Relocation: Big city, better lives

"We had no expendable income in Yikoudao," Yang said. "It was really hard to make money farming there We earned just enough to survive. So, she and her husband alter-

nately worked as migrants or stayed to look after their three children. Yang only attended primar school for two years. She can read

Her husband returns from work ing as a migrant in Zhejiang prov ince once a year, usually for Spring

but "can't really write".

Zhu Hailu, their 17-year-old daughter, has adjusted well since

"Her classmates and teachers like her," Yang said. "She said it was diffi-

accents at first. But kids learn fast. She had no problem making friends. She'd come home right after school in the first few months. But now she stays out shopping with the other girls."

Zhu is a year behind in school because she grew up in the village. "Usually, 17-year-olds are sophomores. But she's a freshman," Yang

The girl started primary school at age 8 rather than 7 because she had to climb for an hour to reach the school from their home.

"The path was dangered recalled. In two years, Zhu will take the national college entrance examina-

tion. She hopes to become a civil ser Yang appreciates urbanization's

"Our home was far from the village center," she recalled. "If we got sick, we'd have to go to a small hospital in Yanhe town. It was over an hour's hike. If you were too sick to walk, a family member would have to carry you. If no relative could, a neighbor would."

In addition to consolidated public facilities, she's grateful for such home amenities as running water. "We washed with a bucket about

once a week in the village. An elderly relative took a while to get used to flushing toilets, she said.

Residents agree the relocation offers a better life. But it also poses Poverty-alleviation

arrange for officials from Tongren city ed villagers' to adapt to city life.

"It was initially hard to persuade they'd lived in the village for generations," said Xiao Han, a public servant in Tongren. concerns about city life. It's difficult to serve those without professional skills or education."

So, the village chiefs visited the eldest member of every household to persuade them to relocate, he

"Cremation is also a point of contention," he said. "Many villagers prefer to be buried in hillside tombs alongside their relatives. They fear cremation in cities."

Sense of community

Public servants also mitigate such issues as dialects. Relocated residents from different settlements often do not understand each other events such as dragon boat races and singing competitions to build a

plan to provide gardens for resi-said.

not feel entirely uprooted from their agrarian identities. Livelihood challenges persist

despite government efforts, said Zhu Yongxue, who has served as head of getting used to advanced schools. Yikoudao for nearly three decades. The government is considering a hard. It's a city — but a small city," he

"Industry is still developing. And to move.

people from villages are still adjust ing. There are a lot of new rules for them to follow.

Xiao Han (fourth from left), a senior cadre, chats with Deng Zaifa (fourth from right), a resident of Yikoudao

villiger, and other representatives about the local government's efforts to relocate residents to urbanized areas

Many relocated children are still Some struggle, especially in subjects

Still, Zhu and his colleagues have said. persuaded most middle-aged people

"I'm still young in the village," the 55-year-old said. "Everyone ages 20 to 40 has left.'

> brothers have relocated. "My brothers told me their new

About 340 families, mostly from the rural Yanhe Tujia autonomous county in Guizhou province, have moved to this community in downtown Tongren since last year. PHOTOS BY YANG JUN / CHINA DAILY

"They have furniture and running

Deng runs a restaurant for toursts in Yikoudao. "I thought it would make more than farming," Deng said.

He owns 0.2 hectares of "not-verv-Deng earns 10.000 to 20.000 yuan rom his restaurant during the peak eason from May to July control. Xiao said.

Tourists and profits

when a paved road reached the vil-

Siqu town center from the village on foot and another two hours to reach Yanhe county by boat along the Wujiang River, Guizhou's main water-

own and another hour and a half by highway to the county seat. Payed roads also reach Tongren, about 300

The mountains have long made agriculture difficult in Yikoudao. Only 7 percent — about 60 hectares — of the village's surface area is arable. And only 5 percent of that land can produce crops that require much water such as wheat.

As a result, the villagers mostly grew corn that they ate and also fed They would sell it outside to buy

grow, such as rice.

production of more profitable crops such as medicinal herbs and pean-

Farmers who have transferred land rights are shareholders of the companies that use their plots. The villagers will own 20 percent of the shares for the next 10 years, after which they will assume 80 percent

The companies also hire villagers

A similar plan has transformed relocated families' old houses into heritage sites that draw visitors. The government then distributes a portion of the profits from tourism among relocated villagers, according to He Zhigang, deputy Party chief of Yanhe.

The projects supplement the relocated villagers' incomes. And Tongren's government offers at least one job opportunity to every

The service center in the Xiangtanglong community where Yang lives has so far helped nearly 90 people to find jobs. It has also provided vocational instruction to about 50 residents, who undertake security, construction and domestic work. Some relatively educated residents help farmers adjust to relocation

There are three main desks in Xiangtanglong's service center: dents to apply for governm The relocation has enabled the sidies; the second helps them villagers to lease their land for the switch from rural to urban health

relatively prosperous towns by the end of this year.

insurance; and the third enrolls children in local schools.

About 340 families, mostly from Yanhe, have moved into Xiangtanglong since major construction nded last year.

The community boasts a clinic, convenience stores and a square with exercise equipment. A kin dergarten, supermarket, public square and cultural activity center

Better prospects

Yikoudao native Zhu Aiyong believes the relocation to Tongren offers a better future for his chil-The 37-year-old returned from the wealthier province of Jiangsu

From far left: Xiao Han explains the layout of Yikoudao village using a scale model installed in his office. Deng Zaiquan, a villager who plans to relocate to downtown Tongren, makes chicha, a type of Chinese his wife clean their roast fish res taurant, which the couple opened near Xiangtanglong after relocating



2,300 yuan in annual income 752,000

below the official poverty line of

villagers across China will be relocated to

when he learned of the project. His wife is pregnant with their

us to have a son," Zhu Aiyong said of his wife's pregnancy. "We don't actually want more kids because of financial strain. I

"The village socially pressured

wouldn't have tried to have anoth er child in the hope it may be a boy if I'd known we'd move to the city. He opened a roast fish restau rant near Xiangtanglong more

than a month ago after leaving to Zhu Aiyong dropped out of his first year of high school to support

His father was a migrant worker. His mother raised him and his

"School costs money. I left so I could earn money," he said. "It's a pity. I wish I could've learned more so I could have a better future. I won't let that happen

Zhu Aiyong recalled he had to quit a production line job at a Coca-Cola plant in Guangdong province because he could not use

computer," he said. "I trained for a month. But it was still too difficult

Working as a migrant expanded his worldview, he said.

'Villagers just wake up and farm. All of life is agriculture. They don't know anything else," he said Two of his daughters, ages 5 and 13, are in Tongren, but two others are still in the village in the care of

"I hope to bring them to the city," he said. "I want them to have a better education than I had. I hope they will have a better life and enjoy opportunities I've never

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It was really hard to make money farming there. We earned just enough to survive"

Yang Cuihong, 37, one of 913 downtown Tongren from the



Yang Cuihong, who relocated to downtown Tongren, sits in her new apartment under a collection of photos that show her old way of life in Yikoudao village. Above: Yang and her family carry their belongings to their new apartment

Suggestions Suggestions from residents are welcomed by the authorities, so the

tion from poorly equipped, uninhab itable villages to towns and cities has become the most effective way of raising living standards. Last year, more han 12,000 people from 2,137 families in Yanhe were relocated.

"Initially, many residents were reluctant to move because they were accustomed to life in small communities, where people know each other well. Also, uncertainty about the quality of their new living conditions was a major concern," He Zhigang, Yanhe's deputy Party chief, said.

According to He, the county government paid for residents to visit proposed new residential areas, which played a crucial role in persuading them to move. In the past year, more than 1,700 impoverished families visited their future homes in Tongren.

After seeing the new garden view apartments, which are equipped with appliances and furniture provided by the local government, the villagers were won over. By the end of October, 53,077 people from 11,486 families had signed reloca-

To better solve people's difficulties and encourage families to move to unfamiliar places, albeit with better public services and a wider range of opportunities, the Tongren overnment assigned hundreds of experienced Party officials to a poverty-alleviation team to improve

Teams of three to eight county or city officials have been sent to both the villages and the new homes of relocated residents. The officials, who sign contracts for at least twoyears, help the families under their care to solve problems related to the

relocation process. "To understand the villagers' basic needs and concerns, we must become friends and provide solutions. People will only trust us if they know we are helping them and will

Changxu, Party chief of Tongren.

In May, to encourage more Party officials to work toward the alleviation of poverty, the city government released a guideline that included a number of supporting policies, such bonuses for the best-performing officials, he added, Officials who sustain injuries in accidents related to the relocation process are provided with preferential hospital treatment and

home page of the Tongren governboard for local leaders". In August, a resident posted a

message noting that people who relocated from rural areas and are accustomed to working in the agricultural sector find it difficult to adapt to new forms of work. He suggested that the government should encourage these people to find jobs n animal husbandry or to cultivate land in the urban areas.

"The government received the feedback and is formulating a plan to meet such needs. Next year, we will provide relocated residents with land scale," said Luo Ling, a public servant from Yanhe who works in a relocation support group in Tongren's Xiang-

Luo said that in the first few weeks after relocation, some senior villagers were afraid of taking elevators and didn't know how to use the induction cookers provided, so she and her team members stayed in the community "on call" day and night.

According to He, the city govern ment is working to create more jobs and planting bases for kiwi fruits and eatable fungi are being planned in some of the relocation sites. He said different areas will have

government-aided supporting industries, such as the cultivation of tea, organic vegetables and medical herbs, along with livestock farming, based on their climate and geography.

"The biggest challenge is to help in their new communities." Luo said. "Relocation is not the be all and end friends, receive better educations and job opportunities, they will really feel

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Residents in Tongren's impoverished Songtao Miao autonomo

Helping people to help themselves

By the end of last year, 43 million impoverished people were living in China's rural areas, after 55 million people were lifted above the poverty line between 2012 and last year, the National Bureau of Statistics said.

According to the State Council Leading Group Office for Poverty Alleviation and Development. of people living in poverty fell from 99 million to 43.36 million. and more than 10 million people will be lifted out of poverty this

been lifted above the poverty line in each of the past five years From 1986 to 2000, the figure was about 6.4 million in total, while it was a combined 6.7 million from 2001 to 2010.

Among the country's 34 provincial regions, Guizhou is home to the largest poverty-stricken popu-

Although it has raised living standards for nearly 7.8 million

in rural areas were resettled in places with better infrastructure and ecology. About 752,000 residents will be relocated this year, moving from 3,603 mountain villages to rela-

ter living conditions and economic

Last year, 458,000 poor people

million people in the rural areas

poverty line of 2,300 yuan (\$345)

in annual income, according to

provincial government statistics.

Eradicating poverty in Guizhou

is a "key concern" in China's effort

ous" society by 2020, said Sun

Zhigang, Party chief of Guizhou. Guizhou has also set its average

annual economic growth target at

efforts to pull more than 3.7 million

people out of poverty by 2020. Guizhou's move is part of China's broader efforts to help 70

million people out of poverty by

2020.

opportunities.

around 10 percent as part of