

Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) on Land Resources in Nigeria for Sustainable Governance: Scope and Limitations

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ABSTRACT

This paper emphasizes a consideration of internally generated revenue as a potential for growth and development. The major sources of land-based revenue for the states and local government should be known and what the constraints of these taxes could be. The government has to deepen and widen the revenue base. This paper therefore examines the pertinent problems of revenue generation with a view to improving internally generated revenue from land based taxation in Nigeria. The study adopted systemic review of past relevant literatures. Though there are various types of internally generated revenue but this paper focuses on tax on land resources. However, the fundamental principle is equally applicable to other forms of internally generated revenue. An efficient, fair and transparent tax system not only improves fiscal performance but also furthers good governance and strengthens legitimacy. The scope of the tax restricted to land resources which fall within the purview of Estate Surveyors and Valuers was also reviewed for proper understanding. The findings revealed property based taxation associated with the use and value of landed properties. The concluding part of this paper focused on recommendations for effective and efficient property based taxation delivery system in Nigeria and useful recommendations were thereafter proffered.

KEYWORDS: Tax, Internally Generated Revenue, Land Resources, sustainable governance, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Government all over the world necessarily sources revenue from various avenues to meet spending. Taxation represents one of such sources of revenue. Society in itself is dynamic, thus population increases daily and so developmental activities. This natural phenomenon equally demands that government constantly seek to increase revenue driven from taxation either by widening the tax base or increasing the rate of taxation (Adebisi, 2021).

Nigeria is a vast country with a high level of human and material resources. It was estimated that the population of the country will be above 280 million in 2030. (Needs, 2018). This figure was nearly one-quarter of the Sub-Saharan African population. The social and economic conditions in Nigeria' today present a starting paradox. In spite of a rich endowment of natural and human resources, most people in Nigeria still live below the poverty line (Adekanola, 2016)

Due to this plethora of challenges like the cost of governance and general global downturn in economic resources pose a major challenge to the Nigerian states. The increasing cost of running government is becoming alarming. Some budgets find recurrent expenditures outplaying capital expenditures. Therefore, increasing demand for urban and rural infrastructures and dwindling revenue allocations in Nigeria have informed the Government to promulgate Laws on taxation as a way of increasing internally-generated revenues through property tax. This increasing cost of governance has forced some state to formulate other means of improving their revenue base (Ogunleye, 2022).

It is unfortunate that, despite decades of policy discussions and reform efforts, Nigeria's economy remains heavily dependent on crude oil revenue since the oil boom of the 1970s. Oil continues to dominate government finances, providing a substantial share of national revenue and foreign exchange earnings, which exposes the economy to external shocks (Nigeria Risk Index, 2025; David et al., 2025). In recent years, fluctuations in global oil prices and production challenges in the international oil market have significantly reduced expected oil receipts, thereby constraining public finances (IMF, 2025). These challenges have been further compounded by increasing demands for higher and more sustainable living wages by organised labour, particularly the Nigerian Labour Congress. Together, these pressures have resulted in reduced funds available for statutory allocations to states and local governments, limiting their capacity to meet basic obligations and deliver essential public services (New Telegraph, 2025). It is therefore paramount that the federal, state and local governments must generate adequate revenue from internal sources. This need underscores the eagerness on the part of state and local governments and even the federal government to look for new sources of revenue or to become aggressive in mode of collecting revenue from existing sources especially taxation (Kiabel & Nwokah, 2021).

The rate of urbanization in Nigeria has tremendously increased in the last two decades. Today, the national population is estimated to be over 250 million by the year 2030 with the urban population constituting of about 60% (Oni, 2021). The revenue allocation in Nigeria has been a topical issue in the country. The vertical revenue allocation is the division of public revenue among the federal, states and local governments in the country. Federal government has been retaining the bulk of the federally collected revenues. This explains the discordant voices from the states and local governments that more revenue should be allocated to them. In the existing revenue allocation formula, 52.68 percent goes to federal, 26.72 percent is reserved for the states and 20.60 percent is allocated to the local governments as well as 13 percent derivation for mineral resources only (Babalola, 2024)

The cost of governance in Nigeria has continued to rise, with state budgets expanding annually alongside increasing recurrent and debt-service expenditures. This persistent growth in expenditure, combined with weak internally generated revenue at the subnational level, has intensified fiscal stress across many states (International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2023; World Bank, 2022). Consequently, state governments have increasingly relied on borrowing to finance budget deficits through domestic bank loans, bond issuances, external credit facilities, and public-private partnership arrangements. While these financing options provide short-term fiscal relief,

the growing dependence on debt raises concerns about fiscal sustainability and the capacity of states to fund long-term development priorities (Aizenman, Jinjark, & Park, 2021; Iyoha & Oriakhi, 2020). There are obligations attached to these sources and these obligations are spread over a period of time. However, the government must borrow because this has its benefits and borrowing to fund your businesses or projects are acceptable practices world over but no government relies on grants and donations from agencies to plan its business.

The above scenario leaves us with one major source to which we all need to pay so much attention to and that is taxation. Taxation has been advocated for in advanced countries for development and this has brought the big economies to their current states (Acemoglu, Johnson, & Robinson, 2005; OECD, 2019; Besley & Persson, 2014). In Nigeria, available information reveals that the tax ratio to the Gross Domestic Product, GDP using the 2019 index is approximately 8% where countries like, Sweden, Norway, France, Germany, Canada, Australia, USA, UK, South Africa and China have 50%, 44%, 46%, 41%, 33%, 30%, 28%, 39%, 27% and 17% respectively, which have the same shared common wealth status with Nigeria (Ukauru, 2021).

Femi-Ayegbo, T. B., et al. (2025) investigated the challenges of taxation in Nigeria with a view to identifying viable solutions. The study identified high rate of poverty, corruption, illiteracy, ignorance of tax procedure and tax evasion as the major societal factors hindering effective taxation in Nigeria. Also, ineffective utilization of collected taxes poor remuneration of tax officials, improper record keeping, non-enforcement of tax policies and inadequate facilities to monitor tax payment and to assess taxable resources were expressed as the major administrative factors retarding effective and efficient taxation in Nigeria. This paper sought to examine the pertinent problems of revenue generation with a view to improving internally generated revenue from land-based taxation for sustainable governance in Nigeria.

2.0 Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Discussions about internally generated revenue of states and local government are located within the framework of the theory and practice of fiscal federalism. The justification for state and local governments is rooted in the recognition that public goods have important geographical dimensions. Public goods whose benefits are spatially limited or vary across locations often referred to as local public goods are less efficiently provided by a central government. Subnational governments are therefore better positioned to deliver such goods because they can tailor provision to local preferences and conditions (Brown & Jackson, 2024).

Internally generated revenue in normal day to day parlance refers to those revenue sources that are generated solely by the state and local governments. However, our focus should be on deepening and widening the entire revenue base and not just internally generated revenues as defined, as what is of utmost importance is that additional revenues are generated for the state and local government 'regardless' of how it is collected. Tax is the amount levied on an individual, group or corporate entity and payable to government to meet expenditure on infrastructure and keep the organs of governance running smoothly. Taxation has become an indispensable part of modern economic systems worldwide, with wide variety of different tax models. Such tax is expected to be fair and equitable; set in simple and clearly understandable language; considering the ability of each person to pay based on income; politically acceptable to the payers to avoid incurring their hostility and must be consistent with goals of promoting stable economy (Silvani & Paulo, 2016).

Smith (1776) in his book propounded four canons or principles of taxation. This classical economic theory of taxation insists that a good tax must be fair, certain, convenient and efficient. In addition

to the above four test or measure of a good tax, alternative theoretical approaches have emerged based on the three principal functions of taxation i.e. revenue generation, income redistribution and economic/fiscal stabilisation functions (Ola, 2025)

In determining the appropriate method of tax assessment, Harvey (2022) opined that it is usual for local property taxes to be levied ad valorem (according to value) with net annual value (NAV), capital value or site-value being the basis of assessment. Capital value, in this respect, is the amount of money which may be obtained for an interest at a particular time from individuals who are able and willing to purchase it. It is the price arrived at under an open market normal financing, non-cohesive, non-monopolistic condition, and by private treaty at a particular date assuming willing seller, reasonable period within which to negotiate the sale, taking into account the nature of the property and the state of the market, with the property freely exposed to the market (Kalu, 2021).

Lean and Goodall (2022) stated that the basic economic effect of tax is that the open market price will increase in the long run if there is higher demand for a good or service. Similarly, the higher the outgoings in form of tax liability, the higher will be the rent that landlord will demand for a given property on the long run. In this regard, where initial capital costs cannot be set off against tax liability whereas maintenance expenditure can be, this will increase additional expenditure on maintenance rather than initial construction in respect of supply of properties.

For tax administration, Ukauru (2021) identified six logical steps involved in Tax Administration, namely: Identification/Registration, Assessment, Collection, Accounting, Monitoring/Audit and Enforcement.

In carrying out the valuation of properties, Ifediora (2014) identified five methods that an Estate Surveyor and Valuer, in his specialist functions, uses to determine the capital and rental values of interests in land or land and building. The methods are cost (contractor's test) approach, sales comparison approach, income (investment) approach, account (profits), residual (development), and depreciated replacement cost approach.

3.0 Scope of Land Based Taxation

Ogunleye (2022) in a paper presented at an international journal on property-based taxation identified twelve scope of land-based or property-based taxes, that is, all taxes associated with the use and value of landed property. They are as follows: company income tax, withholding tax, petroleum profit tax, stamp duties, tenement rate, value added tax, capital gains tax, Shops and Kiosks rates, Business Premises Registration Fees, Right of Occupancy fees, Market Taxes and levies and Motor Park levies. Over the years, the scope has further been expanded. They are discussed below;

i. Companies Income Tax

Companies Income Tax Act Cap. 60 LFN 1990: This is the current enabling law that governs the collection of taxes on profits made by companies operating in Nigeria excluding companies engaged in Petroleum exploration activities.

ii. Withholding Tax

The law giving effect to this tax is the Finance (Miscellaneous Taxation Provisions) Decree No 98 of 1989. This is directed at income earned on land and building and other identifiable income earned from contractual agreement. The Federal Inland Revenue presently charges 5%.

iii. Petroleum Profits Tax

This is the tax on profits made by companies engaged in petroleum exploration activities in Nigeria. The law that regulates this tax is the Nigeria Petroleum Profit Tax Act. Cap. 354 LFN 1990:

iv. Value Added Tax (VAT)

The Value-Added Tax Act No. 102 LFN 1993 is the law that regulates the collection of tax due on 'vatable' goods and services. This is a consumption tax payable on the goods and services consumed by any person whether the government agencies business organization or individuals. It can also be defined as a tax on spending /consumption levied at every stage of a transaction but eventually borne by the final consumer of such goods and services. The target of VAT is consumption of goods and services and unless an item specifically exempted by the law, the consumer is liable to the tax. It is levied at the rate of five percent (5%).

v. Stamp Duties

This tax which is also referred to as documentary tax is a tax on landed property on the sale, purchase, mortgage or any other form of land transaction. They are usually imposed by state and local government authorities. However, it can be imposed by the federal authority.

vi. Estate Fee/Probate Fee

It is simply a tax paid before granting letters of probate following the death of the owner of a property. Letters of administration will not be handed over until this amount is paid to the tax authority. The chargeable amount is paid on the market value of the deceased's estate as at the date of death.

vii. Capital Gains Tax

Capital Gains Tax Act Cap. 42 LFN 1990: This law which amended the Capital Gains Tax Decree No. 42 of 1967 governs the collection of taxes due on the disposal of chargeable assets. Capital Gains Tax is a form of tax chargeable on capital gains arising from the disposal of chargeable assets. CGT was introduced in Nigeria through the Capital Gains Tax Act of 1967 and it became effective on 1st April 1967. The provisions of this Act are applicable to transactions effected by companies in the same manner as they apply to transactions effected by individuals. The highlights of the provisions of the CGT Act are: CGT is chargeable at 20% on capital gains arising from disposal of capital assets. Capital gains represent mainly the excess of disposal proceeds over the cost of the particular assets. Capital loss on disposal of any asset is not deductible from capital gains on disposal of any other asset even if both are of the same type. Chargeable gains are assessed on current year basis, i.e. preceding year basis is not applicable.

viii. Tenement Rate

Tenement rate is a local form of taxation levied on buildings or hereditaments. The proceeds of which are used for funding local government social services. It is a tax on ownership or occupation of built up landed property. It is charged by a local government or a precepting authority on properties within its area of jurisdiction to defray expenses on a ray of services, such as street lighting, water supply, road, drainage, refuse disposal, etc. It is a veritable source of revenue generation for a state or local government and accounts for the highest revenue generating capacity. This is why most states and local governments of the local governments have been exploring the

opportunity that avails itself to the best advantage. Tenement rate is not on flat rate basis but are paid on annual basis on the actual rental value of each property within the local government area on a predetermined rate mirage. Despite the mirage of opportunities of tenement rating taxation, it is yet to be fully tapped by the authorities concerned because of a number of problems that beset it. Therefore, there is the need for a total overhauling of the rating administration system in Nigeria.

ix. Other Taxes.

These are taxes and levies under the powers imposed by the Constitution and as specified in the Taxes and Levies Act No 21 of 1998 to be collected by various tiers of Governments which are not property based taxes. They include but not limited to Shops and Kiosks rates, Business Premises Registration Fees, Market Taxes and levies excluding market where State Finance is involved and Motor Park levies, Water Rate, Tourism tax, Personal Income Tax, etc.

4. Limitation of Effective Land Based Revenues

Several challenges hinder the effective implementation of land-based taxation systems. These limitations include:

i. Lack of Awareness – Both taxpayers and tax authorities often lack sufficient understanding of taxation principles. Many taxpayers in Nigeria are unaware of the purpose of taxation or their obligation to pay taxes. Similarly, tax authorities sometimes face confusion over policies governing property taxation. It is essential to conduct thorough groundwork before introducing any tax system, ensuring that practices successful in other countries are adapted thoughtfully to local conditions.

ii. Attitudes of Tax and Rating Authorities – There is a widespread reluctance among citizens to pay taxes, despite demands for improved social services. Paying taxes should be considered a civic duty for all eligible adults. Additionally, some tax authorities may abolish justified taxes for political expediency, undermining revenue generation efforts.

iii. Challenges in Assessment and Valuation – Property tax assessment requires expert knowledge of law and valuation. The shortage of skilled professionals adversely affects the accuracy and effectiveness of tax assessments, thereby limiting revenue collection.

iv. Absence of Adequate Legal Frameworks – Property taxation is inherently statutory and requires up-to-date legislation. In many developing countries, such legal frameworks are either lacking or outdated, rendering them ineffective in regulating property taxes.

v. Lack of a Suitable Tax Policy – Developing countries often adopt tax systems modeled after advanced economies without considering local historical and practical contexts. This approach has contributed to frequent tax reforms and instability. However, recent tax policy reforms offer hope for more consistent and appropriate tax structures.

vi. Ineffective or Nonexistent Appeal Mechanisms – Taxpayers often raise objections or complaints against tax assessments. Unfortunately, many jurisdictions lack effective administrative appeal processes to ensure fairness for both taxpayers and tax authorities.

5. Conclusion

The cost of governance and the provision of basic infrastructure are increasing annually. This has led to increase poverty as a result of drastic unemployment and employment in the Nigeria's public and private sector. Added to this is unavailability of good roads, power, education, hospital etc. In other to close the revenue crunch, federal, state, and local government continue to increase taxes collected from individual and groups without provision of the needed infrastructure and adequate employment. The property tax system has great potentials for enhancing internally generated revenue for both the state and local governments. The revenue derivable from the system remains largely untapped due to lack of political will to implement the system, efficient implementation, non-engagement of the services of the professionals, and corruption. If the tax system is properly instituted and efficiently implemented, it will go a long way to enhance internally generated revenue and reduce dependence on the federation account and consequently increases the autonomy of lower tiers of government and decentralization of political administration. Land taxes being the major sources of local government revenue required more than ever before and overhaul that will bring about tax justice and efficiently. The reengineering of the land tax system is feasible and viable in Nigeria as in most other countries. In order to optimize internally generated revenue collection, revenue collection agencies must align their ICT investments with corporate strategies and organizational objectives. In the implementation of the property tax system, however, collaboration between the state and local governments is essential to reduce cost burden and provide sufficient levels of the needed skills and technology.

6. Recommendations

The concluding part of this paper focused on recommendations for effective and efficient property-based taxation delivery system in Nigeria. They are stated hereunder as follows:

- i Government at all levels must engage itself in a systematic sensitization process through constructive training and re-training of government officials including Governors and Local Government Chairmen. These trainings are centered on the education of officials pertaining to their rights, duties, and obligation concerning existing tax laws and formulating of tax policies. The tax law, policy and implementation must be geared towards improving the quality of life of Nigerians generally, by maximizing the revenue base of the nation and not imposing of undue and unnecessary burden on the citizens. The realization of increased IGR through taxation is guided by creating efficient, objective, and people oriented tax structures at all levels of government, as well as running a government of prudence in purchasing and accountability in government expenditure. This approach will encourage people to be more tax friendly and cooperative in payment of taxes through voluntary compliance.
- ii. All property-based taxes be harmonized and reviewed in line with the principles of taxation to enhance their administration performance.
- iii. The high tariff at the ports should be reduced and the various charges harmonized to encourage importation through the Nigerian ports and increase the revenue accruable therefore as well as reduce overheads of industries particularly those in the construction industry.
- iv. S.29A, of the Companies Income Tax Act, which deals with minimum tax should be reviewed with a view to ensuring that losses incurred in a year are carried forward to avoid payment of tax with company capital which discourage investment. In order to have the full and actual picture of

a company's account, the Act should be amended to provide for a valuation of the Assets of the company on a 5-yearly basis.

v. The Petroleum Profits Tax Act, 1959 should be comprehensively reviewed, not only to include the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) but to be unambiguous and all embracing to include all minerals.

vi. VAT should be comprehensively reviewed in the light of anomalies and ambiguities in the amendments contained in Decree Nos 18, 19, and 21 of 1998, and all property transaction should be exempted in order to encourage property development.

vii. The Capital Gains Tax should be reviewed to take account of value appreciation due to inflation and currency for that only actual gains are taxed. In order to ensure equitability and fairness, assessment for tax should be based on professional valuation of the properties.

viii. A lot of income accruing from property escapes taxation because of paucity of information relation to ownership and recommended a comprehensively compulsory registration or recording of property ownership in the country.

ix. Assessment for Estate Duty should be based on professional valuation in order to ensure uniformity and fairness and graduated rate for tax should apply.

x. Under the Land Use Decree No 6 of 1978. Governor's consent to subsequent transactions attracts a fee. The assessment for this fee should be based on professional valuation, in order to ensure uniformity, transparency and additionally, this fee should be minimal to cover only administrative costs, in order to enhance volume of transaction and voluntary release of information there to.

xi. Property taxes are by far the largest untapped potential source of revenue for urban development. There is also the need for policy intervention on property taxation whereby the unbuilt lands in built-up neighbourhood to be subjected to heavy land taxation. This will discourage land speculation.

xii. Valuation and rating department should be established every local government council, for the administration of this tax while valuation lists should be prepared every years.

xiii. The deployment of ICT solution will assist revenue agencies to effectively and efficiently discharge their mandate in terms of identification and registration of tax payers, returns and payment processing, audit, accounting and other tax administration functions. More importantly, fraud or sharp practices inherent in manual transaction processes will be eliminated in a fully automated revenue administration system. This would lead to more revenue entering government's purse. Government should also embrace and without delay commission a national Geographic Information System (GIS) or at least a comprehensive land information system (LIS) in every state, to hold information on all properties in the country, including ownership. This will reduce tax evasion.

xiv. Government and Tax Authorities should ensure transparency and accountability in the assessment collection and disbursement of all taxes. The people deserve to know how taxes paid by them are being utilized in order to encourage voluntary compliance.

xvi. Professionalism in taxation should be encouraged. There should therefore, be a provision in the tax laws to support the appointment of Estate Surveyors and Valuers to be involved in policy formulation, assessment of capital and annual values for all property based taxes.

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