

The overall condition of resettlement for Zipingpu hydraulic project

The Zipingpu hydraulic project involves resettlement of 33,000 people in a total of 5 townships, which are located in Dujiangyan city (under the administration of Chengdu municipality of Sichuan Province) and Wenchuan county of Aba Tibetan Ethnicity Autonomous Prefecture, and 29 county-owned corporations. Among them, 11,000 came from Dujiangyan city and the rest from Wenchuan.

The affected people in Dujiangyan city are mainly located in Chaguan village of Longxi township, Maxi township and its Qingyuan village, Ziping village and Dujiang village of Zipingpu township. These affected communities are relocated to Nanhai, Quanhong, Kuangjia, Jijia and Ximin villages in Jiahongxiang township of Dujiangyan.

The affected people in Wenchuan county are mainly located in Xuankou township and its Zhao-er-ba, Shuitianping and Xuaokou villages, Baihua township and its Shenyinsi, Baihuatan and Youzhan villages, and Yingxiu township and its Baiyan village. About 10,000 people of the Wenchuan's affected people were relocated to Wenjiang, Chongzhou, Qionglai, Longquan, Xinjin, Shuangliu, Xindu and Pengzhou county or district of Chengdu municipality.

The major issues of Zipingpu dam resettlement

The affected communities and individuals as the land and property owners are not entitled to assessing the standard of compensation

The Sichuan Institute of Water Resources and Surveying, which is closely related to the Zipingpu Hydropower Company, conducted the assessment of the compensation standard. The government released the results to the public. The whole process was conducted in the black box. The related documents and policies did not go through the consultation and hearing processes before the resettlement started. As the property owner, the affected communities have no say in the treatment of their property. They can only unconditionally listen to and obey the instructions from the third party.

More incredibly, the research on the compensation was conducted irresponsibly. By the end of November 2001, the personnel from Zipingpu hydropower company, the Sichuan Institute of Water Resources and Surveying and the Xuankou township government conducted a field research in the group 4 of Shuitianping village, which is to prepare land acquisition. Without prior notice, the information of farmers' property was missing or wrongly reported. The officials claimed the research result was only "an estimate", and required a final review by 2004. However, until now the final review was yet to conduct.

The housing compensation is categorised as main room and auxiliary room. The compensation for auxiliary rooms is much lower than that for main rooms. However, the people did not know how the room was categorised. The house structure is also made ambiguous. Therefore, the reported housing category may not reflect the reality.

Black box operation, abuse, graft and corruption of resettlement fund

The allocation and application of resettlement fund was done without following the principles of openness and fairness. The Zipingpu hydropower company kept the affected people away from the whole process of resettlement fund allocation, including the expenses for removal, operation, coordination and construction of new houses. The expense for removal was specifically made exclusive for the communities. But the people did not know how much the government would pay. And they are totally not informed the actual expenses for operations, coordination and project construction, which were taken by the government.

According to the sources, Zipingpu Hydropower Company directly allocated Aba Prefectural government a coordination fee of as high as 30 million yuan, which was used for the purchase of two luxury cars. It was also said that the resettlement capital was used for the building of private houses. The people called them “corrupted buildings”. He Yao from the Resettlement Office of Xuankou township, and Li Yu-jun, the secretary general of Xuankou village’s party committee, grafted over 100,000 yuan of resettlement fund in over half a year. He Yao was now being under custody.

The inconsistent standard of compensation in the same dam area

The Zipingpu dam area includes the Dujiangyan city of Chongqing municipality and the Wenchuan county of Aba Prefecture. Dujiangyan city issued a guideline for resettlement and compensation in 2001 (Document number (2001)131). Wenchuan county issued a handbook for resettlement in 2004, and announced its compensation standard. Even in the same dam area, and the Wenchuan’s standard was announced three years later than the Dujiangyan’s, Wenchuan’s standard is below the Dujiangyan’s. Take housing compensation as an example, the main room made of both bricks and concrete is paid 330 yuan in Dujiangyan, but only 315 yuan in Wenchuan. The main room made of bricks and wood is paid 260 yuan in Dujiangyan, but only 245 yuan in Wenchuan. The main room made of earth and wood is paid 190 yuan in Dujiangyan, but only 175 yuan in Wenchuan. In addition, the food stores and restaurants were paid 700 and 1,500 yuan respectively in Dujiangyan, but only 350 and 560 yuan in Wenchuan.

Besides, under the same circumstances, the houses of government units and corporations were paid higher than ordinary residents. The county-owned corporations in Aba Prefecture were paid 15,000-18,000 yuan per capita. But the laid-off and retired workers from the county-owned corporations, and the townships residents who are willing to move outside were not compensated. The farmers were paid 1,000 yuan as the “removal reward” (of course they have to fulfil some certain criteria), but the township residents cannot enjoy.

The housing compensation did not take the business market values and the livelihood of township residents in consideration

Take Xuankou township of Wenchuan county as an example. The township will be fully flooded. Since it is located at a centre of the National Highway 213, the gate to enter Aba Prefecture from Chengdu, it is historically a communication centre and the place of goods distribution and merchandise. Most of the township residents have been running their shops for many generations. However, the housing compensation standard did not take these shops into consideration, and consider them as ordinary residential houses. The resettlement land and houses are also not guaranteed to be the same size of the original shops space.

The Xuankou township was originally planned to move to the group 4 of Shuitianping village, which is located at higher altitude. The new township would be next to the re-routed National Highway 213, and thus the people can run the business by the highway. Over 200 acres of farmland of the group 4 of Shuipingtian village was therefore acquired. It reportedly allocated several tens of millions yuan for land clearance. But due to the landslide, the land was then considered inappropriate for resettlement village. The government then chose several other places like Xinjin Garden, Wenjiang Spring, Xindu Military Base, Sanjiang of Chongzhou and Jiuchi of Pengzhou. Unfortunately the resettlement office of Wenchuan county refused the people’s choice to move to Xinjin Garden without giving any reasons, and designated Wenjiang Spring and Xindu Military Base as the resettlement village. These two places are far from the main highways, and will make the Xuankou township people face the livelihood difficulties.

House resettlement became the project of some officials who gained their private interests

The affected people and resident’s committee were kept away from the design,

construction, quality control, finance control, tender exercise and allocation of the resettlement housing in Wenchuan county. And some of the construction teams came from the construction office of Wenchuan county, or were recommended by some leaders in Aba Prefecture's Party Committee. The people who have close relations with the officials also did the quality control work.

The groups 1 and 3 of Shuipingtian village were also among the flooded area. The affected people have to move to Xindu and Wenjiang. Take Liji township of Xindu as an example, the resettlement house, which was built by the construction team arranged by the government, was found low quality and detected cracks soon after its completion.

Power abuse of government departments in resettlement work

Due to the removal of Xuankou township in 2002, over 200 acres of farmland in group 4 of Shuitianping village was acquired, including part of the land occupied by the new route of the National Highway 213. Since the construction in January 2004, till early 2005, apart from the completion of the new route, the resettlement project was halted due to the landslide. But the original farmland and houses were all occupied or destroyed. Since the villagers started migration in April 2004, they were still staying in very poor temporary shelters. Each person only received 1,650 yuan of temporary housing fee and 600 yuan of living subsidies per year. The construction of the temporary shelters has to done by themselves. They even have to pay the fee for farmland due to the shelter construction. So far the resettlement houses that were promised by the government were not built. The government has yet to clear the land and build the water and electricity supply facilities. There is no farmland around the designated resettlement land. The villagers are then unwilling to go. The compensation fee is too low for house construction. Villagers even have to pay themselves. Due to the loss of farmland and no permanent house, the villagers, who can originally support themselves with basic livelihoods and sufficient food supply, now have to rely on the compensation fee and living subsidies. They have to pay a much higher price for the vegetables. Many of them are now facing difficulties due to lacking livelihoods.

The land of the group 4 of Shuitianping village was acquired due to the resettlement of the original Xuankou township. Although the project was halted, the government did not return the destroyed land to the villagers. The villagers are also not compensated for the land loss. It is even said that the government resold the land to other developers.

Since the removal operation in Shuitianping village was aborted, the resettlement work in Xuankou township was also affected. The government has to move the Xuankou residents according to the original schedule, but the new houses have yet to built. In April 2005, the government stopped the water and electricity supply of Xuankou county, and used force to move the people. The people then turned homeless. They can only stay in their relatives' houses, or find themselves houses. They are now facing difficulties. Many old people have to stay a much smaller shelters. Because they are not adapted to the changing environment, they always suffer from diseases. Due to the high house rent, water and electricity tariff and medical cost, and the interruption of their livelihoods, many dam-affected people are living in dire difficulty. The students who originally attended schools in Xuankou now spread across their temporary residences. Their household registration is not yet moved, so the students have to bear much higher school fees. The Xuankou communities feel strongly discontented. The government still cannot fulfil their promise in the building of new houses. Beforehand, the Xuankou residents proposed the government to make contacts with the local governments of their new homes, and let the residents pay themselves for the field trips. But the Xuankou government refused their request.

Wang Yi-zhong, a villager from the group 4 of Shuitianping village, was granted 20 acres of barren hills for reforestation in January 2000. The concession period was 50 years. The contract was recognised by the Arbitration Office at the Wenchuan Bureau of Justice and

made effective in 28 June 2000. Mr. Wang planted 9,000 ginkgo trees, 5,000 bloody rattan, 2,000 walnut trees, 2,000 Chinese chestnut trees and others like metasequoia and fragrant camphor. 15 acres of his land was acquired due to the removal of Xuankou township and the re-routing of the National Highway 213, but without giving him compensation. The Wenchuan resettlement office replied in the letter (Document No. (2003)70) that the Sichuan government has issued an order to stop all kinds of construction in the Zipingpu dam area in 1 June 1999. But the contracting land and reforestation only happened afterwards. If this is the case, it is unreasonable the county Bureau of Justice still approved the contract. After Wang made petitions for several times and told the story to the journalists, the Zipingpu hydropower project headquarter said in a meeting minutes that they had to consult with the Sichuan resettlement office to solve the problem. But until now, no reasonable solutions emerged.

Xiao Yuan-ming, another villager from the group 4 of Shuitianping village, bought a house in the group 3 of the same village, just nearby the National Highway 213, for residential and business purposes. His contracting land and household registration still remained in the group 4. The group 3 of the village is located in the Zipingpu dam's flooded area. In the compensation survey conducted in 2000, Xuankou township government replied Xiao that he would not move outside the township, but move uphill. Xiao's land in the group 4 of the village was not counted in the compensation package. But in 2003, the township government and county resettlement office re-classified Xiao as outward migrants, and moved him to Liji township of Xindu county. They did not compensate for Xiao's group 4 land and the fruit trees. (Later on most of his land was occupied due to the removal of Xuankou and rerouting of the National Highway 213.) The contractor of the local government built Xiao's new house in Liji, which costs over 60,000 yuan. Xiao only received about 42,000 yuan for housing compensation, temporary shelter and removal, but no money for his contracting land. Therefore he cannot afford the new house. He cannot stay in the new house, and have to return to Shuitianping village. He then stayed in a shelter near the road. His shelter cannot shield himself from the bad weather. His condition was very poor. But the government removed his shelter using the reason of illegal construction. Therefore he became homeless.

Most of the county-owned corporations in Wenchuan's flooded area were sold to the private investors during the removal operation. Many workers were then laid off.

According to the residents, there were many problems in the governance of Xuankou township government. There was no water supply in the township. The water became contaminated in rainy days. Many years ago, the higher rank government once allocated 300,000 yuan to solve the problem. But until the relocation, no water supply and sanitation facilities were built. The project funding was gone. Besides, the Xuankou government fell into a debt of over 100,000 yuan to Wang Yong, the owner of Qiaotou restaurant in the township. Therefore the government has to pay the debt by transferring the stakes of the township-owned brick and tile factory to him.

The legal rights of dam-affected people are not guaranteed due to the lacking of channels of appeal, communications and negotiations. This triggered more social conflicts and protests.

Because of the problems and difficulties, the affected people have made several petitions to the township, county and provincial governments. But the long-awaiting problems are never solved. When handling the resettlement problems, the government departments and officials were biased to their close friends and relatives, and let them report the exaggerated figures so that they can claim compensation. But those who made the petitions were considered "radicals", and were taken revenge. Many of the instructions that were approved by higher-rank governments were never enforced. Those who deserve compensation were not paid. Some cadres even told the people: "I will pay you when I want. It is none of your business!" The officials' attitudes are simply rude and unreasonable, which caused huge discontent among the people, and triggered social conflicts.

In the second half of 2004, the Xuankou's manganese plant was sold to a private owner in Dujiangyan city, which led to the workers' protest. The owner hired thugs from the underground society to attack and injure the protesting workers. The workers gathered and blocked the highway.

On 16 March 2005, over 1,000 workers from the Aba Prefecture-owned corporations petitioned in front of the Aba Prefecture resettlement office located in Dujiangyan city.

On 18 March 2005, several hundreds of Xuankou township residents marched to Zipingpu Hydropower Company, demanding details of resettlement funding.

(Note: The report was prepared by Fan Xiao, who was accompanied by the journalists from BBC News and Hong Kong Television Broadcasting Company (TVB News). It was originally written in Chinese language, and translated into English language by Kevin Li.)