Commitment to human resources development through education and training is a firm ICDF principle. As people are trained and educated, societies are enriched, economic growth is accelerated, political power is strengthened, and human potential is unleashed. Without question this is one of the most exciting and important areas of the ICDF’s work.

The ICDF has provided scholarships for students from elementary through postgraduate levels since its founding in 1996. In 2001, with the addition of doctoral studies to the cooperative master’s degree program at the National Pingtung University of Science and Technology (NPUST), and the creation of an international MBA (IMBA) scholarship program in cooperation with National Chengchi University, the training of graduate and postgraduate students has taken on even greater importance for the ICDF.

The ICDF has offered scholarships supporting study at the NPUST’s Institute of Tropical Agriculture since 1998. This two-year master’s degree program includes in its curriculum agronomy, horticulture, plant protection, agri-business, food processing and rural planning and development studies. Students from ROC partner nations are given considerable flexibility in selecting courses to combine their unique interests with these areas of study. Classes are taught in English, but students also have an opportunity to take Chinese classes, so that when they return home they not only have their master’s degrees but also new language skills. In addition to academic work, students in this program visit farms, farmers’ associations, businesses and government institutions, where the techniques and topics they are studying are practically applied. Students profit from the exchange of ideas with professors,
visiting lecturers, agricultural practitioners, policymakers and business professionals. To date, 22 students from 14 countries in Latin America, Africa, and the Caribbean and Balkan regions have participated in this program. Students at this level not only richly contribute to their home countries, but also participate in valuable skills and technology exchanges with Taiwan. Many have also expressed interest in cooperating with ICDF Technical Missions. This thriving program welcomes eight new master’s degree candidates in 2001. To learn even more about this program, read “Teaching is Learning,” an interview with program director Lai Po-yung, in this issue of IC&D.

The NPUST program has been so successful that the ICDF is extending it to include doctoral students in 2001. After two years of postgraduate study at NPUST, students will return to their home countries to continue related research and complete the draft of their dissertations (the ICDF will not fund students during this period). After completion of the draft, students will return to NPUST to orally defend their dissertation (the ICDF will provide round-trip air fare and a necessary living allowance during this period). After proper review and revision of their dissertations, students judged to be qualified will be conferred their PhDs by NPUST. If a student fails to finish the requirements for the PhD degree within the stipulated time period, he or she shall be disqualified from receiving additional financial assistance offered in the program. For the 2001 academic year, the ICDF is delighted to welcome two foreign agriculturalists into the program: Mr. Albert Charles (Commonwealth of Dominica), and Mr. Mballo Younoussa (Senegal).

Based on the success of the NPUST program, the ICDF has broadened its cooperative educational efforts in Taiwan, and in fall 2001 begins cooperation with the National Chengchi University in Taipei on a new IMBA graduate program. Courses, conducted in English, include management, finance, marketing, human resources and business strategy. Other courses and practical training are also offered, based on students’ specific interests and skills. Taiwanese small and medium enterprise entrepreneurship is emphasized throughout the program. In this the first year of the program, four candidates have been selected. The ICDF welcomes Mr. Jose Perez Penabad (Guatemala), Mr. Jose Adolfo Aguilar Umanzor and Miss Alejandra Nolasco (Honduras) and Mr. Reginald Goodridge, Jr. (Liberia). The four students arrived in Taiwan in August and began their academic year in mid-September.

2001 has been a milestone year in ICDF cooperative educational activities. The extension of the NPUST agriculture program, and the addition of the National Chengchi University IMBA program, exemplify the ICDF’s commitment to making graduate and postgraduate study available for the people of the nations with which it works. The ICDF is proud to have come this far, and looks forward to a future of expanding educational opportunity.