

Satisfaction with adequacy and fairness of compensation amongst eacop paps. A case study of kiziranfumbi subcounty, Kikuube district, Uganda.

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ABSTRACT

Context and Background

Before compulsory land acquisition, Project Affected Persons (PAPs) are expected to receive compensation that is fair and sufficient to offset losses. However, defining “fair” and “adequate” is subjective, making assessments contentious. While global studies have explored compensation practices in similar contexts, there is a notable gap in empirical research within Uganda, particularly for large-scale projects like the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP). This study therefore examines the satisfaction of PAPs along the East African Crude Oil Pipeline regarding compensation adequacy and fairness, focusing on Kiziranfumbi Subcounty in Kikuube District.

Goal and Objectives:

The specific objectives of the study were to determine the factors that influence satisfaction of PAPs with compensation awards, to ascertain the level of satisfaction of PAPs with compensation adequacy, and to evaluate the extent to which implementation of the existing compensation legal framework aligns with fairness principles.

Methodology:

The research adopted a case study research design and employed mixed methods approach by combining quantitative data from 150 PAPs with qualitative insights from 9 key informant interviews (KIIs), 3 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and document review. Simple random sampling was adopted for readily available PAPs while the snowball technique was employed to track PAPs that had relocated. The key informants i.e: 4 local leaders, a community-based organization (CBO) official, an EACOP official, 2 Petroleum Authority of Uganda (PAU) officials and an official from Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development (MLHUD) were purposively selected based on their expertise and involvement in the project. Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS Ver 25.0. Qualitative data was transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis to uncover recurring patterns, while content analysis was used for secondary data.

Results:

The findings revealed that satisfaction amongst PAPs is primarily influenced by timeliness of compensation. Overall satisfaction with compensation amongst PAPs remains low. However, PAPs that received in-kind compensation reported higher satisfaction than those who received cash. The widespread dissatisfaction stems from delays in disbursement, largely attributed to the COVID-19 outbreak. The limited stakeholder engagement and lack of transparency further exacerbated discontent. Furthermore, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are said to have significantly shaped perceptions by raising expectations and amplifying dissatisfaction where procedural gaps existed.

Keywords

Satisfaction, Adequacy, Fairness, Compensation, Uganda

1. INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development requires the provision of public infrastructure and services that promote safety, health, welfare, economic growth, and environmental protection (FAO, 2009). Implementing such projects often necessitates land clearance for rights of way, with governments frequently invoking the principle of eminent domain, which is the legal authority to compulsorily acquire private land for public benefit (Keith et al., 2008). While such acquisition serves broader societal interests, it inherently infringes on individual property rights, typically justified by the projects' significance to national development. Globally, the right to compulsory acquisition is recognized but it is contingent upon the provision of fair and adequate compensation to affected persons (Rao, 2019; Vig & Gajinov, 2016). However, the definition of fair and adequate varies across jurisdictions. In the United States, compensation is generally based on market value (Eaton, 1995), whereas in the UK and many Commonwealth countries, it includes market value plus additional losses (Cruden, 1986).

In Uganda, the right to compulsorily acquire land is derived from Article 26(2) of The 1995 Constitution which permits compulsory acquisition by the government, provided it is lawful, serves the public interest, and ensures prompt payment of fair and adequate compensation. The 1965 Land Acquisition Act and the Land Act of 1998 as amended, operationalizes this provision, stipulating compensation based on market value and a disturbance allowance of 15% or 30%, depending on the time given to the PAP to avail vacant possession. One of the major projects that has invoked compulsory land acquisition is the EACOP Project, a transnational infrastructure initiative spanning Uganda and Tanzania that arose out of confirmation of commercially viable oil reserves in Uganda's Lake Albert Basin in 2006 (TotalEnergies, 2023). The project involves the construction and operation of a 1,443 km buried pipeline to transport crude oil from Uganda's Lake Albert region to the eastern coast of Tanzania for export. In Uganda, the pipeline covers 296 km, traversing ten districts; Hoima, Kikuube, Kakumiro, Mubende, Kyankwanzi, Gomba, Sembabule, Lwengo, Rakai, and Kyotera where it impacts a total of 27 sub-counties, 3 town councils, and 171 villages (Total East Africa Midstream BV, 2020).

The project has since triggered extensive land acquisition starting in 2018 affecting 3,792 PAPs (Total East Africa Midstream BV, 2020), many of whom depend on land for their livelihoods. While the project is positioned as a catalyst for regional development, concerns have emerged regarding the fairness and adequacy of compensation, with PAPs from districts such as Kyotera and Sembabule publicly expressing their dissatisfaction through mass media (New Vision, 2023). Elong (2020) identified the lack of a clear definition of fair and adequate compensation as a major challenge. Similarly, Olanrele, et al (2017) noted that global uniformity in compensation valuation is unattainable due to differing principles and methods. While the concept of fair and adequate compensation is widely recognized as subjective (Alemu, 2014), some countries have made efforts to define it from the perspective of affected persons. In Uganda, however, such initiatives remain limited.

This research, therefore, seeks to assess PAPs' satisfaction with the adequacy and fairness of compensation under the EACOP project, using Kiziranfumbi as a case study. By analyzing legal frameworks, capturing affected individuals' perspectives, and evaluating implementation outcomes,

the study aims to contribute to a more equitable and just compensation system, one that aligns with both national laws and international best practices for sustainable infrastructure development.

2. PROBLEM, PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE PAPER

2.1. Problem

Uganda's ongoing infrastructure development requires compulsory land acquisition, often resulting in displacement of PAPs. Whereas laws and policies exist to ensure fair and adequate compensation, many PAPs report dissatisfaction as compensation awards often fail to restore their livelihoods, leading to economic hardships, landlessness, homelessness and food insecurity. It however remains unclear what PAPs in Uganda consider fair and adequate compensation, given the inherently subjective nature of these concepts. Although previous researchers such as Alemu (2014), Asamoah (2012) and Alias and Nasir (2006) have acknowledged this subjectivity, there is still insufficient research exploring these perceptions within Uganda's specific context. This gap is particularly significant in the context of the EACOP project, where the scale and visibility of land acquisition amplify the stakes of getting compensation right. Ignoring PAPs' satisfaction risks undermining project implementation timelines and eroding public trust in institutions. This research has adopted a case study approach to explore PAPs' perceptions of fairness and adequacy of compensation with a view of generating policy recommendations for improving the compensation framework in Uganda. A case study approach was deemed useful in allowing the researcher to gain deep insights into the research topic.

2.2. Objectives

The main objective of the study was to examine satisfaction with compensation adequacy and fairness amongst persons affected by the East African Crude Oil Pipeline Project. Specifically, the study sought to determine the factors that influence satisfaction of PAPs with compensation awards, to ascertain the level of satisfaction of PAPs with compensation adequacy, and to evaluate the extent to which implementation of the existing compensation legal framework aligns with fairness principles. Accordingly, the study posed the following questions; What are the main factors that influence the satisfaction of PAPs with compensation awards? Are project-affected persons satisfied with the adequacy of compensation paid for their expropriated properties? To what extent does the implementation of the existing legal framework align with fairness principles?

The use of research questions rather than testable hypotheses in this study is intentional and reflects its exploratory and evaluative orientation. The concepts of adequacy and fairness in land acquisition are context-dependent, and multi-dimensional, making them difficult to operationalize into testable variables required for hypothesis formulation. Accordingly, research questions provide a more suitable framework for examining stakeholder perceptions and institutional processes. This approach aligns with the qualitative and mixed methods commonly applied in compensation studies.

2.3. Scope of Study

The study was carried out in Kiziranfumbi subcounty, Kikuube district in Uganda. The coordinates of the subcounty are 1°20'26.0"N 31°11'58.9 (Latitude: 1.34056, Longitude: 31.1997). Kikuube District was chosen as a case study due to its status as the second largest contributor to physically displaced PAPs (PDPs), with 22.72% (45 out 198) of them originating from Kikuube. Among these, 34 PAPs are

specifically from Kiziranfumbi Sub County. This study was conducted between September 2023 and January 2025. The research planning and design phase occurred from September 2023 to January 2024. Data collection was carried out in March 2024. The writing of this research report and the validation of the study's findings took place between April 2024 and February 2025.

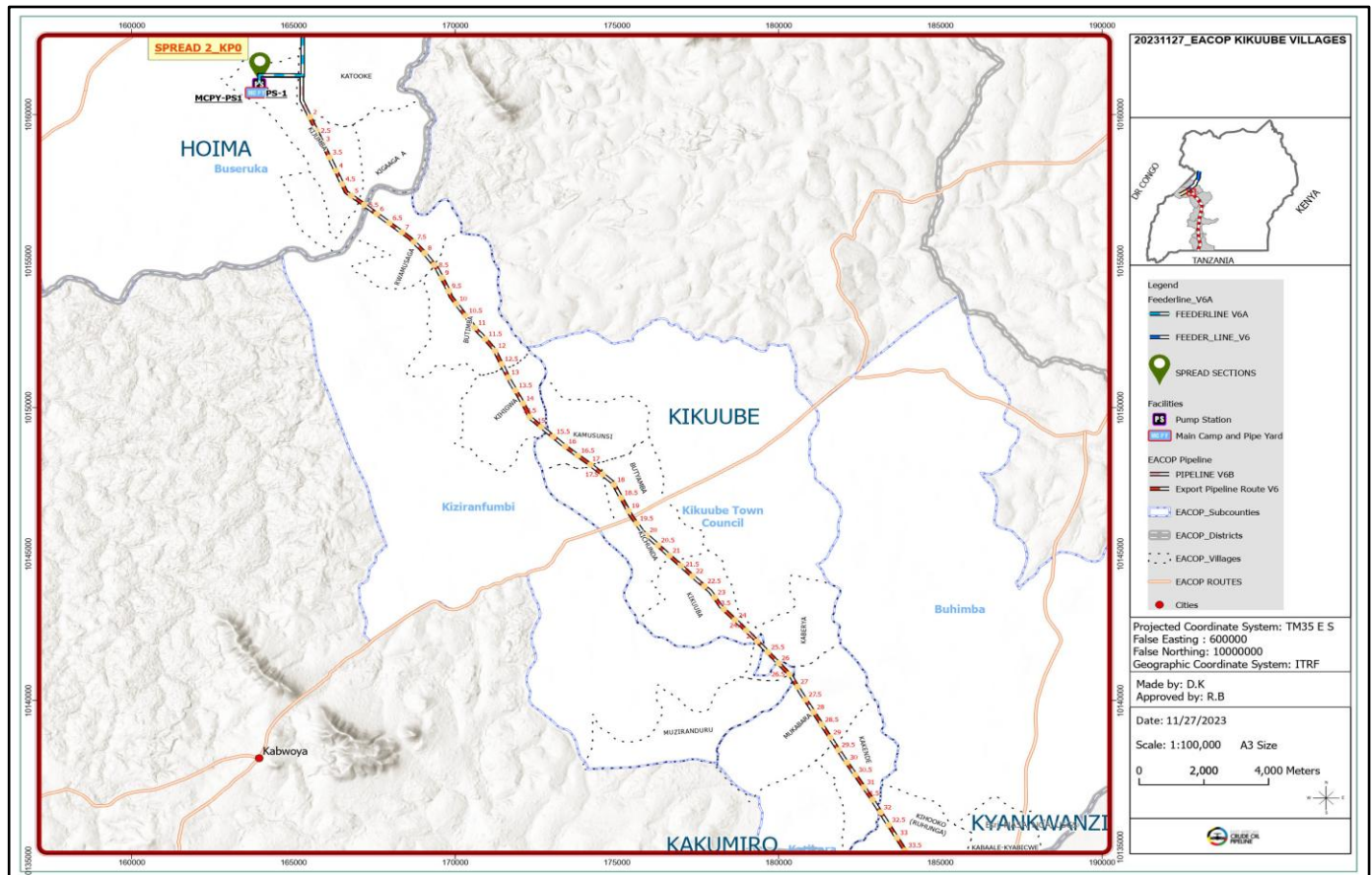


Figure 1: A map of Kikuube District showing Kiziranfumbi Subcounty

Source: Secondary Data

3. METHODOLOGY

The research employed a mixed methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques to enhance validity and provide a comprehensive understanding of compensation satisfaction. Mixed methods were justified because quantitative data offered measurable patterns, while qualitative insights captured perceptions, and explanations that numbers alone could not reveal. This integration allowed triangulation, reducing bias and strengthening interpretation of the results. Quantitative data was collected through systematic random sampling, issuing 178 questionnaires, with sample size determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula below:

$$S = \frac{X^2 N P(1-P)}{d^2(N-1) + X^2 P(1-P)},$$

where: ($X^2=3.841$ (chi-square value for 95%, confidence, degree of freedom (df) = 1), $N=328$ (population), $P=0.5$ (population proportion), $d=0.05$ (margin of error = 5%)).

For PAPs that had relocated and were hard to trace using conventional approaches, they were identified using snowball sampling. For objective one, respondents rated 13 compensation satisfaction factors on a 5-point Likert scale. Mean scores were calculated using the Analysis of Means (ANOM) approach, and a grand mean was computed as a baseline for comparison (Pallmann & Hothorn, 2015). Each factor's mean was then compared to the grand mean to assess agreement levels. The same method was applied to objective three, which evaluated nine global fairness aspects using a 5-point Likert scale. This approach enabled a comprehensive assessment of overall agreement across all rated factors.

Objective two was achieved using both the ANOM approach and computation of a compensation satisfaction index (CSI). In the context of this research, CSI is a measure used to gauge PAP's satisfaction with various aspects of the compensation adequacy measured. As adopted by Oshikoya and Olayiwola (2023), the CSI was calculated using from the formula below;

$$CSI = \{\Sigma(X_1Y_1 + X_2Y_2 + X_n Y_n) \div Z_n^1N\} \times 100\%$$

Where; $X_1X_2 X_n$ represents the values of levels of satisfaction rated, $Y_1Y_2 Y_n$ represents the actual score by the respondents, Z_n^1 is the maximum score that the X^{th} variable could have on the scale used and N is the number of respondents.

Qualitative data was collected using FGDs which were 3 groups comprised of PAPs and local leaders and interviews with 9 key informants. The branches for the FGD were systematically selected and were conducted at every 6th village out of the 18 affected villages. The key informants were; 4 local leaders, 2 PAU officials, 1 EACOP official, 1 MLHUD official and 1 CBO officer were purposively selected based on their expertise and level of involvement on the project. Additionally, literature reviews of secondary data were carried out.

3.1. Validity and Reliability of Data Collection Instruments

Field data validity was ensured by testing the questionnaire and interview guide with 5 respondents. Their feedback was then used to refine both instruments. Content validity was ensured by randomly selecting ten (10) items rated for relevance by 3 experts in the field of compulsory land acquisition, using a 5-point scale (4-5 = Strong relevance, 2-3 = Moderate relevance, 1 = Weak relevance). An acceptable Content Validity Index (CVI) of 0.85 was achieved, exceeding the 0.8 threshold (Shi, et al., 2012). The CVI was calculated using the formula:

$$CVI = a/b$$

where a is the total relevance rating (25.5) and b is the total possible rating (30).

To ensure reliability, the test-retest method was used, where the same scale or measure was administered to the same group at two different times with an interval in between. A closed-ended questionnaire was given to selected respondents to ensure consistency in evaluating areas aligned with the study objectives. Reliability was confirmed, with instruments yielding consistent results within an acceptable kappa value (k) of 0.82, as calculated by (Bujang & Baharum, 2017) using the equation below;

$$k=(p(a)-p(e))/(1-p(e))$$

Where k represents the kappa value, $p(a)$ denotes the probability of observed agreement, and $p(e)$ indicates the probability of agreement by chance. The kappa values range from -1 to 1 ($-1 \leq k \leq 1$). A kappa value less than 0.00 signifies perfect disagreement; a value between 0.00 and 0.60 indicates weak agreement; a value from 0.60 to 0.79 reflects moderate agreement; a value from 0.80 to 0.90 shows strong agreement; and a value above 0.90 represents almost perfect agreement.

3.2. Data Analysis

Quantitative data was coded and presented in charts and tables to facilitate ease of use, interpretation, and analysis. Analysis was performed using SPSS Ver 25.0 and Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and their levels of satisfaction with the compensation process. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically and key themes related to perceptions of fairness, compensation adequacy, and the broader impacts of land acquisition on livelihoods were identified.

4. FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE SATISFACTION WITH COMPENSATION AWARDS

4.1. General Findings

The study achieved an 84.3% response rate, with 150 of 178 sampled PAPs completing questionnaires. Gender distribution was 67.3% male (101) and 32.7% female (49), a proportion considered adequate since women form 49% of households along the EACOP route (2020 RAP report). Gender inclusion was emphasized due to women's vulnerability to land acquisition. Education levels showed that 8 (5.3%) had no formal education, 46 (30.7%) completed primary, 38 (21.3%) secondary, and 58 (38.7%) attained higher education. Overall, 96 (63.9%) had secondary education or above, hence capable of providing reliable responses. Among the 34 PAPs eligible for replacement housing, 4 opted for cash and of the remaining 30, only 12 participated, representing 9.15% of respondents. Regarding compensable items, 107 (71.3%) were compensated for land and crops/trees, 21 (14.0%) for vacant land, 16 (10.7%) for land and buildings, 4 (2.7%) for developments only, and 2 (1.3%) for land with commercial buildings.

4.2 Empirical Findings

Timeliness of compensation emerged as the most critical factor influencing PAPs' satisfaction with compensation awards, given its highest mean score of 4.73. Other key factors scoring above the grand mean of 4.17 included transparency (4.67), accurate asset valuation (4.63), negotiation before acquisition (4.57), high compensation expectations (4.46), livelihood restoration (4.37), participation (4.31), and payment before possession (4.22). Functional grievance mechanisms (4.11) and PAPs' economic status (4.06) scored slightly below the grand mean but remained important. In contrast, sentimental land value (3.53), government policies (3.27), and consideration of claims like severe injurious affection (3.22) were viewed as less influential.

Table 1: Factors that influence satisfaction with compensation awards

Factor	Min	Max	Mean
1. Timeliness/Promptness of the Compensation Payment	3	5	4.73
2. Transparency of the Process	3	5	4.67

3. Accurate valuation/enumeration of Assets	1	5	4.63
4. Negotiation before acquisition	1	5	4.57
5. High expectations/greed on the part of the PAP	1	5	4.46
6. Livelihood Restoration	1	5	4.37
7. Participation of PAPs	1	5	4.31
8. Payment before taking possession of the property	1	5	4.22
9. Functional Grievance Resolution Mechanisms	1	5	4.11
10. Economic Status of the PAPs	1	5	4.06
11. Sentimental value attached to Land	1	5	3.53
12. Government Policies	1	5	3.27
13. Consideration of all heads of claims like severe injurious affection, etc	1	5	3.22
GRAND MEAN			4.17

Source: Primary Data, 2024

The results revealed that timeliness of compensation is the most important factor influencing satisfaction with compensation amongst PAPs. With a mean score of 4.73 that is over and above the grand mean of 4.17, the results mean that for a PAP to be satisfied with compensation, the assessed award must be paid on time. The rationale is that timely payment of compensation enables PAPs to quickly identify a suitable alternative for relocation, making it more probable that they will replace their acquired property to its original state or a much better state as envisaged by the principle of equivalence.

Seven of the factors were scored above the grand mean of 4.17. These were transparency of the process, accurate asset valuation, negotiation before acquisition, high compensation expectations, livelihood restoration, participation, and payment before possession. The high scores indicate the critical importance to PAPs, requiring priority attention from implementers. Four of the factors scored slightly below the grand mean but remained close, showing they were considered important. These were functional grievance mechanisms, PAPs' economic status, sentimental value attachment to land, and government policies.

Another important finding is that consideration of all heads of claims, particularly severance and injurious affection, received the lowest mean rating (3.22) compared to the overall grand mean of 4.17. A possible explanation for this might be the timing of data collection, which occurred prior to the commencement of the pipeline civil works within Kiziranfumbi Subcounty. In practice, the impacts associated with injurious affection and severance typically become evident during the actual implementation of civil construction activities. Consequently, it is possible that most PAPs did not fully recognize this factor at the time of the study, as they had not yet experienced its effects.

The above findings align with prior studies (Kuma et al., 2019; Alias & Daud, 2006) emphasizing timeliness, transparency, and negotiation mechanisms as key factors influencing satisfaction with compulsory acquisition. However, this study partly diverges from Oshikoya and Olayiwola (2023), who identified sentimental land attachment as a major determinant in Nigeria. Despite 74.2% of PAPs in Kiziranfumbi residing in the area for over seven years, their mean score for sentimental attachment was lower than expected, contrasting with the assertion that attachment increases with

length of residence. The strong emphasis on sentimental attachment to land in Nigeria, however, is understandable since 90% of land there is typically customary. Customary land by its nature is collectively owned, representing identity, history, and community bonds, making it highly valued sentimentally. It is therefore reasonable to hypothesize that similar studies in Uganda's northern or eastern regions, where customary tenure is prevalent, would yield significantly higher mean scores for sentimental value attachment compared to those observed in the current study area.

Another finding that stands out from the results is that while over 80% of key informants emphasized timeliness, participation, and compensation amounts, technical informants from EACOP, PAU, and MLHUD equally argued that PAPs' dissatisfaction was not primarily due to low compensation or procedural lapses. Instead, they attributed the perceived inadequacy and unfairness to the influence of external actors, particularly NGOs and CSOs actively opposing fossil fuel projects globally. This suggests that external advocacy may significantly shape PAPs' perceptions of the compensation process.

These organizations intensified their advocacy activities following the discovery of oil in the Albertine Graben and are reportedly campaigning against the construction of the pipeline on environmental grounds. According to EACOP and MLHUD, some NGOs and CSOs have supported some PAPs financially or otherwise in ways that may have contributed to a broader narrative portraying the land acquisition process as unsatisfactory. On this aspect, an EACOP official had this to say during an interview:

"The PAPs' perception of oil and gas projects are fueled by the many NGOs like African Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO) and Civil Society Coalition on Oil and Gas (CSCO) that sometimes pay PAPs to come up and speak bad about the project. These are financing PAPs to reject the project, go to courts of law etc. These are generally against the EACOP project".

Such narratives suggest that NGOs and CSOs in the oil region play a critical role in shaping PAPs' perceptions of compensation adequacy and fairness. Abiddin, et al (2022) note that these actors often serve as intermediaries, advocates, and information facilitators, influencing views on transparency and fairness. In the EACOP case, concerns raised by technical key informants appear valid, given that AFIEGO and others filed a case before the East African Court of Justice challenging the project's legality (AFIEGO, 2023). This context suggests that external actors significantly contribute to forming critical or negative perspectives among PAPs regarding land acquisition and compensation processes.

5. LEVEL OF SATISFACTION OF PAPS WITH COMPENSATION ADEQUACY

Table 2 below shows that the average compensation satisfaction index (CSI) was 0.47, indicating a 47% satisfaction level, which is extremely low since it is below 50%. Only three factors had a CSI of 50% or above: compensation for crops and trees (CSI = 55%), quality of resettlement housing (CSI = 53%), and compensation for buildings (CSI = 50%). Other factors included the livelihood restoration program (CSI = 46%), compensation for land (CSI = 44%), overall land acquisition process (CSI = 44%) and timeliness of compensation had the lowest CSI at 40%.

Table 2: Level of satisfaction with compensation adequacy

Item	N	Min	Max	Mean	CSI
Compensation paid for crops and economic value	150	1	5	1.65	55
Quality of resettlement housing provided	150	1	5	1.59	53
Compensation paid for buildings	150	1	4	1.51	50
Livelihood restoration program in place	150	1	4	1.37	46
Compensation paid for the land	150	1	4	1.33	44
Entire Land Acquisition process	150	1	2	1.31	44
Timeliness/promptness of Compensation	150	1	5	1.19	40
Grand Mean & CSI	150			1.42	47

Source: Primary Data, 2024

Figure 2 expands on the CSIs, showing widespread dissatisfaction with the land acquisition process. A majority of respondents expressed strong discontent, with 103 very dissatisfied and 47 dissatisfied overall. The livelihood restoration program was poorly rated, with 102 very dissatisfied and only 4 slightly satisfied. Resettlement housing quality was similarly criticized, with 129 dissatisfied or very dissatisfied and just 13 satisfied. Compensation aspects for crops, buildings, and land also received negative ratings. Notably, land compensation and timeliness were the worst-performing areas, with 104 and 130 respondents respectively reporting being very dissatisfied.

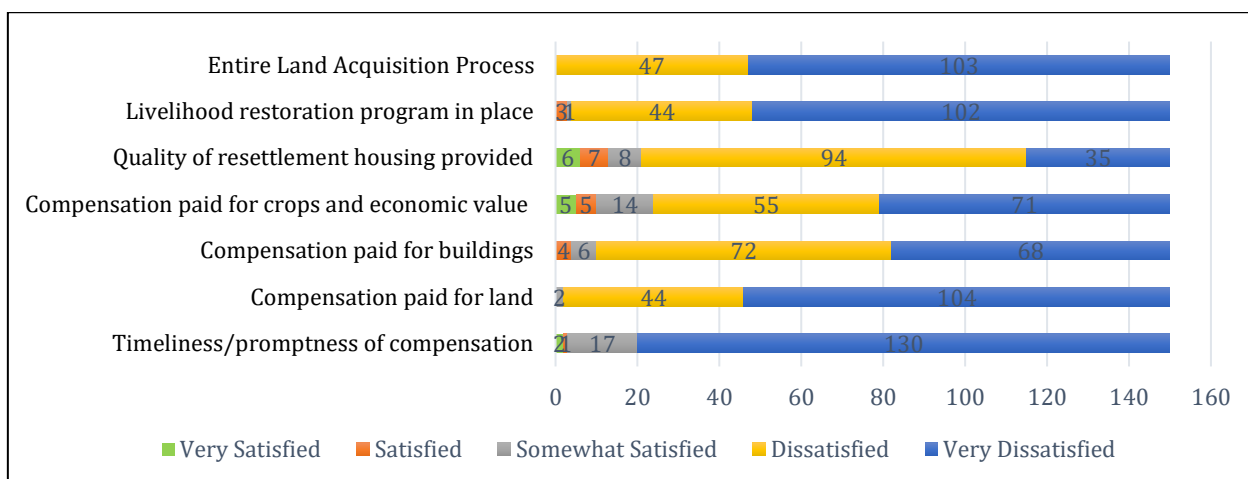


Figure 2: Responses per compensation adequacy aspect rated

Source: Primary Data, 2024

Dissatisfaction with entire land acquisition process was linked to delayed compensation, a concern emphasized by both PAPs and key informants. There was broad consensus that cash payments were not made on time. This aligns with Inclusive Development International (2022) findings, which reported delays of over two years between land demarcation and compensation for many PAPs. Such delays violated the principle of minimizing time between cut-off dates and payment. One PAP's take on this issue was that:

"The assessed amounts could have been sufficient. However, inflation affected the payment at the time of disbursement since it was delayed, hence making it inadequate as previously planned".

A local leader also had this to say on this matter:

"..... I am very concerned some individuals seemed unable to find adequate replacements for their affected land or properties. As such, they really felt like they were cheated".

Delayed compensation payments significantly undermined PAPs' ability to replace expropriated properties, as the real value of payments was eroded by inflation. AFIEGO (2023) reports that 96.6% of PAPs compensated between 2022 and 2023 failed to acquire alternative land due to inflationary pressures. This underscores the critical importance of timely compensation, which PAPs ranked as their top priority in objective one. Failure to meet this expectation fueled perceptions of inadequacy. Consequently, the compensation process fell short in addressing the economic realities faced by PAPs.

The above conclusion is supported by the 2021 EACOP Project report which confirms that, despite completing land delineation, asset surveys, and valuation approvals between 2018 and 2020, compensation payments were delayed. The delays were attributed to postponement of the final investment decision and the COVID-19 outbreak which resulted in diversion of resources to emergency response activities.

In addition, the outbreak of COVID 19 meant that some project activities could not normally proceed because observance of standard operating procedures (SOPs). As a result, the project lost two years (2020 and 2021). Ideally, PAPs expected to be paid within one year after assessing their properties as envisaged in the 2017 Guidelines for Compulsory Acquisition of land by MLHUD. An official from EACOP had this to say about the delays:

"For PAPs eligible for a replacement house, no one was asked to move or to relocate before a replacement house was completed. For this option, the PAP only moves in when the house is ready, and it is always consensual. So, for the in-kind option, compensation is always timely. On the other hand, cash compensation wasn't timely because of the COVID 19 issues. You know, the assessment was done in 2019 and then remember that COVID period started towards end of 2019. The COVID challenge made us lose almost 2 years. So, the implementation was done at the beginning of 2021. However, we incorporated a 15% escalation per annum on the earlier assessment".

Despite EACOP's 15% inflation uplift, PAPs still expressed dissatisfaction, reflected in low CSIs for crops (0.55), buildings (0.50), and land (0.44). Three factors may explain this: (i) some of the initial valuations were perhaps below market rates due to limited rural land transaction data and outdated district compensation rates that ignore future income potential (Akujuru & Ruddock, 2015); (ii) high expectations for compensation amongst PAPs driven by large household sizes, with over 80% of the households having more than six members; and (iii) exposure to multiple concurrent land acquisition projects in the Albertine Graben, enabling comparisons and creating perceived inconsistencies despite harmonization efforts by EACOP. The narratives below explain the key drivers for high expectations amongst PAPs:

"..... "for example, I have a family of 13 people and I expected to get more than what I was compensated because I look after a big family. As much as the cash compensation was not enough for me, I just accepted it for the good of the project". (PAP during one of the FGDs)

"It is very hard to satisfy PAPs from this region. The district has so many ongoing projects like the Kabale-Kiziranfumbi road (critical oil road projects) and sometimes UNRA gives high rates. So

different projects use different rates, which is posing a serious challenge to the project. We, however, endeavored to harmonize at all intersections wherever possible. (MLHUD official).

Another key point inferred from the results relates to the Livelihood Restoration Program (LRP), which involved distributing seeds to support PAPs during the transition period. Results show that 146 PAPs (97.33%) were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the LRP. According to EACOP, PAU, and MLHUD, the LRP targeted PAPs fully dependent on agriculture, providing seeds over two years, with quantities based on the size of arable land affected. However, PAPs' expectations differed significantly and were likely misunderstood from the project's outset as captured in the lamentations by PAPs below during a FGD:

"The in-kind options like food rations and seeds were not enough. The food supply was irregular contrary to earlier communicated terms".

"Some of us received little food and seeds compared to our neighbours. The truth is that there were no proper livelihood restoration measures, leaving many of us struggling".

The essence of the LRP was rather different from PAU's perspective whose official indicated that:

"LRP was just a mitigation measure. In that if you had 10 acres and 6 are affected, you're compensated for the 6 acres and then eligibility to participate in the LRP was dependent on the extent to which the land acquisition affected a significant portion of land that was used for cultivation."

These contrasting perspectives reveal a gap between PAPs' expectations of the LRP and those of technical key informants. Many PAPs reported unmet expectations and unclear eligibility and distribution criteria, perhaps stemming from the absence of legal provisions for livelihood restoration, leaving implementation of the LRP to EACOP's discretion. Although most PAPs qualified, variations in quantities created perceptions that the program fell short of expectations.

Another significant finding that emerged from the data is that in-kind compensation is more effective in restoring PAPs to a better position. It was established that of the few PAPs (6) who reported timely compensation, five (5) were all compensated in-kind. The remaining seven (7) PAPs who received houses somewhat agreed, but no one disagreed that compensation was timely. Most importantly, all the 12 PAPs that received houses reported higher satisfaction with the quality of the houses provided to them.

As explained by EACOP, all houses for the in-kind option were made available on time and no PAP was forced to vacate their land until the replacement house was ready for use. Besides this, the consensus amongst key informants was that the replacement houses were of a much better quality than what most PAPs initially had:

"A number of people got houses that they've never owned before, or they still wouldn't own if it wasn't for the EACOP project. In a village setting, anyone would dream of having a house worth \$50,000 with solar facilities, modern cooking stove, charger, inverter, batteries and as well a rainwater harvesting water tank"

That said however, two reasons might have caused perceptions of dissatisfaction with the in-kind option: (1) as highlighted by EACOP, the majority of PAPs deep in villages wanted to be relocated

closer to trading centres where land values were higher, causing delays in site identification and, (2) a few defects to do with solar lighting were frequently reported during engagements with both the CBO official and local leaders interviewed. For example, the CBO official was captured saying:

“..... certainly, the quality of support provided was commendable, and the houses built appear to be durable and better than what most PAPs previously had. However, there were occasional challenges reported, particularly regarding faulty lighting systems but these are still by a few”.

Nonetheless, PAPs that received in-kind compensation were more satisfied levels than their counterparts who received cash, although the fewer numbers may have limited their influence on overall research findings. Accordingly, despite the high implementation costs, in-kind compensation should be prioritized where feasible, as cash payments are susceptible to misuse as stated by a PAU official:

“.....in-kind is the best. However, most PAPs prefer cash and we cannot force them to accept the in-kind option. And a number of these people were receiving huge compensations of money that they had never received at any one point in their time which made it vulnerable to either wastage or misuse for different factors”.

The above view is equally held by Mugagga and Nnakayima (2019) who note that initial excitement over cash compensation often results in poor financial decisions and long-term socio-economic challenges. Similarly, Keith (2008) observed that recipients unfamiliar with managing large sums risk losing land, income, and the ability to adapt to non-agricultural livelihoods. These findings underscore the need to prioritize in-kind compensation where financially feasible.

6. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EXISTING COMEPESATION LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

Table 3 reveals a grand mean of 1.64, reflecting overall low alignment with compensation fairness principles. Only three aspects scored above the grand mean: asset enumeration in PAPs' presence (2.01), no interference with common property (1.99), and absence of coercion (1.68). All other dimensions fell below the mean, including respect for the cut-off date (1.63), grievance mechanism functionality (1.57), clarity of assessor responses (1.57), assessment of all property interests (1.56), participation (1.39), and transparency (1.19). These results highlight significant deficiencies across most fairness indicators.

Table 3: Implementation of the compensation legal and policy framework

Descriptive	Min	Max	Mean
1. Enumeration of the Assets was done in the presence of the PAPs	1	5	2.01
2. There was no interference with access to common property like community wells, access roads	1	5	1.99
3. No one was coerced to accept the compensation awarded	1	5	1.68
4. The communicated cut-off date was respected	1	5	1.63
5. There was a clear and functional grievance resolution mechanisms	1	5	1.57
6. I was convinced by the response provided by the assessors when I sought clarity	1	5	1.57
7. All property interests were assessed for compensation	1	5	1.56
8. The process was participatory	1	4	1.39
9. The process was transparent	1	5	1.19
Grand Mean Valid N (listwise)			1.64

Figure 3 below corroborates the mean scores, revealing mixed evaluations of the land acquisition process. Most PAPs strongly disagreed that implementation aligned with fairness principles. Transparency (126), unclear responses (101), participation (97), and grievance mechanism functionality (88) were the most criticized aspects. Additionally, 80 respondents strongly disagreed that all property interests were assessed, 72 that asset enumeration occurred in their presence, 77 that the cut-off date was respected, and 68 that coercion was absent. Nonetheless, some PAPs agreed there was no interference with common property, asset enumeration occurred in their presence, no one was coerced, and the grievance mechanism was functional. Overall, while a few fairness elements showed strength, significant deficiencies were evident across most rated aspects.

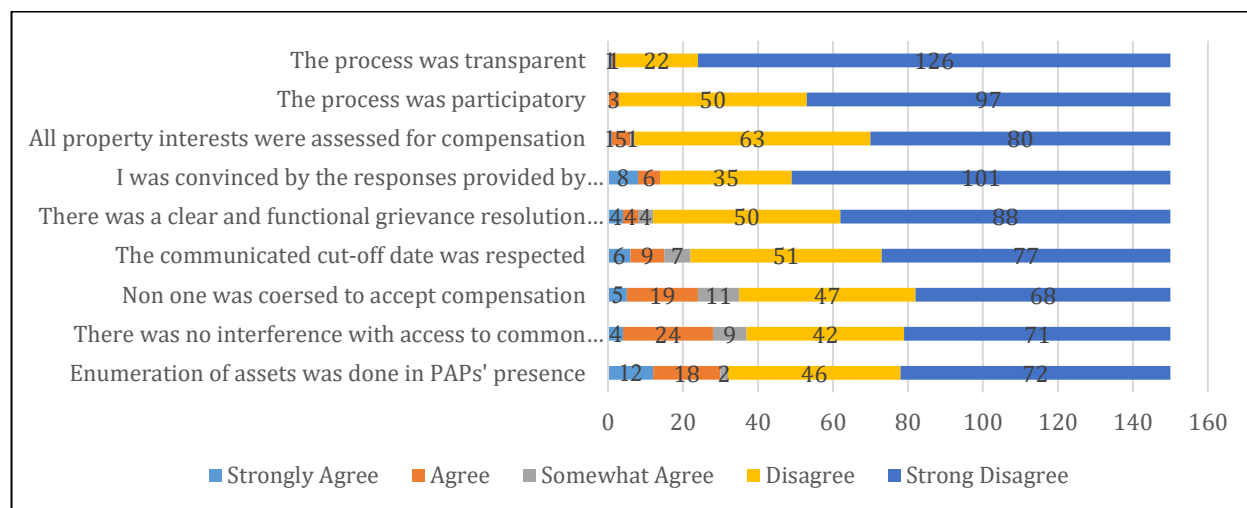


Figure 3: Responses per fairness aspect rated

Source: Primary Data, 2024

The findings reveal substantial gaps in implementing the existing legal framework, with a grand mean of 1.64 indicating misalignment with fairness principles. Transparency and participation scored lowest, at 1.19 and 1.39 out of 5, respectively. Triangulated data, however, showed differing views among key informants. For instance, during an interview, PAU asserted that participation and transparency were promoted through efforts like collaborative development of district compensation rates with stakeholders:

“In regard to transparency, EACOP liaised with all the relevant local governments and key stakeholders like MLHUD and Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development (MEMD) to agree on the compensation rates to be used. In addition, the rates were also pinned on noticeboards at the different districts traversed by the project.”

Despite the above collaborative efforts with key stakeholders, PAPs perceptions of unfairness were largely hinged on their non-participation. The submission below is from a PAP engaged in sugarcane growing:

“We as sugarcane dealers were not consulted when they were assessing our plantations for compensation, and they ended up paying us very little money after four years”.

EACOP officials acknowledged efforts to engage all PAPs, but full participation was constrained by external factors notably, COVID-19 SOPs which limited public gatherings thereby reducing inclusivity

in stakeholder engagement. Additionally, as noted by an EACOP official in the below narrative, participation was hindered by some PAPs' expectations of financial incentives for attending meetings:

"During COVID, we would organise a few PAPs like 5. PAPs were mainly engaged using public drives in the villages telling their people what was taking place. Even now, engagements are still ongoing. However, in most cases very few participate because for every engagement, they want to be paid. That is the biggest challenge to participation now. For every engagement, PAPs expect money."

The above narrative illustrates the complex interplay between logistical constraints and community expectations, which contributed to perceived deficits in transparency and participation. Even where PAPs agreed to have participated, their involvement was considered to be largely symbolic, conferring formal inclusion without substantive decision-making authority. Notably, PAPs expressed a preference for negotiating compensation as highlighted in the submission below by a PAP during one of the FGDs:

"We all like it when there is room for negotiation before deciding on compensation for our properties. EACOP did not give some of us a chance to negotiate."

Such sentiments suggest that while some PAPs engaged in the process, critical decisions were largely predetermined, partly due to legal constraints. PAPs preferred negotiating compensation, but Uganda's legal framework does not provide for this. Previous research shows that participation enhances psychological well-being through self-esteem and inclusion (Brockner, 2002). Consequently, the perceived lack of participation reduced transparency, reflected in the process's low rating.

The next point concerns the disconnect between PAPs' perceptions and key informants' views on the grievance resolution mechanism (GRM). Results indicate that 138 PAPs (92%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the GRM aligned with fairness principles. This is contrary to the views of key informants. The narratives below about the GRM are from interviews with EACOP and PAU respectively

"There is a clear grievance resolution mechanism starting from the village level, at the subcounty with the settlement planning committee, district settlement committee and if a grievance isn't resolved, it is escalated to PAU. Additionally, civil society organisations were allowed to support the PAPs. For instance, CSCO supported in mediating some of these grievances".

"EACOP availed free third-party counsel to explain to the PAPs what they were signing for and to provide legal counsel where necessary. This was in addition to the District Consultative Council that also supported with resolution of grievances. To date, the GRM for EACOP has had about 98% resolution rate for the 895 grievances so far recorded, with 119 originating from Kiziranfumbi".

While EACOP reports a 98% grievance resolution rate, a critical question arises. Why does discontent persist despite this high grievance closure rate? Three explanations emerge:

1. As noted by the World Bank (2021), grievance closure does not necessarily reflect resolution of issues, as some cases are closed procedurally without addressing the root causes. It is therefore possible that some PAPs were not satisfied with how their grievances were closed.
2. Some PAPs, unaware of the grievance mechanisms, did not file formal complaints but still voiced dissatisfaction during the study. As previously stated, limited information flow, partly due to COVID-19 SOPs, may have hindered access to grievance resolution procedures by some PAPs.
3. The compulsory nature of land acquisition tends to discourage PAPs from raising grievances due to the fear of being seen as obstructive to government projects (Ty, Van Westen, & Zoomers, 2013). Relatedly, a report by Inclusive Development International (2022) on EACOP found that some PAPs under the EACOP Project were pressured into accepting cash compensation.

Despite widespread criticisms of the various fairness dimensions, the data reveal areas of moderate agreement among some PAPs. Some respondents confirmed there was no interference with access to communal property like wells and boreholes. This is a realistic finding since civil works had not commenced during data collection. Additionally, some PAPs acknowledged that asset enumeration was conducted in their presence, a perception exemplified by this view from a CBO official, who stated that:

“All assets were valued in PAPs presence and their value paid, because the assessment was genuine and was done by qualified government appointed valuers. All assets were evaluated as per the current value and considering the district compensation rates set by the government”.

Such accounts suggest that, in some instances, procedural standards were upheld, and that PAPs were afforded a degree of fairness. However, these positive perceptions were generally less strongly held and less frequently reported than the negative ones. Taken together, the findings indicate that while certain elements of fairness were present, particularly in relation to asset enumeration and protection of communal property, significant deficiencies were perceived across most of the fairness dimensions assessed. This underscores the need for more consistent and inclusive implementation of land acquisition procedures to enhance legitimacy and trust among affected communities.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. CONCLUSION

Timely payment emerged as the most critical factor influencing satisfaction, followed by transparency, accurate valuation, negotiation, and participation. Despite EACOP's 15% inflation adjustment, dissatisfaction persisted due to perceived undervaluation driven by insufficient comparable land sales data, and high expectations amongst PAPs, compounded by COVID-19 which delayed payment of compensation awards. Cash compensation proved most vulnerable to inflation and mismanagement, while in-kind options like replacement housing delivered higher satisfaction and fairness but faced logistical constraints. The LRP showed gaps due to the absence of a clear legal framework, and NGOs/CSOs significantly shaped PAP perceptions, sometimes amplifying dissatisfaction. Although procedural compliance was reported, participation and transparency were viewed as symbolic, exposing weaknesses in implementation. Dissatisfaction with the GRM

highlights the need for more inclusive, participatory, and context-sensitive approaches to strengthen fairness and trust.

7.2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends establishing a dedicated, ring-fenced compensation fund to ensure timely payments and prevent diversion of resources. The legal framework should be amended to mandate a negotiation phase before compulsory acquisition, set and define enforceable timelines for compensation disbursement with clear interest penalties for delays, and allow diverse compensation options such as cash, land for land, and house for house. Regular updates to district compensation rates are essential, alongside reinstating District Land Tribunals for grievance resolution. A centralized land valuation databank should be created to improve accuracy and reliability of land valuations. Project implementation agencies must engage affected communities early and transparently, while implementing systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, including feedback from PAPs. Finally, the government should develop a comprehensive legal and policy framework for the LRPs aligned with international standards to ensure fairness, accountability, and best practice compliance.

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Kalinaki Faruk – Developed the research concept, data collection and writing of the manuscript.

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13. DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Compensation: The monetary or non-monetary restitution provided to landowners, occupants, or affected parties to offset the loss of land, property, livelihoods, and associated rights resulting from compulsory acquisition by the state or other authorized entities.

Adequacy: Refers to the degree to which the compensation provided sufficiently restores or replaces the economic, social, and psychological value of the land and associated losses, as perceived by the affected party.

Fairness: This is the extent to which the compensation process and outcomes uphold the principles of justice as fairness (Rawls, 2001). It encompasses both procedural justice, including transparency, equal treatment, and meaningful participation and distributive justice, which ensures that the least advantaged are not disproportionately harmed and may even benefit from the process. Fairness is thus not only about the amount of compensation but also about how rights are recognized, decisions are made, and grievances are addressed.

Satisfaction: Refers to the degree to which individuals affected by land acquisition perceive the compensation received, monetary and non-monetary, as meeting or exceeding their expectations, restoring their socio-economic status, and being delivered through a fair and transparent process.