

# Special Reports



Poverty-related diseases are written all over the faces of the needy in many developing nations. Among the eight United Nations MDGs, three goals were devoted to improving medical and health systems through reducing infant mortality, improving maternal health, and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other communicable diseases. As nations around the world strive towards alleviating poverty, they cannot neglect the fragile medical and health systems in developing countries, the lack of sanitary environments, and the masses of people suffering from preventable diseases. To correct these deficiencies, long-term medical assistance must be provided on an ongoing basis. The TaiwanICDF fully understands that strong medical systems are vital to a country's economic and social development. The huge social costs and economic stagnation associated with poor medical infrastructure create a vicious circle of poverty. Creating strong health networks is mandatory to getting a nation back on its feet and onto the track of development.

Over the past five decades, Taiwan's development has enabled it to become a technologically advanced nation. The country's health care standards have advanced significantly, and a number of diseases have been eradicated, such as malaria and polio. The TaiwanICDF utilizes Taiwan's experiences in medical development to map out strategies and policies that assist developing nations in improving their own public health systems. The Fund sends medical missions to these countries, implements mobile hospital projects and outreach clinics, and often cooperates with other international organizations and NGOs. The goals of this treatment and preventive care are to provide professional and immediate attention to those in need and to promote public awareness to impede the spread of infectious diseases.

In addition to a lack of medical resources, developing nations are facing a "digital divide" and an inability to access information, which marginalizes them in today's globalized and knowledge-based economy. Building an information-based society is a fundamental requirement to compete successfully in a knowledge-driven world. Problems faced by developing nations can then be addressed by the world at large, without the responsibility resting on a single region or nation. This divide will create only more imbalances in the world, making underdeveloped nations poorer and developed nations wealthier. Addressing the problems associated with the digital divide has thus become a key topic in poverty reduction work. Efforts to solve this dilemma are made with the hope of further raising digital human rights in developing countries.

The TaiwanICDF is aware of this trend and is working hand in hand with many countries to bridge the technology gap. In recent years, the Fund and World Links have cooperated in providing Internet curricula, computer networks, and educational resources for schools in developing countries. In 2004, fact-finding delegations visited friendly and allied nations in Latin America to evaluate various plans for developing digital opportunities and to implement IT school projects. These labors are only the beginning of efforts to help the international community in reducing the digital divide. In the future, the Fund will continue to mobilize Taiwan's IT experience, human resources, and advanced technologies to assist emerging countries in their social and economic development.