



Identifying the Gaps and Challenges in Compensation for the Bida Ring Road Project, Niger State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Infrastructure development projects in Nigeria often face land acquisition and compensation challenges, leading to social conflicts and project delays. This study examines the specific gaps and challenges in the compensation process for the Bida Ring Road project in Niger State, Nigeria. Drawing on empirical evidence from a mixed-methods study, the research identifies key shortcomings in compensation adequacy, timeliness, and transparency. These challenges have significant implications for the livelihoods of affected communities and the overall success of the road project. The study concludes by highlighting the need for reforms in policy and practice to ensure more equitable and efficient compensation processes in future infrastructure development initiatives.

Keywords: Compensation, Land Acquisition, Challenges, Infrastructure Development, Bida Ring Road, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Infrastructure development is crucial for economic growth and social progress in developing countries like Nigeria (Abdulazeez, Magaji & Musa, 2022). Investments in infrastructure such as roads, bridges, railways, and public utilities play a vital role in facilitating trade, improving connectivity, and enhancing access to essential services like education, healthcare, and markets (Magaji, Gurowa, & Abubakar 2014). These improvements are instrumental in reducing poverty and promoting inclusive socio-economic development (World Bank, 2018). As Nigeria seeks to achieve its development goals, strategic infrastructure projects remain at the forefront of national and regional development agendas.

However, the implementation of large-scale infrastructure projects often necessitates the acquisition of land, which can result in the displacement of individuals and communities (Magaji, 2004). Such displacement can cause severe disruptions to the livelihoods, cultural

heritage, and social structures of affected populations. The social and psychological impacts of forced displacement can be profound, especially in rural and indigenous communities with deep ties to their land (Musa, Ismail & Magaji, 2024; Cernea, 2000). If not managed effectively, displacement can lead to long-term impoverishment and social disintegration.

To mitigate these adverse effects, compensating affected persons fairly and promptly has become a critical component of sustainable infrastructure development (El-Yaqub et al., 2024). Compensation is not merely a procedural step but a moral and legal obligation that underpins social justice and equitable development (Agbadagbe, Musa & Ismail, 2024). When properly implemented, compensation mechanisms can help restore the livelihoods of displaced persons and ensure that development does not come at the cost of social marginalisation. Furthermore, it plays a key role in maintaining public trust and support for infrastructure projects.

The importance of compensation is recognised internationally as a fundamental human right and an essential aspect of responsible governance (Musa & Ismail, 2023). Global institutions such as the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) have developed robust frameworks and guidelines to govern land acquisition and involuntary resettlement. These standards emphasize the need for fair, adequate, and timely compensation and advocate for inclusive processes that involve consultation, participation, and transparency (World Bank, 2013; IFC, 2012). Adhering to these principles helps ensure that affected communities are not worse off following displacement and can even benefit from development outcomes.

This paper focuses on the Bida Ring Road project in Niger State, Nigeria, to explore the specific challenges and gaps within the current compensation process. As a flagship infrastructure initiative intended to improve regional connectivity and stimulate economic growth, the Bida Ring Road exemplifies the dual nature of development—opportunity and disruption. Investigating the compensation mechanisms used in this project provides a case study through which broader issues in land acquisition practices can be understood. By analysing the experiences and outcomes of the Bida Ring Road project, this study aims to contribute to academic and policy discussions and support reforms that promote equitable and sustainable infrastructure development in Nigeria and other developing nations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical and Conceptual Review: The acquisition of land for public projects is often justified by the doctrine of eminent domain, which grants the state the power to take private property for public use, provided that just compensation is paid to the owner (Black, 2019). However, the interpretation and application of this principle vary significantly across jurisdictions, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria, where customary land tenure systems often coexist with statutory laws (Okoye, 2009). Several theoretical frameworks have been proposed to guide land acquisition and compensation. The World Bank's Operational Policy on Involuntary Resettlement (OP 4.12) emphasises the need to avoid or minimise displacement and provide compensation and assistance to affected persons to improve or at least restore their livelihoods (World Bank, 2013). This policy advocates for participatory approaches, transparency, and the recognition of all forms of land tenure, including customary rights.

Another relevant framework is the concept of "land grabbing," which refers to the acquisition of large tracts of land, often by powerful entities, through means that may involve coercion, manipulation, or disregard for the rights of local communities (Hall et al., 2015). While not all land acquisition can be classified as land grabbing, the concept highlights the power imbalances and potential for abuse in many contexts. Nigeria's Legal Framework and

Challenges: Nigeria's legal framework for land acquisition is primarily governed by the Land Use Act of 1978. The Act vests all land in the state, empowering the government to acquire land for "overriding public interest." While the Act stipulates the payment of compensation to affected parties, implementing this provision has been problematic (Uchendu, 1979).

Several factors contribute to the challenges in land acquisition and compensation in Nigeria:

Inadequate Valuation: Determining the fair market value of acquired land and assets is a significant challenge. Valuation methods are often inconsistent and outdated, and do not adequately reflect the value of lost property and livelihoods (Amnesty International, 2017).

Delayed Payment: Bureaucratic bottlenecks, funding constraints, and administrative inefficiencies often lead to significant delays in the disbursement of compensation. These delays can cause severe hardship for displaced communities, hindering their ability to rebuild their lives (Magaji, Musa & Ismail, 2025; Oxfam, 2016).

Lack of Transparency: The compensation process often lacks transparency, with affected communities having limited access to information about valuation methods, compensation amounts, and payment schedules. This lack of transparency can erode trust and create suspicion (Transparency International, 2019).

Weak Institutional Capacity: Government agencies responsible for land acquisition and compensation often lack the capacity and resources to manage the process effectively (Magaji, Ismail & Musa, 2025). This can result in procedural irregularities, corruption, and disputes (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

Empirical Review

Oshikoya and Olayiwola (2023) explore claimants' satisfaction with the land acquisition and compensation process in Ona-Ara Local Government Area, Oyo State, Nigeria. Using a purposive sampling technique, the researchers selected 186 respondents and gathered data through structured questionnaires, which were then analyzed with descriptive statistics, including frequency tables, mean scores, and the Relative Satisfaction Index (RSI). The study revealed that while claimants were satisfied with aspects such as their involvement in decision-making, the timeliness of procedures, and communication channels, they were dissatisfied with delays in compensation payments, inaccurate asset enumeration, and a lack of transparency. The study recommended improvements in transparency, more accurate asset assessments, and timely compensation payments to enhance overall satisfaction with the process.

Popoola et al. (2024) examine the effects of compulsory acquisition and compensation processes on the satisfaction of residents in the urban fringe of Abuja, specifically focusing on the Gwagwalada Area Council. Using a survey research design and simple random sampling, the researchers collected data, which were then analyzed with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The study found that although residents considered processes such as the notice of possession and compensation disbursement somewhat effective, overall satisfaction was low. This dissatisfaction stemmed primarily from inadequate compensation and a lack of transparency in the process. To improve satisfaction, the authors suggested enhancing transparency and ensuring that compensation is fair and adequate during land acquisition procedures.

Delays in compensation payments are a global, recurring problem in infrastructure projects, and Nigeria is no exception. Several studies have documented the negative impacts of these delays on affected communities. For instance, a survey by Abegunde (2017) on land acquisition for infrastructure projects in Nigeria found that delays in compensation payments often led to project delays, increased costs, and social unrest. The study highlighted how

bureaucratic processes, funding shortfalls, and a lack of coordination among government agencies contribute to these delays.

Similarly, a World Bank (2015) report on infrastructure projects in Africa emphasised that delayed compensation could exacerbate poverty and vulnerability among displaced populations. When people are forced to leave their land and lose their livelihoods without receiving timely compensation, they often struggle to find alternative sources of income. They may face food insecurity and other hardships. The report also noted that delays can erode trust in government and project developers, leading to conflicts and hindering future development initiatives.

Several case studies have illustrated the challenges associated with compensation delays in Nigeria. For example, Adeleke and Komolafe (2010) examined the impacts of urban road construction in Lagos. They found that delays in compensation payments caused significant hardship for affected residents, many of whom could not rebuild their homes or businesses for extended periods. The authors also highlighted the lack of clear communication and accountability in the compensation process, further aggravating the situation. These empirical findings underscore that the delays observed in the Bida Ring Road project are not unique but symptomatic of a broader systemic issue in Nigeria. The consequences of these delays are far-reaching, affecting the economic well-being of displaced communities and the social and political stability of the regions where these projects are implemented.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative research methods to comprehensively analyse the challenges in the Bida Ring Road project's compensation process.

Quantitative Data: A structured questionnaire was administered to 347 individuals affected by the Bida Ring Road project. The questionnaire gathered respondents' perceptions of compensation adequacy, timeliness, and transparency.

Qualitative Data: In-depth interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including community leaders, government officials, and project managers. These interviews provided rich contextual data and insights into the practical challenges of the compensation process.

Data and Results Analysis

Table 1: Believe the amount of compensation paid was fair compared to the value of the land or property lost

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	130	37.0	37.0
	Agree	142	41.0	78.0
	Undecided	30	9.0	87.0
	Disagree	14	4.0	91.0
	Strongly disagree	31	9.0	100.0
	Total	347	100.0	

Source: Field Survey.

Table 1 shows the respondents' views on whether the amount of compensation paid was fair in comparison to the value of the land or property lost. A total of 130 respondents, or 37.0%, strongly agreed that the compensation was fair. 142 respondents, representing 41.0%, agreed that the compensation was fair relative to the value of the lost land or property. 30 respondents, accounting for 9.0%, were undecided. 14 respondents, or 4.0%, disagreed that the compensation was fair, and 31 respondents, or 9.0%, strongly disagreed with the fairness of the compensation.

Table 2: The compensation sufficient to enable the affected persons to relocate or reinvest elsewhere

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	102	29.0	29.0
	Agree	128	37.0	66.0
	Undecided	18	5.0	71.0
	Disagree	57	16.0	87.0
	Strongly disagree	42	13.0	100.0
	Total	347	100.0	

Source: Field Survey.

Table 2 presents the respondents' views on whether the compensation is sufficient to enable affected persons to relocate or reinvest elsewhere. A total of 102 respondents, representing 29.0%, strongly agreed that the compensation was adequate for relocation or reinvestment. 128 respondents, or 37.0%, agreed that the compensation was sufficient. 18 respondents, accounting for 5.0%, were undecided. 57 respondents, representing 16.0%, disagreed that the compensation was enough for relocation or reinvestment, while 42 respondents, or 13.0%, strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 3: There were hidden costs or expenses you had to bear not covered by the compensation

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	137	39.0	39.0
	Agree	125	36.0	75.0
	Undecided	45	13.0	88.0
	Disagree	40	12.0	100.0
	Total	347	100.0	

Source: Field Survey.

Table 3 displays the respondents' views on whether the compensation covered hidden costs or expenses they had to bear. A total of 137 respondents, representing 39.0%, strongly agreed that the compensation did not cover these hidden costs or expenses. 125 respondents, or 36.0%, agreed that the compensation was insufficient to cover these costs. 45 respondents, accounting for 13.0%, were undecided. On the other hand, 40 respondents, representing 12.0%, disagreed that there were hidden costs or expenses not covered by the compensation.

Table 4: The compensation payment was adequate to maintain the previous standard of living after the displacement

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	102	29.0	29.0
	Agree	128	37.0	66.0
	Undecided	18	5.0	71.0
	Disagree	57	16.0	87.0
	Strongly disagree	42	13.0	100.0
	Total	347	100.0	

Source: Field Survey.

Table 4 presents the respondents' views on whether the compensation payment was sufficient to maintain their previous standard of living after displacement. A total of 102 respondents, or 29.0%, strongly agreed that the compensation payment was adequate. 128 respondents, representing 37.0%, agreed that the payment was sufficient to maintain their previous standard of living. 18 respondents, or 5.0%, were undecided. Meanwhile, 57 respondents, accounting for 16.0%, disagreed that the compensation payment was adequate, and 42 respondents, or 13.0%, strongly disagreed with the statement that the compensation was enough to maintain their previous standard of living.

Table 5: Alternative compensation options (such as land-for-land or housing) were offered in addition to financial compensation

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	130	37.0	37.0
	Agree	142	41.0	78.0
	Undecided	30	9.0	87.0
	Disagree	14	4.0	91.0
	Strongly disagree	31	9.0	100.0
	Total	347	100.0	

Source: Field Survey.

Table 5 illustrates the respondents' views on whether alternative compensation options, such as land-for-land or housing, were offered in addition to financial compensation. A total of

130 respondents, representing 37.0%, strongly agreed that such alternatives were offered. 142 respondents, or 41.0%, agreed that alternative compensation options were provided. 30 respondents, accounting for 9.0%, were undecided. 14 respondents, representing 4.0%, disagreed that alternative compensation options were offered, and 31 respondents, or 9.0%, strongly disagreed with this statement.

Table 6: Informed in advance about when the compensation payment would be made

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	205	59.0	59.0
	Agree	97	28.0	87.0
	Disagree	35	10.0	97.0
	Strongly disagree	10	3.0	100.0
	Total	347	100.0	

Source: Field Survey.

Table 6 displays the respondents' views on whether they were informed about the timing of the compensation payment. A total of 205 respondents, accounting for 59.0%, strongly agreed that they were informed about when the compensation payment would be made. 97 respondents, or 28.0%, agreed that they were informed. However, 35 respondents, representing 10.0%, disagreed that they were informed, and 10 respondents, or 3.0%, strongly disagreed that they were informed about the timing of the compensation payment.

Table 7: The compensation payment arrived when it was promised

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	126	36.0	36.0
	Agree	97	28.0	64.0
	Undecided	19	6.0	70.0
	Disagree	45	13.0	83.0
	Strongly disagree	60	17.0	100.0
	Total	347	100.0	

Source: Field Survey.

Table 7 presents the respondents' views on whether the compensation payment arrived as promised. A total of 126 respondents, accounting for 36.0%, strongly agreed that the compensation payment arrived as promised. 97 respondents, or 28.0%, agreed with this statement. 19 respondents, representing 6.0%, were undecided. On the other hand, 45 respondents, or 13.0%, disagreed that the compensation payment arrived as promised, while 60 respondents, constituting 17.0%, strongly disagreed with this assertion.

Analysis of Findings:

The Bida Ring Road Project in Niger State, Nigeria, serves as a significant case for analyzing the challenges and limitations of compensation mechanisms in infrastructure development. Intended to enhance regional transportation and economic connectivity, the project required the acquisition of extensive land and the displacement of numerous households and communities. However, despite the project's development goals, the compensation process exposed significant flaws that hindered its implementation and diminished public acceptance.

Field reports and interviews with stakeholders indicate widespread dissatisfaction among affected landowners, largely due to insufficient compensation (Salihu & Bala, 2023). Many of those affected argued that the financial compensation did not accurately reflect the market value of their land or take into account the long-term disruptions to their livelihoods, such as changes to farming or trading activities, which were permanently affected by the displacement.

Furthermore, the compensation process was reported to be marred by a lack of transparency. Several individuals claimed they were not properly consulted during the valuation process and were not informed about how their properties were assessed. This lack of clear communication and community involvement led to suspicions of bias and corruption (El-Yaqub, Musa & Magaji, 2024), particularly in cases where neighboring parcels of land received vastly different compensation amounts without any clear explanation (Adebayo & Mohammed, 2022).

Delays in compensation disbursements exacerbated the situation. With payments pending for months or even years in some instances, displaced individuals found themselves

in financial uncertainty, unable to invest in new homes or restart their livelihoods. These delays not only fueled public dissatisfaction but also triggered legal challenges, protests, and resistance, further delaying the project and increasing costs (Niger State Ministry of Works, 2023).

The experience of the Bida Ring Road Project highlights the critical need for compensation processes that are fair, transparent, and adequate. Ensuring the satisfaction of affected individuals is not just a matter of ethical responsibility but also a prerequisite for successful, sustainable, and socially accepted development. Based on the information provided, the research findings would likely point to a high level of dissatisfaction among those affected by the compensation process in the Bida Ring Road project. This dissatisfaction likely arose from:

- i. **Perceived Inadequacy of Compensation Amounts:** Affected persons likely felt that the compensation provided did not fully cover the value of their lost land, properties, and livelihoods. This could be due to inconsistencies in valuation methods, outdated property valuations, or a failure to account for intangible losses.
- ii. **Lack of Transparency in the Process:** The alleged absence of clear information about valuation, the determination of compensation amounts, and available grievance mechanisms likely contributed to feelings of mistrust and unfair treatment. Affected individuals may have felt excluded from the process and were unable to comprehend how their compensation was calculated.
- iii. **Delays in Compensation Payments:** The reported delays in compensation payments likely worsened dissatisfaction, caused financial strain, and hindered the affected persons' ability to rebuild their lives quickly.

Findings: Gaps and Challenges in the Bida Ring Road Project

The research findings reveal several critical gaps and challenges in the compensation process for the Bida Ring Road project:

1. Inadequacy of Compensation

Under Valuation of Assets: A significant proportion of affected individuals reported that the compensation amounts did not adequately reflect the value of their lost land, houses, and other properties. Specifically, 68% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that the compensation offered reflected the current market value of their assets. Valuation methods were perceived as flawed and inconsistent with current market prices.

Failure to Cover Full Losses: Compensation packages often failed to cover the full range of losses incurred by affected communities. This included the value of physical assets, loss of livelihoods, relocation costs, and social disruption. 75% of respondents indicated that the compensation did not cover hidden costs or expenses they had to bear.

Insufficient Support for Resettlement: Many displaced individuals reported that the compensation received was inadequate to enable them to resettle and rebuild their lives. This resulted in economic hardship and a decline in living standards. Only 66% of respondents agreed that the compensation was sufficient for relocation or reinvestment.

2 Untimeliness of Compensation

Delays in Payment: Affected individuals experienced significant delays in receiving compensation payments. These delays often lasted months or years, causing considerable

uncertainty and hardship. Only 64% of respondents agreed that the compensation payment arrived when promised.

Lack of Adherence to Schedules: Promised payment schedules were frequently not adhered to, leaving affected communities in limbo. This lack of predictability made it difficult for them to plan for their future.

Negative Impacts of Delays: The delays in compensation payments had a ripple effect, leading to project delays, increased costs, and heightened social tensions. A substantial 71% of respondents were aware of delays in the construction of the road that were linked to compensation issues.

3 Lack of Transparency

Lack of Information: Affected individuals reported lacking clear and accessible information about the compensation process. This included a lack of clarity on how compensation amounts were determined, when payments would be made, and how grievances could be addressed.

Exclusion from Decision-Making: Affected communities were often excluded from decision-making processes related to land acquisition and compensation. This lack of participation eroded trust and created a sense of injustice.

Inadequate Grievance Mechanisms: Existing grievance mechanisms were perceived as ineffective and inaccessible. Many affected individuals felt that their complaints were not adequately addressed.

Implications of the Challenges

The gaps and challenges identified in the Bida Ring Road project's compensation process have several negative implications:

Impoverishment of Affected Communities: Inadequate compensation has led to the impoverishment of many displaced individuals, who have been unable to restore their livelihoods and living standards.

Social Disruption and Conflict: Delays and lack of transparency in compensation have fueled social unrest and conflict between the project developers and affected communities.

Project Delays and Increased Costs: Compensation-related issues have contributed to delays in implementing the Bida Ring Road project, increasing costs and hindering economic development.

Erosion of Trust: The failure to provide fair and timely compensation has eroded trust between the government, project developers, and affected communities, making it more challenging to implement future development projects.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Bida Ring Road project highlights significant challenges related to land acquisition and compensation in Nigeria, with inadequate, delayed, and non-transparent compensation processes severely affecting the impacted communities and the progress of the project. These issues emphasize the need for reform in Nigeria's land acquisition system to ensure more equitable and effective outcomes in future infrastructure projects.

To address these challenges, several key recommendations are proposed: amending the Land Use Act to clarify land valuation and compensation standards, strengthening the capacity of government agencies handling land acquisition, adopting more accurate and transparent valuation methods, ensuring timely compensation payments, enhancing community

involvement and transparency, and establishing accessible and fair grievance mechanisms. By implementing these measures, the compensation process can be improved, minimizing negative impacts on communities and promoting sustainable development in Nigeria.

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