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UK-China Sustainable
Development Dialogue

THE UK-CHINA SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DIALOGUE (SDD)

SDD FACTSHEET

“FORGING A PARTNERSHIP FOR GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT”

Sustainable Urban Development

What are we doing?

Working with China on urban regeneration and low-income urban housing – Joint-research will draw on national experience in both countries as well as focus on four cities for detailed case studies: Sheffield and Glasgow in the UK, and Wuhan and Nanjing in China. The aim of the research is to promote sustainable urban development approaches, develop innovative policy options, encourage lesson learning, and identify transferable and adaptable models in China and the UK.

Assisting Yunnan Provincial government in effectively incorporating sustainable development considerations into their planning process, through providing technical assistance to: (i) develop a provincial spatial plan, (ii) conduct a sustainability appraisal, and (iii) maximise opportunities for wider dissemination of lessons learned to other Chinese provinces.

Did you know...?

The largest human migration in the history of mankind is occurring in China. China's urban population has grown from less than 20% of the total in 1980 to more than 40% today. Similar changes occurred over 120 years in the UK. More than 200 million people have moved to China's cities in the past 25 years. Urban population growth is expected to continue unabated, reaching 60% of the total population by 2030. In the next two decades China's cities are expected to absorb about 300 million people—equal to the current USA population—from rural areas.

Rapid urbanisation is widening the income gap between urban and rural areas. If one takes account of non-income factors such as medical care, education and unemployment insurance, the rural-urban divide in China is among the widest in the world.

The stock of urban buildings in China doubled in a mere five years, reaching almost 15 billion square metres in 2004. Construction projects in China account for 30% of the global total. In just one year, 2005, Shanghai constructed more building space than exists in all the office buildings of New York City!

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This overview presents key facts about sustainable development challenges in China and the UK, relating these to activities currently conducted under the four themes of the UK-China SDD. The four themes of the SDD are: Sustainable Consumption and Production, Natural Resources Management, Capacity Building and Governance, and Sustainable Urban Development. For more information on the SDD please refer to the accompanying Introductory Leaflet.

Sustainable Consumption and Production

What are we doing?

Improving the environmental performance of energy-using products – A pilot project initiated in 2005 at the request of the Chinese National Development and Reform Commission has successfully demonstrated how the UK's Market Transformation approach can be applied to product policy in China. Existing product policies and the impact of energy consumption in China for eight types of energy-using products was assessed, and findings and recommendations presented to policy-makers. A follow-on project is focusing on improving the environmental performance of air conditioners, electric motors, set top boxes and display technology.

Enhancing the capability for chemicals management in China – A programme of activities to enhance the capability for chemicals management in China by demonstrating UK best practice and providing capacity building support to regulators, company CEOs, senior technical directors and Environmental, Health and Safety practitioners.

Introducing innovative approaches to industrial waste reduction and reuse – A pilot project in Yunnan province is demonstrating the application of UK best-practice in industrial resource efficiency and waste management. The focus is on promoting industrial symbiosis (i.e. the exchange and recycling of wastes between companies), and providing business support to improve the environmental performance of small and medium enterprises. To date the project has identified 267,000 tonnes of potential waste diversion that can be used as input materials to suitably matched Yunnan companies.

Did you know...?

Electronic waste is the fastest growing source of municipal waste on Earth. Around 40% of the heavy metals found in landfills come from e-waste. The average lifespan of a mobile phone in the UK is just 18 months: Britons are buying new phones at a rate of 1,700 every hour! By 2010 there will be 178 million new computer users in China.

China is the 3rd largest producer and the fastest growing consumer of chemical products in the world. In 2005 nearly half of China's 7,500 chemical companies posed 'severe environmental risks' and 81% of these were located either on bodies of water or near densely populated areas.

The UK in 2005 pledged to be a performance-leader in sustainable procurement by 2009. In 2006, China introduced a 'Green List' for government procurement, as a first step towards implementing a nationwide 'green procurement' policy.





Natural Resources Management

What are we doing?

Working together to address domestic and global forestry challenges recognising China's position as the essential hub in global forest product chains. A Working Group on Forestry under the UK-China SDD was established in 2007 to promote substantive collaboration on forestry issues, covering in particular: afforestation, plantation management, forest research and standards; forest certification, and illegal logging. Collaboration to date has included exchanges on the Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration, which China has now signed.

The SDD is piloting the development and deployment of **practical tools to help farmers improve their livelihoods by reducing their use of costly and polluting inorganic nitrogen fertiliser**. Field research shows that rates applied to wheat and maize could often be cut by at least 30-50% without causing any loss of crop yield. It is estimated that greenhouse gas emissions savings of at least 25% could be made through the application of these tools, while farm profits could be increased by 20%.

The China-UK Sustainable Agriculture Innovation Network (SAIN), to be launched in the autumn of 2008, will establish a framework for long-term collaboration on agricultural innovation, with a focus on translating policy and science into practical action. Partners will include Chinese Ministries of Agriculture and of Science and Technology, the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), and the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

Collaborating on fisheries management and tackling illegal fishing – Chinese authorities recognise the need for good knowledge to manage fisheries and have indicated serious intent to regulate its domestic fleets operating within national and international waters. A programme of collaboration is now being developed in these areas. Agreed activities include research and academic exchanges, provincial pilot projects and capacity building in management systems. These would address fisheries as an international public good.

Did you know...?

Forestry – China is among the world's most forest deficient countries, with only one sixth of the world average of forest per person. Domestic consumption of wood is modest too: the average person in the USA uses 17 times and average Japanese six times more wood than a person in China. On the other hand, China is the world's largest importer of tropical timber, sourcing wood from over 80 countries and accounting for 60% of African timber exported. 70% of this imported timber is converted into processed wood products and then re-exported to Europe, Japan and the USA.

Fisheries – China accounted for about a third of the reported fish landings and production over the last decade, making it the world's largest fish producing nation in the world. China's processing capacity increased by 50% between 1996 and 2000. Over 20m people in China are employed in fisheries and aquaculture.

Agriculture – China's grain harvests declined by 9% between 1998 and 2005 due to a combination of falling water tables, the conversion of agricultural land to non-farm uses, and the loss of farm labour in rapidly industrializing provinces. Chinese staple crops—rice, wheat and maize—may fall by as much as 37% by the end of the century, under current climate change projections.

Agricultural emissions – The amount of inorganic nitrogen fertiliser overused in China is equivalent to the entire amount the USA applies in its agriculture. The manufacture and application of nitrogen fertilizers in China causes annual greenhouse gas emissions of about 450 Mt CO₂ equivalent. These emissions represent over 20% of total CO₂ emissions from China.



Capacity Building and Governance for Sustainable Development

What are we doing?

Training for high-level Chinese decision-makers in sustainable development concepts and tools – With support from the SDD, the Global Environment Institute is working with trainers in the Central Communist Party School (CCPS) to develop a new curriculum on environmentally sustainable development. This is the first formal partnership between the Party School and a Non-Governmental Organisation. We are also supporting the Advanced Leadership Development Programme (ALDP), which provides intensive training for Chinese Vice Ministers and Vice Governors in sustainable development. This programme is run by the United Nations Development Programme and delivered by Oxford and Cambridge Universities.

Building awareness and promoting cross-cultural understanding of sustainable development challenges, through support to a bilingual discussion website (www.chinadialogue.net) to engage UK and Chinese experts and citizens in debating the sustainable development issues of the day.

Working with Chinese civil society to improve environmental governance, by supporting a Chatham House project to help environmental NGOs develop a common strategy to improve their impact on environmental governance in China. The strategy was developed through a series of themed workshops and study visits.

Sustainable Development Indicator Project – This project aims to develop methods and practical guidelines for establishing sustainable development indicator systems as well as building capacity for operating these systems in two pilot locations, namely: (i) Panzhihua city in southern Sichuan Province, and; (ii) Danjiangkou city in northwest Hubei Province.

Did you know...?

By the end of 2005, there were **2,768 Environmental NGOs registered in China**, from almost none just a decade before. Recent laws, including the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Law of 2002 explicitly include language encouraging public participation in environmental decision-making. The mass media has also been playing an increasingly important role in exposing polluting offenders and informing the public about pollution issues.

The number of mass protests in China increased tenfold over a decade, reaching 87,000 in 2005 and involving 3.7 million people. Of these 51,000 cases were pollution-related.

The Chinese public is getting more aware and concerned about environmental quality. A recent survey conducted by the China Youth Daily shows that more than four in five Chinese are "concerned" or "deeply worried" about environmental pollution. In Beijing pollution-related complaints have been increasing steadily, and account for 50% of all complaints today.

The State Environmental Protection Administration has recently been upgraded to a Ministry for Environmental Protection. It has a staff of around 300 (compared to about 17,000 in the US Environmental Protection Agency).