

VI-15 Social Environment Evaluation of Three Gorges Project in China

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1. Introduction

Coursing over a distance of 6,380 kilometers, the mighty Yangtze is the longest river in China and the third longest in the world after the Amazon in South America and the Nile in Africa. With more than 30 industrial cities along the coast, it provides about 70% of the inland navigation, runs through more than 25% of the agricultural farmlands and supports about a third of the population in the country. It is also a cradle of ancient Chinese civilization. One and a half miles wide and 610 feet tall, the gargantuan Three Gorges Project is China's largest construction project since the Great Wall. The project is composed of a dam, two power plants and navigation facilities.

The most impressive section of the River is the Three Yangtze River Gorges: Qutang Gorge, Wuxia Gorge and Xiling Gorge, collectively known as the Sanxia in Chinese, Three Gorges in English. The TGP is a multipurpose project which offers many enormous benefits such as flood control, power generation, navigation, aquaculture tourism, ecological protection, environmental purification, development-oriented resettlement, transferring water from the South to the North, water supply and irrigation.

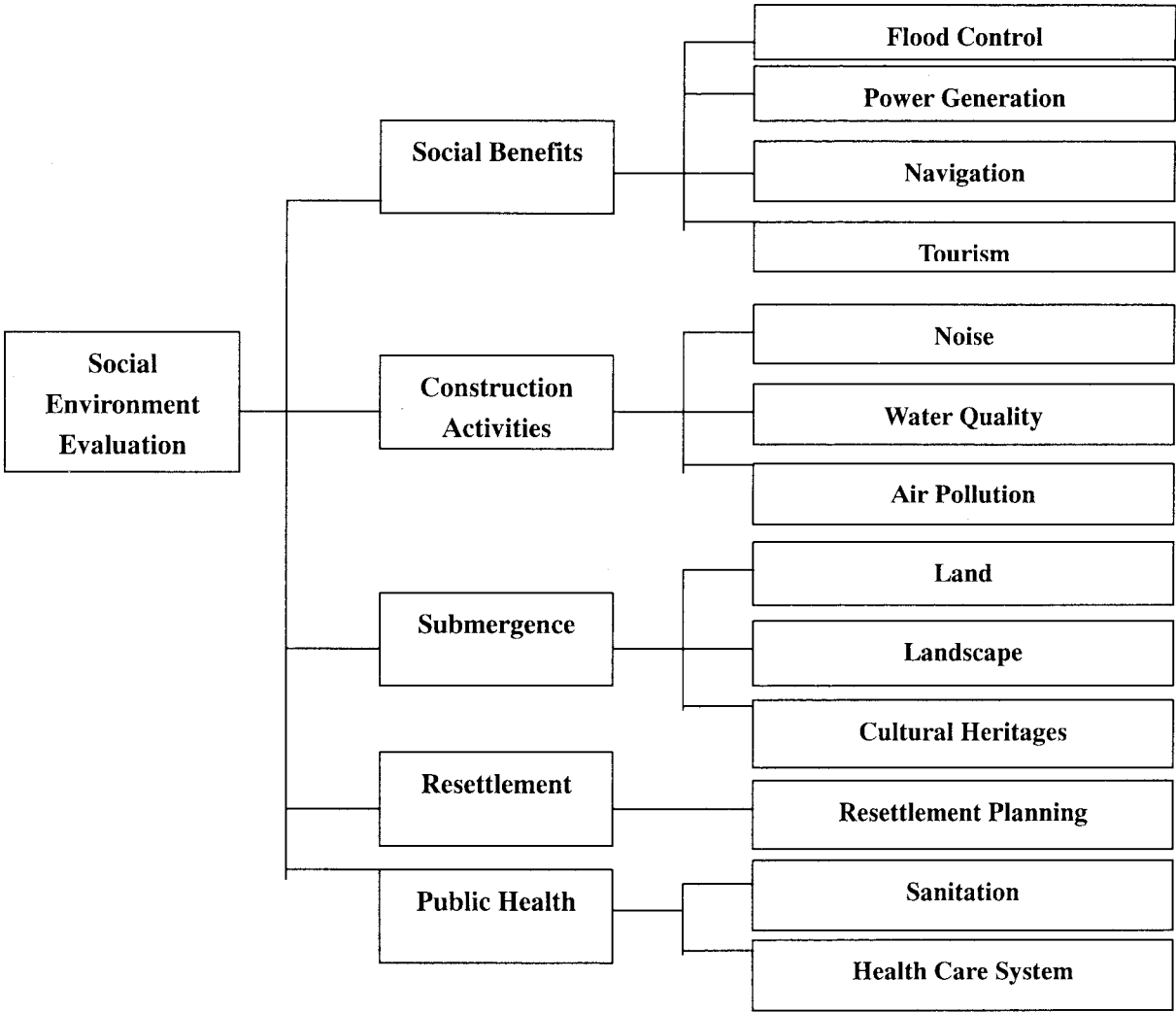
By analyzing the possible impacts of the Three Gorges Project, true benefits that could be acquired from the project need to be filtered out. An analysis of how these impacts would affect the social environment would have to be taken into consideration.

2. Social Environment Evaluation

Three Gorges Project is one of the big projects in the world, it has so many social environment impacts which includes social benefits, construction activities, submergence, resettlement and public health. (Table 1)

The multipurpose Three Gorges Project that is expected to fully operate by 2009 will have the immediate benefit of protecting millions of citizens, living in the farmlands of Hubei province downstream Three Gorges, from recurrent and severe floods. Three Gorges project has been designed to store over 5 trillion gallons of water and to withstand an earthquake of 7.0 on the Richter scale. Besides floods prevention, power generation is expected to bring true benefits as supplying the badly needed clean electricity at low cost; twenty-six generators, each with a generating capacity of 700, 000 kw, will be installed in the power station at the Three Gorges. Navigation capacity is also expected to expand greatly as the reservoir will allow 10,000-ton freighters to enter the nation's interior, which currently limits access to boats under 1,500 tons.

Table 1 Evaluation Index System of Social Environmental Impacts of TGP



3. Conclusion

If adequate attention could be given to these above-mentioned negative impacts posed by the construction of the Project, effective measures could be implemented, and a sufficient investment could be ensured, thus most of the negative impacts can be reduced to a minimum extent. Despite this controversy, everyone however agrees that the Three Gorges Dam is an incredible undertaking. Like China's Great Wall, it will be one of the few man-made structures visible from space.

4.References

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