

Plateau Perspectives

Annual Report 2005

*Supporting grassroots initiatives in
conservation & sustainable development
on the Tibetan Plateau*



December 2005



Plateau Perspectives

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Plateau Perspectives' mission is to promote integrated community development and environmental protection in the Tibetan Plateau region of western China as an expression of practical Christian love for the world

HISTORY OF PLATEAU PERSPECTIVES

Plateau Perspectives was established in 1998 to help promote environmental protection and sustainable development in the Tibetan Plateau region of China. The organization was formally registered in Canada in 2002 and in Scotland (UK) in 2004. The process of registering Plateau Perspectives in Qinghai Province (China) was begun in 2004.

Plateau Perspectives' Executive Director, Dr Marc Foggin, and Medical Director, Dr Marion Torrance-Foggin, jointly bring over 15 years of development experience in the Tibetan Plateau region. Other staff members equally bring many areas of expertise and decades of experience in China and abroad.

Since its foundation, Plateau Perspectives has undertaken several important conservation and development projects, including the *Yangtze Headwaters Sustainable Development Project* (2003-08), with programme areas in environmental protection, health and education; the Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) funded project *Health Status and Risk Factors of Nomadic Pastoralists in Southern Qinghai Province* (2000-03); partnership in a training programme for village doctors in Shannan Prefecture, Tibet Autonomous Region (2001-02); the collaborative *Upper Yangtze Project*, a joint effort with the grassroots Upper Yangtze Organization and national Biodiversity Working Group of the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment & Development (BWG/CCICED) (1998-2002); and has given extensive support to help develop civil society and build indigenous capacity in Tibetan areas of China.



In 2004, a house in Zhiduo town was rented to provide a project office, training room and accommodation.

THE YANGTZE HEADWATERS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT (2003-2008)

The biodiversity of the Tibetan Plateau constitutes a heritage of global significance that should be preserved for this and future generations. The high mountains, grasslands and wetlands near the source of the Yangtze River, with their abundant native wildlife and traditional livelihoods, are especially important. Tibetan Plateau grasslands comprise some of the most extensive open rangelands in Asia and are surrounded by many of the world's highest mountains. Furthermore, the wetlands of southwest Qinghai Province (an enormous area known as *Sanjiangyuan* in Chinese, or the 'Three Rivers Headwaters' in English, in reference to the source of the Yangtze, Yellow and Mekong Rivers) are also of exceptional ecological value, serving as main regulator of the water flow in three major Asian rivers. Often called the "water tower" of Asia, the central part of the Tibetan Plateau is also home to many unique species of flora and fauna, from marsh sedges and numerous water birds to carnivores large and small, a unique assemblage of large herbivores, and special desert-adapted plant associations. Among the most endangered wildlife species are the Tibetan antelope, wild yak, argali, white-lipped deer, musk deer, and the elusive, almost mystical snow leopard.

The traditional livelihood of people in the Yangtze River headwaters is pastoralism (livestock grazing), a form of resource use practised for thousands of years and well adapted to the natural conditions of the plateau. The most significant features of traditional Tibetan pastoralism are seasonal mobility and a flexible, adaptive management strategy that can respond effectively to variations in climatic and socio-economic conditions.

It is important to preserve traditional ecological knowledge, which is disappearing rapidly with the older generation, as it is beneficial for animal husbandry as well as for traditional medicine and plant conservation. Altogether pastoralism as a way of life well suited to the local conditions is still practiced in the upper reaches of China's longest waterway, the Yangtze River. Even in this remote corner of the planet, however, rapid changes are beginning.

The needs, the problems, the challenges faced in the headwaters are indeed enormous. From an environmental perspective, while a large region is now part of the recently established Sanjiangyuan National Nature Reserve, key challenges still remain in the delineation of management zones, training nature reserve staff, conducting wildlife research, and engaging local communities to co-manage the area's natural resources. Even more difficult is the provision of social services for the sparse, highly dispersed population, one of the most inaccessible in the country. Basic education is almost non-existent, available income is relatively low, and community health (especially maternal and child health) is extremely poor. In the light of this, the government is seeking new ways to simultaneously protect the environment and improve people's quality of life, yet international experience has shown that some of the proposed methods – such as moving people out of protected areas and various efforts to sedentarize pastoralists – have rarely met with success. There is, however, a large body of good national policy and approved plans upon which to build, as well as several good community initiatives already underway that can be encouraged and further expanded. The Yangtze Headwaters Sustainable Development Project aims to bring hope and increase local capacity to implement such initiatives.

Women's Health Worker Training



In the light of last year's training, the health bureau director discussed with us his concerns about the health needs of the community, particularly in the remote areas. Consistent with our health survey findings, he told us that the women have poor health and poor access to health care.

Women give birth in their homes, usually beside the yak dung pile with a relative or neighbour as their only helper. There has been no custom of traditional midwives or women's health workers. They have only had a relative or friend who may or may not have seen or assisted a delivery before.

Last year a local NGO met with representatives from each village to select a woman to act as a health worker. These women were sent to the nearest large town for training. Although the health bureau liked the idea and the selection process, they were concerned that their training was inadequate. We agreed to give further training to these women.

The aim of the women's health worker training therefore was to improve the quality and the accessibility of health care for women:

- By increasing their understanding of normal woman and child health including normal pregnancy and delivery.
- By enabling them to recognise key problems in pregnancy and delivery and to initiate treatment or referral as appropriate.

- By improving their understanding of preventative health issues and helping them apply this to the local context such that they can educate the local women and hence improve the health of other household members.

The main priorities for the first course were that of pregnancy, delivery and postnatal care and related issues as well as early infant care. This is because miscarriages and premature deliveries are common and infant mortality is very high (most losses occurring within the first month after delivery). Women in this area provide the entire child care and household tasks and are therefore key to the health of the family. It is for this reason the course also focussed on helping them problem-solve how to tackle several main issues which perpetuate poor health.

The teaching was given mainly by Dr Marion Torrance-Foggin, a British Paediatrician, and Mrs Jenni Wilson, a British midwife. Mrs Natalie Yeoman, a teacher from New Zealand, also gave a session on keeping the family healthy.



The young women were initially shy but soon began to participate and role-play women at all stages of pregnancy. Many of the students were illiterate and many visual aids and models made locally were used. Blood pressure machines purchased locally were used to teach the students how to measure blood pressure accurately. They had been provided with blood pressure sets previously. The last week was spent doing oral viva examinations, each used as a teaching tool to the class.



Jiongqu Clinic Construction



The Jiongqu community approached us in 2004 as they wanted to build a health centre which would also serve as a broader-purpose community centre. The higher-level leaders were very supportive of this being used as a model.

The aim was to make a good quality facility accessible to the remoter community who cannot easily travel the long distance to town. It was to be a centre where medicines can be stored and distributed. A further aspect was that of modelling good health practices.

The health centre was built this year and on completion it was immediately used. Management was taken on by the community leaders to free up the doctor to see patients. The doctor is a senior doctor who completed the training last year and is respected by the community. The leaders made trips



to town to buy medicines and the turnover of patients at the clinic is so high that they managed to charge a small commission on each medicine. From the profit they have paid the doctor's salary, paid for the running of the clinic and they are going to purchase better storage cupboards for the medicines.

An initial monitoring trip was done to monitor the building. A further monitoring visit will be made in 2006 to assess the modelling of healthy practices and waste disposal.

Immunisation Programme



The immunisation campaign was very popular last year and the community requested that we return with hepatitis vaccine this year. After long discussions with the epidemic station, the health bureau and the local community leader it was decided that with 3 trips the community could be

immunised against Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertusis, Polio and Hepatitis B as well as catching up with the children who missed Measles last year.

This was accomplished using local village doctors and women's health workers who had been trained in the giving of immunisations. The government provided the triple vaccine and polio. The hepatitis B vaccine for infants had been given to the health bureau by another charity and the hepatitis cover for older children had to be purchased. The first two immunisation trips have been completed including the catch up of the children who missed the measles last year. Clear records have been kept of every child and what they have received. The third immunisation will be given by the doctors in the spring of 2006.

Next year's work will include further training for both doctors and women health workers, an expanded immunisation programme and further development of rural health services including construction of more village health centres.

Yaqu Village School



At the beginning of the year, we were approached by a leader of Yaqu village school. When Plateau Perspectives first became involved in Zhiduo county, working with the Upper Yangtze Organisation, the community was brought to understand the need for education and started a tent school.

However, another organisation came with funding, together with the education bureau. The UYO and PP then withdrew from the project. Community ownership was lost and the school was losing popularity. One of the sub-villages had stopped sending any children. Now the other NGO is no longer involved and the UYO and PP have begun discussions again about becoming involved.

Early this year the community asked the local leader who had started the school to come back from retirement and re-establish the school. The main concern of the families was that of the health of their children. The classroom roofs were leaking and there was no good kitchen/dining room. We



We therefore agreed that the local leader should approach the education bureau and look for joint help. The education bureau repaired the classrooms. From funding left over from the Barbour Trust education fund, and from savings made on last year's Barbour Trust office setup budget, we provided for the building of a kitchen and dining room. This was built within the year and the school student numbers have increased again and all villages are sending their children to school now.

On a monitoring visit it was found that the children's quilts were worn and thin so over 40 new quilts were purchased to supplement the children's bedding.



Muqu Village School



Following on from previous assistance given to Muqu village school, we agreed to provide for the construction of a school kitchen and dining room.

Materials were purchased but due to a particularly wet summer and reconstruction of the road to Muqu it was not possible to undertake the construction this year. The kitchen and dining room will be built next summer.

Professional Development for Teachers



A foreign English teacher provided training in the fall semester for the *Zhiduo County Nationalities Middle School* English teachers. She gave training in English and teaching methodology to the teachers and also gave joint classes to the students.

Promoting Biodiversity Conservation and Community Development in the Sanjiangyuan Region

One of Plateau Perspectives' main goals for 2005-06 was to launch its conservation work in the Sanjiangyuan region. Environmental protection includes both the protection of biodiversity and the sustainable utilisation of the region's natural resources. The main ecosystem in the area is alpine grassland, which

- (1) supports a wide array of wildlife species (e.g., Tibetan antelope, wild ass, wild yak, argali, snow leopard, black-necked crane, etc.);
- (2) provides critical ecological services for millions of people downstream
- (3) is home to Tibetan herders whose traditional livelihood has been adapted over millennia to the harsh environmental conditions of the Tibetan Plateau region.



In pursuit of its goal to develop a regional development project with joint emphasis on natural resource management and community development, Plateau Perspectives worked together with several local partners to organise a Biodiversity Conservation Planning Meeting in

October 2005. The meeting was co-hosted by the Upper Yangtze Organisation, the Government of Zhiduo County and the Management Bureau of the Sanjiangyuan National Nature Reserve.

An environmental training workshop was held for the nature reserve staff, government leaders, forestry bureau staff, and local

communities. Dr John Sale gave the environmental training. The training was followed by a field trip. Dr Walter Willms of Agriculture Canada (a grassland ecology expert), Chris Wood of Zhejiang University and representatives from the nature reserve and local communities went on the field trip to see the various key wildlife and wetland areas.

There were many logistical challenges but the field trip finally culminated in a planning meeting in the prefecture town, attended by the leaders of the nature reserve, local NGOs and PP. Dr Marc Foggin chaired the meeting which culminated in the forming of agreed conservation action priorities which will form the basis of future conservation work in Zhiduo and other counties within the Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.



At the opening meeting, the vice director of this national nature reserve made a speech in which she praised our work in integrating environmental protection and development and specifically sited work to improve women's health, recognising that these women who live in the buffer zone have no access to health care.

The following action points were agreed:

- Action 1. Responding to training needs in environmental conservation
- Action 2. Identification of biodiversity hotspots (priority conservation areas)
- Action 3. Assistance given to monitor wildlife and ecosystems, train herders

- Action 4. Organisation of a cross-sectoral meeting on grassland management
- Action 5. Assistance given to develop a Community Co-Management Plan
- Action 6. Establishment of a Tibetan Conservation & Development Centre

Of note was the agreement that Plateau Perspectives should build a conservation centre which could have a room for use by the national nature reserve, and in return we could use a couple of rooms in one of the remote national nature reserve stations in Suojia township. We can use those rooms for environmental information, education and other integrated project trainings.

The main purposes of this meeting were to gain the general approval and co-operation of the nature reserve, to encourage them to involve the local communities in the nature reserve's management – to which they were very responsive – and to gain specific permissions for the building of the conservation centre.

Main project partners in this conservation work will be the Sanjiangyuan National Nature Reserve together with local communities, the government (at the village, township, county and prefecture levels), and, where applicable, local organizations such as the Upper Yangtze Organization. Together, these agencies plan to collaborate and develop a practical “community co-management plan” that integrates sustainable community development with long-term regional biodiversity conservation. Plateau Perspectives has been particularly commended for its work to improve women's health and education, and will further develop this area of work as part of a broader community co-management plan.



Wildlife Monitor Training

Wildlife monitoring teams have been established in various locations to monitor the local population of various species. Plateau Perspectives has provided wildlife training to local leaders, produced data worksheets and contributed



more than 30 pairs of binoculars and other survey materials to enable effective work by the local wildlife monitors.

COUNCIL OF REFERENCE

Professor Calvin DeWitt

Calvin DeWitt is Professor of Environmental Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison, and President Emeritus of the Au Sable Institute. He is a physiological ecologist and ecosystems ecologist with a focus on wetland ecosystems. At Au Sable Institute he administered a programme that serves 60 Christian colleges and universities in North America, India, and Africa with courses in Christian environmental stewardship.

In the area of interface between ecology and Judeo-Christian environmental ethics he is co-author (with Sir Ghilleen Prance) of *Missionary Earthkeeping* (1992) and author of *Caring for Creation: Responsible Stewardship of God's Handiwork* (1997).

Sir Brian Heap CBE ScD FRS

Sir Brian Heap is a former Master of St Edmunds College, Cambridge University, and a Fellow and Foreign Secretary of The Royal Society. He is an eminent animal biologist and until recently was Director of the Babraham Institute, Cambridge, and Director of Science, UK Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council. He is also the UK representative on the NATO Science Committee, and has worked with the World Health Organization in China. Professor Heap holds doctorates from Cambridge,

Nottingham and York, has published extensively and holds distinguished awards for his scientific work.

Dr John Hodges

Dr John Hodges was responsible for animal breeding and genetic resources in the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the UN where he had wide experience of development agriculture. Previously he was Professor of Animal Genetics at the University of British Columbia, Canada and earlier taught at Cambridge University, UK. He is the former Head of the Production Division of the Milk Marketing Board of England and Wales. He has degrees in agriculture, livestock production and genetics from Reading and Cambridge Universities (UK) and in business administration from Harvard University (USA).

Dr Hodges is co-author of the book *Tropical Cattle: Origins, Breeds and Breeding Policies* (1997). Having analysed the history of genetic gain and livestock in the tropics he recommends an alternative approach to improving quality of life by greater use of indigenous breeds and working together with the local cultures of livestock producers.

Since 1990, Dr. Hodges has worked with the governments and agricultural leaders in Central and Eastern Europe to restructure agriculture. He writes and speaks on Ethics, Genetics and Agriculture examining their influence on the future development of society in Developing Countries and in the West.

Sir John Polkinghorne KBE FRS

Sir John Polkinghorne is an Anglican priest, the former President of Queens' College, Cambridge University, and former Professor of Mathematical Physics at Cambridge University. Dr Polkinghorne resigned his chair in physics to study for the Anglican priesthood. After completing his theological studies and serving in parishes, he returned to Cambridge. During this time, he wrote a series of books on the compatibility of religion and science. These include *Quarks, Chaos and Christianity* (1994), and most recently, *Belief in God in an Age of Science* (2000) and his Gifford Lectures, *The Faith of a Physicist*. Dr Polkinghorne was the recipient of the 2002 Templeton Prize.

Sir Ghillea Prance FRS VMH

Sir Ghillea Prance was for eleven years Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, until his retirement in 1999. Prior to this he was Senior Vice President for Science of the New York Botanical Gardens and Founding Director of the Garden's Institute of Economic Botany. He is an expert on the flora of the Amazon rain forests, having led annual expeditions there over a period of twenty-five years and described more than 450 Amazonian plants new to science.

Sir Ghillean was trained as a plant taxonomist and spent over 8 years on fieldwork and botanical exploration in Amazonian Brazil. He has a world-wide interest in the sustainable development of rainforest ecosystems and conservation generally; as well as being author of 19 books and editor of a further 14 books, he has published over 400 papers of both scientific and general interest on plant systematics, plant ecology, ethnobotany and conservation.

Mr Matthias Stiefel

Mr Stiefel works in Geneva as Executive Director of WSP International, a private organisation affiliated with the UN, which uses action-research and consensus building methodology to assist local and national actors in war-torn societies in consolidating peace and rebuilding their countries. It also assists the UN and the international community in better supporting them in this task. In the early 1970s he was a freelance journalist and consultant in Southeast Asia. In 1986 he resigned from employment with the UN to spend five years as a farmer on a traditional dry-land subsistence farm in the Algarve, motivated by the desire to gain practical field experience of development issues. Mr Stiefel is also an International Trustee (Chair) of A Rocha International.

Mr David Taylor

Mr David Taylor is Director of the USAID Office of Transition Initiatives. Prior to USAID, Mr. Taylor served in the private non-profit sector with ADRA International for 24 years and World Vision for 10 years.

In his current role as Director of USAID/OTI, Mr Taylor's tasks include that of providing assistance to ordinary citizens in fragile, failing or recovering states. His office has partnered with thirty countries over the past ten years, and is currently active in ten countries. In several instances they have supported conservation projects when environmental issues were identified as key factors in the fragility of the state.

Dr Tony Whitten

Dr Tony Whitten is Senior Biodiversity Specialist for the East Asia and Pacific Region at the World Bank in Washington, D.C., where he attempts to achieve the conservation of forests, wildlife, karst biota, and freshwater biodiversity by whatever means. He has written over a dozen books on the ecology and natural history of Indonesia, and works throughout the East Asia region from Mongolia to New Guinea. Dr Whitten manages stand-alone conservation projects, research/capacity projects, a regional project on faiths and the environment, and environmental assessment on other World Bank projects.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS (CANADA)

Mr Bernard Arsenault (P Eng, MSc), Chairman

Senior Research Officer, National Research Council of Canada

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Accountant, AXA Assurances Inc.

Dr Peter Foggin (PhD), Member

Professor, Department of Geography, University of Montreal

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Vice-Principal, Ridley College, Cambridge

Mrs Rachel Begbie

Trustee, Plateau Perspectives Scotland

Dr Darren Evans

Avian Ecologist, Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) Centre for Ecology & Hydrology

Mrs Sharon Evans

Avian Ecologist, Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) Centre for Ecology & Hydrology

Rev Prof Alan Torrance

Chair of Systematic Theology, School of Divinity, St Mary's College, University of St Andrews

Mrs Jane Torrance

Secretary, Plateau Perspectives Scotland; also Research Assistant, Qinghai SSHRCC Project

Dr Charles Warren

Lecturer, School of Geography & Geosciences, St Andrews University

Mrs Sarah Warren

Trustee, Plateau Perspectives Scotland

FIELD STAFF IN 2005

Marc & Marion (Torrance) Foggin

Dr Marc Foggin is a conservation biologist and founding director of Plateau Perspectives. This year he has been running the *Yangtze Headwaters Sustainable Development Project* and arranging and running the conservation planning meeting, *Promoting Biodiversity Conservation and Community Development in the Sanjiangyuan Region*. Dr Torrance-Foggin is a consultant community paediatrician. This year she has been organizing the health programme including the women's health workers training.

Colin & Sarah Wilcock

Mr Wilcock is a chartered certified accountant from the UK who has worked previously and studied Mandarin in China. This year he arrived in China in October and has re-organised the accounts pulling together all the receipts and produced a budget for 2006. Mrs Wilcock is trained in community development work with 2 years China experience and Mandarin language. She has been out to meet our local partners helped up wrap up the administration for 2005, and will taking on the lead for the clinic and other projects in the new year.

Selwyn & Natalie Yeoman

Mrs Yeoman is an education expert who assisted local English teachers with their professional development. Mr Yeoman assisted in the project management of the Yangtze Headwaters Sustainable Development Project.

Plateau Perspectives national staff in 2005 included:

Liu Lingjun (*Larry*)

Office Secretary, Xining

Tsewang Chujie (*Hudson*)

Tibetan translator, Zhiduo

Tarshin

Driver, Zhiduo

Renzin

Office Assistant, Zhiduo

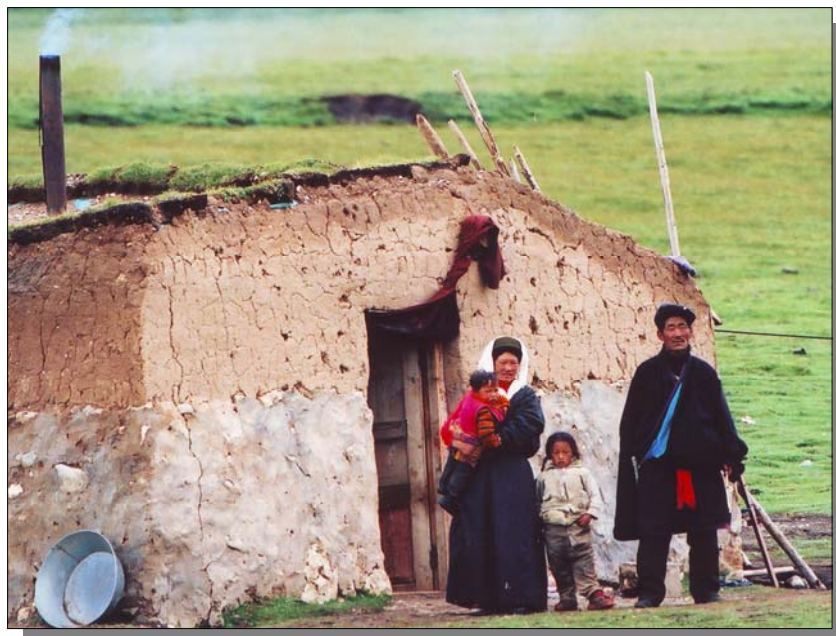


VOLUNTEERS & VISITORS

Many thanks are also due to Plateau Perspectives volunteers and visitors who made the long journey to Zhiduo County this year. These include **Dr Peter Foggin**, who worked on the health project and various monitoring trips; **Dr John Sale** who was the trainer on the Wildlife Research Training Workshop and is helping to design our co-operative work with the Nature Reserve; **Dr Walter Willms** and **Mr Chris Wood**, who together with Dr John Sale participated in the Biodiversity Conservation Planning Meeting; **Mrs Jenni Wilson**, who taught on the Women's Health Worker Training and **Miss Monica Yeoman**, who visited for 6 weeks and generally assisted in the work.

We would also like to thank **Bernard Arsenault**, **Marjorie Bergen** and **Jane Torrance**, who have run the offices in the UK and Canada and provided much needed support.

Finally, thanks are due to our numerous supporters worldwide, including both expert advisors and sponsors, particularly the Barbour Trust who provided core funding for all this work.



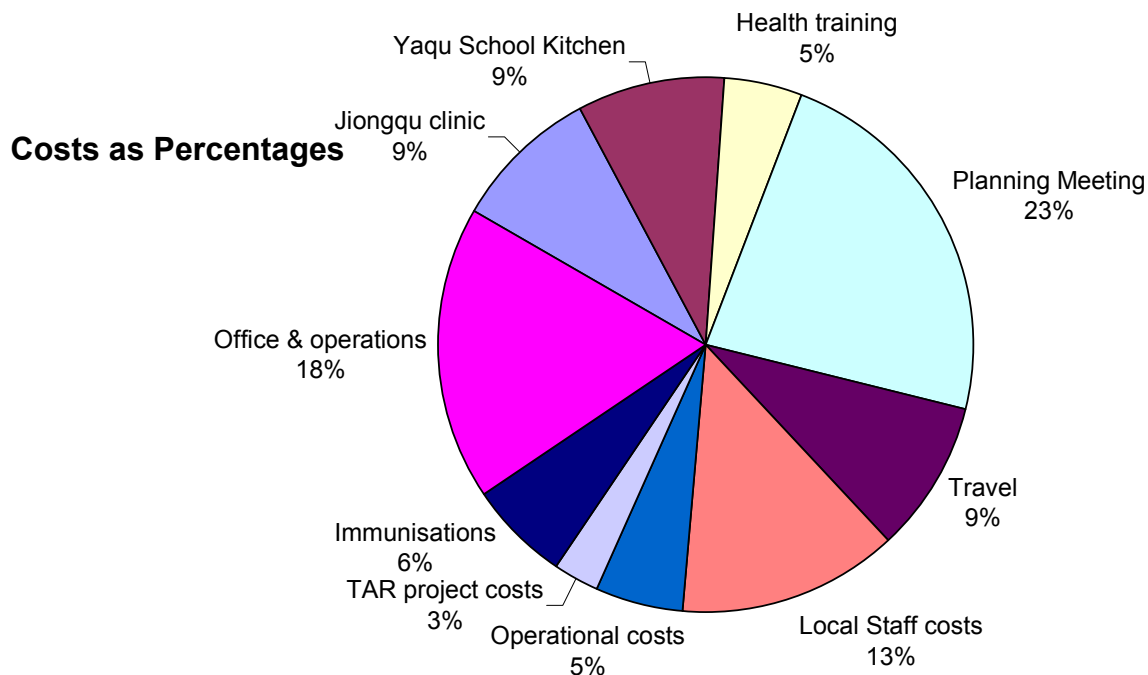
PROJECT EXPENDITURE

All the expenditures reported here were incurred in the field, i.e., in China rather than Canada or Scotland.

International staff time (fees) have not been included, as they have been donated by staff members.

Due to variable exchange rates, the figures below are approximate. Detailed accounts and receipts are held in Canada and Scotland.

Project Activity	Cost in CAD	Cost in GBP
Jiongqu clinic	\$4,137	£1,903
Biodiversity Conservation Planning Meeting	\$10,713	£4,927
Yaqu School Kitchen and Dining Room	\$4,180	£1,923
Health Training	\$2,182	£1,003
Immunisations	\$2,922	£1,344
Operational costs	\$2,467	£1,135
TAR project costs	\$1,262	£580
National staff salaries and expenses	\$6,199	£2,851
Travel costs	\$4,321	£1,987
Office & operations	\$8,239	£3,789
Total Expenditure	\$46,621	£21,442



Plateau Perspectives extends many thanks to everyone who has made all this possible.





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