

Embracing New Development Assistance Models for Global Changes

Official Development Assistance (ODA) has a history dating back about three-quarters of a century. Over these decades, there have been several important models in the evolution of ODA. One of the earliest and most important was the Marshall Plan, a massive reconstruction effort that was introduced in 1947 after World War II. Half a century later, the United Nations introduced its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which sought to forge balanced development throughout the world. Most recently, ODA has been carried out to reflect the UN's 2007/2008 Human Development Report, which pursues sustainability. Each shift reflects changes in the overall state of the development of civilization, and is an expression of the collective focus of the international community at each period in time.

The Marshall Plan was implemented in response to the special circumstances of the time it was introduced. We can see in the latter two models, however, the world beginning to find a common voice, which initially was the promotion of balanced growth, and is now the pursuit of sustainability. The message is: Future communities urgently require the establishment of a collective belief, the foundation of which must be "human security." This is the cornerstone of a sustainable path for development. As the 2007/2008 UN Human Development Report states, we must pursue "human solidarity in a divided world."

Amid this trend, the TaiwanICDF, which acts as Taiwan's dedicated assistance organization, must also carefully examine its international development and cooperation strategies. It must reflect international trends, join and accept global frameworks and perspectives, but at the same time maximize Taiwan's unique qualities in development work. Since becoming chairman of the TaiwanICDF, I have come to understand that international development assistance is not a yes or no equation for Taiwan, but rather a multiple-choice question. In other words, as a newly developed country that itself received foreign assistance in the past, and has achieved successful development, Taiwan must fulfill its duty to repay the international community. The question as to whether there is a need to engage in international assistance work was answered long ago. Subsequently, Taiwan needed to design international development and cooperation strategies that best leveraged its own resources and strengths, helping to reduce the development gap, while also creating opportunities for Taiwan to actively participate in global efforts to alleviate poverty.

Taiwan is able to provide the international community with substantive assistance, sharing its experiences in transforming from a country receiving aid to a nation that provides assistance. The TaiwanICDF's methodology in lending, investment, technical cooperation, and the development of human resources, follows the paradigms and precedents set by major international development organizations. Based on this, the TaiwanICDF institutes an array of international cooperation projects to share Taiwan's unique development know-how, and works to find the best means of introducing its assistance resources into the development platforms of partner countries.

During its half century of participation in ODA, Taiwan has consistently focused on providing agricultural technical assistance to developing countries in order to help them emerge from hunger and poverty. As a leader in tropical agricultural technology, Taiwan considers it a duty to assist in the reduction of famine in developing countries in order to ensure the basic right to life for the people of these nations. The fundamental nature of development work is to support partner countries in their bid for self-reliance through the introduction of cutting edge technology and techniques. The ultimate objective is to enable these countries to boost their quality of life and reach sustainable growth. Correspondingly, the TaiwanICDF has successfully refined its foreign assistance over the years, assisting in capacity-building, and the establishment of ownership within partner countries.

In the past, agricultural technical assistance was the predominant focus of TaiwanICDF projects. Over the years this has been expanded to small and medium enterprise (SME) development, medical and health care assistance, and information and communications technology (ICT) applications. Mirroring the changing nature of development assistance, the TaiwanICDF's projects in recent years have increasingly stressed environmental protection and sustainable growth. The TaiwanICDF works to ensure its development projects in partner countries will not exact a social or environmental price on those nations. The projects will bolster short-term growth, while keeping an eye on long-term sustainability. These efforts are designed to avoid over-development and the depletion of future resources.

In addition to the effectiveness and efficiency of assistance methods, the TaiwanICDF must also carefully consider some other issues. As Chairman of the TaiwanICDF, and Taiwan's Minister of Foreign Affairs, I must look at how Taiwan can contribute its strengths for the good of the international community, while finding means to expand space for itself within that community. In other words, the TaiwanICDF's operations should be compatible with Taiwan's diplomatic relations. Donor and recipient nations alike always find means of creating mutual benefit. The "one world" view has become the foundation of many global topics in the spotlight today, and international cooperation ought to be a win-win situation between partners. With this in mind, in the future, we will continue to appropriately integrate foreign affairs and international cooperation. In the course of providing specialized and sustainable development assistance, we will seek to maintain and promote interaction under the principles of prosperity, equality, and mutual benefit.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to personally extend my deepest appreciation to all the agencies that have cooperated with us over the past year in our overseas assistance work. Taiwan is a nation with limited resources. However, with coordination and cooperation between the public and private sectors, the TaiwanICDF will continue to expand the depth and breadth of its international cooperation projects. While this annual report is published by the TaiwanICDF, it also represents the aggregate efforts of the various sectors participating in development assistance work in Taiwan. The TaiwanICDF is on its way to creating new models in development assistance in this new century. It will continue to do Taiwan's part in contributing to sustainable development in the international community.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James C.F. Huang". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

James C.F. Huang
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chairman of the TaiwanICDF