

China
Agroforestry in the Mountains of Southwest China
News from the Field

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Conservation International

Rediscovering Nature through “Children of the Forest” Environmental Education

At the end of October, a CI partner focusing on natural education for children, NGO Sichuan Yinengsiji Natural and Art Studio, held nature education for children at our project site in Ganpu Village. CI China’s project manager and botanist Dr. Biao Yang led the group of about 30 children, including nine selected as “Children of the Forest” from Ganpu Primary School, for a weekend hiking trip to a high plateau lake called Nine Dragon Lake located at 3,000 m above sea level in the mountains behind Ganpu Village. During the trip, part of the agro-forestry project’s community engagement plan, children learned to unravel the secrets of the autumn forest, and how to make plant specimens under the guidance of Dr. Yang. They also learned the concept of leaving no traces in the forest by bringing home garbage and other remnants of their visit. Rediscovering the natural environment and learning more about nature has long-term positive impacts on the lives of the children and their families, and paves the way for greater community engagement for our future eco-friendly agriculture project activities.



The project demonstration field
(© Wang Heng)



Children learn how to make plant specimens
(© Wang Heng)

Eco-Friendly Agriculture Technology Workshop

A workshop on eco-friendly agriculture technology was held in Chengdu on November 16, 2015. We invited experts from scientific institutions, as well as experienced farmers and NGO leaders, to share their ideas and techniques in eco-friendly planting and other farming skills. We also invited experts who are familiar with agricultural policy and eco-friendly agriculture development in Europe, Japan, and Taiwan to give participants a general idea of global trends in the field. Participants included members of the fruit and vegetable cooperative of Ganpu village and village leaders, along with leaders of nature reserves and forestry departments with an interest in promoting agro-forestry systems in surrounding communities. The workshop provides a good platform for sharing information and experiences that can be used to develop and implement future projects.



The eco-friendly agriculture workshop (© Wang Heng)

Technical Training in Eco-Friendly Agriculture in Ganpu Village

In early December, two-day training on eco-friendly agriculture technology was held in Ganpu Village. Experts on fruit trees management, vegetable planting, and pest control introduced participants to the basic concepts, methods, and benefits of eco-friendly planting and pest control. They also explained things like how to properly manage the land and demonstrated how to make eco-friendly pesticide on site. One week after the training, the fruit and vegetable cooperative of Ganpu village purchased raw materials and made 3,600 kg of Bordeaux mixture, a kind of eco-friendly pesticide introduced by the experts, that will be distributed to villagers in Ganpu. We hope this training will reduce the use of chemical pesticides starting next year and persuade villagers of the effectiveness of eco-friendly agriculture methods.



At the eco-friendly agriculture training (© Wang Heng)



Making the eco-friendly Bordeaux pesticide (©Liang Bo)

Successful Crowd-Funding Sparks Interest in E-Commerce

CI China helped the villagers launch a crowd-funding campaign on China's biggest online crowd-funding platform, zhongchou.com, in order to sell the project's harvest of 1,700 kg of beans. The successful campaign sold over CNY5,000 of beans and allowed the villagers to purchase a straw pulverizer to cut legume straw that can then be used as green fertilizer for the fields. This crowd-funding campaign brought an additional benefit: by linking the farmers to a vast and proven e-commerce market, it has motivated them to open their own online store.

Ongoing soil monitoring

The results of monitoring surface runoff for last season are available and show that the nitrogen runoff in our demonstration area is much less than that of farmland in the village where chemical fertilizer is being used. In order to test the effectiveness of different types of fertilizer on soil

restoration, soil samples have been collected from areas using legume residue fertilizer or other organic fertilizers, and from areas not using these organic fertilizers.

Communication

Photos and videos were taken of the training, environmental education, and crop harvesting process to use in newsletters and videos related to this project.

Wedding Season in Ganpu Village

Winter is the season for weddings in some Tibetan areas including Ganpu village, and there is a wedding ceremony every few days. Almost all the villagers attend every wedding, and we were also recently invited to join. The ceremony usually starts in the morning in the main square of Ganpu village. Elder relatives, brothers, and friends in turn give the newlyweds “Hada,” long, colorful strips of silk that are traditional Tibetan wedding gifts. The different colors of the Hada represent blessings from the sky, the earth, and the gods. After the wedding ceremony, several groups of women dance to start the celebrations. The entire event lasts for two or three days and includes the wedding ceremony, a traditional local lion dance, and fireworks.



A Tibetan wedding in Ganpu village (© Wang Heng)

Plans for Next Reporting Period (January to March 2016)

Compost and natural pesticides will be prepared for the spring planting season, and orders will be placed for seeds and saplings. The implementation of the Conservation Agreement will be monitored, and plans will be made to plant vegetables under fruit trees. A handbook on eco-friendly agriculture techniques will be created to use as guidance in the agro-forestry demonstration field. And again this period, communication materials will be gathered for project updates and video records.

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