

Vietnam Union of Science and Technology Association (VUSTA)  
**Center for Water Resources Conservation and Development (WARECOD)**

-----  
**Project Leader**  
**Dr. Tran Van Ha**

## **Follow-up Study on Impacts of Resettlement of Son La Hydropower Plant**



HÀ NỘI - 2008

## Table of contents

<b>Foreword and Acknowledgement.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1. Brief summary of the previous study findings .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. Objectives of the follow-up study .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3. Research methodology.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>4. Selection of the studied sites.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>5. Overview of the implementation of Son La hydropower plant resettlement program at the study time.....</b>	<b>8</b>
5.1. Adjustments on resettlement policy.....	8
5.1.1. Adjustments from Government.....	8
5.1.2. Differences in implementation at local level.....	10
5.1.3. Up-dated concepts.....	10
5.2. Implementation of Resettlement at the study time .....	11
5.2.1. Plans and Practices.....	11
5.2.2. New Expectation and Challenges .....	12
<b>6. Main findings from field study .....</b>	<b>13</b>
6.1. Social- economic dimension .....	13
6.1.1. Compensation and housing issue.....	13
6.1.2. Resettlement models and arable land.....	15
6.1.3. Life restoration.....	16
6.1.5. Organizational problems.....	20
6.2. Culture and social relations.....	21
6.2.1. Community structure .....	21
6.2.2. Relations in resettlement areas.....	24
6.2.3. Resettled but not restored.....	24
6.3. Sanitary environment and health care.....	26
6.3.1. Access to the sanitary water and environment.....	26
6.3.2. Health care and diseases prevention .....	29
6.3.3. Disease model .....	30
6.3.4. Impacts of the weather, climate and nutrition to resettlers' health protection	30
6.4. Impacts on environment security and the issue of wastes deposited in the reservoir .....	32
6.4.1. Security of the space in resettlement sites is an urgent issue.....	32
6.4.2. Waste and potential sedimentation in the reservoir .....	32
<b>7. Conclusion and Recommendations .....</b>	<b>32</b>
7.1. Conclusion .....	32
7.2. Recommendations.....	35
<b>Reference .....</b>	<b>37</b>

## **Foreword and Acknowledgement**

This report is produced by the research team, who originally worked on this issue more than 2 years ago under the coordination of the Vietnam Union of Science and Technology Association (VUSTA), funded by the Ford Foundation. This continuative study focuses on a selection of the surveyed sites in 2005, with a smaller scope (7 out of 25 old villages and one new commune) in 4 districts of Son La and Lai Chau provinces. Our sincere thanks are sent to the local authorities and responsible people in the resettlement program who have deep knowledge on this issue. Interviews with them provide us with a more comprehensive view. Besides what we have observed, expressions, thoughts and feelings of the resettlers always find our special concerns. We would like to thank them all for their help and support during our trip. We also would like to express our thanks to the Center for Water Resources Conservation and Development for coordinating the team and the Global Greengrant Fund for providing financial support. This study would not be completed without their support.

Dr. Trần Văn Hà

## **1. Brief summary of the previous study findings**

Construction of the Son La Hydropower plant formally started on December 25, 2005. With about 100,000 people to be displaced to make way for the dam, the Son La hydropower resettlement is the biggest involuntary resettlement in the modern history of Vietnam. As of early 2006, over 1,000 families had been moved. Land-use rights and the availability of arable land are the two most contentious aspects of the Son La resettlement project. Inter-related with these issues are ensuring sustainable livelihood for the affected people, and the impacts that resettlement will have on the cultural continuity and community values of the affected people, most of whom come from ethnic minority groups.

A study, conducted by the Vietnam Union of Science and Technology Associations in late 2005 and early 2006, used multidisciplinary approach to examine the socio-economic, cultural, environmental and health impacts of the Son La resettlement project. Field surveys were conducted by the study team in the two provinces of Son La and Lai Châu and included 5 districts, 11 communes and 25 villages. The study provides much needed and new empirical data on how resettlement is impacting project-affected people – pre-resettlement, post-resettlement and in host communities.

The study found that while there is a serious attempt to implement resettlement in a positive manner, there are several areas that require significant improvement. The following outlines the key findings and concerns raised by the study team.

***Administrative Hurdles and Delays:*** Though legal documents and a resettlement master plan exist, specific guidelines and plans have not been developed or implemented by local authorities in a timely manner. Bureaucratic mismanagement is creating delays in implementation, resulting in many people being moved before the necessary infrastructure is in place. There is a serious shortage of qualified and trained personnel at district-level Resettlement Management Units, affecting the success of the resettlement program.

***The Question of Land:*** The availability of sufficient arable land has been a major problem in this project. There shortage of land in the area is making the provision of “land for land” compensation difficult. Most people who have already been moved remain without any agricultural land. The land that will eventually be given to them will be taken from host communities, potentially leading to inter-community conflicts in the future.

***The Question of Livelihood:*** Resettled communities are not being given adequate assistance in transitioning from their former method of farming (wet rice cultivation) to other forms of upland agriculture production. Very little is being done to help them grow food and create an environment for food self-sufficiency in their new locations. This is leading to greater food insecurity. In the short run, affected people face the immediate difficulties of moving to a new environment, community, climate and a completely different way of living without the river; and in the long run, they risk being deprived of

sustainable sources of livelihood. There are already signs of increased poverty amongst affected people.

***One Size Fits All Doesn't Work for Affected People:*** The allotment of 400 m<sup>2</sup> of residential land (including garden plots) to each household in rural resettlement sites regardless of family size is unfair to large families or those who had more property pre-resettlement.

***Problems Managing Cash Compensation:*** Many households who have received large sums of cash compensation have had a hard time managing it. Not accustomed to saving and investing, some have bought motorbikes, while others have wasted it on drinking or drugs. These households are likely to suffer from future food shortages and may fall back into poverty if no sustainable means of income is found.

***Unequal Costs and Benefits between Resettled and Host Communities:*** Disparities are emerging between host communities and those being resettled. In some cases, the host population ends up with smaller houses than those who have been resettled, with less compensation. This is starting to create resentment in resettlement sites.

***Disintegration of Communities:*** Some communities are being torn apart because clan members and kin cannot move together to a new resettlement site; or names of their old villages cannot be taken with them. Existing social structures and community relationships are breaking down. The involuntary nature of resettlement is creating trauma for many groups as their ancestral lands will be flooded from the reservoir.

***Creating Better Access to Clean Water:*** In some sites, people have poor quality drinking water, and serious water shortages during the dry season. According to the resettlement policy, the government must provide pipes, water tanks or wells for villages before they are resettled, but this has not been the case for many villages.

***Creating Access to Healthcare:*** Some resettlement sites are constructed very far from health clinics and people have been moved to new sites while clinics are still being constructed. In these instances, affected people find it very difficult to get to their local health clinic due to lack of roads and distance.

**The study this time** continued to find out about issues and questions raised 2 years ago. Thus, most of the sites this time were studied under the last research except Chieng Lao commune.

## **2. Objectives of the follow-up study**

General objective of this study is to contribute to assisting resettlers to restore life, health care and to adapt to new environment conditions in some extent and to preserve their cultural values in the future. The specific objectives are the followings:

- To find out the real situation of the issues relating to livelihood, culture, health, and environment impacted by the resettlement process after two years.

- To consider the factors that cause to instability of life, livelihood and health care of resettlers and obstacles in cultural preservation of such communities.
- To learn how affected and resettled people deal with the resettlement and rehabilitation within community and between communities.
- To provide recommendations on mitigating impacts to the resettled and affected people.

### 3. Research methodology

This study was carried out in early summer, at the peak time of resettlement implementation in the first half of 2008 before the rainy season comes<sup>1</sup>. The research group had spent almost three weeks at the field in Son La and Lai Châu provinces<sup>2</sup>. The study aimed at examining number of prevailing issues in resettlement of the Son La hydropower project such as compensation policy, housing, land conditions, life restoration, changes in work and economic performance, organization of resettlement, water and sanitation, environment and disease model, social relations in the selected resettlement communities. Therefore, group discussion and open-ended interview were used to collect information. Village officials and households were grouped and discussed. We aimed to identify positive and negative points, as well as similarity and differences in issues among resettlement communities.

At the local community, in order to find similarity and difference among types of resettlement, the study team made comparison and analysis of the current situation in 7 different villages.

The combination of in-depth interviews with officials at commune, district and province levels give insight into specific cases, and aided our understanding about urgent matters for the resettlement work in each location.

Successful resettlement requires the application of many different professional disciplines, which then leads to the requirement of interdisciplinary approach for the study. In the research process, researchers work as a team. Several methods were used as the follows:

*In-depth interview:* the subjects for in-depth interview are diverse including representatives from local officials and leaders (province, district, commune and village), association officials (farmer association, women union, old-age association, youth union), local professionals (agriculture, land survey) and gender and age representatives. The in-depth interviews were conducted with 56 people.

*Group discussion:* in order to define basic issues relating to compensation, and problems on policy unsolved or partly solved, discussion groups were organized to include

---

<sup>1</sup> The first moving period of 2008 will be ended by May 19<sup>th</sup> in order to celebrate Ho Chi Minh's birthday

<sup>2</sup> Dien Bien province is not included in both the original study and the follow up due to difficulties at local level.

different members such local officials, gender representatives, villagers, etc. 104 households were included in different group discussions.

*Secondary materials* collected from province, district to communes consist of reports on socio economic development and resettlement management.

#### 4. Selection of the studied sites

Study sites were selected based on the following criteria:

- Studied sites must be at village level<sup>3</sup> as village in rural mountainous areas of Vietnam is the place where socio-economic and cultural characteristics can be the most clearly presented.
- The selected villages belong to different types of resettlement: *di ven/di noi xa* (moving within commune) and *di tap trung* (moving out of the commune)
- The selected sites count for about 30 percent of studied villages in 2005.

**Table 1:** Selected areas for study

No	Resettlement area (village)	Household/person	Ethnic group	Type of resettlement	Time of displace	Previous main production	Current main production
	<b>Lai Châu province</b>						
1	Huổi Luông (3 villages)	150/364	Tai, Giáy	Within commune – <i>di noi xa</i> (with locals)	11/2006	Rice paddy + Fields	Field, commerce
2	Chiềng Lè (2 villages: Chiềng Lè, Chang)	82/385	Tai	Within commune- <i>di noi xa</i>	11/2007	Field + weave	Field + weave
	<b>Sơn La province</b>						
3	Bó Pan	66/370	Tai	Within commune – <i>di noi xa</i>	3/2005	Rice paddy	Old rice paddy
5	Pu Nhuông (Pu Nhuông and Hìn Hon )	62/285	Tai, La Ha	Within district – <i>di tap trung</i>	3/2005	Field	Field
6	Ban Xa	63/317	La Ha	Within commune – <i>di noi xa</i>	6/2005	Field	Field
7	Phiêng Bùng	66/268	Tai	Within district – <i>di tap trung</i>	10/2005	Field	Field + Rice in the unflooded old paddy fields
8	Chiềng Lao <sup>4</sup>	179 House holds	Tai	Within commune – <i>di noi xa</i>	10/2006	Rice paddy + Fields	Field + Rice in the unflooded old paddy fields

<sup>3</sup> In this study we focus more on the impact at village level.

<sup>4</sup> Chieng Lao commune is an additional area visited by the team which was not covered by the study in 2005.

## **5. Overview of the implementation of Son La hydropower plant resettlement program at the study time**

On June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2001, the 10<sup>th</sup> Vietnam Assembly at the 9<sup>th</sup> session issued the Resolution No 44/2001/QH10 on the direction for the investment on Son La Hydropower project. Eighteen months later, in December 16, 2002, the 11<sup>th</sup> National Assembly at the 2<sup>nd</sup> session issued the Resolution No. 13/2002 approving the Son La Hydropower Construction Project.

Son La Hydropower plant is multi-purpose project. The main purposes are to supply electricity, water for irrigation and contribute to improvement of the socio-economic development in the Northwest region. Electricity of Vietnam (EVN) has received permission from the Government to shorten the construction time by 2 years compared to the initial plan.

Principles for compensation, assistance and resettlement were set to guarantee that displaced people can restore their livelihood after moving, maintain conditions for production, increase income, and step by step improve infrastructure. Material and cultural life is expected to be at least equal or better than in old places. The project aims to ensure long-term stable rehabilitation; to arrange enough production land for resettlement households, especially farming land; to guarantee balance interests between resettled and host communities.

### ***5.1. Adjustments on resettlement policy***

#### ***5.1.1. Adjustments from Government***

In relation to resettlement, an important component of this hydropower project, the Government has issued Decree No. 197/2004/NĐ-CP<sup>5</sup> on guidance for compensation, assistance and resettlement when appropriating the land of 18,968 households with more than 91,000 people, who mainly are ethnic minorities in three provinces of Son La, Lai Châu and Điện Biên. Within the process, the Prime Minister has issued Decision No. 459/QĐ-TTg<sup>6</sup> assigning compensation and resettlement, Decision No. 196/2004/QĐ-TTg<sup>7</sup> on budget for resettlement<sup>8</sup>. Especially, the Decision No. 02/2007/QĐ-TTg<sup>9</sup> on

---

<sup>5</sup>Decree No.197/2004/NĐ-CPdated 13th December, 2004 of the Government of Vietnam on Compensation, Assistance and Resettlement when State Recovers Land.

<sup>6</sup> Decision No. 459/QĐ-TTg by the Prime Minister on the regulations of compensation, displacement and resettlement of the Son La hydropower project.

<sup>7</sup> Decision No. 196/2004/QĐ-TTg by the Prime Minister on regulations of compensation, displacement and resettlement.

compensation, assistance and resettlement of the Son La Hydropower Plant with the amendment and supplement of new issues relating to the steering practices and benefits of resettlers and the host communities. The government targets an open, fair and transparent implementation of the compensation and assistance to right subjects with right purpose, and effective and efficient.

After more than one year of implementing resettlement for the communities under 145-meter level<sup>10</sup>, there were two major problems arising related to resettlement and compensation policy, including:

First, since resettlers have to move in with existing communities in the identified resettlement areas, policy adjustment to assist host communities with running water and electricity is needed. In some places, there were difficulties in appropriating land from the host communities for resettlement sites. Host communities whose lands are acquired have not yet received any compensation as well as benefits from basic infrastructure such as running water, and electricity feel that the project was unfair to them. Even in some cases, social programs for villages with special difficulties were stopped by misleading of the local policy makers. The concerned issues are only given to the resettlement households.

Second, in the resettlement sites, resettlers have not received adequate supporting for production when they moved to the new areas. So far, resettlers have not received supporting for livelihood restoration, new farming lands have not been formally assigned to each family.

This leads to the need of policy adjustment by the government. As a result, the Government has issued Decision 02/2007/QĐ-TTg, which amends the Decision No. 459/QĐ-TTg as follows:

- The application of compensation policy was extended towards the host communities, whose lands were acquired and/or have to displace to make way for the rural concentrated resettlement site. These families will be receiving *assistance for investment in running water and electricity* as the resettled.
- Financial support to resettled families for livelihood recovery includes varieties, fertilizers, pesticides, perennial trees and livestock. Each household is credited of 7,000,000 VND for the first member, 3,000,000VND for the following members.

The study results show that first adjustment in Decision 02/2007/QĐ-TTg has brought good results by solving the interest conflicts between host communities and resettlers in

---

<sup>8</sup> Up to now, the total investment for the Son La hydropower resettlement is the highest for resettlement work. The estimated amount of 700 million dong a households, equivalent to 46,000 USD (including compensation, assistance for displacing, life restoration, production, and infrastructure construction)

<sup>9</sup> Decision No. 02/2007/QĐ-TTg by the Prime Minister on the regulations of compensation, assistance and resettlement of the Son La hydropower project. The supporting level is lower than that in Decision No.01

<sup>10</sup> The resettlement was divided into 2 levels : 145 meter level and 218 meter level. The resettlement for 145 meter level was completed by the last time study (end of 2005) and only in Son La province. The level 218m applied for the rest of the resettled in the 3 provinces.

some extent and speed up the resettlement progress. However, resettlers in all surveyed sites are still not happy with the second adjustment. They expect to receive higher level of financial support for livelihood restoration.

#### 5.1.2. Differences in implementation at local level.

Due to different situations in Son La, Lai Châu and Điện Biên provinces there are differences in implementation at local level in compensation and resettlement of the Son La Hydropower Project which was assigned and decentralized to provincial management by the Government and Inter-ministry. The provinces' leaders make decision based on the local socio-economic and physical characteristics as well as their land availability.

*Lai Châu province:* 3,804 families at 218 meter-level. Up to 31 March 2008, 2,320 families were displaced. Resettlement Project Management Unit is the investor for infrastructure projects, of which 80 percent are for resettlement.

*Son La Province:* 12,400 resettled families including all types of resettlement were under direct management of the District People's Committee which is the direct investor of the infrastructure construction for resettlement. Son La Hydropower Resettlement Project Management Unit has functions as a state management agency and is the investor for bigger projects with investment from 100 billion VND.

*Reward to resettled families:* From 2005 to 2006, Son La province applied a reward policy to households who moved in time with an amount of 3,000,000 VND/ household (Decision 01/UBND). After Decision 02/2007/QĐ-TTg, Son La province issued Decision 02/2007/QĐ-UBND, dated 5<sup>th</sup> May 2007 applying 3 levels of rewards: 3,000,000 VND/household for households resettled within commune, 4,000,000 VND/household for resettlement within district, and 5,000,000 VND/household for resettlement to other districts within province. In the meantime, Lai Châu province applied only uniform reward policy of 5,000,000 VND for every family who moved in time<sup>11</sup>. Financial support for adjustment of commune-level administrative border<sup>12</sup> (approved from budget of the Son La Resettlement Project) has been carried out in Lai Châu province but not in Son La province.

#### 5.1.3. Up-dated concepts<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Decision No. 11/2007/QĐ-UBND on compensation, assistance and resettlement from Son La Hydropower Project in Lai Châu Province according to Decision No. 02/2007/QĐ-TTg by the Prime Minister. The project is responsible for ground leveling at resettlement sites and support with transportation for the moving. Resettlers took their houses apart and moved to the the sites.

<sup>12</sup> Financial support for adjusting commune-level administrative border is the money spent for bordermarks, measuring to identify administrative boundaries of the communes and districts, mapping the land based on the new arrangements of land use and public infrastructure. According to number 7 of article 13.2 of Decision 11/2007/QĐ-UBND of Lai Chau province, this cost is from the budget for resettlement project.

<sup>13</sup> Compared to 2 years ago the project now uses some new concepts in relation to the resettlement process

- Adding the *concept of voluntary resettlement*: Up to the end of 2007, 100 percent of resettlement in Son La hydropower project is involuntary. In 2007, a form of voluntary<sup>14</sup> appears (in both Lai Châu and Son La provinces). These households displaced themselves to new place by their own choice not in the resettlement plans. Compensation and assistance policy for them is the same as in Decision 02/2007/QĐ-TTg. They can find a new place to move in by themselves or choose to move to where their relatives live. The provinces encourage this form of resettlement. However, it is note that this form of resettlement is quite few in Lai Châu province, while it is getting more common in Son La, mainly with Tai people.

“*Di noi xa*” has replaced the concept “*di vén*” (just move up higher around the reservoir). This concept (*di noi xa*) was known as to resettle in short distance without planning for the Hoà Bình case. In addition, concepts of “Resettlement Site” and “Resettlement Area” are also understood as resettlement within district and resettlement to other districts within province, which is specified under the Decision 02/2007/QĐ-TTg.

In general, the concepts of “Resettlement site”, “Resettlement Area”, and “Resettlement Region” are still understood as shown in the Decision 459/QĐ-TTg and other decisions by the provinces on guiding the implementation of the Son La Hydropower resettlement project<sup>15</sup>. However, there are two unclear concepts “Urban resettlement area” and “Rural resettlement area”. They should not be just as concepts. They should have the specific criteria on infrastructure and other factors relating to environment conditions.

## 5.2. Implementation of Resettlement at the study time

### 5.2.1. Plans and Practices

Son La province has the largest number of resettlement households compared to Điện Biên and Lai Châu provinces. Based on detailed plans of resettlement areas, Son La province has 8 regions (districts), 62 areas (communes), 237 sites for resettlement (including 03 standby sites) with capacity to receive 13,100 households<sup>16</sup>. By the end of 2007, the People’s Committee of Son La Province has approved draft detailed plans for 60 out of 62 areas, 213 sites, receiving 12,024 households, approved detailed plans for 40

---

<sup>14</sup> We think that this “voluntary” concept probably should be understood within the frame of “involuntary” as they all have to move to make way for the dam.

<sup>15</sup> “Resettlement site” – *diem tai dinh cu* is a place where inhabitants was constructed as plan, including: land for house, land for production, specialized land, land for infrastructure, public construction to arrange resettlers

“Resettlement area” – *khu tai dinh cu* is an area planned for arranging resettlement site(s), with system of infrastructure, public construction and production area. Each resettlement area has at least one resettlement site.

“Resettlement region” – *vung tai dinh cu* is a region of districts, townships planned for receiving resettlement people. Each resettlement region has at least one resettlement area.

<sup>16</sup> Of which 59 areas and 223 sites for rural resettlement with capacity to receive 10,574 households; 3 areas and 14 sites for urban resettlement with capacity to receive 1,661 households; resettlement with existing local people to 60 villages of 23 communes with capacity to receive 755 households and 110 voluntary resettlement households

out of 60 areas, 169 sites, receiving 10,436 households. In only 2007, 29 draft detailed plans and 25 detailed plans for resettlement areas were appraised and approved.<sup>17</sup>

At the time of study, resettlement implementation was at the peak time of the whole plan. Son La province has mobilized its whole administrative and political systems to accomplish the resettlement by the end of dry season of 2009 (upto 19<sup>th</sup> May 2009). As planned, from October 2007 to 19 May 2008, 4,606 households should be resettled in 39 resettlement areas, 93 sites of *di tap trung* and 58 mixed sites (*di xen ghép* – where the resettled will live together with the host communities).

However, according to the report on resettlement progress over the last 4 years, upto 20 June 2008, the number of displaced households are 8,146 out of 12,400 households (65,69%); 23,232 out of 48,028 persons (48,37%). In general, there is still a large number of people need to be resettled before the deadline of the resettlement program in May 2009.

In Lai Châu province, upto April 2008, profile filing<sup>18</sup> of 3,584 households out of 3,805 households has been completed (94.42%). Detailed plans for 100% of resettlement sites have been approved. Compensation and assistance for 3,397 out of 3,805 households has been completed. Currently, draft compensation and assistance for 2,755 out of 2,805 households have been approved (72.4% of the plan). Several component projects are ongoing such as construction of inter-resettlement sites, ground leveling, and water pipes installment. So far, 2,320 households (61%) have resettled in new places.

**Table 2:** Resettlement progress in Son La and Lai Chau provinces

Order	Province	Total of households to be resettled	Number of resettled households	Number of households to be resettled
1	Lai Châu	3,805	2,320	1,485
2	Sơn La	12,400	8,146	4,254
	Total	16,205	10,466	5,739

### 5.2.2. New Expectation and Challenges

Electricity of Vietnam (EVN) has received permission from the Government to shorten the construction time by 2 years compared to the initial plan. It is a big challenge for resettlement program, especially in the context of high inflation over the last year. It is more expensive for families to establish their new households, purchase materials for

<sup>17</sup> Interview with officials of the Son La Hydropower Resettlement Management Unit, May 2008

<sup>18</sup> The project needs to have complete profile for each household including all information related to its moving such as amount of lost lands, damaged properties, all kinds of compensations it receive after moving, etc.

extra construction and stabilizing their lives. Directly related to compensation and resettlement of Sơn La Hydropower project, there are two new challenges as following:

*First*, it is hard to complete the whole resettlement process in time by May 2009. A lot of lessons learned over the last 3 years, but it is only one year ahead to move the rest out of 218m level. Over the last almost three years, from October 2005 to March 2008, Sơn La and Lai Châu provinces made only 58.18% of the plan. Total households need to be displaced from both provinces are 16,205. In which 12,400 families are from Sơn La, 2,805 from Lai Châu).

*Second*, In fact, local authorities in both provinces found that time and work pressure of the resettlement process is too high. In order to start turbine No. 1 in December 2010, the resettlement must be completed in May 2009 (Power Company No. 3; <http://www.PC3.com.vn>; 26<sup>th</sup> June 2008). MARD recently held a workshop in Thanh Hoa province to discuss ways for speeding up the resettlement progress in all three provinces. Prevailing problems include poor infrastructure in resettlement areas, land acquisition as well as farming land assignment after moving. These have caused great constraints for livelihood rehabilitation and restoration for the resettlers<sup>19</sup>.

It is worth to remind that success or failure of Sơn La hydropower is the resettlement work itself. Planners and decision makers need to listen and understand what should be in position of resettlers.

## **6. Main findings from field study**

### **6.1. Social- economic dimension**

#### **6.1.1. Compensation and housing issue**

At the moment, resettlement of the Sơn La hydropower project has been remarkably pushed up but it is still behind the plan due to a number of reasons, including insufficient and ill preparation and implementation of the resettlement planning even though a huge amount of money has been invested in it.

In several resettlement sites, the planning and implementation were inconsistent, causing delays in construction (for both *di ven* and *di xen ghep*). As a consequence, people have to wait for long time to get things ready for the new life. Moreover, a huge number of resettlers makes many problems arising after displacement remain unsolved.

In general, resettlers have quickly re-built their houses after moving. The policy of dismantling the old house to rebuild in the new places has helped people to keep their custom of house building. Support in house-moving, according to most of them, is necessary and very useful.

---

<sup>19</sup> (<http://www.thanhnienonline.com.vn>, dated 10 July 2008)

According to most of the interviewees, after displaced, many households have improved their houses. In the surveyed resettlement villages, none of households have house with wall from mud and bamboo. Several families even changed from old houses on stilts to brick-wall houses. In some aspects, the moving should be an opportunity for resettlers to use compensation money for improving their houses.

However, there is a problem in all resettlement sites that we have observed is that as the whole village moved at the same time, people could only take turn to help each other. As a consequence, it took longer time to rebuild the houses. Thus, this also has affected life restoration of many families.

Another problem regarding housing issue is many resettlement households have used the compensated money inefficiently. They watched each other in building their house. As a result, some houses are a lot bigger than necessary. Many families used up all the compensation money, or even borrowed from others to build big house without considering the debt as they expected more supporting from the government.

This is also one of the difficulties that resettlement officials realized in all surveyed districts. People did not completely understand the compensation policy of the project. In other words, the propaganda for resettlement compensation did not help people to fully understand the policy. For example, many people understood the compensation amount of 500 million dong<sup>20</sup> is what each family supposed to receive in cash and complained that they have received much less than that. However, in fact that amount includes both the compensation for what they have lost and the investment for infrastructure of the new resettlement area. This misunderstanding was probably mostly caused by unclear explanation of the resettlement officials (Thời báo Kinh tế Sài Gòn, 19 June 2008). It is obviously that the propaganda work should be done better for people to understand the policy more clearly.



**Figure 1a:** Old house was rebuilt in resettlement site in Pú Nhuồng village, Mường Bú commune, Mường La district, Sơn La province



**Figure 1b:** Building new houses in Chiềng Lè resettlement site, Lai Châu province

<sup>20</sup> in fact, this number has increased upto 700 million dong (VND)

### 6.1.2. Resettlement models and arable land.

As mentioned above, the study concentrates in two forms of resettlement as *di vén/ di noi xa*, and *di tập trung*. Resettlers, if it's possible, usually request to be resettled within commune – *di noi xa*. In short term, they could return to their old land for farming until it is flooded. This also helps to maintain their livelihood when they have not received enough arable land in the new places.

Dry hilly farming land (*đất nương*) for *di vén* or *di noi xa* will not be flooded much because these lands normally locate in higher areas. However, when the reservoir is filled, total paddy rice area along the river will be submerged under water. Therefore, ones who used to live on paddy rice production will have to change to growing subsidiary crops (such as corn, cassava) in dry hilly fields. However, most of resettlement sites are located in high slope areas, the arable lands become quite limited. Besides, it is not easy to farm on hilly field with slope of about 40-45 degrees. As a consequence, farming land will be a great big problem to be dealt with when the reservoir is filled in 2010.

The irrigation projects have been built promptly. After completed, these irrigation projects, if function as designed, will provide water for newly reclaimed paddy rice fields. For example, in Huổi Luông resettlement sites consisting of 3 villages, the cultivation area is about 3.8 ha, of which 0.8 ha is dry fields. The irrigation project which is shortly completed will provide enough water for 3 ha of paddy rice. According to a resettlement official in Lai Châu province, the irrigation system upon finish will provide enough water for totally about 40-50 ha of wet rice land in different resettlement areas in the province. Several projects have started in the middle of 2008 and will operate from the end of 2008 to the end of 2009.

A program on changing agricultural structure from subsidiary crops to rubber tree has been carried out in several resettlement areas. As expected, Vietnam Rubber Corporation (VRC), in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, will invest to grow rubber trees on a large scale, with priority to resettlers to be rubber workers in the first hand. Each household will contribute at least one hectare of dry farming land in order to have one member to work as paid worker for the VRC. Number of the family members to work as paid worker will increase parallel to the number of hectares of land contributed to the rubber program. Technical consultation and training will be provided to farmers by VRC's staff.



**Figure 2:** Dry hilly field is prepared for rubber plantation

During the interview, many resettlers showed their high expectation on this plan and willing to participate in it. According to the assessment from Project Management Unit, food subsidiary to resettlers within two years after moving would not help them to overcome poverty because in long run, the farming land will be significantly reduced. Rubber program could be an opportunity for them if it is successful.

However, there are potential risks to the Rubber program. First, it is the rubber variety. Rubber is grown in large scale in Central Highland and Central of Vietnam but that variety is not suitable to natural conditions in Northeast area. Second, it takes 7 years before the sap can be tapped. That means we can only learn about the raw rubber quality after 7 years. Third, people in the resettlement areas are not well educated. They are used to simple ways of living and producing. Growing rubber tree (or any kind of industrial tree) requires a long and careful training; otherwise the cost will be high. However, provincial officials are quite positive about the program. They claim that if the program fails, rubber growing areas can become protection forests and people still can do rubber logging when the trees are big enough.

#### 6.1.3. Life restoration

Restoring income and livelihood, stabilizing life and production conditions are claimed as the most important goals of the resettlement works. It requires efforts from project officials to help resettlers improve their life; create opportunities to earn income and production, or at least to restore their lives as before displacement. In principle, this could be achieved by providing compensation in money or land, support in livelihood, support in moving and stabilizing their life.

Farming land is always the most concerned by the resettlers. Resettlement families have not officially assigned any land although it has been planned. At the moment, *di noi xa*

families still farm in their old land but they don't know what to do for their living when it is flooded.

The local governments understand that when it is flooded, the *di noi xa* families will face many difficulties due to land shortage. The detailed plan are not well prepared in several resettlement sites, leading to the problem that less land for farming will be assigned to people compared to the plan. In Pú Nhuồng 2 village (Mường La district, Sơn La province), according to the project, each household should be assigned 2,700 m<sup>2</sup> of land, but after 2 years of displacement, each household received only 1,900 m<sup>2</sup>. The lands are poor with high slope that make it difficult for people to grow their crops. A number of La Ha people have returned to their old village, about 30 km away from current place to cultivate.

In some resettlement sites, lands have been assigned for commune in general, but not to each household. In some aspect, assigning land for each household by the number of person in the household would be fair. However, in fact, every household wish to have land as much as possible but they use it differently. Many households after receiving compensation have reduced production and increased expenditure; they even leave their land idle (both old land and newly assigned land). This causes to a situation that several households have more than enough land, some others have less.

To solve this problem, Sơn La resettlement management unit has proposed to assign land to community (village), not to household<sup>21</sup>. At the beginning, land will be assigned to village for cultivation. After village meeting, each household will receive their land (according to cultivating demand). It is estimated that it will take 2 years to specify the farming demand and then assign the area of land for each household. Thus, if this approach is applied, it takes some certain time to explain and persuade the resettlers to accept it.

The process might take a few years but perhaps, more feasible compare to define a specific area to assign to household by casting lots (to a rock land). Moreover, land assigned to commune should be known as to households, but it takes longer time for issuing red-book than expected.

Currently, people are still in the period of 2 years livelihood subsidy (especially to the newly displaced households). There are several households who do not want to work hard while receiving the subsidies. Some of them simply think that they may just want to rely on compensation and subsidies.

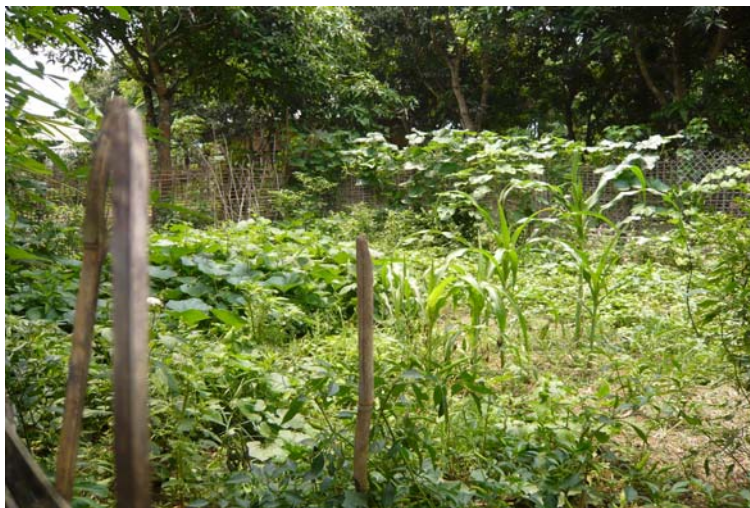
One problem in consideration occurs in several mixed resettlement sites such as Pú Nhuồng<sup>1</sup>, Hìn Hon and Phiêng Bùng villages is the host communities tend to keep the land, and don't let resettlers farm on their land even though these lands are supposed to give to the resettlers as planned. The reason is the host communities have not yet received compensation for their land. If this problem will not be solved in the short term, the conflicts between resettlers and host communities will be severe.

---

<sup>21</sup> From interviews with provincial officers in Resettlement Unit

In the case of Phiêng Bùng resettlement village, 64 households were displaced from Nom Village (Mường Trai, Sơn La). In the old place, they did not have land for wet rice but had 400 hectares of hilly field for growing maize, soybean and cassava. In the resettlement site, they were assigned totally 84 ha of farming land, including 39.04 hectares of dry hilly field and 20.6 hectares of land for paddy rice. After 2 years, the number of households increased to 66, of which 8 households are considered as “rich” with income from 50 to 100 million VN dong a year, 55 households are “average” with income about 20-40 million dong a year. Only 3 household are viewed as poor with annual income under 20 million dong.<sup>22</sup>

Phiêng Bùng resettlement village has seen as the most succesful village in the total 8 resettlement villages studied. However, Phiêng Bùng should not be considered as representative village for the resettlement project, because most of other villages are facing difficulties in both farming land and water for life restoration. For example, in Lai Châu province, most resettlement villages have not recieved land for production, except Huổi Luông resettlement site.



**Figure 3:** A garden in Phiêng Bùng resettlement village, Mường Bú commune, Mường La district, Sơn La province

#### 6.1.4. Changes in living conditions and economic activities.

This survey did not show any remarkably change in job and economic activities. Resettlement households mainly continue doing their farming on rice and other subsidiary crops such as corn and cassava as before. Some families have spent their money on livestock and been doing quite well (in Phieng Bung and Po Ban villages). Unfortunately, these successful cases only count for a small percentage of the resettlers.

In many villages, resettlers express their desire to expand their livestock into larger scale but lack of techniques and experience. In addition, water shortage is a big constraint as raising both pig and cow need a lot of water.

---

<sup>22</sup> The concept of “poor” is defined by the villagers themselves through group discussions

Some households invested in service and commerce as small restaurant, husking, drying which help them gain high revenue. Group discussions in Phiêng Búng (Mường La) and Pó Ban (Quỳnh Nhai) villages reveal that some people could rehabilitate quite quickly. Some families even became wealthier than before. It is because they were able to use their skills and experiences in intensive farming, increase productivity of land in resettlement place compare to other areas. Unfortunately, this model of restoration is not common.

One of the important indicators to show people's wealthiness is their assets. However, it is difficult to conclude in this case because most of assets they have were from compensation. Motorbikes now became the important means of transportation. It shortens time to fields, so they can spend more time working in the field. This could be a reason to increase productivity with the evidence of higher harvest.

In fact the resettlement program has made some significant achievements especially in infrastructure construction. Good roads come to many villages, making it easier for transportation, purchase and exchange products. This is important point to be emphasized because in many villages, the roads were extremely bad and difficult to travel.

The development of infrastructure, especially road system and electricity, has improved accessibility to the area. As a result this helps make a big push to overall development by making products and services easier and faster to the market. People can easily carry their agricultural produces to local markets. During harvesting time, vehicle could come to villages to purchase products. Furthermore, better traffic system can reduce geographic distance and development among areas. Many people agreed that many things are getting better than before due to these roads. Most of the resettlement sites have electricity from the national grid line<sup>23</sup>. There are a couple of other villages still use hydropicos. Electricity has help to increase convenience in family activities as cooking or entertainment by television.

In general, schools in resettlement sites are built better than in the old places. Children from both resettlers and host communities share new school.

---

<sup>23</sup> Except Chiềng Lao commune, 8 out of 9 resettlement villages still don't have electricity and running water after two years of moving. This is because the construction company who won the bidding has quitted the contract due to soaring inflation.



**Figure 4a:** School and cultural house in Phiêng Bùng resettlement site, Mường La district, Sơn La province



**Figure 4b:** A classroom in Phiêng Bùng resettlement site, Sơn La

However, in some *di ven/ di noi xa* sites such as Chiềng Lao or Chiềng Lè, the construction of new school has not started when people moved in. Thus, the children have to either go to their old school or use a temporary classroom.



**Figure 5a:** Temporary classroom in Chiềng Lè resettlement village, Lê Lợi, Lai Châu province



**Figure 5b:** Inside the temporary classroom in Chiềng Lè village

#### 6.1.5. Organizational problems

At the moment, master plan for Sơn La resettlement project is facing some problems that need to solve quickly. According to Lai Châu Resettlement Project Management Unit, some villages will be flooded but are not included in the initial planning. Now they have to work again in order to fix the problem. Furthermore, resettlement of the Sơn La hydropower project is a long process. An increase in number of families and well as the population, and inflation etc. - all lead to the need of continuously adjusting compensation and investment in the project. Text book is one small example, 20,000

VND supporting each child per school year can be no longer applied due to the inflation. Similar thing happens with rice and other subsidies.

Land measurement has caused great pressure on local officials. New policy requires machine land measurement<sup>24</sup> in order to receive the compensation money. Unfortunately, majority of the land were already manually measured. Remeasuring by machine will increase the time for setting up compensation file for both displaced households and host communities. Previously, measurement by professional machines were not required due to high cost therefore measurement was made manually, in some cases, the data were based on red-books and green-books<sup>25</sup> provided by households. Machine measures in some villages show quite significant difference between the two ways of measuring. Now, compensation plan should base on official land survey made by the measurement center under the Provincial Department of Natural Resource and Environment. As estimated by staff of the provinces and districts' Resettlement Unit, the area needs to be measured (both old and new) could not be finished in 3 years. In addition, it is estimated that the budget for this measurement works could be tens of billion dong. This means it will be longer as it takes time to get approved by the Prime Minister.

As required, to define the compensation, both land to be flooded and land at the resettlement sites should be measured accurately. After that, the difference between two areas specifies the result to compensation. Weak capacity in land survey, in combination with complicated terrain<sup>26</sup>, has significantly increased time for measuring. It also means compensation will be delayed. This causes mental impacts to resettlers and host communities.

There are many requests from resettlers asking for recalculating the price of rice in food subsidy. The problem is, at the time of survey, price of rice has been increased three times compared from the end of 2005 to the end of 2007 (12,000 VND/kg). Most of them already received the compensation based on the price fixed by the Ministry of Finance as 4,500 VND/kg (when the market price of rice was 6,000 VND/kg). Many resettlers have stated that they were getting poorer compared to the time of receiving compensation, and complained that this is the State's responsibility? In the high inflation period, compensation to resettlers based on price of rice is directly affected. "Difference in compensation price" is one of suggestion during discussion on compensation to resettlement households. However, by decentralizing management of the project and depending on administration borders (rural and urban land), the compensation prices are very different from one area to another (although they are close to each other).

## *6.2. Culture and social relations*

### *6.2.1. Community structure*

---

<sup>24</sup> The land will be measured by professional machine, not by hand and measuring tapes.

<sup>25</sup> "Redbook" is the certificate of land use right of a household without time limit, "greenbook" is the certificate of forest land use right within 50 years.

<sup>26</sup> In general, dry fields are very scattered and hilly. That makes it very difficult to measure by machines

Related to traditional community structure broken by resettlement, it happens mainly within Tai people in *di tập trung* sites outside commune and district. Tai people count for more than 75% of the total resettlers. One Tai village is quite a lot larger than capacity of one resettlement site can hold. Social disarticulation of Tai communities unavoidably occurs although the planners have tried to minimize it as much as possible.



**Figure 6:** Scenery of a Tai village, Tòng Cọ commune, Thuận Châu district, Sơn La province

The problem of broken traditional community structure does not occur in *di noi xa* sites with the La Ha, Giáy and Khơ Mú ethnic groups because their kinship, relatives and households in the villages are quite small compared to Tai people.



**Figure 7:** Welcoming guests as the traditional custom of La Ha ethnic group in Ban Xa village

Tai people settle in valley along the Đà River for a very long period of time. Their villages are normally large, close to rivers or streamlines. Their livelihood depends mainly on wet rice cultivation and they are skillful in using irrigation canal (build dikes and open ditches to rice fields). Traditional village structure and social institutions of Tai

are not separated from these characteristics of landscape and long-standing wet rice culture. Tai people count for the largest population in the Northwest; therefore, their culture and language are pervasive and dominate to other ethnic groups' cultures in the area.



**Figure 8:** Bring water to the field by Tai people, Chiềng Bằng commune, Sơn La province

The above characteristics could explain why they suffered psychologically in term of ethnic group and non-migrant during the resettlement.

The traditional community structure was broken also by the limits in living space in the resettlement areas. Shifting from valley landscape to higher places, their living space is reduced. Wet rice cultivation customs of Tai people in valleys of the Northwest in Mường Lò, Mường Lay is not only a legend of the Tai in the Northwest but also similar to Mường Thanh in Điện Biên area. As a resettler in Huổi Luông village (Lai Châu province) who is displaced from Chăn Nưa village, said “with average of 200m<sup>2</sup> of living area, about half size of the old house and garden, circumference of new village is less than one forth of the old one, and small rice fields, when the new village the resettlement site become a part of Pa So town, we will have to wait and find a new job for living.”

The broken community also expressed in the instability and inadaptability of clans and community members. The relations roles among members of a community linked to convention, unwritten law in old place, now in resettlement areas, village convention has been replaced with new content and new members are not linked with old village's landscape. The disorder in social relations needs to be readjusted.

Our recommendations 2 years ago still remain valuable. To the scattered community integrating to the other more stable community as in Pú Nhuồng, Phiêng Bủng resettlement sites (Mường La district), the interest conflicts did not occur from the beginning. However, for the community in stable situation (though the same ethnic), it is not well prepared in term of mentality to accept the integration (as in Mường Khiêng, Thuận Châu or resettlement sites in Mường Bú commune, Mường La district, Sơn La province), and the concerns arise about losing the stability of existing local community.

Specifically, if the resettlers are poorer, then the consideration is at initial assistance (as the case of Sang village in Mường Bú commune). But if the resettlers know how to do better business and are getting wealthier, then the envious thought appear (as in Phiêng Búng village, Mường La commune or Pa So town, Lai Châu province. (this could also be seen through the behavior of the existing local Kinh and Tai to the Tai community displaced from Chấn Nưa commune, Sin Hồ district). Resettlement community within district and within province if they have land and work hard they will be able to restore sooner, otherwise they become poorer and have to come back to the old place for temporary farming (as 13 out of 17 households of La Ha ethnic group in Pú Nhuồng resettlement village, Mường Bú district have returned to old village to farm in their already compensated land).

#### 6.2.2. Relations in resettlement areas

It is easily seen that many locals affected by the resettlement plan. Statistics from 7 surveyed sites, there are 32.4% of existing households directly affected by giving up their land to the resettlement planning. This issue did not happen or less in within-commune resettlement sites. Furthermore, in several within-commune resettlement sites, some households have opportunities to buy or rent field land from between-commune displaced households. For example, La Ha community of within-commune resettlement in Ban Xa village has bought near-river fields of Tai people in Nôm village, Mường Chai commune who moved Phiêng Búng, Mường Bú commune).

In Huổi Luông resettlement site, which consists of 141 Tai families from Chiềng Chấn village, Chấn Nưa commune and 17 Giáy existing local households, there was no significant conflict between resettlers and locals. In other sites where both resettlers and host communities are Tai people there were severe conflicts over land compensation policy. In fact, the locals' compensation is delayed when the new decision (Decision No. 246 issued by the Government) was released. In most of the surveyed resettlement sites, only 50% of housing land and cultivate land have been transferred to resettlement households based on the committed compensation.

For example, in Pú Nhuồng resettlement site, as plan (land exchange to land), in average each resettler should receive 2,500 m<sup>2</sup> but after one year, they were assigned only 1,200 m<sup>2</sup> for each person (800m<sup>2</sup> of cultivate field and 400 m<sup>2</sup> of housing land). The people in the host communities, who have not received compensation, did not transfer land to resettlers. In Phiêng Búng resettlement site, where is considered as a successful model of resettlement but the existing locals still asked to have their land back after 2 years if they do not have compensation timely. In some extreme cases, the locals have damaged production activities of resettlers such as chopped down trees, stole fish in fish ponds etc. Fortunately, this has been partly under control without any remarkable conflict.

#### 6.2.3. Resettled but not restored

Displacement was completed in 2005 at Pú Nhuồng resettlement site. This community has received compensation and land for housing as planned from the Tai in Sang and Lồng Luông villages. Electricity, roads, water and village cultural house were available when they moved in. Now this resettlement site is divided into two villages namely Hin Hon and Pú Nhuồng I. In Hin Hon village (the resettlers wanted to keep the name of their old village), when resettled have 11 Tai households with 44 persons and 17 La Ha households with 79 persons. However, only Tai households who were able to receive farming land can start their production activities<sup>27</sup>; 13 La Ha households who have not been assigned land have returned to the old place for farming in their already compensated land.

Lack of land causes lack of food for several households while the assistance for food for resettlement is coming to the end after 2 years. For them, without any job, unable to get along with the new life, making decision to return for farming in the unflooded old village which is about 30 km away is compelled. Only children stayed in the houses in resettlement site as schools are better there. All grown ups in the family came back to their old land. They made temporary camps to stay and farm. One La Ha said “we are more miserable compare to *divén/ di noi xa* families because we have to move more than 30 km back to the old land to farm while they only need go for about 1-3 km.”

Pú Nhuồng I village faces different obstacles. They have to displace from 40 km away (from Pó Ban village, Muong Chai commune). The village consists of 36 households with 169 persons, of which 20 households are Tai with 102 persons, La Ha are 16 households with 67 persons. Up to now, most of households have assigned 800m<sup>2</sup> of field land and 400 m<sup>2</sup> housing land as compensation, but the field land is poor quality. The village headman told us that: up to now, there were 6 households returned to old land to farm, including 2 Tai households and 1 La Ha household. In spite of the distance several households are going to return to their old lands. They will continue to do it until it is flooded because the quality of the land there is better in the new place.

In both villages, people have not received livelihood support yet. A La Ha person said “we now have to return to the old land to grow corn and rice. But the land will soon be flooded. If this (land assignment) takes longer, we will die in hunger.”

---

<sup>27</sup> Since the land was very limited, they had to do like lottery to see if who can have the land first.



**Figure 9:** Ban Xa resettlement village, Liệp Tè commune, Thuận Châu district, Sơn La province

### 6.3. Sanitary environment and health care

#### 6.3.1. Access to the sanitary water and environment

##### - Water and community-based water management

The study results show that one of the most difficulties noted in resettlement villages is water, especially to the *di ven/di noi xa* resettlement villages. Formal use right of the water system has not transferred to every village yet. In almost every village, water supply tank and pipe system have been built (both public and private). In some villages such as Ban Xa, Chiềng Lè, Hìn Hon and Pú Nhuồng, water meters have been installed. But water is not always available. In most of the surveyed villages, only Phieng Bung and Pó Ban have water to the villages. In other places, people have to go quite far to get the water, at least 2 kilometers from their houses.

There are several reasons for it. First, water tanks have been built but not transferred to resettlement villages. Therefore, no one was in charge of management (Pú Nhuồng village). This leads to the situation of being downgraded or even damage. Second, several ongoing road construction projects have broken water pipe systems that causes the lack of water in some villages (Pú Nhuồng and Ban Xa villages). Infrastructure construction surrounding resettlement sites are not synchronized (Ban Xa village). As planned, water lines were set to villages but cross unbuilt roads. Now, during the construction of these roads, excavators, bulldozers and rocks have damaged the water pipes causing to prolonged lacking of water<sup>28</sup>. When receiving petition from people, the construction agencies and local government promised to quickly repair, but in fact, it takes some time

<sup>28</sup> Ban Xa village, Liệp Tè commune, Thuận Châu district, Sơn La province: People *di ven* in November 2005, but they did not have running water until November 2006. Since November 2007 the pipes have been broken by a road construction project.

because the time to build a road is quite long. However, promises without quick responses have caused the problem that resettlers lost their trust to local government and the project management board.

In some villages water was available when people move in, but soon was broken after just a few months of using. For instance, in Chiềng Lè, Pú Nhuồng 1 and Hin Hon villages (Mường La, Sơn La) people only had water in 3 months. In Chiềng Lao commune, the story is different. Resettlers have moved to 9 different resettlement sites since 2006, but upto now there are no running water and electricity available in 8 villages.

If use right of the water system for resettlement was formally transferred to the villages, villagers would have met and assigned responsibility to maintain it. Normally, they will have a person to measure water quantity used by each family. Villagers will pay management fee according to the amount they use. The person, who is in charge for water management, would be assigned by the people in the village, in term or in turns. Water management by community could be an efficient way in this context.



**Figure 10:** Public water tank without water for few months in Chiềng Lè village, Lê Lợi commune, Lai Châu province

In resettlement sites, water tap is quite different from what people were used to such as getting water from natural spring, *nuoc mo*. Some villagers suggested building public water tanks in the village rather than running pipes to each house. Furthermore, activities near water supply source are closed to their old custom of using water.

Therefore, although water management by community is rather efficient theoretically, there is a need of management method. This could be applied through trainings and experience sharing.

- Access to clean water:

In all surveyed resettlement sites, clean water to resettlement sites was designed systematically based on natural water sources (*nước mỏ*). However, at the moment, except Phiêng Bùng resettlement site where the water is available for domestic use, the water system is technically problematic and unsecured in other 6 sites. Typical case is Ban Xa village (Liệp Tè commune) of La Ha people. Since November 2007 63

households with 317 persons have not had running water. People in the village have to go 2 km away to carry water from a spring by motorbike. It is very difficult to households with only children or older people. They even have to go down to drink water from the Đà River.

The water pipe from water tank to each household has been completely damaged in Pú Nhuồng resettlement site. In a group discussion with households and management board in Hin Hon village, people said that the water system operated well in the beginning. However, after a year, torrential rain leaves and solid waste came into the main water tank blocking the metal pipe system. The pipe was damaged. Households have to use soft plastic pipe to lead water in. Inter-village roads were eroded into big ditches.

The damaged water pipe causing water problems also happened in Chiềng Lè resettlement site (Lê Lợi, Lai Châu). This site is considered as completed in whole infrastructure but the technique used for linking water pipes was not appropriate, leading to the fact that water does not come to the village.

It seems that in number of villages, the water system satisfied people's demand only in a short time after installment. However, problems occurred later by rain, quality of work causing unsecured supply of water. Community-based water management in Phieng Bung village could be a good model to expand to other villages.

In general view, due to the unfinished infrastructure, resettlers in the surveyed sites have been facing problems to access to clean water. In some cases, it was under threat and dangerous. The negative impacts from such problems to the security and health of people in the resettlement sites are realistic.



**Figure 11:** One of the broken water pipes for about 6 months in Hin Hon village, Pú Nhuồng resettlement site, Mường La district, Sơn La province

- Sanitary environment

As observed, most families built their bathroom and toilet. The villages are cleaner than old place. One resettler in Pú Nhuồng resettlement site said: “in our old village, most of us did not have toilets; only some Tai families had open and soil-toilets. We don’t use bathroom”. When people moved to new villages, they received 8 millions VND of compensation for building toilet and bathroom. Many households invested more than above amount to build nice bathroom and toilets. Unfortunately, due to water shortage the toilets were left unused. Ban Xa resettlement village (Liệp Tè commune) is an example. The La Ha people came back to their traditional way of having no toilet.



**Figure 12a:** Bathroom and toilet left unused from Nov. 2007 due to water shortage in Ban Xa village, Liệp Tè commune



**Figure 12b:** Water meter in Ban Xa village

This situation is directly related to ensuring sanitary environment in the resettlement villages. In addition, the custom of keeping cattles under the floor in many households in the resettlement villages makes it difficult to keep clean. Therefore the sanitary environment has not been improved (as in Pú Nhuồng and Huỗi Luông villages).

From group discussions with the village management board in 7 resettlement sites, of which 5 villages have not had new village convention (except Huỗi Luông and Phiêng Búng) and not performed periodically cleaning works in the community. Households’ wastes were arbitrarily processed as throwing around the house. Propaganda and discussion about keeping clean environment by making convention by the local health officials and/or management board did not gain enough attention.

### 6.3.2. Health care and diseases prevention

Due to concentrating in the displacement plan, except examining and treating people, providing health books for poorer households did not gain the appropriate attention. For the *di ven/ di noi xa* villages, regulations for the poor households remain the same. But the problems arise to the within-district resettlement households. In the communities such as Huỗi Luông and Mùng Bú, the high demand for medical treatment and medicine has created pressure to the local health care stations. As in the within-commune resettlement sites, infrastructure of the health care stations have not been improved (downgraded infrastructure, narrow stations, limited skill staff), the physical conditions and treatment

tools are overloaded in the host villages. In some mixed resettlement site, village health care is not available or the health care staffs who belong to the displaced community were not ready in new places. Currently, in such sites, women gave birth at home (with the assistance of local health staff who also providing clean delivering bag). If people are sick, they treat themselves by taking medicine or are transferred to the district or province hospitals.

The implementation of 7 national health care programs in the within district resettlement sites have not been restored. Although resettled for about one to two years, these programs have been performed weakly. For example, the malaria prevention program, program for iodized salt use and bronchocele prevention, vaccination programs are active only in several sites.

At the female group discussion with in Huỗi Luông and the male group in Pú Nhuồng, participants told that in the old place, village health care staff worked better and more regularly. In new places, children vaccination and propaganda for disease prevention don't work very well.

#### 6.3.3. Disease model

Up to the survey time, there was little change in disease model in within-commune resettlement sites. The reason is, according to village health staff, the living condition remains pretty much the same, so no new disease has been reported. These sites were under control by the local health staff. However, there were some new diseases occurring in within district and mixed resettlement sites. Group discussion in such sites showed that the malaria from old place (14 cases in Huỗi Luông) has not treated may transmit to the whole village because people live closer to each other than before. Respiration problems seemed to increase in young children. Diarrhea in children tended to reduce because the water is cleaner (only in places where water is available). In Huỗi Luông, problems with headache and stomach occurred more often to the middle age and old people. Epidemic diseases follow up by the village health care stations was limited in the mixed resettlement sites<sup>29</sup>.

In general, people want to keep using public health care service (everyone has his/her own health card). However, in *di vón/di nơi xa* villages it is easier for the villagers as nothing has changed much with the health care system, but in mixed or *di tập trung* sites, people are reluctant to use their health cards partly because they are not used with the system in the new places and partly because of the unfriendly attitude of some health care staff.

#### 6.3.4. Impacts of the weather, climate and nutrition to resettlers' health protection

---

<sup>29</sup> Evidence is that the disease model was collected in fields was not provided by the commune health care staff. People and village management board told that from the time they displaced to the site, no health care staff came to them for any performance.

It is easy to find that people's health was negatively affected after spending time on displacing, rebuilding house and restoring. Besides, food shortage occurs in months. Within-district resettlers got sick more often than within-commune ones. Different topography, weather and climate conditions, land and water – all possibly cause sickness among children, pregnant women and old people.

As displacement has been carried out for about one or two years, it is possible to assess the seasonal diseases in the mountainous areas. According to the village health staff and people, the weather - hotter in summer and colder in winter, in the resettlement sites has affected health of children and older people. Higher land terrain, lack of trees, without stream/river, newly leveled ground, narrowly concentrated area among other make Tai people easier to get sick compared to La Ha people. According to the resettlers, that's because La Ha, Kháng and Giáy ethnic group are familiar with higher land and severe conditions compared to Tai people so their adaptabilities are better. Most of resettlement sites are set in mountain sides, in the baren hills, dry fields and newly leveled ground. The older people commented that in the night time, gas from land exhaled making it uncomfortable, especially for people live in on-the-ground houses. In the dry season, children and older people are easy to get sick as they sleep on the floor. Some resettlement sites have more mosquitoes than in the old place (Phiêng Búng, Pú Nhuồng) due to the households' toilet and waste dump are under bad conditions.

Ensuring the daily nutrition in meals for resettlers is one of the important factors relating to the health recovery in the new place. In this study, we did not have enough tools to measure the number of calories in each meal of households to confirm about whether it is 2100 calories a day for each person as regulated by Vietnam Ministry of Health. But, as observed, we found that the number of calories was not sufficient in the meals of La Ha household (see Box)

The meal was simple with plain or sticky rice. Often, they eat the sticky rice with red pepper and salt. There were very little vegetables, except with plain rice. Local whisky is the indispensable drink for men every meal. The amount of protein and vitamin from meat, fish, egg and fat is very little in the resettlers' daily meals.

**Box 1: Main meal of a resettlement family**

In a main meal of a La Ha resettlement family, we witnessed that the portion of meal for the a woman after 2 months of giving birth was only steamed sticky rice and vegetable (young leaves picked from forest, not vegetable from garden or market) with salt. In estimation for such meal, there were only 250 to 300 grams of sticky rice, 200 grams of vegetables and 15 grams of roasted salt mixed with red pepper.

The iodized salt bags were arranged largely in the kitchen's corner as the reserved food source. The study team shared their food bought from the district and village store. Just only little fruit and vegetables and some eggs but were “much” as the family's thought.

#### *6.4. Impacts on environment security and the issue of wastes deposited in the reservoir*

In this survey, we also pay attention to the environment aspect relating to the ongoing resettlement process. There are two findings. The first is security of the space in resettlement sites. The second is waste matter in the to-be-flooded area.

##### *6.4.1. Security of the space in resettlement sites is an urgent issue.*

This could be seen in the quality of construction and geological foundation that was surveyed when making decision for the resettlement sites. In most studied sites, the displaced villages along the Đà River suffered from landslide, threatening to the people's houses. Landslide already hit 2 houses in Pó Ban village, Chiềng Bằng commune, and 2 other houses in Ban Xa village, Liệp Tè commune. Inter-village paths in Pú Nhuồng resettlement site became stream after just a year even though the they were not too slope.

The early rain in July 2008 was a warning because it made hundreds of cubic meters of rock and landslide and slipped from the 40 meter high and buried a portion of infrastructure lower in Nậm Cắn site, Mường Lay town. According to Sơn La resettlement management unit, the hilly and mountainous topography and geological conditions along with heavy rain are the main reasons for the landslide in number of resettlement sites. But according to the experts, another important reason is of inappropriate design<sup>30</sup>. In fact, the security of space levelling in the weak geology was threatened in the within-commune resettlement site or in the resettlement areas with more than 100 households. There was no landslide case reported in mixed resettlement sites.

It is the fact that in the last few years, rain and flood and high slope in the Northwest mountainous area have been great threats not only to resettlement projects but transportation and infrastructure in general.

##### *6.4.2. Waste and potential sedimentation in the reservoir*

There were tens of different kinds of waste in the to-be-flooded areas when people move out. Beside the wooden and bamboo stuff, plastic stuff, the mortar and cement and concrete as well as farm trees, the barren hills remained full of crop residues. These wastes will be submerged and contribute to producing methan gas in the reservoir. Besides, this could potentially be one of the impacts to the water storage capacity.

## **7. Conclusion and Recommendations**

### *7.1. Conclusion*

---

<sup>30</sup> Theo <http://www.dantri.com.vn> , 2/7/2008).

Two years and a half passed from the previous study. The findings do not include much exciting new information. Totally, this resettlement process has been implemented for 3 years. However, the progress we see is mostly the number of people to be displaced. Life restoration is not similar in resettlement sites. The percentage of people who are able to improve their lives only counts for a moderate number. People are still facing problems of land shortage and access to running water. Unsynchronized infrastructure still happens in many places. In addition, the resettlement staffs are still not professional as they should be, and the decisive period fell into the inflation time. All these factors lead to the fact that the resettlement, beside the current achievement, is facing the new and hard challenges. Beside some certain achievements, there are many constraints the project is encountering.

***The positive points of Sơn La Hydropower resettlement process:***

1. The regulations and principles relating to compensation and resettlement by the Government and local government are valuable for the whole process.

The policy acknowledgements in last 2 years are the adjustment to the reality at the Government level. The local authorities, at some extent, are initiative in guidance and implementation. The government is quite responsive to reflections from local authorities which result to appropriate policy adjustments.

Resettlement process gained progress in filing resettlement documents, measuring and approving compensation and assistance projects, and in building infrastructure for resettlement. Especially, compensation for resettlers was fair. The affected people, in general, satisfied about housing and infrastructure. In resettlement sites, infrastructure is better than before.

2. In Sơn La and Lai Châu provinces, people's committees of some key districts such as Mường La, Quỳnh Nhai, or Mường Lay have paid a critical and positive role in assisting resettlers in propagandizing, planning, displacing and managing housing constructions. The local agencies at district level (both in going and receiving place) have had development plan aiming at ensuring the security of life and assets for resettlers.

***The factors that affect the resettlement program:***

- First, although surveys and plans have been done through the pre-feasibility and feasibility studies, a plan for preparing good quality land for resettlement has not implemented. It is lack of timing preparation for a transitional period for Tai communities from growing wet rice to industrial trees in slope land and other works. Although the Rubber program has been reviewed with other high-value industrial trees but up to now, there is not any guiding policy from the relating agencies<sup>31</sup>. General situation is for production assistance, except land assignment (from one third to half of production land area is available for resettlers), other

---

<sup>31</sup> Lai Châu People's Committee. Report on Implementation of Compensation for Sơn La Hydropower Resettlement project in Lai Châu province by April 2008.

activities such as supporting programs on agriculture and forestry, technical training to resettlers in new place have not started yet<sup>32</sup>. The affected people, up to now, have no access to the production development service and assistance as designed.

- Second, in some stages of resettlement, the Ministries, central agencies and local government lack of synchronous coordination in implementation. For example, the unflooded villages have been considered as flooded villages affecting the plan of displacing people (in Lai Châu province) due to the inaccurate survey. The detailed plans have faced with difficulties because it was first planned to be conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, now it is assigned to the provinces and their districts. Lack of synchronized guidance and regulations on land measurement for compensation (it was allowed to measure by hand and based on red books, now it is required to measure by professional machine<sup>33</sup>). Or the case of Decision 02/2007/QĐ-TTg in Son La province: although adjustments have been made, but the consequences are not only the lessons on economic loss, but also reducing people's beliefs and delaying resettlement process.
- Third, infrastructure is unstable, lack of maintenance or appropriate measures to manage important constructions in the resettlement areas (such as water system, intervillage roads). Due to the demand for progress of resettlement, investors in the main districts of Son La province have not paid enough attention to this issue. In fact, it is damaging physically and affecting the life conditions and transportations of resettlers.
- Forth, the ending of assistance for poorer households according to the poverty standard regulated in Decision No. 170/2005/QĐ-TTg dated 08 July 2005 by the Prime Minister on issuing poverty standard applied for the period 2006-2010 (poverty household) in the within communes or within district resettlement sites would constitute obstacles in life for such households after resettlement. This problem should be analyzed and recommended timely by Ethnic group.
- Fifth, in some resettlement sites, people returned to their old places. This should be seriously concerned by the local competent agencies. Besides, the people's voices should be heard in order to understand problems if any. It should be

---

<sup>32</sup> Only Huổi Luông resettlement site, in 2007, was assisted by ADB to new model as breeding buffalos, growing safe vegetables, potatoes and wet rice.

<sup>33</sup> Decision 246/QĐTTg: Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment requires land measurement by professional machines for compensation. The figure based on manual measurement and red books are no longer valid for the compensation. The costs will be much higher especially for the areas where people already move to new places. The people who are about to move are also facing problem as they want to receive compensation right away after moving so they can settle down in new places. However, there is no clear guidance for this Decision yet.

considered as the signals of failure in implementing resettlement in some areas if there is no effective solutions to be done.

## *7.2. Recommendations*

At this moment, it is urgently required to improve the effectiveness of the Son La hydropower resettlement. Because if it fails it will cause many complicated social consequences. In order to achieve better results for the project, beside recommendations from our previous study, the focuses and priorities should also include:

- First, beside continuing to canvass people to participate in social activities, environmental protection and sanitation, health care, there is a need of legal assistance on resettlement for them. Local governments and unions should quickly build a regulations on self management for the existing local infrastructure to ensure life restoring and sustainable resettlement.
- Second, for resettlement implementation, the difference in each province causes the different obstacles. This should be considered in steering the implementation. For instance, the way Lai Chau province implements show that it solves the time constraint for the resettlement but the district management unit could not propose timely recommendations on resettlement issues, project management is limited due to tendency to implement people displacement.
- Third, for the planning, the problems in master plan at district level should be solved as quick as possible (as the recommended by Son La Hydropower Resettlement Project Management Unit in Lai Chau province); the detail plans at localities are at present but it take efforts to deal with such consequences from the previous problems; the state management in inhabitant certificate and land is not good. Therefore, it is important to concentrate on solving the existing problems in favor to completing compensation files and documents in the communes which have to displace in the dry seasons in 2008 and 2009.
- Forth, for finance and price, money transaction is made through many processes, delaying the fund disbursement. Increase in prices has strong effects to the budget of resettlement. Therefore, it is necessary for the Ministry of Finance to timely review the resettlement documents and reports, together with provinces propose the way to calculate price change due to inflation in both resettlement construction and compensation, ruling out the situation that the existing locals do not transfer production land and the construction agents fail to work. The government should timely adjust price of compensated land, of rice, electricity and water under the assistance (according to the Decision No. 02/2007/QĐ-TTg) which is inappropriate to the current situation; adjust the level of reduce in price of construction contract of 5% in process of contract assignment (as Decision No. 207/2004/QĐ-TTg dated December 11<sup>th</sup> 2004 by the Prime Minister) to suite with the current increase in price and inflation situation.

- Fifth, the Government should supplement mechanism for displacing the whole commune, including building and establishing a new administration center; reconsider the production assistance based on the number of household's members and release the specific guidance on changing number of people as born or death.
- Sixth, the land measurement for compensation filing as in Decision No. 246/TTg by the Prime Minister causes hard pressures to the implementation in localities, the displaced people and the existing people due to lack of specific guidance from responsible ministry. Therefore, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment should quickly issue the guidance for implementing this Decision corresponding to the current conditions. To avoid the discontinuity in resettlement process and cause to pressing problems for people, the Government should allow the provinces to implement according to the old mechanism while waiting for the new guidance.
- Seventh, for production assistance for resettlers, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development should have a mechanism to assist the policy in rubber tree plantation (as assistance in variety, fertilizer for households). Together with Vietnam Rubber Corporation, provinces should build a roadmap for investment, development, labor usage, product purchase with a model suitable to the underdeveloped socio-economic conditions in the region of ethnic minority people in the Northwest to ensure a sustainable resettlement./.

## Reference

### 1. In Vietnamese

1. Bộ Nông nghiệp và Phát triển Nông thôn. (2004) *Báo cáo bổ sung về Quy hoạch Tổng thể về Di dân TĐC Dự án Thủy điện Sơn La*. (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (2004). *Supplement report on the Son La Hydropower Resettlement Master Plan*)
2. Bộ Nông nghiệp và Phát triển nông thôn. (2004) *Báo cáo tóm tắt Quy hoạch tổng thể Di dân tái định cư thủy điện Sơn La*. (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (2004). *Executive Report on the Son La Hydropower Resettlement Master Plan*)
3. <http://www.dantri.com.vn> , 2/7/2008.
4. <http://www.thanhnienonline.com.vn> 10/7/2008.
5. <http://www.PC3.com.vn>; 26/6/2008.
6. Liên hiệp các hội Khoa học và Kỹ thuật Việt Nam (2006). *Nghiên cứu về tác động của quá trình tái định cư công trình thủy điện Sơn La*. Hà Nội. (VUSTA (2006) – *Study on Impacts of the Son La Hydropower Resettlement*)
7. UBND tỉnh Lai Châu. *Quyết định V/v: Qui định cụ thể một số chính sách về bồi thường, hỗ trợ và tái định cư dự án thủy điện Sơn La trên địa bàn tỉnh Lai Châu theo Quyết định số 02/2007/QĐ-TTg ngày 9/1/2007 của Thủ tướng Chính phủ*. (Lai Châu People's Committee: *Decision on specific assignment on some policy of compensation, assistance and resettlement of the Son La Hydropower for Lai Châu province according to Decision No. 02/2007/QĐ-TTg dated 9 January 2007 by the Prime Minister*)
8. UBND tỉnh Lai Châu. *Báo cáo kết quả thực hiện công tác bồi thường di dân TĐC dự án thủy điện Sơn La trên địa bàn tỉnh Lai Châu đến tháng 4/2008*. (Lai Châu People's Committee. *Report on results implementing compensation of the Son La hydropower resettlement in Lai Châu province by April 2008*)
9. UBND tỉnh Sơn La. *Kết quả di chuyển dân đến ngày 20/6/2008*. (Sơn La People's Committee. *Result of people displacement by 20 June 2008*)
10. UBND tỉnh Sơn La. *Quyết định của UBND tỉnh Sơn La V/v Ban hành cơ chế quản lý, điều hành, tổ chức thực hiện dự án tái định cư thủy điện Sơn La, tỉnh Sơn La*. Số 57/2005/QĐ-UB. (Sơn La People's Committee. *Decision No. 57/2005/QĐ-UB of the Son La People's Committee on promulgating the mechanism of management, executing and organizing the implementation of the Son La hydropower resettlement*)
11. UBND huyện Quỳnh Nhai. *Báo cáo tình hình thực hiện nhiệm vụ phát triển kinh tế - xã hội, an ninh quốc phòng năm 2007; mục tiêu và giải pháp năm 2008*. Số 147/BC-UBND. (Quỳnh Nhai District People's Committee. *Report on the implementation of defense, security and social-economic development tasks of 2007: targets and solutions for 2008*. No. 147/BC-UBND)
12. UBND huyện Mường La. *Kế hoạch tổng thể di dân TĐC giai đoạn 2008-2010 huyện Mường La*. Số 317/KH-UBND. (Mường La District People's Committee.

- Resettlement Master Plan of Mường La District in 2008-2010. No. 317/KH-UBND)*
13. Quyết định 196/2004/QĐ-TTg của Thủ tướng Chính Phủ về việc ban hành Quy định về bồi thường, di dân, tái định cư. (Decision No. 196/2004/QĐ-TTg by the Prime Minister on regulations of compensation, displacement and resettlement)
  14. Quyết định 459/QĐ-TTg của Thủ tướng Chính Phủ về việc ban hành Quy định về bồi thường, di dân, tái định cư dự án thủy điện Sơn La. (Decision No. 459/QĐ-TTg by the Prime Minister on the regulations of compensation, displacement and resettlement of the Sơn La hydropower project)
  15. Quyết định số 170/2005/QĐ-TTg ngày 08 tháng 7 năm 2005 của Thủ tướng Chính phủ về ban hành chuẩn nghèo áp dụng cho giai đoạn 2006 – 2010. (Decision No. 170/QĐ-TTg dated 08 July 2005 of the Prime Minister on poverty standard applied for the period of 2006-2010)
  16. Quyết định số 02/2007/QĐ-TTg của Thủ tướng Chính Phủ về việc ban hành Quy định về bồi thường, hỗ trợ và tái định cư dự án thủy điện Sơn La. (Decision No. 02/2007/QĐ-TTg by the Prime Minister on the regulations of compensation, assistance and resettlement of the Sơn La hydropower project)
  17. Viện Quy hoạch và thiết kế nông nghiệp.(2005). *Phương án điều chuyển dân cư dự án thủy điện Sơn La tỉnh Sơn La*. Hà Nội. (Institute of agriculture planning and design. (2005). *Project on people displacement of the Sơn La hydropower project in Sơn La province. Hanoi.*)

## **2. In English**

18. Lifwenborg, Goran . (2004) *National Hydropower Plan (NHP) Study Vietnam, Stage 1. A New Approach to Sustainable Hydropower Development*.
19. McCully (1996), *Silenced Rivers the Ecology and Politics of Large Dams*, London: Zed Books.
20. Mungomba et al, (1993) *Akosombo and Aswan dams in Jobin*, 1999, p278, 298-300.
21. Micheal Cernea. (1997) *The Risks and Reconstruction Model for Resettling Displaced Populations*. World Development 25(10).
22. Micheal Cernea. (1997) *Hydropower Dams and Social Impacts: A Sociological Perspective*. Environment Department Papers, the World Bank. Washington D.C.
23. Parasuraman, S. (2001) *Impact of Dams on Natural Resources dependent and vulnerable Communities* (Tác động của đập đến các nguồn tài nguyên thiên nhiên và các cộng đồng dễ bị tổn thương) Discussion Paper at the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Asian Training and Study Session, 17<sup>th</sup> October 2001).
24. World Rainforest Movement. (2003). *Vietnam starts resettlement to make way for massive Sơn La dam*. (available at <http://www.wrm.org.uy>).