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**Bridging the Gender Gap in Development Projects:  
A Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) of Resettlement in a  
Hydropower Project in China**

**Abstract:** Compensation as well as relocation is key to resettlement activities in water conservancy projects. At present, reservoir resettlement in China is mainly based on land and people's rights to land and has revolved around land rights and compensation for land acquisition. This paper describes a study investigating the life experiences of migrants in Q village among the affected villages of W reservoir. It uses the Social Relations Approach as a tool to analyze gaps between the lives of migrant women and men in three categories: rules, resources, and power. It is found that there are gender gaps and biases in the content and implementation of local policies, regulations, and folk laws regarding land acquisition compensation related to W reservoir. In particular, women have been absent from the process of formulating these rules. Resource allocation tends to be male-centered, while migrant women within the reservoir area have no guarantee of financial compensation or production from land and curtilage allocation. Migrant men enjoy leadership privileges within the village, including freedom of speech and expression in meetings; they also hold higher decision-making power within the family compared with migrant women. This paper shows that gender gaps related to various dimensions of land acquisition rights and interests of reservoir migrants are the result of numerous factors. These include: patriarchy; gender norms; marital mobility; village rules and regulations; the "profit first" laws of a market economy; and internal factors, specifically migrant women's lack of education and consciousness about their rights. In order to balance these gaps, it is suggested that equal sociocultural environments and opportunities be created for both genders and that migrant women's positions and abilities be improved overall.

**Introduction**

To promote China's economic and social development and improve people's livelihoods, water conservancy and hydropower projects have gradually been established in the country with remarkable results. Between 1949 and 2018, China had more than 25 million reservoir migrants, about half of whom were women. Compensation and relocation are major issues in the resettlement work of water conservancy projects, affecting the levels of livelihood reconstruction, social relations, and network reconstruction of reservoir migrants (Shi, Yan, & Sun, 2015). In response to the vulnerability of reservoir migrants, the Chinese government has adopted measures such as early compensation and subsequent support to aid these migrants' livelihood restoration, survival, and development. A diversified model has thus been formed, rooted in land resettlement and supplemented by multiple resettlement methods (Li & Yu, 2014). Compensation methods

include “long-term compensation,” which entails a “combination of long-term compensation, share dividends and social security” (Fan, Lu, Qiang, et al., 2015), among others. According to *Guiding Opinions on Improving the Compensation and Settling System for Land Acquisition*, issued by the Ministry of Land and Resources in 2004 on the issue of “agricultural production resettlement,” the acquisition of farmers’ collective land outside the urban planning area shall be obtained through the use of rural collective mobile land, contracted land voluntarily returned by contracted farmers, transfer of contracted land, and newly developed arable land after land consolidation. The first goal is to ensure that the land-expropriated farmers have the land they need to continue farming. Landless reservoir migrants receive direct compensation and resettlement support for land acquisition. At the same time, reservoir migrants obtain indirect rights and benefits related to politics, culture and education, labor and social security, property, life, marriage, and family due to reservoir construction. Direct compensation includes the price difference between the expropriated and the resettlement lands (i.e., labor resettlement fees and green seedling compensation fees) and a compensation for village collective land and attachments, while resettlement support mainly includes land for agricultural production and curtilage allocation.

Land acquisition compensation mainly involves land rights and property rights. The *Law of the People’s Republic of China on Property Rights* (2007) stipulates that land rights belong to real property, which refers to the rights of the landholder to directly control the land according to law, mainly including land contract and management rights, the rights of income distribution in the village collective economic organization, and the rights of distribution of land acquisition compensation and curtilage. With the complete abolition of agricultural taxes in China since 2006, farmers’ obligations have continued to decrease. Due to this limited involvement coupled with the urbanization process, the enthusiasm for land expropriation has inevitably led farmers to leave the land actively or passively (Liu, 2009); rural land acquisition has become one of the focal points of farmers’ rights. Land rights and interests are the issues most relevant to the survival and development of rural women. “Women, as members of society and citizens of the country, shall enjoy the sum of various inviolable rights and interests.” The *Law of the People’s Republic of China on Rural Land Contracting* (Art.6) stipulates that “rural women have equal rights with men when contracting land.” The *Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Protection of Women’s Rights and Interests* (Art.32) requires that women enjoy equal rights with men in all aspects of rural land contracting and management, the distribution of income of collective economic organizations, the use of land acquisition or compensation fees, and the use of curtilage. In reality, however, disputes over the land rights of rural Chinese women have proliferated for years, along with accompanying petitions. From 2016 to 2017, the All China Women’s Federation (ACWF) received 8,807 complaints about women’s land rights—a 1.82-fold increase over the previous two years. The third survey of Chinese women’s social status, jointly conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics and the ACWF, showed that 21% of rural women aged 18–64 years had not implemented their land contract rights due to marriage, widowhood, and land loss. As China’s reservoir projects are mostly carried out in agricultural areas, rural female reservoir migrants face more serious land rights concerns than do ordinary rural women due to the impact of involuntary migration. Their property rights—such as land contract management rights,

curtilage use rights, and land transfer decision-making rights—are undermined by the dilemma of gender and power imbalances.

Gender mainstreaming, as defined by the United Nations Economic and Social Council, is the process of assessing the impact of any planned action (including legislation, policies, or programs) on gender in all areas and at all levels. In 2003, the World Bank's OP/BP 4.20 established a national-level strategic approach to mainstreaming gender issues into work. As a thematic issue involving many sectors, gender is addressed directly or indirectly in the nine official business policies and banking procedures contained in the *World Bank Operation Manual* (World Bank, 2011). Today, most international development agencies including the World Bank, the United Nations Development Program, the Australian Agency for International Development, and the U.S. Agency for International Development have adopted gender mainstreaming as their overall framework for developing and implementing plans and services. In the past decade or so, this concept has been incorporated into the policies of global governments and has had an important impact on aid projects, including gender neutrality projects (Adusei-Asante & Hancock, 2015). As a tool to implement gender mainstreaming, the Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) evaluates whether policies have direct or indirect impacts on women and men. The authors of this paper examined gaps in gender impacts of reservoir resettlement compensation on a case-by-case basis, analyzed the status of the rights and interests of female reservoir migrants in terms of rules, resources, and power, and proposed countermeasures for female reservoir migrants to enjoy equal rights to compensation for land acquisition.

### **Literature Review**

Chinese scholars' research on reservoir migration is mainly holistic or non-specific to women and gender issues. There are fewer studies on gender gaps related to reservoir migrants' rights and interests. Some studies on female reservoir migrants' rights and interests have been carried out in the areas of human capital (Sheng & Shi, 2008; Yan & Shi, 2012), public policy and social governance (Liu & Chen, 2006), land rights (Qin & Han, 2011), ideological construction (Chen, 2013), pension (Chen, 2010), resource utilization and participation (Cheng & Chen, 2015; Lin, 2003; Wang & Yang, 2011; Xia & Cheng, 2014), and social relation networks (Chen, 2013). Studies have shown that migrant women in rural reservoir areas face a more severely problematic situation than men do, as they are more likely to fall into poverty, and it is more difficult for them to restore their social systems (Chen, 2008; Chen, 2013; Cheng & Chen, 2015; Liu & Chen, 2008; Shi, Yan, & Sun, 2015). Foreign scholars argue that resettlement caused by the construction of water conservancy dams has simultaneously taken away the economic, social, and cultural resources of migrants and caused poverty in communities and families. Compared with their male counterparts, female reservoir migrants suffer even more adverse effects (Koenig & Diarra, 2002). Land acquisition disrupts the livelihood development of local women, causing poverty, and these women's experience of adverse effects is profound in most cases (Scudder, 2005). For this reason, many scholars have pointed out the importance of gender analysis in water conservancy and hydropower projects and have provided a detailed GIA process with a view to bettering the situation of women as well as improving men's production and living conditions (Simon & Simpson, 2016).

A large number of studies have discussed gender gaps related to land ownership, control rights, and inheritance rights in developing countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America (Agarwal & Bina, 2003; Deere & Diana, 2003; Deere, Diana, & Magdalena, 2003; Guerny, Daphne, & Topouzis, 2001; Jacobs & Moi, 2008; Manji & Ambreena, 2003; Stolen & Anne, 1991). Studies also have pointed out the causes of such gender gaps, such as the interpretation of laws tending to support men's ownership and control of land use rights (Guerny, Daphne, & Topouzis, 2001). In terms of the land rights and interests of rural women in China, studies have attributed such disparities to various social systems and land systems during various periods (Wang & Li, 2014). It is found that the infringement of rural women's rights and interests mainly occurred in the areas of land confirmation rights (Li, 2014, 2016), land contract management rights (Wang, 2004; Wang, 2007; Wu & Zhang, 2004; Zhang & Wang, 2008; Zhang, 2016), rights to use and distribute curtilage (Liu, 2011; Mo, 2010), and rights to distribute collective income (Wang & Zhang, 2014). To cope with current violations of the rights of rural female reservoir migrants, especially married women, some scholars have put forward suggestions to protect such rights by improving land compensation distribution methods for married female migrants, adjusting the identification policy of married women, modifying migration policies and laws, insisting on long-term compensation mechanisms, and so on (Qin, Han, & Shi, 2011). In addition to perspectives from disciplines such as law and land management, studies of gender and culture can provide ideas for scholars to analyze gender inequality and the loss of women's land rights. The duplication and perpetuation of patriarchy (Li, 2002) and traditional gender concepts in modern society have received the attention of scholars who point out that China is at a critical stage of social transformation, and the perspective of gender research is critical to the study of the "Chinese experience" (Li, 2004). Such scholars suggest that the formulation of laws and regulations regarding the protection of women's rights and interests need to consider factors such as gender and culture.

The concept of gender, from a sociological perspective, is used to describe all the socially ascribed attributes, roles, activities, and responsibilities connected to the experience of being a male or female in a given society (March, Smyth, & Mukhopadhyay, 1999). This study has used a Social Relations Approach (SRA) as a basic framework to explore gender differences in the area of compensation rights and interests among reservoir migrants; this approach is a novel addition and unique contribution to the current academic research on reservoir migrants.

### **Methods**

The Social Relations Approach (SRA), a prominent gender analysis framework coined by Kabeer, is a method of analyzing existing gender inequalities in the distribution of resources, responsibilities, and power, and for designing policies and programs that enable women to be agents of their own development (March, Smyth, & Mukhopadhyay, 1999). SRA enables the institutional analysis of five elements—rules, activity, resources, people, and power— as well as their control structure to see who has done what, who has gained what, and who has lost what among men and women (March, Smyth, & Mukhopadhyay, 1999). In the current context, land acquisition compensation policy and its implementation are actually "rules" that include four different interrelated elements; meanwhile, "people" and "activities" exist across land acquisition rules, resource allocation,

and power structure. Therefore, this study condenses the elements of SRA into three categories or dimensions: rules, resources, and power.

Dimension	Content	Activity	People	
Rules	Policies and regulations of W reservoir	Identification rules for migrant population	Male migrants	Female migrants
		Compensation rules		
Resources	Restorative resources	Capital compensation		
		Production land		
		Curtilage		
	Developmental resources	Skills Training		
Employment opportunities				
Power	Leadership	Village committees		
		Migration council		
	Rights of expression	Formal meetings		
		Informal meetings		
	Decision-making power	Family routines		
Important affairs				

Table 1: Analysis Framework

This ethnographic case study used in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis methods for collecting data. In-depth interviews were conducted with 25 reservoir migrants including village cadres and members of the resettlement council in Q village of W reservoir. There were 13 women and 12 men in the participant sample, and this included staff from the development company's resettlement office, the construction team, and the staff of the petition department in resettlement command. Through these interviews, the implementation process of compensation and resettlement for W reservoir migrants was thoroughly examined, and the gender differences in reservoir migrants' experiences with compensation and resettlement were analyzed.

### Case Introduction

The W Water Conservancy Project is an international loan project under which the dam site was constructed in F County of J City mainly for the purpose of flood control along with water supply and power generation functions. In July 2011, during the substantive construction phase of the project, land acquisition, house demolition, and resettlement took place in 38 villages of 13 townships/towns affecting a total of 16,104 people in 4,423 households. Based on the investigation of the production resettlement and relocation intention of the reservoir migrants, the overall conditions of the resettlement area and the submerged and dam-affected areas of the reservoir were analyzed with the villager group as the unit. In accordance with the principle of "equal conditions," a combination of backward resettlement, outward resettlement, and self-employment was adopted.

Q village is located in the north of F County. The source of the villagers' economic income is mainly agriculture and migratory work. In 2015, the per capita disposable income of the residents was 7,589 yuan. There was no industry in the village, and economic

development was lagging. The village has seven natural villages and 12 different villager groups, with a total of 1,713 people in 376 households. As a result of the construction of the W reservoir, 1,125 villagers from 251 households needed to be relocated. There were 716 women of which 65 were girls under the age of 14 years, 165 were unmarried, 322 were married at the childbearing age (including five divorced and 65 widowed women), and 164 virilocal women with *hukou* (户口) in Q village. There were 552 women identified as migrant population, of whom 487 were above 14 years old. The village had the largest number of affected people among all the villages in F County, and the problems of resettlement were the most comprehensive and typical in nature.

The land contract management right is a product of China's rural household contract responsibility system. It is a basic facet of the current rural land system and the main mode of agricultural land use and management. Under this system, agricultural production operators have the right to possess and use land owned by rural collectives or the state, or used by rural collective economic organizations through contracts, to produce and benefit through crop cultivation, forestry, animal husbandry, and fishery in accordance with the law and land contract (Jiang & Chen, 2005). The main holder of the land contract management right is a citizen or collective engaged in agricultural production and management (i.e., members of the collective economic organization to which the agricultural land belongs). Each member of the village collective, regardless of age or gender, is entitled to hold a contract to the land of the collective economic organization. However, the current system of rural collective land ownership in China is still an institutional framework within which the rights of individual or collective members are dependent on their social identities or locations. For the members of a village, the acquirement and enjoyment of their rights is based on a certain membership status. If their status is lost, their land rights and interests will follow suit. Thus, a change in marital or relationship status will inevitably lead to an encroachment on women's rights and interests regarding land. For example, the tradition of virilocal residence means out-married women leave their original village collective while most of their land remains in the village of their parents. Further, separation of people and land causes women's land contract rights to be easily invaded by other members of their mother's home. Since the signing of the rural land contracts on December 1, 1998, Q village has strictly followed the principle that "land contracts remain unchanged for 30 years" and has never made land adjustments. However, through 21 years of marriages, births and deaths, the population and demographic structure of the village has changed; in the case of land contracts, major differences between households have replaced unconditional equality. In particular, the land rights enjoyed by women have changed a great deal. Most of the land owned by out-married women has been occupied by their brothers—a widespread phenomenon that has rendered most women ignorant of their own land rights. Some women who were aware of such infringement simply gave up their rights due to traditional ideas such as "face and favor" and "non-litigation."

### **Gender Gaps in Land Acquisition Compensation Rules**

Rules refer to both formal and informal working methods followed in land acquisition compensation activities in general. Formal rules refer to relevant laws and

regulations for population identification, compensation, and resettlement programs such as the “Women’s Rights Protection Law,” the “Rural Land Contracting Law,” the “Land Management Law,” the “Land Compensation and Resettlement Regulations for Large and Medium-Sized Water Conservancy and Hydropower Project Construction” (Order No. 471 of the State Council, promulgated on July 7, 2006), the “Implementation Measures for Resettlement and Compensation for W Water Conservancy Project Construction,” etc. Informal rules include village rules, customary law, folk law, and so on. The relationship between rules and people determines whether the equal rights of migrants can be guaranteed during the rule-making process, whether the content of rules can guarantee equal rights and interests of migrants of both sexes, and so on. Order No. 471 established a new management mode of “safeguarding the interests of migrants, paying equal attention to construction and resettlement,” with emphasis on protecting the property rights, democratic rights, and development rights of migrants. Although Order No. 471 treats migrants equally without distinguishing between male and female, the local formal regulations of W reservoir and the informal rules of Q village showed gender biases in the formulation of compensation and settlement programs, identification of migrant population, and compensation contents.

For example, reservoir migrants express opinions through public participation as they partake in the formulation of rules for land acquisition compensation and resettlement programs. The core part of the resettlement program involves site selection and housing structure design. It was mainly migrant men who provided specific opinions on resettlement plans, site selection for curtilage, overall layout and external structure design of resettlement houses, and future development planning for resettlement areas; they were also the main group to conduct field surveys and site selection for resettlement programs. One female interviewee said,

The current house looks good from the outside, but the inside is not very good. The bathroom and kitchen are too small. They are not as good as before. I didn’t know the house was like this until it was built. It was my husband, they were negotiating. They went to visit and choose places. I didn’t know. (Interview with migrant woman LX, 2017)

The absence of migrant women in the programming process makes it difficult for their needs to be reflected in the rules of compensation and resettlement.

Since the identification of a “migrant population” was the basis of compensation for land acquisition of W reservoir, non-recognized migrants cannot enjoy such rights. According to the *Implementation Measures for the Compensation and Resettlement of W Water Conservancy Project Construction*, migrant women are divided into four categories: unmarried, married, widowed, and divorced. Unmarried women were those over 14 years old that had been registered before the reservoir design unit carried out a physical index survey during the feasibility study phase. Married women were those who had been married and lived in the reservoir area for a long time before the reservoir design unit carried out investigation on the physical indicators during the feasibility study stage. This category included the matrilineal women in the village and the women who had married into the village from outside. Divorced and widowed women had been living in the area for a long time before the feasibility study took place and were still living in their houses in the

village due to divorce or widowhood. During the initial survey, we found another group of women who were not included in the compensation and resettlement process although their lives and production capacities were also affected by reservoir construction. Having been excluded from the identification rules of the migrant population, it was difficult for them to enjoy any rights. These were the virilocal women. The following section will focus on the rights and interests of virilocal women in terms of resource distribution under the land acquisition compensation process.

In the context of villagers' autonomy, local discourses such as village regulations and customary laws also caused gender imbalances related to the land rights of migrants. Villager autonomy is a basic socio-political system entrusted to all rural populations in China by the constitution. Villagers' committees establish a system of meetings including representatives' meetings and open village affairs, formulate self-government charters or village regulations, and implement democratic management. The *Organization Law of the Villagers' Committee of the People's Republic of China* provides guidelines for the implementation of villagers' self-determination wherein decisions on village issues can be approved by two-thirds of villagers. These so-called folk laws, which reflect the common interests expressed by most villagers, are similar to civil society rules relative to national laws. Although they are informal in nature, they govern many important aspects of rural social life often beyond the scope of formal institutional planning, creating an order space that is not the same as a formal institutional system but is widely recognized by many villagers. Therefore, it may be even more effective than formal laws (Zhang, 2012). Beyond national laws, the most formal norms at the village level are undoubtedly village regulations and the resolutions of village meetings (Wang, 1997). However, freedom without restraint can easily develop into autocracy, thereby infringing on the legitimate rights and interests of others. At the villagers' meetings, when the economic interests of all villagers are involved, those forming the majority can still subordinate the minority by virtue of the power granted by the system of village autonomy and by the "village rules," and can thus "legally" deprive minority groups such as virilocal women of their rights to access the collective profits of the village (Chang, 2010).

According to the distribution method of land acquisition compensation for curtilage in Q village, the population whose *hukou* is not in the village—that is, those who have relocated to other villages or have converted from agricultural to non-agriculture based life—will no longer be allocated curtilage in that village. The resettlement policy of W reservoir also stipulates that only the displaced affected population can get curtilage. Native men who have worked and resided outside the village for a long time and perhaps even purchased homes elsewhere but have still kept their *hukou* in Q village do not belong to the migrant population; however, when they are old, these men often return to live in Q village again due to the traditional idea of "deciduous leaves returning to the roots." This means Q village considered them as migrants and allocated them curtilage, as shown in the following narrative:

Our village has always done this. People who are old and want to come back to the village and have the financial ability to build a house, we would offer them curtilage of different sizes. This time, houses are demolished due to reservoir construction, [but] the distribution of curtilage also takes them into consideration. People who die

are returning to their hometown for burial, not to mention that they just want to come back when they are old. You can't say no. (Interview with HXD, president of the migration council of Q village 1 group, 2017)

The curtilage area obtained by migrants of Q village was not large. On the premise of guaranteeing one curtilage for each family, priority was given to the unmarried male who had reached legal marriage age in the village; however, the curtilage application rights of women were not considered. As a result, most of the extra homestead land was taken away from vulnerable groups, mainly female. The village rules treated special cases in accordance with customary rules rather than population identification rules and compensation methods for W reservoir migrants; as such, curtilages were allocated to native males who could not be identified as migrant population. Thus, the land rights and interests of women, especially multi-female families, were overtly infringed upon.

### **Gender Gaps in Resource Allocation of Land Acquisition Compensation**

In this study, "resources" refers to new means provided to migrants to counter and restore the effects of the damage to their original possessions caused by reservoir construction. This includes restorative materials such as capital compensation, production land, and curtilage compensation, as well as developmental methods such as skills training and employment support. It is the embodiment of migrants' rights to property, cultural and educational resources, employment, and social security. The availability of resources is integral and directly related to the enjoyment of these rights.

Capital compensation mainly includes repayment for house demolition, refunding for the loss of collective assets, and land substitution for any outstanding balance after land replacement. It is calculated according to the migrant population and issued directly to the bank account of the migrant householder. Except for the head of the household himself, other family members including his wife cannot obtain compensation funds from the bank. One woman said,

The money is in the bank [account], it is in my husband's name, and only he can take the money out. Some families will re-open a bank [account] and save it [the money], also using the name of the head of the household. When my family needs money, he [my husband] will take it and give it to me. (Interview with female migrant ZY, 2017).

Since most heads of household are male, women's right to income is concealed or undermined by the *hukou* system. Women encounter much difficulty in using and controlling compensation funds, and it is especially difficult to protect their legal rights in cases of conjugal conflict.

Thus, financial compensation received by female migrants in Q village varied according to their varied marital status. The most controversial cases were mainly the virilocal, divorced, and widowed women. Virilocal women from Q village did not get the contracted land of their husband's family; rather, their contracted land was kept at their mothers' homes, which were regarded as a part of their family's property and became irrelevant to them. A few of these women who had left Q village not only faced opposition from family members but also had to accept condemnation from the village committee and

collective when they asked their parents for rights to their own lands. Therefore, the contracted land allocated to them during the second round was basically occupied and cultivated by their parents and brothers because they had been married outside Q village. The loss of ownership and use rights as well as income and disposal rights by virilocal women became “de facto transfer” (Wang, 2003). The reservoir project expropriated the land of virilocal women in their maternal home without providing them corresponding capital compensation, or providing very little. This was because the government does not pay out funds to compensate individuals but rather makes compensation payments to households as a unit under the name of the father or brother.

Divorced women in Q village can be roughly divided into two types: those who participated in land contracting during the second round, and those who did not because they were no longer married to men in that village during that time. The survey found that no matter whether they remarried or not, as long as they had not lived in Q village for a long time, the female divorcees were not allowed to continue to occupy or use the contracted land, nor could they receive land compensation. On the contrary, in the case of virilocal women who returned to their maternal homes due to divorce or the death of their husbands, as long as their *hukou* still remained in Q village and they had been living in their mother’s home for a long time before the physical indicator survey started, they were considered migrant population and consequently enjoyed land compensation.

Widowed women did not directly lose their land rights and interests due to widowhood, but were affected by factors such as children, remarriage intention, and relationship with the in-law’s family. Our survey found that the land rights of older widowed women could generally be guaranteed because they had lived in Q village for a long time, had a relatively stable position with their in-laws and extended families, and had little desire to remarry. Younger widows who did not remarry after widowhood often continued to occupy and use the contracted land; but once they remarried, the original contracted land would be occupied and used by other members of the in-law’s family. Here is an example:

It was only more than two years after I got married and my baby was one year old when his father [my husband] died in a car accident. We were both left behind, and the baby was too young. I stay home to take care of my baby and my father-in-law pays the bills, the capital compensation is all owned by him and I don’t know how much. Apart from the money my baby needs, I can’t get any other money. It wasn’t long before I got married, and life here is still adapting. An auntie next door told me that my mother-in-law said that I would remarry sooner or later, and could not give me all the money, otherwise they would have nothing. If I had not given a grandson to their family, they would not have given me a penny. I don’t want to fight for anything, after all we are family members, not to mention I have no friends or relatives here, and the child is still young. (Interview with a 24-year-old widowed woman, LM, 2017)

It was also found that after the resettlement of the reservoir migrants, the widows who had married a male in the reservoir area and lived there for a long time before the reservoir design unit conducted the physical index survey during the feasibility stage were

also identified as migrant population; they were qualified to obtain labor resettlement fees, crop compensation fees, and compensation for village collective land and its appendages. However, the ability to use and control capital compensation was affected by many factors including the nature of their relationship with their in-laws.

In summary, there was little to no difference between men and women with respect to obtaining financial compensation as long as they belonged to the migrant population. Migrant women whose contracted land had not been recovered by Q village after divorce, also enjoyed financial compensation under the second round of land contracts. However, virilocal and divorced women whose contracted land had been recovered no longer enjoyed financial compensation (see Table 2 for details).

Division of <i>hukou</i> population	Capital Compensation Policy and Obtainment		
	Labor Placement Fee	Crop Compensation Fee	Compensation for Village Collective Land and its Appendages
Migrant man	●	●	●
Migrant woman in marriage	●	●	●
Unmarried migrant woman	●	●	●
Divorced migrant woman	●	●	●
Divorced woman (contract land untaken)	●	●	●
Divorced woman (contract land taken)	○	○	○
Widowed migrant woman	●	●	●
Virilocal woman	○	○	◎
● = gain ◎ = partial gain ○ = no gain			

Table 2: Statistic of Capital Compensation

According to the *Implementation Measures for Resettlement and Compensation for the Construction of W Water Conservancy Project*, as long as villagers belong to the migration population in the reservoir area, they can obtain adjusted land for production resettlement. Therefore, all men as well as unmarried, matrilocal, divorced, and widowed women can get allocated production land. However, this study found that it is difficult for virilocal and divorced women not classified as migrant population to enjoy land distribution. These women had to permanently lose lands due to the construction of the reservoir.

In terms of curtilage, the principle of allocation is “one household, one curtilage.” Since each household building was considered in the implementation of migrant resettlement, *hukou* was the unit of allocation, which means family splitting determined the number of curtilages for migrant families to enjoy. The *F County W Water Conservancy*

*Project Resettlement Measures for Households* only stipulated the family splitting method for households with two or more married and unmarried brothers, as well as the households of a purely matrilineal system. It did not include a method for splitting the households of two or more unmarried sisters. In addition, migrant, widowed, and divorced women enjoyed different rights to curtilage distribution. Although widowed migrant women's husbands had died, family ties with the in-laws still existed in many cases. According to the principle of "one household, one curtilage," these women cannot obtain a curtilage alone but must share it with their in-laws or adult sons, while divorced migrant women can be treated as a separate household and therefore enjoy the distribution of curtilages. The following example confirms this situation:

As long as you are migrant population, we treat you equally. Although your *hukou* is not in our village and you are no longer our daughter-in-law, you have lived here for a long time, and you are familiar with the village. So, you are a member of our village. (Interview with the head of Q village, HAS, 2017)

Table 3 clearly reflects the difference in curtilage distribution of migrant men and women.

Population Classification	Curtilage Distribution	
	Policy	Reality
Multi-son migrants (2 sons)	2	2
Multi-daughter migrant (3 daughters)	1	1
Non-migrant man (Household population)	0	1
Non-migrant woman (Household population)	0	0

Table 3: Curtilage Distribution in Q Village

### **Gender Gaps in Power Allocation of Land Acquisition Compensation**

Power and benefits are interrelated issues; power is a means to obtain and generate benefits under certain conditions, while benefits are the driving force for asserting power that serves certain interests. In this study, to understand the power of land acquisition compensation, we ask: 1) Who makes compensation decisions? 2) Whose interests are served? Power translates to leadership in village business, the voice to express opinions about issues, and decision-making ability regarding family affairs. The distribution of such power is reflected in the social and family status of migrant men and women.

Before the construction of W reservoir, men and women in Q village used to perform three types of work: productive, reproductive, and social. Productive activities involved farmland production and migrant labor, done mostly by men. Reproductive activities mainly included cooking, cleaning, laundry, child-rearing, caring for the elderly, and construction and maintenance of housing. This type of work is mainly performed by women, without compensation or inclusion in national economic statistics. Social activities are mainly activities outside of families such as villagers' meetings, business networking, public relations, etc., mainly executed by men. This is also in line with the traditional Chinese ideology of "women inside, men outside" (See Table 4 for details). Such gender

divisions of labor play a significant role in determining the power behind the distribution of land acquisition compensation.

Activity		Female	Male
Productive Activity	Farm work (e.g., farming, harvesting)	●	●
	Pig, chicken, duck and other farming	●	●
	Migrant labor	●	●
Reproductive Activity	Laundry and cooking	●	○
	Cleaning	●	○
	Care for the young and old	●	○
	Construction and maintenance of housing	●	●
Social Activity	Village meetings	○	●
	Daily maintenance of interpersonal relationships	○	●
	Conflict resolution	●	●
● = engage in this activity ○ = do not engage in this activity Note: Engagement and non-engagement are not absolute, but have a high probability.			

Table 4: Gender Division of Social Labor in Q village before Construction of W Reservoir

The “two committees” of Q village were the main bodies of leadership, and the resettlement council was a unique governing body created during the reservoir resettlement period; both were in charge of management and supervision. Compared to migrant men, reservoir migrant women had a lower proportion of representation and less power in the village committees. At the same time, the threshold for migrant women to assume core positions on the “two committees” had been raised implicitly (Shi, Su, & Zhou, 2018). There were seven cadres, of which the secretary, director, deputy secretary, members, and forest guards were male; female members were in charge of women’s congresses, family planning, new farm insurance, civil affairs, environmental sanitation, statistics, farmhouses, and bookkeeping. The assistant secretary was a woman who was also a village official; her job was to assist the secretary in charge of party affairs. Thus, women were mainly responsible for peripheral and less important work; they faced difficulty climbing leadership ladders and lacked real power or the right to speak. The hidden imbalance in migrant women’s rights to participate in the political affairs of the two village committees directly affected the rights and interests of all women in the village, especially in the face of major events such as land acquisition and house demolition for reservoir construction.

The Q village resettlement council was an unofficial organization set up exclusively for the W reservoir project and was responsible for all resettlement matters related to the villagers; it was mainly for communicating the villagers’ opinions and suggestions to the

committees or the project office, and for publicizing timely and accurate information such as policy standards to villagers. Routine matters were usually resolved within the council, generally by holding a discussion meeting on matters relevant to the entire village. Work experiences were often exchanged between village group resettlement councils. The migration councils had a strong voice regarding the migration work of each village group. Based on regulations, each migration council was generally composed of seven people, including three village group cadres and four village representatives (which must include one or two women). In reality, only one of the 10 migration councils in Q village had one female member. One interviewee explained the reason behind this:

We have no women elected. Women take care of their children and do housework all day. They have never seen anything big. The education level of rural women is inherently low, and they cannot understand compensation and resettlement policy, not to mention the project management of the resettlement site. The members of the council are to do things. We are not excluding women, the key is to see their ability. (Interview with YCS, a resettlement council member of Group 2, Q village, 2017)

Due to the uneven distribution of educational resources between men and women in rural areas, the education level of migrant women is not as high as that of men. Coupled with the fact that women in Q village are mainly engaged in domestic work and rarely go out to work, the limited ability of migrant women was regarded by the council as the main barrier for inclusion. Another important factor affecting the composition of the council is the “acquaintance society” (Fei, 1948) network, as pointed out by a research participant:

The Yu family is a big family in our village. They have a lot of family members. The number of votes of their own family adds up a lot. They are usually good people, and some villagers who are not in their family also choose them. (Interview with HJ, the director of Q village, 2017)

Q village appears to be a traditional acquaintance society; the selection of the migration council is thus based on blood relations, sentiment, and geography. Most of the council members came from the big family in Q village and included people who had lived there for a long time or had a strong reputation and professional skills. All these factors contributed to the fact that there was only one female member representing the whole village on the council, and that migrant women were rather powerless and marginalized.

Reservoir migrants’ rights to expression were mainly reflected in the formal and informal meetings on land acquisition compensation. Formal meetings included villagers’ autonomous representative conference, party members’ meetings, and resettlement council meetings that involved decision-making on important matters. The informal meetings were organized mainly to collect and exchange opinions of villagers. Due to the minimal representation of migrant women on the committees, parties, and migration councils, the proportion of migrant women participating in formal meetings was significantly lower than that of men. The majority principle, i.e., “two-thirds of the members agree and pass,” fully protected the interests of men in the formal meetings. Migrant women had the opportunity to speak because the regulations stipulate a certain number of women can speak in formal meetings, but this was not encouraged or emphasized; rather, it was simply adhered to as a formality or obligation. The chances of women’s opinions being heard or adopted in decision-making were quite low, as one participant expressed:

I spoke at each meeting and talked about my thoughts. In fact, I can only say that I participated symbolically. The ideas I proposed were rarely adopted. They [men] had the final say. (Interview with LQP, a female village representative, 2017)

Moreover, any opposition or counter opinions put forward by women would cause dissatisfaction among the men in the meetings. In this village that values “face” and “men's respect,” the women’s group slowly “lost voice” in the meetings.

Finally, the current influence of “husband's power” in China’s rural areas presents a “hollowing out” trend as men go out to work, and the nature of rural families and gender relations have undergone significant qualitative changes. The pattern of two generations of matriarchs (mother-in-law and daughter-in-law) residing in the same family is becoming commonplace (Li, 2016). The resolution of family affairs during the land acquisition compensation process reflects the gender difference in decision-making power of migrants: daily affairs are mainly controlled by women while major affairs are dominated by men. Migration activities caused by reservoir construction have changed original gender roles and gender division of labor. Before the construction of the reservoir, agricultural production was jointly handled by men and women in large farmland areas. Production of goods as well as management of social and political activities was mainly completed by men, while family production was mainly performed by women. After reservoir construction, the greatly reduced area of adjusted land caused a reduction of labor required for agricultural production. This resulted in an increased number of migrant men working outside and the gradual emergence of the trend of “agricultural feminization.” A new gender division of labor—i.e., “male worker and female farmer”—has emerged, and migrant women left at home while their husbands go out to work have gained more decision-making power over daily affairs at home. One migrant woman’s explanation is shared below:

There used to be a lot of farmland in our family. We worked together during the busy season. In the spare time, he [my husband] went out to do odd jobs and I stayed home to do housework. Now there is less farmland, basically I do the farm work by myself. He has been working outside the whole year round and doesn’t come home a lot. I also go to meetings in the village; the village chief will call him to tell him about important things. I usually call the shots at home when he is absent. (Interview with LZH, a migrant woman of Q village, 2017)

Major matters for family consideration in the process of compensation for land acquisition mainly involved land, housing, investment loans, etc. The decision-making power of migrant women regarding two major issues (i.e., compensation and new housing) was almost nominal. In terms of investment, wealthy families had surplus funds after the construction of resettlement houses, and how to use the surplus funds was entirely determined by the men. On the surface, migrant women exercised the power to make “secondary decisions” regarding daily household expenses after the men had decided on the main purpose of the funds. One woman said,

He [my husband] gives me a sum of money at intervals, which is usually used for daily living expenses, which is scattered. I calculate it when I spend it. The things that cost a lot of money must be discussed by the two of us. After all, we are not rich

and can't afford to waste money. But in the end, he still has to decide, and I believe him. (Interview with migrant woman ZY of Q village, 2017)

Men made decisions about whether the land acquired by the family was to be cultivated by the family themselves or by acquaintances free of charge, or leased or transferred; they also signed the final contracts as heads of household.

On the other hand, men's decision-making power in family affairs has been declining while women's decision-making power regarding such matters has been increasing, with their opinions gaining more importance in both urban and rural areas. In urban areas, husband and wife almost share the dominant position within the family, maintaining a relatively equal relationship (Wang, 2013). However, men's decision-making power in major family matters is still more pronounced than women's, with men exercising signing authority over land acquisition compensation and house demolition agreements. Men are generally reluctant to allow women to deal with major issues because they are perceived as incompetent in these areas. Moreover, women's signatures are usually not recognized by village cadres and staff of migration institutions because they require the consent and signature of heads of household—traditionally, men.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

This study explores gender gaps in land acquisition compensation processes for reservoir migrants in Q village across the dimensions of rules (policies and regulations), resource access (restorative and developmental), and power (leadership, freedom of expression, and decision-making). The local formal regulations of W reservoir and the village rules of Q village show gender gaps in the formulation of resettlement plans, identification of migrant population, and compensation contents. Men are in charge of creating informal local rules where women's perspectives are missing or marginal. The population identification plan for compensation and resettlement ignored the rights and interests of some female groups, especially virilocal women. The *hukou* system represents a male-oriented rule that plays a decisive role in distribution of resources such as curtilages. Local discourses such as village regulations and customary laws have also caused imbalanced land rights for migrant men and women.

Regarding the allocation of land acquisition compensation resources, at the policy level, male and female migrants enjoy equal rights and interests in funding compensation, production land allocation, and curtilage allocation. However, at the implementation level, migrant women's rights are not honored due to the *hukou* system. Virilocal, divorced, and widowed women suffered different degrees of loss in terms of capital compensation. Additionally, virilocal and divorced women of non-migrant population status permanently lost their land during the reservoir construction period.

As regards power allocation, gender gaps exist in the leadership system of Q village in terms of men and women's rights to speak and make decisions about village affairs as well as important family issues. Migrant men dominate on village committees and migration councils, while migrant women face difficulty reaching the core of power. The voices of migrant women at village meetings simply fulfilled formal requirements without influencing decisions much. The new phenomenon of "feminization of agriculture" brought

about by the land acquisition system and the idea of “male outside, female inside” have jointly promoted the pattern of “migrant women in charge of daily affairs and migrant men in charge of major affairs” within the family.

Gender gaps in various dimensions of reservoir migrants’ life are the result of a combination of internal and external factors. These factors include a lack of gender perspectives in formulation of regulations and policies, inadequate implementation of policies, the role of the rural collective land ownership and use system, village regulations and civil laws, the profound influence of traditional preferences for sons, the social custom of virilocal residence, and many more (Zhang, 2011). Rural land contract management is based on the unit of the family, and there is no basis for regulating individual interests. Generally speaking, marriage does not change male collective membership (except for matrilocal residence), whereas the marriage model of virilocal residence causes women to migrate, leading to change in their land rights and interests. Therefore, unlike men, rural women’s land rights are often lost during changes in marital relationship. Virilocal women, agricultural women married to non-agricultural men, divorced women, widowed women, and matrilocal women are most vulnerable to infringement of their land rights. These rights apply to land contract management, allocation of land acquisition compensation, use of curtilage, land share dividends, and distribution of other collective economic organization benefits. The family, the village collective, and the local government together constitute the agents of infringement.

On the other hand, traditional gender roles assert continuous influence in the history of human development and evolution (Qin, 2019), and gender inequality is rooted in traditional culture and gender norms (Jayachandran, 2015). The concept of gender roles bred by ancient agricultural production methods still exists and significantly affects current gender inequality in the labor field (Alesina, Giuliano, & Numm, 2013; Hansen, Jensen, & Skovsgaard, 2015 ). As a country and culture with thousands of years of agricultural civilization and Confucian tradition, Chinese patriarchal culture has a profound impact on gender inequality. Gender discourses in Chinese society, however, have undergone significant transformation due to the current market and institutional changes (Wu, 2009). The continuation and reconstruction as well as deconstruction of the patriarchal family structure is a result of the interactions of multiple forces: institutional constraints, market dominance, and the need for patriarchy to continue (Jin, 2010). Official discourses that “every man and woman is the same” and “women can dominate the half sky” gradually lose institutional ground. Under the expansion of market and media, the concept of gender roles, especially social division of labor, have blended with traditional trends. Traditional ideas such as “male outside, female inside” and “married daughter is splashed water” still prevail in closed, economically backward rural areas. Men already have more rights while women’s existing political and land rights are transferred to men.

In response to the above gender discrimination, the academic community has proposed some measures to protect rural women’s land rights. Firstly, adjustments to laws and regulations need to adhere to the value and principle of gender equality (King, 2002). Secondly, village regulations need to be revised so that cultural changes are synchronized with institutional innovation. People, party committees, governments, and gender experts

must cooperate to achieve gender equality (Li, 2012). Finally, agricultural and rural capacity-building initiatives should incorporate gender equality and equalize gender rights consciously (Wang & Li, 2013). These suggestions are applicable but not limited to reservoir migrants. We believe that compared with ordinary rural women, women subjected to reservoir resettlement and involuntary migrants have their own characteristic and unique needs; therefore, protection measures for their land acquisition compensation rights should not be too general. The following two specific suggestions are therefore advanced:

To create an equal gender environment, factors uncondusive to the enjoyment of rights and interests of migrant women in resettlement area should be eliminated through multi-party cooperation. First of all, a reservoir resettlement policy system informed by gender perspectives need to be built. Relevant regulations and policies for reservoir migrants should be revised and improved. Obvious male prejudices and gender blindness are to be avoided, and men and women's rights to enjoy equal status must be ensured at the policy level. Secondly, publicity and education about gender equality need to be strengthened in the entire reservoir area to influence public perception of women's positioning at the ideological and consciousness levels. Next, reservoir resettlement staff will be trained in gender-consciousness and awareness of women's equal rights and interests at each stage of reservoir resettlement. The Women's Federation should receive full authority to lead, organize, unite, and aid female migrants. Lastly, complaint channels for migrant women should be set up with an accountability system to improve the efficiency of resolving complaints.

At another level, targeted efforts should be made to reduce the vulnerability of reservoir migrant women and improve their capacity. First, the independent "individual" status of migrant women needs to be changed to avoid damage to their capital compensation, production land, and curtilages caused by the *hukou* system. Secondly, increased levels of resources such as continuing education and skills training opportunities should be invested in for the development of human capital among migrant women. Migrant women must participate in activities throughout the resettlement process and exercise certain leadership and expression rights in those activities. Finally, income sources for migrant women need to be increased, with their agricultural planting capacity strengthened and maximum agricultural income ensured. At the same time, enterprises with high demand for female workers should be introduced in resettlement areas, and companies should be encouraged to hire female employees to create more employment and income-earning opportunities for female migrants.

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