers.<sup>38</sup>

The illustration of the discriminative tendencies of customary law is best captured by the famous case of S.M. Otieno and Wambui Otieno.<sup>39</sup> This case commenced in 1987 in which the wife of the deceased (Wambui Otieno) was taken to court by her deceased husband's family in a sensational contest over the burial of his remains. The case culminated in a series of court cases, involving twelve separate court actions and concluding in May 1987 with a court of Appeal ruling, which awarded custody of Otieno's remains to his clansmen for burial in his birth place in western Kenya according to Luo custom. This case exposed the dynamic nature of custom and tradition and the level of control placed over women.

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<sup>32</sup> The Law of Persons, First schedule Local Customary (Declaration) Order GN 279 of 1963; the law of Inheritance, second schedule Local customary (Declaration) (No. 4) order GN 436 of 1963.

<sup>33</sup> Helen Dancer (2017) op. cit p.3

<sup>34</sup> Laws of Kenya Cap. 160

<sup>35</sup> Nyariki, M.G. op. cit. p. 34

<sup>36</sup> Ibid p. 37

<sup>37</sup> Nyariki M.G. op. cit. p. 38

<sup>38</sup> Ibid p. 39

<sup>39</sup> Case citation: Weekly Review (January 30, 1987), 9.

## 6. Inheritance under Islamic Law

The root of the application of Islamic Law in Kenya is the constitution of Kenya. Islamic Law is given constitutional weight through the establishment of Kadhi's Courts,<sup>40</sup> with the Jurisdiction to determine questions of Muslim Law relating to personal status, marriage, divorce or inheritance in proceedings in which all the parties profess the Muslim religion and submit to the jurisdiction of the Kadhi's courts.<sup>41</sup> In 1990, the amendment made to the Law of Succession Act<sup>42</sup> exempted Muslims from the substantive provisions of the Law of Succession Act – those relating to testamentary or intestate succession, thereby subjecting the estate of a deceased Muslim exclusively to Islamic Law. The Koran recognises both testate and intestate succession. Only a third of the deceased's estate can be dealt with by will. The remaining two thirds is distributed under intestacy rules laid down in the Koran which fixes shares allocated to persons recognized as heirs. The Koran provides that during succession, males are to receive double the property of females or equal kinship category and the widow to receive one quarter of a husband's estate. When a man dies leaving a wife and no children, the wife inherits one quarter of the net estate and if there are children, she takes one eighth. If it is a polygamous family the wives share the quarter or eighth depending on whether there are children. This formula is not consistent with the succession Act which states equal division among sons and daughters.<sup>43</sup>

## 7. Inheritance under the Law of Succession Act

The Law of Succession Act was an attempt towards eliminating all forms of discrimination against women in the inheritance of property of their deceased husbands. Section 2(1) of the Act<sup>44</sup> states that, 'the Act constitutes the law of Kenya in respect of and is of universal application to all cases of intestate or testamentary succession to the estates of deceased persons dying after the commencement of the Act'. Section 38 of the Act also states that in the absence of a will, male and female children shall inherit from their parents equally. The Act has in its overriding objective, the elimination of discrimination and the equal inheritance rights for women and men, girls and boys whether in testate or intestate succession.<sup>45</sup> The Law of Succession Act embodies the African customary law of succession in order to provide the Kenyan with a statute that translates his customary beliefs and practices into law. The Law of Succession Act allows the application of African customary law in a number of instances. For example, Estates of persons dying before the application of the Law of Succession Act; Testamentary dispositions in accordance with African Customary Law Section 2(2) of the Law of Succession Act provides that the estates of persons dying before the commencement of the Act are subject to the written Laws and customs applying at the date of death.

It has been noted that inheritance followed mostly the male line and women have been historically dispossessed of ownership of property. The widespread practice of inheritance by males ensures that women continue to be practically excluded from acquiring and controlling property. Widows do not exercise rights over management, disposal or alienation of property due to property due to communal authority of the clan and the moral regard to the beneficial interests of the children. The highlighting of the discriminatory practices as embodied in the various laws will go a long way in providing a fertile knowledge for a more comprehensive law that will not repeat the same practices.<sup>46</sup>

## 8. The Nigerian Case on Inheritance considering the Yoruba and Igbo Customary Laws on Inheritance

Many scholars of feminist studies have been largely unanimous that aspects of African culture are hostile to women, hence the need for a paradigm shift in order for the marginalized woman to be emancipated.<sup>47</sup> The Yoruba nation like many other African societies is essentially patriarchal; hence men are understood to be more privileged than women. It is described as a situation which is characterized by male super ordination and female subordination. Men show superiority over their women counterparts, who are usually relegated to the background.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, socially, politically, economically and religiously women are to a very large extent, disadvantaged since decisions were taken mostly by males. The cultural and gender problems which African

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<sup>40</sup> Article 169 (1) (b) of the Constitution, 2010.

<sup>41</sup> Article 170 (5) of the Constitution, 2010.

<sup>42</sup> Statute Law (Miscellaneous Amendment) Act (No. 2), 1990 (Act No. 21 of 1990).

<sup>43</sup> Nyariki M.G. op. cit. p. 43

<sup>44</sup> Law of Succession Act, (1981) Cap. 160 (Kenya).

<sup>45</sup> Nyariki M.G. Op. cit. p. 44

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. p. 49

<sup>47</sup> Familusi, O.O. African Culture and the status of Women: The Yoruba Example. *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, Vol. 5, no. 1, March 2012 p. 299 retrieved from [www.findarticles.com](http://www.findarticles.com) accessed on 31-12-2018.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. p. 300.

women have been facing dates back to their birth as in many homes, the birth of a baby girl does not receive the kind of enthusiastic reception that is given to that of a baby boy.

Inheritance under Yoruba customary practice is not women friendly. Traditionally the issue of will was non-existent. Thus after the burial of the deceased, the oracle was consulted to fix a time for the sharing of the property (human – wives, offices and material). Sharing of offices is male centred as women cannot be made family heads. No matter how young a male child is, he is superior to female children in this regard no matter how old he may be. It is not impossible for female children to inherit property in their father's house when they are single but, this is not always the case for married women because of the belief that they in their entirety belong to their husbands.<sup>49</sup> Hence, it is important to note that while a woman may not inherit property, she could be inherited by somebody too old for her or somebody who may be younger than her own son.<sup>50</sup>

There is no doubt that there is conflict between Igbo traditional practices and the recognition of women's human rights. Many writers have raise the issue of women's rights as human rights, maintaining that the practice of denying inheritance to women and even worse, widows, letting widows be inherited as property, is inhumane and counter to treaties to which Nigeria is a signatory, in addition to being contrary to the Nigerian constitution.<sup>51</sup> The Igbo tradition says, the first son inherits property and he many share with his male siblings but not with the female. A widow by tradition, do not have rights and can even be regarded as the property of their deceased husbands' male relatives. The only way a woman may inherit property is by being charged with staying unmarried in order to maintain the lineage rights to her father's land.<sup>52</sup> In the absence of a son or male descendant, a daughter was asked to stay in the family to assume the status of a female son and was encouraged to procreate to maintain the continuity of the family and the lineage. Not only was she a daughter and a female son, but also 'a female father and the head of her family on the death of her father. As a female son, she owned land and inherited the family property.' This custom is called nrachi or idegbe.<sup>53</sup>

## 9. Conclusion and Recommendations

There have been instances of resistance from many quarters concerning this practice of denying women inheritance rights. Many writers have called for reforms in this area of disinheriting a woman from owning property; either she is married or unmarried. Widows too are not left out in this fight for Justice and equity. It has come to public knowledge that even the apex court in the land has voided the custom in the South-East of Nigeria that prevented female children from inheriting their father's property. The Supreme Court ruled that the Igbo Practice was discriminatory and it conflicts with the provisions of the Nigerian Constitution.<sup>54</sup> The court held that the practice was a breach of section 42(1)(a) and (2) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended). Even the courts had joined forces with women rights activist to rule that it is unconstitutional to dis-inherit female children, as there are notable Court of Appeal Justices who supported the discontinuation of the practice of disinheriting female children in Nigeria because it is not constitutional.<sup>55</sup> So, the Supreme Court was actually the last to come to say that female children should not be disinherited. This was upheld by the apex court in the case of *Ukeje v. Ukeje*, where the deceased daughter had sued the widow and son of her deceased father before the Lagos High Court claiming to be one of the Ukeje's children and sought to be included among those to administer their father's estate. The case went on to the Supreme Court which gave the final ruling in the case and stopped the practice.<sup>56</sup>

Women in Igboland under the custom do not inherit from their fathers and this is basically due to a customary law that says when a woman is married, she doesn't need to inherit from the father's lineage. The problem also continues when a woman goes to her husband's family and realises that there is nothing there for her too because, in some cases, the woman faces the problem of not being accepted by the husband's family. It will be unfair for a woman married under customary law not to be included in the inheritance of her husband's family or even in her father's house. Marginalising these women from property rights will cause great economic hardship on the woman and her family (children). I strongly stand with the stance of the courts who have waded into this matter and will

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid Familusi O.O. p. 301

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Onyemelukwe, C. Inheritance and land Ownership in an Igbo Village presented at the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Igbo Conference SOAS University of London. Retrieved from s3.amazonaws.com, 2015

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. Onyemelukwe C.

<sup>53</sup> Onyemelukwe C. Op. cit.

<sup>54</sup> Gabriel Chioma, Property war in South-East: "Never again will Igbo Women be denied of their inheritance" September 2016 retrieved from www.vanguardngr.com accessed on 03-01-2019.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. www.vanguardngr.com

<sup>56</sup> Ibid

see to it that woman are no long segregated when it comes to sharing of property. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) should also rise up to the occasion and help salvage this situation. More women should be educated and aware of NGOs that could come to their rescue whenever there is a property dispute. International statutes have also great roles to play in our nation Nigeria, if only it can be made reference to frequently. The African charter on Rights of women in Africa, the United Nations Convention that prohibits all forms of discrimination against women, the international convention of human rights, and many others have all been ratified by Nigeria. There is a call for a paradigm shift from customary practices that are repugnant to natural Justice, equity and good conscience. A good reform from these customary practices of disinheriting woman from owning property can be gleaned from the Law of Succession Act of Kenya whose overriding interest is to see to the equal rights of both men and women in property inheritance. If Kenya recognizes that women and men should have equal rights to inheritance, Nigerian laws and traditions should also change from its old practices and welcome a more developed approach where undue hardship will not be slammed on women and children who are females, both now and for the future.