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Civil Society Program for China

公民社会项目



Canadian International
Development Agency

Agence canadienne de
développement international

Canada

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发展

Projects within CIDA's Civil Society Program address the following issues:

- **Promoting civil society development** is the main purpose of the Civil Society Program (CSP) and is accomplished by supporting Chinese non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in their efforts to contribute to policy research and make their own recommendations. These efforts touch upon areas such as migrant labour rights, gender equality, and the rights of the disabled. In this way, the CSP enables Chinese NGOs to contribute to social change.
- **Protecting the rights of citizens and disadvantaged groups** is another important area of support of the CSP. The program contributes to research and local activities that help promote and protect the rights of citizens, including migrants, children, women, the elderly, and the disabled.
- **Enhancing gender equality** is one of the key concerns of the CSP. Several projects address the protection of women's rights and promotion of equality between women and men.
- **Increasing public participation** has helped to mobilize public participation by NGOs and citizens in their communities.

Introduction

China's drive toward economic reform and modernization has created new opportunities for citizen participation. One of the most significant ways this can be seen is through the emergence of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) over the past two decades.



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In 1998, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) launched the Program to Support Governance and Civil Society Initiatives in China. This provided international support for non-governmental initiatives that meant to improve democratic practices, social services, public education, legal reform and respect

for human rights in China. Given the success of this initiative in promoting the development of civil society organizations and a strong positive response from the NGO community, the program was followed in 2001 with the Civil Society Program (CSP)—a similar initiative with common objectives.

The CSP provides support to Chinese civil society organizations to strengthen the role and the participation of citizens, communities and NGOs in the development of public policy and decision making. The program also promotes greater acceptance of citizen and NGO participation in public discourse within government circles and communities. The program is administered by the Canadian Embassy in Beijing. As of March 2008, the project had supported the creation of 35 new NGOs and helped strengthen 160 others.

Among the CSP's many successful projects has been the support it provided to a local NGO to help organize and facilitate the first direct, competitive community-level elections in Beijing. While the significance of local elections in China should not be overstated, this modest initiative highlights the potential for local organizations to help advance local democracy.

合作

Promoting Civil Society Development Capacity Building for CIDA Small Projects Partners

From 2006 to 2007, the Beijing Huizeren Human Service Centre conducted the Capacity Building for CIDA Small Projects Partners program, funded and supported by CIDA. The centre brought together many small NGOs, supported by CIDA, to share their experience and skills and to provide them with an opportunity to discuss cooperation and exchange ideas. During a capacity-building workshop held in Beijing in March 2006, Zhu Qiang, the co-founder of a migrant worker's rights NGO, was invited to share his story.

When he was 17 years old, Zhu Qiang, who had moved to Guangdong to work, became permanently handicapped as a result of an industrial accident. At the time, he was not aware of either occupational health and safety standards or his rights.

In China, approximately 15,000 people die due to industrial accidents and at least 30,000 people experience work-related injuries each year. In 2004, 80 percent of all work-related deaths involved migrant workers. They are particularly at risk for occupation-related injury, illness and death as they leave poor rural areas with few skills and little or no training in safe work practices. In the aftermath of a work-related accident, these workers often also lack the resources to seek compensation and receive appropriate services.

In 2003—a few years after his accident—Zhu Qiang first learned about labour rights when he participated as an intern in a CSP project in Xian. Through the internship, he not only met several lawyers and law students, he also encountered many injured workers. After his return to Guangdong, he took it upon himself to visit hospitals and provide legal support to injured workers. Since then, he and two partners have reached more than 300 workers, sharing their knowledge of labour rights and directing the workers to appropriate legal resources.



Some of these workers have taken legal action and succeeded; two of them have received compensation of up to 120,000 yuan. According to the China Labour Bulletin, the average monthly income of migrant workers in 2004 was 780 yuan.

In 2005, Zhu Qiang participated once more in a CSP project. This time he was the organizer of legal training for migrant workers in the Guangdong city of Shenzhen. By the end of 2005, Zhu Qiang and his two partners had formed the Shenzhen Zhiqiang Migrant Labour Service Centre, and worked for the organization full time. Their activities expanded from legal aid to legal education, organizing activities for migrant workers such as a tea house where migrant workers could share their experiences and build support networks.

Creating the NGO was not easy since the registration process for NGOs in China is fraught with obstacles. In order to register at a local Civil Affairs Department as an NGO, applicant organizations have to be sponsored by a government institution. Some organizations choose to register as a company through a local Industrial and Commerce Bureau. However, this procedure requires substantial application fees. Lacking the support of a government body, the Shenzhen Zhiqiang Migrant Labour Service Centre had to register as a company and gather sufficient funds to pay these fees. Through fundraising and support from the CSP, the members of the organization eventually succeeded. However, gathering the funds necessary to pursue their work is a constant challenge.

The Capacity Building for CIDA Small Projects Partners program helped Zhu Qiang and his partners gain knowledge of how to manage an NGO, raise funds and train volunteers. At the end of a three-day workshop, Zhu Qiang remarked, "It has been difficult for the past few years to run an NGO. I have wanted to give up many times, but this meeting has made me decide to go on since I have discovered I have so many counterparts and I know that I have your support. I feel that I saw the light of hope." With CIDA's support, Zhu Qiang's organization is now better prepared to continue its efforts to promote labour rights in the years to come.



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Protecting the Rights of Citizens and Disadvantaged Groups

Rights Protection Centre for Rural Women under Migrant Marriages

In China, land distribution, property rights, and profits are collectively managed at the village level through the village committee, which is selected through a local electoral process. Some decisions made by these local bodies have discriminatory effects on women. In many villages in Guangdong Province, the sharing of collective wealth is restricted to local villagers. This excludes women who have married into the village. In some villages, women who are born outside of the village also lose the right to vote at the village committee. According to some estimates, there are about 100,000 such women in the Pearl River delta.

The Women and Gender Study Centre at Sun Yet-sen University was established in 2000. In 2004, the centre expanded its research and legal services to rural women with the formation of the Rights Protection Centre for Rural Women under Migrant Marriages. At this centre, there are 20 female staff members, mainly students and teachers from the university, who provide legal aid services to rural women. The centre's focus is to raise the awareness of the discrimination faced by rural women who have married outside of their home village.



At one of the seminars organized by the centre, it was noted that there are two elements hampering the protection of these women's rights: no clear channel or appeal procedure, and traditional rigid village regulations. The centre encourages married migrant women and their supporters to try to solve their problems lawfully through mechanisms put in place by the government.

The centre, on behalf of more than 800 married migrant women, submitted a proposal to the National People's Congress (NPC), stating that certain laws in Guangdong Province violated the constitution. Through this proposal, the centre has been encouraging the NPC to take steps to crack down on village regulations that are opposed to the constitution and to protect women's rights through the enactment of new laws in this area.

The centre has tirelessly lobbied various levels of government to protect the rights of these women. It has organized seminars and meetings with local governments and made presentations to the National Women's Federation, Supreme Court of Guangdong Province, Provincial People's Congress of Guangdong, Law Association of Guangdong Province, and Supervision Department of Guangdong Province.

On June 7, 2007, as a result of the centre's advocacy, the Provincial People's Congress of Guangdong passed the Detailed Implementation Regulation on China Women's Rights Protection Law, which clearly stipulates that rural women's legal rights and interests should not be violated in the event of marriage, divorce or loss of spouse. With this new piece of legislation, rural women now have legal grounds to protect their rights.



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Enhancing Gender Equality Policy Advocacy for Ethnic Minority Girls

Children from ethnic minorities face discrimination in gaining access to education in China. Despite inclusive government policies, education levels for ethnic minorities are below the national average. The preference to educate boys creates additional discrimination for ethnic minority girls. A non-profit high school in Guangxi, the Huaguang Girls Senior School (HGSS), wanted to lobby the local government to provide support for the education of ethnic minority girls. Through training and forums, the project—the first in China to tackle the issue of equal access to education for ethnic minority girls—raised the issue with government policy makers. Policy recommendations were submitted to the National People’s Congress, Provincial People’s Congress and the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference requesting that a new policy be drafted that would allow ethnic minority girls to receive free education in regional senior high schools in Guangxi as a stepping-stone toward promoting equal opportunities.

As of 2006, 27 percent of ethnic villages in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region had never produced a college student. In 61 percent of ethnic villages, there has never been a female college student. This is well below the national average. High school enrolment in minority regions in Guangxi is also low. According to research done by the HGSS, in one minority area in Guangxi (Nanning), only 28 percent of middle school graduates enrolled in high school in 2005, compared with 89 percent across China.

Civil society is finding innovative ways to increase equal access to education for ethnic minority girls. The HGSS was founded in 2000, and is the only senior school for girls in China run as a non-profit institution. Students come from throughout Guangxi Province, with approximately 70 percent attending for free or paying only one quarter of the cost of tuition. The school also offers a multifaceted service program to support the education, health, and advancement of women and girls. One of its projects, the Golden Phoenix Project, mobilizes support to help finance the high

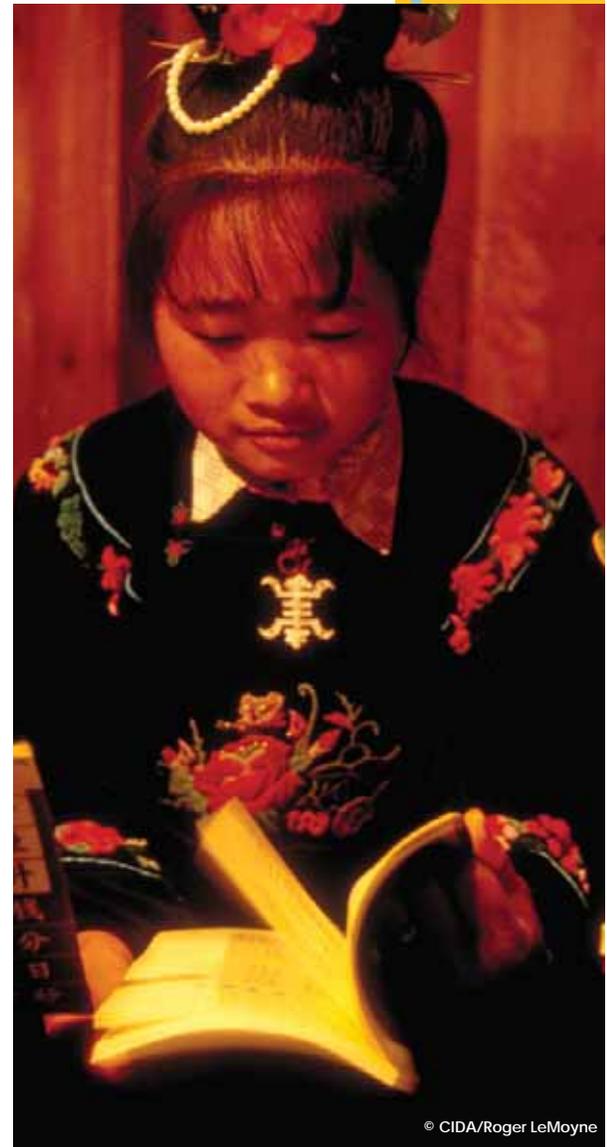
school education of girls from poor families, most of whom are from ethnic minorities.

Principal Liu Guanghua started the school with her own money. Each year, 60 students graduate, and at present, there are more than 300 girls in the school. Its operational budget is covered by public donations, with the main donors being Hong Kong Sowers Action, the Hong Kong Policemen's Association and some small charity organizations in Hong Kong and Macau.

In 2007, with the help of the CSP, the HGSS research team studied the educational situation for girls from ethnic minority backgrounds in various counties in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. They found that while the educational status of ethnic minority girls had improved greatly over time, they still did not have the same level of access to education as ethnic minority boys or the general population. And even though they had completed the state-funded first nine years of compulsory education, the majority of ethnic minority girls did not have the financial means to enrol in high school.

This research led to the drafting of a policy recommendation, which attracted the interest of the media and local government. Local journalists published reports on the project in newspapers and on television, radio, and the Internet. Qin Wenjing, a representative of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and a member of an ethnic minority, brought the policy recommendation to the national CPPCC meeting. "We should provide policy support for poor ethnic minority girls," said Ms. Qin. "They should have the opportunity to receive an equal education. As a female ethnic minority scholar, I particularly understand the importance of education in changing the destinies of these girls."

As a result of this initiative, educational counterparts offered their support, and now other schools in Guangxi are undertaking similar programs. In the fall of 2007, Guangxi Hope High School received funds to subsidize 200 ethnic minority girls to attend school, while Liu Zhou Girls' Experimental High School obtained funds to support 150 girls. The Guangxi Province Government has not yet implemented a policy to promote the education of ethnic minority girls, but, through the HGSS recommendation, policy makers are beginning to take notice of this important means of addressing discrimination.



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progress

进步

Mo Shaolan, a Yao minority girl who graduated from HGSS and is now a college student, said, "With increased knowledge, we hope to change our future so we can contribute to society. This CIDA-supported project for poor ethnic minority girls demonstrates the urgency of this issue. The development of ethnic minority girls needs the support of society. That is why I hope more organizations will be like CIDA and offer their help."



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Increasing Public Participation

Protecting the Han River

Through the public environmental protection education of the residents along both sides of the Hanjiang (Han) River, this project supported research on the potential impact of the planned South-to-North Water Diversion Project on the Han River, and drew public and official attention to the importance of protecting local water resources. Through this initiative, the local population began to participate actively in drafting a policy recommendation calling for action with regard to the diversion of the Han River.

China's river basins are in crisis. They suffer from water shortages and severe pollution, and their aquatic ecosystems are threatened by dams and other construction projects. China's unsustainable management of its river basins not only endangers the health of aquatic ecosystems, but also threatens the country's socio-economic development and environmental protection.

With the implementation of the planned South-to-North Water Diversion Project, the water in the Han River will be diverted to flow north from the Danjiangkou Reservoir, which is located in the northwest of Xiangfan. The water originally flowed to the city of Xiangfan, which will now experience tremendous water shortages. In addition, the ecological balance of the region will be severely affected by this diversion.

However, there is now increasing openness in China to the role played by civil society in raising environmental awareness and contributing to environmental protection. The Hubei Xiangfan Environmental Protection Association, with the cooperation and support of CIDA's CSP, is working diligently to raise awareness of the negative impact of the proposed South-to-North Water Diversion Project and to protect the water resources of the Han River by involving the public in policy dialogue and community action. The association, also called Green River Han, is a non-profit NGO that was established in September 2002. It is the first NGO in Hubei Province and the first environmental volunteer group to be concerned with the Han River.



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参与

"The patient guidance provided by CIDA officers has enhanced our capacity and ability to lay out a solid foundation for sound future development," said Yun Jianli, President of the association.

The association's efforts have paid off. Now, more and more people in Xiangfan have come to realize that environmental protection is everyone's responsibility.

Many people have started to save water and recycle garbage. Ye Benchun, an 80-year-old member of the association, introduces the "green life" concept to people around him every day. Grade school students voluntarily put trash bags by their desks, and many of them have even asked their parents and grandparents to save more water, reduce the use of air conditioners and washing machines, and increase the use of phosphorus-free detergents.

"We will continue our efforts to set up water-quality inspection teams in primary and secondary schools, and mobilize more students to pay attention to water resources," said Ms. Yun.

"At the same time, we will encourage the participation of more village heads, ordinary villagers, and primary school teachers and students. We should also establish inspection teams for the purpose of public participation."

As part of the campaign to raise awareness, more than 4,000 copies of the *Hanjiang Environment Protection Handbook* and 5,000 rural photos, as well as 30 slide shows, have been printed and circulated to urban and rural citizens in all walks of life. The association has also distributed information on compact discs to journalists.

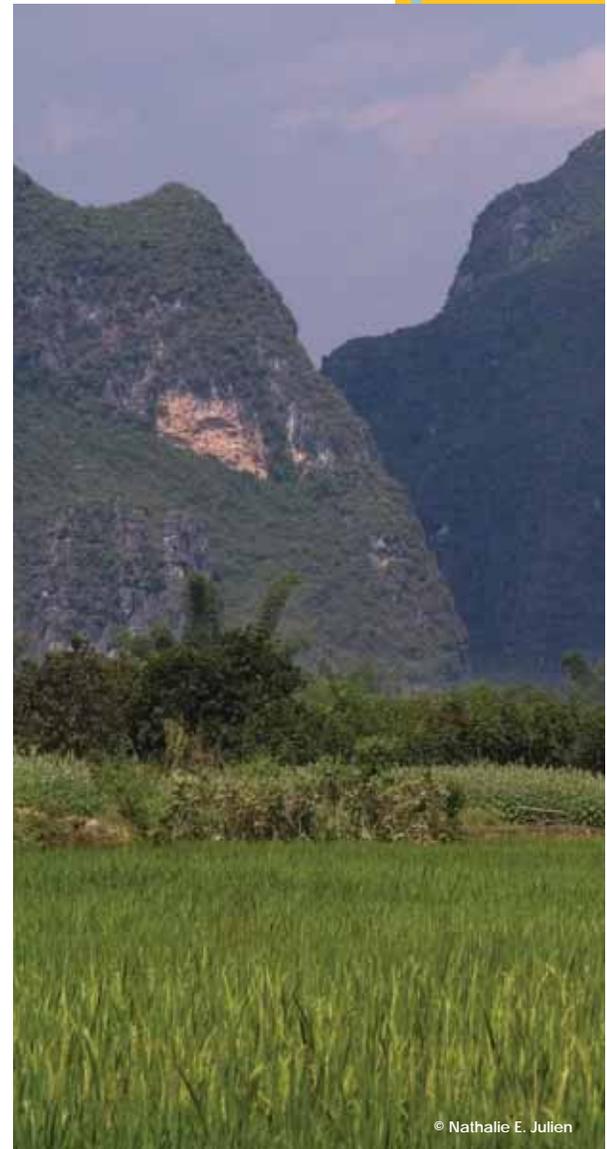
Over the past year, the association has held close to 100 lectures and workshops, reaching an audience of approximately 30,000 local people, and has formed three water quality monitoring groups made up entirely of primary and secondary school students. Because the association's initiatives are well recognized by the local environmental protection agency, environmental officials are encouraged to learn from the association, and the group is invited by schools and government agencies to give presentations on environmental protection.

Experienced staff members have written a *Survey and Policy Recommendation Report* on the South-to-North Water Diversion Project's impact on the Hanjiang watershed. Two hundred copies

of this report have been delivered to the State Department, the Ministry of Water Resources, the Ministry of Environmental Protection, the Central Party, and the Provincial Project Office, as well as to a score of media and environmental NGOs.

“What we have achieved is just the beginning. We still have a long way to go,” said Ms. Yun. “But we must carry on with environmental protection since it takes the effort of generations to effectively protect our environment and our mother river.”

Hu Shengguo, Deputy Director of the Xiangfan Irrigation Works Bureau, said, “With Canada’s support, this project is now really starting to hit the mark and is getting the attention of the central government.”



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