

# Three Gorges Reservoir area: millions more to be relocated

Saturday 13 October 2007, by [BODEEN Christopher](#), [Xinhua](#) (Date first published: 12 October 2007).

**Please find below two stories on this topics, offering somewhat different figures — International Rivers Network (IRN).**

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## 4 million more people to be moved from gorges area

**(Xinhua)**

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CHONGQING: At least 4 million people from the Three Gorges Reservoir area are to be relocated to cities in the next 10 to 15 years, Chongqing Municipality Vice-Mayor Yu Yuanmu said.

Chongqing's 2007-20 rural and urban development plan, which was approved by the State Council on September 20, describes the resettlements as necessary to protect the ecology of the reservoir area, said Yu.

The country's most populous municipality is set for vigorous urban expansion.

More than 4 million people currently living in northeast and southwest Chongqing, where the Three Gorges Reservoir extends for 600 km, will be encouraged to resettle in the urban outskirts, about an hour's bus ride from downtown Chongqing, according to a report on sina.com.

No details about the massive relocation are available, but Yu said the ecological safety of the Three Gorges Reservoir area is threatened by the growing population.

"On one hand, the reservoir area has a vulnerable environment, and the natural conditions make

large scale urbanization or serious overpopulation impossible here," said the official.

On the other hand, Yu said, the area is already suffering from overpopulation and poor conditions for industrial development.

In March 1997, the city, which sits on the upper reaches of the Yangtze River, received approval to become a centrally administered municipality, the fourth after Beijing, Shanghai and Tianjin. It was expected to spearhead economic development in the central and western regions.

Covering 82,000 sq km, the municipality has a population of more than 27.98 million, 55 percent of whom live in rural areas.

The city's gross domestic product reached 348.6 billion yuan (\$45.8 billion) last year. However, its growth has been seriously unbalanced. The per capita GDP of Wuxi county was 3,593 yuan last year, only a tenth of that in the developed Yuzhong District.

On June 7, Chongqing and Chengdu, capital of neighboring Sichuan Province, were selected by the National Development and Reform Commission, the country's top economic planner, as pilot cities to work towards coordinated and balanced development between urban and rural areas.

Planners estimate that Chongqing will have a population of 30 million, 16.15 million of them in urban areas, representing an urbanization rate of 53.8 percent by 2010. The urban population will be 21.6 million of the city's total population of 31 million by 2020, representing an urbanization rate of 70 percent.

Last month, officials and experts admitted the Three Gorges Dam project had caused an array of ecological problems, including more frequent landslides and pollution, and if preventive measures are not taken, it could lead to an environmental "catastrophe".

Tan Qiwei, vice-mayor of Chongqing, told a forum in Wuhan that the shore of the reservoir had collapsed in 91 places and a total of 36 km had caved in.

Frequent geological disasters have threatened the lives of residents around the reservoir area, said Huang Xuebin, head of the headquarters for

prevention and control of geological disasters in the Three Gorges Reservoir.

Construction of the project has already necessitated the resettlement of at least 1.2 million people.

The dam, the world's largest water-control facility, was launched in 1993, with a budget of 180 billion yuan.

Located on the middle reaches of the Yangtze River, the project comprises a 185-m-high dam, completed early last year, a five-tier ship lock and the reservoir.

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## **Giant China Dam Forcing More Relocations**

**By CHRISTOPHER BODEEN , AP, October 12, 2007**

BEIJING (AP) Chinese authorities plan to move even more rural residents from behind the Three Gorges Dam in recognition of environmental and economic problems spawned by the giant project, state media and the local government reported Friday.

The number of people to be moved was unclear and officials in the Chongqing region said some reports on the project were incorrect.

The official Xinhua News Agency, citing earlier reports, put the figure to be moved as high as 4 million, adding to the 1.4 million already forced to relocate as a result of the project.

However, other reports put the figure much lower, with the newspaper 21<sup>st</sup> Century Business Herald saying 2.3 million would be moved to urban areas by 2020.

An outline of the plan posted on the Chongqing government Web site said the region's urban population was expected to grow by about 4 million between 2010 and 2020. The plan said "environmental relocation" would be carried out in areas surrounding the reservoir where the environment was particularly vulnerable, but gave no figures.

Wang Qing, an official with the Chongqing Development and Reform Commission, said people would be "encouraged and guided to move," but didn't say how many.

Hu Jihong, the commission's office director, also said there were incorrect reports, adding: "We think it's not worth commenting."

Relocating residents for the controversial dam has been a sensitive issue, with some of those moved complaining of corruption and saying their new homes offered little opportunity to make a living.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Business Herald said families targeted under the new plan included some who had already been moved once to make way for the dam. Those communities, however, were often scattered, with poor farmland and few public services.

"These communities would never be able to establish a solid economic base," the paper said.

Chongqing's plan calls for the establishment of a green belt surrounding the reservoir to curb pollution and prevent further erosion of the Yangtze's banks.

The announcement follows an unusually frank government assessment last month that China could face a catastrophe if it fails to quickly stop environmental problems caused by the dam.

The dam is China's showcase engineering triumph and the world's biggest hydropower project. However, authorities are also showing a growing recognition of serious environmental problems related to the project.

The dam has been relentlessly promoted as a cure-all for devastating flooding on the Yangtze River, and a source of clean power for a nation attempting to wean itself off its heavy reliance on coal.

Begun in 1993, the Three Gorges dam project, with an overall cost of \$23.6 billion, has forged ahead with the backing of the Communist leadership despite complaints about its expense, environmental concerns and the forced relocations.

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