



**CLIMATE CHANGE  
AND POVERTY**



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樂施會  
**OXFAM**  
Hong Kong

無窮世界  
World  
Without  
Poverty



# 1. CLIMATE CHANGE AND RURAL POVERTY POPULATION

In China, 95% of those living in absolute poverty live in areas where the ecological environment is extremely vulnerable.<sup>1</sup>



In China, impoverished areas, ecologically fragile zones and climate-sensitive zones generally overlap. Extremely impoverished areas have high degrees of climate exposure and sensitivity but their adaptive capacity is low. Communities' vulnerability to climate change in these areas is much higher than the average level across the country<sup>2</sup>.

## INTRODUCTION

Oxfam Hong Kong (OHK) began its poverty alleviation and development work in mainland China in 1987; the Climate Change and Poverty Programme is a major part of its work. OHK is convinced that climate change has significantly impacted poor people's livelihoods.

Since 2007, OHK has been actively participating in the United Nations' negotiations on climate change, while in mainland China OHK has been promoting public education and advocacy activities in this area. The agency strives to partner with governments, research institutes, non-government organisations (NGOs), the private sector and the media to help poor communities tackle climate change through community action and policy advocacy work.

OHK formed its Climate Change and Poverty Programme Team in 2013. It strives to explore feasible ways to integrate climate change adaptation and low-carbon development with poverty alleviation work in order to help rural communities achieve sustainable development in the face of the challenges climate change poses.



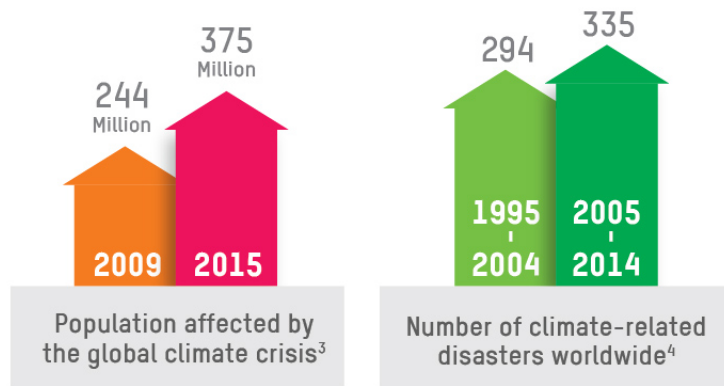
OHK and partners help communities cope with the drought in Lucha Village, Gansu Province

<sup>1</sup> Source: Environmental Protection Department Statistical Report, 2005

<sup>2</sup> Source: Oxfam report 'Climate Change and Precision Poverty-Relief'



## The Impact of Climate Change



- **Climate change and extreme weather:** Since the 1980s, serious climate-related disasters like droughts and floods have frequently affected China, leading to a direct economic loss of over US\$29 billion per year on average<sup>5</sup>. In the future, the risk of disasters and extreme climate phenomena such as high temperatures, droughts and heavy rainfall are expected to increase in China.
- **Climate change and human health:** The extreme weather caused by climate change increases the incidence of non-communicable diseases, such as elderly cardiovascular diseases. Increases in temperature also lead to the increase of vector-borne diseases.
- **Climate change and gender:** Ecologically vulnerable rural areas are directly affected by climate change. Extreme weather events exacerbate the hardships poor rural women face. These women often suffer from poorer health as they bear increased cost of living and greater burden of housework, such as fetching drinking water, livestock fodder as well as firewood.

Haiqing, Oxfam Ambassador and actor in China, visited a number of poor communities affected by climate change and called for public attention.



<sup>3</sup> Source: Oxfam report 'The Right to Survive, 2009'

<sup>4</sup> Source: the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR)

<sup>5</sup> Source: China's National Climate Change Adaptation Plan, 2013 and China's National Assessment Report on Extreme Weather and Climate Events and Disaster Risk Management and Adaptation, 2015

## Problems China Faces in Tackling Climate Change

### 1) Climate Change Coping Strategy Pays Little Attention to Impoverished Areas

Before 2013, China's response to climate change focused entirely on mitigation. In 2013, China's first document on National Climate Change Adaptation Plan was released, but it largely disregarded impoverished areas.

### 2) Poverty Alleviation Strategy Does Not Take into Account New Challenges Climate Change Will Bring

China has planned to fully develop into a moderately prosperous society by 2020. While this is most difficult in poor areas, the existing poverty alleviation strategy does not consider the new challenges climate change will bring, as well as the relevant perspectives and measures to cope with it.

### 3) Low Adaptive Capacity in Poor Rural Areas

Low income, a lack of resources and tools to make a living, poor infrastructure, remote location, poor transportation, inadequate information and a lack of necessary equipment/facilities to tackle disasters contributed to the low adaptive capacity in poor rural areas.

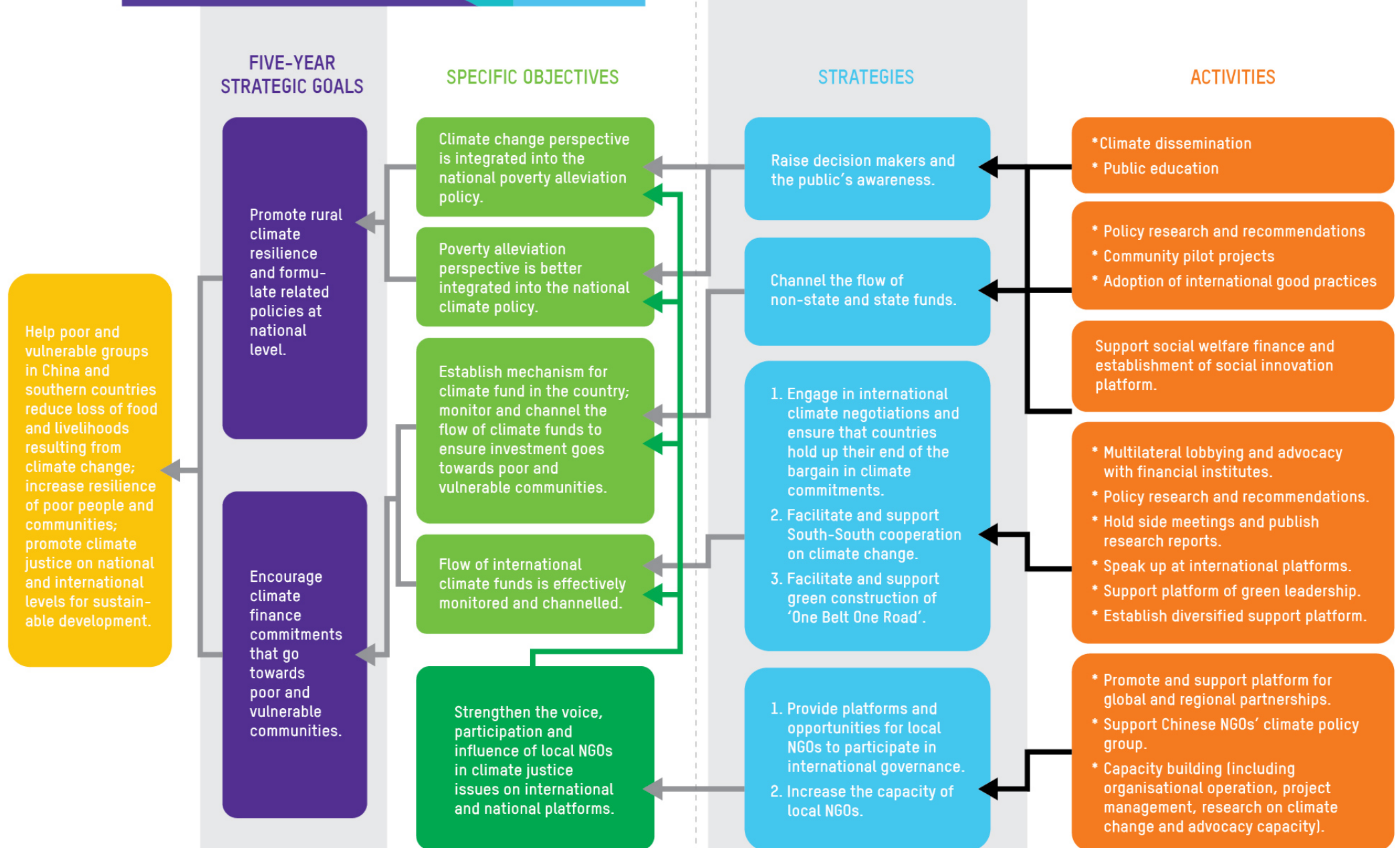
### 4) Few Feasible Ways for Poor Communities to Adapt to Climate Change

There are few innovative case studies and solutions that look at enhancing the adaptive capacity of ecologically fragile and poor communities. Attention to and policies on improving the resilience of and facilitating sustainable development in poor communities is also insufficient.



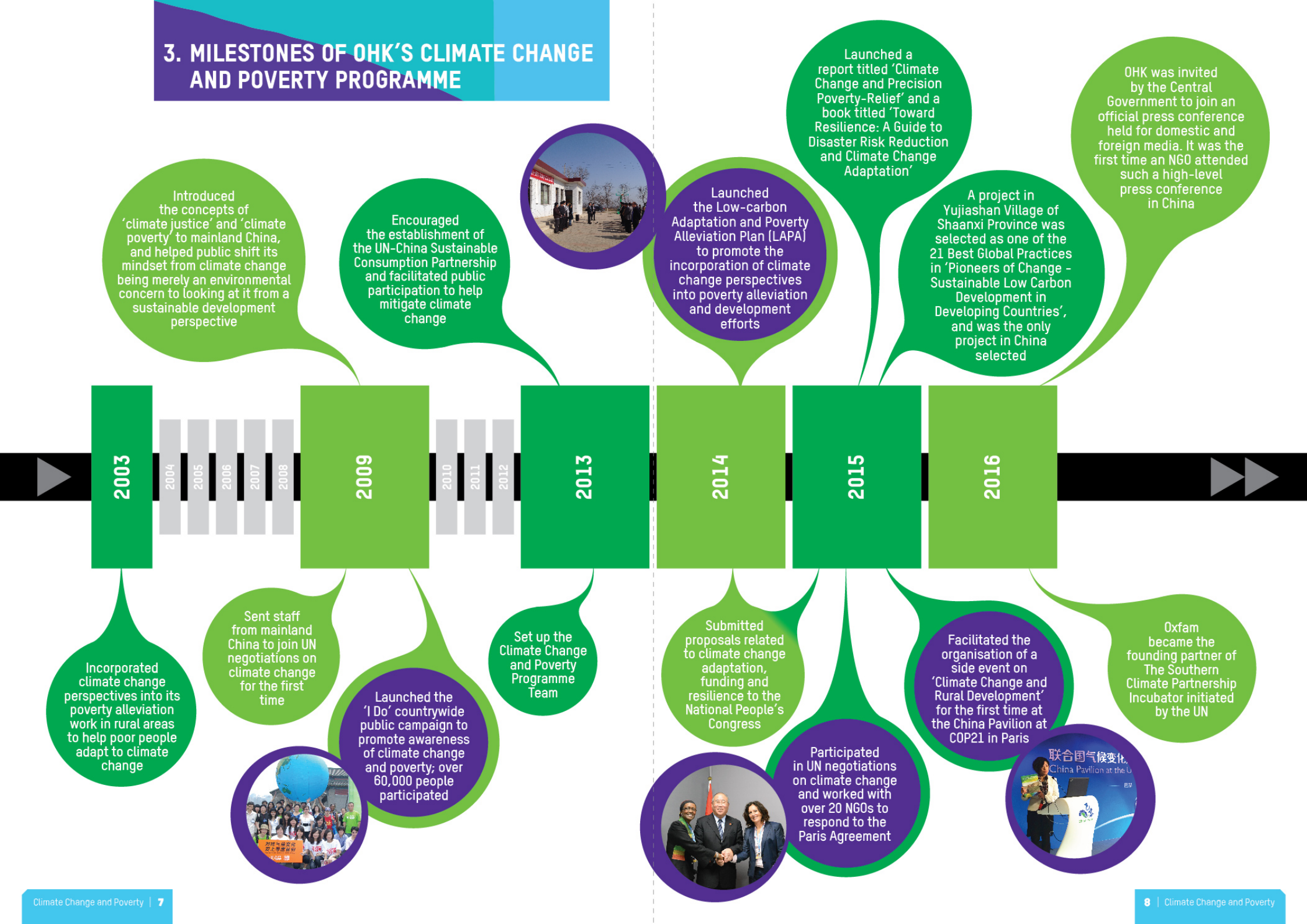
OHK's partner and a volunteer conducted a pilot research study on pest and disease variations under the impact of climate change in rural areas.

## 2. THEORY OF CHANGE (APRIL 2014 – MARCH 2019)





### 3. MILESTONES OF OHK'S CLIMATE CHANGE AND POVERTY PROGRAMME



## 4. MAJOR OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

### SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL NGOS

Established 4 partner networking platforms

Supported 10 local partner NGOs

Supported the China Climate Policy Group formed by NGOs for 3 years in a row

2012: Research findings on public awareness were cited in the white paper entitled 'China's Policies and Actions for Addressing Climate Change'

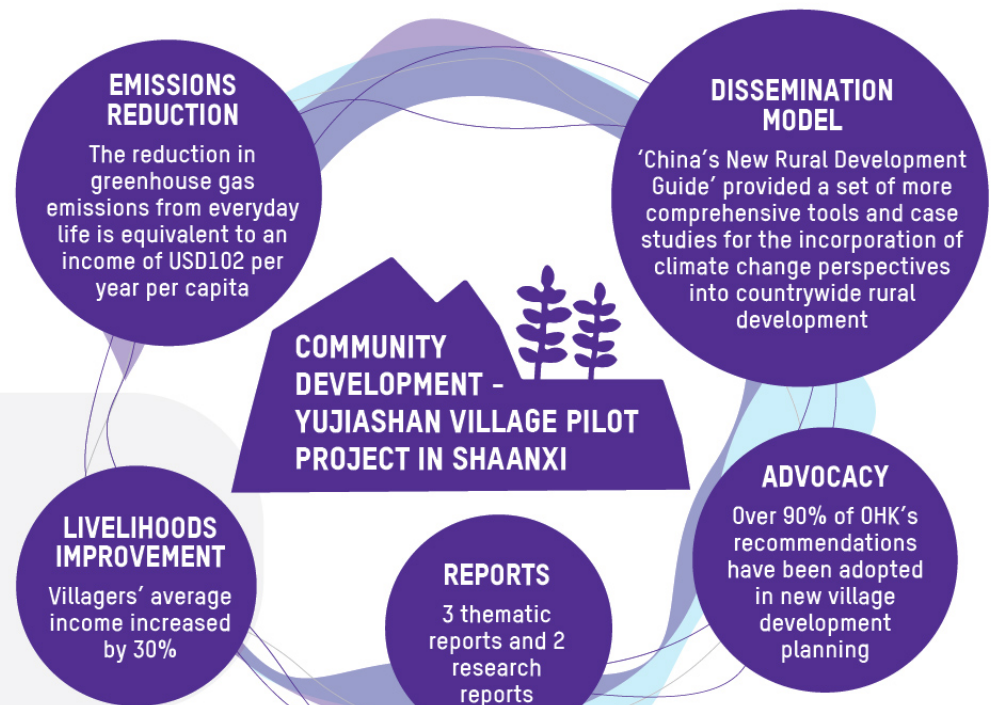
As of 2013: OHK has participated in 5 international side events, launched 2 research reports on public awareness and held 3 thematic seminars. Over 500 articles reported on these, and over 100,000 people were influenced

### CLIMATE COMMUNICATION

2010: OHK partnered with the Research Centre of Journalism and Social Development at Renmin University of China to set up the China Center for Climate Change Communication, which is a platform for dialogue among governments, NGOs and the media. In 2013, the Center received the 'Beautiful China Award'

OHK's China Climate Communication Project was awarded the 'Charity Brand Project of Media Attention' by ministries and commissions such as the Ministry of Civil Affairs

2010: At the UN Climate Change Conference in Cancún, a side event on climate communication was held for its first time, and the book 'Theory and Practice of Climate Communication' was released and was the first of its kind in China



### POLICY ADVOCACY

2009: The Oxfam report, 'Climate Change and Poverty: A Case Study of China', was released. It was the first study on climate change and poverty in mainland China, and was taken as a reference by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

2010: The Chinese Government Delegation and NGOs began to regularly communicate about climate change

2013: China's National Development and Reform Commission promulgated the National Strategy of Climate Change Adaptation

2015: OHK released the report, 'Climate Change and Precision Poverty-Relief', which received recognition from The State Council Leading Group Office of Poverty Alleviation and Development

2015: The concept of 'climate justice' was written into the Paris Agreement

2016: Oxfam became the founding partner of The Southern Climate Partnership Incubator and was invited to witness the signing ceremony of the Paris Agreement in New York



## GOOD PRACTICES

### Emphasis on Community Actions and Case Collection to Support Policy Advocacy

In 2014, OHK initiated the Low Carbon Adaptation and Poverty Alleviation (LAPA) to explore the integration of rural communities' adaptation to climate change and low carbon development into poverty alleviation; this was done by partnering with governments, research institutes, NGOs, the private sector and the media.

Throughout the Yujiashan Village Pilot Project, OHK used participatory approach that emphasised gender sensitivity. OHK gathered villagers' opinions through activities such as seminars and household interviews, communicated with government departments, and sought experts to advise the planning of the new village. Numerous recommendations on poverty alleviation and tackling climate change were proposed; these focused on three aspects: enhancing economic effectiveness of agriculture, improving rural living environments, encouraging farmers' participation and enhancing their knowledge and skills. Over 90% of OHK's recommendations were adopted; These serve as good future reference on how to promote the integrated approach.

### Following Up on International Climate Change Negotiations and Advocating Climate Justice

OHK has continued to follow up on the UN negotiations on climate change, and promote the implementation of climate change adaptation work and funds. It has also coordinated and created a communication platform between Winnie Byanyima, the Executive Director of Oxfam International, and Xie Zhenhua, the head of China's delegation and the country's Special Representative for Climate Change Affairs. In 2015, COP21 in Paris adopted the Paris Agreement, in which the concept of 'climate justice' was endorsed for the first time. This prompted a new and more comprehensive understanding of the international society on climate change issues. After COP21, OHK became the founding partner of The Southern Climate Partnership Incubator.

### Supporting Local NGOs to Take Part in Climate Agenda, Making Civil Society's Voices Heard, Building NGOs' Capacity and Establishing Partnerships

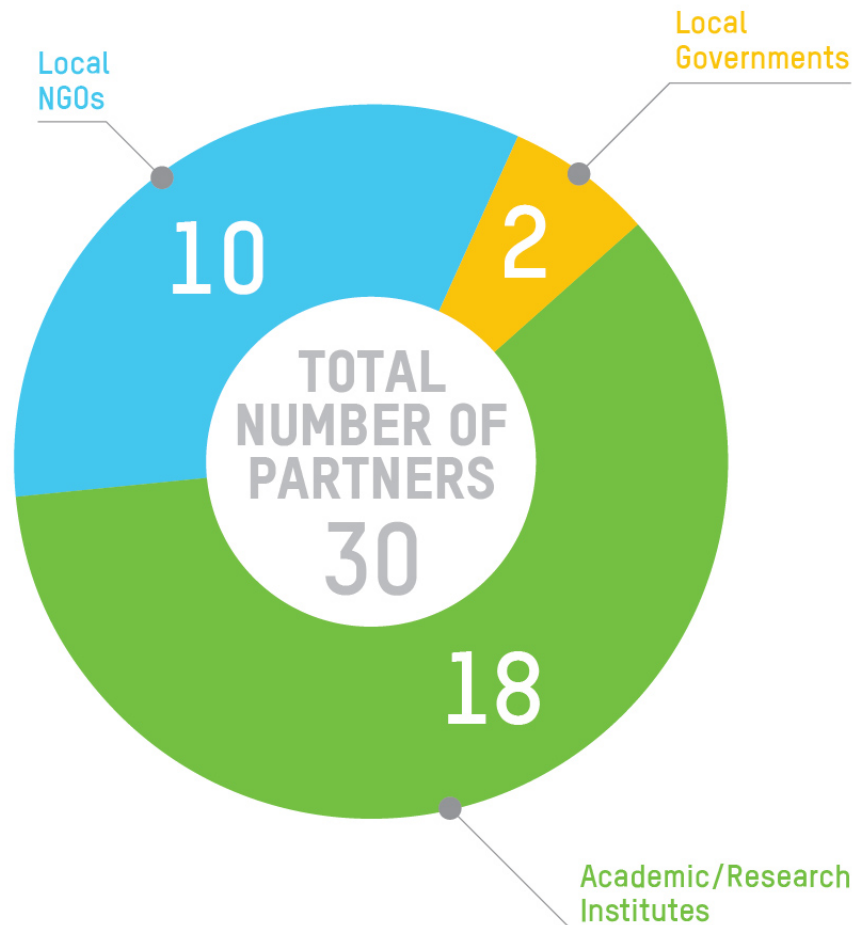
In response to the lack of local organisations focusing on policy advocacy, OHK helped establish 'Greenovation Hub'. It conducted research on climate equity and countries' differentiation in the Paris climate deal, which was released nationally and internationally to enhance civil awareness of climate justice and the capacity of participating in global climate governance. Through Greenovation Hub, OHK also set up climate policy groups to conduct regular thematic seminars to encourage active participation in policy making; helped Greenovation Hub participate in the UN's climate negotiations, dialogue with international counterparts and conduct side meetings; and encouraged green leadership to facilitate China's active participation in global climate governance.



OHK met with experts from Beijing who participated in field trips to and seminars on a pilot project in Yujiashan Village of Shaanxi Province



## 5. ABOUT OHK'S PARTNERS (APRIL 2015 – MARCH 2016)



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A villager inspecting his maize after a hailstorm hit Shengyang Village in Gansu Province