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Green careers guide

Ni Huan
China



Ni Huan China



In 2004, I was lucky enough to pursue my Master's Degree in Development Studies at the University of Cambridge with a Chevening Scholarship. Before I went abroad for the first time in my life, I had worked with a local bank for one year and worked for a DFID-funded project in Chengdu for nearly 4 years, during which I learned about CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) and Sustainable Development from a group of British experts.

My studies in Cambridge were colourful and enlightening. I applied for a small grant to do a business trip to Norwich to attend a conference organised by a local Chamber of Commerce - The conference was a “match-making” event for banks to meet eligible business clients. Bank managers spoke about environmental standards, urging small and medium enterprises to talk to environmental experts to avoid violating laws and regulations. These were exactly Green Finance policies that China has been advocating since 2006.

I had been working with PlaNet Finance, an international microfinance NGO, and IFC under the World Bank Group in Beijing for 3 years on environmental and energy efficiency financing after I returned to China in 2005. This was a valuable experience of participating in and witnessing how Chinese banking sector embraced innovative ideas of developing financial products from international organizations to tackle climate change issues and took part in carbon trading internationally. Many of my colleagues were from the UK. I came to know CDP, a London-based NGO, which sets internationally recognized carbon disclosure

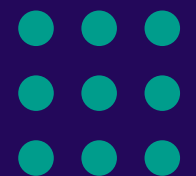
standards, now representing the world's largest institutional investors requiring listed companies to manage and disclose carbon emissions.

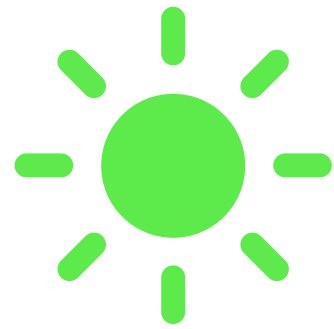
In early 2009, I returned to the UK to join my husband and worked with a think tank under the then Ministry of Environmental Protection on green finance policy research in collaboration with UK-based organisations. I visited many excellent low carbon advisory companies and financial organisations in London, and introduced their expertise to high-emission sectors' industrial associations and the Chinese banking sector.

After my family relocated to Shanghai in 2012, I worked with UNEP FI and WWF China on a range of green finance initiatives until 2014, when my life and career were changed by climate change.

I set up an NGO in December 2015, because of my real experiences of climate change.

In the summer of 2013 we moved into a new property - the abnormally hot weather that summer made our front balcony burn. I started to look for solutions to a good sunshade until May 2014. I built a solar-powered sunshade. It was the first solar power station in China built with a thin film made from copper, indium, gallium and selenium that can be installed at home and it can generate power even during raining days. At that time, I originally only wanted to implement climate change policies that I personally have been focusing on at home, and then see how long it will take to receive subsidies as well as how efficient the new photo-voltaic materials were.





It attracted not only a range of media, but also a continuously growing enquiries of neighbours and community residents, most of whom were children. I found out that there had been a huge demand for families to learn from good example of green lifestyle and parents were happy to bring their kids to join green initiatives, at home or near their homes, to feel and experience sustainable development-related examples. These new demo cases inspired kids' imagination and passion toward green living although these cases are not available in public museums and very rare in real life communities. After an unexpected positive response from the market, Shanghai Green Light-Year, a community-based NGO came into being.

Within the first two years of operation, we carried out a number of community-led activities and scientific research projects aiming at promoting sustainable lifestyles for people in schools, businesses and society as a whole.

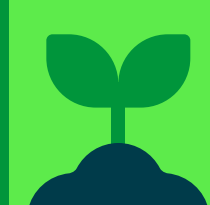
Two neighbourhood mothers joined me and we designed and implemented China's first 'Low Carbon Tour' connecting low carbon facilities in nearby university campuses and communities. We charge people for this 6-hour trip for 100 yuan per person. In the first year, we attracted more than 5000 people to the tour and the income contributed to 21% of the first year's income.

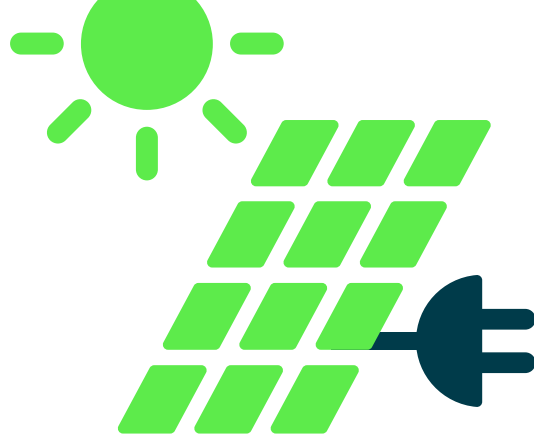
The Low Carbon Tour was inspired by my senior neighbours in Cambridge who were fans of plants and birds. They organised regular study tours in local communities to empower residents to learn about the history of the local plants and found evidence of how climate change has impacted local species and the breeding of insects.



In 2016, I transformed my home into an environmental technology “museum”, which has become the famous “resort” in the Low Carbon Tour. My home is now equipped with:

1. A CIGS thin film solar plant.
2. An aquaponics system which automatically grows vegetables while raising fish to save water and recycle fish poo as nutrients to plants
3. A vertical farm using my kitchen waste as compost to realize zero waste of wet garbage
4. The first shared EV car charging station of Minhang District
5. An automatic dripping system to irrigating my vertical farm using the solar energy





The impact of this grass-root NGO promoting low carbon lifestyles has some impact after four years' operation:

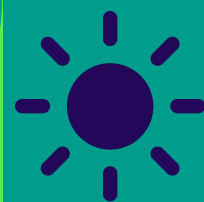
- We have received over 30,000 people to enjoy 6 urban and rural Low Carbon Tour Routes in Shanghai, Jiangsu and Zhejiang.
- My home has received over 15,000 visitors from 15 countries, 70% of whom are children.
- 103 Director-General level officials from Communist Party Leadership Academy came to experience our Low Carbon Tour in 2017 to understand how low carbon policies were implemented at community level.
- 8 families in my community transformed their homes in a low carbon style and 2 joined us to open for public visits
- Over 250 families acquired composters to make their fertilizers for balcony plants
- Over 100 families bought EV cars and over 50 families installed solar roofing after visiting my home
- We trained 25 little volunteer narrators and over 150 students volunteered with us from 35 universities.
- My home was in the world's first documentary of energy transformation, Lighting Your Roof, produced by Greenpeace.
- 13 international media from 8 countries came to my home
- 27 low carbon and green DIY workshops were delivered to over 80 communities in four provinces in Eastern China.



- 56 articles written by teenagers who came to experience our programs published in national and provincial media.
- Over 30 students' environmental research projects under the Green Light-Year Research Academy have won national and provincial top awards.

Since 2018, UNESCO has been promoting Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). From the previous decade's development plan aimed at the 2030 United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development, we have seen that developing education based on sustainable development is a lifelong learning process applicable to all age groups.

Within the first two years of operation, we aimed to improve the public's understanding of low-carbon lifestyles and hope the public take action to change their behaviour. As a result, in the second half of 2018 we decided to transform ourselves into a sustainable education institution. Over the past two years, we have experienced many complications during our transformation and growth, however we continue to exploring the feasibility of mainstreaming sustainable education in China.





Ni Huan (Helen Ni) bio

Ms. Ni has 19 years of experience in developing and managing international projects with multi-national corporations, international organisations and Chinese governmental agencies. Apart from having been professional project managers and fund-raising managers, she is also a communications expert in managing government relations and corporate relations. She has proven expertise to manage and deliver thematic projects on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and corporate citizenship, public-private partnership, SME Development, microfinance, socially responsible investment (SRI), green financing in China, environmental protection and climate change. A Graduate from Cambridge University (under UK Government's Chevening Scholarship), she is a passionate networker to bridge Chinese organizations with the rest of the world.

Helen is also a practitioner of green consumption and green lifestyle. As China mainland's first CIGS thin film distributed solar plant civil user (2014), she has developed some public educational programmes with media for her community and she has received more than 15000 visitors to her home since Aug 2014, mostly teenagers and

children. Her green home is refurbished with solar plant, a sharing EV car charging station, a vertical farm using compost made from her kitchen waste and an aquaponics system. Due to the impact of her NGO work, she was awarded "2017 Study UK Award" "Social Impact Award" by British Council and won GGEF Women Eco Game Changer Awards- Asia Eco Innovator Award in 2018. She was also a winner of China "Green Guard Award" of the Eighth "Mother River" Awards-the top national awards for environmental courses.

She founded a native environmental NGO called Green Light-Year in Minhang District, Shanghai in 2015 and Suzhou Green Light-Year in 2018, from promoting green lifestyle in communities, schools and businesses in Shanghai, Zhejiang, Jiangsu and Shandong, to practising Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in Eastern China. She developed a series of courses teaching residents to invest in home-use solar plants and EV cars, including financial literacy education for affordable renewable energy for teenagers.

She is a member of the policy taskforce under G20 Saudi 2020 on "UN SDGs and Development Cooperation". She is the only Chinese expert in the policy brief groups of G20. The policy brief is available at:

https://t20saudiarabia.org.sa/en/briefs/Pages/Policy-Brief.aspx?pb=TF7_PB2

