Climate Change in China

Overview

China’s impressive development in recent decades has been driven by a process of urbanization and industrialization, powered predominantly by coal energy. This fossil fuel consumption has carried a heavy environmental impact; in 2007 China overtook the United States as the world’s largest producer of climate-changing Green House Gases (GHGs), although per capita emissions remain modest by global standards. China has taken responsibility and responded effectively; 2014 figures show a decline in coal consumption for the first time in 15 years, and China is now the world’s largest investor in renewable energy.

UNDP’s collaboration with China on climate change started far before it became a prominent concern worldwide. As early as the 1980s, the UNDP Country Programme (1982-1986) in China had already identified energy development and conservation as a priority area of the organization’s work. This focus has continued to the present day, with 422 million USD allocated to addressing climate change from 2011-15 in China. In 2015, UNDP’s work on Environment & Energy presents the largest part of the domestic-facing programme in China, with a strong emphasis on reducing and mitigating the impact of climate change.

In addition to this domestic programme, UNDP China has also strongly incorporated climate change into its portfolio of South-South and Regional Cooperation projects, where UNDP and China share domestic lessons learned with other developing countries.

Reducing Climate Change

On the ground in China, UNDP is helping to tackle climate change with a number of projects that guide the development of policy and regulations at both national and provincial level, design demo pilots, and provide education to improve public awareness of and ability to mitigate climate change.

Phasing out incandescent lamps in favour of energy-saving alternatives: As part of national efforts to cut energy consumption, UNDP is supporting the Chinese lighting industry to phase out energy-intensive incandescent light bulbs and develop supply chains for energy-saving lamps. This support includes a guideline for China’s strategic planning to promote energy-saving lamps nationwide, and a business plan to develop policy recommendations for guiding incandescent lamps manufacturers’ business conversion.

Making rural buildings in China more energy efficient: Pilot projects run by UNDP have assisted manufacturers in producing new energy-efficient bricks and are demonstrating that homes made with energy-efficient bricks reduce heating costs and GHG emissions. UNDP also helped set national standards for brick making and their usage, undertaken surveys and assessments of local governments’ capability to enforce energy-efficient brick production policy, and has engaged 13 provinces to transform markets to promote the sale and use of energy-efficient bricks.

Promoting energy-efficient room air conditioners: UNDP China contributes to the reduction of GHG emissions by guiding the transformation of the Chinese air conditioning market towards manufacturing and selling more energy-efficient products.

Accounting for and reducing GHG emissions: A crucial first step in reducing emissions is accurately measuring them. UNDP is helping China to develop and implement fit-for-purpose industrial accounting methodologies for tracking GHG output. Using Chongqing and Guangdong as pilots, UNDP is also developing low-carbon Product Certification Implementation Rules as well as GHG accounting methodologies for motorcycles, air conditioning units and refrigerators.

Building biomass energy capacity: UNDP supports China’s efforts in using alternative energy sources such as biomass.
Xinjiang, UNDP is working closely with leading energy enterprises and local governments to expand the biomass fuel industry. In Guangxi, UNDP is also developing a model system for biomass material production and supply, benefiting local farmers.

**Enhancing use of clean cars:** With the support of UNDP and GEF, China is promoting the commercial domestic production of fuel-cell vehicles (FCVs). UNDP is also engaged in smog control initiatives in Beijing. Through studies and policy recommendations, UNDP is expediting the elimination process of old vehicles, helping control air pollution and promoting the use of new energy vehicles.

**Supporting the national emissions trading system:** To reduce the carbon intensity of the Chinese economy, UNDP is helping establish a national voluntary emissions reductions registry system to help develop a functioning carbon market – a national objective.

**Removing barriers to cost-effective energy efficiency:** This wide-ranging initiative to raise standards of electric products in China has included work to improve appliance labelling in China, encouraging the promotion and adoption of energy-efficient electrical goods.

**Improving energy conservation technologies:** Through policy studies and training, UNDP is helping overcome technology deficiencies and promoting China’s energy conservation products and industry. UNDP will also launch a technology innovation competition for domestic energy conservation enterprises to encourage use of enhanced technologies.

Guiding the implementation of energy-efficient standards and labelling across Asia; UNDP collaborates with Asian countries including Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan, Thailand and Viet Nam to remove political, financial, institutional and technical barriers in energy efficiency of electrical products by increasing standards and providing consumers with a choice through labelling. Through these initiatives, the aim is to help reduce on average 10 per cent of residential and commercial energy use by 2030.

Guiding high-level cooperation on climate change; Through initiatives such as the South-South Cooperation on Climate Change Forum in 2014, UNDP brings ministers, senior civil servants and the heads of international organizations together to identify opportunities for cooperation to tackle climate change.

**Policy Research and Advocacy**

Alongside programming work, UNDP is delivering high-level policy support and driving Chinese public awareness of promoting engagement with greener consumption.

**Enhancing knowledge to tackle climate change:** UNDP is facilitating the global development of expertise on climate change, most recently with the *China India Low Carbon Report*. UNDP with GEF is also helping China fulfill its commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) by helping prepare its Third National Communication (TNC) and Biennial Update Report (BUR) in line with UNFCCC guidelines.

**Increasing emphasis on low-carbon development:** Publications such as the *UNDP National Human Development Report (2009/10)* ‘China and a Sustainable Future – Toward a Low-Carbon Economy and Society’ contributed to the increased emphasis on low-carbon development in the national discourse at a crucial moment in time when China was preparing its 12th Five-Year Plan (FYP).

**Green:** UNDP joined with national Goodwill Ambassador Zhou Xun and Director Du Jiayi to produce *Green*, a short film about how to live a greener lifestyle which received over 200 million online views.

**South-South and Regional Cooperation**

UNDP leverages its global reach and knowledge base to share Chinese experiences and resources with other developing countries to cooperate on climate change.

**Facilitating international technical transfers:** UNDP is working on projects to connect China with countries including Burundi, Zambia and Ghana to share expertise and technology for renewable energy, and Kenya and Ethiopia for drought management and desertification control.

**For more information, visit:** [www.cn.undp.org](http://www.cn.undp.org)