

# HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

It was in 1959 that the ROC, itself struggling valiantly to achieve economic progress on the island of Taiwan, first began to offer assistance to other countries. The first case was an agricultural technical mission sent to Vietnam. This was soon followed by 'Operation Vanguard,' through which technical cooperation was extended to African countries, laying a strong foundation of friendship with the African continent that continues to this day. Soon, countries in East Asia and the Asia Pacific region, as well as Central and South America and other parts of the world, were requesting assistance from the ROC.

In 1960, the Committee of International Technical Cooperation (CITC) was set up to dispatch and oversee the work of the overseas technical missions. This was followed by the establishment of the International Economic Cooperation Development Fund (IECDF) in 1988, under the supervision of the Ministry of Economic Affairs. In 1990, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) also began to make available an annual budget—the International Humanitarian and Relief Fund—for assistance to disaster areas.

As the Republic of China on Taiwan grew in economic strength, it channeled more of its resources to developing countries. To maximize efficiency, the government decided to consolidate its assistance programs, which were administered by various government ministries and departments, into one organization. The IECDF was reorganized and renamed as the International Cooperation and Development Fund (ICDF), effective 1 July 1996.

The legislation making possible the establishment of the ICDF, an independent corporate entity under the supervision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was passed by the Legislative Yuan on 19 December 1995 and promulgated by President Lee Teng-hui on 15 January 1996.

## MISSION

From its inception, the ICDF was intended to be a transparent and professional corporate body. It would report to the Legislative Yuan, thus be subject to public scrutiny. It was given a structure analogous to that of a private sector organization, and local entrepreneurs were invited to join the public sector policy makers on the board of directors.

The mission of the ICDF is to assist developing countries in their economic growth, in ways that neither abuse their natural resources nor destroy their culture. The assistance takes the form of small-scale lending programs, educational training, technical cooperation and volunteer assistance missions.

The ROC is happy to share with other countries some of the knowledge and unique experience that it gained through the 'Taiwan Experience' as it transformed its economy from agricultural to industrial over less than four decades. Some of that knowledge is transferred through agricultural, fishery, handicraft or industrial programs that help improve rural communities; training courses that impart to foreign nationals some of the experience of the ROC's vigorous small- and medium-sized enterprises; and loans to international development institutions that channel the funds through micro-loans to small farmers and business owners. In other cases, concessional loans are made to the developing countries for infrastructure projects, such as irrigation works, highways, industrial parks and export processing zones.

An important focus in the past has been on agricultural and fishery technical missions. These will continue, for they have demonstrated how even modest development of agriculture and aquaculture can help to reduce poverty substantially by maximizing the productivity of existing resources.

## MERGER WITH CITC

Preparations for the merger between the CITC and the ICDF as of 1 July 1997 began in the second half of 1996. The staff of the ICDF and the Economic and Trade Affairs Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), to which CITC had previously reported, worked closely together to ensure a smooth transition. Dr. Sung-ching Hsieh, who had served as Executive Secretary of the CITC, was appointed Deputy Secretary General of the ICDF.

In the many years that the CITC has been active in different parts of the world, ROC specialists in agriculture, forestry, fisheries and livestock farming have worked industriously to develop and export varieties and species that are suited to the climatic and other conditions in the host countries. Since 1980 the Taiwan Provincial Department of Agriculture and Forestry has provided assistance in these areas.

In addition to conducting demonstrations and training on location, the ROC has consistently invited friendly countries to send their people to the island of Taiwan for professional training, exchange of experience and transfer of technology in a wide variety of areas.

Supervision of the programs abroad has been conducted by the CITC itself and specialists from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Council of Agriculture, and other governmental and non-governmental organizations.

As of 1 July 1997, 47 ROC technical assistance missions, comprising 383 members, were working overseas in cooperative projects focusing on agriculture, fishing, animal husbandry, handicrafts, transportation service and medical care.