

Youth join green jobs push in China

Yang Shumbo, a Chinese electronic sciences student invented a device to save electricity. He developed this into a business under a pilot project of the Greener Business Option (GBO), an ILO Green Jobs Programme initiative. GBO aims to encourage entrepreneurship in green businesses among young people. Report from Chengdu, China, by Satoshi Sasaki, Specialist on Enterprise Development and Job Creation, ILO Beijing and Vincent Jugault, Senior Specialist in Environment and Decent Work, ILO Bangkok.

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- Many will have heard the old joke: 'How many people does it take to change a light bulb?'

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- In Chengdu, China, Yang Shumbo, a third year electronic sciences student has shown that just one person can change the way we change light bulbs everywhere.

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- While energy-saving light bulbs have been around for years, Mr. Yang has developed a device to further reduce electricity consumption. Regular electric bulbs are replaced with Light Emitting Diodes (LED) bulbs, coupled with a small controller designed to reduce electricity consumption. The device regulates variations in temperatures and resistance associated with the semiconductor diode operating in LED light bulbs. As a result, the LED intelligent control system was born and developed into Mr. Yang's business idea.

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- "It's a business model intended to contribute to the lighting of buildings with low costs, no pollution and a longer lifecycle," said Mr. Yang.

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- Mr. Yang's inspiration came when he found that on average, 13 electric bulbs were being used in each of the lecture rooms at his Chengdu Vocational and Technical College. He concluded that the college could greatly reduce its energy costs if those bulbs were replaced by LED bulbs, accompanied by a small electricity control device that would minimize the supply of electricity to the bulb. His studies in electronic science made him confident he could develop such a device himself.

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- Mr. Yang was then offered the opportunity to take part in the Green Business Options (GBO) Training, an ILO Green Jobs programme initiative associated with the "Start and Improve Your Business" (SIYB) Training Programme in China. GBO aims to encourage entrepreneurship in green businesses among young people. The programme was launched on a pilot basis in April 2010, focusing on sectors such as energy efficiency and recycling that could contribute both to job creation and climate change mitigation in China.

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- Energy efficiency, conservation, and the promotion of a recycling economy are two strategic priorities of China's Action Plan on Climate Change that are being supported by the ILO Green Jobs programme in China. Green Jobs will also be the focus of a special session at the forthcoming ILO Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting (APRM) in Kyoto, Japan. The panel discussion on Green Jobs will look at the potential for creating green jobs, the challenges of a shift to a low-carbon, environmentally friendly development path and the kind of policies required to support a just transition.

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- The GBO training confirmed to Mr. Yang that his idea was in line with the government's policy of reducing the energy used in maintaining school buildings. Consequently he received further guidance and training on how to develop his business plan.
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- With two other students, Mr. Yang established the Yu Chen Cheng Electronic Technology Company. The Chengdu Vocational and Technical College supported the business plan and provided 5,000 yuan (approximately US\$760) for the project. The college became the first pilot location for testing Mr. Yang's system. The initial contract, to install 100 LED bulbs with controllers, allows Mr. Yang's team to share any savings the college makes from its reduced electricity use. The team is now producing 1,000 controllers, which will increase the businesses profit and further reduce the energy consumed by the school's lighting.
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- These improvements in the use of energy-efficient light bulbs have applications far beyond schools and universities. In a country the size of China, with its rapidly expanding economy, such devices, and the resulting reduction in energy needs, could mean considerable cost-savings.
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- Mr. Yang expects to graduate next year. Given the good prospects for a business specialising in cutting energy use in lighting, he is thinking of expanding. Under his business plan the primary targets would be colleges and universities, which have similar needs for energy reduction. He is also considering expanding gradually into the areas of interior illumination, pedestrian lighting and street advertisement signs in large cities. He is also looking into similar needs in rural areas. His aim is to consolidate his business model in the first five years, then develop and improve the technology and expand his business in south-west China in the following decade.
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- ILO's Green Business Option Project continues in China in 2011 and will expand throughout the region from 2012.
- *The APRM Special Session on Green Jobs will take place during the ILO's Fifteenth Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting, to be held in Kyoto, Japan, from 10-13 April 2011. More details of this, and other sessions at the 15th APRM, can be found at www.ilo.org/asia*