

International Symposium on Resettlement and Social Development (ISRSD)

Nanjing, China, May 12–14, 2002

Each year, over 10 million people are forcefully displaced for development reasons.¹ In China alone, 40 to 45 million people have been involuntarily resettled by development projects in the past 50 years. Development-induced displacement can have significant socio-economic impacts, in particular on the livelihoods of the relocates. Since the early 1980s, both on the international and on the national level, safeguard policies have been developed which are designed to protect and assist persons involuntarily displaced as a result of, *inter alia*, the need to build infrastructure for new industries, irrigation, transportation highways, or power generation, or for urban developments.

To discuss developments in involuntary resettlement theories, policies and practices, and to enhance international academic communication in related areas, from May 12–14, 2002, an International Symposium on Resettlement and Social Development was held in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province, People's Republic of China.² The symposium was sponsored by the Bureau of Reservoir Resettlement Development of the Chinese Ministry of Water Resources (MWR) and undertaken by the National Research Centre for Resettlement (NRCR) at Hohai University, Nanjing, under its director Prof. Shi Guoqing.³ The World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Administrative Office under the Resettlement Development Bureau of the Three Gorges Construction Committee of the State Council, the Department of Policy and Law, the Department of Farmland Protection under the Ministry of Land Resources, and Hohai University were co-sponsors.

The agenda of the symposium which was attended by resettlement experts from 9 different countries, included discussions on resettlement theories, policies and practices; income and livelihoods restoration; the economics of resettlement; and social analysis, evaluation and monitoring of resettlement operations. After the opening speeches by the Vice-Minister of Water Resources and the Vice-Chancellor of Hohai University, respectively, representatives from the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Chinese Ministry of Water Resources, the Resettlement Bureau of the Three Gorges, the Xiaolangdi Resettlement Office, the NRCR, as well as from the Government of Turkey presented papers on "Resettlement Policy, Law and Regulation, Theory and Practice". The key points discussed under this topic were (1) the assessment of how resettlement policies work on the ground; (2) the lessons learned from experiences with resettlement; and (3) future challenges, such as the

¹ Cf. International Network on Displacement and Resettlement, online available at <http://www.displacement.net> (visited June 3, 2002).

² Cf. www.chinaresettlement.com, www.mwr.org.cn or www.hhu.edu.cn.

³ NRCR, which was approved by the Ministry of Water Resources, is the first national research institute specializing in development-induced involuntary resettlement. For further information, see <http://www.chinaresettlement.com>.

identification and management of resettlement risks. Under topic 2, "Income Restoration and Livelihood Recovery", among others, practices on livelihoods development and income restoration of the Xiaolangdi and the Taolinkou Dams Projects in China, risk-liability mapping in development-induced displacement and resettlement, and environment and social risks arising from conservation related resettlement programs in Central Africa were discussed. Unfortunately three papers on resettlement monitoring and supervision practices, including two on the Three Gorges Dam Project were presented in a separate session without simultaneous interpretation from English into Chinese and vice-versa. The presentations on resettlement practices and supervision in the Three Gorges Dam Project by a Canadian and a Chinese scholar from the Three Gorges University must be given credit for their critical and thorough project appraisal which provoked an extended comment by a Chinese government representative. On the third and final day of the symposium, topics 3 and 4, "Resettlement Analysis Methods: Risk and Rehabilitation", and "Resettlement and Social Development" were discussed, including presentations on poverty and development in Chinese reservoir resettlement, the link between resettlement and poverty reduction, and challenges in resettlement and rehabilitation in contemporary China.

Most of the papers presented were rather technical in nature, with the majority of the Chinese presentations having focused on the management of resettlement projects regarding the two biggest dams in China, the Three Gorges Dam, which is currently under construction,⁴ and the Xiaolangdi Dam.⁵ Given that the symposium was sponsored by the Bureau of Reservoir Resettlement and Development of the Chinese Ministry of Water Resources, and that China is among the top five dam-building countries in the world,⁶ the conference focus on dam resettlement did not come as a surprise. The symposium would, however, have profited from a discussion of resettlement policies and practices regarding urban development, infra-structural projects, such as railroad construction, and poverty reduction projects as well. In her presentation on "Social Assessment of Resettlement in China", Professor Bettina Gransow (Germany) illustrated that there are plenty such resettlement projects in China which deserve closer analysis. The Guizhou Shuibai Railway Project, the primary goal of which is to promote economic growth by creating necessary transportation infrastructure, is but one example. The project is funded by the Asian Development Bank and has poverty reduction as a secondary project objective.

⁴ The Three Gorges Dam is the largest dam in the world. By 2009, an estimated 1.3 million people and 1599 enterprises from 11 counties are to be relocated. Following the international symposium, a study tour to the Three Gorges Dam Project was conducted from May 15–21, 2002.

⁵ The Xiaolangdi Dam in Henan Province (under construction) is funded by the World Bank. About 200,000 project-affected people are to be relocated by 2003. Prior to the conference, a study tour was held for international participations to Xiaolangdi Dam from 8–10 May, 2002.

⁶ Cf. *The Report of the World Commission on Dams*, supra, p. 9. Since the foundation of the People's Republic of China (PRC), 86,000 dams with a total storage volume of 492,4 billion m³ had been built in China. In total, about 1.5 million hectares of land have been inundated as a result of dam construction, and about 17 million people have been resettled. (Information by Chuanli Tang, MWR, China).

On the theoretical level, the discussion of resettlement theories, policies and practices was dominated by the so-called "Risk and Reconstruction Model". This model was developed by Professor Michael Cernea, social policy advisor of the World Bank⁷ and honorary professor of Hohai University. Cernea argues that involuntary resettlement entails intrinsic risks such as landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalization, food insecurity, increased morbidity, loss of access to common property resources, and community disarticulation, that cause impoverishment which must be eliminated or mitigated.⁸ In India, for example, out of 20 million displaced, 75% were worse off after resettlement. In China, over the past fifty years, 1/3 of the 40 million displaced have not been resettled well.⁹ According to Cernea, the impoverishment risks can and must be counteracted through targeted strategies, backed up by adequate financing.¹⁰ Today, Cernea's model is almost universally accepted. It has been useful "in identifying the risks inherent in resettlement, and in suggesting ways to deal with these risks so as to reconstitute economic livelihoods and socio-cultural systems".¹¹ The model is particularly well received by Chinese resettlement practitioners and academics alike who generally favour a rather managerial approach to resettlement, as well as by practitioners working for development agencies.

It was somehow lamentable that the managerial approach to forced resettlement for development reasons dominated the symposium's presentations and discussions, and that so little attention has been given to a rights-based approach to development-induced displacement. The difference between the former and the latter was best illustrated by Professor Chris de Wet's¹² report on the findings of a project on "Improving Outcomes in Development-Induced Displacement and Resettlement Project's" conducted at the Refugee Studies Centre of the University of Oxford. Whereas the managerial approach lays out the basic principles which should be taken into consideration in resettlement management, the rights-based approach not only asks how resettlement could best be managed and how livelihoods could be restored and improved. Rather, this conceptional approach analyses how human rights norms protect not only during but also against development-induced forced relocations. The one-sidedness of the presentations can only in part be explained by the conference setting. Had the same symposium been held in a country in which the protection of human rights is a less sensitive issue, the papers and discussions would most likely have had a rather managerial approach to development-induced displacement, which, today, is still prevalent among resettlement experts regardless of

⁷ Michael M. Cernea joined the World Bank in 1974 as its first in-house sociologist. He worked as the Bank's Senior Adviser for Sociology and Social Policy until 1997.

⁸ Cf. e.g. Michael M. Cernea, "Risks, safeguards, and reconstruction: a model for population displacement and resettlement," in: id. & Christopher McDowell (eds.), *Risks and Reconstruction: Experience of Resettlers and Refugees*, 2000, pp. 11 et seq.

⁹ Cernea, May 12, 2002.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 20.

¹¹ See the paper presented by Chris de Wet on "Improving Outcomes in Development-Induced Displacement and Resettlement (DIDR) Projects".

¹² Chris de Wet is Professor of Anthropology at Rhodes University, South Africa.

their country of origin. The rights-based approach might become more prevalent in future resettlement conferences if in such conferences apart from academics and representatives of development agencies and governments, NGOs too participated, as has been suggested by symposium participants. From January 5–9, 2003, the 8th Biannual Conference of the International Association for the Study of Forced Migration (IASFM) will be held in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The conference's agenda includes as a sub-topic development-induced displacement.¹³ It remains to be seen whether NGOs will play a more prominent role in this up-coming meeting.

Stefanie Ricarda Roos

Discourses on Political Reform and Democratization in East and South-east Asia in the Light of New Processes of Regional Community Building

University of Duisburg/Germany, May 22-24, 2002

This interdisciplinary conference was organized by Prof. Heberer and Dr. Claudia Derichs and financially supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Science Foundation) and the Ministry of School, Science and Research of North Rhine Westphalia.

The objective of this conference was to share the discussion of the impact of current political discourses with scholars from different countries and various disciplines. The topics of the papers presented centered on reform politics in the PR of China, Japan, Korea, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam.

The three days of conferencing were structured into a theoretical introductory part and case studies from the various countries. Thomas Heberer outlined the power of discourses and the political function of intellectuals. He referred to different definitions of intellectuals and linked these definitions to their role in the modernization process. Narrowing the discussion down to authoritarian states, he differed between etatistic and intellectual-critical discourses. Using the example of the discourse on corruption in the PR China, he demonstrated the significance of discourses for political change. In the closing remarks he formulated the further issues which have to be examined, such as questions concerning the spillover process from the level of discourse into political action, the interaction between intellectuals and the political elite, the networking of other actors in East and Southeast Asia and their involvement in global (reform) discussions.

The second theoretical paper by Lee Lai To (Singapore University) examined different roles of intellectuals in "Asian societies". Distinguishing between their role as developers and disseminators of knowledge, their role in political leadership, as social critics and as social advocates, he outlined some central questions for the region in the near future, e.g. the reliance of many Asian states to use foreign exper-

¹³ Cf. www.iasfm.org for details or contact Professor Francois Crepeau, at iasfm8@droit.umontreal.ca.