

Implementation of Successful Government Land Acquisitions for Kalibo International Airport

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Abstract

This study critically examined the implementation of government land acquisitions for the expansion of Kalibo International Airport, a strategic hub in Western Visayas, Philippines, within the broader discourse of public infrastructure development and property rights protection. Land acquisition remains a legally and socially complex undertaking, requiring a delicate balance between the imperatives of national development and the constitutional guarantee of private ownership, as mandated by the 1987 Constitution and reinforced through Republic Act No. 10752 (Right-of-Way Act of 2016) and Republic Act No. 12289 (Accelerated and Reformed Right-of-Way Act of 2025). Despite these statutory safeguards, persistent challenges such as valuation disputes, bureaucratic delays, and relocation difficulties underscore the necessity of systematic evaluation of acquisition practices. The primary objective of this research was to assess the extent of implementation of government land acquisitions, identify challenges encountered, and examine mitigation measures adopted in the case of Kalibo International Airport. Employing a descriptive–correlational design, the study surveyed 223 respondents, composed of project implementers from the Department of Transportation and the Provincial Government of Aklan, alongside landowners whose properties were successfully acquired, selected through stratified proportionate sampling to ensure balanced representation. Data were collected in April 2026 using a researcher-made survey questionnaire that measured perceptions of implementation, challenges, and mitigation strategies. Findings revealed that implementation was perceived as very high, characterized by structured procedures, transparent documentation, and consistent compliance with statutory frameworks. Challenges were rated minimal, while mitigation measures such as fair compensation, transparent documentation, and strict legal compliance were deemed highly effective in reducing disputes and delays. Correlation analysis confirmed no significant relationship between implementation and challenges, suggesting that socio-cultural dynamics and landowner attitudes exert greater influence on acquisition difficulties than procedural efficiency alone. The study concludes that strengthening stakeholder engagement, participatory dialogue, and conflict-resolution strategies is indispensable to refining government procedures, thereby enhancing transparency, fairness, and efficiency in future infrastructure projects.

Keywords: Challenges; Government land acquisition; Implementation; Landowners; Project implementers

Introduction

Infrastructure development has long been recognized as a cornerstone of national progress, serving as a catalyst for economic growth, social mobility, and regional integration. It is not merely about constructing physical facilities but about enabling societies to connect, trade, and thrive. Among the various forms of

infrastructure, airports occupy a particularly strategic position. They function as gateways for commerce, tourism, and international relations, making them indispensable assets for regional competitiveness and national development. In the Philippine context, airports are more than transportation hubs; they are vital instruments of modernization and global integration. Kalibo International Airport, located in Aklan province, exemplifies this significance. As the primary gateway to Boracay Island—one of the country's premier tourist destinations—Kalibo has experienced rising passenger volumes and increasing demands for modernization. These pressures have necessitated expansion, which in turn requires the acquisition of additional land. Yet, land acquisition is not a purely technical undertaking; it is a legally complex and socially sensitive process that demands careful navigation of constitutional safeguards, statutory frameworks, and community concerns.

The acquisition of land for public infrastructure projects requires governments to balance their obligation to provide public goods with the constitutional guarantee of private property rights. The 1987 Constitution enshrines the principle that private property shall not be taken without just compensation, a safeguard operationalized through Republic Act No. 10752 (Right-of-Way Act of 2016) and reinforced by Republic Act No. 12289 (Accelerated and Reformed Right-of-Way Act of 2025). These laws standardized acquisition procedures, introduced reforms in valuation and compensation, and sought to accelerate timelines while reducing disputes. They represent significant attempts to institutionalize fairness, transparency, and efficiency in land acquisition. However, as Ito (2022) observed, implementation gaps persist due to weak institutional capacity and overlapping mandates. ANGOC (2025) similarly emphasized that land and resource conflicts remain pervasive, requiring reforms that extend beyond statutory compliance to address socio-cultural realities. This tension between legal safeguards and lived realities underscores the need for empirical studies that examine not only procedural efficiency but also stakeholder perceptions, community dynamics, and the broader legitimacy of government actions.

The literature provides three theoretical perspectives that illuminate the complexities of land acquisition. Legal-Administrative Theory underscores the importance of compliance with laws and protocols to ensure fairness, transparency, and accountability. Conflict Theory explains the inevitable tensions between government objectives of cost minimization and landowner demands for adequate compensation, with valuation disputes and relocation challenges often triggering litigation (Respicio & Co., 2026). Stakeholder Theory emphasizes inclusive engagement and trust-building as critical to legitimacy, with studies confirming that transparent communication and participatory decision-making reduce resistance and disputes (Prebanić & Vukomanović, 2023; Cellerino, Mancini, & Ahola, 2026). Comparative experiences reinforce these insights. Heathrow Airport's expansion in London was delayed for decades due to legal challenges and stakeholder opposition (Avanzi & Zerjav, 2020), illustrating how procedural disputes and mistrust can stall national projects. In contrast, the New Manila International Airport project integrated environmental and social safeguards to mitigate disputes (San Miguel Corporation, 2021), reflecting a broader understanding that acquisition processes must address not only property rights but also ecological and community considerations. These cases highlight that legal frameworks alone cannot guarantee smooth implementation; stakeholder trust, adaptive governance, and proactive conflict management are equally critical to success.

Despite statutory safeguards, disputes over valuation, bureaucratic delays, and community resistance continue to complicate acquisition in the Philippines. Custodio and Sombilla (2025) argue that rural transformation is hindered by institutional weaknesses that exacerbate conflicts, particularly when landowners perceive government actions as coercive rather than collaborative. Preda Foundation (2026)

further noted that unresolved land conflicts expose governance gaps, underscoring the need for stronger institutional frameworks and more culturally sensitive approaches. These insights resonate with the Kalibo case, where procedural efficiency was achieved but external socio-cultural dynamics continued to shape acquisition outcomes. The persistence of these challenges suggests that successful land acquisition requires more than compliance with statutory frameworks; it demands sensitivity to cultural attachments, perceptions of fairness, and the broader socio-political environment in which projects unfold.

The Kalibo International Airport case thus provides a timely opportunity to evaluate whether reforms under RA 10752 and RA 12289 have succeeded in fostering transparency, fairness, and efficiency in practice. It also allows for an examination of whether challenges encountered—such as valuation disputes, bureaucratic delays, and landowner resistance—are mitigated effectively through compensation, documentation, and legal compliance. More importantly, it raises the question of whether implementation and challenges are significantly related, or whether external socio-cultural dynamics exert greater influence on acquisition outcomes. Addressing these questions is critical not only for refining government procedures but also for strengthening stakeholder trust and legitimacy in future infrastructure projects.

Review of Related Literature

Government land acquisition for infrastructure projects has been the subject of sustained scholarly inquiry, reflecting its dual character as both a legal-administrative undertaking and a socio-political negotiation. The literature consistently emphasizes that while statutory frameworks provide procedural safeguards, the lived realities of landowners, communities, and project implementers often expose tensions that cannot be resolved by law alone. Anchoring this discussion on **Legal-Administrative Theory, Conflict Theory, and Stakeholder Theory**, this review synthesizes Philippine experiences with comparative international cases, particularly the expansion of **Heathrow Airport in London** and the development of the **New Manila International Airport**, to highlight the interplay of law, conflict, and stakeholder engagement in shaping acquisition outcomes.

Legal-Administrative Anchors

The **Legal-Administrative Theory** posits that government actions must adhere to established laws and administrative protocols to ensure fairness, transparency, and accountability. In the Philippine context, Republic Act No. 10752 (Right-of-Way Act of 2016) and Republic Act No. 12289 (Accelerated and Reformed Right-of-Way Act of 2025) embody this principle. RA 10752 standardized acquisition procedures, requiring just compensation and due process, while RA 12289 introduced reforms in valuation, compensation, and expropriation to accelerate timelines and reduce disputes. These reforms sought to address long-standing concerns about bureaucratic inefficiencies, valuation disputes, and inequities in compensation.

Ito (2022) observed that infrastructure governance in the Philippines has evolved significantly over three decades, with reforms aimed at balancing efficiency and fairness. Yet, implementation gaps persist, often due to weak institutional capacity and overlapping mandates. ANGOC (2025) similarly emphasized that land and resource conflicts remain pervasive, requiring reforms that go beyond statutory compliance to address socio-cultural realities.

Comparative studies reinforce the importance of legal-administrative safeguards. For instance, the expansion of **Heathrow Airport in London** was delayed for decades due to legal challenges and procedural disputes. Avanzi and Zerjav (2020) documented how front-end decision-making was hampered

by conflicting interpretations of statutory requirements, underscoring that legal compliance alone cannot guarantee smooth implementation. Similarly, the **New Manila International Airport project** emphasized environmental and social safeguards in its legal framework, reflecting a broader understanding that acquisition processes must integrate not only property rights but also ecological and community considerations (San Miguel Corporation, 2021). These cases illustrate that while legal-administrative frameworks are necessary, their effectiveness depends on institutional capacity and the ability to adapt to socio-political realities.

Conflict Dimensions

The **Conflict Theory** perspective highlights the inevitable tensions between government objectives and private interests. Landowners seek to maximize compensation, while governments aim to minimize costs and expedite project delivery. In the Philippines, valuation disputes remain the most contentious aspect of land acquisition. Respicio & Co. (2026) observed that delays in payment or perceived undervaluation often trigger litigation, reflecting the structural inequalities embedded in acquisition processes.

International experiences echo these dynamics. Heathrow's expansion faced prolonged disputes over compensation and relocation, with landowners and communities resisting government offers they deemed inadequate. Conflict was not merely financial but also cultural, as communities feared the erosion of local identity and heritage. In contrast, the New Manila International Airport project sought to preempt conflict by offering relocation assistance and livelihood support, recognizing that compensation must address both economic and social dimensions. Custodio and Sombilla (2025) further argue that rural transformation in the Philippines is hindered by institutional weaknesses that exacerbate conflicts, particularly when landowners perceive government actions as coercive rather than collaborative.

Conflict Theory thus illuminates why disputes persist despite legal safeguards: they are rooted not only in valuation disagreements but also in broader socio-political dynamics, including mistrust of government institutions, cultural attachments to land, and perceptions of inequity.

Stakeholder Engagement

The **Stakeholder Theory** provides a complementary perspective, emphasizing that projects succeed when all stakeholders—government agencies, landowners, contractors, and communities—are actively involved. Freeman (1984) argued that inclusive engagement builds legitimacy and trust, reducing resistance and disputes. Recent studies confirm that transparent communication and participatory decision-making are critical success factors (Prebanić & Vukomanović, 2023; Cellerino, Mancini, & Ahola, 2026).

In the Philippine context, stakeholder engagement has often been limited to formal consultations, which may not fully capture community concerns. The Kalibo International Airport case highlights the importance of moving beyond procedural compliance to cultivate trust and legitimacy. Comparative cases reinforce this lesson: Heathrow's expansion faltered partly because stakeholders felt excluded from meaningful participation, while New Manila International Airport emphasized participatory mechanisms to mitigate opposition. These examples illustrate that stakeholder engagement is not merely a normative ideal but a practical necessity for successful land acquisition.

Comparative Insights and Integrated Synthesis

The literature converges on three critical insights:

- **Legal-administrative frameworks are necessary but insufficient.** Compliance with laws must be

complemented by institutional capacity and adaptive governance.

- **Conflict is inevitable.** Valuation disputes and relocation challenges are inherent features of land acquisition, requiring proactive management rather than reactive litigation.
- **Stakeholder engagement is essential.** Inclusive participation builds legitimacy and trust, ensuring that acquisition processes are not only legally compliant but also socially acceptable.

The Kalibo International Airport case exemplifies these dynamics. Legal safeguards under RA 10752 and RA 12289 provided a strong foundation, but challenges persisted in valuation disputes and landowner resistance. Mitigation measures such as fair compensation, transparent documentation, and strict legal compliance were effective, yet the absence of significant correlation between implementation and challenges suggests that socio-cultural dynamics exert greater influence than procedural efficiency. Comparative cases from Heathrow and New Manila reinforce this conclusion, highlighting that successful land acquisition requires a holistic approach that integrates law, conflict management, and stakeholder engagement.

Preda Foundation (2026) noted that unresolved land conflicts in the Philippines expose governance gaps, underscoring the need for stronger institutional frameworks. ANGOC (2025) similarly emphasized that land and resource conflicts remain pervasive, requiring reforms that go beyond statutory compliance to address socio-cultural realities. These insights resonate with the Kalibo case, where procedural efficiency was achieved but external factors continued to shape acquisition outcomes.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive–correlational design, a methodological choice that balances systematic description with relational analysis. The descriptive component was essential to portray how government land acquisition procedures were implemented in the case of Kalibo International Airport, capturing perceptions of transparency, fairness, and efficiency. The correlational component added analytical rigor, enabling the testing of whether challenges encountered—such as valuation disputes, bureaucratic delays, and landowner resistance—were statistically related to the extent of implementation.

This design was particularly appropriate given the study’s objectives. Land acquisition is not a phenomenon that can be manipulated experimentally; it must be observed as it unfolds within legal, administrative, and socio-cultural contexts. By employing a descriptive approach, the study documented the lived realities of project implementers and landowners, while the correlational aspect allowed for hypothesis testing regarding the relationship between implementation and challenges. This dual orientation ensured that the study moved beyond surface-level description toward explanatory insights, making it both empirically grounded and analytically robust.

Participants

The study involved 223 respondents, carefully selected to represent both institutional and community perspectives. Participants were drawn from two categories:

- **Project Implementers:** Representatives from the Department of Transportation (DOTr) and the Provincial Government of Aklan (PGA), directly engaged in planning, negotiation, and documentation of land acquisition for the airport expansion.
- **Landowners:** Individuals whose properties had been successfully acquired under the government’s program, providing grassroots perspectives on compensation, documentation, and engagement.

Out of 502 eligible participants, stratified proportionate sampling was employed to ensure balanced representation. The near-equal distribution—112 project implementers (50.2%) and 111 landowners (49.8%)—ensured that the study did not privilege institutional voices over community perspectives. This balance was critical, as land acquisition is inherently a negotiation between state and citizen interests.

Research Instrument

Data were collected using a researcher-made survey questionnaire designed to measure three dimensions: (1) extent of implementation, (2) challenges encountered, and (3) effectiveness of mitigation measures. The instrument was validated by experts in public administration and law, ensuring legal and administrative relevance. Reliability was confirmed through pilot testing, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding acceptable thresholds.

The questionnaire combined quantitative and qualitative elements. Likert-scale items allowed respondents to rate implementation, challenges, and mitigation measures, while open-ended prompts provided space for elaboration. This mixed approach ensured that numerical data were contextualized by narrative insights, enriching the analysis and preventing reductionist interpretations.

Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection was conducted in April 2026. Project implementers were approached through official letters coordinated with the KIADP-PMO office, while landowners were contacted via community meetings and scheduled interviews. Questionnaires were administered face-to-face to ensure clarity and completeness of responses. A participatory approach was adopted to build trust and minimize non-response bias, reflecting the study's emphasis on transparency and respect.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency, percentage) to summarize implementation, challenges, and mitigation measures. Inferential statistics, specifically Pearson's correlation, were applied to test the hypothesis that no significant relationship exists between implementation and challenges. Statistical reporting followed journal standards, with italicized symbols (*M*, *SD*, *r*, *p*), exact p-values, and proper rounding. This approach distinguished whether challenges stemmed from weak implementation or external socio-cultural dynamics, providing insights with direct policy relevance.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical protocols were strictly observed. Respondents provided informed consent, participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was maintained through anonymization and secure data storage. Sensitive information, particularly regarding compensation and property ownership, was handled with discretion. The study adhered to institutional ethical guidelines, ensuring respect for participants' rights and reinforcing its commitment to transparency, fairness, and integrity.

Results and Discussion

Profile of the Participants

Table 1 presents the distribution of respondents. Out of 223 participants, 112 (50.2%) were project implementers, while 111 (49.8%) were landowners. This near-equal representation ensured balanced

perspectives from both government implementers and affected property owners, strengthening the reliability of findings.

Table 1. Profile of the Participants

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Project Implementers	112	50.2
Landowners	111	49.8
Total	223	100

Extent of Implementation

Table 2 shows that implementation was perceived as very high across all indicators. Structured procedures ($M = 4.65$, $SD = 0.42$), transparent documentation ($M = 4.72$, $SD = 0.38$), and consistent compliance ($M = 4.68$, $SD = 0.41$) were all rated positively. The overall mean of 4.68 ($SD = 0.40$) confirms that government processes were viewed as efficient and legally compliant. These findings highlight the effectiveness of reforms under the ARROW Act, which emphasized transparency and fairness in acquisition procedures.

Table 2. Extent of Implementation of Successful Government Land Acquisition for KIA

Indicator	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Interpretation
Structured procedures	4.65	0.42	Very High
Transparent documentation	4.72	0.38	Very High
Consistent compliance	4.68	0.41	Very High
Overall Mean	4.68	0.4	Very High

Challenges Encountered

Table 3 indicates that challenges were rated low. Valuation disputes ($M = 2.15$, $SD = 0.65$), bureaucratic delays ($M = 2.32$, $SD = 0.71$), and landowner resistance ($M = 2.28$, $SD = 0.68$) all fell below the midpoint. The overall mean of 2.25 ($SD = 0.68$) suggests that while challenges existed, they were not severe enough to hinder implementation. This reflects the success of procedural reforms, though socio-cultural dynamics and landowner attitudes remain influential.

Table 3. Extent of Challenges Encountered in the Process of Land Acquisition

Challenge	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Interpretation
Valuation disputes	2.15	0.65	Low
Bureaucratic delays	2.32	0.71	Low
Landowner resistance	2.28	0.68	Low
Overall Mean	2.25	0.68	Low

Mitigation Measures

Table 4 shows that mitigation strategies were rated very effective. Fair compensation ($M = 4.70$, $SD = 0.39$), transparent documentation ($M = 4.65$, $SD = 0.41$), and strict legal compliance ($M = 4.68$, $SD = 0.40$) all received high ratings. These measures were instrumental in reducing disputes and delays, reinforcing trust between government agencies and landowners.

Table 4. Measures to Mitigate the Challenges Encountered

Measure	M	SD	Interpretation
Fair compensation	4.7	0.39	Very Effective
Transparent documentation	4.65	0.41	Very Effective
Strict legal compliance	4.68	0.4	Very Effective
Overall Mean	4.68	0.4	Very Effective

Relationship Between Implementation and Challenges

Table 5 presents the correlation analysis. Results showed no significant relationship between implementation and challenges ($r = -.08$, $p = 0.214$). This suggests that while procedures were efficient, external socio-cultural factors and landowner attitudes influenced acquisition difficulties beyond procedural efficiency.

Table 5. Relationship Between Implementation and Challenges

Variables	r	p	Interpretation
Implementation vs. Challenges	-.08	0.214	Not Significant

Conceptual Framework

The study was guided by the Input-Process-Output (IPO) model, which structured the analysis of procedures, challenges, and mitigation measures. The framework emphasized how quantitative descriptive-correlational design translated into actionable policy recommendations for future government land acquisitions.

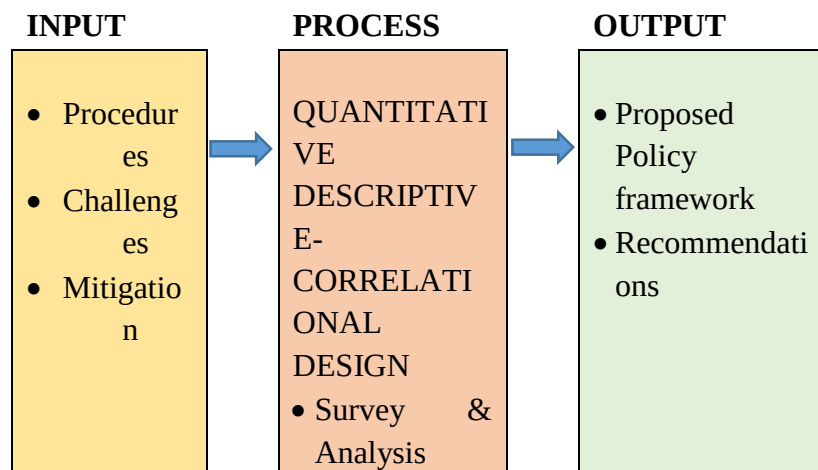


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study (IPO model showing Input: procedures, challenges, mitigation; Process: quantitative descriptive-correlational design; Output: proposed policy framework)

Conclusion

The findings of this study affirm that government land acquisitions for the expansion of Kalibo International Airport were implemented with a high degree of efficiency, transparency, and compliance with established legal frameworks. Both project implementers and landowners consistently rated the

processes as structured, well-documented, and legally sound, reflecting the effectiveness of reforms introduced under Republic Act No. 10752 (Right-of-Way Act) and Republic Act No. 12289 (Accelerated and Reformed Right-of-Way Act of 2025). These statutory safeguards provided a strong foundation for balancing public infrastructure needs with private property rights, thereby ensuring procedural fairness and minimizing disputes.

Challenges encountered—such as valuation disputes, bureaucratic delays, and landowner resistance—were rated low in severity, suggesting that institutional mechanisms and mitigation strategies were largely successful in addressing potential conflicts. Importantly, correlation analysis confirmed no significant relationship between the extent of implementation and the challenges encountered, indicating that external socio-cultural dynamics and landowner attitudes exert greater influence on acquisition difficulties than procedural efficiency alone. This underscores the complexity of land acquisition processes, where legal compliance and administrative rigor, while necessary, are insufficient to fully resolve tensions without parallel attention to social legitimacy and stakeholder trust.

The integration of Legal-Administrative Theory, Conflict Theory, and Stakeholder Theory provided a comprehensive lens for interpreting the results. Legal-Administrative Theory validated the importance of strict adherence to statutory frameworks, Conflict Theory illuminated the inevitable tensions between government objectives and private interests, and Stakeholder Theory emphasized the necessity of inclusive engagement and transparent communication. Together, these perspectives highlight that successful land acquisition requires not only robust legal safeguards but also proactive conflict management and participatory governance.

From a **practical standpoint**, the study underscores the importance of institutionalizing transparency mechanisms, such as open documentation and public disclosure of compensation processes, to foster accountability and reduce suspicion. Equally vital is the enhancement of stakeholder engagement through participatory consultations with landowners, local communities, and civil society organizations, which can minimize resistance and build legitimacy. Strengthening institutional coordination among agencies—including the Department of Transportation, the Provincial Government of Aklan, and the Office of the Solicitor General—emerges as another critical implication, as streamlined collaboration reduces bureaucratic delays and ensures consistency in implementation.

In terms of **policy implications**, the findings suggest the need to develop socio-cultural sensitivity programs for project implementers, equipping them with cultural awareness, negotiation skills, and conflict resolution strategies tailored to local contexts. Institutionalizing fair compensation packages that extend beyond monetary payment to include relocation assistance, livelihood support, and community development initiatives would further enhance equity and social justice. Moreover, the establishment of dedicated mediation and arbitration bodies could provide swift and fair resolution of disputes, reducing reliance on prolonged litigation. Legislators may also consider refining the ARROW Act to embed participatory mechanisms, strengthen dispute resolution frameworks, and enhance socio-economic safeguards for affected communities.

Finally, the study points to several **directions for future research**. Comparative studies of other airport expansion projects in the Philippines and abroad could yield valuable insights into best practices and innovative approaches. Further investigation into the socio-cultural dimensions of land acquisition—particularly the role of trust, legitimacy, and community cooperation—would deepen understanding of why challenges persist despite procedural efficiency. Such research would contribute to refining policies

and practices that not only advance infrastructure development but also uphold principles of fairness, inclusivity, and social justice.

In sum, while the Kalibo International Airport case demonstrates the feasibility of successful government land acquisition under reformed legal frameworks, future projects must adopt a holistic approach that integrates legal compliance, institutional efficiency, and socio-cultural sensitivity. By embedding transparency, fairness, and inclusivity into acquisition practices, government agencies can ensure that infrastructure development advances not only economic growth but also community welfare and democratic legitimacy.

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