

Community Perception on Land Dispossession and Compensation Practices: Evidence from Gondar City, Northwest Ethiopia

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Abstract

Land expropriation for urban expansion in the Gondar area significantly reduced farming households from 95%–74%, displacing 29% of affected farmers. While some acknowledged the public benefits, most respondents criticized the process for a lack of transparency, limited community involvement, and inadequate rehabilitation support. Farmers reported receiving compensation that was low, unfairly calculated, and subject to prolonged delays. Key systemic issues included a lack of awareness among affected communities, inconsistent knowledge among officials, and an absence of accountability and transparent practices. The local government's role was seen as ending with compensation, failing to ensure sustainable livelihoods. To address these, the study recommends coordinated awareness training for both communities and executing agencies. The process of acquiring land should be open and involve community participation. Most importantly, local governments must prioritize rehabilitating displaced individuals by organizing skill training and developing business plans, ensuring equitable outcomes beyond mere financial payment. Furthermore, the findings underscore the need for an integrated policy framework that links land expropriation with long-term urban and rural development planning. Strengthening institutional capacity, establishing clear monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and enforcing legal safeguards can enhance fairness and public trust in expropriation practices. Incorporating livelihood restoration programs into compensation schemes would reduce socio-economic vulnerability and improve resilience among displaced households. Overall, adopting participatory, transparent, and accountable approaches is essential for balancing urban growth objectives with social justice and sustainable development.

Keywords: Compensation, dispossession, land, perception, urbanization

INTRODUCTION

The Ethiopian land law is governed by both federal and state statutes as well as the Constitution. Land "is an indisputable common property of the nations, nationalities, and peoples of Ethiopia,"

according to the Constitution (Constitution 1995). According to the 1995 Federal Constitution, adult Ethiopian peasants have the right to receive land for farming from the state without having to pay for it. However, this right is contingent upon the land's availability. Today, in many more populous areas, there is little available unused land due to population pressures and inheritance, leading first to decrease farm sizes, and eventually to limited availability of land for allocation (Holden and Tefera, 2008) [1].

Proclamation 89/1997, a significant early land law, allowed for the leasing and bequest of land but forbade its sale, exchange, or use as collateral

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Received Date: December 22, 2025

Accepted Date: January 17, 2026

Published Date: February 26, 2026.

Citation: Mitikie Nigussie Melesse and Alebachew Destaw Belay. Community Perception on Land Dispossession and Compensation Practices: Evidence from Gondar City, Northwest Ethiopia. International Journal of Land, 2026; 3(1): 1–16p.

(Chanyalew, Adenew, and Mellor, 2010) [2]. Proclamation 456/2005, a later law, preserved federal ownership of rural land and the prohibition on sales while slightly strengthening the rights of landholders. It affirms the right of intergenerational tenure transfer, permits the exchange and leasing of land within certain bounds, and grants holders the right to the land's products. The government's land certificates are to guarantee all of these rights (Rural Land Administration Proclamation 1997). For a more thorough explanation of the restrictions on leasing and their impact on Ethiopia's land markets, see the Focus on Land in Africa lesson "Making Land Rental Markets Work for Ethiopia's Rural Poor."

Private investors are expressly granted the right to purchase and utilize land under the Constitution, and the State may appropriate private property for public use in exchange for "adequate compensation" (Rural Land Administration Proclamation 1997). A "better development project" to be carried out by "private investors" is specifically listed in the law as an acceptable public use for which expropriation is permitted. However, the law does not specify what a "better development project" is (Expropriation Proclamation 2005).

The ability of the government to obtain private property rights for public use without the owner's or occupant's voluntary consent is known as land acquisition (Keith, 2008) [3]. Depending on a nation's legal customs, this authority is referred to by a number of terms, such as eminent domain, expropriation, takings, and compulsory purchase, and dispossession. Regardless of the name, compulsory acquisition is a vital tool for government development and for guaranteeing that land is available when necessary for infrastructure – a requirement that land markets aren't always able to fulfill (Eyasu, 2007) [4]. Claims that Ethiopian urban centers are growing at an unanticipated rate, displacing peasants and causing them to lose their agricultural land, production, and means of subsistence.

Land acquisition for industrialization, the development of necessary infrastructure, and urbanization with the least amount of disturbance to the landowners and other impacted families; just and fair compensation to the affected families whose land has been acquired, is proposed to be acquired, or is affected by such acquisition; adequate provisions for the rehabilitation and resettlement of such affected persons; and ensuring that the cumulative result of compulsory acquisition should be that affected persons become partners in development. Urban growth typically results from the displacement of rural farming communities, which is a spontaneous phenomenon. The livelihood and post-displacement life of the impacted community are negatively impacted by even planned displacement. In order to pursue sustainable and all-encompassing urban development, this should also be identified and acknowledged (Tegegne, 2011) [5].

Property expropriation for public advantage is practiced by many countries in the world. However, compensation payment must be seen as an important aspect in the overall activity. If we see the experiences of China under China's Land Administration Law, the compensation for arable land under requisition constitutes three components:

- (i) Land compensation (6–10 times the derived land productivity, which is the monetary value of the average annual agricultural output value over the previous three years);
- (ii) Resettlement compensation (4–6 times the derived land productivity); and
- (iii) Land accessory asset compensation. The maximum compensation for land acquisition cannot be more than thirty times the derived land productivity, according to a policy document published by the Ministry of Land Resources (NBS, 2004). Additionally, the maximum compensation can only be reached in exceptional circumstances with provincial authorities' approval. However, the prices are typically significantly higher when the land is leased out in markets for commercial use. For instance, the cost of leasing land in the Yangtze River Delta varies from RMB 2,100,000–RMB 5,250,000 per hectare, which is seven to ten times the compensation provided to the displaced farmers (Cao, 2008) [6].

The scientific community, the media, and policymakers have become interested in the effects of forced land acquisition for urbanization and industrialization. The impact of land loss on rural populations' livelihoods has been the subject of numerous recent studies (Tuyen et al., 2014) [7]. Rapid

urbanization and economic transformation go hand in hand, with urban areas growing at the fastest rate. As a result, there is a greater need for high-quality housing as well as facilities and infrastructure that support sustainable urban development and economic growth. This has put a lot of pressure on land use, particularly in peri-urban areas where land that has historically been used for agriculture is still available and less expensive than urban land. The Ethiopian government has taken a number of steps, including compulsory land use, to meet the growing demand for land for socioeconomic development.

The protests of those impacted by land loss for urban development and economic expansion receive little attention. This gap in the existing literature has prompted us to undertake an empirical study to address two important research questions: whether or not impacted farmers move into new patterns of livelihood and how this affects their livelihood after being forced to leave part or all of their land for urban expansion and other development purposes; if so, what coping mechanisms did they develop; and how did they feel about mandatory land acquisition and compensation practices?

The Department of Agriculture and Environment for Gondar City Administration raised the issues and hypotheses that prompted the start of this study as well as the gap found in the literature for the following reasons:

- (a) That various Federal, Regional State, and local governments and organizations are dispossessing land and compensating rural landholders for land taken from them under the power of eminent domain (Boudreaux, 2005) [8]. But there is no strong follow up to rehabilitate those farmers on appropriate livelihood strategy;
- (b) Some of the farmers are not happy on the valuation methods and procedures, they perceive that there is unfair valuation and compensation by local leaders.
- (c) Many people in the area including the local government perceived that there is a life change observed that was affected negatively from farmers who are compensated for their land that was happened to the reverse. It was hypothesized their lifestyle may be going down so that the impact of land dispossession and compensation on the livelihood outcomes of smallholder farmers must be assessed.

In general, it was observed that compulsory land acquisition for urbanization and industrialization along with its impacts have initiated the local governments especially policy implementers and the scientific community to undertake an investigation on the issue. The question of how land loss has impacted rural populations' livelihoods in various regions of Ethiopia has been the subject of numerous recent studies. However, as far as the knowledge of the researchers is concerned there was no any investigation on this issue was undertaken in this area. Therefore, having this information in one side and based on the demand of the local government for city administration of Gondar for the study; the researchers were intended to study the impact of compulsory acquisition of land holdings and compensation practice and livelihoods. With this justification, the general study was subdivided into three major components and the focus of this study component was to investigate the major problems and the perception of affected community members towards land dispossession and compensation practices.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Description of the Study Area

Emperor Fasilides established Gondar around 1635, and it developed into a market and agricultural town. From 1632–1868, this city and distinct woreda in Ethiopia served as both the capital of the ancient Begemder Province and the former imperial capital. Gondar is currently situated in the Amhara Region's central Gondar Zone, north of Tana Lake on the Lesser Angereb River and southwest of the Simien Mountains. It is 747 kilometers from Addis Ababa and 170 kilometers from Bahir-Dar, the regional capital. Twelve sub-cities, twelve rural kebeles, and one satellite town make up Gondar's city administration (Tewodros Ferede, 2011) [9]. The city is located 2200 meters above sea level at latitude 12°36'N and longitude 37°28'E. The city's collection of royal castles has earned it the moniker "The Camelot of Africa" (from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia).

According to the Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia's (CSA) 2007 national census, there were 207,044 people living in Gondar, with 98,120 men and 108,924 women. Eighty-four percent of the population identified as Ethiopian Orthodox Christian, followed by Muslims (11.8%) and Protestants (1.1%).

The Amhara (88.91%), Tigrayans (6.74%), and Qemants (2.37%) were the three largest ethnic groups in Gondar Zuria, with the remaining ethnic groups accounting for 1.98% of the population. 94.57% of people spoke Amharic as their first language, 4.67% spoke Tigrinya, and the remaining 0.76% spoke all other primary languages. Of the population, 83.31% identified as Ethiopian Orthodox Christians, and 15.83% identified as Muslims. Ethiopian Jews now make up a significant portion of the population; some have immigrated to Israel, while others reside in makeshift camps.

Research Design

Both qualitative and quantitative research approaches were applied. Farmer's opinion towards land dispossession and compensation payments and other related practices were assessed using quantitative data measured by Likert scale and also triangulated with qualitative information. In addition, qualitative information was collected to identify the problems related to property expropriation practices.

Sampling Procedure

In this study, those sub-cities which have expansion for different purpose observed having a higher effect on property expropriation in the peri-urban area of the city were selected purposively and sample was taken from displaced and land dispossessed farmers and other social groups as shown in figure 1.

These areas are Maraki sub-city, Azezo Dimaza sub-city, Azezo T/Himanot sub-city and Lay-Teda sub-city. Of which, a total of 240 land dispossessed or farmers who were affected by property expropriation were selected randomly using systematic random sampling by applying probability proportional to sample size (PPS) from all the sub-cities which had expansion since urban expansion and industrial village establishment and the Megech dam is constructed in Gondar City.

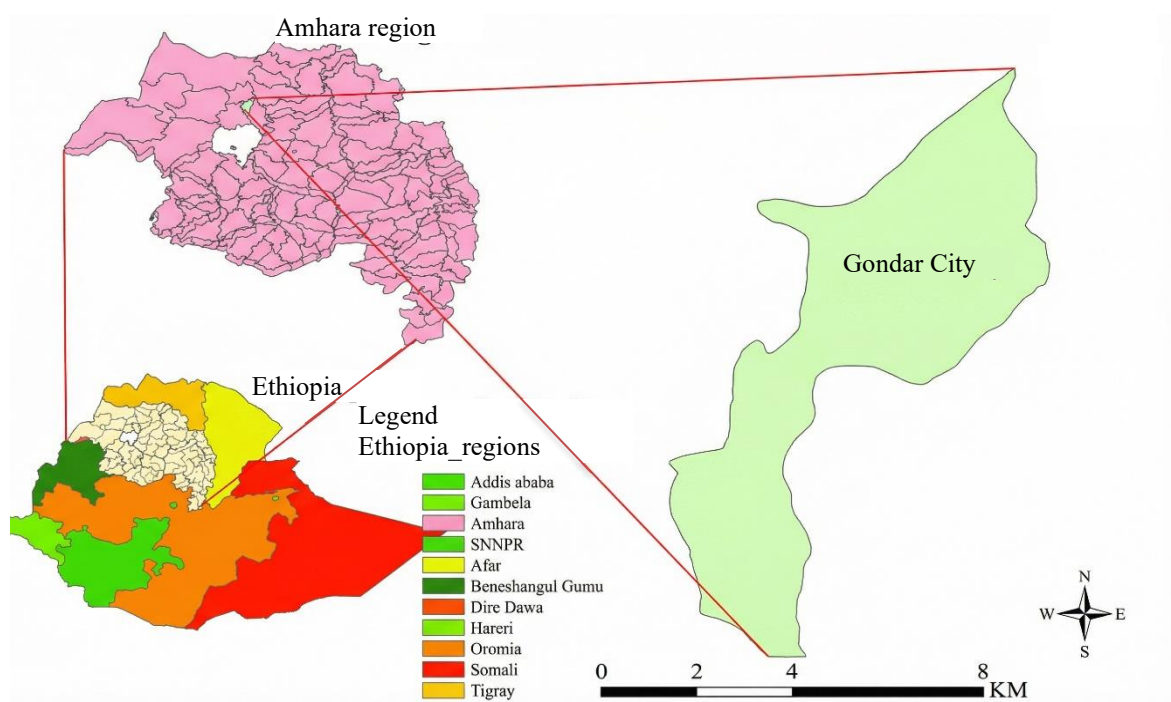


Figure 1. Map of the study area.

Data Sources and Data Collection Methods

Both primary and secondary data were used for this study. Primary data were collected from the primary sources of data, using interview schedule and focus group discussions from displaced societies and municipality official's and other relevant institution officials and communities' leaders. Moreover, the primary data were augmented by direct field observation. Interview schedule and checklists for focus group discussion were prepared, pretested, and implemented. Enumerators were employed and trained before conducting the actual data collection from the study peri-urban of Gondar City Administration.

The city administration's sub-city report documents, a variety of registers and publications (such as books, journals, research reports and papers, and magazines), documents accessible on various web profiles, land use regulations, and government policy documents were among the secondary data sources from which secondary data was also gathered.

METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS

The Likert scale was used to analyze the data gathered to determine how displaced and land-dispossessed farmers were perceived. A five-scale measurement was suggested, with 1 denoting strongly agree, 2 agree, 3 neutral, 4 disagree, and 5 strongly disagree. However, respondents were unable to distinguish between strongly disagree and disagree as well as between strongly agree and agree during pretesting the interview schedule. As a result, it was condensed into a three-point rating system with values of 1 for agree, 2 for neutral, and 3 for disagree. The mean, standard deviation, frequency, percentage, and other descriptive statistics were used. In the peri-urban area of the city of Gondar, qualitative data was collected, compiled, and interpreted in order to analyze the opportunities and difficulties of land acquisition that resulted in the displacement (dislocation) and dispossession of land.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings from both qualitative and quantitative data are covered in this chapter. The socio-economic characteristics of sample households in the study area are presented in the first part of this chapter. It has also discussed the findings of property expropriated community members perception towards land dispossession and property compensation practices. In addition, the major constraints to land acquisition and compensation payment are discussed as a third discussion.

Demographic and Socio-economic Characteristics of Sample Households *Households' Characteristics*

Age, family size and sex of the household head

One of the most crucial household characteristics is age, which can also reveal information about the sample's and the population's age distribution. In (Table 1) The heads of households range in age from 22 to 88.

Table 1. Family size of sample households and their age group by sex.

Family Size in age group	Category	Frequency		percentage	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
Age group	18-35	21	7	10.8%	14.9%
	36-50	81	21	41.5%	44.7%
	51-64	48	10	24.6%	21.3%
	>64	45	9	23.1%	19.1%
	Total	195	47	100%	100%
Family size	Mean. F. S.	3.99	Mean. age	52	
	Maximum F*. S.	8	Max. age	88	
	Minimum F.S*.	1	Min. age	22	

*F= family and S= size Source: own survey data.

The sample household heads are 52 years old on average. Age can either increase or decrease a farmer's confidence in new technology or their ability to make decisions; that is, as they gain experience, they may become less or more risk-averse.

The majority of the impacted community members fall into the 36–50 age range, which accounts for 42.1% of all respondents and is associated with more seasoned farm households. Respondent farmers had an average family size of four, with minimum and maximum family sizes of one and eight, respectively. Among the respondent farmers 195 or 80.6% were male headed households and the remaining 47 or 19.4% were female headed households.

Marital Status and Literacy Level of Sample Households

In Table 2, Among the respondents the majority or almost 75% were married followed by widowed households and it was also observed the majority of widowed households were female. The same was true for unmarried and divorced households which were dominated by female. From the total respondents 64.8% were illiterate that may contribute for unplanned utilization of their resources.

Occupational engagement of land expropriated households

In Table 3, the study it was intended to understand the engagement of land expropriated households before and after displacement. More than six activities were identified in which the surrounding community in the study area may be engaged either before or after land expropriation. As indicated in table 3, the major livelihood option in the study area was agriculture before or after and expropriation.

The information was assessed from 242 land expropriated households and before land expropriation almost 95% of households were engaged in farming activity. However, after land expropriation the number of households engaged in the farming activity was reduced to 74%. About 21% of them have changed to other livelihood options.

Table 2. Marital status and literacy level of sample households.

S. No	Family Structure		Frequency	Percentage
1	Marital Status	Married	182	75.8
		Unmarried	21	8.8
		Divorced	8	3.3
		Widowed	29	12.1
		Total	240	100
2	Literacy level	Literate	82	35.2
		Illiterate	151	64.8
		Total	233	100

Source: own survey data

Table 3. Sample household's occupational engagement before and after land expropriation.

S. N.	Activity/Engagement	Before		After	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1	Agriculture	229	94.6	176	73.9
2	Trade	0	0	11	4.6
3	Salaried	1	0.4	5	2.1
4	Temporary labourer	8	3.3	30	12.6
5	Broker			9	3.8
6	Handicraft			4	1.7
7	Others	4	1.7	3	1.3
	Total	242	100	238	100

Source: own survey data.

Before land expropriation there were about four livelihood options in which agriculture was the dominant followed by limited number of daily laborers and others. During the study period 53 farm households or 21.9% were changed their livelihood to more than 5 livelihood options among which the daily laborer was the dominant. This has an implication that either they are not compensated timely or the compensated money was consumed so that there was no another option to be engaged.

Changes in Vicinity Due to Land Dispossession

It was assessed during the study if households have changed their locality or not because of land dispossession in the study area. Accordingly, it was identified that of course there were households who have changed their vicinity as indicated in Table 4, but very limited in number. About 16% of the households were displaced in their area either for searching other livelihood options or finding living houses for rent. As it is indicated in Table 4, it was tried to identify the current address of affected households and the study revealed that 71% of them are in the same Kebele but changed their village and the remaining 29% have left their Kebele and went to urban and rural Kebele in the city administration.

Smallholder Farmer's Perception on Land Dispossession and Compensation

The basic objective of this study was to identify the opinion of property expropriated individuals towards land dispossession and compensation practices. Consequently, it was assessed how affected respondents perceived the forced taking of land by the local government from them and the compensation practices. According to Ambaye, 2015, land expropriation is a forced taking of land by the state from private owners for public purpose activities and against payment of adequate compensation.

Therefore, land expropriated farmer's opinion on land dispossession and compensation practices were measured by Likert scale using different item statements. In the measurement process respondents were asked in a five-scale measurement; however, when the questionnaire was pretested farmers were confused to choose among strongly agree and agree and also disagree and strongly disagree. Therefore, it was summarized into a three-scale measurement as shown in the table. The item statements are also structured to reflect positive and negative ideas to avoid respondent's biasness. During the assessment towards respondent's perception the major focus areas were; the practice of property dispossession, compensation practices, community's participation and the role of stakeholders in property dispossession and compensation payments.

Farmers' Perceptions of Land Dispossession Procedures

The establishment of effective and equitable legal and institutional frameworks for the exercise of the compulsory acquisition power is still unresolved in many nations worldwide, despite the fact that this power is deeply ingrained in almost all legal systems. The task of better defining the principles and procedures that govern compulsory acquisition powers is one that is very much alive and at the center of current land policy debates, from Brazil and China to Ghana and the United States (Lindsay, 2012) [10].

Being unfinished business the issue of land dispossession to all countries of the world including Ethiopia, has created an interest to study the perception of respondents towards the practice of land dispossession in the study area which was the basic objective of the study.

Table 4. Sample HHs change in vicinity and current address because of land dispossession.

S.N.	Category	Frequency	Percentage	Displaced HHs living area (after displacement)		
Change in vicinity	Yes	38	15.8	Village change	Another urban K	Another Rural K.
	No	202	84.2	27	5	6
Total		235	100	71%	13%	16%

Source: own survey data.

The first issue which was intended to identify was the perception of respondents towards land expropriation policy and practices of the government of Ethiopia. Consequently, the majority which was about 61.8% of the respondents supported the policy, only 34% of the respondents expressed their opposition and the remaining were neutral. In the group discussion the qualitative idea identified also supports this quantitative result. In the focus group discussion, it was reflected that “though the practice of land expropriation has many constraints during implementation, property owners have no any objection on the policy since its purpose is for public advantage and affected individuals are paid the proper compensation money.”

In addition, affected individuals were asked if they were having enough information and increased their awareness about property dispossession before action was taken by the local government. It was identified that 80.6% of the dispossessed members responded that no one have any information about land expropriation. It was also identified from the interview made for key informants that “commonly local governments did not have any system to aware the community about the plan of land dispossession, its objective, who will be affected by the program when and where to be implemented etc.” Furthermore, from the focus group discussion, the participants have forwarded an idea similar to the information obtained from the key informant interview and they observed that though farmers were not aware about land expropriation measures taken in their area, the majority did not have any opposition about the policy and the practices taken by the government (Van et al., 2014) [11].

It was also assessed farmer’s perception towards their displacement in their vicinity due to land dispossession was because of the land was wanted by the government for public advantages. About 87.2% of the respondents did not agree about their displacement even if it was for public advantage. As it was indicated in the above paragraph because lack of information when, how, and why they are displaced in their ownership and future plans of the government about compensation payments and the plan to rehabilitate affected members they strongly oppose their displacement. The group discussion made with the selected stakeholders including the affected farmers showed the same opinion.

Those respondent farmers who were affected by the land expropriation practices were asked about the current life situation as compared to their life before land dispossession and 52.7% of the respondents reflected that their lifestyle is lowered from time to time. However, there are also dispossessed households whose lifestyle is improved after land dispossession though they are limited in number. Because of that reason about 45.2% of the respondents has a negative perception towards the decrease in lifestyle of affected individuals.

They were also asked about their knowledge with regard to their unrestricted rights to appeal to any concerned institution when they feel there is lack of good governance or poor practices during land dispossession. The study identified that 64.7% of the land expropriated farmers responded that they know their rights to appeal to any independent institution. It was also assessed whether dispossessed farmers are knowledgeable about the procedures taken during land dispossession or not and the majority (62.4%) of the respondents were not clear about the legal procedures and only 36.4 have information about it. This indicated that nevertheless they know their rights to appeal to the established institution, they do know not the legal procedure where, when, and how to apply and fight for their rights which can be a major problem for the affected community members.

In general, the perception of land expropriated community members about land dispossession practices indicates in Table 5, the community members were not informed about the overall process and the basic objective of land expropriation in their area and also no clear information about the procedures during land dispossession practices, subsequently they oppose or reject to be displaced from their vicinity and they negatively rouse about the development program. During the study period still, they felt as their life was negatively affected even if limited numbers of them have a positive opinion. However, with this all understanding the majority of the respondent did not have a negative opinion about the policies and practices of land expropriation when they are told and if they are clear about the program.

Table 5. Sample households perception towards land dispossession.

S.N.	Item Statement	Frequency of level of agreement			
		<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Total</i>
1	I strongly oppose land expropriation policy and practices of the government	149(61.8)	10(4.2)	82(34)	241
2	I was aware about the land dispossession before displacement	195 (80.6)	9(3.7)	38(15.7)	242
3	I was displaced from my vicinity because of land dispossession	211(87.2)	1(.4)	30(12.4)	242
4	My life is deteriorated after land dispossession	109(45.2)	5(2.1)	127(52.7)	241
5	Unrestricted rights to appeal to an independent body	78(32.4)	7(2.9)	156(64.7)	241
6	I was not clear with the land dispossession procedures	88(36.4)	3(1.2)	151(62.4)	242

Numbers in the parenthesis are percentages.

Respondent's perception on land and property compensation practices

In Table 6, For the most part, compensation has been understood to refer to particular actions meant to make up for the losses incurred by those who were displaced or adversely impacted by the acquisition. Compensation typically consists of one-time payments, either in kind or cash, and is primarily given to those who have been adversely impacted. People who are impacted by the construction of infrastructure, such as dams, townships, project offices, canals, transmission lines, and other facilities, typically do not have their losses accurately recorded, and as a result, they have not received sufficient compensation. In a similar vein, the projects' effects (e.g., dam) on the downstream population's means of subsistence as well as on those who lose their homes and means of subsistence because land purchased for compensatory afforestation has not been appropriately evaluated and compensated (Alias, 2009) [12].

However, property compensation is the most important practice by the state for the land taken for public purpose activities from land and other property owners. Accordingly, the opinions of dispossessed community members largely farmers towards the practices of property compensation were measured using about eight item statements.

During the study, from the total 242 dispossessed land owners only 98 or 40.5% of them were compensated for their dispossessed property. When the sample was taken from the target population, about 50 of the sample respondents were dispossessed their property before 2011G.C. and the rest 50% were dispossessed after 2011. Therefore, the result of the study shows most of the dispossessed individuals who were dispossessed after 2011 and some before 2011 did not receive any compensation from the state. For that reason and other reasons, the majority or 57% of the respondents have a negative attitude about the compensation payment.

They were also asked whether the amount of compensation was enough as compared to the property they missed and only 18.5% of the respondents do have a positive opinion about the amount they were compensated the other 79.7% of the respondents disagreed on the issue that is why the majority of the dispossessed farmers reject to take the compensation timely. In the land dispossession practices the majority of the farmers perceived that their life is deteriorated as indicated in Table 5, and this may be because of the amount of compensation paid was irrational.

In the process of compensation payments there were different procedural steps followed. However, the procedure was perceived as bureaucratic by the members which, was identified by the focus group discussion. In addition, these bureaucratic steps were not clear and transparent to the dispossessed land owners. Only 26.6% has a positive response about its transparency and the rest reject its simplicity. Considering the execution process on compensation practices respondents were asked about their view on the executing committee who are involved on compensation especially if they have a trust on them. About 78.5% of the respondents didn't trust the property compensation committee which seems poor intelligibility about the issue.

Table 6. Perception about property compensation.

S. N	Item Statement	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Total
1	I was compensated for the dispossessed property	138(57)	6(2.5)	98(40.5)	242
2	The amount of compensation was enough as compared to the dispossessed property (if compensated)	192(79.7)	4(1.6)	45(18.7)	241
3	The process of compensation was transparent	167(69.3)	10(4.1)	64(26.6)	241
4	I have full trust on the compensation committee	190(78.5)	14(5.8)	38(15.7)	242
5	The process of compensation practice was not lengthy and bureaucratic	134(55.4)	8(3.3)	100(41.3)	242
6	I received the compensated money timely	103(42.9)	6(2.5)	131(54.6)	240
7	My livelihood is changed by the compensation money received	191(79.3)	5(2)	45(18.7)	241
8	It was difficult to cope with the new livelihood after compensation	86(35.8)	6(2.5)	148(61.7)	240

Source: own survey data

It was also hypothesized that the process of compensation practice may be lengthy and bureaucratic. In the group discussion the compensation activity was supposed to be overbearing because of many reasons may be less amount of compensation money proposed, lacks participatory action and transparency, frequent changes in the committee members etc. Therefore, it was identified the same result to the FGD in which the majority (134 or 55.4%) of the respondents reacted as compensation payment was protracted and intrusive.

It was assumed and told informally that many of the land dispossessed farmers have changed their livelihood based on the compensation money. However, significant number of the respondents 191 or 79.3% did not agree. That means for the many affected community members no new livelihood opportunity created that makes difficult the new life situation after compensation that was reflected by 61.7% of the respondents. This result can be supported by the result obtained in Table 4.

Perception on the Community's Participation in Compensation Practices

It was expected the community to have some roles at stages of compensation practices in; therefore, this was to assess how dispossessed members perceive the community role during the process of compensation practices.

The result of the study on understanding the participation of the community in the different decision-making activities has no difference between the respondents the same result 41% for negative and positive attitude as indicated in table 7, and the remaining 17% were neutral. In addition, if they believe to be participated, it was assessed whether their participation in the decision-making process has created an opportunity to benefit from the packages designed for dispossessed members like training, advisory services, organizing for livelihood creation etc. after compensation. However, 71% of the respondents had negative opinion which implies after property compensation there was no any support from the government or stakeholders including community representatives who responsible to rehabilitate affected community members. The same idea was forwarded in the group discussion that supported this opinion. In the group discussion all of the participants suggested that "because of poor attention and lack of support from the local government after compensation payment, many of the farmers who had got even better amount of money have purchased a truck and due to poor knowledge and mismanagement many of them were lost from their business."

In any community affair activities grievance are expected and an institution that includes affected community members representative will be established to hear if any complaint and to resolve conflicts and give solutions. Though there were many applicants as suggested in the FGD because amount of compensation payments and time of payment there was no any legal procedure to hear the application and they suggested this may the role and participation of the community members were insignificant.

Table 7. Perception towards participation of the community in the process of property expropriation and Compensation practices.

S. N.	Item statement	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Total
1	Our representatives participated in the decision-making process of land expropriation and compensation practices	100(41.3)	41(17)	101(41.7)	242
2	Because of participation access to benefit packages increased	171(71)	31(12.9)	39(16.1)	241
3	Because of participation it has created opportunity for application	183(76.3)	16(6.7)	41(17)	240
4	Because of participation it has created opportunity to livelihood means	204(85)	8(3.3)	28(11.7)	240

Source: own survey data.

The same result was revealed in the quantitative information about 76.3% of the respondents perceived negatively if their representative participation created conducive environment for application. Moreover, affected community members must be rehabilitated after compensation payment as suggested in the previous paragraphs and the role of stakeholders especially affected community representatives was expected to be significant. Conversely, 85% of the respondents have suggested negatively about the opportunity creation to livelihood means.

Perception Towards Stakeholder's Role in Compensation Practice and Rehabilitation.

In the previous section it was discussed about the community representative's role and their active participation at all aspects especially on compensation payments and rehabilitation of affected community members. Under this section it was intended to see how farmers understand the role of stakeholders who were supposed to do different activities by the government to enhance the living status of the society especially the farming community. With regard to land administration and related issues especially land expropriation and rehabilitating activities in the study area were administered by the office of Environmental Protection and Land Administration. There were also other stakeholders including the farmers representative established as a committee by the local government to work with environmental protection and land administration for land dispossession, compensation payments and rehabilitating affected individuals.

According to the information obtained from Gondar City Administration Office of Environmental Protection and Land Administration; the stakeholders represented in their institution and directly involved in land acquisition and property compensation were, office of agriculture, office of cooperative promotion, woreda administration offices, office of municipality, representative of farmers association and office of small-scale enterprise.

Hence, in this study land dispossessed and compensated community members were asked how they can realize the role of these stakeholders involved in property compensation and rehabilitation practices. About five item statements were suggested to test their opinion towards stakeholder's role during accomplishing their tasks.

Rehabilitating dispossessed and displaced members was one of the tasks to be accomplished by stakeholders. However, In Table 8, the results of the study revealed that there was no any organized and planned support by the local government which was represented by the committee to resettle affected farmers. About 93% or 223 respondents approved the weak role of stakeholders with regard to resettlement.

It was also expected to design a business plan for affected farmers to manage the compensated money in most effective method. But, 94.2% of the respondents had reflected no business plan was prepared or thought by the local government. As part of the business plan affected farmers must be trained how to rehabilitate themselves and create new business or livelihood option and arrange themselves to the new environment.

Table 8. Perception towards the role of stakeholders during compensation and rehabilitation.

S.N.	Item statement	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Total
1	Organized support by the government for resettlement	223(92.9)	3(1.3)	14(5.8)	240
2	There was business plan prepared for rehabilitation	228(94.2)	2(0.8)	12(5)	242
3	Training was organized how we can use the money	212(88)	3(1.2)	26(10.8)	241
4	The rehabilitating committee is still working with us	207(85.5)	11(4.66)	24(9.9)	242
5	Now my life is on the right track (not negatively affected)	190(78.8)	4(1.7)	47(19.5)	241

Source: own survey data

But this was not happened that means according to the farmers response 88% of them has no any information about the provision of training for affected community members. Thus, because of poor accomplishment of the local government (represented by the committee) in rehabilitating affected community members respondents felt the life of land dispossessed farmers or community members was not on the right track during the study period. This was reflected by the majority (78.8%) of the respondents.

In general, the mean value of land dispossessed community members perception which was 88% towards the role of stakeholders at all cases was negative. Stakeholders organized to support the community especially after property compensation for rehabilitation purpose did not accomplish their job. The qualitative data produced during the group discussion further verified this. In the group discussion group members were from relevant institutions that are supposed to support the property compensation and rehabilitation practices. They believed that “committee members were not properly functioning specially to rehabilitate dispossessed members which were manifested in their lifestyle or living condition.”

Major Constraints to Land Acquisition and Compensation Payment

Land is the primary economic, political, social, and cultural asset for rural residents in the majority of developing nations, including Ethiopia. It is a vital source of income for society's means of subsistence. Farmers still have the ability to amass wealth and pass it on to future generations. Furthermore, the land issue has not only continued to be an economic one but has also become deeply entwined with the culture and identity of the populace. In summary, the most delicate aspect of overall development that governments must take into account in developing nations is land-related issues (Alemu, 2015) [13].

Land owners in Ethiopia, particularly those in the Gondar City Administration, have been impacted by the widespread practice of land expropriation for public purposes, particularly for the growth of urbanization and industrialization. This study was prompted by various issues that were seen when government organizations handled the land acquisition and compensation process. As a result, the following issues were anticipated during the process. (a) Government institutions and other organizations were involved in the eviction of land and other properties and compensating the impacted rural landholders for land and other properties taken from them under the authority of eminent domain.

However, no commitment or trial was observed to rehabilitate displaced farmers on appropriate livelihood options; (b) some farmers do have a negative opinion on the valuation methods and procedures during compensation payments by established committee members. (c) Before the study it was also imagined some of the affected farmer's livelihood was changed and the lifestyle was worsened or was going down. There were also many other problems talked about by the farmers as well as by the professionals related to compulsory land acquisition and compensation practices so that the study was done to prove these assumptions and to identify other problems that farmers were facing during the process of land dispossession and compensation practice and its impact on their livelihood. Consequently, qualitative, and quantitative information were collected from affected farmers, local

leaders and relevant stakeholders (who were directly and indirectly involved in the process) to assess most important limitations to land acquisition and compensation payment in the study area.

An interview schedule was used to gather quantitative data, and focus groups, key informant interviews, and observation were used to gather qualitative data. For the group discussion, the group was composed of different stakeholders who were directly involved in land dispossession and compensation practices representing their institution, local leaders' representatives of affected farmers. In view of that a lot of problems were observed and raised in the group discussion and also during the interview process, affected farmers were asked if they observe any problem in the process of land dispossession and compensation practices and 200 or 82.7% and 42 or 17.3% were responded yes and no answers respectively. Thus, the most important problems identified in the study information were as follows:

Problems Related to Farmers Awareness About Land Dispossession and Compensation Practices

The majority of national laws would benefit from clauses that increase participation and more clearly mandate consultation with impacted parties at crucial decision-making stages. This would guarantee, for instance, meaningful conversations about site selection, the type and amount of compensation, and a stronger focus on making sure that people are aware of their rights and the nature of the process (Lindsay, 2012) [10]. Earlier on the process of land dispossession and compensation practices the role and the participation of affected farmer's representatives must get a great emphasis. In addition, awareness creation to all community members should be taken as a major purpose of local governments. Accordingly, during the study it was revealed that earlier to land dispossession there was no any information provided to the community specifically to land dispossessed individuals to help them build readiness and to find other livelihood options. From 242 samples 124 or 51.2% responded that among the many problems; lack of information about the issue was the major problem. Group discussants also commented that the community was not told about the program of the government in advance of the land acquisition. In addition, prior to any action the rules and procedures of the overall activity were not aware to the community especially to farmers expected to be affected by the program. Information in the key interview identified that dispossessed farmers knows when the land was measured and the property was registered for compensation. Immediately they were only notified to shift their family and their property (if any) from their original vicinity even before giving any compensation which significantly affected their regular living condition. Regardless of whether those interests are officially recognized and registered rights, there is no process or proactive methods intended to guarantee that people are truly informed about a process that may affect their interests. Additionally, notification periods must be long enough for people to realistically comprehend the situation and respond appropriately.

Constraints Related to Lack of Transparency

To be transparent in workplace to the context of this study is "operating in a way that creates openness between actors involved in land dispossession and compensation practices and the affected community members." This type of openness between the actors and community members creates trust and leads to a successful action. Transparency is an ongoing process that can have ongoing results.

One of the complaint roses by the affected farmers and proved in the group discussion was unclear actions delivered by land acquisition and compensation committee and also by the institution that authorized the committee. The information from the group discussion stated that "the rate of money to be paid for the dispossessed land and properties were inadequate." Farmers do have a reservation on the measurements on land and the assets. It was done with the absence of the owners and even they did not to let them understand about the process that leads to raise complaint. It was suggested that the major cause for opposition on the program by the farmers was the result of lack of clarity in the overall compensation practices. Of course, this was a critical problem before 2011 where land administration as an institution was not established. There have been some changes since then. Generally speaking, the process of inventorying properties, valuing them, and determining the compensation amount was opaque and subject to injustice and subjectivity.

Problems Related to Compensation Payments

The provision of other forms of compensation (like land) or the timing and amount of monetary compensation are crucial. Though it was not legal, in the study area farmers were selling and also leased out their land to the third party based on the market price. Therefore, the amount of money paid for compensation and the price of land in the market were observed to be extremely different. That means the amount of money paid for compensation was too much less than the market price.

Thus, it was understood that the impact of low rate of payment leads to poor living standard. It was observed that many of the affected community members become unable to feed themselves and their family. Due to the fact that some affected community members changed their livelihood and became daily laborers (Blicharska et al., 2022) [14]. Of course, it was identified that there were also some land dispossessed farmers but very limited in number who were compensated in kind that means by another land that was more fertile than the dispossessed land and that helped them to improve their life situation.

It was not only the low amount of compensation but also the time of payment was the other critical problem identified. Full provision of compensation as a prerequisite for government taking possession of the land in question, and a showing by the acquiring entity that the funds for compensation have been set aside before the taking is approved by government decision makers. By the reason many of the dispossessed farmers were forced to change other livelihood options by searching informal credit sources for the purpose of consumption to extend their life.

In most cases the compensation practice was paying money for the dispossessed land and other properties but only a few of the community members got land for land. In this case farmers who has no an additional land will be forced to change his/her livelihood but difficult to cope in the new living environment. To some of the farmers to proceed as a farmer they must rent for land and this was also difficult because the value of land for rent was increased from time to time.

Problems Related to Rehabilitation

It was observed that the ultimate goal of land dispossession and compensation committee and the land administration institution at different levels seems to take the land and pay the compensation no more activity was observed beyond the payment. Rehabilitating farmers who were displaced from their land or vicinity should the major task of the government.

However, during the study it was identified that there was any plan or action was tried to rehabilitate the displaced farmers. Much amount of money was distributed to farmers, which was beyond their capacity to manage. Training, business plan preparation, consultancy services and other supports were important for the wise use of the cash resource. It was revealed that some of the farmers allocated their money to purchase heavy truck and some others Mini-Bus for public transport. These farmers do not have the knowledge to manage these resources and even to purchase spares for the vehicles because poor orientation about the business and ultimately, they become out of the market and lost much of their resources.

Poor Accountability

The land acquisition and compensation practice were implemented by a committee established by the respective woreda or city administration in the last many years. Since 2011 land administration and environmental protection was responsible to support this committee but not with a full mandate as stated in the group discussion. The committee was established from relevant office that would be responsible until the mission would be completed. When complaint was arisen, it was this committee mandated to solve the issue. In most cases there was a frequent dropout in the committee members before completing the mission. Therefore, there was no any organ that are permanently functioning the land dispossession and compensation practices, hear appeals and solve complaints that will be accountable.

Problems Related to Committee Members Understanding on Procedural Process and Implementation Guidelines

As suggested in the group discussion there are proclamations, regulations directives and guidelines designed by the government pertinent to land and its utilization. It was expected that committee members assigned to execute land acquisition and compensation payments should be aware of government regulations, directives and guidelines for proper implementation of their mission. However, in the study it was found out that many of the committee members do not have a clear understanding about the laws and the guidelines. As identified in the key informant interview and also the group discussion this was basically the reason for weak implementation of the committee's mission that led to raise compliant by the affected farmers. In addition, it was also observed the change in the committee members who were responsible for land expropriation and compensation payments was dynamic. When they start to understand and develop an experience on the laws and guidelines and the detailed activities institutions replaced them by another that worsen the problem.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that compulsory land acquisition in Gondar city has profoundly disrupted the livelihoods of smallholder farmers, with agriculture as the primary income source declining from 95%–74% post-dispossession. This displacement, which included relocating approximately 16% of farmers, forced a significant shift in survival strategies. The research, utilizing surveys, group discussions, and key informant interviews, reveals a predominantly negative perception among the affected community, with an average of 63% expressing dissatisfaction with the expropriation processes and procedures.

This dissatisfaction stems from critical failures in compensation and rehabilitation. On average, 65.5% of respondents viewed compensation practices negatively, citing insufficient payment amounts compared to market values, untimely payments, and a lack of transparency. Furthermore, the promised rehabilitation support from relevant government offices and stakeholders was largely nonexistent, exacerbating post-displacement hardships. The process was also marked by a significant exclusion of the community, with only 31.6% of respondents acknowledging any meaningful participation in valuation or decision-making.

Ultimately, the negative perceptions are directly linked to systemic problems identified in the study. These include a pervasive lack of awareness among farmers about the procedures, poor knowledge and commitment from committee members regarding relevant regulations, and an overall absence of transparency and fairness. The qualitative findings from discussions and interviews confirm that these operational failures are the root causes of the community's distrust and the worsening living conditions observed, creating a clear cause-and-effect relationship between procedural flaws and widespread farmer discontent.

Recommendation

Limited information and poor knowledge of the affected community members and the executing institutions about the overall processes of land dispossession and compensation payments were the basic problem identified and the cause for the negative perception of affected members. Thus, awareness should be created especially to farmers that will be dispossessed and displaced in advance of any action and also executing agencies must be trained about the overall procedures and even the rules and guidelines pertinent to compulsory land acquisition and compensation payments.

The study identified that the amount of compensation payment was not sufficient and the time of payment for many reasons were delayed that led affected individuals to complaint and accusation. Therefore, properties including land must be valued according to the rules and guidelines of the government and the compensation should also be paid in advance of their displacement.

Unwise use of the compensated money by farmers were highly observed and identified during the study and rehabilitation activity was not practiced in the study area though the rule of the government advices to do so. Hence, rehabilitating affected farmers through preparing business plan and providing training should be the basic responsibility of the local leaders.

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