



Gender Equality

The China Canada Co-operation Project in Cleaner Production is a \$10.6 million (Canadian), six year Project funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The Canadian Executing Agency consists of PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, SNC-Lavalin Environment Inc, and ESSA Technologies Ltd. The Project began in October 1996.

Under CIDA's Gender Equality Policy, special efforts are being made to ensure that women participate fully and benefit equally from the measures introduced by the Project, as well as from training opportunities.

The Project's Gender Equality Goal

To promote increased participation of women at decision-making levels and in technical specialties among the Project's partner agencies and enterprises

Objectives

- increase awareness of gender issues and support for women's full participation in the workforce
- achieve 30% participation by women in project activities
- increase the self-confidence and motivation of women employed in the factories



Photos by Dorothy Lele and Mary Ellen MacCallum

Women are an important part of the workforce in industries across China.

Internet Resources

Women and Environment website www.cei.gov.cn (Chinese only)

SETC website on Cleaner Production in China has links to global activities on gender equality: www.chinacp.com. This site is prepared and maintained by the CCCPCP.

Gender Equality Activities

China has a much higher percentage of women engineers than does Canada, but generally women are concentrated in certain types of jobs, such as laboratory technicians, packaging, and office staff, with low representation at higher management levels. A Baseline Study was conducted in the first year of the Project to assess gender differences and issues. It identified the need for attitudinal change about women's capacities and for more opportunities allowing women to develop and apply their skills and talents.

A Gender Equality Consultant based in Beijing was hired to work with project counterparts to raise awareness about gender issues, to promote gender equality and to improve the working conditions for women. She leads workshops with Project partners at the national, provincial and factory levels. The workshops introduce gender issues and generate discussion about these issues and reasons for the lack of women at management levels. These workshops are often the first time many participants have recognized their experiences with gender issues as more than a personal issue.

Gender Equality Working Groups have been established at two Project demonstration sites to promote gender equality and improve women's status. They identify problems, organize needed action and serve as a focal point for the Project's gender equality support.

These activities have unleashed women's great interest and enthusiasm for environmental initiatives. The Project serves as a catalyst in assisting women to mobilize in support of improved environmental awareness and protection. The Project organized an unprecedented national workshop on Gender Equality and Development in Beijing in January 1999. Workshop participants created a new non-governmental organization, the Women and Environment Network (WEN), to publicize gender and environment issues. WEN members become energetic advocates for cleaner production. They have set up a Chinese webpage about women and the environment (www.cei.gov.cn), they visit schools to speak with children and their teachers, and they helped organize a street fair on World Environment Day in June 2000 to raise awareness about environmental protection and cleaner production.



Photo by Helen Wei

Members of Women and Environment Network participated in the World Environment Day activities in Beijing, June 2000.

Training

The candidate selection process for training programs encourages participation by women. As a result, women have participated in training in Process Improvement and Sustainable Development, on-the-job training in pre-audit and audit practices, use of monitoring equipment, and computer training, and they participate in study tours to Canada.

Gender equality sessions are included in Chinese study tours to Canada. In 1999, a Chinese delegation learned about gender equality programs in Canadian workplaces and about women's voluntary efforts to promote environmental protection. In 2000, the Canadian Gender Equality Consultant organized a participatory Gender Awareness Workshop for study tour delegates.

Gender Awareness Workshop

Awareness-raising workshops are an important tool in increasing understanding of Gender Equity, its benefits, and measures to achieve it.

A participatory workshop for Study Tour delegates in Montreal was held in September 2000 to increase awareness about gender issues and support for gender equality. Most of the participants were men. Basic gender-related concepts and issues were explained and discussed.

Participants identified tasks and behaviour that are typical or unusual for their gender. They discussed whether they enjoy or dislike these tasks and drew conclusions about gender stereotyping.

They discussed statements such as:

- “Women need to be protected and therefore they can do only certain kinds of work.”
- “Women are not promoted as much as men because of their family responsibilities.”
- “Men and women have equal chances for promotion in my organization.”

Participants identified the proportion of women at senior management levels in their organizations and discussed reasons why there are so few women in those positions.



Photo by Mary Ellen MacCallum

Workers such as this woman are enjoying improved working conditions as a result of the Project's initiatives.

Steps in promoting Gender Equality at Cleaner Production Demonstration Sites

- adoption of gender equality as a major issue and goal
- creation of a Gender Equality Working Group
- increased awareness of gender issues among male and female workers and managers
- recognition by management that gender equality results in improved productivity
- improved working conditions for women: day care, health and safety, training
- greater self-confidence among women workers
- stronger voice for women workers
- more responsible positions for women

Results

The Project is meeting its target of 30% participation of women overall in its training programs.

The environmental initiatives of the Women and Environment Network have led to higher awareness among the general public: the World Environment Day street fair attracted several thousand visitors, with activities for children and information about the Project for adults. Articles about the event appeared in four different Chinese newspapers. Public support at the fair suggests that the general population is eager to learn more about how to achieve economic growth without sacrificing the environment.

At Fuyang General Chemical Works, one of the Project's demonstration plants, efforts of the Gender Equality Working Group have led to health and safety improvements in the bagmaking workshop, where most of the workers are women. The daycare centre has been expanded to take children from one to three years old. Senior managers are aware of the need to motivate the workforce to improve each person's performance. They recognize the importance of women in their work force, but find



Photo by Dorothy Lele

The nursery at Fuyang General Chemical Works now provides care for children from the age of one.

the women reluctant to take on greater responsibilities. Management welcomes the Project's gender equality support because they see it as helping female workers to develop their capabilities and improve their productivity.

There has been significant progress since the beginning of the Project in the awareness of gender issues, the ability to suggest and implement changes, and the ways in which both men and women are discussing problems and how to solve them. Project partners and factory workers who have been involved in gender awareness discussions now see women's domestic responsibilities as a social issue that needs to be resolved, rather than as a personal limitation of women workers.

Effecting changes in working conditions is only the beginning of a deeper process of change. Improvements to date have helped women see new possibilities, learn how to make their voices heard, gain confidence in their ability to make changes, and understand that they are more important than they realized. They now feel that their suggestions are valuable. The next step will be for them to assume positions of influence.

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