

Designing and Implementing - Grievance Redressal of the Community for Facilitation of Water Distribution Project

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Abstract

Background: This paper describes the Grievance Redressal Mechanism which is the strategy for accelerating the project initiatives among the community. The planned project had to be executed by government of Tamil Nadu Pillur Water Supply Project to meet the need of additional water requirement of the community in Coimbatore. The drinking water supply initiative efforts had the major responsibility to pump water from Bhavani River through underground setting of pipes, booster stations and service reservoir etc. The land space which the project requires can be acquired only with community support from nine villages. The acquisition of the land space generates changes and losses in the livelihood of the local people. Developmental projects cannot ignore justice issues of the community.

Method: There are various legal and policy framework for the project which involves acquisitions of agricultural lands and house sites. Only when the communities concern on their losses is redressed, the water supply project activities can be launched. In this context the Grievance redressal committee was set up in the project unit which functioned as continuous transparent process. It had multi-level structures and corresponding processes. The grievances of the community were collected using anthropological data generation tools: Non-participant and participant observation, Focus Group Discussions and in-depth interviews. The data obtained were analysed on its textual content using the software ATLAS and main themes of the issues were evolved.

Results: The grievance redressal committee has informed the community on how they can register their grievances. The right to seek legal redressal was provided if the complainant did not find solution with the grievance redressal mechanism. The main subjects of grievances were fragmentation of agricultural land and house sites, fear of animals intruding from forest with the new road, loss of income, anxieties on payment of compensation, family with women head not willing to shift from agriculture and fear of water level getting reduced. The Grievance redressal team had organised public redressal consultation, explained the resettlement measures, process

involved in land acquisition and compensation etc. The activities of the project are on pipeline with active Grievance redressal committee.

Key words: Grievance Redressal Mechanism, Anthropological tools, Land acquisition

Introduction

Land management is a wide topic of research interest in the subject of Anthropology. In our country the land management is taken care by the current policies of economic liberalization, 1991 and democratic decentralisation, 1993. The process of land management assists in the growth and progress of the land in urban and rural areas. Lands are usually used for agriculture, water resource, residential, industrial, reforestation etc. The law in India ascertains that agricultural land should be used only for food production. The land acquisition act of India, 1894 states that government can acquire land for public purpose. Anis Mukhopadhyay (2005) states that it is important to understand the legal frame work for resolving the problems associated with land acquisition.

There are immense problem faced during the land acquisition. It alters the social, economic, cultural and environment of the affected people. Some of the hardship of the land acquisition is taken care by the rehabilitation and resettlement bill, 2007. It aims to compensate and protect the rights of the people who are affected by land acquisition. Executions of the activities for rehabilitation are usually very tough. However many innovations are made to ease out the activities. One of the crucial factors which have to be taken care during land acquisition is the redressal of the grievances of the affected people. The government departments which are involved in services for citizens and organisations have made Grievance Redressal Mechanism mandatory. Grievance redress mechanisms (GRMs) can be associated with institutions and processes which paves way for the grievance to get redressed. There are many Grievance redressal mechanisms established in the country for various types of grievances.

In the present research article, the author has documented the designing and implementation of grievance redressal cell at community level. This initiative was done for facilitation of water distribution project in Coimbatore. The research articles focuses on the anthropological approaches which has been used for designing and executing the Grievance Redressal Mechanism.

Careful designing of the grievance redressal mechanism is crucial (Asian Development Bank, 2010). Ethnographical approaches help to get the real picture of the community and their needs (Kratz, 2010; Hampshire et al., 2014; Taplin, et al., 2020). The approach adopts qualitative research techniques which captures the real life situation of the community in a given a geographical location. The final written product of the study provides in-depth insight of what the researcher looks forward in the study. It requires systematic and long term field observation adopting various methods and systematic documentation is the key for success in this type of research.

The present research was conducted as a foundation for the Pillur project drinking water supply. The geographical location for the designing and execution of Grievance Redressal mechanism was in nine revenue villages from Coimbatore and Mattupalayam taluk. The project aims to achieve the following phases: pumping of water, treatment of water and making conveyance of water through the upgraded storage and distribution system in the corporation. The project requires land in the selected route of water distribution. Therefore land acquisition becomes a major task for the government. In this context the present efforts of designing and implementing the grievance redressal mechanism and gathering information for the same were conducted.

In the present article the authors has documented the process which was used for executing the Grievance Redressal Mechanism for facilitating the start-up of the project.

Objectives of the project were as follows

1. To design the grievance redressal mechanism for the water supply project.
2. To use ethnographic approaches for study of grievances of the community.
3. To document the profile of the communities in the project location.

Review of Literature

Nallathiga et al., (2018) in their case built approach have compared the Land acquisition acts of 2013 and 2015 which were analysed for the development of the physical infrastructure in India. The government by National Democratic Alliance made changes in the ordinance of land acquisition in the year 2015. The authors suggested to address all the issues at ground level, rise the compensation of land and make mandatory to rehabilitate and resettle them in amicable ways for the successful acquisition of required land for the project. Mukerji (2017) in his study states that land acquisition is justified for developing infrastructure such as dams and mines for

achieving rapid economic growth and public welfare for long term. It is common to have low resistance in terms of political consciousness and few unorganised organisations raise the voice against the land acquisition. The legislation ensues the drive for commercialisation and quick industrial investment for private business. Changing the existing law creates smooth processing of the land acquisition easily. But this action faces challenges in the public domain and resistances are more than the past. The neoliberal agenda is questionable in the domain of public and resistance power is opted for formal as well as informal channels. The author states that pro-government has taken steps to amend the existing law for land acquisition. Padayatras and rally of farmers with oppositional political parties are the strong resistance to acquire the land from the owners. Debabrata and Shireesh (2015) in their study have highlighted the participatory way of addressing bottlenecks and measure the social impact proposed by the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (RECTLARR) Act, 2013. The affected people have changes in the lives for short period due to the loss of land and other properties. Participatory approach helps addressing the conflicting issues of implementation and grievances of the affected people and provides alternate options in decision making to get livelihood. They suggested restoration, relocation and skill development can capacitate them to have options for new livelihood. Larbi (2008) in his research study has found that acquisition of 20% of the land compulsory in Ghana led to several problems unresolved. Some of the unsolved problems are more land acquisition than requirement, deficiency of intergenerational fairness in the use of paid compensation, non-payment of acquisition of the land, lack of participation of private sectors etc. The State has occupied the land without acquisition and deprived the land owners to claim compensation leading to lack of confidence in the machinery which manages the tension between the State and the owners of the land. The author suggests new policy proposals to overcoming the unsettled issues and to improve future guidance for practical solution to stakeholders. Quansah et al., (2020) in their study have documented that small holder farmers affected the livelihood because the multinational companies had acquired large scale of land in Pru East. Government leased out their lands to foreign investors for more than 10 years. Livelihood effect index survey with 5 indicators was used to 332 households and found land acquisition has moderate positive effect on the areas of health, security of food and employment, negative effect on income and no effect on nutritional status in the households of small holder farmers in the communities of Kobre and

Kadue. The authors suggest that formulation of by-laws for safeguarding the people of Pru through the investors for the land acquired.

Arup Majumder (2019) in his research states that the nature of imposing state power has depicted the land acquisition by using the 1894 Act. But the land acquisition new act of the parliament provides right to reasonable compensation with transparency, namely 'Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act 2013'. Specialists do the assessment of social impact in order to acquire land from the stakeholders. In the anthropological study, micro-level field work was done from peasant families to assess the loss of cultivable land for construction of an industry in Gokulpur village, West Bengal in the years 1991-92. The land losers had change in social structure and affected social relation with the neighbours of non-land losers. The ethnographic findings show that the peasant families of land acquisition had adverse effects such as landlessness, food insecurity, fragmentation of families, educational drop out, intra-family conflicts and ritual of agriculture.

Jyoti Rao et al., (2020) in their study have documented fairness in the offered compensation and fairness in the land acquired process in Scotland. Reforming laws and policy leading to acquisition of land are the current necessity in Scotland. For these, qualitative approach for content analysis was taken from stakeholders. Several procedures in planning the project and acquiring land were found such as public weak decision to identify and design the projects, insufficient objection because high cost associating with public inquiry, long time, uneven information and poor grievance management. They suggested that socio economic-cost analysis, equal representation of stakeholders, ensuring balance with acquirers and acquires, neural measure of objection and suggestion, improving responsibility with commitment and timelines, and counselling. Alcorn, Opryszko, and Schwab, (2011) in their research of formative ethnography to evaluate novel water system have heightened that private company installed kiosk-water systems in village of Ghana. The effect of kiosks leads to water-related disease in the communities. Ethnographic study was conducted to measure the effect of local practices and the ways adoption of this technology. The fieldworkers in the two communities interviewed entire water sector of stakeholders. The communities had new technology and also they had water related behaviours which were complex and many factors transmitted the diseases. Ethnographic research would be necessary for subsequent evaluation to intervene the specific site, and their cultural based knowledge. This study explained the value of integrating qualitative research

techniques to evaluate water-related projects and the precision of research instruments will increase the credibility of expected findings.

Method and Procedures

The following methods were used in the project:

1. Data gathering using ethnographic methods: non participant and participant observation, Focus Group Discussions and in-depth interviews.
2. Analysis of the textual content of the data gathered from the community.
3. Setting up of Grievance redressal committee and their mechanism.

Analysis of the textual content of the information obtained was done by using software ATLAS and the main themes of grievances were identified.

The team which worked for the setting up of grievance redressal mechanism started up with non-participant observation and participant observation. In this method the team mingled with the community by participating in their daily activities to observe and understand their problem. The observations from this method were systematically documented. Following this the team conducted two Focus Group Discussions in each village. The Focus group discussion guide was used for facilitating the discussion. The team ensured active participation of both the genders and representation of right participants. The content of the focus group discussion was documented in verbatim form. The textual content of the participant observation and the Focus group discussion was analysed using ATLAS software. The in-depth interviews helped the team to validate the observations and findings and quantify the profile of the community.

The information obtained was used by the team to understand the intensity of grievances of the community, set hierarchical priorities of the grievances and evolve means of redressing the grievances.

The Grievance redressal team was set up as a part of institutional management. They had been given the major responsibility to understand and redress the grievance. The team had to have the following skills to execute this such as Patient listening, empathic approach, communication skills, building trust, counselling, documenting and advocating for their grievances.

Results

The results of the ethnographic data collected have helped the team to understand the profile of the people affected by the project and their grievances. Among the people affected by the project 89.8% had males and 10.2% belonged to females as the head of the house. 58.5% belonged to

backward communities, followed by 22% most backward communities, 8.5% schedule caste and 11% other communities. The educational status of the People affected by the project shows that illiterates, primary and secondary education, graduates, professional degree, post graduates and Diploma were 49.1%, 11.0%, 9.3%, 4.2%, and 5.15% respectively. The occupation of the people affected by the project shows that farmers, business, private sector job, daily wage labourers, retired people and other category were 61.9%, 11.0%, 11%, 6.8%, 5.9% & 3.4% respectively. They are living in pucca houses 66.9%, old tiled houses 17.8% partially pucca 15.3% and the rest in asbestos roofed houses. The farmers lose land are marginal holders (42.4%), semi medium category (20.3%), small holders (16.1%) and medium size holder (12.7%) big farmers (2.9%). the owners of house sites 5.9% involving in different kinds of occupations. They own livestock namely cattle, sheep, goat and poultry 43.2% and the rest has no livestock. 9.5% has income between ₹3 to ₹5 lakhs, 11.0% families' income 50 to 75 thousands, and the rest 79.5% has lesser percentage.

The analysis highlighted the following themes of grievances of the community which are affected by the project. It includes Grievances related to compensation, Emotional disturbances, fragmentation of agricultural land and house site, fear of animals intruding from forest with the new road, loss of livelihood and income, anxieties on payment of compensation, family with women head not willing to shift from agriculture, fear of water level getting reduced, doubtful about the government approaches and compensation. The semantic diagram clearly highlights the grievance issues in each theme.

cost to be in par with the present market rates. Many of them did not have clear understanding of what are compensation and the procedures.

Emotional disturbances: Majority of the affected community had emotional attachment to their lands. They attributed many reasons for it like the land is their ancestral property, sentiments that the land has provided their economic needs, the land near temple which is auspicious, uprooting their trees and crops which they have grown etc. They have developed fears of getting displaced from where they are living. The family by women had more emotional disturbances. Majority of them were tensed as they were not able to dispose their properties.

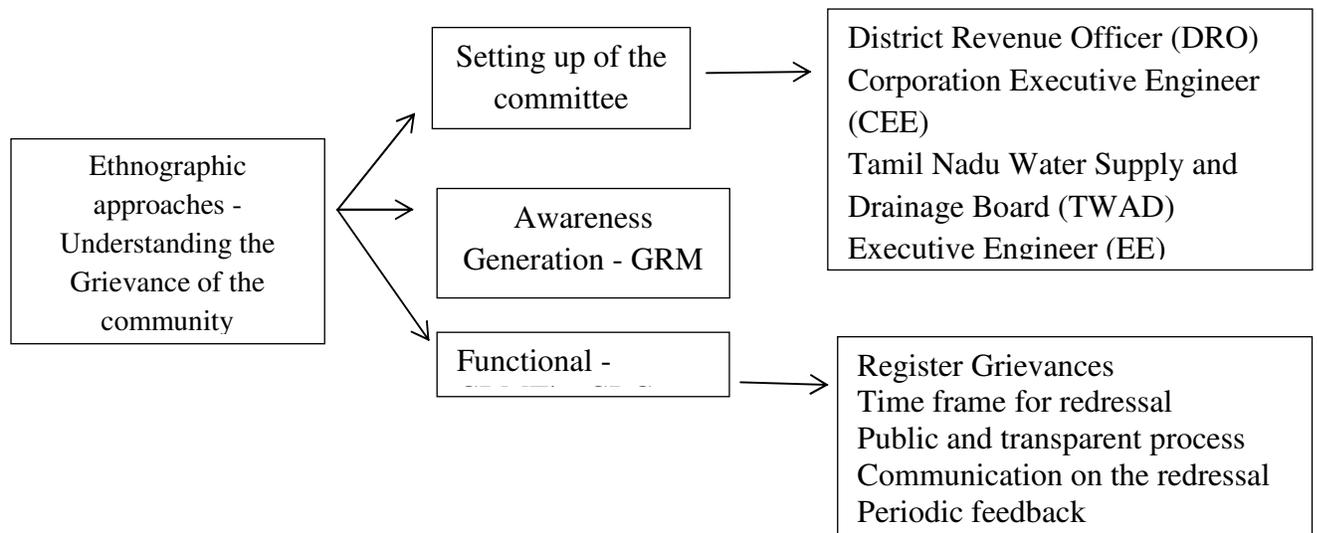
Fragmentation of agricultural land and house site: In some of the sites in the villages, the land acquisition is part of the land. This fragments the land into narrow area and future agricultural activities are threatened. Similarly if the house site is fragmented the living space and the quality of the life of the family are disrupted. Majority of the affected people stated that they will not be able to sell their fragmented land in future.

Loss of livelihood and income: Nearly all the agricultural families had their major grievance as loss of their income. Majority of the farmers were illiterates and finding alternate source of income is a grave challenge. Nearly all of them stated that their main grievance is the reason why they have to be the people affected by the land acquisition. The grievances of woman headed family were very strong on their fears of loss of income and change in livelihood options. Majority of the families were illiterates and the change in livelihood options has created fear and anxiety about their survival.

General grievances: The other general grievances of the people were: they feared the water levels in River Bhavani storage to decrease because of the project, since the road and pipelines are constructed, they feared that bore well water will be disturbed and it becomes difficult for the use of irrigation. Many feared that road facility near the forest will make the wild animals to access easily in the living areas of people. Many people have fear that the solution for their resettlement is not yet clear. Majority of them feared water scarcity in their areas because of the increased number of water supply projects from the River Bhavani.

Designing of the Grievance Redressal Mechanism (GRM)

Figure 2: Design of the Grievance Redressal Mechanism



Setting up of the committee

The grievance redressal committee was set up with personnel who will handle the grievances at various levels and also in accordance to the type of grievances. The process for the redressal mechanism was receiving the grievance and then record, sort out and prioritise. The team should conduct assessment of the grievance and arrive at resolution process. The team have to coordinate with various authorities and liaison between community and the higher officials. They were also responsible for monitoring of the grievance registered.

Awareness generation to the community on GRM

The community was made aware of the Grievance committee and their roles and responsibilities. Further they were also educated on their basic rights to differ from the committee and access legal advises. Format for the grievance registration, procedure for registration and follow up was developed. The committee had to give periodic feedback about the status of their grievance registered and potential solutions.

Activities and procedures of the GRM

The activities of the Grievance redressal committee were monitored by the deputy project director. The grievance committee members were the District Revenue Officer (DRO) of Coimbatore, City Engineer, Corporation Executive Engineer (CEE), Tamil Nadu Water Supply

and Drainage Board (TWAD), Executive Engineer (EE), and Water Resource Database (WRD). The community is encouraged to register their grievances. The committee will register all the grievances in the register, provide receipt after registration and work out time frame for redressal. The committee will respond to the individuals within four weeks and it depends upon the type of grievance. Finally the decisions of the committee are not final and the individual has rights to seek judicial redress mechanism.

Types of grievances to be redressed

The grievances which will be redresses by this committee include payment of compensation for the land, implementation of the mitigation measures, construction practices and water management. It will be a continuous process and will use transpired and participatory process.

Proposed mitigation measures

The community was informed about the mitigation measures which the government has promised. Since the land acquisition is the main grievance of the project affected communities fair compensation will be given. In the lands and house sites which are fragmented government can take the narrow piece of land also and pay the compensation. The compensation amount will be finalised by the competent authority. To avoid wild animal's entry from forest to the living area, it is planned to dig trenches and the forest department will support this activity. Compensation for the land acquisition varies in the context of different countries (Ellitt, 1977). The measure which is applied to compensation depends upon the juries (Parish, 1990). In the current project the compensation amount to be paid will be decided by the government officials and not the Grievance redressal committee.

Discussion and conclusion

In the present article the author has documented the various efforts which are taken in the community for facilitating the emergence of a water distribution project. The successful implementation of the project requires the support of the people who are affected because of the project. Multi-faceted problems are faced by the people and all of them have to be redressed by the government. The total number of families affected is around 688. It is interesting to understand that anthropological approaches have generated the adequate information about the economic community.

The approaches like transect walk (non-participant observation and participant observation), which is a flexible and participatory method that leads an entry point to start a project for

understanding local realities. This helps to prioritise and translate problem for making action plan. Team members of planners walk through various areas interview bystander and draw prevailing solution (Tallinn et al., 2020). Focus group discussions and in-depth interviews had helped to gather holistic information. Ethnography has various stages of data collection (Gobi, 2008). In designing and setting up grievance redressal mechanism information plays a vital role. This mechanism has several assistances for the people who are affected and feel traumatised. It offers a cost effective way to express their grievances with dignity, it facilitates fair hearing of their grievances and the remedies, facilitates them to negotiate the decisions and policies, further they get access to information.

The systematically collected information helped to understand the intensity of the problems and also plan the mitigation measures. Kaur et al (2019) stated in their study it is essential to have informal and practical methods for grievance redressal for the welfare of the people. This article outlines the emergence of grievance redressal cell and how its functions are planned. The experience captured in this article can be replicated for similar projects.

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