

Cross-Party Group On Tibet

at The Scottish Parliament

Mass Relocations and
Resettlement on the
Tibetan Plateau

2018 Report



Mass Relocations and Nomad Settlement on the Tibetan Plateau.

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Executive Summary

1. Since 2000, more than 2 million Tibetans have undergone an unprecedented process of relocation and resettlement under the combined rubric of “Constructing a Socialist Countryside”. Resettlement has occurred under the twin policies of “Ecological Migration” and the “Comfortable Housing Project”, which has seen the mass relocation of Tibetans to so-called *xiaokang* (“small well-being”) accommodation.
2. These policies have largely come under the banner of the decades-long “Developing the West” Project, and have been hailed on the international stage in terms of Millenium Development Goals of poverty alleviation and environmental protection.
3. While *xiaokang* housing has seen the improvement of living standards for many Tibetans, complaints of forced relocation, inadequate compensation, disruption of livelihood, poor building materials and inadequate employment opportunities in many relocation sites are common.
4. The dislocation of established community arrangements, along with increased security measures and “Gratitude Education” imply the distinct politicisation of relocation and rehousing schemes in Tibetan areas.
5. “Ecological Migration” policies have generally targetted nomadic pastoralists in Tibetan and Mongolian regions, who are blamed for environmental degradation of crucial grasslands ecosystems, and consequent desertification and water security problems. Such arguments have been challenged by environmental scientists and pastoral specialists, who argue that it was previous government restrictions on nomad mobility that caused over-grazing and soil degradation.
6. Most rehousing schemes, whilst subsidised by the government, place Tibetans in significant debt and many are left dependent on welfare payments to survive. The long term implications of this for poverty alleviation and the environment are currently unclear and deserving of monitoring and, given “prior history of such relocation (e.g. reservations in US, First Nations in Canada and aboriginal reservations in Australia) gives cause for concern”.¹

¹ J. Marc Foggin. 2008. ‘Depopulating the Tibetan Grasslands: National Policies and Perspectives for the Future of Tibetan Herders in Qinghai Province, China’, *Mountain Research and Development*, 28(1): 26-31.

Introduction – The New Socialist Countryside

In 2000, the policy of the “New Socialist Countryside” (新农村建设; *Xīn xiāngcūn jiànshè*) was proclaimed as a top priority for the People’s Republic of China under the twin banners of poverty alleviation and socio-economic development². In the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), this has been implemented since 2006 primarily as part of the “Comfortable Housing Project” (安居工程, *ān jū gōng chéng*), which seeks to establish new houses and “new socialist villages”, complete with modern infrastructure, to Tibetan populations in the TAR. The PRC central government announced that the Tibetan Autonomous Region would undergo 900,000 rehousing schemes (and/or relocations) in 2014 to further the approximately 2.3 million Tibetans already resettled from 2006-2013³. Simultaneously, Qinghai Province (also part of the Tibetan Plateau) has witnessed large scale planned “Eco-migration” (生态移民, *shēngtài yímín*), with approximately 300,000 ethnic Tibetans relocated between 2006-2013, away from designated environmental areas to new villages, and 113,000 nomads forcibly settled by 2014.

Current resettlement of Tibetan populations must be understood within the wider framework of PRC national policy, in particular “The Great Western Development” (西部大開發; *Xībù Dàkāifā*). Economic and infrastructure development of China’s western regions is sought in order to balance the uneven development across mainland China as a consequence of untrammled market growth, as well as to help fuel the already industrially developed eastern regions. As China is home to 13% of the world’s poorest people (defined as living below \$1.25 per day by the World Bank), the Western Development program appeals to global efforts of poverty alleviation particularly that espoused by the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

The relocation and rehousing of Tibetans by the PRC has focused on: rapidly increasing the living standards of rural Tibetans through access to centralised infrastructure (electricity, running water, healthcare and education); providing a boost to the under-developed economy of China’s West, and; addressing the PRC’s pressing environmental challenges. While on the surface these appear laudable aims, there are worrying long term consequences for Tibetan populations in addition to concerns regarding the sustainability of poverty alleviation and environmental protection. Organisations such as Human Rights Watch and many Tibetans themselves, argue the relocations and rehousing is less to do with welfare than about increased surveillance and control of the restive Tibetan population.

The Comfortable Housing Project

The Tibetan Autonomous Region (the southern province of the Tibetan Plateau) has experienced an unprecedented rise in relocations and rehousing schemes under the

² “Building a New Socialist Countryside”, <http://www.china.org.cn/english/zhuanti/country/159776.htm>.

³ “China to Forcibly Resettle One Million Tibetans by End of 2014”, *Tibet Society*, <http://www.tibetsociety.com/content/view/406> Accessed 22 August 2015.

“Comfortable Housing Policy” (安居工程, *ān jū gōng chéng*). The Comfortable Housing Project is part of both the Western Development Project and an overall drive to provide subsidised housing for low-income families across the PRC. These houses are often referred to as *xiaokang*, or “moderately well-off”, reflecting an overall party goal for standardised rural and urban accommodation⁴. The central government has provided escalating sums in support of those increasingly expropriated by China’s massive market expansion, from 5.1bn yuan in 2007, to a staggering 80.2bn yuan in 2010. In Tibet, the policy has so far involved the rehousing and relocation of nearly 2.3 million people from over 280,000 households.

The impact of this policy on Tibet’s cultural and physical landscape is signal. As the *Economist* correspondent commented in 2010:

“The impact of this is already obvious. Newly built (or rebuilt) settlements are common along the 300km (185-mile) road between Lhasa and Tibet’s second-biggest city, Shigatse, to the west. Multicoloured Tibetan prayer-flags flutter above the houses, sometimes bunched together with China’s red national flag. Near Shigatse, officials display the new two-storey home of a peasant, Bianba Tsering, who describes the benefits showered upon him by local authorities in the past five years: money to start a chicken farm, land to start a brickmaking business, wood to build his house (a few hundred metres from his water-deprived old one). Portraits of China’s leaders from Mao Zedong to President Hu adorn the wall of his living room.”⁵

The ‘gift’ of new housing is, however, not without its local costs. The occupants of new *xiaokang* houses must in many cases pay up to 75% of the ultimate cost of the new properties in bank loans, largely granted from the Agricultural Bank of China. Statistics from the Agricultural Bank indicate that around 90% of households within the TAR have received loans to various amounts⁶. At the same time, while the production of *xiaokang* housing has certainly provided local booms in construction industries linked to it, in the resettlement villages, job opportunities have not materialized on the necessary scale, or have been filled by new migrant labourers moving in, while social assistance allowances are insufficient to make up for the increase in the cost of living that followed resettlement near urban centres.⁷

⁴ See “All about *xiaokang* (16th Party Congress)”. *China Daily Online* (11/10/2002). <http://app1.chinadaily.com.cn/highlights/party16/news/1110xiaokang.htm>.

⁵ “Pilgrims and progress”. *The Economist*. 10 Jan 2010.

⁶ “Affordable Loans Help Tibetan Business Grow”, CNTV, July 2010 <http://english.cntv.cn/program/newshour/20110720/115566.shtml> Accessed 30 July 2015.

⁷ Report presented to the UN’s Human Rights Council by the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier De Schutter, 2012.

The comfortable housing program, in addition to bringing benefits of infrastructure and amenities has profoundly altered Tibetans daily lived realities. The new houses comply to government specifications that fundamentally alter the ways in which Tibetans live within their own homes and their familial relationships. Additionally, the new housing structures have brought entirely new villages into being or relocated existing villages, altering again familial and community networks which, at times, has resulted in increased local tensions as communities and families vie against each other for limited resources and employment.

Doubts exist regarding the quality of new housing structures themselves, which are predominantly produced of concrete and not the traditional Tibetan building materials. While some Tibetans are reportedly pleased with their new housing structures, others have reported building to be of poor quality and/or inapplicable to the unique Tibetan environment: concrete is cold in the winter but too warm in the summer and requiring more expensive fuel heating than traditional houses. For many the standardized rows of housing structures in the “new socialist villages” has meant more cramped living conditions for larger households. In particular the standardised and limited back enclosures allocated to each household are insufficient for keeping livestock or subsistence farming, forcing Tibetans to buy produce that was previously grown, reared or handmade.⁸ A State Council Study report issued in 2009⁹ identified several medium to long term problems regarding the implementation of the Comfortable Housing scheme which included: the lack of rational housing design and the gap between house design and the needs of the rural population; pastoralists cut off from their herds and livestock; and a rising risk of default on comfortable housing loans.

Security Policy and ‘Gratitude Training’

The PRC central government has repeatedly asserted that the project is concerned with poverty alleviation, economic development and human development by providing accesses to employment, health, education facilities and modern infrastructure.¹⁰ However, at a local level the purposes and uses of the scheme have a distinctly more political edge. In 2006 Tibet's party chief, Zhang Qingli, said the comfortable-housing programme and job creation in the countryside were an essential foundation for keeping “the upper hand in our struggle with the Dalai clique”¹¹.

The political dimensions of the Comfortable Housing Project also exist in the conditions of acceptance of new housing. As Yeh has outlined in detail, Tibetans rehoused in “New Socialist

⁸ “‘They Say We Should Be Grateful’: Mass Rehousing and Relocation Programs in Tibetan Areas of China’, *Human Rights Watch*, 27 June 2013, p.83 <https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/06/27/they-say-we-should-be-grateful/mass-rehousing-and-relocation-programs-tibetan> Accessed 21 August 2015.

⁹ State Council Development Center. 2012. “Comfortable Housing: A Project that Brings Benefit to Millions of Tibetans Farmers and Herders”, *China Economic Times*,

¹⁰ See Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PRC, 2015. Report on China's Implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015). http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/W020150730508595306242.pdf.

¹¹ “Pilgrims and progress”. *The Economist*. 10 Jan 2010.

Villages” must take several weeks of ‘gratitude education’ (感恩教育; *gǎn'ēn jiàoyù*) lest they misrepresent the conditions of the gift, under the understanding that

“Failure to perform gratitude for the gift of the *Xiaokang* houses ... would be tantamount to a rejection of the state’s territorial sovereignty.”¹²

In addition to the compulsory “Gratitude Training”, over 20,000 officials and communist party cadres have been established in Tibetan villages to undertake surveillance, political re-education and establish partisan security units. The first instructions given to new teams of party cadres is to expand the role and size of the Communist party in Tibetan villages while the second is to “maintain stability” by “carrying out activities against the Dalai Clique”.¹³ The importance of societal control is evident in a statement given by the TAR party secretary in March 2013 which stated: ‘Stability maintenance... the number one priority exceeding all else’ in the TAR.

Nicholas Bequelin (Human Rights Watch) stated that:

“The government has started to despatch new teams of Communist Party Officials to each single village of the Tibet Autonomous Region... The new personnel stationed at these villages have been instructed to eat, live and work with the villages and that includes monitoring their political opinions and identifying whose loyalty to the Party of the government is questionable.”¹⁴

Reports from Human Rights Watch and the BBC state that the aim of such reconstruction is tighter political control of ethnic Tibetans.¹⁵ The images overleaf show the reconstruction of a Tibetan village alongside a road and the uniform rows of new buildings.

¹² Yeh, Emily. 2013. *Taming Tibet: Landscape Transformation and the Gift of Chinese Development*. New York: Cornell University Press.

¹³ Human Rights Watch. June 2013. *China: “Benefit the Masses”: Campaign Surveilling Tibetans*, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/06/18/china-benefit-masses-campaign-surveilling-tibetans>

¹⁴ Cited “China Resettles 2 Million Tibetans, says Human Rights Watch”, Celia Hatton, *BBC*, 27 June 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-23081653> Accessed 22 August 2015.

¹⁵ “China Resettles 2 Million Tibetans, says Human Rights Watch”, Celia Hatton, *BBC*, 27 June 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-23081653> Accessed 22 August 2015.

2004 Bagkarshol village before demolition



2009 New settlement after reconstruction



Figure 1: Image from “China Resettles 2 Million Tibetans, says Human Rights Watch”, Celia Hatton, *BBC*, 27 June 2013.

Google, DigitalGlobe

Complementing the dispatch of Party Cadres is the implementation of the ‘Grid System’. Each neighbourhood is further divided along a grid system. The grid system allows for the close monitoring of street level activities in an attempt to prevent or halt mass protests like those witnessed in March 2008 and inhibit self-immolations, a means of protest that has become almost commonplace in eastern Tibetan areas since 2009¹⁶.

¹⁶ See previous briefing papers by the Scottish Parliament’s Cross Party Group on Tibet.

'Voluntary' Resettlement?

Though the PRC states that rehousing and relocation is voluntary and beneficial to Tibetans, Tibetans themselves clearly have mixed feelings regarding relocation. While some Tibetans have indeed proclaimed new housing schemes to be of benefit, others have found their socio-economic status decline with a perceived loss of culture and long term livelihood. Given the PRC announced the number of resettlements prior to public consultation, the "voluntary" nature of such resettlements must be questioned.

Despite Beijing's repeated assurances that relocations and rehousing are voluntary raises concerns in the context of the central government's announcement that 90% of the herder population would be sedentarized by 2015, prior to public consultation. A report issued in 2013 by Human Rights Watch verified the involuntary nature of a large number of Tibetan resettlements, which is against International law regarding evictions. International Law states that forced eviction need not be by physical force but include situations where no meaningful consultation or compensation takes place and/or where no alternatives are offered.¹⁷ The report also indicates that at the local level relocations and rehousing was achieved through a mixture of incentives and threats whereby refusal to comply would be viewed as a "political problem". The lack of dispute mechanisms or opportunities to challenge compensation decisions made by local government officials was also highlighted.¹⁸

The "voluntary" nature of such resettlements must also be considered alongside the stricter application of the 2007 Compulsory Education Law (CEL). In order to be compliant with the Law, families must live within immediate travel distance of an educational facility, thus reducing the possibility for traditional nomadic practice for at least one of the parents. Full application of the CEL thus forces nomadic parents to sedentarise or face legal punishment (monetary fines and/or imprisonment). In essence, education falls within the remit of the Millennium Development Goals and is presented as a case for long term human development. From the perspective of some Tibetan nomads however, compulsory education is seen not as a benefit of development, but as a tool to force relocation and sedentarisation. For many Tibetans, compulsory education is also perceived as an effort to eradicate Tibetan identity and language as Mandarin (not Tibetan) is the language of the curriculum and thus education is seen as a tool for state building and transformation of national identity.

¹⁷ "'They Say We Should Be Grateful': Mass Rehousing and Relocation Programs in Tibetan Areas of China', *Human Rights Watch*, 27 June 2013, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/06/27/they-say-we-should-be-grateful/mass-rehousing-and-relocation-programs-tibetan> Accessed 21 August 2015.

¹⁸ "'They Say We Should Be Grateful': Mass Rehousing and Relocation Programs in Tibetan Areas of China', *Human Rights Watch*, 27 June 2013, p. 74, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/06/27/they-say-we-should-be-grateful/mass-rehousing-and-relocation-programs-tibetan> Accessed 21 August 2015.

Eco-Migration and Nomad Resettlement

“Local nomads [have begun] enjoying a new modern life in their crystal-clean new homes while all of their livestock are raised in the endless grassland under a cooperative style [system].” *Qinghai Online News*, Jan 2014¹⁹

The Ecological Migration Policy (生态移民; *shēngtài yímín*) implemented across the Tibetan Plateau is a component of the *Nationwide Environmental Development Plan* initiated across the PRC in November 1998²⁰, with regional level legislation opened in 2001 focused on the forced sedentarisation of China’s extensive nomadic pastoralist population. Pilot projects were carried out in Inner Mongolia in the early 2000s, involving the forced relocation and settlement of 650,000 Mongolian nomad herders²¹. From 2000 onwards, implementation of the Eco-Migration policy has involved the mass resettlement and sedentarisation of the Tibetan Plateau’s traditional nomadic herding communities. At the time of writing, approximately 90% of herders and nomads have been sedentarized²². Accelerated relocation and sedentarization of nomadic herders in the North and East of the Tibetan Plateau coincides with relocation and settlement of TAR populations along roads (see below).

The Ecological Migration policy is part of Beijing’s response to the devastating effects upon its environment caused by rapid urbanisation and industrialisation since the 1980s, resulting in environmental protection increasing as a national priority. Deforestation, desertification and downstream water distribution problems are paramount environmental concerns for Tibet’s northern Qinghai province which has seen the application of national environmental policies of “Reverting Farmland to Forest” and “Reverting Pastures to Grasslands” implemented across the province. Relocation fits into this government paradigm, as nomadic herding is identified as the paramount reason for desertification and loss of fragile grassland areas. The solution to this a re-orientation of population distribution towards settled farming, towns and urbanisation.

This analysis has many critics, who argue that, rather than being inefficient and destructive of grassland integrity, nomadic pastoralism is precisely focused on the long term sustainability of grassland resources. Indeed, they argue that it is precisely the *limitation* of pastoral mobility – promoted by the economic privatisation, fencing and segmentation within nomadic communities under Deng Xiaoping’s reforms of the 1990s - that denudes local natural resources and promotes desertification, a consequence which is exacerbated by the new sedentarisation

¹⁹ *Qinghai Online News*, cited in Yeshe Dorje, Jan 2014. “China Completes Controversial Nomad Relocation in Tibet”. *Voice of America News*, <http://www.voanews.com/content/china-completes-controversial-nomad-relocation-in-tibet/1837288.html>.

²⁰ State Council Document No.36: “Notice Regarding Nationwide Environmental Development Plan”.

²¹ Enghebatu Togochoog 2006. “Ecological Migration and Human Rights”. *Development For Whom? China Rights Forum*, No. 4.

²² “They Say We Should Be Grateful”: Mass Rehousing and Relocation Programs in Tibetan Areas of China’, *Human Rights Watch*, 27 June 2013, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/06/27/they-say-we-should-be-grateful/mass-rehousing-and-relocation-programs-tibetan> Accessed 21 August 2015.

initiatives²³. As Humphrey and Sneath at Cambridge University's Mongolia and Inner Asia Studies Unit comment with regard to the Mongolian pilot work:

"It is dismaying that Chinese policy for Inner Mongolia envisages measures that are similar in some respects to those which have had such disastrous results in Russia: introduction of 'improved' (more productive) breeds, use of heated winter sheds, development of fodder agriculture, and a less mobile, more static organisation of pastoralism in general. Pasture degradation is associated with the loss of mobility in pastoral systems. One of the effects of privatising livestock has been to reduce the amount of movement undertaken by many pastoral households. In Mongolia in the past, in both the pre-revolutionary and the socialist period long migrations were used as a strategy to increase pastoral production. This argument challenges the stereotypical view that seasonal migration is merely a 'primitive survival technique', and that the only way to improve pastoral production is to reduce mobility."²⁴

Effects on Population Conditions

Relocation of herders into permanent structures results in an abrupt alteration in the daily lives, traditions and livelihood patterns of Tibetan nomads, mainly by separating herders and nomads from the herds and livestock that ensure their survival. The Peking University team conducted a survey of grassland policy which concluded that 60% of pastoralists noted a decrease in their livelihoods with sedentarisation and fencing policies due to increased costs for livestock production and increased living costs.²⁵ As Bauer notes:

"While resettlement offers nomad families opportunities in terms of access to public services such as education and health care, it also entails significant new expenses for households even as their earnings potential contracts; these trends are exacerbated in the case of poorer households and income inequalities are likely to worsen when families move to urban areas. Likewise, while resettlement has

²³ "Wasted Lives: A Critical Analysis of China's Campaign to End Tibetan Pastoral Lifeways", *Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy*, May 2015, <http://www.tchrd.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Download-Report.pdf>. The unintended detrimental effects of recent environmental policies were raised at the 2015 World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty by a team from Peking University College who argued that the failures were due to improper policies themselves and not improper implementation. The findings coincide with the United Nations Development Programme that has established a "new paradigm" in regards to nomadic herding which claims that in contrast to previous assumptions over-grazing is largely caused by impeding movements with barriers and bounded fences, rather than the movement itself.

²⁴ Caroline Humphrey and David Sneath, *The End of Nomadism? Society, state and the environment in Inner Asia*, Duke University Press, 1999, 14, 292

²⁵ "Wasted Lives: A Critical Analysis of China's Campaign to End Tibetan Pastoral Lifeways", *Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy*, May 2015, <http://www.tchrd.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Download-Report.pdf> Accessed 30 July 2015.

resulted in increased purchase of consumption goods, household investment in productive assets has seen a corresponding decline.”²⁶

Resettlement structures separate nomad communities from the livestock that they depend upon for income, which are re-organised under present policies into government-run animal husbandry co-operatives. Many have argued that this is simply government appropriation. Mogru Tenpa, Member for Qinghai (Do-Mey) of the Tibetan parliament in exile, comments:

“They call it cooperation but they are run by government officials ... They say the government is not taking it away from people, but managing it for people. But in reality, once government takes it over, individuals can no longer use their land.”

Prospects for the Future

As components of the overarching Development of the West initiative, the Comfortable Housing and Eco-Migration Projects are intended to simultaneously fulfil several key goals of the central government of the PRC: that is, “to eliminate regional disparities gradually, consolidate the unity of ethnic groups, ensure broader safety and social stability and promote social progress”²⁷. Essential to this is the philosophy of balancing uneven economic growth within the PRC through the systematisation of *xiaokang* housing, whose goal is to produce a culturally and economically standardised rural population, effectively settled, “free from want” and amenable to state organisation and political stability through the PRC’s extensive bureaucratic and security apparatus. The rural and especially nomadic populations of the Tibetan Plateau and Inner Mongolia represent a particular challenge to this future vision of population organisation, and given Tibetans’ history of unrest, a particular focus.

The implementation of such directives is highly variable at the provincial level. Whilst the central government in Beijing concerns itself with pressing issues such as the growing environmental challenges that the PRC as a whole faces, individual provincial governments primarily focus on economic growth and state security. In this sense, the *xiaokang* philosophy produces different political, cultural and economic realities in different regions of the PRC. In the Tibetan Autonomous Region and its surrounding Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures, that reality has vast implications on the quotidian and cultural life of Tibetans. What is less clear is the long-term consequences of this huge re-organisation of the population, although the historical precedents for such initiatives around the world are gloomy indeed: unemployment, conflict, marginalisation, debt and welfare dependency.

Rehousing, resettlement and the creation of New Socialist Villages is promoted within the wider PRC as the generosity of the Chinese State. This hides the hidden financial burdens on Tibetans

²⁶ Kenneth Bauer, 2015. “New homes, new lives - the social and economic effects of resettlement on Tibetan nomads (Yushu prefecture, Qinghai province, PRC)”. *Nomadic Peoples Journal*, 19(2).

²⁷ “Overall Plan of Western Region Development During the Tenth Five-Year Plan Period (1)”. <http://www.china.com.cn/market/hwc/400823.htm>

themselves where up to 70% of the cost of house demolition and rebuilding are born by households themselves through “self-financing” involving a mixture of private savings, sale of assets and most substantially bank loans. Compensation amounts and direct subsidies vary across counties only being payable once the new house is constructed and local officials have verified that the new housing structure meets required specifications. Reports indicate that often only part of the promised subsidies materialise and the opportunity for siphoning off funds by local officials is ripe leading to various reports of corruption at the local level.²⁸

One of the most important determinants of these long-term consequences revolves around the sheer cost of the initiatives themselves, particularly in situations where resettled communities fail to thrive in economic terms. The sustainability of the Western Development Project as a whole depended on the assumed continuance of the expansion of the Chinese economy, an assumption that now looks increasingly doubtful, both from a provincial and a pan-PRC perspective. On the one hand, the TAR has seen a rise in economic growth (if economic growth is measured by the GDP of the province). On the other hand, much of what is produced is for export and not being consumed locally and much of the new employment opportunities are filled by an influx of Han Chinese migrants. Official statistics have reported a quadrupling of TAR economy from 1997-2007 with tourism expanding tenfold between 2000 and 2010.²⁹ Yet, it has been claimed that despite the TAR economy expanding more rapidly than elsewhere in China, the economy has been described as “An artificially-sustained subsidy bubble”.³⁰ If, in cases where such *xiaokang* resettlement villages fail to become economically viable – and many suggest that this will be the rule rather than the exception – then future limitations on the capacity of the state to provide such subsidies, in combination with increased costs and indebtedness, points towards a growing poverty trap for many Tibetans.

Therefore, there is an ambiguous relationship between conservation programs and poverty alleviation association with eco-migration as reportedly it is the poor who are burdened with the economic and social costs of relocation, loss of livelihood, increased living expenses in urban areas and a loss of culture, tradition and family life.³¹ Denying access to some of the most biologically diverse resources to the most impoverished peoples imposes significant costs on local populations³².

²⁸ “‘They Say We Should Be Grateful’: Mass Rehousing and Relocation Programs in Tibetan Areas of China”, *Human Rights Watch*, 27 June 2013, p.83 <https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/06/27/they-say-we-should-be-grateful/mass-rehousing-and-relocation-programs-tibetan> p.78 Accessed 21 August 2015.

²⁹ “‘They Say We Should Be Grateful’: Mass Rehousing and Relocation Programs in Tibetan Areas of China”, *Human Rights Watch*, 27 June 2013, p.44 <https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/06/27/they-say-we-should-be-grateful/mass-rehousing-and-relocation-programs-tibetan> Accessed 21 August 2015.

³⁰ Andrew M. Fischer. 2005. *State, Growth and Social Exclusion in Tibet: Challenges of Recent Economic Growth*, Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies.

³¹ Xiang, Shi, Chen, Li, and Zhu, Qingke. 2010. ‘Remembering the Ultimate Goal of Environmental Protection: Including Protection of Impoverished Citizens in China’s Environmental Policy’, *Ambio*, 39(5/6): 439-442.

³² Xiang, Shi, Chen, Li, and Zhu, Qingke. 2010. ‘Remembering the Ultimate Goal of Environmental Protection: Including Protection of Impoverished Citizens in China’s Environmental Policy’, *Ambio*, 39(5/6): 441.