

Socio-Economic Impact of Land Acquisition Consequent of the Establishment of Cochin Airport and Rehabilitation of Affected Families-A Case Study of Cochin International Airport Limited

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Abstract: This paper examines the economic impact of land acquisition consequent of the establishment of Cochin Airport and rehabilitation of affected families. CIAL is the first airport project in India implemented under the Public Private Partnership model. While implementing the project acquiring land has been one of the biggest challenges faced. CIAL acquired around 1,300 acres of land from about 822 families. Unlike what is taking place now where State Governments are acquiring land for airports, land acquisition in this case was done through a negotiated settlement with the land-owners. A co-ordination committee headed by ministers of the Kerala government, representatives of the land owners, the District Collector, the elected representatives of the locality or panchayat and the managing director of the company, held several rounds of marathon meetings to arrive at a settlement scheme that was acceptable to all the land evictees. A rehabilitation package was also worked out for rehabilitating 822 families that were displaced due to the land acquisition process. The process entailed one of the biggest ever land acquisition process in the district. The study is useful in understanding the exact state of condition of persons displaced due to the setting up of the Cochin airport.

Keywords: Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation, Public Private Partnership model, Displacement, public purpose.

1. INTRODUCTION

Cochin International Airport Limited (CIAL) the first greenfield airport setup in the Public Private Partnership (PPP) model in civil aviation infrastructure sector in India. This is the first international airport in India to be built with only a minority (26%) State and Central Government stake in a public-private partnership (PPP) project. The unique rehabilitation package, the amazing public participation and a sustainable business model have made Cochin International Airport Limited (CIAL) the company, which operates the airport an international brand.

Cochin International Airport Limited is situated in the city of Kochi, in the state of Kerala, India. Located at Nedumbassery about 30 km northeast of Kochi, It is now the only airport in Kerala, which handled five million passengers a year. Ever since commercial operations started on 10th June 1999 with International flight to Dammam, CIAL, has grown rapidly becoming the 4th largest International Airport in India in terms of international passenger traffic in just four years. CIAL recorded a cumulative annual growth rate of nearly 20% in the initial 8 years and thereafter at 12% with annual passenger traffic touching 7.7 million in 2015-16. The airport handles more than 1100 aircraft movements per week. Cochin International Airport Limited is a first aviation venture in the history of civil aviation in India, where Govt. of Kerala, Non- resident India's (NRI'S), travelling public, financial institutions, airport service provider's and others joined hand in the equity structure. The idea to float an airport under public private partnership has

been mooted by the district collector of Ernakulam Mr.V.J.Kurian IAS today stands as a path breaker in this field in our country. The Airport was formally inaugurated by the Honorable President of India K R Narayanan on 25th May 1999 and the first inaugural flight of Air India take off on 10th June 1999.

The Land Acquisition Act, 1894 is a law in India and Pakistan that allows the government to acquire private land. In those countries "land acquisition" literally means the acquisition of land for some public purpose by a government agency from individual land owners as authorized by the law, after paying a government fixed compensation to cover losses incurred by landowners from surrendering their land to the concerned government agency. This act was created with the purpose of facilitating acquisition by the government of privately held land for public purposes. The word "public purpose" as defined in act, refers to the acquisition of land for constructing educational institutions or schemes such as housing, health or sum clearness as well as for project concerned with rural planning or formation of sites. The word "Government" refers to the central government if the purpose for acquisitions is for the union and for all other purposes it refers to the state government. It is not necessary that all the acquisition has to be initiated by the government alone. Local authorities, societies registered under the Societies Registration Act 1860 and co-operative societies established under the Co-operative Societies Act 1912 can also acquire the land for developmental activities through the government.

In India, a new bill, Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement bill was passed by the Parliament in 2013 to repeal this Act. Land Acquisition in India refers to the process of land acquisition by the central or state government of India for various infrastructure and economic growth initiatives. Land acquisition in India is currently governed by the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013, which came into force from 1 January 2014.

2. IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Cochin International Airport limited is one of the country's latest and advanced airports with modern facilities and conveniences. This is the first airport in India that was constructed with private participation, outside the ambit of Airport Authority of India. All the other airports and other infrastructural facilities are owned, managed and operated by the government. An Airport built with an unbelievably low cost of Rs. 300 crores; the project started with a paltry amount of Rs. 20,000/- as its initial capital, became a reality within a period of five years with an overall investment of Rs. 300 crores after acquiring about 1300 acres of land belonging to more than 2600 land owners. A rehabilitation package was also worked out for rehabilitating 822 families. The study is useful in understanding the exact state of condition of persons displaced due to the setting up of the Cochin airport one of the biggest ever land acquisition process in the district

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study is conducted with the following specific objectives of analyzing the socio-economic dimensions of displaced persons.

1. To understand living conditions of the evictees before and after relocation.
2. To examine the economic impact of land acquisition consequent on the establishment of CIAL

4. METHODOLOGY

Selection of Project and study area To study the socio-economic impact of displacement due to the development of Airport, a project of Cochin International Airport Limited is selected. The project is situated at Nedumbassery and 65 percent of project area is a paddy land, which covers mainly two panchayat Nedumbaserry, and Kanjoor, in Ernakulam district of Kerala.

Present study is based on both primary and secondary data. The sampling technique that was adopted for the study was convenience sampling a type of non-probability sampling. Primary data has been collected with the help of structured interview schedule. Other methods like interview and focus group discussion (FGD) are used based according to the need of the situation. For base line information, personal visits to the affected places were also made. Hundred and fifty households are chosen at random basis from Kanjoor and Nedumbasery Gram Panchayath which is the largest resettlement area. Researcher also had interactions with officers of the various departments of CIAL. This method helped the researcher to collect reliable and accurate data from the respondents. The data so collected were analysed with the help of statistical techniques, which included percentages and averages.

The secondary data for the study was collected from the developmental report of Nedumbasery Grama panchayath, records on land ownership, housing and other properties maintained by village level revenue officials and land acquisition and compensation data maintained by land acquisition officers, annual reports of CIAL, Tourist Statistics published by Government of Kerala and Economic Review. Moreover, to substantiate study data were collected from books, journals, magazines, newspapers, CIAL records, websites of airports etc.

5. FINDINGS

In order to evaluate the socio economic profile of the project a thorough investigation has been conducted as per the methodology and objectives outlines.

Evictees were from the panchayats of Nedumbassery and Kanjoor which is the largest resettlement area and 84.66 percent of the respondents are in the age group of 20-49 years. In all the age groups males outnumbered the females. 53.3 percent of the respondents are Hindus. Though the evictees are selected at random thirty six respondents are backward groups. Out of fifty christian respondents, forty evictee are concentrated in Kanjoor panchayat. Thus it is clear that Kanjoor area is a Christian dominated area, while the Muslims constitute the least.

Another major finding is that out of 150 evictees four respondents are illiterates, twenty seven respondents know how to read and write. Eighteen percent have only primary and upper education, thirty one percent of the respondents have SSLC, 17.33 percent plus two, nine percent have degree and only three percent have post graduate qualification. This clearly shows that absence of higher, technical institutions is a handicap in the development of manpower in these areas. Displacement had effected separation of family member of the respondents. The number of nuclear families was increased after displacement as compared to the pre-displacement period.

Before displacement majority of the respondents (48 %) were engaged in agriculture related activities and twenty four percent of the respondents were cultivators, only a minor number is engaged in self employed activities and government jobs. A major shift in the job pattern was identified among the respondents, after the land acquisition majority of the respondents changed their occupation. As a result of land acquisition 65% of the paddy lands vanished, so also the agricultural activities. Number of cultivator class reduced to twelve, while there is a steep increase in the number of persons engaged in non agricultural activities like temporary casual work like loading, cleaning, contractor labourers, taxi drivers, kiosks, and baggage handlers brick kiln workers, unskilled workers in small industrial units etc.

The analysis of the income level of the displaces shows a downward mobility. Before displacements majority of the respondents were agricultural labourers .The largest number of household, 55.33 percent were in the income class of below Rs. 2000. 33.33 percent of the households had income between Rs.2000-6000.Only one respondent's income is above 10000. After displacement there is a sharp increase in number of the respondents having income between 2000-4000.48.66 percent of the households are in this income group while it was only 17.25 percent before relocation. But there is no improvement in the standard of living of the respondents.

Land area acquired by the Cochin airport varied from below twenty five cent to more than three acres. Majority of the respondents acquired land is below fifty cent. And the main occupations of the respondents are cultivators. The houses of the land evictees were valued at the rates currently in force and the compensation was paid through the District Collector. Amount of compensation paid for land varies largely depending on the quality of the soil that is wet land, dry land, location etc. Among the one fifty households surveyed one hundred and one households received less than one lakh. Respondents received compensation in two installments. Eighty percentage of money was disbursed when the land was acquired. Respondents utilized the amount for the repayment of loan, to build a new house in the resettled area, purchase of new land, meeting emergencies and household consumption.

Before displacement majority of the respondents living in Kutcha houses, fifty percent of the respondents have temporary toilet facility and seven percent have no bathroom facility so they use open space, fifty nine percent of the respondents use their own well for drinking sources. The respondents were settled both inside and outside the resettlement colonies. More than half of the respondents stayed back in the same panchayat even after displacement After the displacement lot of changes seen in their living conditions from kutcha houses 66.66 percent shift into new concrete houses, eighty three percent use permanent toilet facility but their source of drinking water changed into pipe water. Before displacement due to availability of land and farm employment, daily substance could have been easily met by them. From the survey it is

revealed that deprivation of common assets and loss of access to income generating property assets that used to belong to their communities before relocation results in significant deterioration in income and livelihood.

Another important problem noticed is that the displaced persons were confronted with changes in family structure, change in economic conditions, change in environment and change in relationship. The inability of most families to buy land with the compensation amount and consequently a shift from land based occupation to non land based ones are the problems exposed by the respondents. Seventy two percent of respondents were engaged in agriculture related activities before the land was acquired. As a result of land acquisition 65 percentage of land disappeared, so also agricultural activities.

Congested living condition with limited area of six cents of land is another problem faced by households in the resettled areas. This problem is more acute in Nedumbassery where nearly two hundred and fifty evictees are residing. Unemployment is the another important effect of displacement. Twenty one respondents revealed that most of them are unemployed for most of the days in a month. Among the one hundred and fifty households surveyed seventy two percent of the respondents were engaged in agriculture related activities. Sixty five percent of agricultural land, two tile companies and more than thirty brickkilns were acquired for the project. This resulted in reduction in job opportunities.

6. SUGGESTIONS

The broad suggestions evolved from the detailed analysis of the study are given below

1. Passing of a clear legislation laying down basic obligations of the Government towards the rehabilitation of displaced persons.
2. Use of a method for fixing the monetary compensation which accounts for the potentiality of the price-rise.
3. Compulsory Social Impact Assessment, ensuring that the subsequent problems of loss of employment, social surroundings and emotional trauma are accounted for.
4. Utilization of the system of Panchayati raj as a platform for the opinions and grievances of the affected people and formation of an interest group that cannot go unheard.

7. CONCLUSION

The case study found that the majority of households were disappointed with the compensation and resettlement scheme. Displaced persons were confronted with changes in family structure, change in economic conditions, change in environment and change in relationship. The inability of most families to buy land with the compensation amount and consequently a shift from land based occupation to non land based ones are the problems exposed by the respondents. Before displacement due to availability of land and farm employment, daily substance could have been easily met by them. From the survey it is revealed that deprivation of common assets and loss of access to income generating property assets that used to belong to their communities before relocation results in significant deterioration in income and livelihood. It draws to the conclusion that the ousters instead of becoming beneficiaries became the 'victims at the altar of the development' project.

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