

IPE: A POTENT FORCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE IN CHINA

INTRODUCTION

The Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs (IPE) is a leading environmental NGO in China. Founded in 2006 by Mr. MA Jun and powered by a highly efficient team of 40, the organization uses information transparency to direct the spotlight of public exposure to drive reductions in industrial pollution and greenhouse gases across the country. The cornerstone of IPE's efforts is its comprehensive pollution information database, which enables successful advocacy based on three pillars: the power of people, the power of law, and the power of the purse. Within these three impact areas, the organization applies digital solutions to address the recalcitrant problem of opaque and irresponsible manufacturing practices in the developing world.



INFORMATION DRIVES ACTION

Readily accessible to companies, government agencies and the general public, IPE's interactive [Blue Map Database](#) contains over 1.9 million environmental non-compliance records for more than 1.2 million factories in China, as well as hourly air and water pollution monitoring data required by the government at nearly 30,000 "key monitoring facilities" nationwide.

A growing section of the IPE database also contains "beyond compliance" information on greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental performance data. Most factories reporting this information have been required to do so by brand customers rather than the government.

Numerous corporations make routine use of the Blue Map database for supplier oversight, with dozens of the most active using IPE's [Blue EcoChain](#) tool, a state-of-the-art automatic screening tool that sends push notifications the instant a violation occurs. Many factories reporting carbon emissions into the database make use of IPE's [GHG calculation](#) tool to quantify and report both their baseline emissions and reduction measures.

IPE's work does not stop with providing access to information, however; the aim of the organization is to hold thousands of factories publicly accountable and to motivate resolutions for their pollution. In a dynamic program that first offers an opportunity for factories to provide public explanations for violations, then sets expectations for necessary corrective actions, and ultimately tracks response efforts until verified completion, IPE has to date pushed more than 13,000 factories to remediate their compliance problems.



THE POWER OF PEOPLE

Ever-rising grassroots concern for pollution is the fundamental driving force behind IPE's success. Working in conjunction with 40 other environmental NGOs around the country, IPE has successfully galvanized public attention and leveraged this concern to drive significant improvements on the ground. Over 3 million people have downloaded IPE's popular [Blue Map App](#) to access information about daily environmental conditions and surrounding polluters. People do not just use the app to access information, but also to take action by investigating pollution sources in their neighborhoods and sharing geo-located pictures on social media. Because the app identifies the local agencies responsible for catching industrial polluters, citizens can often direct their pressure on environmental protection bureaus to strengthen overall governance systems. People also use the App to keep track of the household waste sorting in their neighborhood, and record local fauna and flora as citizen scientists.



THE POWER OF LAW

On a second front, IPE uses the transformative power of information transparency to stimulate improvement in local government inspection and enforcement programs around the country. With the [Pollution Information Transparency Index \(PITI\)](#), IPE monitors, evaluates and scores the environmental departments of more than 120 major cities annually. Scores, which are based on the extent to which environmental information has been transparently provided to the public, have been improving markedly year to year, though regional disparities remain.

The central government's intensifying efforts to curtail industrial pollution over the past several years reflect the impact of transparency and the power of bottom-up public supervision. The pivotal moment occurred in 2016, when the central government launched its own massive inspection campaign, targeting both recalcitrant polluters and the lax local authorities that oversee them. The multi-year effort resulted in tens of thousands of rectifications, seized and impounded assets, and suspended operations, as well as the administrative detention of more than 8,000 individuals for violation of environmental laws.



THE POWER OF THE PURSE

Fueled by the grassroots support it has garnered, IPE leads an energetic effort to increase the responsibility that multinational corporations take for the environmental impacts of factories in their supply chains in China. The organization has written numerous exposés on highly problematic industrial sectors such as textile dyeing and finishing, electronics manufacturing and chemical production, and it has singled out the misbehavior of many high-profile brands to accelerate results. The organization sets explicit, professional-level expectations for environmental responsibility in its [Green Supply Chain CITI Evaluation](#), an annual corporate ranking system of more than 580 companies on their pollution oversight and, more recently, in its [Supply Chain Climate Action SCTI Evaluation](#) that ranks corporate activities to reduce greenhouse gas emission reductions in their supply chain. IPE's [Green Supply Chain map](#) displays brand logos on their suppliers' facilities, visually linking brand reputations to suppliers' environmental performance status, and its recently developed [Blue Carbon Map](#) showcases the energy consumption and GHG emissions of cities and provinces in China, as well as enterprises.

To facilitate the work of green finance, IPE offers a novel [Dynamic Environmental Credit Risk Assessment \(DECRA\)](#) tool that allows financial institutions to efficiently identify the risk level of Chinese factories in their investment portfolios, thereby unlocking the additional impact of responsible investors and green finance in the national movement for pollution reduction.

