

HOPE IN A CHANGING CLIMATE

a new film by:



Environmental
Education
Media Project

MEDIA BACKGROUNDER – THE FILM, STORY, PEOPLE & ORGANIZATION

WHAT IF THERE WAS A NATURAL WAY TO SEQUESTER CARBON, JUST AS IT HAD ORIGINALLY BEEN REMOVED FROM THE ATMOSPHERE OVER EVOLUTIONARY TIME?

WHAT IF IT WERE POSSIBLE TO HAVE STREAMS FLOW AGAIN THROUGHOUT THE YEAR, INSTEAD OF ONLY DURING THE RAINY SEASON?

WHAT IF IT WERE POSSIBLE TO RETURN BARREN LANDS TO FERTILITY, ENDING HUNGER FOR MILLIONS OF PEOPLE?

The Film

“Hope in a Changing Climate” will be aired globally by the BBC World on November 27, 2009, and screened at the COP 15 climate change summit in Copenhagen from December 7 – 18.

This documentary demonstrates that it is possible to rehabilitate large-scale damaged ecosystems, to restore ecosystem functions in areas where they have been lost, to fundamentally improve the lives of people who have been trapped in poverty for generations, and to sequester carbon naturally. This approach has been dramatically proven on the Loess Plateau in China, the highland area spanning some 640,000 square km in north central China. It is the birthplace of the Han Chinese, headwaters of The Yellow River and home to a new environmental and economic paradigm; a degraded ecosystem of more than 35,000 square km of land now teems with life and supports the sustainable economic, social, and agricultural activities of its people.

“Hope in a Changing Climate” is the latest documentary produced by the Environmental Education Media Project (EEMP), an organization dedicated to placing ecosystem restoration at the center of global discussions on climate change, poverty, and sustainable agriculture. Shot in stunning HD on location in China, Ethiopia and Rwanda, the film features a diverse collection of interviews, from world leaders such as president of Rwanda HE Paul Kagame, to local people telling their own stories. “Hope in a Changing Climate” is directed by Jeremy Bristow, producer of the award-winning BBC documentaries featuring Sir David Attenborough, “Are We Changing Planet Earth?” and “Can We Save Planet Earth?” The film is presented by John D. Liu, an environmental filmmaker and ecological field researcher who has produced and directed documentaries for CBS, National Geographic and the BBC.

Financial support for the film is provided by IUCN-Netherlands, Open University, The Rockefeller Foundation, the Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture, and The World Bank.

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The Story

Cap and trade is surely not the story of a lifetime. And curbing industrial emissions of greenhouse gases, as fundamental as this end-of-the-pipe solution may be to stabilizing our changing climate, is not enough to secure our future.

Climate change is not an isolated, discrete challenge. It is, on the contrary, at the nexus of how human behavior is altering the fundamental cycles of nature that have enabled our planet to emerge over geologic time from a cosmic boulder surrounded by toxic gases to the blue planet teeming with life.

Framed this way, new solutions emerge about how to address the challenge of climate change.

There is compelling evidence all around the world that if we understand ecosystem function, then we don't have to degrade it. Research and documentation show that soil moisture, relative humidity, temperature, microclimates, and soil fertility are dynamic, and human actions significantly determine whether these are lost in a vicious cycle or accumulate in a virtuous circle. By understanding the scientific principles that regulate the water cycle, biomass, biodiversity and accumulated organic matter, it is possible to not only protect existing healthy ecosystems but to restore ecosystems that have been degraded either recently or over historical time.

A functional methodology for employing the desperately poor in this restoration work has also been successfully demonstrated and documented, and has the potential to lift tens if not hundreds of millions of people out of an entrenched cycle of endemic poverty.

For more than ten years, John D. Liu, the Environmental Education Media Project and colleagues around the world have been identifying best practices and documenting effective methods for large-scale restoration of damaged or destroyed ecosystems. On the Loess Plateau, an area the size of Belgium has been successfully restored over ten years. A barren, brown landscape, denuded and degraded, has been brought back to life; a people entrenched in back-breaking poverty now work, farm, herd, and live, in a functioning, green ecosystem where rainfall infiltrates, water is retained and crops are readied for export.

Firmly rooted in science, and synthesizing knowledge and experience across myriad disciplines, this story has primarily been told – so far – through more than 170 direct presentations. From Kigali to London, from Addis Ababa to Paris, from Beijing to Bangkok we have spoken to bankers, students, presidents, journalists, and scientists. That international discussion now expands dramatically – through the 27 Nov. BBC World broadcast and screenings with world leaders in Copenhagen.

The potential to scale this demonstrated success has been specifically recognized by The World Bank, The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), The Jane Goodall Institute, and the Rothamsted Research Institute. Nations are also beginning to see the vast potential of this approach. The government of President HE Paul Kagame in Rwanda, for example, has adopted a new national land-use policy based on EEMP's presentations and analysis.

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The People

The project team assembled to tell this story is as diverse as the story is complex. Each of the key players has extensive experience; combined, they bring decades of crosscutting experience in filmmaking, environmental research, communications, media, and education.

John Dennis Liu has been studying integrated poverty eradication and large-scale ecosystem rehabilitation since first visiting and filming China's Loess Plateau in 1995. He has produced, written and directed many ecological films for the BBC, National Geographic and other networks including: "A Steppe Ahead," "Line in the Sand," "Because They're Worth It," "Jane Goodall – China Diary," and "The Lessons of the Loess Plateau." He lives and works in Beijing.

Jeremy Bristow has a strong news and current affairs background and is the only producer to have made films for Panorama (BBC's flagship Current Affairs strand) and The Natural World (BBC's flagship Natural History strand). He has won numerous international awards and British Environmental Media Awards. He lives and works in the United Kingdom.

Jonathan J. Halperin, Executive Director of the EEMP, is based in Washington, DC, and has more than 25 years of management, communications, research, and campaigning experience with nonprofit and commercial organizations such as SustainAbility, Resources for the Future, and FYI Resources for a Changing World. Halperin has devoted most of his professional career to helping clients, journalists, business leaders, and activists work effectively at the nexus of public policy, energy, environmental, and social issues and attitudes.

The Goal

EEMP's goal is to incubate large-scale ecosystem restoration projects on each continent (except Antarctica), drawing from the experience in China and refreshing our approach with every subsequent effort.

The Mission

EEMP catalyzes large-scale ecosystem restoration through research, education, advocacy, project incubation, and documentation.

The Vision

EEMP envisions a world community that respects the linkages between ecosystem restoration, integrated poverty eradication, and climate stability – and that collaborates across geographic, cultural, economic, and political divides to restore the global ecosystem upon which we all depend.

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MEDIA BACKGROUNDER – SOURCES OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT

IUCN – NETHERLANDS

www.iucn.nl

“IUCN NL is a bridge between social organizations, the government, business and science and focuses on all kinds of subjects pertaining to the struggle against the loss in biodiversity. In collaboration with the same partners IUCN NL applies this knowledge to come to a constructive Dutch contribution to solving global issues in the fields of nature and the environment.”

OPEN UNIVERSITY

www.open.ac.uk

“The Open University (OU) is the United Kingdom's only university dedicated to distance learning. The Open University is open to people, places, methods and ideas. It promotes educational opportunity and social justice by providing high-quality university education to all who wish to realise their ambitions and fulfill their potential. Through academic research, pedagogic innovation and collaborative partnership it seeks to be a world leader in the design, content and delivery of supported open and distance learning.”

THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION

www.rockfound.org

“Since its establishment in 1913, the Rockefeller Foundation has sought to identify and attack at their source the underlying causes of human suffering. The Foundation pioneered the frontier of global philanthropy and continues to find and fund solutions to many of the world's most intractable challenges. The Rockefeller Foundation attempts to harness the creative forces of globalization, supporting breakthrough solutions to 21st century challenges.”

SYNGENTA FOUNDATION FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

www.syngentafoundation.org

“The Foundation supports partners who work in agriculture in resource-poor settings in developing countries and emerging markets. The Foundation's purpose is to help small farmers become more professional growers by extending science-based know-how, facilitating access to quality inputs, and linking them to markets in profitable ways. Small farmers are the key group requiring attention in agricultural and rural development. The world's poverty and hunger problems cannot be solved otherwise, and their contribution to food supplies is needed.”

THE WORLD BANK

www.worldbank.org

“The World Bank is a vital source of financial and technical assistance to developing countries around the world. Our mission is to fight poverty with passion and professionalism for lasting results and to help people help themselves and their environment by providing resources, sharing knowledge, building capacity and forging partnerships in the public and private sectors.”



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WEBSITES

“Hope in a Changing Climate”
www.hopeinachangingclimate.org

Environmental Education Media Project
www.eemp.org

EEMP on Youtube
www.youtube.com/EarthsHopeChannel

John D. Liu presenting at the 2009 Tällberg Forum
<http://webbtv.compodium.se/tallberg09/ondemand/034/>



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MEDIA BACKGROUND – FACILITATED DISCUSSIONS HOSTED IN 14 COUNTRIES

Thirty-eight organizations, on five continents, in 14 nations are confirmed hosts for facilitated discussions and screenings of “Hope in a Changing Climate.” More are expected.

These events coincide with the BBC World transmission in November and COP15 in December.

Countries:

Burundi, China, Costa Rica, Denmark, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, United Kingdom, U.S.A.

Organizations:

A Rocha South Africa	International School of Beijing
Addis Ababa University	International School of HK
Africa 2000 Network-Burundi	IUCN-China
Africa 2000 Network-Uganda	Mekelle University
African Conservation Foundation	Minister of the Environment - China Environmental Culture Promotion Association
African Conservation Tillage	My Social Responsibility
Agricultural Research Institute	The Ogiek People
AIESEC	San Jose Asociacion Ornitologica de Costa Rica (PIF)
Beijing University	NatureKenya
CAMCO	REMA
Copenhagen International School	Rwanda TV
EDPRS/MINAGRI	South African National Biodiversity Institute
Food & Trees for Africa	Swaziland National Trust Commission
George Mason University	Tanzania Association for Environmental Engineers
The Green Belt Movement	Tanzania Natural Resource Forum
Greening the Beige	Tsingua University
Haramaya University	Uganda Environmental Education Foundation
Higher Institute of Agriculture and Livestock of Rwanda	
Horn Relief Bosaso	
The International Center for Environmental, Social & Policy Studies	



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