

CHINA

SUSTAINABLE SHENYANG PROJECT

Successful environmental management of cities can be helped by broad based political commitment and an integrated, multi-stakeholder approach. This initiative, part of the UNCHS/UNEP Sustainable Cities Programme, shows how this can be achieved through Local Agenda 21 planning approaches.

Shenyang, a major city in North East China, with a population of 10 million, is one of the largest and oldest centres of heavy industry in the country. After years of industrial development planned to give priority to economic production over environmental protection, it was highly polluted. In the early 1990s it was classified as one of the 10 most polluted cities in the world. The city had no operational wastewater treatment, only 10% of domestic solid waste was systematically removed (with the rest being disposed of in informal dump sites) and the regulation of industrial effluents was weak.

The Sustainable Shenyang Project (SSP) was initiated by UNCHS/UNEP using a tried and tested methodology with the ultimate objective of formulating 'bankable' development projects. In 1997 the SSP set out to address the serious environmental issues that the city faced. Its goals were to improve the quality of life and promote balanced socio-economic development by strengthening the capacity of local institutions for environmental protection. This was to be achieved by integrating environmental planning and management into strategic urban planning through multi-stakeholder cooperation.

The SSP started with the preparation of an environmental profile of the city, which highlighted water and air pollution and solid waste disposal as key problems. On the basis of this information, a city consul-

tation exercise was undertaken in mid 1997, as the result of which three cross-sectoral consultative groups were established, made up of 48 members from government departments, enterprises, institutes and communities. After four months of discussions and research these groups produced proposals for water and air pollution and solid waste disposal. These were reviewed and ratified at another city consultation in May 1998 attended by 300 influential city and national stakeholders.

Working groups with participants from government, business and the community were appointed to develop detailed strategies and action plans to implement the proposals; to design investment plans; and to change the decision-making and co-ordination systems of government departments.

One of the main challenges to the programme was to motivate, involve and work with key stakeholders to build a commitment to environmental protection.

The working groups had to build high-level political support and secure funding for demonstration and follow-up projects. This process made radical decisions possible: for example the decision in 1999 to shut down the Shenyang Copper Smelting Plant, one of the largest employers in the city, but also the largest single source of air, water and ground pollution in the city, including serious contamination with sulphur dioxide, lead and arsenic.

One key set of actions promoted by the working groups was the implementation of demonstration projects, designed to explore new options and build support for environmental planning in the city, examples of which are a Japanese funded project to develop bio-media fuel briquettes to replace the current highly polluting reliance on coal for domestic heating and the construction of a wastewater monitoring system.

This initiative shows that a systematic approach to environmental planning and management in accordance with the principles of the Habitat Agenda is feasible, and furthermore that Local Agenda 21 planning methodologies can be adapted for use across a wide range of significantly different contexts. Fifteen other cities in Africa, Asia, Arab States, Europe and Latin America have implemented similar initiatives.



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