

Flight of Development, Ground of Displacement: Rethinking Compensation Strategies for Navi Mumbai International Airport

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Abstract: *The Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA) project is recognized as one of India's most transformative infrastructure developments, aimed at easing aviation congestion in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region and promoting balanced economic growth in Maharashtra. Designed to handle millions of passengers annually, the project is expected to boost logistics, trade, tourism, and urban expansion. However, the realization of this ambitious project necessitated the acquisition of approximately 2,866 acres of land, which inevitably led to the displacement of several thousand individuals, many of whom relied heavily on agriculture and fishing for their livelihoods.*

This research critically examines the unique compensation framework formulated by the City and Industrial Development Corporation (CIDCO) to address the challenges of displacement. The package combined immediate monetary payouts, developed land allocation for residential and commercial use, temporary rental support, and livelihood restoration initiatives. Using a simulated primary survey of 100 displaced residents, this paper assesses the level of satisfaction among affected households, the adequacy of rehabilitation infrastructure, and the extent of socio-economic recovery post-displacement. Descriptive statistical methods and graphical data visualization were used to analyze community perceptions, employment transitions, and overall welfare outcomes.

Findings reveal that while the NMIA compensation model was significantly more comprehensive and forward-looking than many earlier land acquisition schemes in India, the practical implementation faced delays in developed land handovers, incomplete physical infrastructure, and insufficient livelihood assistance programs. Nearly half of the respondents reported a decline in their income levels despite receiving financial compensation, indicating that cash payments alone were not sufficient to ensure economic resilience. This paper concludes by recommending dynamic compensation models linked to market conditions, robust livelihood training programs, and participatory community engagement mechanisms to create socially just and economically sustainable rehabilitation outcomes.

Keywords: Navi Mumbai International Airport

