Solving China’s Pollution Crisis from the Grassroots Up

Kristen McDonald
China Program Director
Pacific Environment

kmcdonald@pacificenvironment.org

Protecting the living environment of the Pacific Rim.
forestry, fisheries, field burning

Arctic treaty

community alliances, oil and coal

INDUSTRIAL POLLUTION

$ sustainable finance

liquefied natural gas, sustainable energy, shark fin ban

www.pacificenvironment.org
Pacific Environment’s Work in China

Vision: grassroots groups in China are leading, visible, and engaged.

Focus: industrial pollution

Tactic: grassroots capacity building and joint advocacy
- Mentorship and training
- Subgrants
- Technical support
- Joint campaigning
- Networking
Water Pollution in China – latest official statistics

• Some **60% of China’s groundwater** is now classified as polluted.

• **28% of key river basins and 39% of lakes and reservoirs** in China are polluted.

• 300 million people in China **lack access to clean water** (1/5 the population of China, almost the population of the US).

• **Nearly 44% of water pollution** comes from agriculture.
How do citizens fight pollution in China?

- Extra-judicial activity
- Rights based resistance
- Both necessary?
History of Environmental Movement in China

- **Friends of Nature**
  - Founded 1993
- Now around 500 independent environmental organizations
- From wildlife → policy issues, pollution
- From domestic → global issues

*Green Anhui volunteers introduce pollution law guide to villagers.*
Environmental Movement in China: Limitations

- Registration challenges for NGOs
- Local government suspicion
- Risks of international ties
- Care around “hot topics”
- Setbacks: scandals
- Weak social standing
How do Local Groups Work on Water Pollution in China?

The basics: *education*

• Water walks
• College student training
• Volunteer programs
• Educational materials
• Elementary schools
“Happy Water Tours”
How do Local Groups Work on Water Pollution in China?

Next steps: *gathering data and mobilizing the public*

- Inspiring public participation
- Corporate and government disclosure of information
- On-the ground monitoring
- Publication of data

Xiang River Monitoring Team, Hunan Province
Jiangsu Polluting Enterprise Database by Green Stone

- Information disclosure requests
- Community volunteers
- 100s of enterprises/interactive online map
- Connected with National Map
Volunteer network of nearly 100 has found 1000s of incidents, stopped hundreds of polluters
How do Local Groups Work on Water Pollution in China?

Next step: *targeted campaigning*
- Corporate campaigns
- Government campaigns
- Policy making
- Media campaigns
- Lawsuits

*Investigating Paper Plants in Anhui*
Apple Campaign (Green Stone, others)

- Two investigative reports
- Nanjing-based Green Stone conducted investigation of nearby supplier
- Apple met with groups
- Apple now conducting audits, weeding out worst suppliers
Air Pollution: the “Airpocalypse” and Citizen Response

• Air pollution = millions of premature deaths in China every year,

• Among China’s 74 major cities, 100% have air quality consistently worse than the recommended WHO standards for PM 2.5

2012 Air Pollution scandal:
- US embassy data release
- Government criticism, public backlash
- NGO/media monitoring
Air Pollution: the “Airpocalypse” and Citizen Response

- Severe air pollution has mobilized public
- Special government Air Pollution Control Plans
- Enforcement challenges – particularly outside major cities
Lesson Suggestions on Pollution in China

• Convey severity of pollution problems – compare with US

• Present/Read case studies on pollution: Apple, Inc., incidents/accidents, protest, campaign, policy (news, NGO reports)

• Discussion questions:
  – how does China’s pollution impact the world?
  – How do we impact pollution in China?
  – What might be done to help?
Thank you! For more information:

• Institute for Public and Environmental Affairs/ Green Choice Alliance www.ipe.org.cn
• Green Stone www.green-stone.org
• Green Hunan www.greenhunan.org.cn
• Green Anhui www.green-anhui.org
• Green Camel Bell www.gcb.ngo.cn

www.pacificenvironment.org
kmcdonald@pacificenvironment.org
+1 415-399-8850, San Francisco, CA