

Post-Compensation Challenges of Compulsory Acquisition in Nigeria: Insights from the Second Niger Bridge Project

¹Onyelukachi Nneoma Ike-Akude, ^{2*}Raphael Oshiobugie Sado, ³Joseph Chukwudi Onyejiaka

¹Department of Estate Management, Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria

^{2*-3}Department of Estate Management, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria

Email: r.o.sado@unizik.edu.ng

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Abstract: *This study interrogated the compulsory acquisition and compensation as tools for advancing public infrastructure in Nigeria, but which often generates complex challenges that persist long after initial payments, as exemplified in the second Niger Bridge project. It highlighted inadequacies in Nigeria's post compensation framework leaving displaced persons and affected communities struggling to recover socially, economically and psychologically. The objective was to investigate this post compensation challenges. An empirical method drawing on geospatial analysis, administrative records and field verification was adopted. Findings revealed significant disparities between compensation paid and the prevailing market values of acquired properties, with losses reportedly reaching 28.6% in Obosi and 57.9% in Atani. It was further noted that compensation delays ranging from 28 to 68 months had eroded livelihoods, disrupting farming, trading, and education. Replacement and restitution measures were described as inadequate, with only 25.3% of affected boreholes and 33.3% of damaged schools restored, while resettlement housing completion remained below 50% across all sites. The study reported severe socioeconomic dislocation: 71% of Oko Amakom farmers abandoned agriculture, 68% of Atani residents migrated for employment, and school enrolments in Okwe/Oko-Amakom declined by 46.6%. Psychosocial distress was also highlighted, with Asaba-Okwe communities recording 60 cases of depression, and access to legal redress remaining limited, as less than 30% of disputes were resolved and only 20.9% of displaced households accessed legal aid. Overall, the findings emphasized that Nigeria's current compensation system, while addressing acquisition, failed to guarantee effective restitution, livelihood recovery, and social stability for displaced communities. The study therefore recommended the implementation of a more inclusive and equitable compensation framework, supported by institutional reforms, to ensure that infrastructure development does not perpetuate vulnerability and impoverishment among affected populations.*

Keywords: Compulsory acquisition, compensation, displacement, resettlement, infrastructure

INTRODUCTION

Compulsory land acquisition remains an essential but controversial tool for acquiring land for public infrastructure projects (Enebeli & Njoku, 2022). The Land Use Act of 1978 provides the legislative framework that permits such acquisitions and gives government the authority to compulsorily acquire land from individuals and communities for the public's benefit (Alkali, 2022). One of the largest transit projects in Nigeria's recent history is the Second Niger Bridge (Plate 1).



Plate 1: Showing the construction of the Second Niger Bridge

Apart from the benefits of infrastructural development, the Second Niger Bridge will also improve inter regional integration between the South-East and the South-South regions of Nigeria. Affected families had to relocate as a result of the construction of the bridge. Recently there were unresolved complaints by families who managed to relocate, a lack of housing options, restricted access to legal remedies, and deteriorating mental health have negatively impacted the lives of those impacted. Empirical studies and field investigations in the project corridor have documented a persistent gap between compensation theory and practice. Many displaced persons continue to live in precarious conditions despite formal settlements, with little or no access to livelihood restoration schemes, community infrastructure, or psychosocial support (Adekola, Cirella & Brownell, 2024)

Moreover, according to Johnnie, Nwafor & Sado (2023) community protests, youth restiveness, and legal disputes have become recurrent expressions of dissatisfaction, pointing to deeper structural failings in the governance of compulsory acquisition and compensation. This study is situated within this complex interplay of state authority, land rights, and displacement outcomes. The study examines the post-compensation phase of Nigerian compulsory land acquisition processes, utilizing both qualitative and spatial data to evaluate institutional responses, provide insights into the lived realities of those affected by displacement, and assess equitable outcomes.

Objectives

1. Assess the post-compensation challenges faced by communities displaced due to compulsory land acquisition for the Second Niger bridge project.
2. Evaluate the adequacy, timeliness, and fairness of compensation, livelihood restoration, resettlement, infrastructure replacement, legal aid, and psychosocial support provided to affected families.
3. Analyse gaps between theory and practice in land acquisition compensation, focusing on market value deficits, delays and delivery of promised services and housing.
4. Use mixed methods (geospatial analysis, administrative records, field verification) to provide evidence-based insights into institutional and social outcomes of displacement in Nigeria.

Theoretical Issues

Development-Induced Displacement and Resettlement (DIDR) theory highlights societal, cultural, and economic changes caused by state-led infrastructure projects (Singh & Muhuri, 2024), including the Second Niger Bridge project in Nigeria, which negatively impacted communities. Not only did these communities lose their homes and farmland, but their social and cultural bonds also broke down. Compensation was provided, but it was frequently delayed, insufficient, and not reflective of the property's actual value at that time. The compensation process failed to address all the damage experienced by displaced households. Cernea's model identifies eight risks of forced relocation, including loss of land, job, and community collapse (Cernea, 2021). The Second Niger Bridge's risks include decreased profitability, worse housing, unemployment, and increased trauma. DIDR provides a method for diagnosing and assessing displacement (Zaman, Khatun, & Islam, 2021). It explains the occurrence of post-compensation vulnerability and critiques transactional approaches to restitution for their inadequacy. The Second Niger Bridge case shows that compensation alone can't fix the problems caused by forced displacement that affect whole systems. What is needed are transformative, rights-based resettlement policies. A thorough framework for examining the social, cultural, and psychological changes that come with major infrastructure projects is provided by the Development-Induced. Even lawful displacement can worsen poverty, reinforce marginalisation, and damage existing community structures if adequate protections are not included in policy and practice, according to DIDR (Afzal & Qayyum, 2023).

The Second Niger Bridge project in Nigeria makes DIDR a crucial foundation for interpretation. Oko Amakom, Atani, Obosi, and Asaba-Okwe were among the villages who were physically uprooted and economically disempowered as a result of the compulsory acquisition of land for the project. In addition to losing their houses and farms, these communities also saw their social and cultural lifestyle erode. DIDR model identifies eight key risks associated with forced relocation: food insecurity, higher illness rates, marginalisation, loss of access to common resources, homelessness, unemployment, landlessness, and community disintegration (Afzal & Qayyum, 2023). Primary care mental health data show rising levels of anxiety, sadness, and trauma, highlighting the psychosocial effects anticipated by

DIDR. DIDR offers a basis for diagnosing and assessing displacement. It clarifies the processes leading to post-compensation vulnerability and critiques the limitations of transactional reparation methods. Compensation alone cannot resolve the systemic issues caused by forced displacement without transformative, rights-based resettlement policies, as demonstrated by the Second Niger Bridge case.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study examined the impact of land acquisition during the Second Niger Bridge construction in Delta and Anambra States, focusing on Obosi, Atani, and Asaba-Okwe communities. The study examined land acquisition outcomes in specific communities through triangulation, offering a comprehensive perspective and increasing data reliability, thus enhancing the understanding of land acquisition. The study classified communities according to the severity of displacement, resettlement status, and access to compensation. The study evaluated infrastructure elements like schools, roads, water points, and health centres based on their distance from the acquisition zone. Sampling relied on field verification and records from the Ministries, community resettlement committees and cadastral survey maps. Data were gathered from primary and secondary sources. From March to August 2023, QGIS was used for geospatial analysis to assess land loss and changes in land use of border communities in Anambra and Delta State along the project corridor. Compensation records were sourced from the Federal Ministry of Works and Housing, and land valuation data was verified. Compensation delay data were obtained from FMWH Compensation Desk Files (2017–2023) and the National Bureau of Statistics (2022).

Land use change analysis used Landsat imagery from NASRDA (2023) and environmental baseline reports from UNEP (2020). Data for the infrastructure audit came from the Delta and Anambra State Ministries of Works (2023), NDDC (2021), and field verification conducted by the author. The National Bureau of Statistics and the Ministry of Economic Planning collected resettlement data from multiple sources, such as reports from the Federal Housing Authority and FMWH, to evaluate livelihood outcomes and enhance economic planning. Records of legal disputes were gathered from the Anambra State Customary Court Registry (2019-2023) and the Legal Aid Council (2022), along with interviews with local legal advocates. Psychosocial health indicators were derived from clinical records at Primary Health Centres (2022-2023), the Anambra State Ministry of Health (2023). In Nigeria, land allocation is managed by Allocation Committees and the Office of the Surveyor-General of the Federation, while Community Youth Associations significantly support these initiatives. The study examined educational disruption using enrolment data from Local Government Education Authorities (2016-2023) and reports from the Anambra State Universal Basic Education Board (2022). This study used triangulation to examine the relationship over time between institutional performance, spatial justice, and social vulnerability in compulsory land acquisition for the Second Niger Bridge. Data collection occurred from March to August 2023, maintaining consistency and validity. This

method was used to improve reliability.

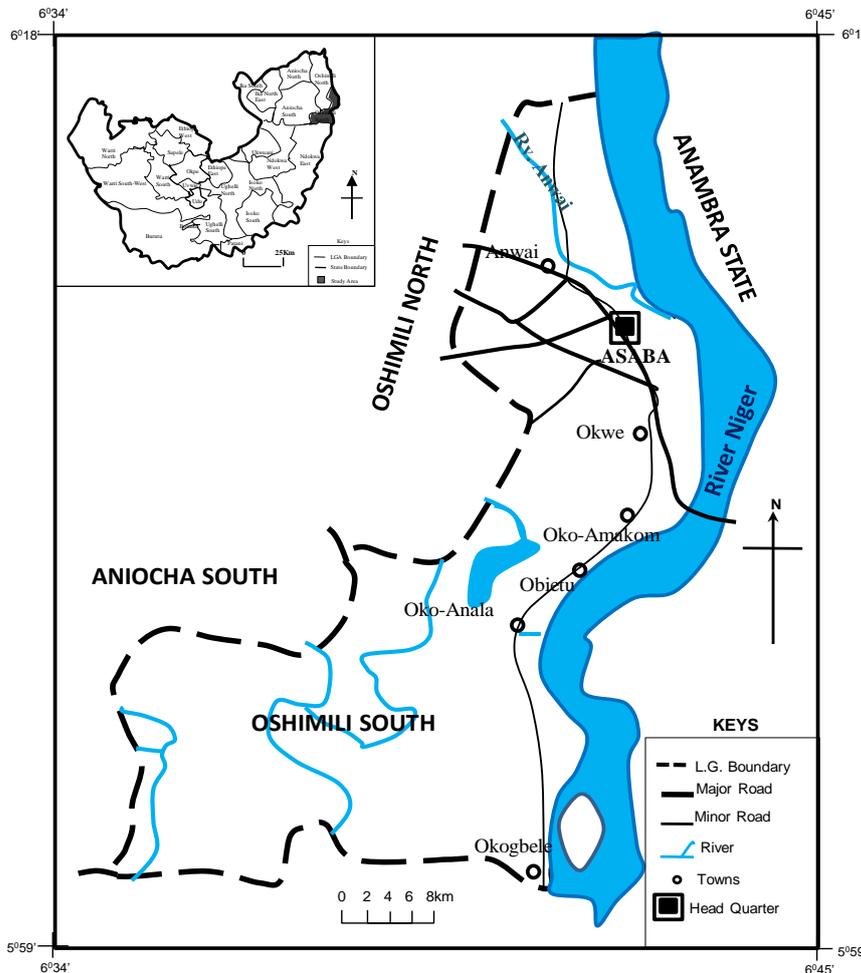


Figure 1: Map of Shimili South Local Government Area

Source: Modified after Ministry of Lands, Survey and Urban Development, Asaba (2008)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1: Land Area Acquired and Compensation Disbursed

Community	Land Acquired (sqkm)	Avg. Compensation Paid (₦/sqkm)	Prevailing Market Rate (₦/sqkm)	Deficit (%)	Verified Year
Oko Amakom	840.4	1,450,000	3,100,000	53.2	2023
Atani	720.7	1,200,000	2,850,000	57.9	2023
Obosi	520.9	2,000,000	2,800,000	28.6	2023
Asaba-Okwe	840.3	1,300,000	2,750,000	52.7	2023

Source: Federal Ministry of Works and Housing (2023)

Table 1 shows data concerning the land area acquired and compensation paid. The table revealed significant differences between the compensation paid and the current market value of land in all communities. Oko Amakom got an average of ₦1,450,000 per square kilometre, which is 53.2% lower than the market rate of ₦3,100,000. Atani incurred a 57.9% deficit, receiving only ₦1,200,000 per square kilometre, compared to the current ₦2,850,000. Despite having the lowest deficit of 28.6%, Obosi's compensation of ₦2,000,000 fell short of the market rate of ₦2,800,000. Asaba-Okwe also experienced a massive 52.7% compensation disparity. The study showed that Nigeria's compensation system for unauthorised land acquisition is extremely inadequate. The significant deficiencies indicate a trend of government agencies undervaluing land, making it more difficult for displaced individuals to regain economic stability. Talema and Nigusie (2024) argue that paying below market value for land violates the principle of equivalence and increases the vulnerability of landowners in their social and economic circumstances. If not addressed, these consequences could weaken the legitimacy of future infrastructure projects. Bridging the compensation disparity is essential for aligning land acquisition practices with justice and sustainability principles.

Table 2: Delay Duration Between Compulsory Acquisition and Compensation Disbursement

Community	Date of Acquisition	Date of Compensation	Delay (Months)
Oko Amakom	Jun 2017	Apr 2020	34
Atani	Mar 2018	Jul 2022	52
Obosi	Aug 2019	Dec 2021	28
Asaba-Okwe	May 2017	Jan 2023	68

Sources: FMWH Compensation Desk Files (2017–2023) and NBS (2022)

Table 2 demonstrates the differences in time between compulsory acquisition and compensation payment for the Second Niger Bridge. Delays are long, ranging from 28 months in Obosi to 68 months in Asaba-Okwe. Oko Amakom was compensated after 34 months, and Atani got paid after 52 months. It's hard to get things back on track because of all the paperwork and the fact that federal agencies and affected parties don't work well together. Relocated individuals often struggle to regain stability while awaiting compensation. Delay in compensation payment reduces the value of compensation due to inflation and the time value of money. De Maria et al. (2023) argues that failing to connect compensation with land acquisition deadlines increases social and economic vulnerability for individuals. The Second Niger Bridge at Asaba-Okwe was delayed by over five years, disrupting farming schedules, household income, and social stability. Delays in government projects lead to a loss of public trust on future initiatives. For compulsory acquisition to be successful, the law must ensure payment of adequate and fair compensation, rather than treating it as an afterthought.

Table 3: Land Use Change Based on Remote Sensing and Ground Verification

Use Category	Area in 2016 (sqkm)	Area in 2023 (sqkm)	Change (%)
Agricultural Land	2,450	1,080	-55.9
Forest Cover	980	380	-61.2
Built-Up Area	420	1,050	150
Wetlands	560	240	-57.1

Sources: National Space Research and Development Agency (NASRDA) (2023)
 Author’s field-based GIS analysis using QGIS (2023)

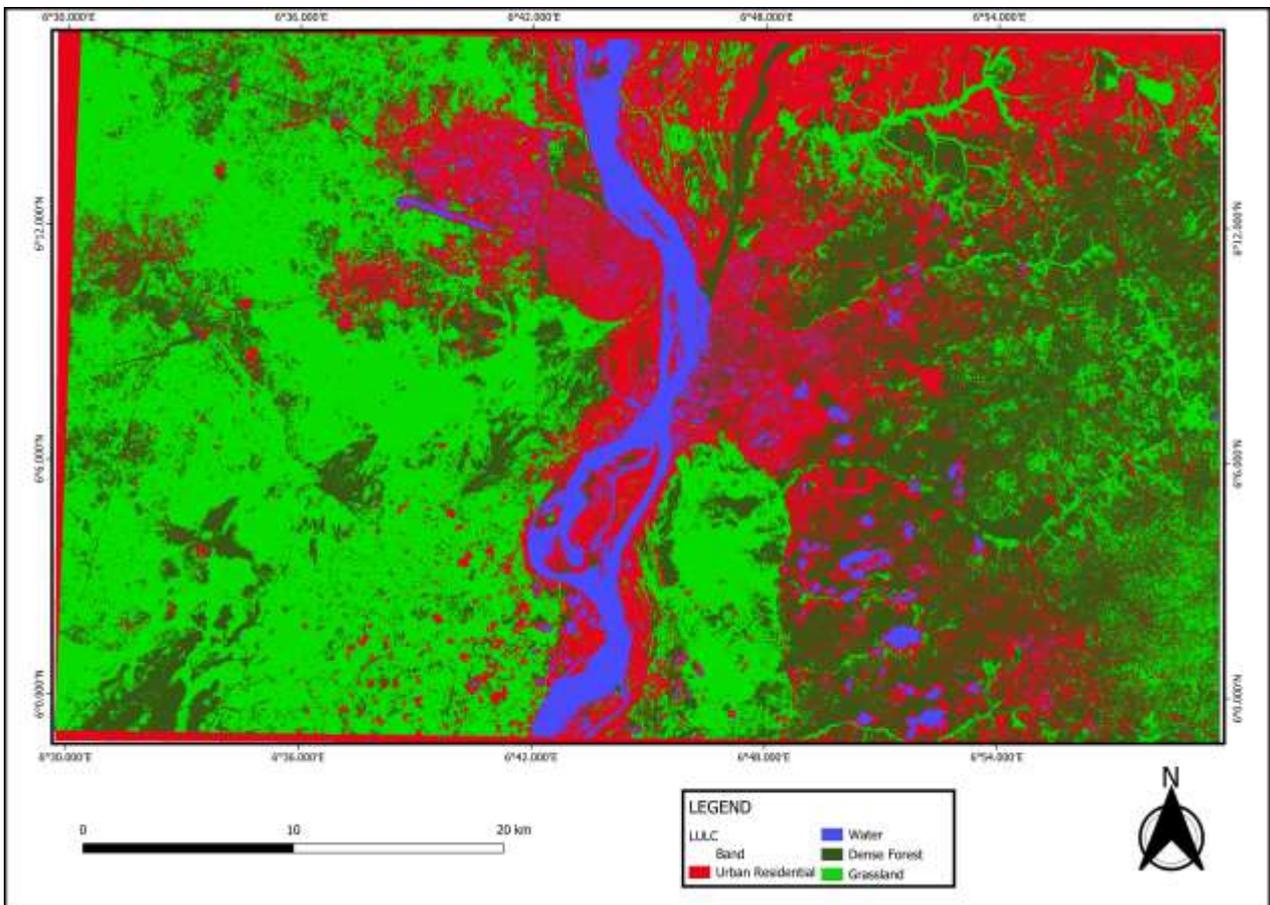


Figure 2: Map of the Construction Area (2018)

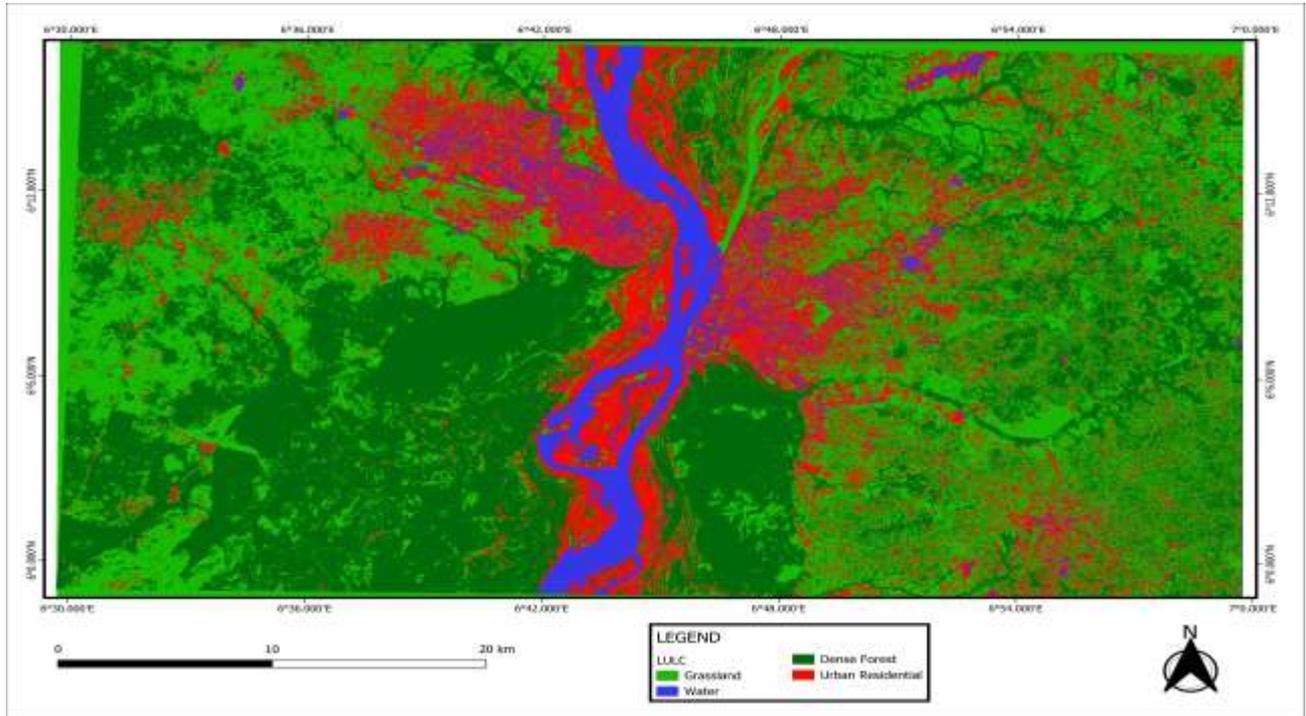


Figure 3: Map of the Construction Area (2023)

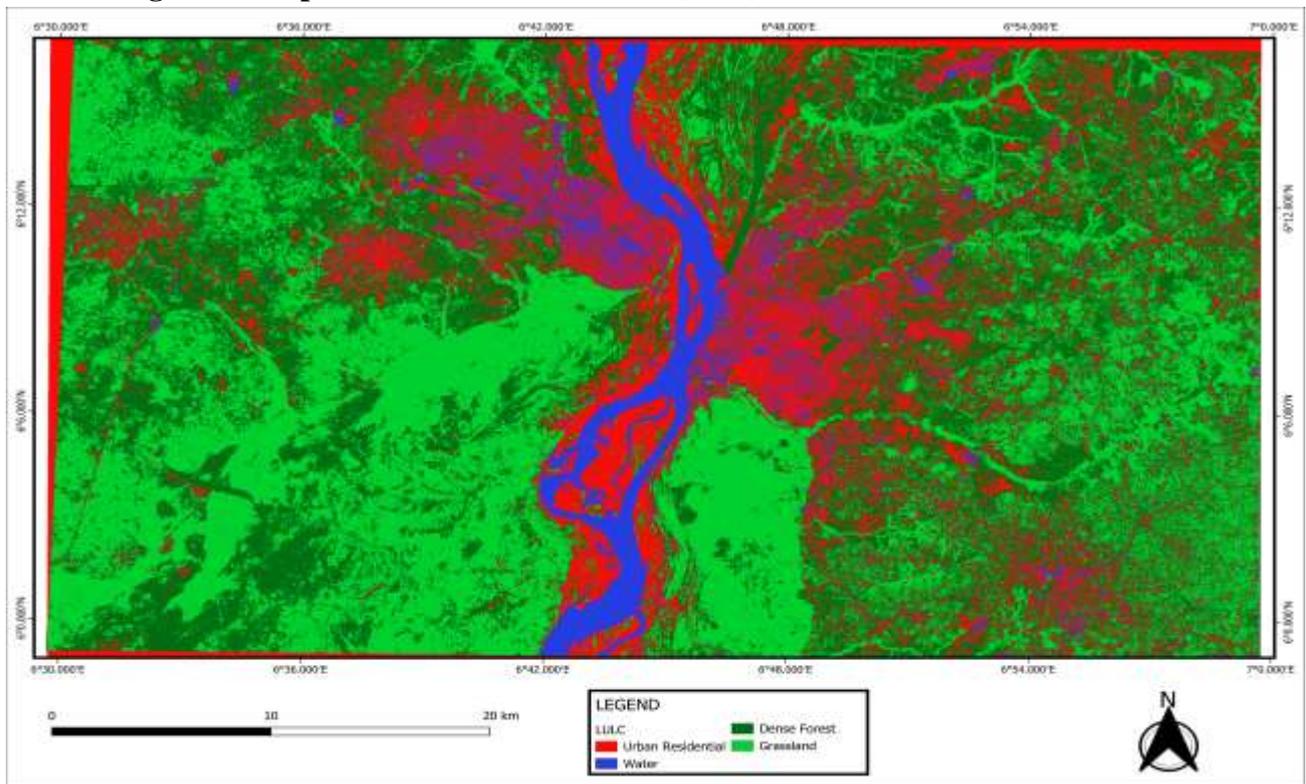


Figure 4: Map of the Construction Area (2024)

Table 3 shows how the land usage in communities affected by the Second Niger Bridge has changed from 2016 to 2023. The amount of agricultural land dropped from 2,450 square kilometres to 1,080 square kilometres, a drop of 55.9%. The number of woods and wetlands is going down by 61.2% and 57.1%, respectively. Because of this, the built-up area grew by 150%, from 420 to 1,050 square kilometres. When farmland is converted into concrete buildings, farmers often have no alternatives and face challenges even when they receive compensation. The growth of urban areas, indicating increased migration to cities and economic activity, highlights uneven development, often at the expense of local communities and the environment. Noy (2023) correctly noted that poor planning following an acquisition can exacerbate inequality and lead to prolonged displacement of individuals. These results highlight the necessity of incorporating sustainable land use methods and fair compensation into infrastructure policies.

Table 4: Infrastructure Damage and Replacement Status

Infrastructure Type	Units Affected	Replaced	Replacement Rate (%)	Verified Status
Boreholes	83	21	25.3	Verified
Community Roads	14.6 km	4.2 km	28.8	Verified
Power Lines	64 poles	19	29.7	Verified
Schools	6	2	33.3	Verified

Sources: Delta and Anambra State Ministries of Works and Infrastructure (2023)

Site verification by author March -August (2023)

Table 4 shows how much the Second Niger Bridge project disrupted infrastructure and the status of the replacements. Out of 83 affected boreholes, only 21 were replaced, which is about 25.3%. Out of 14.6 kilometres of affected community roads, only 4.2 kilometres were rebuilt, which is 28.8%. Only 19 of the 64 utility poles have been restored, and just 2 of the 6 damaged schools have been rebuilt, leading to a replacement rate of 33.3%. The findings highlight a recurring problem in land acquisition in Nigeria: the inadequate restoration of essential community infrastructure following displacement. These deficits undermine the community's social and physical framework, complicating post-compensation challenges. When vital services such as water, roads, schools, and electricity are not promptly restored, displaced individuals face persistent challenges that financial resources cannot resolve. Bhutto (2024) found that inadequate rehabilitation strategies lead to increased local dissatisfaction and decreased trust in public institutions. These results emphasise the need for compensation systems that go beyond financial aspects, prioritising the full restoration of infrastructure.

Table 5: Resettlement Housing Units Promised vs Delivered

Community	Promised Units	Completed Units	Completion Rate (%)	Occupied (%)
Oko Amakom	120	38	31.7	26.6
Atani	105	28	26.7	21
Obosi	80	40	50	45
Asaba-Okwe	110	32	29.1	23.6

Sources: Federal Housing Authority (FHA) and FMWH (2022)

Table 5 shows the difference between the promised resettlement housing units and what was actually delivered to communities affected by the Second Niger Bridge project. Oko Amakom received 120 units, but only 38 were finished, leading to a 31.7% completion rate and a low occupancy of 26.6%. Atani was promised 105 units but delivered only 28, resulting in a 26.7% completion rate and 21% occupancy. Obosi had the best delivery rate, finishing 40 out of 80 units with 45% occupancy. Asaba-Okwe had 32 out of 110 units finished, with an occupancy rate of 23.6%. These numbers highlight a major challenge after compensation: unmet expectations for resettlement housing. Low completion and occupancy rates suggest that displaced individuals either did not have adequate shelter or had to seek alternative housing, often at their own cost. Babalola (2025) observed that delays in providing adequate resettlement undermine the credibility of compulsory acquisition policies and erode trust in state development initiatives. Low occupancy rates in finished units may indicate problems such as inadequate construction, absence of essential amenities, or insufficient local job opportunities. Adekola et al. (2024) discovered that leaving out affected individuals from resettlement planning results in poor integration and dissatisfaction. The Second Niger Bridge case underscores the necessity for improved and timely resettlement programs.

Table 6: Livelihood Loss and Post-Acquisition Occupation

Community	Primary Occupation (Pre-2020)	Percentage Displaced	Current Primary Source of Income	Verified Through
Oko Amakom	Subsistence Farming	71%	Petty Trading	Field Observations
Atani	Fishing/Farming	68%	Labour Migration	Local Chiefs
Obosi	Mixed Trading	35%	Retail and Keke Driving	LG Records
Asaba-Okwe	Crop Farming	63%	Sand Mining	Site Visits

Sources: Author's field observation, 2023 and National Bureau of Statistics (2021)

Table 6 shows a significant shift in how communities affected by the Second Niger Bridge project make a living. In Oko Amakom, 71% of residents used to farm for their needs, but now most rely on small trading for income. Atani has 68% of its population displaced from fishing and farming, leading to a rise in labour migration, particularly among young people. In Obosi, a lower displacement rate of 35% has changed mixed trading to retail sales and driving commercial tricycles (keke). Asaba-Okwe, once reliant on crop farming, now mainly depends on sand mining due to a 63% displacement rate. These changes illustrate how land acquisition impact lives and leads to enduring social and economic

consequences. Transitioning from stable employment to informal work results in decreased income and affects social structures and traditional knowledge. Bukar and Abdallah (2021) found that inadequate livelihood restoration plans in Nigeria's resettlement processes have led to increased poverty and vulnerability in affected communities. The increase in sand mining and labour migration as primary income sources indicates a focus on immediate survival rather than long-term sustainability. The Second Niger Bridge case emphasises the importance of policies that link compensation to the restoration of livelihoods and the enhancement of economic resilience.

Table 7: Legal Disputes Arising from Compensation Irregularities

Community	Cases Filed	Cases Resolved	Ongoing Cases	Typical Delay (Months)
Oko Amakom	38	10	28	18
Atani	42	12	30	22
Obosi	19	15	4	9
Asaba-Okwe	34	8	26	20

Source: Anambra State Customary Court Registry (2019–2023)

Table 7 shows data on legal issues related to compensation problems after the land acquisition for the Second Niger Bridge. Oko Amakom had 38 cases filed, but only 10 were resolved. That leaves 28 still ongoing, with an average delay of 18 months. Atani had 42 cases: 12 resolved and 30 still pending, facing average delays of 22 months. In Obosi, there were 19 cases filed. 15 have been resolved, and 4 are still ongoing, with an average delay of 9 months. Asaba-Okwe had 34 disputes, with only 8 resolved and 26 still ongoing, taking about 20 months on average. Unresolved cases and lengthy legal delays highlight the shortcomings of systems designed to assist those impacted by projects. The data highlights a significant problem post-compensation, as communities endure lengthy legal struggles for justice, frequently lacking assistance and adequate support. The backlog and slow resolution suggest that the customary court system, particularly in rural areas, is overloaded. This trend aligns with the findings of Gaga and Igbiosa-Okoro (2024), indicating that legal issues in land acquisition in Nigeria frequently arise from valuation disputes, non-payment, and errors in exclusion. Unresolved cases create uncertainty, diminish trust in compensation processes, and hinder community recovery. Hankede and Mwelwa (2024) argue that delays in processing compensation claims undermine trust in legal and governance systems. The situation with the Second Niger Bridge underscores the need for improved dispute resolution methods and more robust systems for managing conflicts following acquisitions.

Table 8: Psychosocial Health Indicators in Displaced Communities

Community	Depression Cases	PTSD Diagnoses	Anxiety Diagnoses	Referral Rate (%)
Oko Amakom	48	16	34	18.2
Atani	56	20	40	22
Obosi	22	10	18	10.6
Asaba-Okwe	60	24	45	25.4

Sources: Primary Health Centres' Mental Health Registers (2022–2023)
Anambra State Ministry of Health (2023)

Table 8 shows mental health data from communities affected by the Second Niger Bridge project, highlighting serious concerns. Oko Amakom had 48 depression cases, 16 PTSD diagnoses, and 34 anxiety cases, with an 18.2% referral rate. Atani had the most cases, reporting 56 for depression, 20 for PTSD, and 40 for anxiety, with a referral rate of 22%. Obosi had 22 cases of depression and 18 of anxiety, while Asaba-Okwe had the highest referral rate at 25.4%, with 60 depression and 45 anxiety cases. These findings emphasise the psychological effects of forced displacement, extending beyond economic and material losses. Shifts in social structures, concerns about income, and unemployment contribute to emotional stress and mental health challenges. Displacement due to infrastructure problems in Nigeria results in heightened psychological distress, largely due to inadequate resettlement assistance. The high referral rates in Asaba-Okwe and Atani indicate that the primary health system is overwhelmed, highlighting the need for targeted mental health support for displaced individuals. The Second Niger Bridge case highlights the importance of incorporating mental health into displacement and resettlement plans, ensuring that psychosocial well-being is central to restorative justice.

Table 9: Youth Participation in Compensation-Related Protests

Community	Youth Population (Est.)	Protest Events	Active Participants	Participation Rate (%)
Oko Amakom	1,300	4	520	40
Atani	1,700	5	680	40
Obosi	1,600	2	400	25
Asaba-Okwe	1,400	3	350	25

Sources: Nigeria Police Force, Anambra and Delta State Commands (2022)
Community Youth Associations (2023)

Author's interviews with youth leaders and village councils, April–May 2023

Table 9 shows how many young people took part in protests over compensation in communities affected by the Second Niger Bridge project. In Oko Amakom and Atani, 40% of the youth participated, with 520 and 680 individuals joining four and five protest events, respectively. Obosi and Asaba-Okwe had a 25% participation rate, with fewer protests and 400 and 350 youths involved, respectively. These figures show that more young people are getting involved in challenging unfairness in the compensation process. The high participation rates in Oko Amakom and Atani suggest a significant sense of unfairness, likely related to displacement, limited job opportunities, and slow restitution processes. Many young people face land dispossession, highlighting their significant

numbers and economic vulnerability. Ojo and Afolaranmi (2024) state that youth-led protests in Nigeria's displacement areas frequently stem from frustration with unfulfilled promises, marginalisation, and insufficient representation in decision-making. The protests emphasise persistent problems that legal or administrative solutions fail to resolve completely. When formal grievance processes fail, communities, particularly youth, resort to collective action to voice their concerns and exert influence. The Second Niger Bridge highlights the need for open dialogue and good governance to prevent social unrest.

Table 10: Community Appeals Filed to the Land Use Allocation Committee

Community	Appeals Submitted	Hearing Conducted	Judgements Delivered	Judgement in Favour (%)
Oko Amakom	56	39	21	37.5
Atani	63	48	29	46
Obosi	27	22	17	62.9
Asaba-Okwe	41	35	18	43.9

Source: Office of the Surveyor-General of the Federation (2022)

Table 10 shows the community appeals made to the Land Use Allocation Committee about the Second Niger Bridge land acquisition. Oko Amakom filed 56 appeals. Out of those, 39 were heard, and 21 got judgements, with just 37.5% ruling in favour of the appellants. Atani had 63 appeals, 48 hearings, and 29 judgements, with 46% being favourable. Obosi had 27 appeals and 22 hearings, resulting in 17 judgements, with 62.9% in favour. Asaba-Okwe filed 41 appeals, 35 were heard, and 18 judgements were made, with 43.9% in their favour. The numbers show people are using institutional ways to seek help, but the success rates vary and highlight issues with accessing justice. The low rate of favourable judgements in Oko Amakom and Asaba-Okwe suggests that community concerns may not be adequately addressed, or that affected individuals may encounter difficulties in the process. This aligns with Atuegwu (2024), who noted that land disputes in Nigeria are complicated by bureaucratic obstacles, limited legal knowledge, and perceived bias in institutions. The inconsistent judgement rates indicate a lack of standard criteria for evaluating compensation complaints, undermining fairness in compulsory acquisition processes. The increased success rate in Obosi may result from improved community organisation or documentation, emphasising the necessity for accessible legal support in all impacted regions.

Table 11: School Attendance Decline Post-Acquisition

Community	Enrolment in 2016	Enrolment in 2023	Net Decline (%)	Displacement-Attributed Cases
Oko Amakom	890	520	-41.6	67.20%
Atani	960	540	-43.8	64.80%
Obosi	1,020	910	-10.8	18.60%
Asaba-Okwe	880	470	-46.6	70.10%

Sources: Anambra State Universal Basic Education Board (ASUBEB) (2022)

Interviews with headteachers of public primary schools, June 2023

Table 11 shows a notable drop in school enrolment in communities impacted by the Second Niger Bridge project, highlighting an important but frequently ignored issue after compensation. In Oko Amakom, enrolment decreased from 890 in 2016 to 520 in 2023, marking a 41.6% decline, with 67.2% of cases associated with displacement. Atani experienced a 43.8% decline, with 64.8% attributed to resettlement. Asaba-Okwe experienced a significant decrease of 46.6%, with 70.1% of this drop attributed to displacement. Obosi experienced a 10.8% decline, with 18.6% attributed to dislocation. These figures illustrate the impact of mandatory land acquisition on education. Family life is affected, people relocate to distant or unstable areas, and they lose income necessary for educational expenses, contributing to the problem. Enrolment declines in Oko Amakom, Atani, and Asaba-Okwe indicate inadequate planning following acquisition, particularly regarding educational accessibility in resettlement initiatives. The Second Niger Bridge case emphasises the need for education-based safeguards in land acquisition to prevent challenges for future generations.

Table 12: Access to Legal Aid Services Post-Displacement

Community	Households Displaced	Accessed Legal Aid	Coverage (%)	Main Legal Complaint
Oko Amakom	143	36	25.2	Undervaluation
Atani	167	40	23.9	Non-payment
Obosi	180	89	49.4	Delays in Processing
Asaba-Okwe	134	28	20.9	Omitted Land Parcels

Sources: Legal Aid Council of Nigeria (2023)

Community Development Associations (2022)

Author's fieldwork documentation

Table 12 shows how many households affected by the Second Niger Bridge project have access to legal aid services. Oko Amakom reported 143 displaced households, but only 36 received legal aid, which is a coverage rate of 25.2%. The primary legal concern in these communities was inadequate compensation. In Atani, 167 households were displaced, yet only 40 received legal assistance, primarily because of non-payment problems. Obosi achieved the highest coverage at 49.4% (89 of 180 households) and primarily noted delays in processing. Asaba-Okwe had the lowest access to legal aid at 20.9%, assisting 28 of 134 households, primarily because of omitted land parcels. The data indicates that legal support from institutions is scarce in displacement scenarios, despite the legal complexities of compulsory land acquisition. Low coverage indicates problems such as insufficient awareness, financial constraints, or a shortage of legal aid personnel. This finding aligns with Emmanuel et al. (2025), who observed that displaced individuals in Nigeria frequently experience legal exclusion, heightening their vulnerability. Numerous complaints regarding inadequate compensation, delayed payments, and non-payment reveal issues within the compensation system. Many households face challenges in resolving these violations without adequate legal assistance, leading to persistent problems. The Second Niger Bridge case highlights the necessity of legal aid in land acquisition for fair and accountable resettlement.

Table 13: Paired Samples t-Test Comparing Promised Housing Units and Compensation Paid

		Paired Samples Test							
		Paired Differences							
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Promised Units - Avg. Compensation Paid (₦/ha)	-1487396.2	356792.9	178396.4	-2055133.4	-919659.0	-8.33	3	0.004

Source: SPSS Computation

Table 13 shows the results of a paired samples t-test that compares the promised housing units to the actual money given to affected individuals in the Second Niger Bridge project. The average difference between promised units and compensation paid is ₦1,487,396.20, with a standard deviation of ₦356,792.90. The 95% confidence interval for the difference is between ₦919,659.00 and ₦2,055,133.40, showing a significant shortfall in compensation compared to what was promised. A t-value of -8.33 and a p-value of 0.004 show a significant difference ($p < 0.05$), indicating a notable deviation from the original demands to those impacted by the project. This highlights a significant challenge following compensation in Nigeria's land acquisition process. The significant gap between the promised housing units and the funds provided indicates issues in the management and assessment of compensation. This highlights a frequent problem in research, where displaced individuals report inadequate compensation and support for resettlement. The Second Niger Bridge may exacerbate community problems, diminish trust in public institutions, and impact long-term resettlement strategies. The findings align with previous research indicating that financial compensation, particularly when it undervalues lost assets or omits promised alternatives, fails to restore livelihoods (Twinamasiko et al., 2021). Fair compensation involves clear communication, honouring agreements, and tracking progress, beyond just financial aspects. Addressing these gaps is essential for enhancing the credibility and social sustainability of infrastructure development in Nigeria.

The findings from the Second Niger Bridge project highlight significant issues in Nigeria's land acquisition and compensation processes. In the impacted communities, compensation fell significantly below market rates, putting displaced individuals in a difficult economic position. Payment delays worsened their situation, increasing financial stress due to inflation and job losses. The abrupt shift in land use, particularly converting farms and wetlands into developed spaces, eliminated traditional income sources without offering sustainable alternatives. Many people still lack basic services and shelter, despite promises of housing and infrastructure, due to low delivery rates. Disruptions to livelihoods pushed communities into precarious or harmful employment, heightening economic insecurity. Responses to complaints were inadequate, as evidenced by numerous unresolved disputes, insufficient legal aid, and inconsistent appeal results. The psychological effects were evident, with increasing cases of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress reported widely. Young people, feeling excluded and facing deteriorating living conditions, united to protest, reflecting their growing distrust in the government. Displaced children face educational challenges that can have long-term

impacts on their development. The findings emphasise the need for a fair compulsory acquisition and compensation process that ensures timely compensation, restores livelihoods, rebuilds infrastructure, and offers emotional support. Without a commitment to fairness, openness, and inclusion, major infrastructure projects may exacerbate poverty and social unrest rather than deliver the intended benefits.

CONCLUSION

The study showed a disjointed method for compulsory land acquisition and compensation in the Second Niger Bridge project. Some post-compensation issues such as undervaluation, delays in payment, omission and lack of support after displacement have hurt justice and sustainability. Displaced communities are faced with many challenges, including job loss, environmental damage, lack of housing, loss of infrastructure, and reduced access to legal help. These challenges were worsened by mental health issues, interruptions in education, and youth protests, highlighting a disconnect between infrastructure development and human security. The findings showed that when compensation is delayed, insufficient, or lacks support for restoring livelihoods, it leads to more dispossession. Legal and institutional solutions were slow and not enough, leaving people without confidence or a way to recover. The differences in outcomes between communities show that access to justice and support is still uneven and limited by structure. We need a policy change that ensures fairness, speed, inclusivity, and community involvement in every step of land acquisition and resettlement. Fixing these structural issues is not just a requirement; it's a moral and developmental need. Future infrastructure projects should focus on human dignity, fairness, and resilience, not just economic measures. Only with this change can big public projects really help national development without neglecting the people whose sacrifices make them happen.

Recommendations

In view of the results from this study, the following are recommended:

1. Reform compensation systems to ensure payments are fair, prompt, and equivalent to prevailing market values, preventing increased vulnerability among displaced persons.
2. Integrate comprehensive livelihood restoration and economic resilience strategies alongside cash compensation, prioritizing long-term sustainability for displaced households.
3. Establish robust infrastructure replacement protocols that cover water, roads, schools, and other social services to fully restore affected communities after acquisition.
4. Strengthen legal support by increasing access to legal aid and improving dispute resolution processes for compensation and resettlement cases.
5. Incorporate mental health and psychosocial care in resettlement plans, ensuring affected families receive timely and adequate emotional support.

6. Foster youth and community participation through inclusive decision-making and transparent communication, reducing unrest and building trust.
7. Implement education-specific safeguards to protect children's access to schooling and mitigate the negative impact of displacement on future generations.
8. Require policy changes that mandate fairness, speed, inclusivity and accountability at every stage of land acquisition and compensation.

Contributions to knowledge

The study has contributed to knowledge in the following ways:

1. Provides empirical evidence of persistent compensation deficits and uneven post-acquisition restitution in Nigeria, underpinning the broader critique of transactional approaches to resettlement.
2. Advances understanding of the lived experiences and vulnerabilities of displaced populations, including mental health, educational and livelihood outcomes.
3. Offers a multidisciplinary methodology that combines geospatial, administrative and field data to analyse post-compensation challenges, serving as a blueprint for future studies on infrastructure-induced displacement.
4. Demonstrates the inadequacy of financial compensation alone, highlighting the necessity of restorative policies including livelihood, infrastructural, legal and psychosocial components.
5. Illuminates the importance of integrating Development-induced Displacement and Resettlement (DIDR) theory into Nigeria infrastructure policy, showing its value in diagnosing vulnerabilities and designing comprehensive interventions.
6. Reveals the link between exclusion from compensation processes, youth protest, and social unrest, contributing to policy debates on governance and social justice in land acquisition.

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^{2*}**Corresponding Author:** Raphael Oshiobugie SADO

Email: r.o.sado@unizik.edu.ng **Contact:** +2348039501432