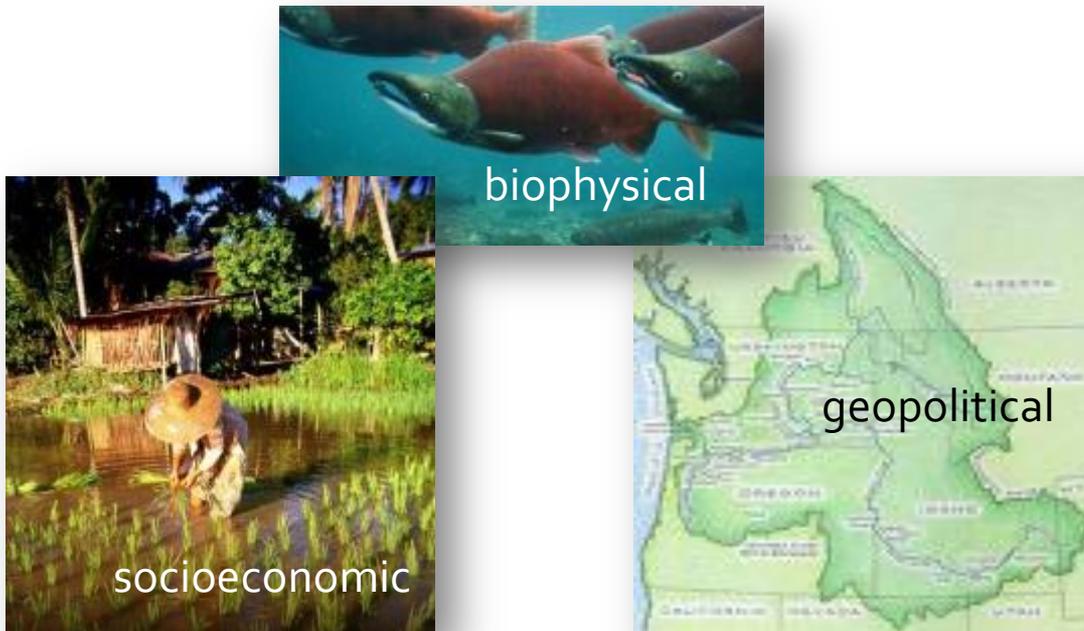


Dams, Displacement, and Compensation in China: Gradual Progress and Remaining Challenges



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Hydropower as a Multifaceted Problem



“Sustainable hydropower development has two dimensions: the environmental dimension, which can usually be addressed with technical solutions; and the social dimension, which has to be addressed through policy. . . . We need better evaluation methods. It’s very challenging. But the technical problems are relatively easy to solve, compared with cultural and social problems.”

(Senior Engineer, Institute of Water Resources and Hydropower Research, Beijing)

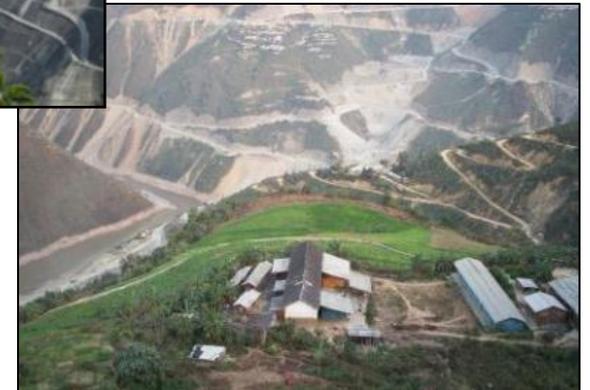
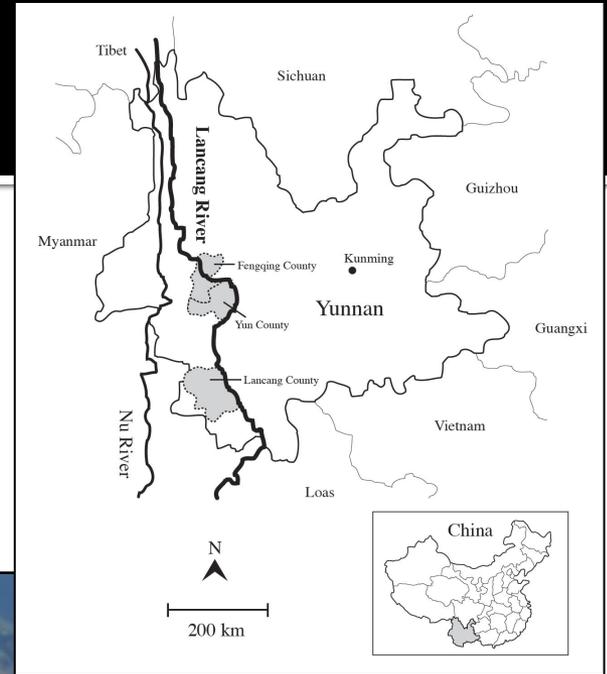
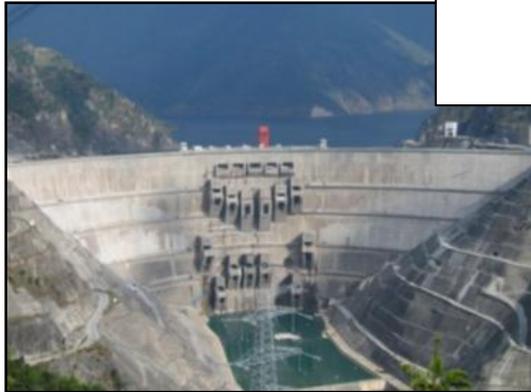
China is home to 25,000 large dams, and its dam-displaced population totals at least 15 million people (Ministry of Water Resources 2004).

Questions Driving this Work

1. What are the values and goals of key constituent groups in water-resource management in China (e.g., government agencies, hydropower corporations, NGOs, local communities)?
2. How do these groups participate in the decision-making process related to dams?
3. How are communities affected by displacement and resettlement?
4. How do policy makers balance the costs and benefits of hydropower development?

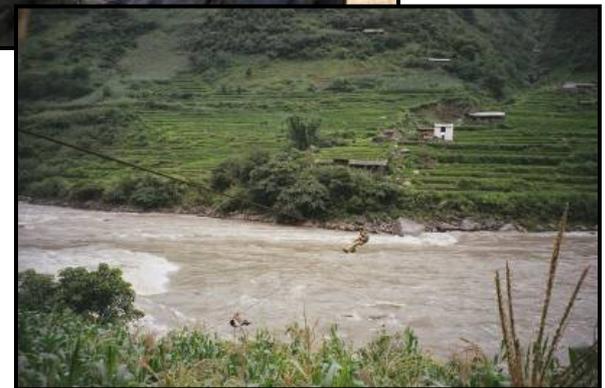
Study Sites

- **Lancang River**
(Upper Mekong)
 - 6 dams already completed in the “Lower Cascade”
 - 50,000 villagers displaced and resettled
 - Minority nationalities and other vulnerable groups



Data Sources

- 1,200 surveys with rural households
- ~100 short interviews with rural households
- Interviews with scientists and policymakers (mostly in Beijing)
- Interviews with NGO representatives
- Review of policy documents and hydropower corporation reports



Community Perceptions

“The biggest effect on us is the inundation of our land. The dam will flood farmers’ houses and fields, and they will have to move. Many have already been moved. This destroys people’s traditions and culture. People are usually not willing to move. It totally changes their way of life. Of course, that’s progress (*jinbu*).” (Farmer, fengqing County)



Traditional house



Resettlement housing near Xiaowan Dam

Effects on Agricultural Livelihoods

- The problem of debt:** Resettled households are net borrowers (average loan: 10,021 RMB, about 1,800 USD)

Note:
Independent-samples t-test
(† Significant at 0.01 level)

		Not Resettled (n=513)	Resettled (n=246)
Land Holdings (mu)	Paddy Land †	1.0	1.8
	Dry Land †	15.9	7.0
	Forest Land †	13.2	3.3
Staple Crop Sales (yuan)	Rice †	434	1,039
	Corn †	5,624	3,626
Commodity Crop Sales (yuan)	Walnuts †	613	4
	Tea	260	33
	Tobacco †	1,462	3,625
Household Income (yuan)	Agricultural Income	19,177	15,026
	Livestock Income	3,068	3,647
	Wage Labor †	5,181	14,105
	Self-Employment †	3,057	9,071
	Total Household Income †	30,565	41,850

Resettlement Compensation: Evidence for Gradual Improvement

County	Sample Size	Dam Sites (Status)	Average Total Compensation (yuan)
Yun	38	Manwan (Completed 1996) Dachaoshan (Completed 2003)	4,957 ^a
Fengqing	29	Xiaowan (Completed 2010)	11,280 ^a
Lancang	55	Nuozhadu (Under Construction)	31,420 ^b
Total Sample	122		18,390

Note: 6.2 yuan = 1 USD. Compensation figures were adjusted for inflation to 2010 RMB, using a consumer price index from the World Trade Organization. (One-way ANOVA with posthoc tests, significant at 0.01 level).

Remaining Challenges

- Courts are difficult to access. Petitioning (*shangfang*, 上访) is a common strategy, but one with uncertain results.
- Displacement compensation accounts for a small share of project costs (typically far less than 5%).
- The rural land-tenure system severely limits compensation.

Land rights spectrum (simplified)



Looking Forward

- The need for interdisciplinary input and community engagement.
- Steps toward improving EIA and SIA processes in China. State Council Directive on Risk Assessment (社会风险评估, 2012).
- Beyond compensation, toward reparations (Johnston 2010).
- The role of Chinese dam-building overseas.



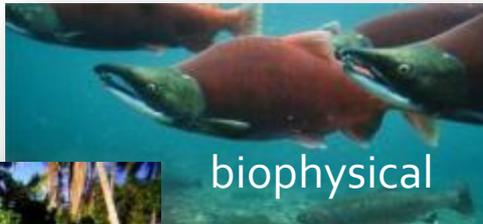
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Recent laws and policies governing resettlement and compensation in the PRC

Issuing Body (Year)	Law / Regulation
State Council (1991, Revised 1998)	Enforcement Ordinance of the Land Administration Law of the PRC
State Council (1991, Revised 2006)	Ordinance on Land Appropriation and Resettlement for Large and Medium Water Conservancy and Hydropower Projects
NDRC, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Water Resources (1996)	Notice on Establishing Later Stage Support Funding for Dam Projects
Ministry of Land Resources (2001)	Methods for Public Announcement of Land Appropriation
Ministry of Land Resources (2004)	Guidance on Improving Land Appropriation and Resettlement
State Council (2006)	Opinions on Improving Later Stage Support for Large and Medium Dam Project Resettlement