

Tackling the New Challenges of Globalization: Pursuing New Milestones in International Development and Cooperation

As familiar landscapes around the globe are being destroyed and irreversibly altered, the international community is having to face up to the stark reality of climate change and its effects on the environment. Mirroring these changes are political shifts in various regions, which are leaving people increasingly concerned over the ability of governments to address the world's most pressing issues.

At the same time, the rapid spread of globalization has sparked economic growth and led to significant changes in the structure of the international economy. This has had an enormous impact on international development assistance, with the problems of poverty, disease, environmental protection, and human rights becoming even more complex and difficult to solve. The core-periphery disparity is as evident as ever, and ensuring a better future for all people in the world is not a task that any one country can undertake by itself. Rather, it is only through integrated and comprehensive development on the economic, political and social fronts that we can have any hope of achieving global prosperity and sustainable development.

The consensus in the international community is that capacity building in development assistance work is the best means by which to underpin development. This not only requires continuous investment, but also a transition at the policy, legal, and systemic levels that advances the rights of disadvantaged groups, further cultivates human resources, hones management systems and creates an environment in which all sectors of the community can participate. The TaiwanICDF embraces the spirit and principle of capacity building in all its efforts, from internal management to external cooperation, to achieve the goals of sustainable operations and resource integration.

From the standpoint of sustainability, there is little dispute that the traditional aid-recipient model has failed to adequately solve the problems of poverty, hunger and disease that cripple growth in many nations. The focus of the TaiwanICDF's assistance is therefore on helping partner nations stand on their own two feet, enabling them to emerge from aid dependency and become active participants in their own development projects. The TaiwanICDF works together with these countries in promoting all types of technical cooperation, human resource cultivation, and investment and lending programs.

While many developing nations have chalked up impressive economic growth, environmental degradation is starting to erode their achievements. As a result, environmentalists and scientists have called for greater attention to be paid to climate change and global warming. Projects initiated by the TaiwanICDF are responding to the increasingly mainstream topic of environmental protection. Over the years, the TaiwanICDF has carried out agricultural biomass recycling projects in Africa and the Pacific region. In 2007, it engaged in solar power projects to help countries in the Pacific and the Caribbean reduce their reliance on petroleum. In the future, the TaiwanICDF will undertake more cooperative projects that emphasize the development of renewable energy, the recycling of agricultural biomass and the reduction of pollution, so as to foster environmental sustainability.

The TaiwanICDF is also making every effort to integrate available resources. It seeks to work with Taiwan's private sector, as well as with partners worldwide, to promote international social development. In 2007, the TaiwanICDF continued to cooperate with regional development organizations such as the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEL), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Investment, lending and technical assistance were coordinated through these channels to maximize the economic benefits to regional development. For example, the TaiwanICDF and the IDB introduced a new microfinance project that helps Latin American countries put funds remitted by nationals working overseas to more productive use, and provides low-income families with access to the formal financial system. The TaiwanICDF is also strengthening its cooperative relationships with international and regional nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) by serving as a platform for the integration of resources, and provides technical assistance and humanitarian aid to friendly countries in Latin America, the Pacific, and Africa.

Besides maintaining close cooperative ties with international organizations, the TaiwanICDF also facilitates the involvement of Taiwan's private sector in international cooperation and development work. Taiwan's strengths in health care and disease prevention have allowed the TaiwanICDF to integrate public health care resources, and to dispatch Mobile Medical Missions (MMMs) to friendly nations to provide medical services. In addition to providing health care to the public, members of these missions train local medical workers, helping to improve the quality of services at the grassroots level. In 2007, the TaiwanICDF invited further participation from the private sector in this mobile medical platform. By bringing private medical enterprises and NGOs into play, the TaiwanICDF is keeping Taiwan in step with international medical assistance trends. This also demonstrates Taiwan's flexibility and innovation in international medical and health care cooperation.

Given its competitive edge in information and ICT, Taiwan has a deep understanding of the impact this field has on development and economic production models. In 2007, the TaiwanICDF called on and successfully united a number of participants in the ICT industry through the formation of the Taiwan ICT Alliance (TICTA). The aim is for Taiwan's ICT industry to provide various hardware and software to assist partner nations in establishing a foundation for ICT development within their own countries, thereby reducing the urban-rural divide of developing countries that are striving for leapfrog development. The Alliance also assists governments of friendly countries in promoting e-government and digitalizing their bureaucracies, thus improving their performance in the area of governance.

Education is another cornerstone of a nation's capacity to develop. The TaiwanICDF continues to host a variety of workshops in Taiwan to provide training to people from developing countries. These workshops offer an opportunity to learn and exchange ideas on Taiwan's development experiences, with a focus on such topics as agricultural policy and rural development, SME development, women's development, food processing technology and WTO trade facilitation. The TaiwanICDF also provides a variety of scholarships to give outstanding students from friendly countries the chance to study for undergraduate, master's, and Ph.D. degrees in Taiwan. This helps to train core groups of talented professionals that can lead their home countries toward self-sufficiency on their return.

The TaiwanICDF was established as a specialized channel for integrating the nation's foreign assistance resources. Its core principles have consistently been "assistance, cooperation, service and empowerment." It is our conviction that a broad level of participation in international development will better enable Taiwan to share its successful experience in transforming from recipient to donor. While supporting the international community's drive to reduce hunger, poverty and the development gap, this also gives Taiwan room to participate in international activities and demonstrate its own unique advantages to the world.

The TaiwanICDF celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2006. With a decade of achievements already under its belt, the organization last year embarked on another 10 years of work. The passing of each year brings with it an opportunity to reflect on past achievements and to look toward future progress. International cooperation and development must continue to reflect the trend of globalization and make headway in achieving the UN's MDGs by the year 2015. Amid changes in the external environment and many other complicated challenges, the TaiwanICDF will continue to fulfill its mission of co-prosperity through cooperation, sustainable development and humanitarian concern. By honing its expertise and pursuing excellence in development and cooperation work, the TaiwanICDF is endeavoring to become an organization that both reflects global trends and meets the expectations of the people of Taiwan.



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