

Harmony Foundation in China October 2006

China faces the greatest environmental challenge in human history. Its remarkable development over the past 20 years has brought unprecedented economic and social benefits but also tremendous pollution, widespread environmental degradation, dramatic depletion of water and other natural resources and rising health and social problems.

China's challenges are the world's challenges too. With twenty percent of the world's population driving history's fastest growing economy either the international community learns to work together or faces the debilitating consequences of crippling declines of critical resources and human health caused by unsustainable development, widespread pollution and climate change.

It is estimated that over 500 million people in China alone regularly drink contaminated water, contributing to above average rates of cancer, miscarriage and other serious health issues. Sixteen of the world's 20 most polluted cities are in China, with estimates that more than 250,000 people die prematurely each year from air pollution. It is estimated that over 20 million people will be forced to leave their homes due to unsafe water or degraded land within 20 years.

It is no coincidence that, over the past ten years, the environmental movement in China has grown steadily. While business has readily taken advantage of the thriving economy, international NGO's and governments are providing help to address the enormous social and environmental challenges facing China and the world.

The Environmental Management College of China: Our New Partner

One major question is how to strengthen the public participation and local leadership needed to achieve development that is socially and environmentally sustainable.

With this goal in mind, Harmony Foundation was invited by the **Environmental Management College of China (EMCC)** to work together to adapt our Community Leadership Training Program for use in China.



Entrance to EMCC in Quinhauandao

We met in June at the UN's World Urban Forum III in Vancouver. Thanks to an introduction by the **Earth Council Alliance (ECA)**, of which Harmony Foundation is the Canadian member, and support from the Forum's Commissioner General, we began our collaboration.

From October 15th through 29th, Harmony visited China to work with EMCC, meet other potential allies and join ECA and its China member, **The Oriental Environmental Institute (OEI)**, at their 2nd annual conference in China. Other conference participants included **Peking** and **Tsinghua Universities** and the **China Environmental Protection Agency (CEPA)**. Together we planned how to improve local capacity to create sustainable community development (SCD) initiatives.

Our visit began on October 15 in Quinhauandao, EMCC's coastal-city home on the Yellow Sea. Between the World Urban Forum and our arrival, EMCC staff translated Harmony Foundation's publications, *Green Cities: a Guide for Sustainable Community Development* and the *Community Action Workshop Manual*. These

tools are the basis for developing local initiatives for SCD. During our visit we worked together to achieve a cultural adaptation suitable for China.

Celebrating EMCC's 25th Anniversary



Over 6,000 attended the celebration

On October 20th EMCC celebrated its 25th anniversary. Harmony Foundation and ECA were honoured participants. In the morning, an audience of over 6,000 people listened to speakers including Maurice Strong and Tommy Short from ECA, Prof. Qu Geping (a leader of China's environmental movement), Michael Bloomfield (Harmony's Executive Director) and the President of the College, Prof. Wang Lixin.

In his remarks, Bloomfield told the students, faculty, officials and dignitaries who attended, "if we truly want a sustainable future we need to create education programs which give hope to our young people, skills to our professionals and tools to our citizens. Solving the complex environmental, social, and economic problems confronting us depends upon a well-informed population, one concerned about the world and with the skills and commitment to work together for positive change. Our collaboration with EMCC is a practical step in this direction."

As part of the events, ECA announced an ECA-OEI-Harmony fund for student scholarships for sustainable development education at EMCC. On behalf of Harmony's Directors, Bloomfield presented a gift of *Cardinal and Sumac*, a print of original artwork by the Foundation's Chair, Robert Bateman. Bloomfield also was named Honorary Professor at EMCC.

During an international conference on sustainable development that afternoon, Michael Bloomfield

made a presentation entitled *The Power and Hope of Sustainable Community Development*. He used community success stories from around the world to exemplify the strength of development that provides economic benefits while protecting the environment, public health and social and cultural assets. He demonstrated the vital importance of citizen participation and community leadership that tap into the rich local pool of knowledge and talent: concerned residents, academics, business-people, professionals and community groups.

The next day, Bloomfield, EMCC President Wang and Project Coordinator Yanyan Xue attended a meeting with local officials, school and community group leaders hosted by Prof. Liu Jianjun, Director of the local Environmental Protection Bureau. The very positive meeting provided excellent opportunities for pilot projects using the Chinese version of the community leadership training and the *Community Action Workshop Manual*.

The 2nd Annual ECA-OEI Conference



The following week began with the **2nd Annual Earth Council Alliance-Oriental Environmental Institute Conference in China** entitled *Sustainable Community Development in China: Current Activities and Positive Actions for the Future*. For two days, conference leaders in China and their colleagues from ECA developed ideas to build the citizen participation and local leadership needed to achieve sustainable community development.

ELIAS Conference in Peking

Later that week, Bloomfield and Project Coordinator Xue attended another international conference hosted by the **University of Peking**. The **ELIAS Conference** brought together innovators from around the world that shared project experiences and best practices and explored opportunities for collaboration on education programs leading to practical local action. Participating organizations included Shell Clean Coal (China), Nanjing University, Unilever,

British Petroleum, MIT, World Wildlife Fund, Ministry of Trade (Indonesia), Nissan (Japan), Nike, Tsinghua University, Tallberg Foundation (Sweden), Institute for Agriculture and Trade (US), Swedish Government Council for Sustainable Development, The Economist, LEAD Brazil, BASF (Germany), Ambio (Sweden) and the Egyptian Ministry of Water.

The trip continued to Chengde, a small city four hours by train from Beijing, for meetings with the local Environmental Protection Bureau. It provided another opportunity to learn more about China's environmental programs and challenges from front-line professionals and to discuss potential pilot communities for leadership training.

Year One Plans

Upon our return to Beijing, further meetings were held with EMCC and others to advance plans for our project. Year one will see many exciting activities:

- 1) Publication of the Chinese versions of Harmony's *Community Action Workshop Manual* and *Green Cities: Guide for Sustainable Community Development* as well as a supplement to *Green Cities* with sustainable community success stories from China.
- 2) Pilot community action workshop(s) and local projects.
- 3) A sustainable community development presentation for Mayors and other leaders in China.
- 4) Work to develop a program to train trainers to who can, in turn, train local leaders to lead community workshops.
- 5) Presentations to the Qinhuangdao 2008 Olympic Committee and the Committee for the 4th Urban Forum in Nanjing in 2008.
- 6) Consultations and planning toward establishment of a national community leadership training program in China.

While China's challenges are great it is encouraging that the government recently announced a landmark policy to build a harmonious and sustainable society and that organizations from across China and around the world are working together to help make that a reality.



First Pass under Heaven – Great Wall

Harmony Foundation (1985) is a registered charitable organization recognized internationally for its leadership in multi-sector cooperation and innovative training programs and educational materials for educators, youth, schools, workplaces and communities. Harmony's innovative programs have been recognized through a variety of honours including the United Nations Environment Programme's Global 500 Award (1992), a Commonwealth Foundation Fellowship (1994), and the Ethics in Action Award (1998).



Harmony Foundation is the Earth Council Alliance representative for Canada

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