Million Tree Project (MTP)

China
Zhenxi Zhong
Organization type: nonprofit/ngo/citizen sector
Project Stage: Established
Budget: $500,000 - $1 million
Website: http://www.jgi-shanghai.org

- Community development
- Climate change
- Environment
- Education
- Rural development
- Sustainable development
- Volunteerism

Project Summary

Elevator Pitch

Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.

Shanghai Roots & Shoots aims to inspire passion for the environment and humanity in the children and future leaders of China.

About Project

Problem: What problem is this project trying to address?

The Million Tree Project aims to fight global warming, stop desertification, and improve the environment in China while improving the livelihood of the farmers living in the area. The previously lush landscape of Kulun Qi, Inner Mongolia, the site for our tree planting initiative, is now a rapidly expanding desert due to a combination of the greenhouse effect and irresponsible exploitation of the land such as overgrazing and over-farming. Desertification causes serious sandstorms that strike Inner Mongolia and its surrounding areas each spring, destroying local homes and forcing many people to flee their native land.

Solution: What is the proposed solution? Please be specific!

The solution is two-fold: plant trees to stop the desert, but involve and educate the community to ensure the project is sustainable. The concept of the program is simple: you are responsible for the environmental damage you do by living on this earth. Help plant trees in the Inner Mongolian desert to stop desertification, stop the sandstorms, and clean our air. In order to do this we help individuals, companies and schools to calculate their carbon footprint and voluntarily offset that by planting trees. These trees will sequester a known amount of CO2 during their lifetime. We are committed to building local capacity to continue to manage and maintain the forests we are planting by paying farmers to plant/maintain the trees, for 20 years.

Impact: How does it Work

Example: Walk us through a specific example(s) of how this solution makes a difference; include its primary activities.

The goal of MTP is to plant one million trees by 2014. As of 2011, 600,000 trees have been planted with a survival rate of over 85%. Over the course of its lifetime, each tree will clear the air of 250kg of CO2. This has obvious environmental benefits. MTP has a positive social impact, as it encompasses true capacity building by intimately involving the local community in every step of the process: planting, maintaining and monitoring the trees. MTP is also making a difference in local Shanghai schools. With the guidance of our resources, R&S student groups can run their own initiatives in the classroom educating their peers about desertification and the impact of global warming in China. The most active R&S groups can earn the chance to participate in one of the school tree planting trips by completing the 1,000 tree challenge each year. A quote from a participant on one of our most recent trips to Inner Mongolia helps exemplify this point: “I’m going to come back to this place and be like ‘wow, when I was 19 years old, I helped create this forest and I’m going to be proud.’ I’m going to tell my kids that.”

Sustainability

Marketplace: Who else is addressing the problem outlined here? How does the proposed project differ from these approaches?

Green Network, a Japanese NPO organization, also runs a tree planting program in KulunQi, Inner Mongolia. What differentiates MTP from the Green Network, however, is our capacity building initiatives in Inner Mongolia, our on site technical expertise, and the involvement of the Shanghai community to ‘buy’ the trees we plant. We are committed to educating a lifestyle change, while improving the lives of the local farmers, their children...
and the greater Chinese community. We do not see Green Network as a competitor and instead choose to work with them as our peer. Together our organizations can plant more trees.

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**About You**

**Organization:**
Shanghai Roots & Shoots

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**About You**

**First Name**
Zhenxi

**Last Name**
Zhong

**Twitter URL**

**Facebook URL**

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**About Your Organization**

**Organization Name**
Shanghai Roots & Shoots

**Organization Country**
Country where this project is creating social impact

**Your role in Education**
Other.

**The type of school(s) your solution is affiliated with**
Public (tuition-free)

**How long has your organization been operating?**
More than 5 years

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The information you provide here will be used to fill in any parts of your profile that have been left blank, such as interests, organization information, and website. No contact information will be made public. Please uncheck here if you do not want this to happen.

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**Innovation**

**How long has your solution been in operation?**
Operating for 15 years

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Now that you have thought out your entry, help us pitch it.

**Define your company, program, service, or product in 1-2 short sentences [136 characters]**
Shanghai Roots & Shoots aims to inspire passion for the environment and humanity in the children and future leaders of China.

**Identify what is innovative about your solution in 1-2 short sentences [136 characters]**
MTP uniquely involves every level of the Chinese community from local farmers to Shanghai student groups, companies, and individuals.

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**Social Impact**

**What has been the impact of your solution to date?**
We have planted 600,000 trees to date with a survival rate of 85%. Each of these trees will sequester 250 kg of CO2 in its 20 year lifetime. We have worked with over 600 volunteers since 2007 to plant these trees, half of which are student volunteers.

Over 200 local families have participated in the tree planting by both helping to plant and maintain the trees. Once the trees are planted, the land around the trees is made available for intercropping. We estimate that this will increase the income of each of these families by RMB 2,000-3,000 each year.

1,300 students form Kulunqi schools have also participated in environmental education sessions conducted by our volunteers during each tree planting trip.

**What is your projected impact over the next 1-3 years?**
We will continue to work with local farmers and Shanghai student groups to plant one million trees by 2014. This will mean more land for local farmers to inter-crop, which will increase each family’s annual income by RMB 2,000-3,000 per year.

Over the course of the next year, MTP is implementing an environmental education curriculum in schools throughout Shanghai to increase awareness of desertification and its environmental impact in China.

We also will make technical improvements to the local nursery, which will improve seedling propagation, growth, cutting, and transportation. This will increase the survival rate of our trees.

**What barriers might hinder the success of your project? How do you plan to overcome them?**

The unique harsh conditions of the Kul Qi region in Inner Mongolia present a constant challenge to the survival of the trees and the sustainability of...
our project. To overcome this challenge we have recently hired a fulltime forestry manager from the Nanjing Forestry University to live in Inner Mongolia and work with the local farmers to monitor the trees and continue research on the local environment and tree species.

Winning entries present a strong plan for how they will achieve and track growth. Identify your six-month milestone for growing your impact

We aim to increase awareness of our program with the launch of the MTP curriculum in schools and on our website throughout China

- Identify three major tasks you will have to complete to reach your six-month milestone

  Task 1
  Lesson-plan development, which is currently taking place with the involvement of Shanghai international schools

  Task 2
  Recruit a lead curriculum coordinator to compile lessons plans, create website and finalize the first draft

  Task 3
  Edit, compile, and design the curriculum, so it is ready for publication by the end of 2012.

Now think bigger! Identify your 12-month impact milestone

To have 1 million trees in the ground that will grow at a success rate of 85% or better.

- Identify three major tasks you will have to complete to reach your 12-month milestone

  Task 1
  Planting of 200,000 trees in April and June 2012

  Task 2
  Conduct an independent (survival rate) audit by Dr. Robin Rose of Oregon State University

  Task 3
  A PHD candidate from Oregon State University will conduct an on-site teaching and training program for technical skills

Founding Story: We want to hear about your "Aha!" moment. Share the story of where and when the founder(s) saw this solution's potential to change the world [125 words]

Our first tree planting trip to Inner Mongolia, in 2007, was with Japanese Organisation, Green Life. Being on site, we saw the tree planting process for the first time. Green Life had the right idea, to plant trees to stop the desert, but the methodology and long term commitment to community involvement, maintenance, care and education was missing. We knew that Shanghai Roots & Shoots could make the necessary commitment to a more empathetic approach to tree planting, which could improve the livelihood of the local farms, and impact the community on a wider scale. We wanted to involve students and volunteers from the rest of China would could help us to make an environmental impact, but also be impacted themselves by the process.

Tell us about your partnerships

Oregon State University School of Forestry provides technically support and auditing.

In Shanghai, 14 local and international schools partner and participate in the yearly 1,000 tree challenge and promote the message of tree planting to off-set carbon foot print within their school community. These schools come tree planting with us each year.

We also partner with the Kulun Qi Youth League and Tongliao Forestry Bureau who provide community and technical support in Kulun Qi.

What type of team (staff, volunteers, etc.) will ensure that you achieve the growth milestones identified in the Social Impact section? [75 words]

We have a full-time MTP program director working on project fundraising, promotion and planning. The program director is supported by a program coordinator. We have a dedicated team of volunteers who help to further support the program when needed, such as during our annual tree planting trip. These volunteers are mostly local Shanghai students (high school and university) but also working individuals that have a demonstrated interest in the program.

Please elaborate on any needs or offers you have mentioned above and/or suggest categories of support that aren't specified within the list

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