



## 中国发展简报

### Editorial

# AIDS: honesty, as best policy, should include study of 'pilots'

*A widespread surveillance exercise conducted in April by public health authorities in Yunnan Province found significantly higher prevalence of the HIV virus than had previously been detected, well-informed sources say.*

This represents something of a transparency litmus test for both local and national authorities. Will they play down their findings, or will they redouble the efforts they have made over the last twelve months to control the epidemic through public education and harm-reduction strategies for high-risk groups?

Some Chinese opinion leaders have in the past assembled compelling arguments for the latter course. For example, New China (Xinhua) News Agency journalist, Lin Gu, last year wrote a series of feature articles comparing AIDS control strategies in two counties of Guangxi Province. (His reports are discussed in a timely collection of case studies on AIDS and the mass media, published by the China-UK AIDS project). Mr. Lin found that HIV prevalence slowed in a county that acknowledged an epidemic and met it head-on with public education campaigns, whereas prevalence rose in a county that hushed up its situation for fear of damage to its reputation.

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Yunnan, the original epicentre of a drugs-related epidemic, has recently reflected shifts in national policy by converting to a relatively open, harm-reduction approach. Hotels across the province must, by provincial decree, now place condoms (for sale) in guest bedrooms. TV screens in Kunming airport carry AIDS prevention messages. And the city of Gejiu, in Honghe Prefecture, has opened a centre where, every day, more than 200 former injecting drug users are supplied with doses of liquid methadone as a substitute for heroin. The Gejiu centre is widely acclaimed as one of the most successful of eight sites across the country where methadone maintenance is being piloted.

Yet the Yunnan government apparently feels bound to balance these efforts with measures to show that it is not condoning commercial sex or drug use. Official AIDS control policy in the province still includes a commitment to crack down on 'prostitution and whoring,' even if this is largely rhetorical. Methadone maintenance is officially available only to drug users who have twice been sent to forcible detoxification centres — that is, as a last resort for those whose addiction cannot be shaken off by more traditional, punitive methods. (In fact, our sources suggest, HIV positive addicts are, sensibly, offered methadone maintenance even if they do not formally qualify for treatment.)

This lingering ambivalence in current policy may still make it difficult for the government to acknowledge the full scale of the problem it is facing. Yet withholding information will make it harder both to design and to assess appropriate prevention and care programmes.

At the same time, growing pressure to respond fast and effectively may detract from serious evaluation of pilot interventions.

Take the condoms in hotel rooms, for example. Yunnan officials assured China Development Brief that the policy is strictly enforced, with spot-checks and fines for hotels that fail to comply. But it seems that less attention is being paid to assessing the actual impact of the policy. Are guests using the condoms, or are they deterred by the knowledge that house-keeping staff will keep a tally and that the reception will add a charge to the bill, perhaps causing blushes when the time comes to check out?

The methadone maintenance pilots are an even more important case in point. The programme only started in earnest last year, but already the government has approved plans to replicate the pilots in an additional 26 sites.

The sense of urgency and desire to scale-up are commendable enough. But it is important first to refine and 'perfect' the 'pilot' experience, or expansion may simply result in the replication and scaling up of mistakes.

In many policy areas, China tends to 'go to scale' without the benefit of objective, empirical study of pilot initiatives. For example, in the sloping land conversion programme (*tuigeng huanlin*), pilots were rapidly followed by distribution of provincial quotas of land to be reforested; and only later did evidence of implementation problems begin to emerge. (The difficulty of evaluation is of course compounded by the still relatively ingrained tendency of lower levels to report only good news to higher level policymakers).

Almost everyone agrees that the two years since SARS have seen the government of China take great strides forward in AIDS prevention and control. But a one-off opening up, a decision to 'pay attention' and respond to the epidemic, is not enough. An effective response will require sustained attention, sustained honesty, flexibility and willingness to learn.

## Feature

# Action research revolutionises the classroom

*A new national curriculum, to be adopted in September, will aim to enhance critical thinking and analytical skills in a bid to boost 'quality education.' This goes against the*

*grain of traditional Chinese pedagogy, so many teachers will experience a difficult transition. But, in remote Guyuan, Ningxia Province, Matt Perrement found some teacher trainers who are ahead of the game*

'Don't open your books' implored teacher Hao. To some this might seem a superfluous instruction given the nature of the task — a group brainstorming exercise — but the habit of rote-learning remains difficult to break in this class of college students. Nevertheless, after ten minutes of preparation in small groups, the 19 and 20-year old first year music students in the Guyuan Teachers College tell us everything they know about Bill Gates, coming one by one to the front of the class to present their ideas in English with a smattering of Chinese. Clearly the reliance on text books to do brain-work is being eroded.

Later, in an adjacent building, students majoring in English make independently researched vocabulary presentations, with teacher Liu interjecting encouragement and comments to draw them out. Group work and further presentations are critically evaluated by peers, who offer feedback to their classmates. It is a genuinely interactive environment where the relationship between teacher and student has shifted from one-way knowledge transfer to two-way learning and mutual respect. Within the English department, which has 800 students and has been voted best department three times in the last two years, 80% of the classes follow a similar format, with the teacher at the periphery, rather than the centre.

### **Isolated, but not backward**

In Beijing a friend who studies at the well-respected New Oriental School tells me that classes are delivered in lecture style with no active learner participation, despite fees starting at CHY 2500 for a 3-month course. Having myself spent four years teaching in China this comes as no surprise, but it does serve to put into perspective what teachers Liu, Hao and the rest of the Guyuan English Department are doing.

'Beijing takes no notice of us' complains one of the teachers, explaining this in terms of 'prejudice.' A simpler explanation is the college's isolation. Guyuan is 12-hours north-east of Xi'an by bus, through the dry Liupan Mountains to southern Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, one of China's most economically and socially deprived areas. A 2002 UNDP human development report ranks literacy as the 5th lowest in China and enrolment in tertiary education at just 17%, compared to a national average of 26%. The illiteracy rate among Hui people in the Region is twice that of the Han, at around 50%.

Nevertheless, Guyuan Teachers College is home to an 'Experimental Centre for Educational Action Research in Foreign Languages Training.' Registered with the Civil Affairs Bureau, the Centre's mission is to improve educational provision for all children. It is doing so with next to no financial backing. The only cash contribution so far has come from Ningxia Education Board, which is providing CNY 25,000 over 2 years.

### **Joint-venture cooperation**

Guyuan's adoption of 'action research' as a teaching methodology was born out of discussions, in 2001, between Dean Tian Feng Jun, the centre leader, and a newly arrived Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) volunteer, Dr. Moira Laidlaw. An experienced teacher who practiced action research for eight years in a girls' school in Bath, UK, she later wrote a doctoral thesis on the subject. 'I had no preconceived ideas of implementing action research [in Guyuan], It was really built on a strong relationship with Dean Tian,' says Laidlaw. She describes Tian as 'a brilliant manager who realised the potential of action research.' Tian describes his original interest in action research as 'practical', seeing a framework that was flexible, less mechanical and 'giving colleagues more rights to explore their teaching methods.'

If Laidlaw was the agent of change, the momentum was certainly provided by Tian, who had to overcome skepticism from staff to get the project moving. 'It was not easy to 'sell' the idea to colleagues,' he says. Many of them were fearful of the time implications of such a project, although it was perhaps helpful that the majority

of the 52 staff were relatively young. There are now 28 core, action researchers in Guyuan alone, and more involved in outreach programmes that stretch as far as Tian's hometown of Haiyuan, some 120 km away.

So what role has Laidlaw, winner of a 2004 annual State Friendship Award for her work in Guyuan, played in the revolution that sees an entire department mobilised in the pursuit of better educational standards? Originally employed as a classroom teacher, teaching methodology and oral classes, Laidlaw has, since January 2004 had a free timetable that sees her in a full-time support role. She now spends her days observing classes, providing coaching support, facilitating group discussions and occasionally delivering lectures on action research and theories of learning. She also draws support from international contacts that include Bath University, which has sent action research experts, and VSO, which has sponsored workshops. The British Council will also be sponsoring professional exchanges for action research practitioners in Guyuan and Bath, and a school exchange that hopes to link a local middle-school and a counterpart in Wiltshire.

### **'Seeking truth from facts'**

Action research departs from the questions: what do I want to improve?; why am I concerned by this?; and how and what can I do to solve the problem? The simplicity of the framework and the practicality of action research seem to be highly prized in Guyuan, turning the 'theory to practice' model on its head. Action research allows teachers to formulate theories out of practice, according to teacher Li, who recalls feeling frustrated by the inapplicability of abstract theories. Liu herself summarises this with Mao Zedong's famous slogan 'seeking truth from facts.'

Answers to the question 'How can I encourage my students to be more active?' are sought through the new practices, punctuated by critical reflection, to bring improvements to both teachers and students. Such improvements are manifest for anyone stepping inside an English language classroom in Guyuan, but the philosophical changes underpinning these are far more profound.

In the words of one Guyuan practitioner

'action research has helped me to become a qualified teacher.'

'Now I am more sensitive to problems in the classroom, whereas previously I just ignored them,' according to another, who sees a clear change in her role as a teacher.

Liu Xia — previously a silent figure within the department according to Laidlaw — is not only busily engaged in her second research topic (which asks 'How can I make my students become autonomous learners?') but is also applying action research to her everyday life. During the weekly meeting for advanced action research practitioners Liu talks confidently and at length about how she now allows her son the freedom to organise his own time, a revolutionary concept within Confucian society.

In addressing his own research theme ('How can I help my colleagues to be involved in collaborative work?'), Dean Tian sees a direct departure from traditional, Confucian modes of thought. He points to the new curriculum and examination reform, to be implemented in 2007, that will see the introduction of subjective elements to examinations in what appears to be a landmark shift away from the multiple-choice, right-wrong format of traditional exams. 'We will no longer be just feeding students with fish, but teaching them how to fish,' he says. His approach has been to encourage both older and younger colleagues to express their ideas freely.

Increased mutual respect between both students and colleagues is reported by many others and is perhaps the defining feature of the success of action research, which Tian summarises as 'trying to make individualism more effective for the collective.'

### **Consolidating and development**

Legal status for the Centre provides a platform for development, following what Tian describes as 'three years of rapid progress and professionalisation of the [English] teachers' department.'

Laidlaw and Tian both believe the centre needs to carry on gaining experience, but increase the impact of its work both within and outside the college. Dean Tian says that a second workshop sponsored by VSO is planned for June



and, he hopes, this will encourage other departments to get involved in action research. The centre also hopes to apply action research in primary and middle schools in eight counties. Later this year, Beijing Foreign Languages Press will also be publishing a book that compiles all the case-studies written by practitioners in Guyuan.

VSO is aware of the potential for promoting the Guyuan experience as a replicable model for VSO, but also aware of the challenges that this could bring. 'It brings to life some of the challenges of rolling out the new curriculum . . . [Action research] is good practice and will be promoted as such ... but it depends on local dynamics,' commented China Representative, Michelle Brown, referring to the importance of good working relations.

In Guyuan the constraints appear to be more financial and Tian is hopeful that current funding from Ningxia Education Board can be matched with other sources to help fund research trips.

Laidlaw is also aware that her time at Guyuan should be limited, although it will be a wrench when she does leave, such is her love of education and feeling of attachment to the local area. 'I would love to stay for life' she says, 'but this is not VSO's philosophy.'

VSO places volunteers for two years in fields where local skills are in short supply, and seeks to share and transfer skills to local counterparts. It has been sending ELT teachers to China since 1981. The programme now only makes placements in western areas of China, and began placements in Guyuan in 1992.

In 2002, VSO announced that it would withdraw from ELT, with the last volunteers leaving in 2009. But, according to Brown, this does not necessarily mean the end of VSO's education programme in China. 'That question has yet to be answered' she remarked when quizzed on the possibility of placing technical experts (as opposed to teachers) to support education initiatives post-2009. Some answers may be provided by a review, planned for 2007, which will consider future strategic possibilities. In addition to education, HIV/AIDS and the promotion of national volunteering are also possible contenders for future programmes.

The appeal of action research in Guyuan is undeniable and will doubtless outlast the presence of any individual. As teacher Li said: 'Action research is beyond education. It is about human beings and social development.' I always felt that, when analysing the differences in educational approaches, but have never seen it in action so clearly.

- *New Zealander, David Strawbridge, who worked for six years as an Education Adviser on **Save the Children** UK's basic education programme in the Tibet Autonomous Region, also received a State Friendship award in 2004. The Tibet education programme has in recent years worked to introduce learner-centred teaching methodologies through in-service training of primary teachers, emphasising small group discussion, introduction of educational games, the use of real objects and simply made teaching aids, and the engagement of all five senses (not just the ears and the eyes) in the learning process.*

*Save the Children has promoted a similar approach as a key component of a five year Yunnan Minorities Basic Education Project, which started in one county of each of three prefectures. The Yunnan Education Bureau has since expanded the programme to thirteen counties, with ongoing technical support from Save the Children.*

*At the end of March, Save the Children and education authority partners held an international conference on ethnic minority education in Simao, Yunnan, drawing more than 200 participants, including two Departmental heads from the central Education Ministry.*

- *On April 27, the **World Wide Fund for Nature** formally launched the third phase of an Environmental Educators Initiative that began in 1997 and aims to turn middle school children into 'active environmental citizens.'*

*The programme started by establishing Environmental Education Centres in key teaching universities, drawing teacher training staff from a wide range of academic disciplines. These, 'master teachers' received international training and went on to train teachers from local, pilot schools. The methodology aims to foster independent, critical thinking among the school children, using action-research methods such as sending children out into their communities to research environmental*

problems and to advocate for solutions — for example, by urging local restaurants not to use disposable chopsticks.

A distinctive feature of the programme is that it does not treat 'the environment' as a separate subject, but incorporates environmental education across the existing subject range. Teaching aids and textbooks have been published, giving lesson plans for introducing an environmental dimension into Maths, Chinese etc. The project also worked closely with the Ministry of Education to develop National Guidelines for Environmental Education.

A second phase saw expansion of the project to numerous other sites. The third phase will aim to 'mainstream' this approach to environmental education in schools across China.

#### NGO development

## Rule on names starts to close door to NGO 'businesses'

*A command-economy style ruling on what certain NGOs can call themselves reveals the daunting complexity of developing a regulatory framework for China's non-profit sector, report Tina Qian and Nick Young.*

The Beijing Bureau of Industry and Commerce has issued new rules about the names that businesses may use, in a bid to prompt NGOs sailing under a business flag of convenience to re-register with the Bureau of Civil Affairs.

Businesses can no longer use phrases such as 'social development,' 'research centre' or 'health

education' in their business title, according to a decision made by the Bureau of Industry and Commerce at the end of last year and implemented by district offices in March.

Industry and Commerce officials are advising organisations that are genuinely engaged in humanities and social science research to register with the Civil Affairs system in order to clearly reflect their nature. As required by non-profit registration regulations, they should also find appropriate government 'supervising units' (*zhuguan danwei*), such as provincial and city level Associations of Philosophy and Social Science, to act as official sponsors. Organisations that remain registered as businesses are expected to genuinely engage in business.

However, it is precisely the difficulty of finding an official sponsor — popularly referred to in China as the 'mother in law' agency — that drives many NGOs to register as businesses in the first place, as the only viable way to have a legal identity.

'By a rough estimate, there are 100 to 200 thousand NGOs registered with the Industry and Commerce system nationwide,' according to Professor Wang Ming of the Tsinghua University NGO Research Center, 'But the authorities cannot provide precise figures because they have no index to identify non-profit organisations registered with Industry and Commerce.'

Given the shortage of willing mothers-in-law, some NGOs with business registration are instead simply changing their names in order to comply with the new ruling.

Beijing Aizhixing Health Education Research Centre, a leading AIDS prevention and support group, has renamed itself the Zhi'aixing Information Consultancy Company. 'The notice given by the Haidian District Bureau of Industry and Commerce was too short,' says the group's Director, Wan Yanhai. 'They informed us on March 21, with a March 30 deadline. We had to get personal written agreement from each of our four shareholders, of whom one was far away in Henan. Moreover we had to change related documents with the tax bureau, and inform our partners.'

Wan adds that Zhi'aixing may begin to take on some commercial contracts to justify their 'business' identity, but are also considering trying to register as a 'people-run non-profit unit'

(*minban feiqiye danwei*) with the Association of Social Science as official sponsor. Another strategy they are actively considering is to set up an offshore foundation, probably in Hong Kong, to raise funds for projects that Zhi'aixing would be contracted to implement.

The new ruling on names also challenges Beijing Civil Society Social Development Research Centre, the legal umbrella for the Chinese language edition of *China Development Brief*, which is registered with Dongcheng District Bureau of Industry and Commerce. The phrases 'social development' and 'research centre' are now taboo, so the organisation has filed an application to change its name to the 'Beijing Gongminhui (which in Chinese sounds like 'civil society' but uses different characters) Information & Consultancy Company'.

## Local variation and flexibility

As with much regulation in China, there has been significant variation in implementation of the new rules. Haidian District issued its own circular requiring the changes, whereas Dongcheng District informed organisations of the ruling only when they submitted annual reports, and allowed up to six weeks for organisations to re-name or re-register.

The move, however, will not affect all NGOs with a business identity. For example, a group that calls itself, in English, 'Community Participatory Action', selected a Chinese name meaning 'Shining Stone Information and Consulting Company' when it registered with the Haidian District Bureau of Industry and Commerce in 2003. According to a spokesperson for the NGO, Industry and Commerce officials had ruled out the use of the words 'participatory' and 'community' at the time of registration. 'Shining Stone' was chosen because, in Chinese, it sounds like 'participatory.' With a name that sounds right, the group is able to continue NGO business as usual.

The ruling, moreover, does not seem likely to affect organisations that are subsidiaries of businesses, rather than having a business registration in their own right. One such group, an environmental NGO that has been operating for ten years, is affiliated to a nominally state-owned enterprise that was established by the Beijing branch of a

national 'mass organisation.' As a subsidiary that 'hangs and leans' (*guakao*) on its parent business, the NGO does not need to register with the Industry and Commerce authorities in its own right. A spokesperson for the group reports, however, that the Xicheng District Bureau of Industry and Commerce has raised the question of their un-businesslike name. Yet — again showing the local variation in implementation of the new rule — the officials were apparently satisfied with the explanation that the word 'development' in the organisation's name refers to 'sustainable development', which is a core policy of central government, and therefore acceptable.

The willingness of some local officials to be flexible, and the leeway that they have in interpreting directives handed down from higher levels, sometimes works to the advantage of individual organisations. For example, the Sichuan Holy Love Foundation recently registered with the Sichuan Bureau of Civil Affairs as a private foundation, even though it did not have the requisite CNY 2 million (USD 240,000) registered capital. Civil Affairs officials were apparently impressed by the organisation's work and accepted founder Meng Changshou's argument that the value of the premises he had personally bought for the foundation should be counted towards the registered capital.

The Sichuan Civil Affairs Bureau appears committed to fostering the growth of some model NGOs and, to this end, is actively encouraging Social Science Associations within the province to agree to serve as mother in law for new organisations. But attitudes towards NGOs appear still to vary widely from province to province.

Nevertheless, the ruling on business names does suggest a concerted effort to clear the fog surrounding NGO registration and to 'regularise' the status of China's non profit sector. The Civil Affairs administration is believed to have initiated the move by requesting the cooperation of the Bureau of Industry and Commerce.

Professor Wang Ming agrees that more tidy and transparent NGO registration procedures are desirable. Yet, he points out, the Ministry of Civil Affairs is still in the process of drafting new regulations for social organisations (*shetuan*) and, until those procedures are defined, it is difficult

for NGOs to relinquish the business registration option. Without a viable registration alternative, he says, the new rule on names will 'cause more hassle (*mafan*) for NGOs.'

April 15 2005

## Older people

# Village elders become asset, not burden, to their families

*Following our March 2005 feature on urban provision for senior citizens, Matt Perrement reports on efforts to improve the lot of older people in rural Shaanxi*

Eighty three year-old Lao Wang is one of three generations living together under the same roof, a family composition that is fairly typical in this area. Her two grandchildren are at middle school, and their parents, both farmers, have to make ends meet with a cash income of less than CNY 1,000 (USD 120) per year. School fees alone eat up 40-50% of that income.

Living conditions here are not easy. Most houses are fashioned from a mixture of mud, patches of brickwork and some interior plastering. In places the floor is no more than compacted earth, and furnishings in the guest area comprise a few low stools. Outside toilets collect waste in open pit latrines.

Illness among the elderly is common at the end of a working life tilling the land, but the nearest medical facility to Lao Wang's home village of Xishan is more than 30 minutes drive along dirt tracks. There is no public bus service. Common

ailments among older people in the households I visited included heart problems, hypertension and arthritis; but combined isolation and poverty mean that many receive little or no treatment. This despite the close proximity of Xi'an, China's ancient capital, which offers an abundance of material comforts just three hours away.

But poverty has never got in the way of a warm welcome in China. Xishan's entire population of 1,556 has turned out for one of the most impressive, if simple, receptions that I have ever seen. Tracksuit-clad, flag-waving schoolchildren line the road, forming a human tunnel through which the visitors pass. Older members of the community — 196 villagers are over the age of 60 — bang drums and clatter cymbals. Fireworks also add to a sense of occasion.

The occasion is a review visit by HelpAge International which, since September 2004, has facilitated the establishment of Old People's Associations in four locations across Shaanxi Province, and enabled them to make small loans of around CNY 1,000 (USD 120) to families that include an elderly relative. The three-year project is sponsored by the European Union, and also works in rural areas of Hunan and Sichuan.

Given that the family remains the mainstay of care for older people in rural areas, boosting the household income is essential to improving care, including access to health care. The project, notes HelpAge Regional Project Manager, Joseph Pannirselvam, is also a way of bolstering the social status of older relatives. 'Older people were beginning to be seen as burden,' he notes, but the Old People's Associations have helped to restore their position in village society.

An Association is established for every 100 older people in the project sites, with larger villages having two Associations. In Xishan, close to 90% of the older population have joined up. Regular meetings are held to discuss and make decisions on loan applications that are distributed from a revolving fund of EUR 6000 (USD 7,760) per Association.

The loans offer the prospect of raising incomes above bare subsistence. One farmer tells us that providing food for his family all the year round 'shouldn't be a problem', but that meat is only served once every two months. Their loan, which buys three goats, may at least improve the family diet.



Income generated from the sale of milk and lambs could, in the longer-term, allow Lao Wang to receive the corrective surgery for a cataract that has left her partially blind, or fund a university education for one of the children. Most of the adults in Xishan have not studied beyond middle school.

But much depends on the ability of villagers to make prudent investments and repay loans, enabling the scheme, which is hoping to attract additional finance, to sustain itself. Interest rates, are modest, at 3%, and will not add much to the loan principal; but raising enough cash to make a lump sum repayment may prove problematic. With milk sales only bringing in CNY 4 (USD 0.5) from a daily yield of 5 kg, it will be necessary to sell five lambs in order to repay a CNY 1000 loan. The first batch of loan results should be available in Autumn 2005.

The project also trains local health workers, sensitising them to the needs of older people and building links between the community and service-providers. If the welcome for project staff and accompanying officials is anything to go by, there is already a deep sense of appreciation.

Low government revenues in rural areas and urban bias in central resource allocation have meant that social service provision has tended to start in cities and extend only gradually to the countryside. The HelpAge project, says Regional Representative Eduardo Klien, is trying to develop a rural model that can be replicated more widely. Its approach appears to fit the context, reinforcing the traditional value of respect for the elderly in order to strengthen informal, family care for older people.

**April 12 2005**

### Short News Items

## *Public enquiries draw SEPA and green NGOs closer together*

A series of real and 'mock' public enquiries on environmental issues has strengthened the growing, informal alliance between environmental NGOs and the State Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA).

On April 13, SEPA convened a public enquiry on a redevelopment project at Beijing's *Yuanmingyuan* — the imperial gardens adjacent to the emperor's Summer Palace, which were sacked and looted by European armies in the nineteenth century. The carefully preserved site has since become a public, recreational amenity that is also an ideologically-charged reminder of wounded, national sovereignty.

The Haidian District government, responsible for the site, began last year to re-landscape the gardens, draining a lake to cover the lake bed with impervious, plastic sheeting to prevent the water level dropping.

A scholar from western China, visiting the gardens, objected that the CNY 10-20 million (USD 1.2-2.5 million) project would disturb the ecosystems that had developed in the lake and gardens. Green NGOs took up the cause.

Environmentalists had similarly protested when, several years ago, the Beijing city government installed concrete lining along channels that bring drinking water to the capital from Miyun reservoir, fifty kilometres north-east of the city. At that time, NGOs and researchers clashed with city leaders in a stormy, private meeting, but there was no public enquiry and local media were ordered not to report on the event.

Thus, although of only minor significance in the context of China's environment at large, NGOs saw the *Yuanmingyuan* enquiry as a test case for public participation in environmental decision making. The status of the site as an important 'cultural relic' added piquancy to the debate and ensured widespread coverage in Beijing media.

Work on the project is in fact well advanced, but the enquiry gave seven NGOs and several scholars the opportunity to air their views. SEPA has not yet announced a ruling on the project, but the environmentalists nonetheless claimed a moral victory for their cause.

The previous week-end, the China Rivers Network, an informal activist association loosely based on the International Rivers Network, held its own, mock enquiry, in private, into the planned construction of a hydropower dam on the Yangtze River at Tiger Leaping Gorge in Yunnan Province. Participants role-played debates between planning authorities and environmental activists. One participant commented that the event was

not well prepared or 'professional,' but it nonetheless shows how the activist community is beginning to gear up for arguing its case in public fora.

An opportunity to hone debating and presentation skills was provided on April 16-17 when the China Environmental Culture Promotion Association (CECPA) and Global Village of Beijing held a training workshop in public enquiries for environmental NGOs. The training included a mock enquiry into a real case, in which local residents had protested a decision to build a high-voltage electricity relay station close to residential communities, and also close to the Summer Palace, in northwest Beijing.

The CECPA is a 'GONGO' ('government-organised NGO') closely affiliated to the State Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), and much of the week-end training was delivered by SEPA departmental heads.

Pan Yue, who is both President of the CECPA and head of SEPA, made a personal appearance at the training and spent more than an hour talking to the NGO participants. They asked about his widely-publicised February 2005 announcement that SEPA would suspend 30 construction projects that had failed to meet environmental standards. (See China Development Brief, February 2005.) Most of the projects were subsequently approved.

This was not a U-turn, Pan Yue told the NGO trainees. Rather, SEPA had managed to assert the principle that infrastructure projects must be subjected to proper impact assessment procedures. The episode, he argued, had served to strengthen the Agency's role as environmental watchdog.

However, Director Pan also implicitly recognised a 'public supervision' role for 'grassroots' NGOs. 'We are all in the same family,' he told participants.

**NY, April 22 2005**

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## *China is key link in destruction of Indonesian forests, says report*

China is the main market for tropical hardwood illegally logged in Indonesia, where primary

forest covering an area the size of Switzerland is cut each year despite official bans, according to a report by the UK-based international campaigning organisation, Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), and their Indonesian partner, Telapak.

The report estimates that every month 300,000 cubic metres of rare, merbau timber is illegally exported from the sparsely populated Indonesian province of Papua which, together with neighbouring Papua New Guinea, is home to Asia's largest remaining tracts of tropical rain forest.

Much of the 'stolen timber,' says the report, goes to the Yangtze delta port of Zhangjiayang, and thence to the nearby city of Nanxun, in Zhejiang Province, where 200 sawmills and 500 wood flooring factories have sprung up over the last five years. Some 70% of the rare timber is processed into luxury flooring materials, used mainly in Chinese homes but also exported to Europe, Japan, Canada and the United States. This China-based industry consumes one Papuan *merbau* tree every minute of every working day, according to the report.

In Papuan forests, says the report, 'the Indonesian military is involved in every aspect of illegal logging.' Soldiers on the payroll of logging companies use strong-arm tactics, including 'intimidation, assault and rape' to bully indigenous communities into selling their ancestral forests for a pittance. In one case, a company acquired 'timber worth almost three million dollars on the international market at a cost of just \$22,000.' Indonesian customs officials and naval vessels turn a blind eye to cargo ships that carry off the booty.

Malaysian companies often act as brokers and intermediaries, providing falsified papers that claim the logs originate from Malaysia. Shipping is generally arranged by brokers in Singapore and Hong Kong.

China banned logging of its own forests in 1998, following exceptionally heavy floods that were widely blamed on deforestation in the upper reaches of the country's major rivers. Since then, China's timber imports have soared: from one million cubic metres in 1997 to 16 million cubic metres in 2002, according to the EIA/Telapak report. By 2010, the report suggests, annual imports could reach 100 million cubic metres.

Although Papuan *merbau* is particularly valuable, it accounts for only a relatively small proportion of China's total timber imports. Russia is the main source of timber illegally imported into China. The report estimates that 9.2 million cubic metres of Russian timber were illegally imported into China in 2004.

Indonesia introduced logging restrictions in 2001, and in 2002 signed a bilateral agreement with China to stem the illegal timber trade. But, says the EIA/ Telapak report, a lucrative illegal trade has flourished on a diet of intimidation, bribery and corruption.

Established in 1984, the EIA uses undercover investigation methods to expose environmental crimes. In researching the timber trade report, EIA and Telapak investigators visited communities in Paupa, brokers in Hong Kong and ports and factories in China, often posing as timber traders and buyers.

**NY, April 20 2005**

'The Last Frontier: Illegal Logging in Papua and China's Massive Timber Theft' can be accessed in full via [www.eia-international.org](http://www.eia-international.org) and [www.telapak.org](http://www.telapak.org)

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## *Muslim Hands reach out to Gansu*

Muslim Hands, a British charity established in 1993 in response to the humanitarian crisis in Bosnia, has recently begun operations in Gansu Province, making it the second UK-based Islamic NGO to open a programme in China's north-west. Islamic Relief has supported work in Shaanxi, Gansu and Xinjiang since 2002.

Muslim Hands works across Europe, Africa, Latin America and Asia. Its China projects, which began in 2004, include provision of scholarships for children from poor families, corrective surgery for children with cleft lips and palates, and distribution of food aid in Gansu's Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture.

Although activities are currently modest in scale, a spokesperson for Muslim Hands said in a telephone interview that they hope to also venture into areas such as water security and vocational

education, provided there is sufficient interest from donors. The China programme is funded exclusively by private individuals, organisations and businesses from Muslim communities.

**MP April, 25 2005**

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## *Legal Aid Foundation launches fundraising drive to fill service gap*

The China Legal Aid Foundation, established by the Ministry of Justice in 1997, is targeting better-off local governments, offshore and foreign businesses in a fundraising drive to expand legal aid provision to cash-strapped western provinces, it announced during an April 7th meeting in Beijing.

Over the last year, with support from the Ford Foundation, the Legal Aid Foundation has recruited more than 70 law graduates and placed them in county-level legal aid centres in fourteen western provinces. The young lawyers are contracted for two years to provide pro bono legal aid services, in return for a modest stipend of just CNY 600 (USD 72) per month.

The Legal Aid Foundation is now seeking donations from the local governments of China's 100 richest counties to support legal aid in the 592 counties officially designated as 'poor'. The Foundation hopes to channel CNY 10,000 (USD 1,200) per year for the next three years to each of these poor counties, to help kick-start their legal aid service. The poor counties, many of which do not yet have a single legal aid lawyer, will be expected to make an equal, matching contribution.

China created a legal aid system in 1994. It was boosted in 2003 by the publication of regulations that formally recognise the state's duty to provide legal aid in a wide range of criminal and civil cases — including compensation claims against the government.

However, government funding falls far short of what is needed to provide a comprehensive service, and senior officials have actively encouraged 'social forces' to fill the service gap.

According to a research report by the Law Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the government allocated a total of CNY 78 million (USD 9.4 million) for legal aid in 2002, amounting to 90% of total expenditure in this area.

Hundreds of millions of *yuan* would be needed to provide comprehensive coverage, Legal Aid Foundation spokesperson Gong Yongde told *China Development Brief* over the phone from Shenzhen, where he was organising a fundraising event.

The Foundation, says Gong, is considering setting up branch offices in Kunming (Yunnan) and Qingdao (Shandong) to boost fundraising efforts in the southern and eastern regions. Its target is to raise CNY 30 million in 2005.

Foundation President, Zhang Xiufu, told the April meeting in Beijing that the concept of legal aid and its importance to building a harmonious society should be publicised more widely in order to encourage donations. Zhang also emphasised the importance of accountability, calling for transparency and careful monitoring of every donation.

**TQ, April 22 2005**

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### *Study critiques poverty alleviation funding, suggests new policies*

China should scrap 'poverty alleviation loans,' abandon the system of targeting support only to officially designated poor counties, strengthen village level participatory planning and make funding available for NGO poverty reduction projects, Professor Li Xiaoyun of the China Agricultural University told a meeting of international donors, government officials and farmers representatives, held in Beijing on April 18.

The meeting was convened to hear the results of a research project into Targeting and Deviation of Poverty Alleviation Funds in China.' The UK Department for International Development funded the research, which was carried out by Professor Li and colleagues who

conducted field research in eight poor counties of four provinces.

Like many earlier studies, the research found that continuing economic growth is no longer in itself bringing substantial reductions in the number of people living in poverty, and that low-income loans are largely ineffective as a means of poverty reduction because they seldom reach the neediest households. Professor Li suggested that commercially sound microfinance be delivered instead through Rural Credit Cooperatives. Money that is currently used to subsidise credit via poverty alleviation loans, he said, could be allocated instead to 'technical assistance funds' open to local government agencies and NGOs implementing poverty reduction projects.

Also echoing previous studies, Professor Li said that only 60% of China's remaining poor live within the 592 officially designated poverty counties. He called for poverty alleviation funding to be targeted more effectively, to include poor communities in 'non-poor' counties, and also pointed out the need for wider, social protections and safety nets for households that are poor or vulnerable to poverty.

Village-level participatory planning, said Professor Li, should be further recognised and strengthened.

He also noted that a Development-Oriented Poverty Reduction Programme for Rural China, 2001-1010, which is the key government policy document in this field, is now due for mid-term review. Professor Li told *China Development Brief* that he expected 'a series of policy adjustments,' drawing on his research, in the near future.

**TQ April 23 2005**

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### *World Bank environment strategy promotes sustainable transport agenda*

A World Bank environment strategy paper for the East Asia and Pacific region, published in April, praises the region's economic performance but laments its environmental record, which is described as a 'grow now, clean up later' approach



to development.

The paper announces a new regional initiative to promote sustainable urban transport strategies. Projects planned for China and other countries are thought likely candidates for Global Environment Facility support.

Integration of environmental considerations into development planning is identified as a priority area for China. The paper also discusses valuation of environmental health risks; green accounting; the environmental challenges of urbanization; environment-poverty linkages; pollution prevention and management; energy efficiency and sustainable water and land management.

The strategy paper calls for greater attention to local circumstances, together with the engagement of local communities and stakeholders in project design. Increased cooperation and dialogue between governments, the private sector and civil society is recommended, especially with respect to growing trans-boundary, regional and global issues.

**MP, April 22 2005**

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### *Yunnan initiative aims to take 'participation' from community to county level*

A Regional Development Research Centre (RDRC) attached to Yunnan University and the Philippines-based International Institute for Rural Reconstruction are to collaborate in a two-year project to introduce county-level 'participatory planning processes' in two counties of Yunnan Province, with USD 150,000 funding support from the Ford Foundation.

'We have so much experience at community level, but very little at county level' says RDRC Director, Lü Xing, who in the early 1990s helped pioneer 'participatory rural appraisal' (PRA) techniques in rural development projects in Yunnan.

The new project, he says, will work with county-level Reform and Development Commissions, which are responsible for drawing up five-year plans for their counties, and look for ways to

make those plans responsive to locally expressed opinion, rather than being driven by top-down targets and quotas. 'We want to build social spaces that allow community interest groups to become involved in planning processes,' says Lü.

The project will start in Yimen County, close to the provincial capital, Kunming. This, says Lü Xing, was chosen for ease of access but also because of the open-minded attitude and 'pioneering spirit' of the county government officials. A second site will be identified later.

Lü used to head a Rural Development Research Centre within the Yunnan Geography Institute, affiliated to the provincial Science and Technology Commission. The Centre implemented experimental, rural development projects across the province, and also served as a secretariat for the Yunnan PRA network, which brought together researchers, officials and rural development practitioners in an informal association to share experience and promote participatory methodologies.

Three years ago, the Centre moved from the Geography Institute to Yunnan University, also changing its name from 'Rural' to 'Regional' Development Research Centre. Staff from the reconstructed RDRC now teach courses for Bachelor and Masters students in the University's Department of Resources, Environment and Earth Science. Courses designed by RDRC emphasise analysis and discussion of real case studies, rather than textbook learning. Assessment is mainly by coursework assignments rather than by examination papers, in contrast to the general practice in Chinese universities.

The Centre recently began to offer short training courses for county, township and community level officials. These draw on the experience of an 'understanding and building community assets for development' programme, also funded by the Ford Foundation. That three-year project sought through local training programmes to build community leadership, as a way of ensuring that local development momentum would continue after internationally funded development projects phased out. Its main sites were Yangliu township of Xuanwei County in Yunnan, and Caohai Nature Reserve in Guizhou's Weining County,

In addition, RDRC has been contracted by a

training centre attached to the national Leading Group for Poverty Reduction to develop training materials for Poverty Alleviation officials who oversee village-level participatory planning.

**NY, April 21, 2005**

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### *ADB to help extend, legalise credit to the neediest*

The Asian Development Bank has announced a new USD 1 million Technical Assistance project that aims over the next four years to expand by 30% credit and savings services to rural dwellers in two of China's poorest provinces, Guizhou and Inner Mongolia.

The project, which began in November 2004, builds on a 2003 government policy decision to restructure Rural Credit Cooperatives (RCCs), whose financial performance ADB describes as 'dismal.' By the end of 2001, 44% of all RCC loans were non-performing, according to project documents.

Numerous other problems have also plagued the management of rural financial institutions, including lack of clarity over ownership, weak staff capacity and corporate governance that denies farmers a voice in a top-down planning system.

Guizhou was one of a group of eight pilot areas that began restructuring RCCs in 2003. ADB is sending a team of international and domestic experts to assist in the full-scale implementation of reforms, announced in Autumn 2004, which will cover a further 21 Provinces including Inner Mongolia.

Activities in Inner Mongolia will build on experience from the pilots, assessing the performance of RCCs, helping to design and implement a strategy for RCC policy and preparing viable cooperatives for restructuring into commercial entities. Work will also include establishing a 'conducive policy environment' — a reference to discriminatory policies and restrictions currently imposed on RCCs.

In Guizhou, RCC staff will be trained to improve loan operations. Provincial and local government will also be engaged in the programme,

which hopes to improve understanding of microfinance policy. The project also hopes to establish a licensed microfinance institution in Jiangkou, Guizhou. Currently, there is no legal framework for licencing microfinance in China.

The ADB Technical Assistance grant, made through the Bank's Poverty Reduction Cooperation Fund (PRF), is part of a strategic partnership with the UK government Department for International Development (DfID). As part of its new strategy ADB is committed to promoting pro-poor economic growth and increasing the proportion of non-loan funding through partnerships with other donors. DfID's overall commitment to the Poverty Reduction Fund is GBP 39 million (USD 75 million).

Commenting from ADB's headquarters in Manila, ADB Principal Financial Economist, Qian Ying, described the project as 'a good opportunity to change the mindset of people [in government and banking].' It will, he says, bring some welcome pace to the financial reform movement, which has lagged behind other sectors.

According to the ADB, poverty in Asia remains a critical issue as population growth continues to swell the absolute number of poor, defined as those living on less than a dollar a day. Although the proportion of poor has fallen, 900 million people in Asia are still classified as poor, 225 million of them residing in China.

**MP, March 7 2005**

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### *DfID picks Family Health International to help draw AIDS 'road map'*

The UK Department for International Development (DfID) has contracted a consortium led by Family Health International to provide technical and capacity building support to the State AIDS Working Committee Office (SAWCO) in a new project that aims to develop a 'road map' for AIDS prevention and care in China.

DfID has committed funding of GBP 5-6 million over three years to the 'China Aids Road Map Technical Support (CHARTS)' project. Two

thirds of the funding is allocated to SAWCO for capacity building activities, and one third — slightly less than USD 3 million at current exchange rates — will purchase technical assistance from Family Health International, the China Aids Information Network and a UK-based development consultancy, Options.

The CHARTS project will follow a ‘three ones’ strategy developed by UNAIDS on the basis of experience in Africa. This sets out three desiderata for an effective, national response to AIDS: a single national authority — in China’s case, SAWCO — responsible for coordinating the national response; a single national plan, and a single monitoring and evaluation system.

Family Health International and its partners will provide SAWCO with technical advice and capacity building support in four areas: strategic planning; strengthening project implementation at provincial level and below; information sharing and use, and the development of a human and financial resource plan.

According to Family Health International Country Director, Cheng Feng, the organisation will place a full-time senior technical adviser with SAWCO to help develop the next five-year action plan for AIDS prevention and control, as well as organizing strategic planning workshops and trainings. One objective of the process will be to assign clear roles and responsibilities to more than 30 government departments that are represented in the National AIDS Prevention and Control Leading Group.

The project will also aim to build implementation capacity in seven provinces — Gansu, Guangxi, Hubei, Hunan, Jilin, Sichuan and Zhejiang. Dr. Cheng notes that awareness and commitment are now high at central level, but lag in some provinces. By way of example, he cites the Spring Festival visits of Premier Wen Jiabao to AIDS-affected areas of Henan, and public handshaking with AIDS patients. Several years ago, Dr. Cheng recalls, then President Jiang Zemin publicly administered polio vaccine to children, in order to boost the polio eradication campaign. In the days that followed, many provincial governors across China followed Jiang’s example; yet none has so far replicated Premier Wen’s and President Hu Jintao’s public embrace of people with AIDS.

Work on sharing and use of information will aim to support government capacity not simply to collect data but also to analyse it, says Dr. Cheng. It will also aim to strengthen media reporting on AIDS, and to develop appropriate ‘information, education and communication’ materials.

Planning of human and financial resources refers to projecting exactly what kind of professional staff will be needed, with what skills, and where, over the coming years.

Based in the United States, Family Health International is one of the world’s largest public health NGOs, working in more than 70 countries worldwide. Since 2001 it has implemented HIV/AIDS prevention and care programmes funded by USAID and DfID in Yunnan, Sichuan and Guangxi.

Options is a UK-based management consultancy specialising in health and social sectors, established in 1992. In 2004 it created a non-profit arm, Options for International Health, in the United States.

The China HIV/AIDS Information Network (CHAIN), which describes itself as ‘an independent, government organisation,’ was established in 2003 and is based in the national Centre for Disease Control. It collects and disseminates information on HIV/AIDS for policymakers, researchers and health care professionals, and also maintains libraries of written and audiovisual information education and communication materials.

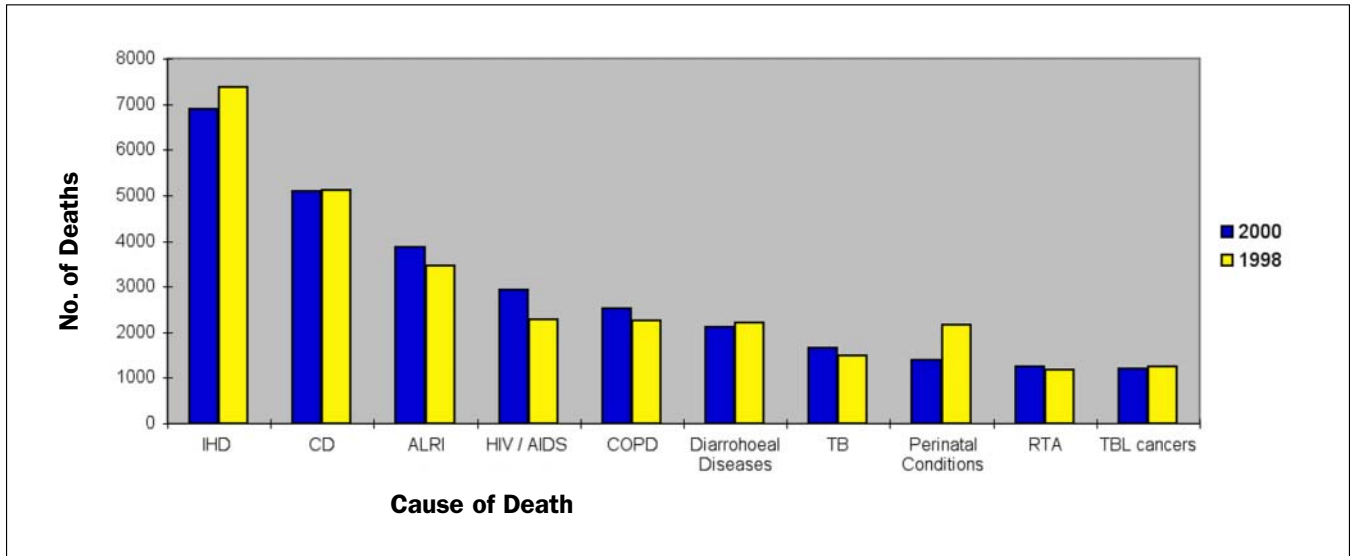
DfID is now seeking consultants to design a further, technical assistance programme to help China implement projects funded by the Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. The technical assistance is expected to include support for programme and financial management of grants from the Global Fund.

**NY, April 22 2005**

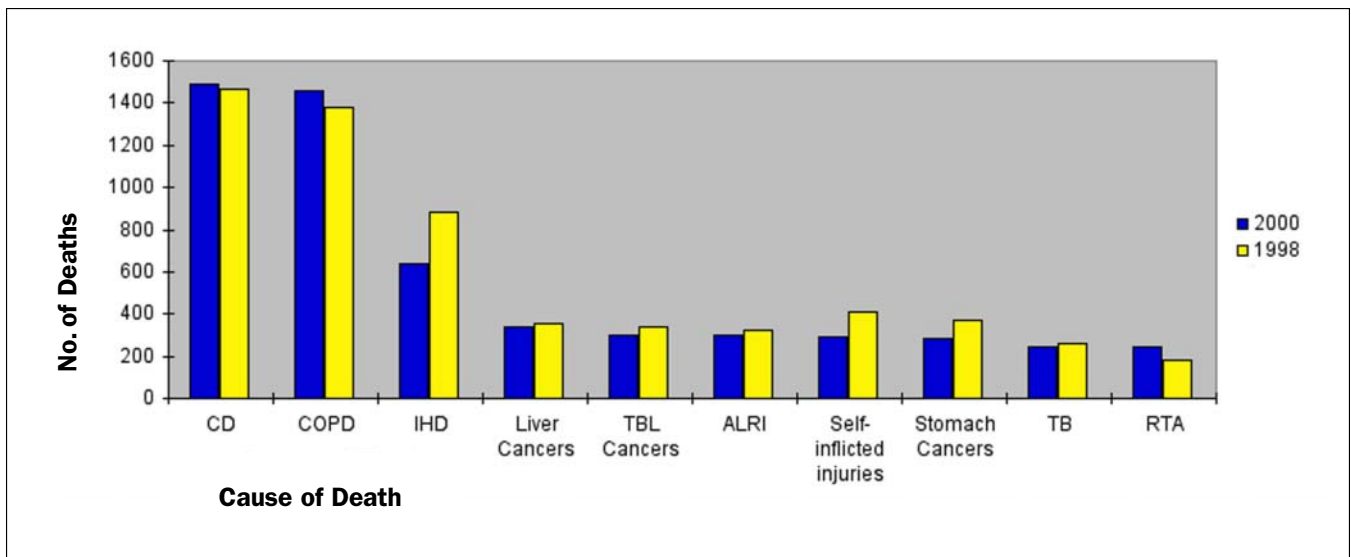
China by Numbers

# Health and Mortality

## 1. Top 10 Causes of Death (2000) in the World for all ages (Unit: 1,000)



## 2. Top 10 Causes of Death (2000) in China for all ages (Unit: 1,000)



**key:** CD = Cerebrovascular Disease. COPD = Chronic Obstructive Pulmoary Disease. IHD = Ischaemic Heart Disease. RTA = Road traffic accidents. ALRI = Acute Lower Respiratory Infections. TBL Cancers = Trachea / Bronchus / Lung Cancers. HHD = Hypertensive Heart Disease. TB = Tuberculosis

**Source:** The information in tables 1 and 2 comes form the World Health Organisation.

*Continued*



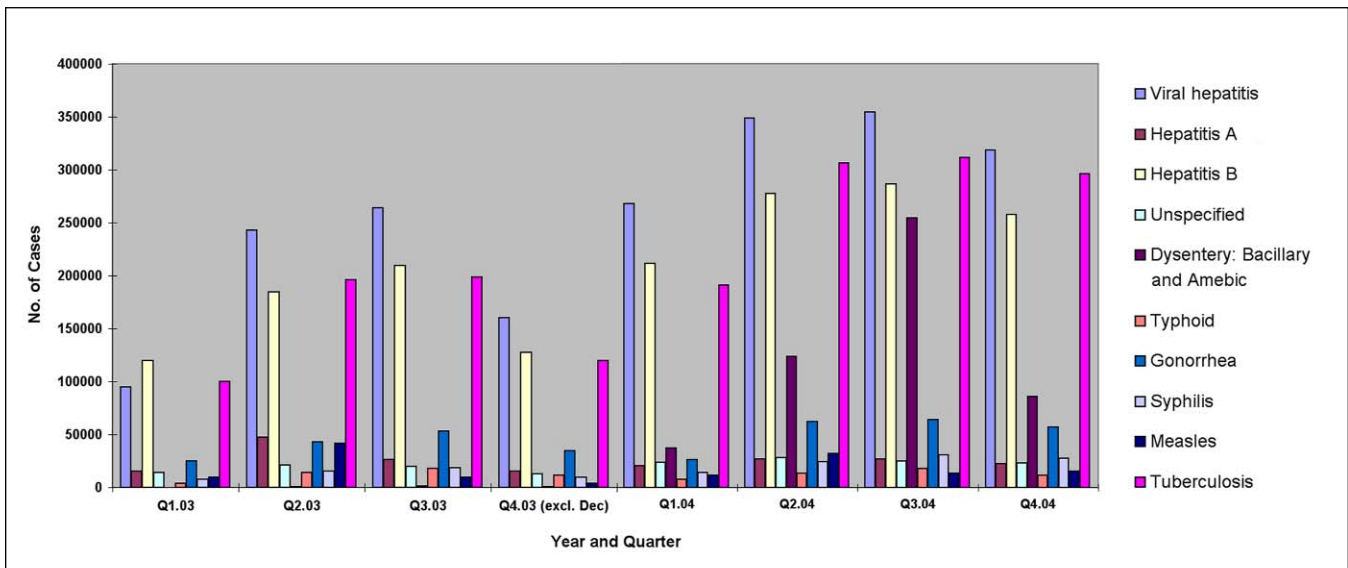
3. Leading Causes of Death in China Across all Ages, 1998 and 2000

0 to 4			5 to 14			15 to 44			45 to 59			>60		
RANK		DEATHS	RANK		DEATHS	RANK		DEATHS	RANK		DEATHS	RANK		DEATHS
1. (2)	ALRI	247221 (171,681)	1. (1)	Drowning	39779 (33,827)	1. (1)	Self-inflicted injuries	141111 (204,922)	1. (1)	CD	179141 (203,935)	1. (1)	COPD	1352380 (1,244,601)
2. (1)	Perinatal Conditions	137522 (186,196)	2. (2)	RTA	16034 (14,618)	2. (2)	RTA	131340 (90,629)	2. (2)	Liver Cancers	114223 (125,583)	2. (2)	CD	1266916 (1,209,961)
3. (N)	Low Birth Weight	75,689 (-)	3. (4)	Leukaemia	8025 (8,891)	3. (3)	Liver Cancers	66186 (71,654)	3. (3)	COPD	88956 (110,714)	3. (3)	IHD	523397 (733,192)
4. (4)	Drowning	58099 (42,301)	4. (3)	Congenital Abnormalities	7626 (9,179)	4. (4)	CD	38707 (47,761)	4. (4)	IHD	85981 (108,183)	4. (5)	TBL cancers	208264 (237,780)
5. (3)	Congenital Abnormalities	36813 (56,563)	5. (5)	ALRI	6257 (6,384)	5. (5)	TB	37438 (43,641)	5. (6)	TBL cancers	78717 (86,736)	5. (N)	Hypertensive Heart Disease	195,404 (-)
6. (5)	Diarrhoeal Diseases	23905 (30,122)	6. (N)	Childhood Cluster Diseases	4,546 (-)	6. (9)	Drowning	34302 (34,337)	6. (5)	Stomach Cancers	69142 (95,077)	6. (4)	Stomach Cancers	194603 (246,663)
7. (N)	Upper Respiratory Infections	18,872 (-)	7. (8)	Poisoning	4051 (3,838)	7. (6)	IHD	32020 (39,340)	7. (7)	Self-inflicted injuries	56789 (73,319)	7. (7)	Liver Cancers	157422 (156,034)
8. (N)	Childhood Cluster Diseases	17,180 (-)	8. (N)	Falls	3,763 (-)	8. (12)	Nephritis / Nephrosis	23837 (28,537)	8. (8)	TB	52750 (65,410)	8. (8)	TB	152699 (142,005)
9. (6)	Protein-Energy Malnutrition	15031 (16,595)	9. (6)	Self-inflicted injuries	2649 (5,253)	9. (7)	Cirrhosis of the liver	21038 (-)	9. (10)	Oesophagus Cancers	47,089 (54,767)	9. (6)	Oesophagus Cancers	144982 (165,660)
10. (12)	RTA	10642 (6,153)	10. (9)	Interpersonal Violence	1943 (2,813)	10. (N)	Falls	20,610 (-)	10. (12)	RTA	46,786 (36,228)	10	Self-inflicted injuries	94769 (129,101)

(Numbers in brackets refer to 1998 ranking. (N) stands for a new entry.)

Source: World Health Organisation.

4. Top 10 Most Common Communicable Diseases (China) 2003 / 2004



Source: China Statistical Yearbook 2004.