

**Strengthening the Cooperation between Chinese Environmental NGOs and the
Media**

December 2006

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Project: Civil Society and Environmental Governance in China

Sponsor: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)

Organisation implementing the project: Chatham House

Sub-Project: Strengthening the Cooperation between Chinese Environmental NGOs
and the Media

Organisation implementing the Sub-Project: Green Earth Volunteers

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Acknowledgements

Foreword

This report is an output of the *Strengthening the Cooperation between Chinese Environmental NGOs and the Media* sub-project, which forms part of the *Civil Society and Environmental Governance in China* Project. It aims to provide information and suggestions on environmental NGO-Media cooperation by studying the problems, needs, and achievements in existing cooperation, in order to enhance Chinese civil society's ability to influence environmental governance.

The research for the report combined case studies, individual interviews, informal discussions and on-the-spot investigations. It also used information from various books, online articles, and the research of Green Earth Volunteers in the past 10 years.

We mainly interviewed environmental NGOs which had entered a stable development stage (i.e., organizations with clear missions and development strategies) and which had both experience and needs in cooperating with the media. We interviewed media organizations which had had experience working with NGOs. In order to gain a full picture, we also interviewed some NGOs with limited experience in cooperation with the media or were unwilling to cooperate with the media. In addition to an organization's stage of development, the following factors were also considered in selecting the NGOs for investigation: (i) different types of organizations, both domestic and international environmental NGOs, both registered and non-registered NGOs; (ii) NGOs of different sizes; (iii) NGOs doing different types of environmental work; (iv) both national and regional NGOs. In total, we interviewed 30 NGOs and 14 media organisations.

The workshop on *Strengthening the Cooperation between Chinese Environmental NGOs and the Media* held between 15 and 17 Nov. 2006 in Beijing were attended by nearly 60 participants from Environmental NGOs and media organizations from 16 provinces. This report has incorporated some of the discussions at the workshop.

We find that, in general, Chinese environmental NGOs have a great need for cooperation with the media once they reach a stable development stage, but many blind spots and difficulties remain in actual cooperation. We have discussed some useful strategies and methods of working with the media and included an action plan for strengthening the cooperation between environmental NGOs and the media in the report.

1. Cooperation between Chinese Environmental NGOs and the Media

1.1 The Importance of the Media to the Global Environmental Protection Movement and Environmental NGOs

The initial impetus of the global environmental protection movement came from public participation. The media played an important part in public education and mobilization. The mass media are a significant part of the public sphere. The public see the world and voice their opinions through the mass media. The environmental protection movement has been described as a typical phenomenon of the information age. There would have been no environmental protection movement in the West without a mass media.

The media are constantly looking for exciting events, such as legends, scandals, disasters, and warning signs of latent problems. There is ample supply of such events in the environmental field.

Greenpeace, a world famous environmental NGO, was established in Vancouver, Canada in 1971. Its special non-violent work style and outstanding media work have turned environmental protection into a heroic battle and a dramatic sphere.

Around the world, almost all NGOs give media interviews and provide environmental information to the media in order to draw public attention to environmental problems, obtain media support from the public and influence government policy.

With the development of Internet and globalisation, environmental protection movement has, in a sense, become an Internet-based movement. This further highlights the importance of the media.

1.2 Media's Role in the Development of Chinese Environmental NGOs

Environmental protection started in the 1960s and 70s in China when the global environmental protection movement boomed. Unlike in the West, environmental protection in China was initially launched by the government. The environmental problems which attracted attention at that time were pollution caused by village and township enterprises and the destruction of the agricultural ecological environment, but these problems did not attract wide public attention or participation.

China's environmental NGOs flourished after mid-1990s. Friends of Nature (FON) was set up on March 31st, 1994, marking the birth of the first popular environmental NGO in China. In 1996, Global Village of Beijing (GVB) and Green Earth Volunteers were established. In the past 10 years, they devoted themselves to providing public education on environmental protection or influencing government decision-making. They have also made efforts to raise citizens' awareness of the right to information.

Environmental NGOs developed as a result of the reform and opening up programme. In the process of economic reform, the state monopoly of almost all resources was replaced by a new system in which resource ownership became more diversified. The Chinese society has also become more pluralistic. When the state stopped controlling all the resources, NGOs were able to obtain human, material and organisational resources for their development.

The media also went through market-oriented reforms. Government funding was reduced or even withdrawn completely, so the media must try to win audiences in addition to recognising the government's concerns.

No longer do all media organizations operate as the party's "mouthpiece". Some commercial newspapers are not subordinate units of Party or government departments and have gradually gained more space to reflect the pluralistic views and demands of society. Some television and radio stations have broadcast programmes which are jointly produced with NGOs. The Internet has also become a platform for disseminating and exchanging information and forming public opinion. NGOs are not disadvantaged when it comes to using this new media.

The active participation of the media has given a strong push to the development of environmental protection and the growth of NGOs and has raised Chinese citizens' environmental awareness.

Case I: Media action gave the campaign to protect Tibetan antelopes a new boost

Some members of Friends of Nature (FON) had travelled to Kekexili to gather information about Tibetan antelopes since 1996. In 1998, FON, the Beijing offices of several international NGOs, such as World Wide Fund for Nature and the International Fund for Animal Welfare, and a few Hong Kong organisations held several meetings to discuss how to support the local initiative to save Tibetan antelopes. However, no feasible action plan was developed owing to the lack of government support.

After that, FON changed its strategy. In September 1998, FON and the *China Forestry* newspaper invited Zhaba Duojie, head of the Wild Yak Team (a local anti-poaching NGO formed by volunteers), to Beijing and arranged for him to meet with the State Environmental Protection Agency and the State Forestry Bureau (SFB). FON also arranged meetings for Zhaba Duojie with the media, and coordinated with some university-based environmental groups to organise several lectures for Zhaba Duojie in Peking University, Beijing Forestry University, and Beijing Light Industry College. In October 1998, Liang Congjie, the Director of FON, met British Prime Minister Tony Blair who was visiting China, and presented him with an open letter calling on the UK government to stop the illegal trade of

Tibetan antelope pashm in the UK and to support China's protection of Tibetan antelopes. Blair replied to the letter the following day to express his sympathy and support. Zhaba Duoqie's visit to Beijing and the reply of Blair aroused the interest of both domestic and international media. Many people and organizations began to take part in the protection of Tibetan antelopes. In February 1999, FON submitted a special report on the protection of Tibetan antelopes to the SFB. These actions led to the launch of the "Kekexili No. 1 Action" by the SFB in April 1999 to crack down on poaching. However, because of the conflict of interests between different local government departments, this initiative did not last long.

In August 1999, 17 journalists who had carried out investigations in Kekexili jointly submitted a letter to the vice-premier in charge of environmental protection to ask the government to protect Tibetan antelopes. In early 2000, the environmental organisation Green Beijing set up the "Web Alliance to Protect Tibetan Antelopes" in association with many commercial web sites. By the end of 2000, over 150 web sites had joined this web alliance.

In the case above, the government and media were initially absent from the campaign. After FON began to cooperate with the media, it was able to draw greater attention to the issue. Beginning with the reply from the British Prime Minister, a second wave of media coverage occurred, which led to the involvement of relevant government ministries. A third wave of media attention followed the submission of the letter by 17 journalists. Finally, if the Internet is also considered a form of mass media, then the launch of the web alliance by Green Beijing constituted yet another new wave of media involvement. The participation of the media helped to revive the campaign, after the initial efforts did not bear fruit.

Chinese environmental NGOs reached a new stage in 2003-2005. Before, most environmental groups only did the so-called "three old things": i.e., tree-planting, bird-watching and garbage-collection. Since 2003, in a series of environmental protection events, including the controversy over the development of hydroelectric projects, the Yuanmingyuan Park seepage prevention project, and the move of Beijing Zoo, environmental NGOs came into the view of the public, entered the realm of public decision-making, and improved their social mobilisation skills. In these events, the media were not only supporters and allies of NGOs but also participated directly in the campaigns. The relationship between the media and NGOs became even closer.

In the history of the development of Chinese NGOs, the "Protecting Nujiang River" campaign is an important event.

Nujiang River originates from the south foot of Tanggula Mountain. After running 2,020 km through Tibet and Yunnan, it enters Burma and the borders of Burma and Thailand, where it is called the Salween River. Nujiang River, Lantsang River, and Jinsha River flow parallel through Lijiang in northwest Yunnan Province, Diqin Tibetan Autonomous

Prefecture, and Nujiang Lisu Autonomous Prefecture. The area is therefore called the District of Three Parallel Rivers.

In July 2003, the Three Parallel Rivers was designated a World Heritage site.

Almost at the same time, the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) approved the plan to construct 13 dams on Nujiang River near the Three Parallel Rivers World Heritage site.

A number of environmental NGOs, including the Yunnan-based Green Watershed, Green Earth Volunteers, and Friends of Nature, together with some experts argued that the construction of dams should be carried out in accordance with the Environmental Impact Assessment Law. They also asked that public hearings on the planned dams be organised and efforts be made to reduce the negative environmental and social impact of the dams. In March 2004, Premier Wen Jiabao wrote an instruction on the Nujiang dam construction plan submitted by the NDRC: "Careful research and scientific decision-making are needed in such large-scale hydroelectric projects which have attracted a high degree of public attention and are environmentally controversial." As a result, the construction of the dams was put on hold.

Case II: The media's role in the campaigns against dams

In June 2003, while visiting Mugecuo and Renzonghai, two lakes on the Gongga Mountain in Sichuan Province, two journalists from China National Radio and China Youth Daily learned that dams were going to be constructed on these two lakes which were considered sacred by local Tibetans. The preparatory work had already started near Renzonghai. Trees had been cut and roads were being built, even though the planned dam's environmental impact assessment had not been approved. Some local people were very worried and sent a letter to Premier Wen Jiabao. After seeing the letter, Premier Wen instructed relevant government agencies to carry out an investigation immediately.

The journalists reported on the story, which attracted much public attention. Afterwards local people gained more information about the project, which increased opposition to it. Eventually, the plan to build dams was abandoned and the local government announced that they would focus on developing a green economy instead.

Also in June 2003, a reservoir was being planned near Dujiang Weir, a World Heritage site. The media showed great interest in it. Within two months, over 180 domestic and international media units had covered the story. In the end, the province government vetoed the project.

Debates over the dams on the Nujiang River have attracted media attention since

the news was first released in July 2003. Some people have charged that the media are simply against the dams.

So exactly what role have the media played? Based on the analysis of the cases above, we can conclude that:

- ◆ the media helped to bring out different voices. In the past, only one voice—"Great"—was heard concerning large-scale infrastructure projects. Now, other voices are also being heard;
- ◆ the debate was not simply about "for" or "against" the dams. Many other issues, such as the public's right to information, were also raised;
- ◆ new concepts have been popularised;
- ◆ the media have called for public participation in decision-making.

The media were not just questioning certain projects. Through covering individual projects they were calling for more democratic and scientific decision-making. The media stressed in their reports that carrying out environmental impact assessments for large-scale projects according to the law was essential. They stressed that public participation in decision-making should no longer be ignored. For example, they asked for public hearings to be held in which stakeholders could take part. Public participation depends on the right to information, the right to hear both sides of the story. In the campaigns against dams, the media told the public both sides of the story. They passed on various kinds of information, not just one kind of information.

1.3 Reasons Why the Media are More Important to Environmental NGOs in China than in Other Countries

The media are more important to environmental NGOs in China than in other countries. This is because of China's specific situation.

In China, the transition to a democratic political system and market economy is not complete. The rule of law and good governance have not been fully established. As a result, environmental NGOs are overly dependent on the media to do their work. According to Ma Jun, Director of the Institute of the Public and the Environment, environmental problems in other countries can be solved through litigation. In the U.S., 70-80% of environmental problems are solved through the legal system. In China, problems are only solved if the voice of the people is loud enough that the leaders hear it. NGOs therefore need to mobilise the public and depend on the public to help raise their voices. NGOs do not have their own mass communication channels, but can use the official media if they have a solid and convincing case.

Liang Xiaoyan is the director of Beijing Brooks Education Centre and a senior media worker. She is also one of the four founders of Friends of Nature. She has mentioned two reasons why the relationship between environmental NGOs and the media in

China is a very special one:

First, Chinese environmental NGOs have few social mobilisation tools at their disposal. Cooperating with the media therefore becomes the main or even the only effective method. In a country with well-developed public participation mechanisms, an organisation has multiple means of social mobilisation. An NGO can use advocacy, opposition, boycott, etc. when it launches a project. These methods, however, are difficult to apply in China. Therefore cooperating with the media to magnify the voices of NGOs is often the only feasible methods.

Second, the resolution of many problems in China is through the administrative system. When NGOs expose environmental problems or social problems caused by environmental problems, their objective is to find solutions to the problems. In China, problem resolution is highly dependent on the administrative system. **Even the media have administrative ranks.** In order to solve a problem, one can ask the media at a higher administrative level to pass the information to the government at the higher level. When the government at a higher level intervenes, the problem becomes easier to solve. Although a lot of environmental problems are local ones, many local media which are controlled by the local governments cannot take part in discussing them. Under these circumstances, national-level media can play an important part. They can expose the problems. In these cases the media not only perform the function of influencing public opinion, they also perform administrative functions. Media with higher administrative ranks can constrain and influence the exercise of administrative power at lower levels. That is another reason why NGOs work so closely with the media.

In addition to the two reasons mentioned by Liang Xiaoyan, there are two more factors which account for the special relationship between Chinese environmental NGOs and the media.

Third, the media in China can offer NGOs special channels for solving environmental problems. Xiong Zhihong, a journalist with the newspaper *China Environmental News*, has spoken about the special communication channels provided by the media. In China, lots of stories cannot be reported in the media, but many media organisations produce "internal reports" which are sent to relevant government agencies. Such reports can also help solve problems. For example, although certain stories cannot be printed, they can be sent as internal reports to the State Environmental Protection Agency or the State Council's General Office, and they may intervene to solve the problems. Many journalists have extensive networks of contacts, and their contacts may be able to help solve certain problems.

Fourth, the media in China can meet many different requirements of environmental NGOs. The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) is one of the earliest international NGOs to carry out projects in China. It has partnerships with various

businesses, local governments, and central government agencies. As WWF's media officer says, cooperation with the media can also help WWF enhance its relationship with its partners. The partners need the media to publicise the good work they have done. So NGOs' good relationship with the media can encourage their partners to give more support to their projects. The media can also help NGOs spread professional knowledge. The work of the Centre for Legal Assistance to Pollution Victims (CLAPV) involves specialised knowledge. Working with the media helps CLAPV to publicise its projects and raise its profile, but more importantly, it helps CLAPV to educate the public about environmental laws and raise their consciousness of their legal rights. Furthermore, the media can also help CLAPV monitor the activities of companies that pollute the environment as well as the government's implementation of environmental laws.

1.4 The Importance of Environmental NGOs to the Media

For media, contact and cooperation with environmental NGOs is also important.

First, the media often needs to present a "people's view", and environmental NGOs can represent the views of the common people. This is a powerful motive for cooperation between the two. The media should always take a neutral position. For example, they can report the position of the government and companies, but they also need to show the perspective of the ordinary people when covering a social issue, therefore they need to communicate with NGOs. Chinese media workers often perform the role of public intellectual, speaking out on public affairs. The role of public intellectuals should not be played by journalists alone, but in China many intellectuals, such as writers, are playing the role of public intellectual less and less. Therefore more and more journalists have no choice but to perform the function of public intellectuals in addition to working as journalists.

Liu Jianqiang, a senior journalist with *Southern Weekly*, points out that currently journalists work in a highly competitive environment. If a journalist lacks resources, their position is insecure, so journalists need stable sources of information. Competition between different media organisations is also intense as they work in an increasingly marketised environment. Both journalists and media organisations need good information. Where does information on environmental issues come from? A strong information network is essential, which should include contacts in such places as Environmental Protection Bureaus. However, only the most powerful media organisations such as the Xinhua News Agency have strong information networks and ready access to all sorts of environmental information. Journalists in other media organisations are not so lucky. Therefore they also need environmental NGOs to supply them with information.

Since the media may face information blockade by government agencies, they have difficulty finding reliable independent sources. In the past, they always turned to victims

of environmental problems, but victims often overstated the damages they suffered, making it impossible for the media to uncover the truth. When neither the government nor victims are reliable information sources, the media have to find a neutral third party. NGOs are considered neutral, so the media need to interview NGOs frequently.

Su Jinping, an anchorman and journalist with Radio Peking, says that journalists are always looking for tips which can lead to exclusive reports. Every journalist wants to be first to expose an environmental problem, so they need NGOs to tip them off about environmental incidents.

Secondly, media workers can gain new social contacts and professional knowledge by working with environmental NGO. Chen Hongwei of China Economic Times said by attending the activities organised by the Environmental Journalist Salon and the Energy Journalist Salon he had met other journalists and experts. Zhang Kejia, a journalist with China Youth Daily, said that sometimes NGOs and the media did similar things, so NGOs could help the media do these things, e.g., organising workshops. In another example, during their cooperation with the media on the GM food issue, Greenpeace furnished the media with specialised knowledge and information. Most journalists lack specialised environmental knowledge, so they rely on NGOs for such knowledge.

1.5 Characteristics of the Current Relationship between Chinese Environmental NGOs and the Media

Currently, relationships between Chinese environmental NGOs and the media have three characters:

- **Relying on the help of the media is a key working method of environmental NGOs.**

As described above, the special relationship between Chinese Environmental NGOs and the media has made media an indispensable factor in environmental NGOs' growth and development. Many environmental NGOs have actively sought media's assistance. A survey conducted by the All-China Environment Federation in 2005 found that using the media to expand their influence and mobilise public support was a common strategy of Chinese environmental NGOs. 79.4% of environmental NGOs had been mentioned in media reports.

- **The NGO-ization of media workers**

In the West, the media is supposed to be objective and neutral. Media workers are observers not participators in news stories. In China, however, journalists are often deeply involved with environmental NGOs. This has been described as the "NGO-isation of Chinese Media", or more precisely, the NGO-isation of media workers. The earliest members of Friends of Nature included about 100 journalists. Wang Yongchen, the leader of Green Earth Volunteers (GEV), is a journalist at China

National Radio. Zhang Kejia, the director of Green Island, is a journalist with China Youth Daily. They are typical examples of environmental NGO staff who have dual status--both media workers and NGO activists. Wang Yongchen is often asked the question "Are you a journalist or an environmental NGO person?" She thinks that by international standards the close relationship between some media workers and NGOs is abnormal, but it's a realistic arrangement in China.

- **NGOs have become platforms for journalists to network and bases for training environmental journalists**

The Environmental Journalist Salon was established in 2000 by journalists/environmental NGO activists. Experts are invited to give talks every month. Information on many environmental incidents in recent years was first released here. Many NGOs also announce their new projects or initiatives at this forum.

A volunteer of GEV who is also a journalist learned that a convention centre would be constructed on a wetland in Beidaihe and mentioned the news at the Salon. Afterwards the news was reported extensively in the press. Leaders of Hebei Province where the wetland is located saw the reports. Eventually the wetland was preserved. Information on the "Protect the Beijing Zoo" campaign was spread through the Salon. The Water Pollution Map of China compiled by the Institute of the Public and the Environment in 2006 was also first launched at the Salon. Journalists showed great interest in the Map. It was covered extensively in the media. As a result, the director of the institute, Ma Jun, was voted a "Green China person of the year 2006".

The Green Journalist Salon is also a training centre for journalists. Luo Hui from Science Daily said: "After I joined the journalist salon, the subjects of many of my environmental reports came from there. Lectures by experts are very informative. We obtained lots of new information and knowledge from the salon."

Another journalist salon, the Sustainable Energy Forum for Journalists, is hosted by Global Village of Beijing with the assistance of the Energy Foundation. Its goal is to increase journalists' awareness and understanding of sustainable energy issues and to train journalists who can write in-depth reports on energy issues, so as to promote the formulation and implementation of rational national energy policies and influence the public to choose sustainable energy consumption lifestyles. The forum has 200 participants and holds eight meetings every year. It has also set up an annual "Star Sustainable Energy Journalist" award. The award ceremony is held every summer. The winner receives 100,000 *yuan*. The award is intended to encourage more and more journalists to pay attention to sustainable energy issues and to write better reports. The Forum also holds irregular "teahouse gatherings" for journalists and sends out the latest news on energy and environmental protection issues to journalists on its mailing list.

1.6 The Different Needs of Environmental NGOs for Cooperation with the Media

Different environmental NGOs need different things from the media. The main factors determining their needs include the type of work an NGO does, its stage of development, and the personality of an NGO's leaders and their media skills.

The type of work an environmental NGO does. WWF and Greenpeace are both world famous environmental NGOs. WWF entered China in the 1980s, while Greenpeace has developed its work in mainland China since 2001. Greenpeace works more closely with the media. This is because Greenpeace's main activity is organising campaigns while WWF focuses on education. Campaigners need to mobilise maximum attention and participation from the public within a short space of time, therefore intensive media work is vital. WWF, on the other hand, focuses not on particular environmental events but on basic scientific research to find practical solutions to problems and gradually change public attitude. Because of their different emphases, the two NGOs also have different media strategies.

The Beijing Raptor Rescue Centre (BRRC) provides treatment, care and rehabilitation training for injured, sick, lost, or confiscated raptors in Beijing and its surrounding areas. It also returns healed birds back to the wild. Because it only operates in Beijing, it works mostly with local media in Beijing.

NGO's stage of development. In its early days of existence, GEV needed the help of the media to publicize its work, e.g., if it organised a tree planting trip or a bird watching event, it asked friends in the media to help spread the news and get more people to participate. But GEV has developed beyond this phase and does not need the media to report such events anymore. Now they want the media to cover public policy debates.

The personality of an NGO's leaders is also a significant factor. Green Web was set up by a group of web surfers who got to know each other through the Internet. It took part in the planning of some environmental campaigns which attracted much media attention, but the General Co-ordinator Shen Xu never gave any media interviews. She has three reasons for this: First, Green Web is not a properly registered organisation, so too much exposure in the media is not good. Second, she prefers to keep a low profile. She thinks the organization is still not mature and a lot of its work is still experimental, so problems may occur. It is irresponsible to offer advice on things they are unsure about in the media. Third, although Green Web was an important force in some campaigns, it worked well from behind the scenes, so there was no need to come onto the stage. Although Green Web keeps a low profile in traditional media, it has rich experience in using the new media of Internet. Shen Xu thinks that Internet has advantages over traditional media such as faster response and greater interaction. Therefore, it gives NGOs another channel to spread their ideas.

Even though NGOs have different attitudes towards the media, most of them have their

own media contact lists and networks. Even organisations like Grassroots Community, which claims that it does not need the media, has a designated spokesperson, which shows that the importance of media to NGOs cannot be underestimated.

2. Significance of NGO-media Cooperation and Media's Role

2.1 Media as the Amplifier of NGO Voices: Promoting Public Participation

Most Chinese NGOs have limited resources. The voice of the media is louder than the voice of NGOs. Journalists have plenty of social capital and resources and can easily mobilise nation-wide attention to an event.

The Yuanmingyuan Park leakage prevention project is a typical example. To save water and prevent water from seeping out from the bottom of its lakes, the Park put a lining on the bottom of the lakes. Environmentalists charged that this damaged the ecological system of the lakes and asked that the lining be removed. On April 13th, 2005, the State Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) organised a public hearing on the leakage prevention project. 120 representatives from all walks of life, including environmental NGOs, and over 30 media crowded into the meeting hall. Over 100 interested citizens could only listen from outside the meeting hall.

This hearing was covered extensively in the media and was called by some “the beginning of a mass environmental protection movement.” After the anti-leakage project of Yuanmingyuan was reported in the media, large-scale public participation ensued. The public hearing was followed by a series of other events, such as the debate on “environmental extremism”, “pseudo-environmentalists”, etc. Whether in terms of the number of people who participated in the discussions and debates, the scope of the discussions, or their impact, the Yuanmingyuan case was unprecedented. Considering its impact on public awareness of environmental protection, it was really a milestone. Zhao Yongxin, the People's Daily journalist who first wrote about the Yuanmingyuan leakage prevention project, was voted the 2005 Annual Green China Person of the Year.

Case III: The Relationship between Mass Media and the Construction of Public Sphere---- Using the Yuanmingyuan Event as an Example

Based mostly on reports on the Yuanmingyuan event in The Beijing News from March 29th to September 10th, 2005 but also consulting reports by the Xinhua News Agency, People's Daily, and China Youth Daily, etc., we can conclude that the media followed two strategies which allowed them to serve as a platform for public discussion and information flow.

(1) Using news reports and commentaries to complement each other

This strategy enabled the media both to provide timely information to the public and to express their own opinions in order to encourage and deepen public discussions. In terms of news reports, numerous media, including Xinhua News Agency, CCTV and China Youth Daily, all reported the event following the first report in the People's Daily. In terms of commentaries, Xinhua News Agency published several sharply worded commentaries which were posted on most news websites and were widely read. The Beijing News published 36 commentaries in its opinions and comments page, 18 of which were editorials. These commentaries questioned the management system of Yuanmingyuan, warned that public hearings should not be just occasions to hear problems, discussed if procedures to demand accountability should be launched, called for support to SEPA, and asked what kind of expert had the right to speak on the Yuanmingyuan project. These commentaries captured public attention. News reports and commentaries reinforced each other, made both of them more effective.

(2) Give balanced coverage to views from all sides

In modern "participatory" societies, the balance of news reports is crucial to ensure that people can hear different opinions. It also ensures that the media serve as a "public forum" where the exchange of opinions from all levels of the society is possible. The media's coverage of the Yuanmingyuan event was largely balanced. This is demonstrated in the following ways. Firstly, the balance between "majority" and "minority" views. For example, most experts and ordinary people had a negative view of the anti-leakage lining on the bottom of the lakes. This was also the media's position. But the media did not neglect the minority opinion of some experts and the Yuanmingyuan Park's management. Secondly, the balance between government opinion and the opinion of some experts who disagreed with the government. After the anti-Leakage project's environmental impact assessment report came out which concluded that anti-leakage measures were necessary, relevant government agencies agreed with the report. At this time the media continued to report the views of a few experts who challenged the report. Thirdly, the balance between scientific jargon and expressions of sentiment. While the media printed the technical terms used by experts, they also gave space to emotional expressions of the public, such as "the dilapidated Yuanmingyuan has a different kind of beauty".

After the media's intervention using the two strategies described above, the government fulfilled its promise that the whole process of dealing with the anti-leakage project would be transparent and open to public participation. In the Yuanmingyuan event, the media facilitated the communication between different groups. They proved that timely and constructive interactions among citizens, media and the governments is possible. Such interactions will help to promote more transparent and open public policy making and implementation.

2.2 Messenger Role

Certain NGO opinions or messages cannot be transmitted directly but can be sent out through the media. For example, the Green Volunteer League of Chongqing called the attention of central government leaders to the destruction of forests in western Sichuan through CCTV in 1998. The leaders intervened and Sichuan Province issued an urgent directive prohibiting the felling of all natural forests in the province.

Sometimes, the government can send out messages through NGOs, who in turn send out messages through the media. In 1997, Friends of Nature (FON) proposed that the Shougang steelmaking factories should be moved to Qianghuangdao, but the Beijing municipal government did not want to adopt the suggestion. They tried to defend Shougang by saying that it had done a lot to protect the environment. Some parts of the government, however, supported the FON proposal, so China Environmental News, an official newspaper under SEPA, put FON's comments on the front page with the headline "Friends of Nature Discusses Shougang."

The media can also help NGOs send messages to their "opponents". Many "opponents" of Greenpeace are large multinational companies. Before sitting down at the negotiating table with them, Greenpeace often sends out messages through media reports. Powerful media reports often succeed in forcing companies to talk to Greenpeace to discuss the issues and make certain commitments.

2.3 Establishing the Legitimacy of Environmental NGOs

NGOs' legitimacy includes both legal legitimacy (i.e., they are officially registered) and social legitimacy. Because of the restrictive registration requirements, many NGOs are not registered (i.e., with ambiguous legal status) but are tolerated. Positive media coverage can help to establish NGOs' social legitimacy, which can compensate for their lack of legal legitimacy to a certain extent.

2.4 Securing More Resources for NGOs (Both Financial and Other Resources)

76.1% of environmental NGOs in China have no fixed income. In the past year, 81.5% of environmental NGOs raised less than RMB 50,000 yuan. 22.5% of environmental NGOs did not raise any money. Over 60% of environmental NGOs do not have their own offices owing to lack of funding. 96% of NGOs' full-time staff receive salaries which are lower than the average salary in their localities, and 43.9% of their full-time staff hardly receive any pay. 72.5% of environmental NGOs are unable to provide unemployment insurance, pension scheme, or health insurance for their staff.

Most of Chinese grassroots NGOs' funding comes from foreign foundations or donations from the private sector, so they need the media's help to establish a good reputation. Once they have gained prestige through media coverage, they can obtain

more resources, including funding, talents, and useful social networks/contacts.

As an Anhui-based NGO said, “we realise that our long-term growth cannot depend on funding from foreign foundations. We need to tap into local resources. We hope to make ourselves known to businesses and the public through media coverage, so they will support us, including giving us financial support.”

2.5 Supervising NGOs

The media is a double-edged sword to NGOs. It can magnify the voice of NGOs, as well as their shortcomings. The story last year which involved some environmental NGO activists being called “pseudo-environmentalist” because they lacked basic knowledge about the issues they campaigned on is a good example. Therefore the media also has a function in supervising NGOs’ behaviour.

3. Challenges to the Cooperation between Environmental NGOs and the Media

Problems affecting the cooperation between environmental NGOs and the media can be both external--which are impossible for NGOs to solve--and internal, which have to do with the capacity of NGOs themselves.

3.1 External Factors

3.1.1 Conflicts between the Public-interest Nature of NGOs and the Dual Character of the Media

- **Media under pressure to make profit.** Chinese media increasingly face market competition. A few newspapers, magazines, and television programmes have established a band name for themselves, but most are struggling to survive. There are over 8,000 magazines in China now. Competition is fierce. Consequently, some media outlets are only concerned with making money and sell space to anybody willing to pay. Public-interest news is not profitable and does not bring more income to journalists. As a result, lots of journalists and media are disinterested in environmental issues.
- **Media under political pressure.** Organisations at the centre of environmental scandals are usually companies or local governments. Local governments depend on companies for their tax revenues, so they often suppress unfavourable news about them or companies in areas under their jurisdiction. A typical example is Greenpeace’s exposure of the papermaking company APP’s illegal logging activities in Yunnan Province in 2004. Since the news was not good for Yunnan government, the media inside and outside the province approached the story in entirely different ways. Later, the government in a city in Yunnan where APP operation was based also ordered local media not to

report any Greenpeace-related news.

APP also spent a lot of PR money in response. As mentioned above, some media depend on sponsorship by companies or advertisement sales to survive. After APP offered lots of money, some publications changed their tune to publish stories praising the good work APP has done in China instead.

Case IV: Whether the government is open and willing to accept different opinions determines the extent to which media can report NGO-related news.

To prevent water leakage from the Kunyu canal, Beijing Municipal Government decided to refurbish the 35-year-old, 102-kilometre long channel by lining its bottom with concrete. Environmentalists, however, thought it broke national regulations since the project did not go through environmental impact assessment. Furthermore, the old ecological system in the canal, which supported various wild animals, would be destroyed. Besides, the water leaked from the canal had helped to maintain groundwater level. Therefore the refurbishment project would cause serious ecological problems.

The project was partially completed in autumn 2000. To prevent its continuation environmental NGOs in Beijing organised a hearing/dialogue with the Beijing government. A vice mayor attended the dialogue. The dialogue between the vice mayor and three NGOs took place in March 2001. It lasted nearly four hours. Unfortunately, the vice Mayor warned journalists attending the meeting not to write any report. Afterwards, all major Beijing newspapers received an order not to report the dialogue. The few key organizers and participants in the dialogue were also accused of besieging the vice mayor and complaints were made to their work units.

3.1.2 NGOs as Victims of “Implicit Rules”

For NGOs, it is impossible to answer the question “what kind of media coverage is appropriate” by applying scientific methods. Mostly, it is down to NGOs’ grasp of China’s implicit rules. In this respect, NGOs have both successful and unsuccessful experiences.

The protection of Tibetan antelopes is an important event in the history of Chinese environmental NGOs. The story of the Wild Yak Team was spread to every corner of China because of large numbers of media reports, the comments of Chinese leaders, the response from the British Prime Minister, and the participation of many NGOs, but in the end the Wild Yak Team was still disbanded.

Liang Congjie summarised an important lesson from the case: “we forgot an implicit rule when we supported the Wild Yak Team--praise the father before you praise a child.

If NGOs had not supported the Wild Yak Team, it might still be alive today. We supported it and it flourished for a while, but was disbanded in the end.” After realising the importance of this implicit rule, Liang Congjie made a last-ditch effort. He wrote to the Qinghai Provincial Political Consultative Conference to thank the Qinghai government for nurturing such a brave environmental protection volunteer group as the Wild Yak Team. “But it was too late”, he said.

The ability to balance different interests, especially through the media, is a vital skill for NGOs. Green Hanjiang is an NGO that is quite skilled in this regard.

The media played an important part in raising Green Hanjiang's profile in its early days. At a meeting of the local Political Consultative Conference, Green Hanjiang's director Yun Jianli challenged the Vice Mayor in charge of environmental protection face to face. She asked: “Why has our city failed to meet the environmental protection targets? When can the “One Control and Three Standards” goal be realised?...” The Vice Mayor was greatly embarrassed. The incident caused a sensation in the city and Green Hanjiang became well-known. Later, however, although Green Hanjiang never has any difficulty making the media cover its activities, since many of its core volunteers are journalists, Yun Jianli has made sure that the organisation's work is not mentioned too frequently in the local media, to avoid making the local government feel that its work has been overshadowed. Because Green Hanjiang has been able to strike a balance between publicising its own work and leaving enough media space to the local government, it has enjoyed a relatively favourable work environment

3.1.3 Potential Conflicts with Government Policies, Laws, or Regulations

(1) There are some sensitive topics in China, such as religion, ethnicity and national defence etc., which the media usually avoid. But some NGOs' work involves such issues, especially in ethnic minority regions. For example, Conservation International has a project to protect "divine mountains and sacred water bodies" which involves religious issues.

(2) The financing of environmental NGOs. Many Chinese NGOs receive funding from abroad and are often interviewed by foreign media. A lot of foreign media like to link everything to human rights and China's political system. NGOs have difficulty dealing with that.

3.1.4 The Unbalanced Nature of Media Coverage of NGO Activities

The imbalance in media coverage of NGO activities has several manifestations. For example, the media pay far more attention to environmental NGOs than other types of NGOs. This has to do with the fact that environmental NGOs tend to be more active than other NGOs. But environmental problems are often very complex. “NGOs in environmental governance” are not limited to environmental NGOs. Other types of

NGO can also be an important force in good environmental governance, so the media should be encouraged to pay more attention to the contributions other types of NGO can make to environmental protection.

Another example of unbalanced media coverage is the disproportionate attention to environmental NGOs in a few places, especially Beijing, and a few NGO leaders, to the neglect of NGOs and their directors in other places.

3.1.5 Communication Problems between Environmental NGOs and the Media, such as Information Distortion and Misunderstanding

This is the problem which many NGOs worry about most and which has made them cautious about working with the media. The problem is particularly acute when it comes to communicating abstract concepts and notions to the media.

The Beijing Raptor Rescue Centre administers euthanasia to animals which cannot be cured and are in pain. Its staff must be extremely careful when communicating with the media, otherwise some of the Centre's practices and notions will be misunderstood.

In June 2006, Greenpeace's release of its Report on Pesticide Residues in Vegetables caused a big stir. Greenpeace was accused of deliberately causing a panic. Many reports compared the figure of pesticide residues with the figure of pesticide residues that exceed safety standards. The difference between 85% and 14% was obviously a big one. In fact, to avoid confusion Greenpeace referred to both concepts in its press release and distinguished between the two in a background document. But media reports did not explain the two figures, which lead to the attack on Greenpeace for engaging in sensationalism.

3.1.6 Conflicts between the Long-term Significance and Relevance of Environmental Topics and the Media's Perpetual Search for Novel Subjects and New Angles

The media are always searching for new subjects. Even very important subjects will be neglected by the media after a while because the public may be bored. Most media focuses on current affairs and news, and pay attention to extraordinary events. Therefore they are uninterested in NGOs' daily work. Even when so-called "news events" happen, they often have nothing to do with NGOs' regular work. On the other hand, much of NGOs' work is of long-term rather than short-term significance. Environmental education, for instance, cannot generate the kind of news which attracts the media.

3.2 Internal Factors

3.2.1 Superficiality and Seeking Media Attention for Its Own Sake, Causing

Resentment from the Media

Hu Xiaojun of the Lanzhou Environmental Research Centre thinks the most important thing for NGOs is to do solid work. NGOs should first ask themselves “what have we done?”, “Is our work effective?”, “Does our organisation have the trust of the public?” and so on. Only after NGOs have answered these questions clearly can they start to implement successful media strategies. If an NGO's work or projects cannot stand public scrutiny, then no amount of media promotion can help it. It will only be regarded as “spin”. Yu Aiqun from CCTV says: “Some NGO projects are only intended for media's consumption. Without media coverage the projects are meaningless. Sometimes journalists can just tell that the events to which they are invited are only aimed at publicising the NGOs themselves. All these things cause resentment from the media.”

3.2.2 NGOs Lacking Proactive Media Strategies

Some organisations lack mature media strategies. Their only contact with the media consists of sending out a press release when they launch a new project or activity. Some NGOs never initiate contact with the media. They only give interviews when the media come to them. Liu Feng, a senior journalist with Xinjiang Daily, found in her interviews that some NGOs had no systematic information about their own organisation which they could give to journalists, and some NGO staff who received journalists could not give a comprehensive description of their projects and activities.

3.2.3 NGOs' Day-to-day Work Lacks Newsworthiness

The work of environmental NGOs covers many areas, from national development strategies to issues such as the behaviour of dog owners in local communities, however, from the media's point of view, a lot of it is not newsworthy.

4. Suggestions for Improving the Cooperation between Environmental NGOs and the Media

4.1 Environmental NGOs Need to Be Genuinely Concerned about Livelihood Issues

In the opinion of Liu Jianqiang, a Southern Weekly journalist, Chinese NGOs' reputation is no longer as good as before. Many people now believe that NGOs inevitably have their own private interests. The public will not believe in NGOs if they do not pay attention to problems directly affecting the lives of ordinary people and only engage in big talk about environmental issues. For example, NGOs paid lots of attention to the Yuanmingyuan Park anti-seepage project, but if they gave the same attention to water pollution problems, e.g., if there is an NGO which works to clean up the polluted rivers in Beijing, then the media will be interested, as will the public. In turn, the NGO's reputation will also be enhanced. At the moment, however, NGOs are often

immersed in their own projects and are unable to speak out on major events happening around them. NGOs must find a strategy to have a voice on matters directly affecting public interest. Take the pollution of the Songhua River as an example, no NGO represented public opinion at the time as the media did. NGOs should always remember that they work for public interest. Sometimes, NGOs have selfish motives. They try to publicise themselves through the media, which is probably not a good thing.

4.2 Do Your Homework--Be Professional, Authoritative and Producing Solid Work

NGOs wishing to attract media attention must have something unique and must know their issues well. The media will not show much interest in pure publicity events organised by NGOs. NGOs should also try to become authoritative in their own fields in order to attract media attention.

Ma Jun's NGO was established recently, but has gained a good reputation with the media because it is professional. Journalists can rely on him whenever they have questions about water pollution. Since its establishment in 1999, the Centre for Legal Assistance to Pollution Victims (CLAPV) has received many praises from national and international media for its professionalism. CLAPV's directors Prof. Wang Canfa and Prof. Xu Kezhu are frequently interviewed by the media as experts. Sometimes journalists find it difficult to turn things NGOs care about into news stories. They need to consult other experts and ask those experts to explain the issues to ordinary people. Therefore, if NGOs can become experts on the issues they work on, then they will not need to worry about attracting the media.

4.3 Identifying Appropriate Media Angles

The media consider two things when selecting topics: newsworthiness and the interest to audiences. Environmental issues are often hot topics, so media organisations concerned to gain a bigger market share are interested in these issues.

Journalists we interviewed suggest that environmental NGOs explore the following angles when dealing with the media:

(1) Environmental issues can be discussed freely as long as they are not linked to religious, ethnic, or sensitive political issues. Nowadays, in addition to the old concept that media should serve as the Party's mouthpiece, there is a new concept that the media should defend people's right to information and participation. They should help more ordinary people to get their voices heard. Various media organisations, especially radio stations, are willing to provide a platform for ordinary people to air their views. This is an angle which NGOs can explore.

(2) Environmental issues can be linked to health. Many media programmes now focus

on health, on the conditions of our bodies, our diets, on buying houses and interior design, etc. NGOs can try to establish a linkage between these issues and the environment.

(3) Traditional Chinese culture is also a big subject now. Traditional culture emphasises such principles as harmony between man and nature, the need to respect nature, the importance of *Feng Shui*, etc. Many people subscribe to these ideas. If NGOs can make good use of these ideas, they can draw more attention to environmental protection.

(4) More and more people are taking holidays and travelling these days. Concepts such as ecotourism can be explored to promote environmental education.

(5) Environmental issues can be linked to poverty alleviation, thereby attracting more media attention. Many NGOs have organised activities to help people in places affected by environmental degradation. For instance, GEV has donated books to schools in Nujiang.

4.4 Understanding the Different Requirements of Different Types of Media

Different media need or emphasise different types of information. The needs of national media are different from those of local media. Market-oriented media and media directly controlled by state organs also have different needs. Therefore NGOs cannot expect one standard press release to open all doors for them.

Wang Yongchen mentioned one example. Southern Weekly has both news and geography pages. Once the editor of the news page said no to an article on the pollution of Wei River, but the editor of the geography page thought the article was excellent and used it. Therefore, NGOs not only need to know the different needs of different types of media, they also need to know the specific requirement and style of individual media programmes or sections.

Some senior journalists have emphasised that NGOs need to develop the skills to be able to help journalists choose the newsworthy bits from all the information they receive. Many journalists who carry out research and interviews out in the field are young and inexperienced. NGOs must be able to give them exactly what they need to write a good story, as they may not be able to sift out the newsworthy information from all the raw data themselves. Sometimes, the media value information which comes directly from local people more highly than information provided by NGOs, so NGOs need to give the media what they are most interested in. For example, the NGO Green Hanjiang organised primary school students to write letters to the provincial governor about the pollution problem. This kind of story is more attractive to the media than NGOs writing letters themselves. It's a hackneyed technique but very effective.

4.5 Be Clear about Your Own Needs

NGOs need to be clear about what they want to achieve by working with the media. For example, are you trying to publicise your project or your organisation itself? Many NGOs implement more than one project, but they may not take every project to the media. It depends on the goal of the project. For projects which NGOs wish to publicise, timing is also very important.

Take Greenpeace as an example. It has both a GM food project and a sustainable agriculture project. Since the commercial farming of GM rice may be approved by the government any moment, and is therefore a more urgent matter, Greenpeace's media work has focused on this issue in order to alert the public to food safety challenges.

Some subjects may be too ahead of their time in China, so taking them to the media may not work. Greenpeace's Paradise Rainforest Project, for example, did not generate much media interest, since the Chinese public do not yet see a close connection between the preservation of rainforests in distant lands and their own lives. If the subject matter is closely related to the interest of Chinese consumers and has a high degree of urgency, then it would be much easier to get people interested.

If public perception or attitude concerning a particular issue cannot be changed immediately, a media campaign on the issue is also unlikely to achieve good effect.

When dealing with local issues, the local media can play a very important role, but sometimes it is also important to get national media involved, as local media tend to follow the lead of national media.

Although located in Inner Mongolia, Society, Entrepreneur & Ecology has extensive media contacts in Beijing, so it can use national media in Beijing to influence local media.

4.6. Matching NGOs' Needs with Media's Needs

If NGOs wish to utilize the media, then they need to identify common interests with the media and aim for a win-win situation. Liang Xiaoyan, the director of Beijing Brooks Education Centre, offered two suggestions for matching the needs of NGOs and the media:

First, when deciding which media to work with NGOs must consider the intended recipients of their messages. If NGOs wish to influence government agencies, then they should work with newspapers published by party organs or major national newspapers. If, on the other hand, they are concerned with issues in local communities, then they should work with smaller newspapers, evening papers, city newspapers, or popular tabloids instead. If, for example, an NGO works on children's issues, then they should work with publications which target parents. Such publications are more

interested in children's issues than publications with other target readerships.

Second, although NGOs do not need to prepare individual press releases for every newspaper, they may need to prepare tailor-made ones for the most important newspapers. This is analogous to the way companies treat their VIP customers. If we have VIP customers, then naturally we need to offer them special services.

Greenpeace has very rich experience in matching its needs with those of the media. It considers the media's needs in every stage of its operation, e.g., when gathering evidence (to expose environmental damaging practices), taping, and photographing, it takes care to collect the type of data media want. It uses words which media like, and considers the special requirements of different media. Greenpeace's media officers all have experience working in the media. They can think from the media's point of view. They avoid using jargon which ordinary people don't understand in press releases. If they have to include some technical terms, they prepare explanations of these terms for journalists. They also prepare a list of frequently asked questions and answers for journalists. To make it easier for journalists to write their reports, they include a CD in the press release, which stores many data and pictures. Whether journalists are writing a short piece or a long story, they can always get what they need. Journalists are particularly satisfied that Greenpeace will also give them a list of people who can comment on the issues, including people who agree and disagree with Greenpeace's position. Finally, Greenpeace always holds news conferences at times convenient for journalists and make sure that the news conferences do not last for more than one hour.

4.7 How to Ensure Media's Sustained Attention to Long-Term Projects

- **Find New Angles.** Recently, the Institute of the Public and the Environment's Water Pollution Map of China attracted a lot of media attention. The data for the map was not new and were obtained from Environmental Protection Bureaus, but the idea of organising the data into a map was novel. This is a good example of generating new interest in old issues.

Green Cross's rural development project is a long-term project, so it is difficult to sustain the media's attention from beginning to end, but Green Cross emphasises different issues at different times according to the dominant media agenda at the time. This way they have been able to stay in the news.

- **Prepare materials which the media like.** Record the interesting incidents and anecdotes in the process of project implementation. Keep a diary and write down some vivid stories. The media may be interested in such stories.
- **Become experts.** If NGOs stick to particular issues and gradually accumulate expertise on these issues, eventually they will be considered authorities on

these issues. By then the media will regularly turn to them for comments and analysis.

(4) Use Both National and Local Media. This is one way to ensure continuous media coverage. For example, when national media have finished covering a project, local media may still be interested in covering it.

(5) Use the Internet. After a wave of media coverage is over, discussions can be carried on in cyber space. Such discussions may also generate new materials to recapture the attention of traditional media.

4.8 How to Establish and Maintain a Media Network

NGOs can use the following strategies to establish and maintain a media network:

(1) Study the different characteristics of different media.

(2) Target specific media according to your own needs and goals

For example, Friends of Nature (FON) has developed contacts in both government-controlled and market-oriented media. One of FON's advantages is that many of its members are journalists, so they can give FON advice on how to work with different types of media. It works with newspapers which are influential and spends less time contacting newspapers which cannot influence public opinion.

Both GEV and Global Village of Beijing (GV) have developed media networks through organising journalist salons. GEV has co-hosted the Environmental Journalist Salon for six years, organising monthly events which are often attended by 40-60 journalists. GV has maintained contact with about 200 journalists through the Sustainable Energy Journalist Forum

The Voice of Green in Hebei organised a training for Hebei local media which was attended by over 70 journalists. It used the training to build up its media network. WWF has opened a special page on its website for journalists and set up an online forum for journalists.

Green Hanjiang recruited many volunteers from among journalists and news editors, which makes it easy for it to communicate with the media.

There are many other strategies: making friends with journalists, inviting journalists to your offices, organising parties for journalists, meeting journalists outside news conferences, e.g., inviting them to the party to open your new office, etc.

(3) Supply media with information they need. Help media and create mutual trust. An NGO should make effort to cultivate a few journalists who really understand

and support the NGO's work and who can write high-quality, in-depth reports. Maintain frequent contact with these journalists and consolidate the relationship with regular cooperation. Provide them with scoops or exclusives so they can write good stories.

4.9 How to Deal with Obstacles beyond NGOs' Control

- (1) Contact as many media organisations as possible by email, fax, or telephone.
- (2) Avoid sensitive angles. For example, instead of highlighting problems, stress the possible solutions to the problems.
- (3) Use the media in other places to expose environmental problems in one place. Avoid direct confrontation. NGOs can cite the opinions of third parties, such as independent experts, to support their arguments. If local media are under pressure not to criticise local policy or practice, ask media in other places to do the work.
- (4) Before giving interviews to foreign media, NGOs should find out the objectives of the foreign media. Avoid being used by foreign media to attack Chinese government, which may jeopardise NGOs' work..

4.10 Making Full Use of the Internet to Expand Channels of Communication

Green Beijing and Green Web are most representative of environmental NGOs organized through the Internet. A group of volunteers established the website "Green Beijing" in 1998. At this site, volunteers can discuss how to promote sustainable development in China and how to solve current environmental problems. They also carry out environment education in different places. Some of the events they organised, such as "Taking Environmental Protection to Bars" and "Saving Tibetan Antelopes", were very known in Beijing and even the whole country.

In addition to using the Internet itself, Green Web is also helping grassroots NGOs to set up their own websites.

Websites devoted to environmental protection have become a "green channel" for the public to understand and participate in environmental protection. Kekexili.com has become a bridge to the protection of Tibetan antelopes. Most people who care about the fate of Tibetan antelopes know Kekexili.com. This website has been running for three years. It is the most professional and comprehensive website on Kekexili and Tibetan antelopes and gets more than 10,000 hits every day. The website of Green Hanjiang was set up by Yun Jianli. She says "the website is very effective. We describe our work through the website, so as to let more people understand us and attract more attention to environmental protection." But many NGO founders and managers still don't know how to create a website and how to use it, so training in this area is very important.

The Internet extends and enlarges the dissemination space for environmental NGOs. It has special advantage in transferring certain environmental information. For example,

information about the flood in Guangdong Province in 2006 was first spread through the Internet. Many media organisations now try to find news stories from the Internet, particularly some well-known online forums.

The Internet has been called the “fourth media”. Min Dahong, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, says that “nowadays, nobody can ignore opinions on the internet. The most significant function of environmental protection websites is that it facilitates interactions between volunteers. They can air their voices any time.”

Although the Internet is useful, in general the ability of environmental NGOs to take advantage of the internet is weak. It is a new way to mobilize society and spread information. NGOs should develop their capacity to use the Internet.

5. Proposed Actions to Promote the Cooperation between Environmental NGOs and the Media

Environmental NGOs are the most active and influential NGOs in China today. In recent years, good interaction and cooperation between environmental NGOs and the media can be seen in many areas. In the next 3-5 years, media should give NGOs more opportunities to make themselves heard, while NGOs should display their fruitful work to media and the public. This needs the common effort of both the media and NGOs.

We think that given the media’s importance to the growth of NGOs and civil society in China, we need to focus on enhancing the ability of NGOs and media to work together through following activities:

5.1 Organize Short- and Long-term Training for both Environmental NGOs and Media Personnel

(1) Trainees: Media Personnel and Environmental NGOs

Training for media personnel must be carried out on a sustained basis. This is a long-term process to influence the media. Existing projects can be fully utilised and expanded. For instance, the Green Journalist Salon is being expanded to 11 more cities outside Beijing. It will provide training for journalists on environmental protection and public participation, and it will organise mock public hearings. The Sustainable Energy Journalist Forum continues to organise training for journalists. CLAPV is planning training for journalists on legal issues. The Global Environmental Institute organises training on public participation consciousness.

We should build on these existing initiatives but also expand them. For example, the Environmental Journalist Salons should adapt itself to the specific concern and

situation of NGOs in different localities.

Training for NGOs should emphasise four issues. **First, NGOs need to understand macro issues and find their own places in the greater scheme of things.** The media often has macro issues in mind even though they approach them through concrete cases and examples. Lots of NGOs immerse themselves in their own work without understanding how the work relates to macro issues in China, so NGOs need to see their projects in the light of China's political, economic, and social priorities at the moment and find the connection between their projects and the major issues which capture public attention at any given time. **Second, training should familiarise NGOs with the rules media need to follow and the operational mode of the media.** If NGOs want to receive media coverage, then they need to avoid breaking the rules and respect the media's mode of operation. **Third, NGOs should improve their knowledge of Chinese media,** so that they can find the most suitable media for their purposes and the right angles for those media. **Fourth, to improve NGOs' ability to use the internet,** including the ability to use blog, MSN group, QQ group, etc..

(2) Format of the Training

Firstly, use diagrams, tables, drawings etc to make the information easily accessible.

Secondly, use concrete cases to illustrate the issues. Pertinent cases, both cases of successful media-NGO cooperation and failed cases should be used.

(3) Trainers

We should not only use well-known experts in Beijing, but also find more trainers in other places. NGOs should try to utilise local human resources, finding people from government agencies, enterprises, media, and NGOs who can provide training which is tailored to the specific local situations.

5.2 Establishing Effective Long-term Communication Mechanisms

To form a web alliance, for example. We suggest building on existing web-based platforms and gradually expanding them to eventually unite NGOs and media in different places. For instance, we can start by establishing a database of NGOs and a media database. The All-China Environmental Federation already has an environmental NGO database. Other organisations such as China Development Brief are also constructing environmental NGO directories.

GEV plans to set up an Environmental Journalist Salon Network. It will start by opening a website in each of the 12 cities where the journalist salon operates. Local journalists and NGOs will jointly maintain the website. Eventually this model can be replicated to other cities across the country. FON plans to set up online forums and link to relevant

websites. The China Grassroots NGO Learning Web maintained by Fuping Development Institute provides relevant online and offline training for NGOs.

Websites can also be established to analyse individual cases of NGO-media communication and cooperation. Such websites can become places for regular exchanges between NGOs and the media.

An e-mail group can be established to facilitate communication between NGOs and media.

5.3 Compiling a Media Handbook for Environmental NGOs

After all, NGOs which can take part in training or directly receive advice from the advisory group (see 5.4) will be a minority, so a handbook with advice and tips on working with the media which NGOs can consult anytime will be very useful.

Some organisations already have plans to produce such handbooks. The NPO Center is considering setting up a media and NGO network, but it is not limited to environmental protection topics. The Center plans to provide training for NGOs so they can approach the media with clear strategies and procedures, like what Greenpeace does. The NPO Center will organise six training annually. At the end of the project they will produce a media handbook.

5.4 Setting up an Advisory Group to Support NGOs' Cooperation with Media

Invite some experts to form an advisory group to advise individual NGOs on their media strategies on request.

Issues to be considered: How to establish the advisory group? Who will take charge of it? What topics will the group provide advice on? In what form will advice be provided? etc.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the participants at our workshop whose thoughts helped to improve this report.

This report is based on many interviews and informal discussions. Without the support of friends from NGOs and media who granted me interviews, it could not have been written. I have not listed the names of everybody but I will remember them in my heart.

Thanks are also due to Defra, Chatham House, and Fuping Development Institute. Their support ensured the success of the project.

Finally, thanks also go to the Green Earth Volunteers team. Through our long period of cooperation, we shared and realised the volunteer spirit and ideals of the organisation.