

Upgrading Opens the Path to Sustainable Development

Since the publication of the Paris Declaration in March 2005, countries and international organizations have individually appraised aid performance and outcomes, and established associated support mechanisms, looking to enhance the substantive benefits of aid. International development agencies such as the OECD, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank, for example, have all sought to uphold the declaration's guidelines, which emphasize ownership, alignment, harmonization, managing for results and mutual accountability. Enhancing institutional performance and effectively managing resources and projects supports the development process in partner countries.

To echo this normalization in the development of international aid practices, the question of how to enhance aid effectiveness by improving performance has been central to our own thinking at the TaiwanICDF.

Developing Operations and Management Mechanisms that Realize Aid Effectiveness

In operational terms, 2011 saw us place the same emphasis on the project cycle as other international development agencies do. On one hand, we are taking a broad view of existing projects. In cases where developing a fixed timetable for project completion would do little to accomplish greater effectiveness, we will carry out an intensive program of overseas missions to investigate project operations and facilitate communication, adjusting projects to put them on the right track. On the other hand, when handling new projects we will move through a series of deliberate steps, performing feasibility studies to lay an effective foundation for the development of each and every project.

In terms of management mechanisms, through 2011 we finalized plans to establish a project management system, and will go on to incorporate a design and monitoring framework and key performance indicators into system processes during the coming year. Being able to analyze the overall effectiveness of project implementation and formulating a complete set of measurable project outcomes will give us real-time control over projects and safeguard their effectiveness.

Developing an Aid Strategy that Builds Capacity and Enhances Substantive Benefits

With global climate change giving rise to extreme weather events and the cost of food and energy soaring around the world, non-traditional security threats are emerging, different to those seen in the past. Under these increasingly complex political and economic circumstances, how do we develop a strategy that enhances the substantive benefits of aid?

One trend among others over recent years has been to focus on capacity building. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, for example, expressly states that developed countries should provide the tools and methods to support education and training, thereby helping various stakeholders – even the most vulnerable countries – to take better action toward adaptation and prepare a wide range of national adaptation strategies.

In accordance with this trend, capacity building was an important component of various TaiwanICDF projects in 2011. As well as factoring the issue into project planning, we also responded to the needs and commitments of partner countries and established timetables for project handover. Building capacity helps partners to successfully take over projects, which can then develop sustainably. Vocational training projects in the Marshall Islands and The Gambia, for example, have been prepared in line with these principles. And capacity building extends beyond the development of students' skills via training itself: These projects are also improving work-related skills among partner governments or cooperating units, thereby building their capacity to take on and maintain project operations.

To underpin project implementation even more thoroughly, capacity building within the TaiwanICDF has continued to strengthen the qualities we need in our overseas professionals and project managers. We have arranged secondment programs at other international development agencies to promote exchanges of personnel and reinforce professional links, hoping to drive further advances in project planning and operations by nurturing talent.

Applying Taiwan's Comparative Advantages to Partners' Development Needs

In other measures, we have identified five operational priorities that embrace key indicators referred to in the MDGs, standards laid out in Taiwan's International Cooperation and Development Act and the priority needs of partner countries, as well as Taiwan's comparative advantages. These priorities are agribusiness, public health, vocational training, information and communications technology, and environmental protection. Our annual work plan will concentrate resources on developing these concerns.

Among these, in agribusiness we are drawing on our advantages in agricultural assistance to provide assistance in Torbeck, Haiti, to industrialize rice production, improve the added value of agricultural technologies, raise associated incomes and alleviate the threat of escalating food prices. In public health, we are drawing on our experience in health care and medicine to implement a Maternal Health Improvement Program, which is enhancing professional skills and reducing maternal and neonatal mortality rates. In addition, projects being developed for ICT and our other priorities are already taking shape in ways that will have a sustainable impact upon the social and economic development of cooperating countries.

Driving Private Sector Participation and Extending the Benefits of Technical Cooperation

To maintain upward momentum, we are combining our own strengths with those of international organizations. We are also getting Taiwan's private sector enterprises more and more involved in international affairs by promoting joint projects that would benefit from their input. With the Morotai Development Project, for example, our organization is serving as a window for project operations, playing the role of catalyst in cooperation between the Indonesian and Taiwanese governments. While government bodies have initiated and are planning the project, non-governmental actors will follow up by investing in the endeavor, driving private sector participation for the mutual benefit of all concerned. Furthermore, during the past year, in a first for our ongoing cooperation with the EBRD, we began to target Taiwanese-made solar power systems and LED streetlights and traffic signals as priority components for financing – integrating efforts among such manufacturers, helping them to prepare for their potential involvement in international foreign aid affairs and extending the benefits of technical cooperation.

As Taiwan's dedicated agency responsible for implementing foreign aid, the TaiwanICDF has been sowing the seeds of international cooperation and development for well over a decade now. To achieve our objective of providing sustainable and more meaningful forms of aid in the months and years ahead, we should outline development concepts through a blueprint for international assistance and proceed to implement and promote projects that yield substantive benefits. In doing so, we will be conforming to international trends and can stride forward on the path to sustainable development, living up to expectations of public trust.



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