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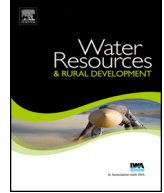


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Broadening stakeholder participation to improve outcomes for dam-forced resettlement in Vietnam



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ABSTRACT

Forced resettlement due to hydropower dam construction in Vietnam continues to result in poor outcomes, in part due to the poor productivity of replacement agricultural land, poor local governance, and constrained access by displaced farmers to forest land and fisheries. This paper critically examines three recent initiatives in Vietnam that promise to promote more stable livelihoods for displaced populations and to strengthen participation in development for residents as well as civil society. The first is a payment for environmental services (PES) scheme for hydroelectric revenue sharing to fund forest maintenance and monitoring by displaced households, while the second focus is an international financial institution (IFI)-initiated project that prioritizes gender empowerment and participation. The PES scheme promises a sustainable income stream for displaced households and has institutionalized legal and government backing, but it entails high transaction costs and a lengthy planning phase. The IFI project offers residents generous compensation and the rights embodied in IFI involuntary safeguards, but a lack of effective livelihood support and poor communication provide cautionary notes. A third, rights-based approach by Vietnamese civil society organizations (CSOs) involves advocacy to achieve effective reallocation of state-managed forest land to displaced villagers. The authors examine the potential for benefit-sharing mechanisms, IFIs, and CSOs, backed by new legislation and expanding space for civil society in Vietnam, to address the

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problems posed by inadequate local governance. They conclude that these approaches show merit for nationwide replication, and there is a need for including these external stakeholders in local resettlement management bodies.

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1. Introduction

Vietnam increasingly relies on hydropower to help satisfy electricity demand estimated to expand by 10–12% per year from 2011 to 2015 [73]. Hydropower currently accounts for approximately 36% of electricity generation [61] and the volume will increase as a number of newly constructed or planned hydropower dams come on-line. According to a 2013 survey of the Ministry of Industry and Trade, there are currently 260 hydropower plants in operation with an installed capacity of 13,694 MW. Several hundred more hydropower dams are now planned or under construction, including 21 large dams to be completed by 2017 [39].

Dam construction in Vietnam has displaced approximately 240,000 people to date [63], with two major hydropower dams alone, Hoa Binh and Son La, displacing an estimated 58,000 and 92,000 residents, respectively [17]. An additional 60,000 people are expected to be dispossessed by 2017 [39]. Most of the displaced are ethnic minority agriculturalists highly dependent on access to forests and fisheries as well as upland fields for their livelihoods.

Vietnam's large hydropower dam projects have become especially contentious in recent years, largely due to greater media coverage and growing awareness of poor human and environmental impacts, including declines in river water quality, reduced flow during the dry season, and degraded fisheries, forests and biodiversity. The Vietnamese media has recently exposed a number of dam-related scandals and accidents, including cracked walls and water leakage due to shoddy construction (Song Tranh 2 dam), sudden releases of reservoir water during storms that inundate downstream areas and communities (Yali Falls dam, 2005; Avuong dam, 2009), and destructive tremors caused by water pressure in reservoirs situated over previously unidentified fault lines (Song Tranh 2 dam, 2012).

Even government officials are increasingly voicing concerns about the social and environmental costs of hydropower and suggesting more caution in pursuing further dam construction [59]. The central government has directed provincial people's committees to review current applications to eliminate inefficient projects or those with negative environmental or resettlement impacts. In Quang Nam province in central Vietnam, the provincial government cancelled 23 of 57 projects originally planned for the Vu Gia-Thu Bon river basin [60] and neighboring Kon Tum's provincial people's committee has cancelled plans for 21 of 69 installed or planned hydropower projects [24]. On October 30, 2013, Vu Huy Hoang, the Minister of Industry and Trade, announced that no new large dams will be built after 2015, although 400 small and mid-sized dams will be constructed [65]. Displacement implications of this decision are unclear: while smaller-scale dams may result in less overall displacement, the fact that most depend on private investment may imply weaker national regulatory oversight and fewer investor resettlement safeguards in place. This burgeoning private sector investment is contiguous with ongoing decentralization and privatization of the power sector in Vietnam, in line with central government aims to reform the sector, widely criticized for mismanagement and speculative investments.

Despite a national regulatory framework that mandates higher levels of financial compensation than before, land-for-land compensation and post-resettlement livelihood assistance, a 2010 survey by a national institute found that 82% of dam-displaced residents become worse off after resettlement than before [25]. Researchers on dam-forced displacement in Vietnam report several common obstacles that have thwarted efforts to improve resettlement outcomes, including local government provision of agricultural land of insufficient quality and quantity and a lack of access to forests and fisheries, which many farmers depend on for supplemental income and enhanced year-round food

security (see [46,9,10,45,10]; and [17]). In addition, residents often do not receive full compensation [11] for assets, or they experience conflict with host communities over access to natural resources [17,68]. Finally, affected populations often are not allowed to fully participate in resettlement site selection, housing or other decisions and may be uninformed about resettlement plans and procedures, and there is typically no independent mechanism for adjudicating grievances over compensation or resettlement [17].

Provincial and district governments – charged with carrying out dam-forced resettlement in Vietnam – are often saddled with straitened budgets and frequently rotated staff with limited training in land management or technical aspects related to resettlement [28]. In addition, district officials may not be eager to help implement large dam projects whose benefits, particularly hydroelectric power and revenues, will mainly accrue to distant urban and industrial areas, and this may also affect implementation and morale [48].

Given the inherent limitations of local governance, the onus for improving livelihoods may fall mainly on the affected populations themselves, especially after compensation monies have been disbursed and resettlement project support has ceased with the end of the construction project term. However, for many rural resettlers, limited assets, education and training make it difficult for them to adopt new livelihoods, diversify or intensify agricultural activities or migrate elsewhere for employment [10].

If the right to participate in decision-making and pursue grievances is not proffered and stable livelihoods and food security after resettlement cannot be secured by the primary stakeholders – the local government and the affected people themselves – due to poor capacity or weak community capitals, it is worth exploring the extent to which other stakeholders can contribute advocacy, expertise and financial resources. According to a World Bank document on Vietnamese infrastructure development [73]: “Given plans to develop many [hydropower dam] projects over the medium-term, strong efforts are necessary to integrate knowledge from elsewhere and to build local capacities to achieve results which are sustainable over the long term” (p. 30).

This paper examines three external stakeholder approaches to improve outcomes for post-resettlement of development-displaced populations in Vietnam in light of growing government tolerance of an expanding civil society.¹ The approaches address different types of common challenges: payment for environmental services schemes by the hydropower authority promise sustainable income streams for poverty alleviation and forest conservation; international financial institutions (IFIs) bound by resettlement risk safeguards seek to improve residents' participation, strengthen environmental and social impact assessment and promote favorable terms of compensation; and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) engage in advocacy for displaced residents and may negotiate for reallocation of forest land. The authors investigate whether these stakeholders can liaise effectively with local government, the main implementation body, to advocate for affected populations and provide essential support for livelihoods and long-term community sustainability that so far have been lacking. The paper will first explain about trends in dam-forced resettlement in Vietnam and reasons for poor resettlement outcomes despite an improving regulatory environment. Then recent trends and issues for each of the three types of stakeholder activity – payment of environmental services schemes, resettlement support by IFIs and support for the displaced by domestic civil society organizations – will be followed by introduction of a relevant case study conducted by the authors in central Vietnam. Finally, the authors will discuss relative strengths and weaknesses of each stakeholder approach and overall prospects for their institutionalized implementation in Vietnam, where a gradual devolution of centralized authority is promoting accommodation of involvement by increasingly autonomous civil society organizations (CSOs). The authors conclude that for these approaches to be effectively and broadly realized the central government should consider creation of specialized local bodies for long-term resettlement support that incorporate external stakeholder expertise.

¹ While international NGOs such as World Vision or Save the Children may have a presence in resettlement villages, their activities have not specifically targeted dam-displaced populations but have been part of broader local poverty alleviation or health and nutrition initiatives; for this reason the role of INGOs will not be examined in this paper.

2. Background

As has been noted by researchers since the 1970s, displacement due to construction of dams and other infrastructure across the global south embodies a serious ethical contradiction: to promote economic growth and enhanced living conditions for the majority, a minority of local residents must risk the loss of their homes, land, community, other assets and social and psychological well-being [19,43]. In the case of hydropower dams, the fact that many displaced populations are economically marginalized indigenous ethnic minorities living in remote river basins implies constrained capacity for restoring previous livelihoods and living conditions [52]. Scudder and Colson hypothesized that displacement and resettlement proceed in a four-stage process of planning and recruitment, adjustment and coping, community formation and economic development, and handing over and incorporation, although Scudder warned that without development opportunities, appropriate infrastructure and access to markets most communities will remain stymied in stage two [50].

In the 1990s sociologist Cernea [13] conceived the highly influential Impoverishment Risks and Reconstruction model for assessing the major risks of resettlement. It identifies eight risks facing displaced populations: loss of land, joblessness, homelessness, economic marginalization, food insecurity, increased morbidity and mortality, loss of access to common property and services, and social disarticulation, especially due to physical fragmentation of a community.

In order to minimize these risks Cernea, who served as a senior advisor to the World Bank for two decades from the mid-1970s, pushed the Bank to formulate involuntary resettlement safeguards that would govern dam and other infrastructure investments. The Bank, as the world's largest investor in large dam projects [35], predicated these safeguards on the goal of improving livelihoods and standards or at least restoring them, in real terms, "to pre-displacement levels or to levels prevailing prior to the beginning of project implementation, whichever is higher [75]." Regional development banks like the Asian Development Bank, many bilateral aid agencies, and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) later adopted their own resettlement guidelines based on the World Bank model. As large dam investment has come to include a growing proportion of private capital there has been an attempt to adopt similar guidelines for private banks and other investors with a framework called the Equator Principles. However, all of these guidelines have also been criticized for a "managerial approach" that assumes that displacement is an inevitable by-product of development whose adverse outcomes should be minimized by adequate compensation, in contrast to a "movementist approach" based on a human rights stance that questions the development imperative and acknowledges the complexity of displacement based on a host of factors – cultural, social, economic, spatial, environmental – that are changing at the same time [18,19]. Although rights approaches increasingly frame displacement discourse, governments and IFIs prefer to consider minimizing risks.

In 1998 an advisory body, the World Commission on Dams (WCD), was convened to assess the impacts of large dams and make recommendations for achieving sustainable dam projects. The group issued a report before disbanding, *Dams and Development: A New Framework for Decision-making* (2000), which set seven strategic priorities for hydropower development, including ensuring that the adversely affected participate in talks to negotiate suitable entitlements and mitigation provisions and the implementation of long-term project monitoring and assistance for affected communities. The report's recommendations, while influential, were never endorsed by major large dam investors such as the World Bank and Asian Development Bank or the governments of India or China, where the greatest displacement has occurred [35].

In 2000 the Vietnamese government hosted a regional consultation meeting of the WCD and two years later held a national workshop to discuss implementation of the group's strategic priorities [17]. While the government never explicitly endorsed the WCD's recommendations it later enacted new legislation for land acquisition and resettlement that improved compensation criteria and strengthened post-resettlement livelihood support, while requiring local governments, rather than hydropower authorities, to carry out resettlement [17]. The Land Law of 2003, for example, allowed those without clear land title to receive compensation, and specified that resettled people should be able to achieve living conditions equal or better than in their original sites.

As noted above, these regulatory reforms have not been accompanied by significant improvements in resettlement outcomes. Of the major identified challenges – poor land-for-land compensation, constrained access to common natural resources, insufficient compensation and weak participation in decision-making, the land issue is perhaps the most intractable. Vietnam has only 0.07 ha of arable land per capita, and three-fourths of the land area is mountainous or hilly [75], so arable land in many upland areas is at a premium. Local governments, legally assigned the main responsibility for resettling displaced residents since 2004 (see Decree No. 197/2004/ND-CP), may find it difficult to secure the agricultural land promised to resettled farmers in resettlement action plans. The recent influx of lowland majority Kinh farmers into Vietnamese upland regions, once almost exclusively inhabited by ethnic minority groups, has further heightened pressure on arable land in watershed areas [51].

In their original sites many displaced farmers cultivated fertile riverine plots, including paddy fields. Most also practiced swidden cultivation, allowing upland plots to remain fallow on 5–10-year rotations. After displacement they typically receive narrow, less productive upland plots for sedentary cultivation. With surrounding forest often designated as state enterprise forest land or protection forest, resettled residents are enjoined from clearing forest for new cultivation plots, but without access to agrichemical inputs or training in intensive agriculture their yields on replacement plots may be poor [9].

Most of the land in upland areas of Vietnam is designated as forest land. All forest land in Vietnam is owned by the state, although land use contracts or agreements can be extended for access, use and management of forest land to individuals and communities [30]. Forests are classified into three types: special use, production forest and protection forest. Special use forest includes national parks and nature reserves. Protection forest includes most remaining areas of primary forest with high levels of biodiversity and endangered plants and wildlife, administered by local forest protection management units (FPMUs), while productive forest is forest that can be used for plantations of income-generating trees such as acacia and bamboo. State forest enterprises currently control millions of hectares of productive forest land; they may retain control even when the land is not being used and may deny access to local residents for firewood or non-timber forest products [54,15].

Much of the land near resettled villages is classified as protection forests: even when residents gain land use rights for community forestry, they are not allowed to transfer, lease or exchange land, harvest wood or clear forest for cultivation. The national Law on Forest Protection and Development, enacted in 2004, provides for the resurveying and reallocation of unused state forest enterprise land to poor and landless rural households in order to decrease deforestation and expand revenues, but devolution of land title has proceeded slowly, benefitting only a small percentage of rural poor [36]. According to Sikor and Tan ([51], p. 407), “Devolution works by repositioning state actors in relation to other actors, that is, by modifying the positions of actors within existing power relations.” State forest enterprises are understandably reluctant to cede control of income-producing land, especially the most fertile land, to marginalized local residents [54], so reallocated land is often of poor quality or remotely located, making it difficult for local residents to cultivate [36].

3. Methodologies

The authors have conducted extensive research in the three case study areas in central Vietnam. For the section on payments for environmental services, the authors drew on research conducted during a two-year project investigating community resilience in ethnic minority resettlement villages from January 2011 to March 2013, including data from 120 household surveys, 58 semi-structured interviews and six focus group interviews in four villages in Tay Giang and Dong Giang districts, Quang Nam province. Informant interviews were conducted with village, commune, and district officials and FPMU representatives. To understand more about the Asian Development Bank’s Song Bung 4 resettlement project in Nam Giang district, Quang Nam province, the authors visited the site in March and September 2012 to conduct two focus groups and semistructured interviews with households, project managers and a former ADB consultant. Other informants included an NGO official who had participated in project assessment as part of a Vietnam Rivers Network-sponsored visit to the site in 2012. The authors also relied on on-line documentation of the ADB project. The final case study is based on doctoral research conducted in Huong Tra district, Thua Thien Hue province from 2010 to

2014 by one of the authors. In-depth interviews were conducted with staff of two local NGOs working in a resettlement village. Additional interviews were conducted with government officials with the Ministry of Natural Resources; the national Committee for Ethnic Minorities; the Vietnam Union of Friendship Organizations of Thua Thien Hue province, which oversees CSO activities in the province; and with principals of three domestic and one international NGO.

4. Analysis of external stakeholder approaches for resettlement

4.1. The hydropower authority: paying for forest environmental services

A number of mechanisms have been proposed to achieve more equitable allocation of benefits and alleviate poverty occurring after dam-forced resettlement, but one that has gained particular attention in Vietnam is the policy instrument known as payment for environmental services (PES). A PES scheme has been defined as “a voluntary transaction in which a well-defined environmental service (ES), or a form of land use likely to secure that service, is bought by at least one ES buyer from a minimum of one ES provider if and only if the provider continues to supply that service” [76]. PES schemes have been implemented as means of allocating funds to municipalities to restore degraded river watersheds or to direct a portion of water use fees paid by irrigation association members to private upstream land owners. They may include public sector schemes, private market schemes and direct private deals between seller and buyer [77].

In Vietnam, PES is regarded by the government as a key strategy for alleviating rural poverty and conserving the nation’s dwindling forests and biodiversity [12]. It is seen as especially promising for dam-displaced communities for the following reasons:

1. Allowing cultivation of tree plantations on a portion of the assigned land, along with regular PES-generated income, may help alleviate poverty for displaced households.
2. It relieves economic pressures on land-deficient resettled households that have contributed to illegal logging and conversion of protected forest for agricultural use.
3. PES participants gain greater awareness of forest ecosystem services and incentives to conserve forests.
4. It helps to address ethical concerns over inequitable distribution of the costs and benefits of hydropower dam construction.
5. It shifts some of the burden for supporting livelihood restoration for displaced populations from local government to the income-accruing project investors.
6. It promises a sustainable, long-term income stream for residents not contingent on dam construction or poverty alleviation project terms.

Recent payment for forest environmental services (PFES) legislation levies taxes at fixed rates on hydroelectric generation or water provision by major water beneficiaries, including hydropower utilities, drinking water or irrigation providers and ecotourism companies. The majority of the revenues raised thereby accrue to local government, with a portion paid out in regular disbursements to local residents. In return, residents are expected to conserve the forest area in the river watershed by planting trees, monitoring changes in forest cover, patrolling to prevent illegal logging and branch-trimming and forest maintenance. The rationale behind the scheme is that since hydropower and water suppliers benefit from ecosystem provisioning services such as steady flows of clean water and prevention of erosion, they should partially pay for the conservation of said services [71].

PFES in a Vietnamese context is at variance with conventional definitions of the scheme in that participation and transactions by both providers and beneficiaries are not voluntary but state-mandated [46,53]. Participants in Vietnamese PFES schemes are allocated specific parcels of forest land, with their use restricted to protection or forest plantations, although they are allowed to harvest non-timber forest products and limited amounts of firewood or building materials. However, even with devolution of legal rights to land use in protected forests, the participants are not allowed to sell, lease or otherwise trade their land, limiting potential revenue growth and incentives for ecosystem management [46].

A 2008 government decree established a national regulatory framework for PFES [30], and PFES pilot programs were initiated in Lam Dong and Song La provinces in 2009–2010, after a pilot policy had been formulated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development [53] and an earlier ADB-funded technical assistance project in Quang Nam province had concluded that benefit sharing of hydroelectric revenues could help support resettlement communities [4]. To help overcome government budgetary limitations and lack of experience in PFES implementation, the American NGO Winrock International and the German Agency for International Cooperation provided crucial funding and trained residents in forest monitoring and conservation in the pilot programs [47,71].

The government deemed the pilot programs as successful, with illegal logging reportedly halved and households receiving annual payments ranging from 10.5 to 12 million VND (US\$540–615) in Lam Dong province [1] and lesser amounts in Song La. The stage was then set for scaling up application nationwide with the enactment of the 99/2010/ND-CP Law on Payment for Environmental Services in 2010. The law stipulates that three categories of ecosystem service beneficiaries, electricity utilities, public water utilities and ecotourism providers, pay for forest environmental services such as water regulation and soil conservation (for water and electric utilities) and for protection of landscape quality (for tourism companies). The rate is fixed at 20 VND per kilowatt hour for hydropower producers and 40 VND per cubic meters for water suppliers [22]. Ecotourism operators need to contribute between 0.5% and 2% of annual tourism revenues [14]. Tax revenues are paid to the provincial government, then a portion is disbursed to a Forest Protection and Development Fund at the district level and subsequently to local households. The program has drawn considerable attention as one of the first such nationwide PES programs in Southeast Asia.

Neef and Thomas [41] detailed a number of prerequisites for a well-functioning PES scheme, including identification of environmental services, market and participants; clear rewards and processes; and a sound legal and institutional framework. With the new law in place Vietnamese PFES schemes appear to meet most of these criteria, and they are regarded as particularly promising for resettlement communities, but with high transaction costs for implementation, problems with clarifying household and community tenure rights, and modest financial incentives, their potential viability and benefits for a broader pool of potential participants are unclear [47,37]. Many provinces are now planning pilot projects, but the complexity and expense of baseline surveys and forest monitoring has necessitated external assistance by consultants and aid donors and prevented rapid implementation.

4.2. PFES case study: Dong Giang district, Quang Nam province

In Dong Giang district in Quang Nam province, central Vietnam, a pilot PFES program was first conducted in two non-resettled villages from 2009, in accordance with the implementation scheme shown in Fig. 1. In interviews conducted by the authors in early 2013 a village chief and district officials claimed that, as a result of regular forest patrols and construction and manning of a road block, incidents of illegal logging declined by 50% during the pilot project. In January 2013 the project was expanded to two adjacent resettlement villages, Aden and Tro Gung, which had been relocated in 2006 due to the construction of the 210 MW Avuong dam.

Forest land was allotted to households by lottery to ameliorate claims of unfairness over varying forest quality. Participating villagers were trained in workshops led by the INGO Winrock about forest ecosystem services and forest maintenance and monitoring, and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) covered costs for assessment of forest quality and training courses. Each household has been allocated 22 ha of forest to protect, and one person from each household is expected to provide approximately one day's labor per week. Illegal loggers found trying to enter the protected area are reported to local forest security officers for follow-up. Regular monitoring of forest quality is conducted by members of the Avuong FPMU.

In the resettlement village of Aden, Dong Giang district, residents were divided into four groups for monitoring, with 13 household residents in each group. In this project each household is paid 274,000 VND per hectare per year, for annual income of 6.028 million VND, or 502,333 VND per month, less than the household payments reported for the pilot case study in Lam Dong province [71]. The current average reported household income for Aden residents is 732,671 VND per month (according to a 2012

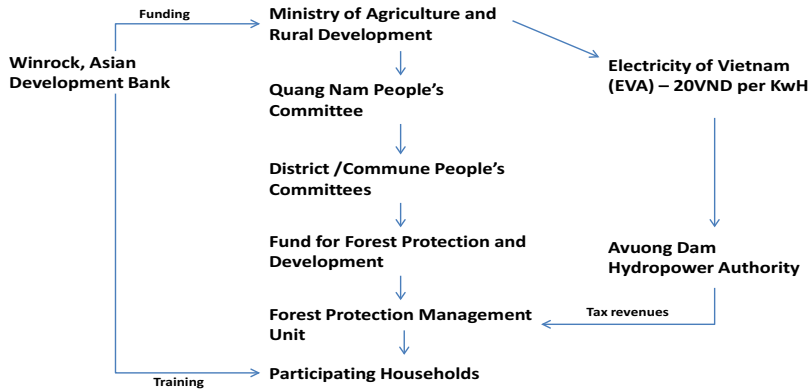


Fig. 1. Institutional framework for PES scheme in Dong Giang district, Quang Nam province.

household survey), so the additional revenue would account for 40% of total average monthly income. However for these subsistence farmers, even this large boost in household income would have negligible effects in lifting families above the rural poverty line of 400,000 VND per capita per month.

Quang Nam province retains a 60% share of the tax on Avuong dam hydroelectric generation, amounting to 12 billion VND per year. The remaining 40% share goes to the affected districts of Dong Giang, Tay Giang and Nam Giang [20]. However, transaction costs are high, according to an officer with the district FPMU (personal communication, 2012), partly due to implementation of an initial baseline study to determine initial forest cover, quality and composition and to periodic forest monitoring. Tax revenues alone couldn't fully fund the forest protection project, so ADB funding has been critical. For residents the major opportunity cost of participation is the requirement that they forego traditional swidden practices of converting forest land for upland rice or other types of agriculture to secure needed food security. However, in this case forest land that had already been converted to shifting cultivation was excluded from demarcated forest areas to allow for continuing use.

As noted earlier, Vietnamese PFES schemes differ from conventional PES initiatives in that participation by both service providers and beneficiaries is mandated and residents have no opportunity to negotiate payment terms directly with beneficiaries. Although Decree 99/2010/ND-CP requires application of a *K*-coefficient that differentiates payment to residents depending on forest type, forest cover, ease of access and other variables, which has proven an effective way of remunerating residents fairly for their efforts [12], villagers have indicated a preference for universal payment levels, which has prevented *K*-coefficients from being adopted in Dong Giang. Although the FPMU indicated that they plan to effect payment based on monitored performance in the future, currently each household receives the same amount, reducing performance incentives.

There are concerns for both the environmental and economic sustainability of the PFES scheme in Dong Giang district. With most residents eager to engage in rent-seeking behavior on their allocated land by planting fast-growing acacia trees, there may be adverse impacts on local biodiversity. Sporadic or limited inspection of forest conditions by program managers may reduce motivation for residents to thoroughly monitor remote or inaccessible parts of their forest allotment.

PFES schemes have been regarded by some local officials and researchers as a “silver bullet” policy instrument for dam-affected communities [37]. However, although Dong Giang district residents and government alike expressed great hope for its contribution to poverty alleviation and forest protection the PFES initiative may more accurately be regarded as a modest welfare program that secures a small income stream for residents but not substantial economic security, providing insufficient training and support to enable residents to gain new livelihood skills or enhance future incomes. The program's complexity, high costs and the necessity of untangling competing tenure claims to forest land may also pose challenges to implementation for all resettled communities [47].

4.3. International financial institutions (IFIs): improving compensation and social inclusion

Two IFIs, the World Bank and Asian Development Bank, have been involved in hydropower sector support in Vietnam since the 1990s, when they carried out planning studies for hydropower development [38]. More recently they have financed transmission lines to transmit electricity produced at large hydropower dam facilities such as Yali Falls and Son La to major urban centers. However until recently they have not acted as direct investors in Vietnamese dam construction projects. Middleton et al. [38] suggest that this may be partly due to the poor record to date of Vietnamese project authorities in authorizing full-scale social and environmental impact assessments and the poor outcomes associated with resettlement. On their part, the Vietnamese government may be reluctant to be held accountable to relatively strict IFI guidelines, including provisions for high compensation payouts, thorough social and environmental impact assessment and decision-making and information disclosure processes which could be construed as precedents for future dam project implementation, thus adding to project terms and complexity. According to Middleton et al. [38], the government reportedly chose to work with a Russian investor on the Sesan 3 dam rather than continue with ADB in the early 2000s, due to the ADB's insistence on providing compensation to downstream Cambodian villagers who were inundated by sudden flood water releases from the nearby Yali Falls dam in 2005.

Although partners in a project must abide by relevant national laws, IFI investment must also comply with safeguard requirements, ensuring that livelihood enhancement, participation, gender empowerment and other principles are incorporated in project planning. Most IFI safeguards stipulate that roads, houses, schools, electricity, water supplies and other infrastructure must be completed before resettlement, and that resettled households be provided land-for-land compensation and cash compensation at prevailing market rates for inundated land and assets and livelihood training and support (see [3,72,1]).

An analysis of the outcomes of eight Asian Development Bank-funded projects in resettlement villages from the 1990s implemented according to ADB involuntary resettlement guidelines showed that compensation, housing and infrastructure and livelihood restoration were enhanced for residents [55]. A 2011 report by the Bank's Independent Evaluation Group [74] noted that half of the 50 ADB dam projects since 1986 have positively affected living standards for displaced persons, adding that "the Bank's environmental and resettlement guidelines appeared to have a positive impact on the dam projects that the Bank has financed." However, there has been criticism of the safeguard mechanisms of virtually all IFIs for retaining the option of seeking to merely "restore prior living standards," even though revised safeguards for the ADB and World Bank, among others, also propose "resettlement as development," with the goal of sharing project benefits among resettlers and improving livelihoods [50,70].

In recent years there has been increasing investment in Vietnamese dam projects by private corporations and financial institutions that neither abide by the Equator Principles or other safeguards nor require thorough environmental and social impact assessments [38,34]. As the government-controlled EVN is the lead investor in many dam projects the government may find IFI safeguard requirements financially onerous, given a desire to prioritize cost reduction and rapid project completion. With this growing private investor involvement, the future role of IFIs in Vietnamese hydropower construction is difficult to project.

4.4. IFI case study: Asian Development Bank and Song Bung 4 dam, Nam Giang district, Quang Nam province

In 2008 the Asian Development Bank approved the first direct investment by an IFI in hydro-power dam construction in Vietnam with a US\$196 million loan for the 156MW Song Bung 4 dam in Quang Nam province. The stated objective was "meeting Vietnam's increasing power demand in an environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive manner" ([2]), which alludes to two elements – a comprehensive social and environmental impact assessment and institutional mechanisms for transparent information disclosure and participation in resettlement decision-making by affected persons (APs) – that have been criticized for poor or nonexistent implementation in other Vietnamese large dam projects [17]. The project included a US\$2 million grant from the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction for village-level initiatives, including training and agricultural support, to achieve livelihood

restoration and improvement [8]. For the ADB, an important component of the dam project was the resettlement and ethnic minority development plan (REMDP) that details resettlement procedures, compensation and livelihood support provisions, and grievance mechanisms. Compliance with the ADB safeguards generally exceeds what is required to meet the provisions of Vietnamese national law in assisting displaced people. For example, the safeguards state that compensation for income loss must be provided to all affected resettlers rather than only to registered businesses, as required by the Vietnamese government, and that customary land rights be recognized by protection or compensation, an area not yet fully recognized by Vietnamese law [5].

The Song Bung 4 dam project displaced 224 households with a total of 939 residents of four villages in Nam Giang district, Quang Nam province. Most of them belong to the Co-tu ethnic minority group [4]. They were compensated for homes, land and productive assets and provided with financial support for healthcare, relocation, house construction costs and labor, development of production techniques, income restoration and food security [7]. From 2006 until the villages began relocating in 2012 frequent meetings and consultations were held with all affected residents about resettlement plans and procedures. A Resettlement Management and Implementation Unit comprising project staff, local government and NGO and village representatives was established at the district level along with village-level resident groups. Although outside observers initially complained that information disclosure on compensation and resettlement was inadequate [8], later monitors noted that efforts had been made to improve transparency and address concerns in community meetings [7,66]. A prominently featured gender action plan promoted involvement of women in meetings, on committees and in administrative roles and as participants in training and employment schemes. Cash compensation was paid into bank accounts, with husband and wife each receiving half the total amount in separate accounts, to enhance the women's financial security and foster more responsible household account management.

During two field visits in 2012 and 2013 to Thon 2, residents noted that their living conditions had greatly improved overall, crediting generous compensation, excellent infrastructure and social services such as healthcare and education. Women in one focus group stated that they appreciated the opportunity to play responsible roles in meetings and training sessions. Three of the women also noted a decrease in domestic abuse. However others reported that men still didn't want their wives to attend meetings or training courses, and the head of the Women's Union explained, "Although we [wives] have our own bank accounts, if your husband tells you to withdraw money from your account it's difficult to refuse" (2013).

As indicated during interviews and in reports by the Vietnam Rivers Network [68] and an independent monitoring group hired by the Bank Information Center [8], a major source of villager dissatisfaction was with the volume and quality of replacement agricultural land, which residents claimed was on a steep grade and generally only half as productive as their original agricultural plots. Their 1.5-hectare plots for upland cultivation did not allow for traditional shifting cultivation, and they had lost much of their livestock to disease. Restricted access to river fisheries forced many residents to purchase fish for consumption. They also complained about inadequate water supplies and inappropriate agricultural training courses by Canadian INGO consultants who had failed to assess soil composition as promised or to introduce appropriate crops or techniques for local conditions. Although most families now have savings in the bank, they voiced serious concerns about future food security and sustainable livelihoods once their compensation funds were spent.

Interviews with villagers and project management also revealed poor communication and mistrust between both sides, with three Thon 2 villagers stating that their grievances weren't being transmitted to the ADB or local government and two resettlement project managers criticizing the villagers' "low adaptive capacity" and "punchant for making complaints." According to the Vietnam Rivers Network [68] and the headman of an adjacent host village, Pa Pang, conflict also arose over access to productive land and protected forest between Thong 2 village and Pa Pang, necessitating frequent commune-level meetings. However the Pa Pang headman stated that villagers were highly satisfied with improved educational and medical services and physical infrastructure as a result of the resettlement project (2012).

Compensation at Thon 2 ranged from US\$14,286 to \$195,138, with an average of \$86,708 [6], far exceeding that reported for other hydropower projects to date (see [17,62,9–11]). However a large

proportion of the compensation funds was spent on homes, leaving several households with relatively little remaining in their bank accounts. Thon 2 villagers reported spending up to 600 million dong (\$30,000) on constructing and furnishing spacious two-story homes, a sizable amount for rural Vietnam.² There was little spending on productive activities or investment to ensure sustainable livelihoods after the project cycle ends in 2014 [8]. In addition, the project provided little training in marketing of livestock and agricultural products. Currently most villagers sell their products to itinerate Kinh traders without understanding prevailing market prices [8].

Song Bung 4s well-monitored compliance with safeguard policies may have a salutary effect on future resettlement projects in Vietnam, particularly as concerns compensation, social inclusion, participation in resettlement planning and information disclosure. The Quang Nam province government, for one, has already revised its resettlement policies to require improved compensation and livelihood support and more generous land allocation (Article 33, Provincial Decree 23 ND/UBND on compensation, support and resettlement for government land acquisition, 2010). However, the project's terms of compensation at maximum allowable levels, funded by the ADB loan, risks distorting APs' expectations for compensation in future dam projects beyond the local government's ability or willingness to pay, particularly for dam-forced resettlement administered solely by provincial governments and in accordance with Vietnamese law.

As Koenig [29] wrote, involvement with prestigious, well-funded IFIs can advance the interests of marginalized local residents by securing resources and representation with the local government and national government. However, there is concern whether the activity of the ADB, World Bank and other IFIs, which aims to satisfy internal resettlement criteria, always reflects the priorities or salient interests of affected populations. For residents, participation in decision-making and gender empowerment, while valued objectives, are less critical than securing productive land and diversified income sources.

4.5. Vietnamese Civil Society Organizations (CSOs): advocacy and land reallocation amidst an expanding civil society sphere

In many developing countries domestic CSOs have played significant roles in post-resettlement support [29]. In central India, for example, a number of CSOs have supported livelihood training and infrastructure development of resettlement villages, despite actively protesting construction of the Narmada River dams that had caused the initial displacement [44]. Their involvement was actively sought and financed by state and national government development and resettlement officials, in part due to a tradition of CSO development activity to supplement limited local government resources and capacities.

That tradition is lacking in Vietnam, where domestic CSOs were historically regarded as potential antagonists [26]. While international NGOs have been allowed to operate in Vietnam since the 1990s and some, like World Vision and Winrock, have been active in resettlement communities, Vietnamese CSOs have played little role until recently.

Vietnam has a vibrant tradition of resident affiliation in village-level social clubs and mutual aid societies [16], yet the overweening authority of Communist Party leadership from 1975 constricted the scope for autonomous group activities and affiliations not predicated on Marxist-Leninist ideology. Vietnam's Marxist-Leninist tripartite model of society consists of Communist party, people and government, with individuals welcome to form their own associations as long as these groups support state policy, try to improve state services or represent marginalized groups to the government in a non-confrontational way [58]. As Landau [31] notes, a Gramscian characterization of civil society as an arena of conflicting ideas in which the state seeks to establish hegemony would appear to be more true of Vietnam than the liberal conception of civil society as being completely autonomous of the state.

² By comparison, the homes built for villagers resettled due to the Avuong dam in neighboring Dong Giang district were assessed as having a market value of 75 million VND (US\$3,558), although residents claimed that the actual value was much lower.

The government has strongly promoted affiliation with Communist Party-linked “mass organizations” (đoàn thể) such as the Ho Chi Minh Youth Union, Vietnam Women’s Union, Farmers’ Union and War Veterans’ Association chapters that operate at the village or town level under the umbrella organization the Vietnam Fatherland Front [31]. Membership is widespread: the Women’s Union alone, for example, claims membership of 13 million [69]. Although many researchers would characterize mass organizations as CSOs, their role as intermediaries between the Communist party and ordinary citizens places them far along the continuum of government affiliation [42]. For the government, these mass organizations help to transmit and explain Party policies and initiatives, while for residents membership in these groups represents a means of enhancing social capital by accessing positions and future influence [49]. In rural areas, in particular, membership in groups such as the Farmers’ Union or Women’s Union may be seen as an entrée to participation in agricultural training and livelihood initiatives and access to seeds, livestock and other concrete benefits. In many rural villages, household membership in mass organizations is nearly universal, as residents accrue material benefits as well as mutual support in the form of cooperative labor or assistance when household members fall ill or suffer financial difficulties.

The *doi moi* economic liberalization reforms of the 1980s weakened the Communist Party’s grip on society and fostered growing tolerance for autonomous groups, with Landau [31] reporting an increase in locally registered associations from over 300 in 1990 to over 1400 in 2000, dealing with such concerns as education, environmental issues, and social welfare. Increasing liberalization and scope for local autonomy evolved with enactment of legislation such as the grassroots democratization decree (Decree 29/1998/ND-CP) of 1998 (amended by another decree in 2003), which prescribed mechanisms for allowing residents to participate at the commune and village levels in local government decision-making [21]. Although implementation of the legislation has been weak, it has broadened the space for negotiation between state and civil society [42]. Today, rather than the past “dominating state” model of top-down socialist governance in all spheres, Vietnam presents a more dynamic, “dialogical” model of state and society listening to and influencing each other ([27], p. 49).

Kerkvliet [27] observed three emerging trends for Vietnamese civil society: an expanded legal framework for recognizing and protecting NGOs, greater domestic media coverage and more diversified content, and a proliferation of civic organizations, from NGOs to mutual aid and religious societies. Domestic development-oriented groups have won far greater government acceptance than religious or political activist groups, which are still often regarded as a potential threat to the state [58].

4.6. Non-governmental organizations: expanding their role

Many private organizations that do not seek profits and have articulated clear social objectives label themselves as non-governmental organizations, in part to more easily attract foreign funding or to tacitly distance themselves from the government [26]. However, “NGO” is a highly contested designation: To date no exact legal definition of an NGO exists in Vietnam [57]. The government maintains different legal categories of civil society organizations, such as “social and charitable funds,” “scientific” or “technological institutions,” and “research and development institutions” [33]. All CSOs are required to be affiliated with and overseen by an official organizational umbrella group such as the Vietnam Union of Science and Technological Association (VUSTA), the largest such grouping, with approximately 500,000 members (ICSU, 2013). According to one local NGO official, non-governmental organizations are periodically visited by police and government officials to monitor their activities, although they now experience less rigorous monitoring than in previous years when paying visits to project sites (personal communication, 2013).

VUSTA estimated that there were 10,000 self-proclaimed NGOs in 2003 [32]. Using a more restrictive definition Norlund [42] estimated a total of 1300–2000, engaged in charity, research and development, consultancy, education and health. In the central Vietnam city of Hue, for example, only four local civil society organizations satisfy the registration criteria for official NGO status, including capital of 1 billion Vietnam dong or more, according to the provincial government organization overseeing international NGOs, the Vietnam Union of Friendship Organizations of Thua Thien Hue Province (personal communication, 2013). Most self-proclaimed NGOs are small, with limited funding, young

and inexperienced staff and high turnover, as staff often leave for higher-paying jobs with business or INGOs [56].

Local NGOs are displaying increasing sophistication and influence while operating within state restrictions that are both onerous and often mutable [32]. Some development or welfare NGOs are led by former government officials, which facilitates approval of stringent registration procedures and eases autonomy of action [33], others are operated by Vietnamese who formerly worked for INGOs. Some NGOs have been successful in receiving funding and support from bilateral aid agencies or INGOs seeking local partners for development projects. According to Norlund [42], foreign funding accounts for approximately 25% or more of total NGO funds, but presumably a higher percentage for development-oriented groups. Foreign funding, and strict donor conditions and project objectives, can enhance an NGO's credibility and clout with local governments [43].

Recent laws have promoted a greater official tolerance for including NGOs in local development. The grassroots democratization decree not only promoted resident involvement in village-level investment decision-making it also allowed community-based groups to participate in commune-level development [58]. A 2010 law (Decree 45/2010/ND-CP on the Organizations, Activities and Management of Associations) allowed NGOs to "participate in programs, projects, studies and counseling and critical comment and examination" but only "at the request of state agencies," thus restricting the potential scope for public advocacy of NGOs [64]. The 2013 Land Law (Article 199) allows citizen associations to participate in land management issues, while not explicitly referring to CSOs [63].

Domestic NGOs are increasingly active in dam displacement issues as well as specific resettlement projects. While the majority engage in community advocacy or poverty alleviation efforts, some Vietnamese NGOs have broadened their scope to advocating for improved national displacement policy and cancellation of high-risk dam projects. The Hanoi-based Green Innovation and Development Center (Green ID), for example, has formed resettlement policy groups of scientists, NGO representatives and national assembly members. Based on information released by Green ID to Vietnamese media in 2013 several newspapers published articles warning of potential environmental impacts of construction of the Dong Nai 6 and 6A hydropower dams on the adjoining Cat Tien national park in southern Dong Nai province. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment subsequently cancelled plans for the dam projects (personal communication, Green ID, 2013). The Vietnam River Network, an umbrella organization of NGOs and environmentalists concerned with river protection and sustainable development that is supported by the transnational International Rivers Network, has conducted post-construction social and environmental assessments of the impacts of selected dams, including the ADB-funded Trung Son dam and Dong Nai 6 [67].

Domestic NGOs in many nations have played an active role in resisting dam-forced displacement. Efforts by groups like Narmada Bachao to resist dam construction in India's Narmada Valley have won wide media attention [43]. Other groups have joined transnational networks to influence national policy and pressure investors to terminate project involvement. Several Vietnamese NGOs, including Green ID, Vietnam Rivers Network and Pan Nature, have joined a transnational group of regional and international NGOs protesting plans to build the Xayaburi dam in Laos, the first large dam on the lower mainstem of the Mekong River, although they have engaged in less direct resistance to dams on Vietnamese soil [23].

4.7. CSO case study: Center for Social Research and Development

The Center for Social Research and Development (CSR/D), a legally recognized Vietnamese NGO based in Hue, central Vietnam, focuses its efforts on climate change and water resource management. Although affiliated with VUSTA the NGO is financially and administratively independent, according to director Lam Thi Thu Suu (personal communication, 2013), with most funding coming from INGOs and bilateral official development assistance. CSR/D implemented a project from 2010 to 2012 in eight ethnic minority villages in two communes in central Thua Thien Hue province that had been resettled due to construction of an irrigation dam and the Binh Diem hydropower dam. The project was funded by a 155,000 Euro grant from ICCO, the Dutch government-funded INGO, and carried out by CSR/D and another local NGO, the Consultative and Research Center on Natural Resources

Management (CORENARM), in order to improve access to forest land, increase business skills and promote gender awareness among APs.

CSRSD sought to help address the lack of adequate productive land by promoting forest land reallocation. With the cooperation of the district FPMU, the NGOs surveyed and identified 169 ha of unutilized land near the resettled villages. They negotiated with the district government, the provincial Department of Natural Resources and the FPMU to reallocate the land to resettled households in four resettlement villages for plantation of indigenous bamboo and other trees. In one commune 91 ha of forest were provided to individual households, along with land use certificates. In the other commune three communities received 78 ha of protected forest for community forest management, along with land use certificates. CSRSD led workshops on land law and land use rights for residents, and they trained local officials in land use planning, land allocation processes and licensing of forest land use rights. According to Binh Thanh commune officials, the training increased their awareness of residents' needs and willingness to collaborate on development initiatives (personal communication, 2013). CSRSD representatives initially described their program as promoting grassroots democracy, but they later rephrased their activities as "putting good intentioned policy into practice" to make them more palatable to local government (personal communication, 2013). Other CSRSD workshops taught communication and negotiation skills, raised awareness of gender issues and human rights, and provided residents with a forum for discussing post-resettlement compensation and support. CSRSD's partner NGO, CORENARM, held training courses on sustainable land use, veterinary skills, new crop introduction and value chains for agroforestry.

CSRSD staff asserted that greater understanding of the local legal and administrative context and residents' needs can make Vietnamese NGOs more effective than INGOs in advocating for APs with local officials. They are well-versed in the exigencies of negotiations with the FPMU over land reallocation, working patiently to persuade the board to cede the forest land under its control. They maintain longstanding ties with local governments, and they often bring together representatives of resettled and downstream communities, NGOs and local officials to exchange experiences and strategies in workshops and public fora. Although they lack the deep pockets of many INGOs, they are experienced in using small budgets effectively. However, the need for extensive negotiations to achieve even limited land reallocation underscores the challenges facing large-scale replication, and NGO success in effecting reallocation of land for resettled villagers by FPMU officials is often contingent on the funding and technical expertise they can provide.

5. Discussion

Local government is charged with resettlement of dam-displaced residents in Vietnam, and to date they have been largely unable to achieve either restoration of pre-resettlement living standards for affected populations or "resettlement with development," the goals espoused by the World Bank and many other dam project investors with resettlement guidelines.

The policy-praxis gap is glaring in Vietnam, particularly when legal provisions erode local government authority or elite benefits. Strong local resistance along with the central government's desire to maintain firm control of civil society has limited the scope of effective assistance in resettlement by external stakeholders.

Although Vietnam has fully embraced development goals and depends greatly on external aid and investment, the government is only gradually accommodating the local devolution of authority and broader scope for civil society that these imply. In the case of hydropower dams, the government complies with IFI and foreign aid agency safeguards and conditions as needed to secure dam loans and financing but has shown little inclination to apply the same conditions to domestic projects, and it is increasingly tolerant of NGO involvement in resettlement as long as the focus is on poverty alleviation and forest allocation rather than advocacy that fosters resistance to state policy. Although official policy promotes decentralization of development planning and local decision-making, large dams are national strategic assets requiring central government approval. However, local government officials have recently been awarded greater scope for deciding on investments in small and mid-sized dams [40].

The case studies reveal that individual IFI projects, benefit-sharing mechanisms and NGO initiatives can help improve outcomes at the village level and address local government shortcomings, as seen in Fig. 2, but they have not yet been widely upscaled. To do so requires an institutional provision for including civil society representatives from the planning stage for every dam project. Zaman [78], for example, reports on a provincial-level strategy for resettlement in Indonesia first proposed by the World Bank and endorsed by the Indonesian government that involves NGOs in planning and implementing resettlement projects. The district-level Resettlement Management and

Stakeholder	Examples of activities and initiatives	Functional role	Strengths	Limitations	Core interests	Resources
Affected people	Mutual help with construction, farming, diversification of crops and income sources, extensification of cropland	Beneficiaries of support	Strong social networks, indigenous agricultural skills	Poor financial and human capital limits livelihood strategies, degraded natural capital adversely impacts food security	Improved livelihoods and living conditions	Indigenous skills, community social networks
Local government	Agricultural extension training; financial support for disabled, veterans, and vulnerable HHs	Determining compensation, providing livelihood support	Understands local conditions, residents' concerns	Officials poorly trained in resettlement policy, limited budgets, difficult to procure replacement land	Reducing conflict and resistance, poverty alleviation	State authority, mass organizations, poverty alleviation programs
Hydropower authority	Payment for forest environmental services (PFES)	Funding for PFES, livelihood support	Sustainable income source, state support	Averse to increasing payments for APs; no inherent interest in residents' welfare	Watershed maintenance	Supported by investors, hydro-power revenues
International financial institutions	Social inclusion and livelihood support initiatives	Ensuring compliance with involuntary safeguards	Funding, authority, central government backing, external resources	Nonprioritizing of residents' concerns, domination of power relations with residents and local government	Compliance with safeguards, successful monitoring reports	Extensive financial resources and expertise, international network
Vietnamese CSOs	Advocacy, proposing forest land for reallocation, leading livelihood training, holding social inclusion and business skills workshops	Advocacy for residents, livelihood training and support	Strong local experience and connections, knowledge of local conditions and society, autonomous of the state	Limited financial resources and technical expertise; lingering government distrust	Successful project outcome, improved livelihoods and local credibility	Can draw on external ODA and INGO aid, have priorities with local government

Fig. 2. Analysis of stakeholders' roles in post-resettlement reconstruction and development.

Implementation Unit model formed prior to resettlement at the Song Bung 4 dam project may also be a viable model for replication nationwide.

6. Conclusion

Despite a greatly enhanced regulatory framework predicated on restoring or improving pre-resettlement living standards, the 240,000 people displaced by hydropower dam construction in Vietnam residents have experienced decreased agricultural productivity and food security. Factors contributing to the adverse outcomes include the provision of inadequate and unproductive land; restricted access to communal natural resources like forests and rivers, which formerly were important sources of supplemental food and household income; poor capacity of local government; and few opportunities for APs to voice grievances or participate in the resettlement process.

Although formerly most resettlement and post-resettlement support was undertaken by local governments working with international NGOs, recognition of the need for expanded stakeholder involvement, along with an expanding civil society in Vietnam, has created opportunities for external stakeholders to become involved and new initiatives to be implemented. These include payment for environmental services schemes, generous compensation and post-resettlement support from IFIs, and advocacy and training by Vietnamese NGOs.

With the passage of a law on Payment for Forest Environmental Services in 2010, resettled households may benefit from a sustainable new source of income that can help alleviate poverty while conserving forests. However, high transaction costs and complex monitoring and assessment requirements make PES schemes difficult to implement, and they offer limited opportunities for training or livelihood improvement.

IFIs like ADB and World Bank must adhere to internal involuntary resettlement and ethnic minority safeguards that greatly exceed what is required by Vietnamese law or conventional practice, thus potentially securing residents greater social inclusion, access to information, gender empowerment, participation in decision-making and grievance adjudication mechanisms, and they can modestly influence subsequent local policies and implementation. At the same time, low prioritization of local interests and sensitivities may complicate government-IFI-village relations.

Vietnamese NGOs can serve as advocates for resettled communities, helping to secure forest land for income generation and to train rural residents in land laws and human rights, new agricultural techniques, and marketing and business skills, allowing them to strengthen rural livelihoods. However, depending on external stakeholders to pressure individual forest management units for forest reallocation risks being little more than a piecemeal solution that requires broader institutional support. There is a clear need for a legally mandated mechanism, perhaps informed by the ADB's district-level resettlement committee model, that incorporates NGOs and other external stakeholders from the start of a project to ensure sustained protection of residents' rights and ameliorization of the risks of resettlement.

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