

Green China, Race to the Future

A Climate Action Summary by NGOs in China

China is the world's largest greenhouse gas emitter and it is also one of the most vulnerable countries in the face of climate change threats. Chinese NGOs are working in China, as well as at international climate negotiation meetings, to raise public awareness on the issue and to push for a "Green China," thereby enabling China to "race to the future".

Mitigation Starts with 1.3 Billion Chinese People

Chinese NGOs have gained strong experience in raising public awareness, policy promotion, and community work. They have walked into neighbourhoods in cities to educate people about climate change and to set up family energy efficiency and emission cut projects. They have also walked into villages to witness the impacts of climate change and to facilitate clean energy utilization.

Chinese NGOs have involved companies to promote energy efficiency standards for refrigerators and air conditioners, so that both their products and their customers can aim for long-term emission cuts.

Their work with the Chinese public and companies is being recognized and adopted by the Chinese government to be turned into national policies and regulations. International NGOs are also pushing for more substantial changes in climate and energy policies. Greenpeace has released, based on strong investigation, a series of reports on the environmental costs of coal and wind power potentials in China. WWF is working to push for low-carbon cities in China.

Case study 1: "Keep Your AC at 26 Degrees" and "Let's Save 20% Energy"

In the summer of 2004, six NGOs in Beijing, namely the Global Village of Beijing, WWF, the Friends of Nature, the China Association for NGO Cooperation (CANGO), the Institute for Environment and Development, and Green SOS, launched a public project to keep air conditioners at 26 degrees Celsius in an effort to save energy and tackle climate change and air pollution caused by the burning of coal. More than 40 NGOs joined the project. Three years later, the State Council of China released a policy to regulate all the air conditioners in public areas to stay no lower than 26 degrees Celsius in summer and no higher than 20 degrees Celsius in winter.

In July, 2007, WWF, the Energy Foundation, the Friends of Nature, and the Global Village of Beijing, launched a new NGO network to mobilize the public in conserving 20% of energy consumption. All 40 NGO partners from 17 provinces and cities in China shared resources, platforms, and ideas to spread the importance and practices of family energy saving.

Case study 2: "Car-free Day" and "Low-Carbon Outing"

In 2005, the Global Village of Beijing, the Friends of Nature, and the China Environmental Culture Promotion Association initiated the public project for Car-Free Day. This call has been followed by many NGOs providing more solutions, including low-carbon outing tips and services.

In 2010, the Friends of Nature studied bike parking and renting facilities along Beijing's subway routes and publicized the Beijing Biking Map to guide citizens and tourists for easier bike riding and renting.

In 2007, China Association for Promoting Democracy and the Environmental Defense Fund launched the "Green Outing" project to promote public transportation, bike riding, and walking.

Case Study 3: Family Energy Plan

In 2009, the Friends of Nature launched the "low-carbon family" project, which started with energy consumption research in 200 volunteer families in Beijing. Based on research and calculation, the project team made plans tailored to save energy and to save electricity costs for these families, which can be promoted and adopted by more families around China.

Case study 4: Energy-saving Domestic Buildings

In 1998 ADRA introduced straw bale building technology to communities in Northeast China, the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, and Qinghai province. The idea is simple enough: Straw, the stems of grasses such as wheat or rice, is hollow, and when bundled into bales and incorporated into walls during construction of buildings, is an excellent thermal insulator. A straw bale building requires 50-68% less fuel to heat during winter and remains comfortable during summer. A village family can save at least RMB 3,000 yuan for each straw bale house.

"To keep air conditioner temperature at a reasonable level is an important and solid action to save energy, to protect the environment, and to benefit both the state and the people."

— Xie Zhenhua, Deputy Minister of the NDRC, June, 2007

Mitigation Actions in the Most Vulnerable Regions

China's mean temperature in the past five decades rose by 1.1 degrees Celsius, the fastest temperature rise globally. Climate disasters, such as droughts and snow storms, are hitting large areas in China, especially the mountainous and dry areas where the local population is under the poverty line.

Chinese NGOs have been actively involved in disaster relief work and in providing adaptation measures for local communities. With their first-hand investigation and assessment, the NGOs are providing the Chinese government with important suggestions on adaptation.

Case Study 1: In the Middle of Climate Disasters

More than ten provinces in southern China were hit by a snow storm in early 2008. More than 32.87 million people were victimized by this record-breaking snow storm.

Chinese NGOs went to the most affected people in the relief work. In Yunnan Province, Green Watershed provided seeds, pipes, and quilts, etc... for those living in remote areas, to help them restore their ability to farm and get access to water. In Guizhou, many NGOs worked together to provide food and winter clothes and beddings to local villagers. In Guangzhou, where migrant workers were stuck in the snow storm, volunteers organized by NGOs were circulating printouts to guide the migrant workers to shelters whilst providing additional information of aid.

In late 2009 and early 2010, many provinces in southwestern China were hit by the worst drought in the past century. By May, 2010, a quarter of the population didn't have access to drinking water. Greenpeace brought solar-powered water pumps and lighting equipment to Yunnan's farmers and schools to transfer water from distant reservoirs for farming and to provide energy for the future.

“Solar powered water pumps are good for our village because we have a lot of sunlight. They are very practical and helpful for our village.”

—Mr. Li Lian, Governor of Jianbian Village, Yunnan, April, 2010

Case Study 2: Prevention of Climate Disasters

Chifeng in Inner Mongolia is one of the places suffering from the worst desertification threats. Chifeng Desert Greening Institute and other NGOs worked in communities to build barns and plant vegetation to tackle the threats from desertification and to improve local villagers' life quality.

Green Watershed in Yunnan helped villagers in Lashihai County to set up a Water Management Group to coordinate efficient and fair irrigation water use. The group also goes into vulnerable regions to assess the urgency levels of climate impact while bringing adaptation skills to the communities.

Oxfam went to many counties in Gansu Province to plant cash crops and trees, and to help local communities to build bio-gas digesters and solar-powered cookers. The project also focused on health condition improvement on a local level.

Appendix: Detailed Actions by Chinese NGOs

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| 2004-2007 | AC at 26 Degrees Celsius |
| 2005 | Car-Free Day |
| July, 2007 | Save 20% Energy |
| 2007 | Chinese Civil Climate Action Network (CCAN) was Established |
| Aug, 2007 | China Youth CAN (CYCAN) was established and started energy research in 60 colleges |
| Dec, 2007 | First Chinese NGO representative team to COP13 in Bali |
| Dec 8 th , 2007 | CYCAN mobilized young people in over 30 provinces and cities in China to support COP 13 on Global Action Day. |
| 2007 | Released the joint announcement on Impacts of Climate Change on China and Chinese Civil Society's Action Plan |
| Early 2008 | Disaster relief work in snow storm |
| Dec, 2008 | Participated COP14 in Poland |
| Oct 24 th , 2009 | Over 300 activities and events organized, in China, by CYCAN |
| Dec, 2009 | Participated COP15 in Copenhagen and released Climate Change Position Paper by the Chinese Civil Society |
| 2010 | Released report 'How Chinese NGOs Participate in Tackling Climate Disasters' |
| 2010 | Participated in UNFCCC inter-session in Tianjin with series of activities for "Green China, Race to the Future" project |