Chapter Six

What Are the Three Gorges Resettlers Thinking?

Ding Qigang

As construction of the Three Gorges dam project begins, the primary problem confronting dam builders is population resettlement. At Sandouping [Sandou Township], where roughly 100 families have to be relocated, local officials in charge of resettlement thought that as long as the new site in the city of Yichang was better than people's present homes they would gladly move. But, to the officials' surprise, resettlers from Sandouping have refused to move.

The officials were dumbfounded. "Had the government promised more than it could deliver?" "Were the resettlers trying to bargain for a better deal?" The questions arose out of a belief that successful resettlement is simply a matter of economics and government planning. If relocatees are financially compensated for submerged lands and provided with the means to make a living in their new location, then, the officials believed, resettlement should not pose any serious problems.

But resettlement is not simply a function of compensation and planning. It is a matter of adaptation by and rehabilitation of relocatees. The people from Sandouping refused to move to Yichang because officials would do nothing to help them adapt to their new situation. Of course, economic considerations and government planning can help people adapt, but the characteristics of the resettlement sites—the type of land and the social make-up of the area, for instance—loom larger than economic considerations and coercive government action in determining the success of resettlement. Because the people to be resettled for the Three Gorges dam project are being moved against their will, the success of the relocation program will hinge on how well people settle in to their new surroundings and adapt to new economic, social, and natural realities.
With this in mind, in 1992 my research team visited the Three Gorges area and conducted fieldwork in three villages: Dongrangkou, located on the northern bank of the Yangtze across from the city of Badong in Hubei Province;* Yangjiapeng, located on the southern bank of the Yangtze about 47 li** east of Badong; and Luoping, situated on the upper reaches of the Longchuan River, a tributary off the northern bank of the Yangtze. Residents from each of these villages will be resettled, though the nature of the move will differ for each community. For example, it is impossible for Dongrangkou to be moved back from the river and resettled in a nearby area like most of the villages in the valley. Yangjiapeng Village will have part of its population moved back from the river and settled into nearby areas, but half will be moved to other villages. Finally, villagers from Luoping will be moved back from the river and resettled in nearby mountain areas, but there is not enough land for about 100 of Luoping's households.

We systematically surveyed 100 of the 570 households in Luoping and Yangjiapeng villages and gathered additional data from Dongrangkou. Information was gathered by questionnaires and supplemented by in-depth follow-up interviews.

**Awareness of the Proposed Functions of the Dam and Potential Problems**

Generally, people's awareness of the project is related to their understanding of the difficulties involved in its construction. This level of understanding is, in turn, related to people's willingness to cooperate with the government's plans and to the sacrifices they are willing to make in the name of the project.

Our research found that 72 percent of the villagers sampled were aware of the dam and the proposed construction site at Sandouping, while the other 28 percent had heard of the dam but were unaware of its planned location. More than half of the respondents (52 percent) learned about the dam from television and other broadcast media, while 32 percent heard about it “through the grapevine,” and 16 percent read about it in official documents and announcements. When asked “what is the purpose of the Three Gorges dam?” 70 percent of respondents showed at least some understanding of its function: Ninety-eight percent of these identified electricity generation as the project's primary function and were aware of the country's electricity needs; 21 percent answered that the dam would contribute to flood control; 17 percent said that the dam would facilitate river navigation; and 7 percent believed it would strengthen national defense.

When asked whether the central government faces any difficulties in the construction of the dam, 55 resettlers answered in the affirmative, 23 did not know, and 7 said that there were no difficulties. When asked about the specific difficulties the project is likely to encounter, 80 percent (of the 55) identified the cost of the project as a potential problem, while 20 percent felt that resettlement could be a major difficulty, and 15 percent identified other technical difficulties.

Follow-up interviews indicated that the mass media played an important role in helping relocatees understand the various problems involved in the dam's construction. Respondents felt that newspaper and television

*Badong has been a center of munitions production since the 1960s when China moved its defense industries into the interior in anticipation of foreign invasion. Recently, it received substantial investments from the central government to support resettlement and reconstruction of the town above the proposed water line of the reservoir.

**One li equals one-half kilometer.
reports along with trial resettlement projects have informed public opinion and created an ideal image of the project, in addition to helping people prepare for resettlement. "Even those unwilling to move now believe that resettlement is inevitable," they asserted.

People’s attitudes toward the project indicate that the media and the government are having an impact in shaping popular opinions about the project. The most important focus of the propaganda campaign is on electricity generation. The Three Gorges area is one of mountains, reservoirs, and dams, but its economy is underdeveloped, with an extremely weak industrial base and inadequate supply of electricity.* Electricity generation is, therefore, attractive to relocatees who feel that the new power will help develop industry in the area.

When interviewed, nearly half of the relocatees said that they felt the central government would have no difficulty building the dam. “The central government would never have planned the dam if there were many difficulties,” was a typical comment from respondents. Nor would the government “start a project it could not complete.” But people may not be as optimistic about the project as they first appear. The average annual income in Badong County is less than ¥400, but many people have claimed that their income is as high as ¥2,400 or ¥3,000. The hope, of course, is that by claiming higher incomes they will receive more compensation under the resettlement plan. In other words, relocatees may minimize the difficulties involved in the dam project, while also overstating the value of their assets in the hope of profiting personally from the dam’s construction.

**Attitudes About Possible Impacts of the Dam**

For people to make informed decisions about whether they will move, they must have a good understanding of how the dam will affect their lives and livelihoods.

When asked how the dam will affect their living standards, 22 percent answered that one benefit from the dam would be improved transportation along the river.** The majority of those responding in this way came from families who earned at least part of their incomes from navigating the

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*The shortage of electricity in China, especially in rural areas, is readily apparent because of periodic stoppages (tingdian) that afflict industry and agriculture alike.

**Dam supporters argue that transportation costs will drop by an estimated 35 percent following completion of the project.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expected Benefits of the Three Gorges Dam</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved river navigation</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical generation</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional economic development</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater opportunities for relocatees</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclear</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See no positive benefits</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 100 Households

river. Other benefits identified by the respondents included electricity generation for the villages, economic development of mountainous areas, and new opportunities for relocatees. Fifty-five percent were unsure of prospective benefits, or felt there would be none.

In the interviews, relocatees emphasized that before the dam had finally been approved by the central government in 1992 their villages were starved for investment. Only after the project began did county authorities get involved in local economic development. Up to that point, farmers had been left to develop uncultivated land on their own. But with the project under way, land development is now the government’s responsibility. For centuries, villagers had to fetch water by carrying it up from the river themselves. Now the government has started to fund projects to improve access to water supplies. Without the Three Gorges project, many villagers felt, there would be no investment in their villages.

Among those surveyed, there was considerable agreement about the possible negative impacts of the project. Fifty-two percent of respondents said that the submersion of homes and orange groves was the most serious of the negative impacts, while significant numbers argued that the difficulty of finding suitable agricultural land in the mountains was also a serious concern.

In the interviews, many of the resettlers expressed concern about the inundation. "The losses stemming from inundation will be tremendous," many respondents commented. "Most of our land and houses—built over the past two-hundred years by a dozen generations—will be submerged. We
Table 6.2

**Potential Negative Impacts of the Three Gorges Dam**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative impacts</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Submersion of housing and/or fruit trees</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to move back from the river and resettle in nearby areas due to overpopulation</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems of daily living</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to collect sand</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclear</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No negative effects</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N = 100 Households</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

will also lose the orange groves we have been cultivating since the 1970s—our sole source of cash income.” Many interviewees also felt that all of the mountainous land suitable for agriculture had already been developed and that population pressures were already placing undue stress on the land. The ¥550 per mu in compensation for lost land was not enough, they believed, to convert steep mountain land into cultivatable terraces.

**Attitudes About Resettlement**

Are villagers willing to resettle? Sixty-seven percent of those we interviewed claimed that they would be “willing to move in the national interest,” while 33 percent were completely unwilling to resettle.

Follow-up interviews indicated that villagers’ willingness to resettle is dependent on the perceived impacts of relocation on their families and standards of living. All indications suggest that after inundation most rural settlers will be left to cultivate inferior land and that their standards of living will indeed fall.

**Yangjiapeng Village**

Some of Yangjiapeng’s residents will be moved back from the river and into nearby areas, while others will be moved to villages far away. Yangjiapeng is a hilly village whose best agricultural land is near the river. This good land will be completely submerged by the dam’s reservoir, and less than one-third of the moderately sloped dry land now under cultivation will be retained. Of the new land being developed for settlers, some is 600 meters above sea level with only about 20 to 30 centimeters of topsoil. The land is steep and covered with crushed stone. In addition, land with a gradient slope of more than 40 cannot be converted into terraces. Even if it could be, there are no rocks large enough to build the terrace walls. And, finally, terraces built on such steep slopes are routinely washed away in severe storms. To quote the locals: “This type of land is prone to both drought and erosion. Three moons without rain will dry up the land, and the first rains will wash it all away.” The situation is compounded by the lack of irrigation facilities in the mountains. The available spring water is sufficient to meet human needs, but is insufficient for large-scale agriculture. Time and again, local villagers told us that 4 or 5 mu of the proposed newly developed land cannot compare to 1 mu of river valley land.

**Luoping Village**

The residents of Luoping Village face a similar situation. Surrounded by mountains, the village sits on the banks of the Longchuan River, a tribu-
tary of the Yangtze River. The river is the lifeblood of the village. Residents wash, bathe, fish, and irrigate their crops with water from the Longchuan. Yearly floods deposit sediment on the banks of the river, providing much needed nutrients for the soil and sustaining village agriculture. Once the dam is built, however, all of the land below the designated reservoir line will be submerged and local residents will be resettled up into the mountains. There they will struggle to raise crops on steep mountain land.

Over the past eight years, the government has invested about 50,000 to develop more than 1,000 mu of land in the mountain areas near Luoping Village. But it is not enough. There are still 100 households that will have no place to go when the waters rise behind the dam. According to the locals we interviewed: “Not only can the new land not support many people, it will require a great deal more work to manage.” To complicate matters, many villagers will have to take a ferry across the two-kilometer-wide lake that the dam will create just to reach their agricultural plots.

Our investigations revealed that the percentages of villagers willing and unwilling to resettle are more or less the same in all three villages. Those farmers who will not lose their lands to the reservoir have no reason to move. Currently, their lands are nearer the mountains and of lower quality than river valley land, and consequently, their incomes are lower than those of people now living on the river. Once the dam is built, however, the waters will rise to their doorsteps, offering a host of new economic opportunities. The poorest land today will become the most valuable land tomorrow. By contrast, those villagers whose land and houses will be submerged will witness a dramatic drop in living standards because they will have to move from their highly prized land holdings near the river to undeveloped lands in the mountains. Given the prevailing view that these new lands “cannot support people,” the farmers are generally unwilling to move.

Concerns About the Policy of Moving Back from the River and Resettling in Nearby Areas

Resettlement is difficult and uncertain regardless of whether it entails moving back from the river and settling in nearby areas, or moving much further away to entirely new locations. When asked about the official policy of moving people back from the river and settling them in nearby areas, 64 percent thought that it would be both difficult to find suitable sites and prohibitively expensive to build new homes. Twenty-seven percent felt that there was not enough good quality land in the new area for everyone. “Hilly, steep land will not grow grain,” is a common refrain. Another 9 percent were concerned that they did not have the manpower to make a successful move and build a new house.

The survey responses indicate that the villagers’ primary concern is housing, with the availability of new land an important second. The villagers’ houses are of different styles, sizes, and ages, and so their values (for compensation) should also be different. But the government’s compensation policy is the same for everyone—55 per square meter. In our interviews, the villagers made it clear that they would not accept such a low price. As one farmer put it: “When I first built my house, I took out a loan that I have yet to repay. I don’t have the money to build a new house.” Another commented: “Before, building a new house was cheap because relatives and neighbors would help with the construction. Now it’s different. Each laborer must be paid 5. I simply can’t afford it.” Yet another said: “We’ll have to build a new house prior to dismantling the old, and so we can’t reuse the materials from the old house. The 55 per square meter is not enough to buy materials for a new house.”

Generally speaking, villagers think that the government should reimburse them for any and all losses of housing stock, although a few are more concerned that the government provide them with new land since their current land holdings will be inundated. If the government is unable to provide new land, these people argue, it should make sure that they secure nonagricultural employment. In any event, villagers are generally less anxious about the amount of land they are to receive than about reimbursement for their houses. They generally believe that the government will provide some kind of gainful employment and will not allow them to go hungry, but there are no such guarantees for adequate housing.* Village cadres agree that unless the housing problem is solved, it will be very difficult to properly implement the resettlement policy.

The Importance of Community and the Quality of Housing

According to our survey, 77 percent of villagers would prefer that their entire village be moved as a unit. Nineteen percent are willing to accept

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*Indeed, “reservoir relocates” from previous projects have been left to languish in temporary housing for years. See Chapter Seven.
whatever form of resettlement the government chooses, and only 4 percent want to be integrated into a new village.

When asked, in follow-up interviews, why they favor collective resettlement, people emphasized the importance of community. In Chinese culture, familiarity and community are of the utmost importance. A popular saying among villagers is that “one friend is better than three strangers.” If villagers do not know someone well, communication is difficult, trust is not forthcoming, favors will not be returned, conflicts are likely, and acceptance into a new community is all but impossible. It is because of this difficulty in integrating into unfamiliar social surroundings that most villagers would like to be moved as a group.

If villagers cannot be moved as a group, most want to move to as familiar a setting as possible. Forty-one percent said they would prefer to live with someone from their village, and 37 percent would like to live with their current next-door neighbor. As the Chinese saying goes: “Nearby neighbors are better than distant relatives.” Thirteen percent said they would like to live with relatives, and only 9 percent said they had never considered the issue.

Clearly, villagers consider their fellow villagers, old neighbors, relatives, and friends as familiar. Social as well as consanguineous and marital ties constitute the major social contacts in the daily lives of the villagers and reinforce the distinctions between “we” and “they.”

Those villagers who are willing to move have standards regarding their new homes that they are loath to compromise on. Most importantly, they insist that the new home be at least as good as their original one. Relocates are also concerned about a whole host of other factors: Eightytwo percent of the people are concerned about whether they will be able to sustain their present standard of living; 73 percent insist on moving to a place that is near the river and near roads; 69 percent want to live in an area with a geography and climate similar to that of their present home; 39 percent want the government to handle everything for them, including resettlement and securing new jobs; 38 percent insist on moving to a place closer to a town; and 20 percent insist on moving to a place close to where they can intermingle with members of their clan.

Opinions About Agriculture

Farmers in the Three Gorges area have developed dry-land agricultural skills suitable to the local climate; skills which are based on thousands of years of experience. Large-scale agriculture is not practiced in the valley. (In fact, tractors are used mostly for transportation and not for plowing fields.)

The most common agricultural implements are hoes and scythes, which are used to cut wheat, weed, and dig sweet potatoes. Major dry-land crops include sweet potatoes, millet, and wheat, while the more humid climate of the valley produces semitropical crops including bananas, palm trees, and sisal hemp. Because local transportation is underdeveloped, most of the produce is consumed locally and there are few cash crops, except for oranges.

Since the early 1970s, orange groves have proliferated in the region. They are a viable cash crop because oranges can be stored for long periods of time and can withstand long-distance shipment. Virtually every household in our survey owns an orange grove, and 37 percent of the farmers said they had been trained to grow oranges by the county or township government. And the vast majority of those we asked (80 percent) said that they would like to continue to grow oranges after they are moved to make way for the dam.

Nonagricultural Employment

Some villagers are willing to convert to nonagricultural employment after being resettled, but a number of factors affect this choice, including age, gender, level of education, and traditional ways of making a living. Age and education also affect employers’ decisions when hiring help. Those over the age of forty and with little education will have a hard time finding jobs outside of agriculture. Women, for their part, will also find it difficult to get jobs in industry, transportation, and mining and are likely to be limited to commerce, service industries, and food services.

Our survey indicates that 87 percent of the villagers are willing to convert to nonagricultural employment. Young people are most willing to make the conversion, those over forty least so.

Among those willing to convert to nonagricultural employment, 47 percent said they would like to work in the transportation field because they have a family history of piloting ships along the river or of driving vehicles. Forty-four percent said they were willing to work in commerce or the service sector and most of these already have experience in these fields. Finally, 45 percent were interested in factory work, where they would learn new skills.
Table 6.3

**Expectations for Family Income Following Resettlement Among Residents of Yangjiapeng Village**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expectation</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drastic decline (by 50 percent)</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depends on government policy</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slight increase</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No opinion</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 50 households

**Expectations for Family Income Following Resettlement**

*Yangjiapeng Village*

Inundation will force all of Yangjiapeng’s residents to be resettled. Two-hundred mu of new land has been developed near the village, but there is not likely to be any further land development. To date, no one knows who will be forced to move afar and who will be able to remain nearby.

If people are moved back from the river and up into the mountains to make their livings in agriculture, what are the anticipated effects on family income? Forty-two percent of the 50 households we surveyed expect their incomes to drop drastically, perhaps by as much as 50 percent. This expectation results from the fact that many farmers actually own much more land than is registered with the village. When the Agricultural Responsibility System was adopted in 1978, the farmers converted as much nearby barren land to farming as was possible.* The converted land does not need to be registered with the village; nor is it taxed by the government. In effect, it is a source of invisible income for the farmers. However, the government will only compensate farmers for registered land lost to the reservoir and, as a result, most farmers will see a drastic drop in both their land allotment and their incomes.

*The Agricultural Responsibility System dismantled the collective agricultural system of People’s Communes and granted farmers the right to lease land for fifteen years or longer.

Aside from having smaller land holdings after inundation than before, many farmers feel that the poor quality of the new land is the most serious threat to their income earning potential. “Five mu of new land in the mountains is not worth one mu of land near the river,” say the farmers. The new land is too steep, its topsoil is too shallow, and irrigation facilities are scarce, making it difficult to grow grain and commercial agricultural products. Moreover, the land is 600 meters above sea level, and oranges grown at this altitude will be inferior to those grown near the river. No matter how much is invested in the land, the farmers say, it cannot be made as highly productive as their current holdings. Twenty-two percent of the farmers find it difficult to anticipate the effects of resettlement on family income. They feel that the surest way to avoid a life of hardship after resettlement is to have household incomes drawn from both agricultural and industrial jobs.

*Luoping Village*

For the residents of Luoping Village who will have to be resettled, new homes built on steep mountainsides will have none of the advantages of the low-land agriculture to which they are accustomed. Moreover, 400 people or about 100 households will be left with no land at all.

Thirty-eight percent of the 50 households we surveyed in Luoping Village feel that their incomes will drop drastically following resettlement, mostly because of the inferiority of mountain land. As with Yangjiapeng villagers, 24 percent of those from Luoping feel that success or failure rests on the shoulders of the government. They think that incomes will increase if nonagricultural opportunities are offered, and decline if such opportunities are not available. Twenty-two percent feel that their incomes will improve slightly because they will be able to start businesses in the new town or take advantage of the new reservoir to engage in water transportation. Ten percent think that their incomes will improve dramatically because a socialist country must take responsibility for people slated for resettlement and because the central government has promised the local county that arrangements will be well planned.

Overall, Luoping residents are slightly more optimistic about future incomes than their counterparts in Yangjiapeng. While the natural conditions in both villages will decline after inundation, Luoping will be left with land similar in quality to that presently enjoyed by Yangjiapeng
Table 6.4  
Expectation of Family Income Following Resettlement Among Residents of Luoping Village

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expectation</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drastic decline (by 50 percent)</td>
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<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No opinion</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 50 households

residents, while Yangjiapeng’s new land will be substantially worse. The decision to resettle Luoping as one group to a single area has boosted the confidence of the villagers; however, those who anticipate drastic improvements in income should beware.

The government’s propaganda campaign has fueled people’s desire for compensation. A variety of slogans have misled some villagers into assuming that resettlement will make them rich. A popular local saying is indicative: “Thinking about the Three Gorges we look forward to earning big bucks.” It should be pointed out as an aside that similar tendencies have been evident among China’s transient workers and floating population.* Well-connected people in the Three Gorges area have tried everything they can to move their relatives’ registry (hukou) from inundated areas to inundated areas and to places from which resettlement is necessary, all in the hopes of receiving generous government compensation.

The propaganda gives villagers the impression that they can make a fortune from resettlement and that drastic increases in income will inevitably follow. Local county governments are presently trying to counter the propaganda and inform people that the project will not be a cash-cow, but villagers are less interested in this new message than in the old promises of wealth. While unrealistic promises might make it easier to move people

*This group is estimated to number as many as 100 million people who move from rural to urban areas and from city to city in search of employment and quick money.

initially, broken promises will make the process much more difficult in the long run.

Expectations of Villagers Willing to Be Moved Great Distances

The entire villages of Yangjiapeng and Luoping must be moved. Owing to land scarcity, many resettlers will have to be moved to different villages, townships, and even counties. Of the 77 relocatees we interviewed who want to be resettled collectively, 38 will agree only to being resettled nearby, while 22 will accept having to move further away. Either way, villagers have similar expectations about resettlement. These can be broken down into four basic expectations or demands.

“Refuse to Move Up into the Mountains”

People living near the river get visibly upset whenever moving up into the mountains is mentioned. Some are so categorically opposed to resettlement that they have vowed never to move, even if it means “doing without land or housing and living by theft and robbery.” Such an adamant attitude is surprising, but people understand that life in the mountains is hard and they are simply not interested. One village head said: “Life in the mountains is not half as good as life on the river. Transportation and trade are impossible, and it’s futile to try to raise oranges there.” Others said: “Life in the mountains is difficult. We are accustomed to living by the river, and we’re comfortable with the climate here. It’s too cold in the mountains.” Near Yangjiapeng there are two villages named Yazi and Xiongjiachong which are 800 meters higher in elevation. People from those two villages belong to the same Tian family clan as people living in Yangjiapeng and readily admit that life on the river is far superior to life in the mountains.

Previous attempts to resettle people from Yangjiapeng have ended in failure. In the early 1950s, the local government moved 60 families to the high mountains of Nanhangling. New houses were built, and the villagers were expected to settle down happily. But before long the families moved back down to the river. A similar situation occurred in the 1960s, when 30 families from Dongrangkou Village were moved to a high mountain plateau, 1,800 meters above sea level. Within ten years, they had all returned to their previous homes and occupations. In the early 1960s, the Badong County government established a state farm and moved some people to
Dahuaping, which was also located deep in the mountains, but this too was a complete failure. One after the other, farm workers returned to their homes leaving only the farm director at the site. The farm was literally destroyed by the people.

"Never Leave the River"

Villagers on the river have made a living there for generations and have developed a way of life intimately related to water. Their lifestyle is completely different from that of mountain dwellers. Although the Gezhouba dam has blocked fish from traveling from the lower reaches to the upper reaches of the river to spawn, and despite the effects of overfishing, most people can earn at least ¥8 to ¥10 a day by fishing. Whenever there is no work in the fields, villagers go to the river to fish. They choose a place along the river bank and scoop up their nets every ten seconds or so until they catch something. Those who have money buy fishing poles and line them up along the banks of the small streams that empty into the Yangtze. Despite limited fish resources, fishing provides a steady source of income for the villagers throughout the year. If they catch a small fish, they'll take it home to cook. If they catch a larger one, they take it to a market to sell. And if they catch a really large fish weighing more than a jin, they'll send it directly to the county guest house where it will fetch ¥30 per jin.

Life along the river has also meant easy access to convenient water transportation. The rapid currents of the Yangtze are filled with twists and turns which can capsize boats easily. This difficult environment encouraged villagers to develop their piloting skills. Today, piloting boats is a long-held tradition for many families. For instance, the Tian family has piloted boats for over two-hundred years, and, at one time, owned over a dozen craft. Villagers who do not own their own boats work on others. The residents of Yangjiapeng Village own 11 boats, the largest of which is 40 tons. For many, shipping is the primary source of income.

"Remain Near Towns with Convenient Transportation"

Because they are 47 li from Badong and 10 li from the town of Guandukou, Yangjiapeng's villagers must rely on river transportation to maintain contact with the outside world. Early every morning, people travel to town by river carrying a basket of goods, usually fruits and vegetables. After selling their wares, they buy whatever they need and return home. During the orange-growing season, they sell oranges to vendors but also hire boats to ship their goods to Yichang, Shashi, and Wuhan. Villagers no longer have to survive on sweet potatoes and millet, they can now afford to buy rice. The staples of ten years ago are now fodder for the pigs. The river as transportation is essential for the economic vitality of Yangjiapeng. It should come as no surprise, then, that villagers insist that if they are moved a great distance, they hope to be settled in a place with equally convenient transportation.

"Grow Oranges Not Paddy Rice"

Before 1971, in accord with Chairman Mao's policy of "planting grain everywhere," the Chinese government did not allow villagers to grow anything except grain, and as a result many people were very poor. A strong laborer could only make a few cents per day. Millet and sweet potatoes were the staple food, while the pigs fed on grass. If villagers wanted to make enough money to buy oil and salt, they had to go fishing in secret or gather firewood to sell. More recently, however, the government's control over grain production has diminished, and since 1975 villagers have been growing oranges for export. Since 1984 orange groves have proliferated, and today oranges are the primary cash crop in Yangjiapeng. Most families now own, on average, over one hundred orange trees. Orange production has changed people's lives dramatically—they now make enough money to buy rice, coal, clothes, and also put some away to build a house. In the past, people raised pigs to provide for a New Year's feast. But now pork is part of the daily diet. Most villagers feel that without oranges they have no economy. Orange production is, indeed, so important that it is said that son-in-laws from villages high in the mountains now often move in with their mother-in-laws in the valley to enjoy the riches. If the government or anyone else asks a villager to move, their first question is always: "Can we grow oranges there?"

Villagers Preference on Resettlement Policy

For villagers living in areas where moving back from the river and resettling in nearby areas is impossible, there are sometimes other options. The

*The policy, promoted by Mao, was part of an attempt to make China self-sufficient in grain, though it came at great cost to other agricultural products.
possibilities might include: moving to a new location near the river, but miles away from their present home; shifting to nonagricultural employment; cash compensation from the government; or moving the elderly and children back from the river and into nearby areas, while the young move away and into nonagricultural employment.

Eighty-three percent of the people we interviewed said that they preferred the last option. The elderly treasure the land left by their ancestors and they also value their friendships with neighbors. Young people, however, are forward-looking and willing to make a go of it somewhere else. They are less nostalgic about ancestral land. This option maintains the integrity of the community and the family and also allows the young to leave without breaking with their past totally.

Why Villagers Are Unwilling to Move to Urban Areas

Dongrangkou Village, which is across the river from Badong, has hundreds of houses on the flat lands between the mountains and the river. Before the Gezhouba dam was built, the river in this area was so shallow that most ships were unable to pass without the help of trackers from the village on the sides of cliffs. When the Gezhouba dam was completed, the water rose, putting many people out of work. But the villagers adapted to the changes, and in recent years Dongrangkou has become a transportation hub. A village dock was built, and it has become a major embarkation point for people to take boats across the river to Badong. Many villagers have taken advantage of the new emphasis on transportation and have built private shipping docks or bought ships or other vehicles and started their own shipping businesses. Village businesses are thriving, too. Restaurants, hotels, and stores are all flourishing. Farmers now sell their produce in Badong. Many of them can be home for lunch, their workday finished. This kind of life is much easier than that for those living back in the mountains who have to get up at 3:00 A.M. and walk more than 30 li to haul their goods to market. But when the Three Gorges dam is built, the village will be flooded. Moreover, there is no land nearby and everyone will have to be moved far from their homes.

The Yichang branch of the Three Gorges Economic Development Office once planned to move the entire village to the Wujia port area in Yichang. Representatives from the village were invited to visit Wujia, and most felt that life in Wujia port was comfortable—it was near a busy shipping dock, and most of the farmers there were engaged in commercial activities or were hired out as seasonal workers to work in orchards, hotels, or stores. Nevertheless, 80 percent of Dongrangkou’s residents were unwilling to move. Instead, they have insisted on moving back from the river and resettling their village on a nearby mountain named Licijaping. Why are they choosing a seemingly more difficult path (moving up into nearby mountains) over moving to the prosperous Wujia port area?

Put simply, the villagers do not want to move to the city. “Our present life is not so bad,” they say. “We are mostly self-sufficient in food and can even afford some luxuries like roast duck and beer when we have guests.” “City life is different,” they claim. “Once you step outside your door, you have to pay for everything—vegetables, coal, water, grain, and transportation. In the cities, unless you have skills, you’re still a farmer.” In the end, the conclusion of many is that it would take years for them to establish a new life in the cities, and if they were to move they “would have to eat bitterness for many years.”

Recently, there was a gold rush on Hainan Island (off China’s southeast coast) and quite a few young people from Dongrangkou Village went there to seek their fortunes. Many succeeded, earning ¥400 a day. But within three months, everyone had returned to the village because life on Hainan was simply too hard. They made a lot of money, but their expenses were high and they suffered a great deal. To the disappointment of many, they could not adapt to the new environment and could not get along with the locals. No wonder most are unwilling to move to Wujia port.

Conclusion

The issue of involuntary resettlement is not simply a matter of finding land and providing financial compensation for relocatees. It is a complex process in which people must adapt to new financial, social, environmental, and employment-related situations. Resettlement will bring about important changes in people’s lives—changes which our survey suggests villagers will resist.