

China to move tens of thousands for huge water scheme

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BEIJING (Reuters) - [China](#) will move 345,000 people, mostly poor villagers, within about two years to make way for a vast scheme to draw on rivers in the south to supply the increasingly dry north, an official newspaper said on Tuesday.

The forced resettlement for the South-to-North Water Transfer Project will be the biggest China has undertaken since building the Three Gorges Dam, the world's biggest hydroelectric scheme, said the People's Daily.

The project involves an eastern route to take water from the lower reaches of the Yangtze River and a central route to tap rivers flowing into the Danjiangkou Dam in central China.

The scheme has been troubled by delays, cost increases, pollution and the burden of resettling displaced farmers.

Zhang Jiyao, the official in charge of the project, said the mass move for the central route could be more demanding than the Three Gorges Dam move, which sparked years of contention with displaced residents unhappy with compensation and conditions.

"The intensity of the resettlement will surpass that of the Three Gorges Dam Project, because that involved a million migrants over about 10 years, and the resettlement for the South-to-North Water Transfer Project must be completed in over two years," the paper quoted Zhang as saying.

Big dams and hydro projects have featured among China's engineering trophies symbolizing its growing wealth, but are also a lightning rod for persistent discontent.

The South-North Project is the latest among such efforts and the drive to finish resettlement for the rising Danjiangkou Dam by 2013 has already stirred complaints from farmers, who say they are being moved to poorer land with dim job prospects.

The dam is being raised to store more water, which will then be drawn along 1,421 km (883 miles) of canals and tunnels to Beijing, the nearby port city of Tianjin and surrounding areas.

North China has about half the country's population but 19 percent of its fresh water resources. Industrial and urban growth have strained the nation's rivers and underground reserves, according to official estimates.

The planned completion for the first stage of the central route was pushed back to 2014 after it became clear that earlier deadlines of 2010 and 2008 could not be met.

Many of the displaced farmers are residents of Xichuan county in Henan province, which lies on one side of the Danjiangkou Dam. They will be resettled in crowded Henan, the country's most populous province with nearly 100 million people.

(Reporting by Chris Buckley; Editing by [Paul Tait](#))

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/06/29/us-china-water-resettlement-idUSTRE65S0YV20100629>