

## Policy pointers

**When developing** resettlement plans, governments must recognise the complexity of interactions in the household. Considering the household as a unique homogeneous organising unit risks ignoring male- and female-specific roles and responsibilities.

**For successful livelihood** restoration, the social equilibrium between men and women in a household and their respective contributions to its economy needs to be incorporated in resettlement plans.

**Resettlement plans** should be careful to avoid empowering one gender at the expense of another. Empowering both genders will help to re-establish livelihoods for men and women at household level more successfully.

**The common practice** that all 'new' assets are controlled by a male head of household must be challenged. Resources that women control pre-resettlement should be identified and assets they expect to control post-resettlement should be clearly documented.

## Gender considerations in the restoration of livelihoods: resettlement from hydropower

Following a review of existing policies and outcomes of resettlement approaches for large hydropower dams, we suggest how incorporating the gendered dimension of resettlement can improve these policies to help women and men successfully restore their livelihoods. Large hydropower projects often force communities from their traditional lands when reservoirs flood and homes and their surroundings are submerged. Even where compensation and resettlement are well designed, plans and legislation tend to be gender blind. Often, these plans do not recognise the different roles of men and women in the household, and do not benefit each group equally. The ways compensation payments are made, and involuntary resettlement is managed, tend to reinforce some roles and diminish others. Hydropower projects should seek to empower and support both men and women's livelihoods simultaneously to achieve successful resettlement outcomes.

Reservoirs created by large dams can flood many hundreds of square kilometres, often displacing villages and leading to loss of fields, fruit trees, forests, pastures, riverine fisheries and informal businesses. Resettling displaced communities and creating viable livelihoods on a new site is a challenging and controversial process that has led many civil society groups to fight against large hydropower projects that displace people involuntarily.

Over the last two decades, resettlement plans have begun to pay greater attention to gender — intra-household dynamics are better understood and gender equity considerations are becoming more mainstream.

Gender relations in the context of this briefing is seen as understanding the nature of the different

roles, and power, of men and women within a household or community. Gender awareness should not be seen solely as having the aim of 'empowering women' — although a growing focus on gender has highlighted that it is women and girls that have often been neglected in social and development approaches, and most case studies show that it is these groups who lose out or whose needs are not addressed.

Gender roles are established by cultural and societal norms and values, although legislation also plays an important role. 189 states have ratified the 1980 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) that made a significant step in globally levelling the legal playing field between women and men. Only Sudan, Somalia and Saudi Arabia have not signed this convention.

## *Without a gendered approach, livelihood restoration neglects 50% of the household*

However, in many countries practice has not followed legislation. One illustration of how legal adoption does not necessarily lead to changes in society's attitudes comes from Burkina Faso,

where 21% of people still assert that a man can force his wife into sexual relations against her will, only 10% of politicians are women, 63% of women have been excised (ie have experienced female genital mutilation) and only 14% of women can sell their land compared to 32% of men. These trends are all shaped by customary norms and constraints.<sup>1</sup> There is clearly a long way to go in changing attitudes and achieving gender equality even when countries have made legal commitments.

The UN Platform for Action, adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, laid the basis for gender mainstreaming in development discourse.<sup>2</sup> Gender-focused research has now generated over 25 years of empirical evidence and a clear rationale for a gendered approach to development. In practice however, the gender dimensions of involuntary resettlement due to large hydropower dams remain insufficiently applied. Taking them more into consideration will help achieve better livelihood outcomes for affected people — both women and men.

### **Gender dimensions of resettlement**

While resettlement has long been a controversial issue, gender disaggregation of impacts and needs for livelihood restoration has emerged more recently. Differential effects on men and

women in livelihood improvement only became mainstream discourse in the 1990s,<sup>3,4,5,6</sup> when it was also documented for the first time.

Interactions within a household are complex and have developed over many years conditioned by societal norms — and they are turned upside down by resettlement. To take the example of farming, agricultural production may be carried out simultaneously on many plots by different family members producing either staple crops and/or cash crops for the household.<sup>7</sup> The way revenue or produce then flows through the household is determined by differentiated gender roles in those communities. In households in Sahelian parts of West Africa, for example, men are expected to provide the main carbohydrate (rice, maize, millet, sorghum etc), while women often produce vegetables or cash crops and generate cash from stalls in markets, small livestock or from artisanal products. Women's activities are primarily responsible for financing the condiments and sauce, as well as children's clothing, school fees and medicines. In fishing communities, women are often exclusively responsible for marketing the fish that are caught largely by men.

During involuntary resettlement, these traditional roles are challenged in two principal ways. First, whose assets (or production) are compensated and how? Second, how are men and women's household roles and contributions affected differently in efforts to restore their livelihoods?

Compensation for lost production is usually paid to the household head, who is generally a man. Household assets, even in recent projects with support from multilateral development banks, have also been inventoried in the man's name (see Box 1) even when belonging to, or used by, women.

Much research has explored how the livelihoods of those affected are restored as part of the resettlement process, both in terms of documenting impacts and proposing frameworks and ways forward (for example, Cernea (2004),<sup>8</sup> Asian Development Bank<sup>9</sup> and World Bank Operational Policies,<sup>10</sup> International Finance Corporation etc, for example see Box 2). Much of this thinking applies to projects funded by lending institutions, however this covers less than 10% of dams under construction<sup>11</sup> and much less of it finds its way into national legislation and practice that affects the remaining 90% of projects.

In terms of restoring livelihoods, recent World Bank policies required that those subject to involuntary resettlement should be 'no worse off'. Yet this has already proved extremely challenging

### **Box 1. Gendered compensation at Kandadji Dam, Niger (2013)**

The compensation process at Kandadji Dam in Niger (first phase) saw women's fields inventoried, along with the men's, during the resettlement process. The government proposed giving one hectare of irrigated land in compensation for every ten hectares of rainfed land lost to the dam (irrigation land being more productive when intensively farmed). To calculate compensation levels, land cultivated by women was added to the land lost by men in each household. However, the reallocation was formally given to the household head (usually a man) and consisted of rice growing plots. These were unsuitable for the cash crops previously favoured by women. The government had planned to deliver market gardens for women but these were not built until four or five years after resettlement and were part of a parallel development plan, not part of the legal compensation package. During the consultation process, communities led by male representatives also rejected the proposal to establish separate bank accounts for men and women so that each could receive compensation payments. Compensation was then paid only to (male) heads of households.

to measure at household scale as local livelihoods are transformed during resettlement. It is an equally difficult task to find appropriate metrics to determine how male and female roles have changed, and whether for better or worse. Communities are in a perpetual state of social evolution and in these circumstances, Environmental and Social Management Plans should deliberately set out to empower both genders and offer complementary, but possibly divergent, development trajectories for both men and women post-resettlement. These programmes should specifically focus on maintaining diversity of incomes, which is one factor that increases resilience for local people, especially in semi-arid areas: if one income stream should falter for any one household, other sources of income may be able to pick up the slack.

### Easy enough to rebuild infrastructure – harder to dictate social and cultural norms and rebuild livelihoods

Government programmes for resettlement and livelihood restoration tend to be blunt instruments. They often focus on infrastructure and physical assets: the tangible, visible parts of a resettlement programme (Level 1, see Figure 1). Many resettlement programmes around the world are successful at this basic level. Level 2 type activities — involving livelihood restoration, tenure security or benefit sharing — pose a greater challenge, this is despite lending institutions maintaining a focus on what are defined as

### Box 2. Asian Development Bank – gender and resettlement

The Asian Development Bank adopted a gendered resettlement policy in 2003 to complement its 1995 resettlement policy and gender and development approaches. The policy was justified by the following observations (among others):

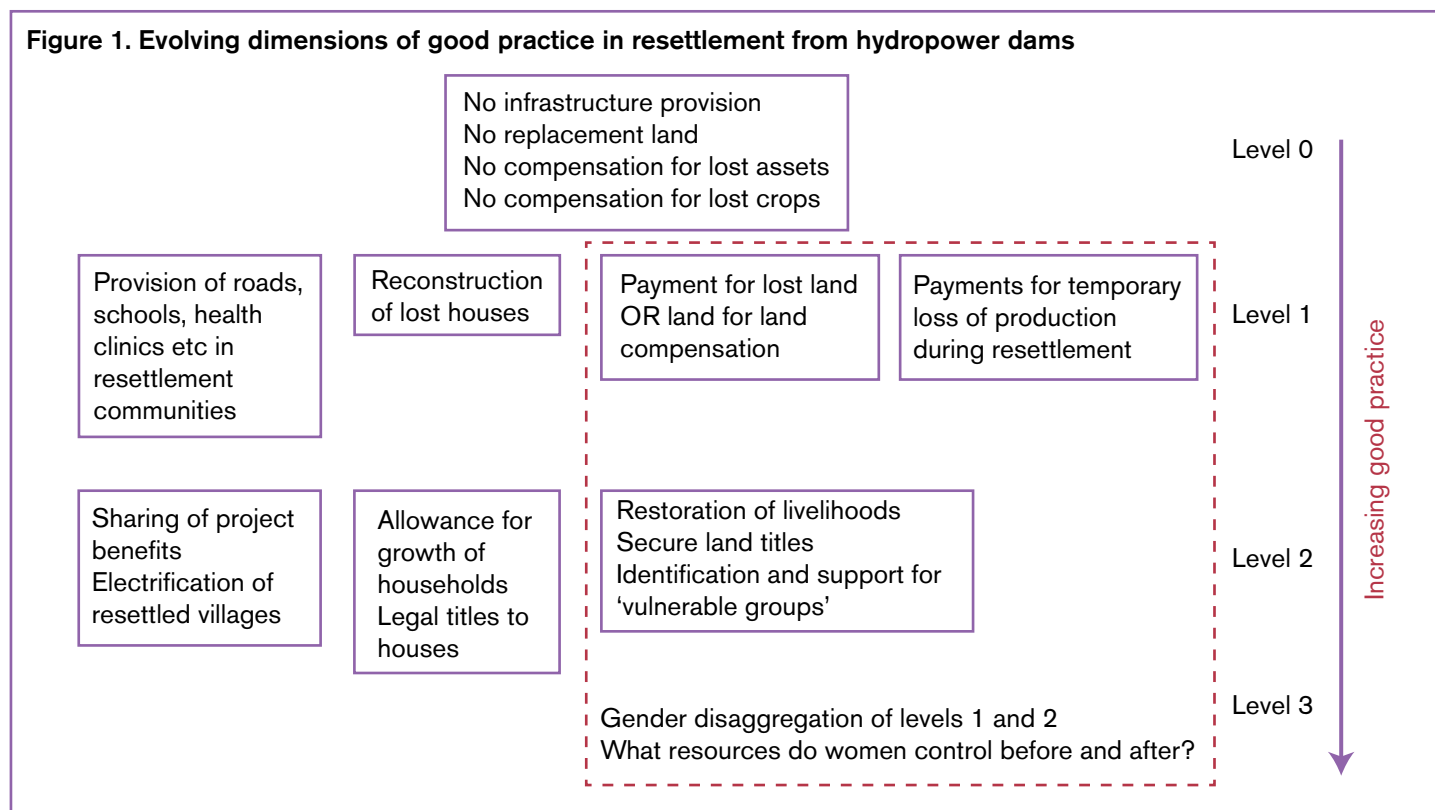
1. Gender disparities that already exist in society and the family tend to become aggravated at times of social and economic stress.
2. Women may not have land ownership and property rights.
3. Women work in the informal sector, such as agriculture and the collection of forest produce. They are equally concerned with sources of livelihood.
4. Women tend to have responsibilities for basic needs like fuel, fodder, nutrition, water and sanitation. Loss of these has a far greater impact on women than men.
5. Breakdown of community and social networks affects women more than men. Social networks are a source of help in times of crisis and provide security for the household.
6. Gender disparities embedded in social practices and traditions render women vulnerable to violence and stress. Any situation of economic and social distress creates more scope for violence against women, adding to their vulnerability.

Modified from Asian Development Bank (2003)<sup>9</sup>

‘vulnerable groups’ (which includes women-headed households). Politicians are often bemused that resettled people can still feel worse off than before, despite governments having provided modern houses, health clinics and school buildings (see Boxes 3 and 4).

Effective consideration of a gender-specific response (Level 3) requires restructured and more

Figure 1. Evolving dimensions of good practice in resettlement from hydropower dams



### Box 3. Social changes at Tehri Dam (India)

The changes in villages displaced by Tehri Dam (India) show how sudden perturbation of social systems due to resettlement affect women's sense of self-worth, pride and wellbeing. Previously they regarded themselves as valued contributors to the household as they ran or heavily contributed to livelihood production systems (field cultivation, livestock, milk etc). But the monetisation of commodities in the resettlement site mediated by men left them feeling less useful, more dependent on money than previously and 'imprisoned' by their surroundings. Social spaces linked to their previous activities (e.g. riverfront, forest, village water sources) disappeared, and the boundaries and gates of the new resettlement site have prevented women from freely moving around. Crime levels are also higher in the communities where rural people were resettled which leads to women spending more time indoors.

The lack of a clear role for women in rebuilding the family and community post resettlement left them feeling impoverished and marginalised.

Tulsi Charan Bisht (2009) Development-Induced Displacement and Women: The Case of the Tehri Dam, India, *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, 10:4, 301-317,

### Box 4. Assets vs livelihoods

In Ghana, women from communities affected by building of the Bui Dam (2013) were pleased with the modern houses provided by the Bui Power Authority but have lost their fruit trees (especially cashews) that provided a steady revenue stream to pay for school fees and medicines. In the resettlement communities, they were unable to send their children to school immediately after displacement as the compensation funds for these crop losses were not paid in a timely manner.

Daniel Doh and Paul Kofi Andoh (2014) Monitoring of Natural Resource Governance Assessment of changes in policy and practice as a result of the multi-stakeholder Ghana dams dialogue. IIED research report, London

granular approaches to compensation and livelihood restoration than Level 1, particularly to avoid actively deepening gender inequality. This is partly because resettlement itself is still a controversial process where good practice has not yet been fully established and is very site specific (Level 2). Even as compensation policies for land and housing evolve,<sup>12</sup> the gender dimension of resettlement is a level of granularity that large dam projects have often been unable to deal with, struggling with managing broader resettlement approaches correctly (eg simply assessing assets properly, paying adequate compensation, respecting rights, consulting communities and finding enough land for resettled people to cultivate). Even just providing clean drinking water to resettled villages seems at times legally or logistically unattainable. People displaced by the Kandadji Dam in Niger had at least two years of intermittent water supply delivered by lorry tanker before pumped water supply came online.

Without a gendered approach, livelihood restoration neglects 50% of the household production unit. To fully mobilise the potential for livelihood restoration and development, resettlement plans need to recognise the complexity and nuances of men and women's roles in the household and their respective economic contributions. Careful gender analysis must be carried out to avoid reinforcing existing inequalities and adding to practices that can subordinate women further. Assets lost during resettlement must be properly compensated as these are the foundation for each gender developing and investing in new productive activities and successfully re-establishing their livelihoods.

#### Jamie Skinner

Jamie Skinner is a principal researcher in IIED's Natural Resources Group.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> OECD (2018) Social institutions and Gender index for Burkina Faso. / <sup>2</sup> Rao, A and Kelleher, D (2005) Is there life after gender mainstreaming? *Gender and Development* 13:2, pp 57-69. / <sup>3</sup> For example, *Gender and development journal* (Oxfam) founded in 1993. / <sup>4</sup> Elson, D (1991) *Male Bias in the Development Process*. Manchester University Press. / <sup>5</sup> Kabeer N (1994) *Reversed realities: gender hierarchies in development thought*. Verso Press, London. / <sup>6</sup> Guijit, I and Shah, MK (eds) (1998) *The myth of community: gender issues in participatory development*. Intermediate Technology Development Group Publishing, London. / <sup>7</sup> See for example, World Bank (2014) Levelling the field: Improving Opportunities for Women Farmers in Africa. / <sup>8</sup> Cernea, MM 'Impoverishment Risks, Risk Management, and Reconstruction: A Model of Population Displacement and Resettlement'. Presented at the UN Symposium on Hydropower and Sustainable Development, Beijing, 27-29 October 2004. / <sup>9</sup> Asian Development Bank (2003) Gender Checklist Resettlement. / <sup>10</sup> World Bank (2010) World Bank Gender and Development Policy Framework – A Guidance Note. / <sup>11</sup> Skinner, J and Haas, LJ (2014) Watered down? A review of social and environmental safeguards for large dam projects. *Natural Resource Issues* No. 28. IIED, London. <http://pubs.iied.org/17517IIED> / <sup>12</sup> See for example, Dao, N (2010) Dam development in Vietnam: The evolution of dam-induced resettlement policy. *Water Alternatives* 3(2): 324-340.



## Knowledge Products

The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) promotes sustainable development, linking local priorities to global challenges. We support some of the world's most vulnerable people to strengthen their voice in decision making.

#### Contact

Jamie Skinner  
jamie.skinner@iied.org

80-86 Gray's Inn Road  
London, WC1X 8NH  
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0)20 3463 7399  
[www.iied.org](http://www.iied.org)

IIED welcomes feedback via: @IIED and [www.facebook.com/theiied](http://www.facebook.com/theiied)

ISBN 978-1-78431-595-5

This briefing has been produced with the generous support of Danida (Denmark), Irish Aid, Sida (Sweden) and the UK's Global Challenges Research Fund. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent those of the institutions involved.

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF DENMARK  
Danida



Did this paper meet your needs?

Please send comments on format, accessibility and more to [newbooks@iied.org](mailto:newbooks@iied.org)