As it carries out the ROC’s substantial overseas aid and development efforts, the ICDF strives to develop effective, efficient, carefully designed technical cooperation projects. The primary goal of ICDF projects has long been to empower people at the foundation of national economies, enabling future growth throughout the economy. A systematic process is continuously in effect, before, during and after the launch of any technical cooperation project. In previous years, the technical cooperation field projects that emerged from this design process concentrated on demonstrations of methods and technologies in agriculture, fisheries, animal husbandry and floriculture. Recently, the ICDF has bolstered this approach by expanding technology transfer to host countries, and widening project scope by involving greater numbers of citizens in core and peripheral industries. In shaping these projects, the ICDF employs a three-stage plan:

1. Projects are designed with markets in mind. High-value products and industries suited to each country are targeted, to provide the best economic and social returns to host countries. Production and marketing skills are mutually reinforced, to enable the people of host countries to maximize efficiency.

2. Where feasible, financial support may be supplied through small farm holders financing schemes.

Photo: Inauguration ceremony of the new hog farm, Rivas Province, Nicaragua, February 2001. From left: ICDF Secretary General Ping-Cheung Loh; Nicaragua President Arnoldo Aleman Lacayo; Nicaragua Minister of Agriculture and Husbandry; ROC Ambassador Tsai Te-san.
Projects are considered successful when they are self-sustaining, through the creation of shared circulating accounts that project members borrow from and contribute to. These funds can reduce costs and maximize efficiency.

If and when these processes culminate in successful projects, the models are replicated in other countries wherever possible. Project replication is one of the ICDF’s most important core principles. Following are three examples of such successful projects, and their replication in other areas.

The ICDF has worked on rice development in Panama for more than 20 years. Beginning in 1970, when the country desperately needed development of this important staple crop, the ICDF aided Panama in constructing a three-grade rice propagation system that could be used as a foundation for countrywide rice cultivation. After the development of this system, a rice propagation center was instituted in 1982. The Panamanian government became progressively more involved in the project, creating quality control mechanisms and establishing government experiment stations. During the 1980s, more farmers were incorporated into the project, and the dissemination of skills and technology widened. In the late 1980s, a small farmer lending scheme, was introduced and gradually expanded. This enabled farmers to extend their efforts by purchasing planting and processing equipment and materials. By 1993 rice was being produced on an astonishing 100,000 hectares annually in Panama. In 1998, the project was fully transferred to Panamanian farmers and authorities. An effective model—from the establishment and development of a primary production system, followed by training and technology transfer, to the farmer lending program, to the project’s expansion, self-sustainability and final transfer to local control—had been created. This very model is now being replicated in rice development projects in Honduras, Belize, Nicaragua and El Salvador.

Pork production can be a key industry in developing countries, providing nutritional foodstuffs to the country’s citizens, and valuable export products. The ICDF Hog Breeding Improvement Extension Project in Nicaragua has established a useful development model, which is now being used in other countries. This project began in 1992, when ICDF mission personnel helped with the initial planning and construction of the Cofradia hog-breeding farm, followed by farm management training, and selection and breeding of high-quality swine. In a short time, the farm was providing choice, disease-free stock, and pork was being sold in Nicaragua and abroad. In 1993, a circulating fund designed to make the farm self-sufficient was instituted. By 1997, the fund was fully in the black, with substantial accumulated profits. In keeping with project philosophy, these monies were combined with ICDF financing and plowed back into expansion and development. Construction began on a new hog farm in the Rivas province in southern Nicaragua, which was proudly dedicated by Nicaraguan President Arnoldo Alemán and ICDF Secretary General Ping-Cheung Loh in February 2001. The model developed by the ICDF for this project—from initial establishment and training in a profitable real-world operation, to the institution of a circulating fund for the hog farmers, to self-sustainability—is planned for additional hog raising farms in Nicaragua, and is now being implemented in a similar project in Honduras.

Indonesia is a resource-rich country, where the ICDF currently has several development projects in operation. One project that is providing valuable lessons that will enable project replication in other countries is the Indonesia Mushroom Growing Business Management Project. The goals of the project have been to raise
yields of edible fungus, reduce production costs, strengthen international competitiveness and meet voracious market demand. Starting with a small group of core farmers, this project has held demonstration fairs, screened fungus varieties, and conducted classes on cultivation and business operations. This dual approach, focusing on both production and marketing aspects, has resulted in enormous profits being generated from a very small initial group of farmers. This small group has now “mushroomed” to some two hundred farmers. The project model is now being replicated elsewhere in Indonesia, as well as in vegetable projects in the Gambia and Honduras, and horticulture projects in Dominica and Panama.

These successful examples illustrate the sound ICDF project methodology and the central importance of project replication. Starting with the working people and farmers of host countries—development of their careers and industries is at the forefront of ICDF planning—and designing projects “with markets in mind,” ICDF projects strive to start on firm footing. High-value products and industries are highlighted, and both production and marketing skills are promulgated. When called for and supportable, financial aid is supplied through lending programs, which encourages farmers to develop their skills and industries, and schools local people in basic financial concepts. These skills are essential after shared circulating funds are created. Projects are considered successful when they are self-sustaining and can be turned over to local control—and then replicated by the ICDF in other countries. The beneficiaries of this system are increasing every month and every year, and the ICDF is proud to be “building on success” in many different countries around the world.