

**Marine Conservation Society, UK
&
Shanghai Rendu Ocean NPO Development Center, Shanghai,**

Report on EU-China NGO Twinning program

Dr. Laura Foster- Head of Pollution, Marine Conservation society and Yi Ru, Shanghai Rendu Ocean NPO Development Center,

The Marine Conservation Society, UK and the Shanghai Rendu Ocean NPO Development Center aimed at exchanging knowledge on how to manage marine debris effectively, with a focus on plastics from land based sources. With China currently being the biggest contributor to marine plastic in the oceans and a lot of UK waste being sent to China they wanted to obtain a better understanding of the challenges that NGOs in China and the UK are facing. -

Dr. Laura Foster, Marine Conservation Society

Dorothee Saar and Sönke Diesener visited the Lüling (Green Collar) - Tianjin Binhai Environmental Advisory Service Center from August 30 to September 20 2015.

The objectives of the exchange were to:

- learn about the challenges faced within China
- learn what china is doing to reduce the programme of marine litter and better understand the monitoring programme.
- discover how much of waste from abroad, and specifically from Europe is ending up in China
- how such foreign waste is dealt with- and if there are any changes recently within China on this
- development of marine litter monitoring programme in China, and how we can advise on this having had over 20 years experience as an organisation
- learn about Chinese culture, society and governance

Rendu is a small NGO in charity based in Shanghai. During the exchange programme I learnt about the disposal of waste from within Shanghai. A number of colleagues at Rendu were very supportive of my stay, and explained the challenges of working within China and setting up an internationally affiliated litter monitoring programme. I was able to share with them our experience of running over 20 years of marine litter monitoring and coordination of volunteers. Interestingly a large number of their volunteers are students, with coordination done via electronic communication.

Activities

A number of visits were organised to other NGOs to discuss about their projects to recycle more within Shanghai. These included Futian ENGO and Taiwan Thuji ENGO which were small organisations looking how to make sure that items from the disposal society were recycled. Interesting Futian said that a large percentage of his supporters were from the ex-pat community, which he said reflected the longstanding culture of recycling within Europe and elsewhere. There was also a visit a factory producing water filtration systems highlighting the challenges of water pollution within China. We also visited Shanghai Life Solid Waste containers Transshipment service and Shanghai LaoGang Waste Disposal Company which were responsible for the transport and disposal of 50% of all the rubbish in Shanghai. The showed the scale of the challenge of reducing the amount of rubbish produced. The Water Environment Cleaning service showed the cleaning of the waterside along the Bund, with much the litter coming very locally ie from visitors to the Bund.

Rendu organised two beach cleans while I was visiting through corporate partners. These allowed me to see firsthand the difference in the types of marine litter found in China, and to see how an NGO engaged with the corporate sector. I was also able to see how Chinese school children learn about the oceans, and it was interesting to compare and contrast this to our work in the UK on getting school children to value the oceans.

At the end of my stay I attended the Northwest Pacific Action Plan, Yantai. This two day conference covered the challenges faced by countries within the Northwest Pacific including among others Japan, Korea, Thailand as well as China. There was a number of interesting talks including how the Japanese had been reducing the impact of commercial fishing buoys, impacts of litter on wildlife and specific campaigns on particular items, innovative ways to monitor and assess marine litter, as well as talking about the impact of the tsunami in Japan in 2011 had on marine litter and clean-ups in response to this. There was also an organised beach clean with the local university with the all the members of NOWPAP, with data collected using an ocean conservancy data form.

Networking

The exchange allowed me to build up a wide scope of contacts within China and the additional NOWPAP conference allowed me to have contacts across the Asian network. Contacts beyond Rendu were really interesting, and I hope that I will remain in contact and look at the potential further collaborations. In addition, on a personal level these contacts gave me new and different insights into Chinese society both on the challenges faced with marine litter, but also within a wider scope. I greatly appreciated the time and effort people in the programme and beyond did to help me have a fulfilling exchange experience.

Impact

One of the key things was that many of the colleagues at Rendu were keen to learn from MCS longstanding experience within the monitoring of marine litter, and also how to engage with volunteers. Furthermore since MCS provide technical input to European work on marine litter- I was able to provide them information on not only what was happening within the UK and our organisation but also across Europe. They provided a lot of positive feedback about this, and that they greatly valued the exchange programme, and the opportunity to learn. I also have first hand experience of the challenges that China and its NGOs face in tackling the problem of marine litter.

Future

A discussion is ongoing about a twinning of schools in China and Scotland, and getting the Chinese to write about their respective experiences of life, both about the environment and beyond. This should be a really nice project. In addition, there are a number of people and organisations that I meet during the exchange which will help me to understand the role of china within the global environmental impact, and how this is changing and developing over time.

Yi Ru, Shanghai Rendu Ocean NPO Development Center, Shanghai

From Oct 21 to Dec 2 2015, I visited Europe for the China-EU NGO Twinning program, stayed at Marine Conservation Society my twinning exchange organization and also a few other organizations.

Objectives of the exchange

Our purpose was to learn different practices regarding marine protection, especially when China's plastic pollution is cited as one of the world's biggest contribution to marine litter, and how to get the public more involved. Also, the UK is recognized as one of the most developed civil societies in the world with the birth of the first Charity Law.

Activities

At the MCS Office

I was given introductions to different departments. MCS is on full functions and has a detailed work division, i.e. pollution program, biodiversity & fisheries program, sea champions program, senior policy, marketing, communication, fund raising, accounts, HR & Facilities, IT & Data. Marketing is responsible for individual members, while fund raising is for corporate membership.

I was surprised to find the volunteers' interactive degree, they are almost involved in every aspect, membership recruitment, fund raising, campaigns, warehouse counting, etc.

Also the campaigns are designed and clearly targeted at specific objectives. For example, "Don't let Go" explores the fact that many people like to fly the lanterns to the sky, however the lanterns end up on the beach, causing problems to marine animals. It aims at drawing local authorities' attention as they have bigger impact. This lantern flying is believed to originate from China, and it is still popular together with water lamps during festivals, people believe they can bring good blessings. This is where new projects can be copied/designed in China. Furthermore, firecracker is even worse in China.

Besides, I noticed that charity shops are very often seen in the UK, Oxfam, British Heart Foundation, YMCA, and all of them are very well organized.

SEAS AT RISK

After two days with MCS, I went to visit Seas At Risk in Brussels, Belgium. Seas At Risk is the umbrella NGO to MCS, working to help drive European and international marine and maritime policies in a sustainable direction. Located in Brussels, their team of policy officers work together with growing membership of environmental NGOs, representing millions of EU citizens that care deeply about the oceans.

During my visit, I learned that the EU's legislation is a complicated process, however once a new law comes into force, it is usually a success. Also I visited the European Parliament, there was a morning Press release, spokesmen of different MPs offered updates of their topics. I also visited the Parliamentarium, interactively illustrated how EU functions.

SAR also cares about maritime planning, deep water mining, etc, which is currently paid less attention to by Chinese NGOs. So I learnt more about this topic, such as each country need to get approval of License of deep water exploring, also better understood the Marine Strategy Framework.

Reflection Workshop in Brussels, Belgium

This workshop is intensive and informative, covering lots of important topics, EU-China climate change relations, TTIP and global impacts, refugee crisis, etc.

Bathing water workshop at Edinburgh, Scotland, UK

This is a joint effort by local government, water companies, NGOs, and university scholars. View points were very interesting and attractive. During the two-day conference, we came across many issues from different aspects. Through this conference, I learnt that bathing water quality has been a concern of the European countries, and many related parties gradually came to realize that they need to unite and take action jointly to make the efforts to the maximum.

Visit at MCS's Scottish Office

This is a lovely small team working on all topics as their head office do. Catherine introduced me beach cleanup and campaigns while Callum illustrated Scotland's important role regarding MPAs (Marine Protected Areas). We went to a specific beach clean up with a local primary school, most of the litter there is ceramic and glass. On the way back, we went to another beach where most litter are tissues, and wet wipes. I was told that different beaches are featured with different types of litter, some are filled with plastic bottles while others don't. The possible reason for this phenomenon is said to be connected with the industries nearby. However, we will keep up with this.

An exciting upcoming cooperation would be connecting pupils both in Edinburgh UK and Shanghai China to be penfriends, exchanging their experiences with the sea, such as beach clean up, marine education courses they have in their corresponding countries.

Visit at FFI in Cambridge

Fauna & Flora International (FFI) is a proven conservation innovator that continues to make a lasting impact on global biodiversity. Therefore, it tends to work on relatively new areas. So under marine conservation there are two projects: plastic pellets and micro-beads. I introduced a few lab resources to test the pellets.

Visit at Residus I Consum in Barcelona

Bin autopsy: It's very innovative. First, volunteers put on surgeon's clothes, cover long tables with white plastic films (table cloth), then collect mixed litter from nearby litter bins, resort them into different labels, such as "need to redesign", "organic", etc.

I found it a good idea to educate the public, I think we can also do a bin autopsy with marine litter we found on the beach, bring them back to city center, and carry out the autopsy with the public.

Anti incineration conference: This is a global meeting of Zero waste Alliance and Gaia. All the attendees are enthusiastic with anti-incineration. The dinner was set at a community restaurant, creating job opportunities for local youngsters, similar as Taiwan and China's practices.

Summary

I found I was very warmly welcomed in Europe, citizens seemed very willing to help others in need.

Despite the fact that most western NGOs are at least able to reach their local authorities to make impact on policy changing, in China, it is different when it comes to policy changing with the country's single Party rule.

However, during my exchange, I learnt to think more from the political and economic perspective, if economic growth was what most people care about, then we need to work on this angle. I've absorbed many innovative practices, ideas, and impulses, which surely will generate a lot of sparks.

Outlook on continued cooperation/partnership of the participating organizations

We've already working on the penfriend letter writing under educational program, and campaigns on lanterns, river lamps, firecrackers are under design, plastic bags and bottles recycle systems are difficult to talk with here but we will figure out our own way to handle.