

Toward a Professional, Effective and Accountable Foreign Assistance Mechanism



The United Nations launched the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000, seeking to realize eight interconnected targets by 2015. The MDGs symbolize a shared belief in the most fundamental qualities of life and include measures relating to extreme poverty and hunger, medical care, education and environmental sustainability. At the same time, the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness provides a clear roadmap on how to approach the development process and sets out a series of high-level strategies that determine how resources could be levered more effectively for the benefit of humanity.

Having recently passed the halfway mark toward the 2015 deadline, the UN compiled an assessment of progress, summarizing the findings in *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2008*, which drew mixed conclusions. Thanks to the collective efforts of donors and their partners, positive steps have been taken in a majority of areas. Overall enrollment in primary education has risen steadily, for example, and a concerted effort to improve gender parity in schools has also seen results. In addition, the number of deaths resulting from measles has fallen by 68 percent, while about 80 percent of children in developing countries have been vaccinated against the disease. Moreover, some 1.6 billion people have gained access to safe drinking water.

Taiwan echoes international consensus on the provision of development assistance. In 2008, and with the full support of the government of the Republic of China (ROC), the TaiwanICDF continued to champion the cause of the MDGs through its core operations: investment and lending, technical cooperation, human resource development, and humanitarian assistance. The organization's endeavors have been widely applauded by its partner countries and other like-minded international agencies.

In reviewing our work in 2008, we must remain aware of the challenges facing us in the year ahead. The effects of the food crisis in early 2008 still hold a pernicious influence over many of the world's most vulnerable citizens. Meanwhile, the global financial crisis has precipitated a pervasive economic downturn, triggering a worldwide rise in unemployment and a general retreat in income. At the same time, climate change is causing sea levels to rise, which threatens the future of island nations.

Equally, and regrettably, less progress has been made on a minority of MDGs. Maternal mortality remains stubbornly high, as does childhood malnutrition; meanwhile, a lack of basic healthcare is still a pressing issue throughout many regions of the world, and the combined threat of malaria and HIV/AIDS is not receding as quickly as anticipated. All of these points require substantial and sustained attention from the international development community.

It is imperative that international development organizations take immediate action to respond to these challenges. The situation calls not only for a greater volume of assistance, but also for a framework of effective delivery, directed toward result-oriented management. By following this approach, the TaiwanICDF will continue to win trust and support at home and overseas.

Shortly after taking office in May 2008, President Ma Ying-jeou advocated "flexible diplomacy" as being the guiding principle behind the ROC's foreign policy. Visiting the TaiwanICDF's headquarters on September 18, President Ma delivered a speech on the ROC's foreign assistance endeavors, stressing that they must follow the three principles of appropriate motives, due diligence, and effective practices. In order to implement this directive, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) intends to embrace the spirit of the ROC Constitution and ensure that its work is commensurate with the aims of the MDGs and agrees with the practices described in the Paris Declaration. In this way, efforts will focus on advancing progressive partnerships and sustainable development, operating within a professional, effective and accountable foreign assistance mechanism.

As Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chairman of the TaiwanICDF, I look forward to working closely with all TaiwanICDF staff members as we continue to promote our foreign aid policy and cooperate with partners on addressing the MDGs. I firmly believe that our initiatives will help to improve the living standards of the people of our partner countries, while showing that Taiwan is a responsible member of the international community.

Specifically, we look forward to building multilateral partnerships throughout our international cooperation and development work. In promoting sustainable development, we will cooperate with partners whose situations require mitigation or adaptation on account of climate change and global warming, working to replace fossil fuels with clean, renewable energy, where appropriate; similarly, we will address food shortages by boosting agricultural productivity, where necessary. We will also continue to offer specialized and well-directed technical cooperation, leveraging Taiwan's comparative advantages in information and communications technology (ICT), health care, manufacturing and industry to tackle the MDGs. We believe that our efforts can help the international community to minimize the impact of the financial crisis felt by many partners and prevent the crisis from deepening further. On another front, we will work to align our own priorities with those laid out in partner countries' national development strategies, while harmonizing our duties and responsibilities with those of other donor governments and international development organizations. In committing to all of these tasks, we pledge to sustain our efforts to attain five key goals: elimination of extreme poverty and hunger, reduction of infectious diseases, strengthening of human resource development, promotion of environmentally sustainable development and the consolidation of global development partnerships. Ultimately, the TaiwanICDF will focus on amplifying the benefits of its assistance among established partners, while taking measures to strengthen the ROC's relationships with its partner countries.

As a member of the international community, the ROC is willing to share its development experience and give back to the international community in appreciation of assistance we received in the past. This desire to provide assistance is embedded into the deeds and accomplishments of the TaiwanICDF and its associates. In the future, I look forward to seeing cooperative relations between the ROC and its partner countries draw ever closer through the work of the TaiwanICDF, as we continue to contribute to world peace, prosperity and sustainable development.

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