

Statement Presented to the Congressional-Executive Committee on China

By Dr. Wan Yanhai
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Information Transparency and Public Participation

China

1. Recently, the Chinese State Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) has adopted a policy of open information and public participation in environmental protection issues and monitoring of government work.
2. Article 23 of the Law on the Control and Prevention of Infectious Diseases clearly demands that the government publish information on infectious diseases.
3. The State Secrets Law contains no provisions relating to health information. Moreover, in 1999, the Ministry of Health issued a notice to all provincial health departments stating very clearly that AIDS-related information is not a state secret.
4. I believe there is no fundamental legal barrier or policy that prohibits publication of information related to HIV/AIDS and other health information.
5. Unfortunately, in the past few years, and most recently with SARS, the Chinese government has covered-up important health-related information, including, of course, AIDS related information.
6. The essentially nationwide blood-sales related AIDS epidemic became known to the central government (among others) in the mid-1990s, but it was only in December 2002 that the former Minister of Health, Zhang Wenkang, reported to the National People's Congress that the blood sales related AIDS epidemic was present in 23 provinces. The Chinese government has not informed the public which provinces and which counties are affected. It has said, however, that in many of these affected areas, the HIV infection rate among blood donors is 10-20%, and in some it's as high as 60%.

United States - Public Participation

1. In the past few years, the U.S. Government, foundations, NGOs, the U.N and other international organizations have fortunately started to turn their attention to the AIDS crisis in my country.
2. I would encourage the U.S. Government, NGOs and any other organizations working in this field in my country to share information with the Chinese public, to seek their comments and input on programs and strategies and to involve the Chinese people in their work. Specifically, these entities should involve the Chinese people in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of AIDS-related programs.
3. These foreign entities should work with Chinese NGOs, academics, health institutes and other emerging, informal groups who focus on AIDS related issues.
4. In addition to working with and soliciting comments and feedback from these groups, U.S. and other foreign AIDS-related organizations should reach out more broadly to the Chinese public, for example in the following ways: collecting and publishing information on the Internet, establishing a hotline, conducting empirical research and public surveys.