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Green Camel Bell Annual Report 2017

Following the announcement of the “Two Mountains” theory of green development by President Xi Jinping of the People’s Republic of China, China has witness much progression in recent years towards becoming an “ecological civilization”, the ideology that society and nature should co-exist in harmony. Thanks to the Communist Party of China and the Chinese Government towards environmental protection and management, China has taken huge steps towards developing an ecological civilization. The recent reforms have allowed for changes towards promoting and protecting the environment, such as a greater push for social activity and a shift in patterns of social interest. Environmental Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) play an essential role in launching environmental education as well as driving the public to take an active part in protecting the environment. Such efforts are gaining recognition and support from the government, corporations and the community, bringing new challenges and opportunities to the development of Green Camel Bell (GCB). In 2017, GCB has continued to build its organizational capacity, improve professional capabilities of staff through training, and address environmental issues at the community and grass roots level.

Below is a summary of GCB’s 2017 organizational development and a summary of each project.

1. Organizational Development

1.1. Capacity Building

In 2017, GCB had a team of three full-time staff members and maintained a strong organizational structure. The compact structure of the team allowed for efficient and flexible work completion. This year GCB assigned seven volunteer staff members to participate in various training sessions and seminars across China in areas such as legal training, program planning and management, public involvement and pollution control and response training. On top of this, the organization took the initiative to acquire social work theories and practices to enhance their community environment conservation work. Out of the two GCB staff members who sat for the 2017 National Level Social Work Certification Examination, one member successfully passed the mid-level exam and gained the mid-level social worker certification.

1.2. Overseas Communication and Cooperation

Sixteen representatives of seven different organizations, high schools and corporations came to visit the GCB office in 2017, where some exchanged experiences in environmental protection with our employees and engaged in CBG investigation projects and joint projects.

The initial progress GCB achieved after being founded has raised awareness to government and organizations of the crucial role the organization has in protecting Gansu's environment, allowing for future collaboration and cooperation. For example, GCB's previous partnership with the United Nations Development Program Global Environmental Finance (UNDP-GEF) Unit, in a project using ecological methods to protect bio-diversity in the Zhao River Basin. This year, GCB staffs were invited by the Investment Projects Office of the Gansu Forestry Department to attend to sixth UNDP-GEF conference as project shareholders, where they were involved in activities for the Gansu sub-project of China's reform of protected areas, such as input in core designs and discussions.

There was also collaboration with some large organizations including Danone, L'Oréal China and Gansu Industry and Transportation Investment Company. In August, GCB organized engaging and interesting volunteer activities in Lanzhou for over 50 employees of Danone. Such volunteer work with corporate organizations can enrich employees' professional experiences, enhancing cohesion among teams, and simultaneously contribute towards company CSR.



GCB and volunteers for Danone participate in activities to protect the Yellow River

GCB also communicated and collaborated with local and international environmental protection organizations, volunteers and foundations. For example, joining hands with Qin Hai Snow Alliance (Xue Lian) to inspect the health of the Huangshui River, Qin Hai, Lanzhou. Internationally, in June, GCB informed Canadian funding parties with updates of their funded projects of organizations in the Gansu region. And from July to August, GCB welcomed five international educational volunteers from the UK and US who taught ecotourism participants Maqu.

2. Green Camel Bell Projects

2.1. Protection of Source Water in Gansu

Incidences of pollution across China have caused the Chinese government to strengthen environmental laws, law enforcement, and regulation. In December 2016, the draft of the Water Pollution and Prevention Control Law was approved by the National People's Congress. The law strengthens local responsibility towards the environment, guarantees safe drinking water, regulates sewage licenses and river dumping, enables joint protection of local streams and rivers from pollution, tightens existing pollution prevention methods, increases fines for those who break the pollution laws, etc. GCB has utilized such new legislation to better achieve their objective of protecting clean water sources. For example, maintaining security of precious water resources through training, seminars, legal methods, etc. In 2017, we continued to preserve Gansu's natural drinking water by conducting sourcewater surveys, river surveys, sourcewater protection seminars, sourcewater nature activities, and public campaigns for water protection. Various forms of public advocacy have brought water conservation to the attention of the government, which helps to upgrade and improve laws and regulations protecting water sources, enhance public participation in the conservation and management, and protect this valuable lifeline together for the future.



Legal education activity on water protection laws

This year GCB has continued to look after the water source in the high-risk category of water conservation in Chaijiatai Village, Lanzhou. The construction of the North Bihe Road Westward Extension Project passes through the waterway protection zone and the road development has brought issues such as land acquisition, demolition, compensation etc. For the protection of waterways and urban development planning, GCB has attempted to create a plan through interviews with local residents, observation and surveys, discussions with members of government; however the work is still in progress. GCB also invited legal professionals to give expert knowledge through seminars on legislation surrounding water laws and consultations to assist the community in understanding of the laws and answer questions. Legal education sessions such as the above were enthusiastically welcomed by the community as a means of enhancing legal knowledge in an easy to understand way, and such activities also carried out in Majiasi Village, Suizhong County.

On World Environment Day June 5th 2017, in partnership with Lanzhou Ecological Development Promotion Association and the Lanzhou Xinlv Research Institute of Environment Protection, GCB organized a forum on the protection of water sources at the Nature Reserve on Taizi Mountain. Those invited included the rangers of the reserve, people from local villages, local environmental protection organizations from Linxia, university student associations, and other groups. Discussions included managing the protection of the reserve and local visitors shared their stories of protecting the environment. The Nature Reserve of Taizi Mountain is an embodiment of the saying “clean water and lush mountains are invaluable assets” which President Xi Jinping stated in a speech about the Two Mountains Theory for green development.



Taizi Mountain legal forum activity

The nature-based activities as part of the water source conservation educational event were very popular amongst participants. In October 2017, staff member of GCB made a visit to Erlong Mountain Nature Reserve where they experienced the exquisite scenery of autumn colours and flowing steams. Staff members also tested the water quality and collected litter left behind by tourists. The visit to the nature reserve further established the vision of GCB in

preserving this natural beauty from pollution.

GCB also partnered with the Centre for Legal Assistance to Pollution Victims at the China Politics and Law University, and working with the lawyers at Lanzhou Xinyin Institute of Environment Protection, organised informal legal seminars and workshops with social groups, not-for-profit organizations and volunteer groups. Currently four seminars with a total of 40 attendants have been organised.

2.2. Loess Plateau Rehabilitation Project

The Loess Plateau Rehabilitation Project has been running successfully since 2015, operating in Mali Nuanshui and Bangshe Villages in Tianshui City, Wu Shan, and was funded by a Canadian Organisation from October 2016 to February 2017. The project was designed to target waste management and focused on teamwork based leadership for women, poster and booklet education, waste management training in villages, village medical waste management training, women gender awareness training, study tours in Shanxi Province and sharing activities, as well as agro-dealer environmental protection training. The project aims to create a waste management system by utilizing female group leadership within the community. Alongside this, providing training activities and building facilities will also raise awareness of village residents to protecting the environment and develop their knowledge of waste classification, which will improve the health of the environment and the community. Expert guidance and support for this project has been provided by Professor Zhu Yiliang from the University of New Mexico and Dr Mao Guorui from Colorado State University.



Spring Festival Cultural Gala at Nuanshui Village in 2017

At the beginning of 2017, most project activities were completed according to their scheduled plan. In January, staff members of GCB returned to Nuanshui Village in Shanxi province to

share their experiences with the local community. The discussion was very rewarding with all participants engaging in active discussion with passion on how to change and improve their local environment. In February, GCB organised a series of cultural activities for Nuanshui Village to celebrate Chinese New Year with over 50 participants from the village, enriching local life and strengthening the bond between GCB and the community. Following these cultural activities, GCB also organised environmental protection training for agro-dealers in Nuanshui, focusing on sales of MHW (pesticides and chemical fertilisers), national agricultural funding policy, and the potential environmental consequences of MHW. Participants in the event enthusiastically discussed establishing an MHW package recycling institution. In March, GCB invited external experts to evaluate the project in a report. The report highlighted various achievements of the project including the involvement of the village and community, training content and personalized method of training catered towards community everyday life. Overall the project was a brought great benefit to the community and there was a noticeable improvement in environmental awareness.

Experiencing the benefit brought to their community from the project, the ties between the local community and GCB strengthened further, and the Nuanshui Village looked forward further involvement and resources to strengthen their community. After the project was completed, GCB took the initiative to seek a sponsor for the village to fulfil their community objectives, partnering with Oxfam Hong Kong in Lanzhou to research to evaluate local project demand in two consecutive trips to the village. Apart from seeking the help of related organisations, GCB also liaised with Gansu Engineering and Transportation Company and sought out potential collaboration for joint project activities.

With over half a year of preparation, the new Loess Plateau Environmental Protection Project was launched in 2017, with a focus on constructing a MHW database and a piloted waste recycling system of pesticide bottles and seed packets at Nuanshui Village. By the end of 2017, a database design was completed and data collection begun. To support the recycling element of the project and encourage local involvement, GCB developed long-term relationships with agro-dealers in Nuanshui.



In December 2017, GCB conducted research on community demand for cultural events and a follow-up of the female leadership program. Apart from waste management and environment protection, in 2018 GCB will further continue to involve local community interests and demands with an emphasis on teamwork, especially the involvement of women in the village, and launch a variety of cultural activities. Such events and programs are aimed at improving both the culture and environment of the village.

With the support of related government policies, poverty alleviation agencies and greater mobilization of social organisations, GCB can gain greater involvement from the local community. With the unity of government, corporations, social organizations and community, Nuanshui village can continue to transform and improve living standards of the community.

2.3. Maqu Grassland Conservation Project

Since 2005, GCB has begun conservation work to protect the ecological environment of the Maqu Grasslands by coordinating college students to conduct ecological surveys, incorporating environmental education into local textbooks and providing environmental knowledge to students from local schools. From 2010, GCB launched a community-based sustainable development project in the Kaerxi Community in Daerjia Village (in Awangcang, Maqu County) to promote ecological and environmental protection for the sustainable development of the community. The project also involved promoting the community's management of natural resources, collecting traditional stories of local pastoral culture, and publishing an information booklet about the protection of ecological culture of Ma Qu titled "*Ping Dan De Shou Hu—Ma Qu Sheng Tai Wen Hua Zhi Shi Gong Shang*". In this project, GCB also formed local environmental protection teams and eco-animal husbandry cooperatives, and created a more lively community, in particular the involvement and ability to participate of women in public affairs. Beginning in 2015, with the supervision of the MBA department of America's Howard University and a detailed assessment of the community and local market, GCB created a tailor-made proposal to sustainably develop the economy of Kaerxi district by reducing grassland ecological damage from over-grazing of cattle. Now in 2017, GCB is still firmly established in Ma Qu and continues to promote the ecological and environmental conservation of its grasslands.

Before the peak tourist season in the late spring and early summer of 2017, GCB organized a large meeting with all members of the community. The meeting lasted the whole day and ended in the early hours of the morning at 2am. Despite disagreements and debates lasting throughout the meeting, there was unanimous consensus from community members to continue to develop eco-tourism in the Kaerxi Community, increase the income of local herdsmen while protecting the grassland ecosystem, and the grassland protection agreement was officially signed. The protection agreement stipulates that one yak will be reduced from the protected area of the grassland for every 6,000 RMB sourced from community tourism; or one sheep will be reduced from protected grassland for every 1,000 RMB gained from community tourism; and that such agreed conditions will continue until a balance is reached between the number of cattle and the grazing capacity of the grassland for the grassland ecosystem to grow sustainably. In addressing the resource needs for eco-tourism sites, it was decided after discussion that community members use solar power to meet energy demands instead of fuel-powered generators. In addition, removable toilets and garbage bins and rubbish will be properly disposed of, the camping area at the tourism site will not be constructed with any cement and the grasslands tourists should be able to stay there without

tents creating damage to the grasslands. Throughout the meeting, there was a strong understanding by all present that grasslands can be protected by protecting ecotourism.



Organizing tourists to participate in eco-tourism activities

From July to August 2017, GCB cooperated with travel agencies, outdoor sports clubs, parent-children education institutions, and used social media platforms such as Airbnb for eco-tourism marketing. Nine eco-tours were organized which is a total of 153 tourists visiting the Kaerxi eco-tourism experience. The community's tourism revenue continues to increase approximately 20,000 RMB annually through ecotourism.

Due to the correct management of ecotourism and activities in the Kaerxi community, there has been greater cohesion amongst the locals. Over time through active debates, communication, compromise, the community has gradually achieved the ability to be able to independently self-govern and are able to cooperate and divide labor within the community. Activities at the tourist site are now completed by the community, such as tent assembling, and other activities including tour guides, cooking, driving, and horse riding are assigned based on individual interests. Preserving the grassland is at the forefront of the community, as it not only supports the cattle of herdsman for the future, but also is an invaluable resource for Maqu eco-tourism. Only just a year ago, the Kaerxi grasslands faced a serious threat to their environment. A construction company building a highway nearby offered 700,000 RMB to buy a mountain from the community to cut stone for construction. 700,000 RMB is an offer that's hard to refuse as it's roughly the cost of a family's entire herd of cattle, and a year's salary for a herding family in Karersi is only 20,000-30,000 RMB. However the community thankfully decided not to sell the mountain as the herdsman believe that mountains are sacred homes of the gods, and they all agreed that the environment itself is priceless.

This year, visitors of all ages including the retired people, families with toddlers, and young professionals, come from all over the country to witness the broad emerald grasslands of Maqu in the Summer season. Tourists experienced life on the grasslands including horse riding, cattle grazing, milking yaks, making butter, and other activities unique to the land including identifying wildflowers and grasses, grassland games, stargazing and traditional dancing.



Conducting a vegetation baseline survey

In addition to organizing eco-tourist activities, GCB have put in place regular monitoring of the wetlands and grasslands to understand the changes in the ecological environment. The number of cattle in the area was recorded in 2010, 2014 and 2017, and GCB mapped GPS maps of the community area and calculated the grazing capacity and grassland protection. GCB has also built a community weather station which not only provides tourists with accurate information, but also encourages students to engage in studying the natural world and allows residents to monitor the environment in the long-term. GCB recorded almost 50 species of wildflowers and fauna and collected wildflower specimens. In 2017, GCB also created a 5m*5m square grassland survey during the winter and summer seasons to observe the changes in the land over time.

The above work mentioned in this report were completed thanks to the cooperation of GCB staff, volunteers and members of the community. The 2017 Maqu project team is an international team including GCB staff and seven national and international volunteers. Among them include doctorate students from the University of California, students who have undertaken Chinese Environmental Studies in the US, Chinese international students studying in the UK, graduate students of Sociology and one student from Shanghai. After the Summer vacation, volunteers went back home to continue their studies or professional work, yet they continue to keep updated with environmental knowledge and support the work of GCB in their own ways. One of our student volunteers from Shanghai, Zhao Tiancheng, contacted his school's annual charity and raised a generous donation of 15,000RMB for the Green Melody Project in Maqu.

2.4. Chinese Giant Salamander Conservation Project

The Chinese Giant Salamander (CGS) is one of the most unique animals of China and is a “flagship” species for China’s freshwater river systems. However, sadly the CGS is currently facing serious threats to their survival. In the past the Bailong River in Gansu was teeming

with salamanders, yet the species is now threatened due to habitat loss, water pollution, human interference etc. Therefore, conservation work to protect the CGS will impact upon habitat recovery, restoration of bio-diversity, clean fresh water sources, and the livelihood of local communities. In 2017, GCB launched the Chinese Giant Salamander Conservation Project. This project applies field visits to search for the salamander, raises public awareness of species protection through education about the CGS, and incorporates a feasible plan to protect this wonderful creature and recover the natural eco-system.



Chinese Giant Salamander field visit

In the summer of 2017, GCB formed a specialized CGS project team and with the guidance of relevant organisations, developed surveys in regard to the location and protection of the salamander, targeting villages, livestock farmers, and members of government.

And in the autumn, GCB staff members and volunteers launched a CGS protection investigation in three villages in the Bailong Jiang Wen County, Gansu (Bikou, Zhongmiao and Fanba Village). The investigation included field surveys of the salamander's natural habitat and CGS breeding farms and found that the CGS had not been sighted in the wild in the past ten years, with the most recent sighting being in 2008. However, the livestock farm reported that they had purchased 11-12 wild adult salamanders, proving that the CGS was not extinct in the area. The dramatic drop in wild CGS numbers are due to factors such as water pollution, overfishing, natural disasters, engineering construction etc. For example, in the 1990s, illegal gold prospecting was active in the area and the process involved washing the gold with sodium cyanide, a harmful toxic chemical. This chemical leaked into the waterways of the Bailong River causing the population of salamanders to go extinct. In recent years due to government crackdowns on illegal gold mining and the enforcement of strict environmental policies, illegal mining has been contained to some degree allowing some fish species to survive, but sadly there are no salamanders to be found in the river due to this contamination.



Investigation on CGS feeding at livestock plant

Wild salamanders hibernate in the winter months and so further field trip investigations will be postponed till the warmer months of 2018. As flagship species for water quality and aquatic ecosystem health, protection of the CGS is inextricably linked to the protection of our waterway ecosystems. In the future, GCB will continue to carry out field trips and investigations into the salamander population. GCB also plans to train and encourage people from local villages to monitor river water quality and reduce the amount of chemicals being discharged into the river, and concurrent to this there will be community educational activities to raise public awareness to wildlife protection and regulations.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our sincere gratitude towards government and environmental institutions and volunteers who worked with GCB, as their constructive criticism, guidance and aid have enabled us to achieve its objectives of the past year. Thanks to joint efforts of cooperation, GCB has raised the awareness of the public towards the environment and have advanced environmental protection in the West of China.

Below we would like to show our appreciation to the following institutions and individuals:

Institutions and individuals:

Department of Gansu Provincial Civil Affairs;
The Foreign Affairs Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of Gansu Province;
Department of Gansu Provincial Environmental Protection;
Lanzhou Municipal Environmental Protection Bureau;
Gansu Zhongliyuan Law Firm;
Gansu Chongye Tax Agent CO., Ltd;
Lanzhou Evening News;

New West Magazine;
Lanzhou Zulihe Culture Media Co. Ltd;
Pacific Environment;
Waterkeeper Alliance;
Canada Foundation;
U.S. Embassy in China;
National Geographic Air and Water Conservation Fund;
L'Oréal (China) Co, Ltd;
Danone SA Northwest Dealers;
Shanghai Shixi High School;
Oxfam Lanzhou Office;
Center for Legal Assistance To Pollution Victims;
Lanzhou Ecological Development Promotion Association;
Maqu Gengpan Environmental Network;
Lanzhou Xinlv Institute of Environment Protection;
Snow Alliance;
Environmental Protection Association at Lanzhou University of Technology;
Kangle County Longren Young Volunteers Association;
University of California Davis RIFA Programme;
The Zoological Society of London;
Lanzhou Qilihe Aganhe Humanistic History Museum;
Gansu Taizi Nature Reserve Management Bureau;
Lanzhou Majiasi Village Committee;
Lanzhou Chaijiatai Village Committee;
Wushan Mali Town Government;
Gansu Industrial Investment Company;
Wushan Mali Nuanshui Village Committee;
Maqu Awancang Town Government;
Gansu Youyou Outdoor Adventure Club;
Wenzhou Fengzi Outdoor Adventure Club;
Joysteper Nature Education;
Professor ZHU Yiliang from The University of New Mexico;
Dr. MAO Kuoray from Colorado State University.

Volunteers:

Chloe Zhu; Connor Trapp; Kelsey Ranjbar; Lyssa Freese; Sylvia Cifuentes; DONG Xixia;
FAN Xin; JIAOBA Dongzhi; LI Ting; MA Jian; NING Zuomei; PENG Weiguo; SANG
Muzhi; SUN Wenchao; TAO Ai; TAO Anli; WANG Fengjun; WANG Peng; WU Peizhen;
XING Xin; ZHANG Kai; ZHAO Tiancheng; ZHENG Bo

Translators and Proofreaders of this report:

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