

Message from the Secretary General

In Quest of New Paths in Development Assistance: Expanding Opportunities for Taiwan's Participation

The TaiwanICDF marked its 10th anniversary in 2006. This was an opportunity not only for celebration, but also for introspection. Ten years ago, the government established the TaiwanICDF to serve as the nation's sole development assistance organization, coordinating Taiwan's various foreign assistance resources. The TaiwanICDF was founded on a belief in mutual benefit, and the desire for participation in a broad spectrum of international development work. The Fund, it was hoped, would assist the international community in eradicating hunger and poverty, and reducing the development gap, while making space for Taiwan in the international arena, and putting the nation's name in the spotlight.

Ten years on, the TaiwanICDF has fully embraced the tradition of foreign assistance established by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), the Ministry of Economic Affairs (MOEA), the Council of Agriculture, and the Department of Health. It has introduced Taiwan's development experience to partner countries, and provided them with the practical assistance they need. In recent years, the private sector has been brought into the effort, and the international cooperation resources of various government agencies have been better integrated in the pursuit of national interests, and international development and private sector growth. Over the past decade, the TaiwanICDF's staff has created a "vision blueprint" for development assistance, providing a basis for realizing our goals over the next 10 years.

Coordinating resources and maximizing results are two of the most critical aspects of international development assistance. Even more important is how the two work in tandem. Since taking office as secretary general I have emphasized the importance of introducing innovation into our various operations, promoting sophisticated and efficient management techniques, and integrating domestic and international development resources. Together with "goal- and result-driven management," this approach has helped the TaiwanICDF become an even more professional, transparent, and systematic organization.

The institution's goals are to engage in international development cooperation to promote national interests, spark growth in the private sector, and strengthen global development. With this in mind, the emphasis should be on sustainable development. Efforts should be made not only to increase investment, but also with an eye to the quality and benefits of the output. Meanwhile, development assistance is work that the international community engages in together. As a result, the work carried out by any single aid-giving nation will undoubtedly have an impact on the overall assistance network. If Taiwan is able to effectively integrate resources, and play an important role as a successful partner, this will surely enhance the nation's global value and influence.

Taiwan's unique strengths and experience form the basis of its innovation in international development. Taiwan itself began to receive economic, technical, and defense assistance from the international community around 1950. The combination of capital, trained individuals, and technology, along with national development policies instituted by the government, enabled Taiwan to rapidly establish an effective governance system in the post-World War II era. This paved the way for the development of agriculture, small- and medium- enterprises (SMEs), external trade, manufacturing, and the information and communications technology (ICT) industry. Taiwan's progression from recipient to advanced donor country serves as a model for developing nations.

While Taiwan's development model has reference value, it obviously cannot be replicated in its entirety elsewhere. The specific circumstances of partner nations must be considered, and appropriate methods adopted, so that Taiwan can tailor its resources and unique experiences to fit the needs of each of its partner countries. This case-by-case approach is exemplified by the TaiwanICDF's Mobile Medical Missions (MMMs), the achievements of which were among the organization's notable successes in 2006.

Many developing countries lack comprehensive health care systems, preventing residents in remote areas from receiving basic treatment. These countries also often do not have the ability to train medical personnel sufficiently. In order to assist these partner nations, the TaiwanICDF makes use of the International Healthcare Cooperation Strategic Alliance (IHCSA), which was created in 2006, to assemble a sizable number of Taiwanese medical workers. These volunteers form small-sized MMMs that journey into remote areas of developing countries, bringing relief to people in need. In addition, these missions provide opportunities for locals to receive advice on health issues. The Taiwanese hospitals that have taken part in these missions have also inked agreements with "sister" hospitals and clinics in partner countries, assisting them in the training of medical professionals. Overall, the MMMs have helped raise the standards of health care in partner nations.

In terms of upgrading management sophistication, my TaiwanICDF colleagues and I encourage each other to set new standards in efficiency to help us best achieve beneficial results. Efforts are made to improve work procedures, and to give people a better insight into our operations, as well as to maximize the impact of our limited resources. This year, the TaiwanICDF's Higher Education Scholarship Programs, Overseas Volunteers, and Taiwan Youth Overseas Service all received ISO international quality management certification. Each of these programs is carried out according to methodical procedures, helping to boost benefits.

Through our international development activities, we hope to provide the world with an insight into Taiwan, and, at the same time, allow Taiwan to gain a better global overview. This is especially important for us, as the government and civil society

in Taiwan have long been unable to get a complete picture of the international community due to the country's unique diplomatic situation. International development serves as a window, offering a glimpse into the actual state of the world. It also enables Taiwan to escape from diplomacy as a zero-sum game, and instead focus on its advantages.

As well as being a highly efficient executive organization, the TaiwanICDF seeks to fulfill its mission as an institution that enables the general public to get to grips with the central issues of development assistance. Society does not yet have a firm understanding of this field, so efforts should be made to raise public awareness as to what development entails, and regarding international trends. To this end, the TaiwanICDF actively encourages public involvement, and has published an "Overview of International Development and Cooperation" to attract attention to, and discussion of, these topics locally.

The French novelist Victor Hugo once said, "Greater than the tread of mighty armies is an idea whose time has come." The TaiwanICDF embraces such thinking, and wants to convey a message in its work, namely that development assistance is the best way to balance national interests and international well-being.

Lastly, one of the TaiwanICDF's core missions is to integrate resources. Perhaps the best example of this is the Taiwan International Cooperation Alliance (TICA), which creates a win-win situation for Taiwan's educational sector, and international human resource development. Meanwhile, the IHCSA exports Taiwan's advantages in the field of health care, and integrates resources from the private sector. Also, the thriving Overseas Volunteers program offers opportunities to work in friendly and allied nations to Taiwanese who are passionate about serving those in need. This once again highlights the TaiwanICDF's pivotal role in coordinating development resources.

In addition to integrating assistance resources in Taiwan, the TaiwanICDF also uses Taiwan's development experience to expand its interaction with the international community. For instance, in 2006, the TaiwanICDF cooperated with two foreign NGOs: Mercy Corps, and the U.S. charity Food For The Poor (FFP). Combining Taiwan's specialized technology with international resources further boosts the results of Taiwan's efforts in development assistance.

The TaiwanICDF also continued to strengthen its links with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) in 2006. The signing of an agreement for a contribution toward the EBRD's Trade Facilitation Program, and the creation of a Taiwan Office for EBRD Business Development have paved the way for cooperation between Taiwanese companies and local entrepreneurs in Central and Eastern Europe, and Central Asia. This has facilitated business opportunities in the region, boosting development in a mutually beneficial manner.

After 10 years of hard work, the fruits of the TaiwanICDF's efforts in development assistance are now there for all to see. Nonetheless, even more needs to be done in the future to maximize the organization's impact. Taiwan will continue to be a presence in the global push to create well-being for the world's population in the new millennium. It will strive to become an even more active participant, in order to demonstrate its goodwill and importance in the field of development. At this time, as the TaiwanICDF reaps the rewards of its first 10 years, we keep in mind the principles of "innovative operations," "sophisticated management," and "integrating resources" in order to sow the seeds for further achievements in the next decade.



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