

Concept Note for Taiwan International Development and Cooperation (2016-2030)

- Advocated by Taiwan AID

Allied Global NGOs for Smart Taiwanese Diplomacy

Introduction

Taiwan's government did not start investing in international aid until the end World War II. Since then, national overseas assistance policy has been dramatically challenged and transformed by international trends and changes. First, Taiwan has a diminishing number of diplomatic allies, currently down to just 22. Yet Taiwan maintains close economic ties with non-diplomatic allies, especially in Southeast Asia. Second, to stabilize formal relations, most official development assistance (ODA) is invested in diplomatic allies, and relatively little is reserved for NGOs to implement official assistance. Third, historically Taiwan's overseas aid focused on agriculture and fishing, but in recent years has concentrated on information technology and economic development, with relatively little attention on advocacy for democracy and human rights. Therefore, we need to prioritize the questions of how to transform's the effectiveness and visibility of Taiwan's overseas assistance, utilize the efforts of civil society, strengthen expert knowledge about international development in the diplomatic system, and keep up with the latest trends in international development.

Sustainable development at the heart of international cooperation

The guiding principles behind Taiwan's current overseas assistance policy are still based on the 2009 "White Paper on Foreign Aid Policy". In the last seven years, there have been dramatic developments in the global technology sector, climate change, peace and security, and other international developments and issues. Yet Taiwan has stuck to its original policy guidelines to inform foreign aid affairs. Unable to respond either to trends in international development or the current needs of developing countries, this policy has been very ineffective. In September last year (2015) the UN passed the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and ratified the "Paris Agreement" (COP21). Both these documents are the result of a global consensus of over 180 countries, established in two to three years of intensive discussions on a roadmap for international aid, which recognizes that traditional aid overlooked "economic prosperity", "social sustainability", "the environment", "peace and tolerance",

“effectiveness” and other overarching features of international cooperation and development. As a result, the “5 P” (people, planet, peace, partnership and prosperity) sustainable development strategy has become the conceptual framework for sustainable international cooperation, offering the world clear and coherent long-term development strategic goals. Yet Taiwan’s diplomacy still follows the 2009 “White Paper on Foreign Aid Policy”, which cannot keep in touch with mainstream global values, and is under clear pressure to be reformed.

Active NGO participation in international cooperation

Taiwan’s non-government organizations (NGOs) have in fact been involved in international aid longer than official assistance, and are vitally important partners for the government in promoting international cooperation and development in non-diplomatic allies. NGOs not only engage in a greater variety of international cooperation programs, but are not limited to working with diplomatic allies, so can promote international cooperation in more flexible ways. In addition, when NGOs promote international cooperation programs they emphasize localization, governance, environmental sustainability, accountability and transparency, which improve effective use of partnership funds, and train a significant number people at home and abroad to become specialists in their relevant fields. The government should effectively use NGO resources and energy to jointly promote ODA, so funding can be invested in comprehensive projects, and efficiency can be improved by establishing mechanisms for project management, monitoring, and assessment. Currently, Taiwan’s overseas assistance projects still focus on diplomatic allies. Most ODA is facilitated by the International Cooperation and Development Fund (ICDF), and only a small amount goes through NGO channels and contacts to promote cooperation between nations with formal and informal relations, which is disappointing. Moreover, the limitations of the International Cooperation and Development Act and the taxation system greatly reduce the potential scope of public-private overseas assistance cooperation.

A New Paradigm in International Cooperation and Development - Smart Diplomacy

International assistance is only one aspect of the international flow of resources. With new trends in international development, the government urgently needs to let go of traditional aid practices and adopt a more inclusive international cooperation and

development mindset, which integrates diplomatic, academic, technological, economic, health, human-rights, labor, environmental and other sector resources to meet the needs of different developing countries in tailor-made cross-sectoral international development cooperation strategies. Taiwan needs to break free of its diplomatic binds, and create people-centered values to become a key player in the process of human development. Therefore, we propose that Taiwan's future global development strategy break out of the traditional "nation-to-nation" diplomatic mold, and adopt a "smart diplomacy" model that connects with global civil society, integrates Taiwan's hard- and soft-power, combines public and private resources, and develops a bilateral and multilateral cooperative strategy to jointly promote the five concrete action programs of "economic prosperity", "social sustainability", "the environment", "peace and tolerance" and "effectiveness". Let smart diplomacy explode the myth of the numbers game of traditional diplomatic ties, and release Taiwan's capacity to be a key partner to citizens all over the world, as we work together to advance global human civilization and development.

In light of the above, Taiwan AID and its 30 member NGOs involved in international cooperation and development propose the following policy suggestions:

1. **Build partner relationships of trust to facilitate civic engagement:** Due to the lack of a mechanism and legal basis for cross-ministerial horizontal coordination and integration in international cooperation and development projects, each ministry implements its own international cooperation policies, making consolidation difficult. So the government should facilitate horizontal coordination between all ministries engaged in international cooperation and establish an integration mechanism. The government should also establish a regular communications mechanism with corporations and NGOs on the use of overseas assistance funds, as well as international cooperation project planning, participation, monitoring and assessment, to collectively appraise the effectiveness of international cooperation projects, which would be an important point of reference to improve foreign aid policy.
2. **Establish an ODA watch mechanism:** Increasing ODA is the basic requirement

for Taiwan to participate in international cooperation. The UN target for ODA is 0.7% of GNI. Currently Taiwan's ODA is only 0.053% of GNI, leaving much room for improvement. In addition, ODA effectiveness should match the Busan Agreement, which requires localized, results-orientated, accountable, transparent and inclusiveness partnerships. So how to monitor the development effectiveness of government ODA (for example, learning from the establishment of Korea's Watch ODA) should be a key future policy.

- 3. Reform overseas assistance laws and policies, invest in a long-term development programs:** In light of Taiwan's foreign affairs situation, diplomacy-related international cooperation and development needs an injection of new ideas. Resource distribution and allocation should be balanced between allied and non-allied nations. Especially now the government is energetically promoting a new "Go South" policy, the question of how to integrate local resources – including NGO, business and government resources – and utilize the local knowledge of Taiwanese NGOs, is crucial to promoting foreign relations. Therefore, revising the International Cooperation and Development Act, establishing a transparent operational mechanism to select international cooperation projects, actively encouraging NGOs to join long-term international development projects, and offering resources in a dignified way, can motivate Taiwanese NGOs and corporations to invest in international cooperation work, to strengthen the impact and visibility of Taiwan's genuine concern for Southeast Asia, South Asia and the SDGs.

- 4. Create an Asian humanitarian assistance platform:** With global climate change and the increasing frequency of natural disasters, the government is faced with the threat of a major international disaster, lacks a response mechanism and a comprehensive disaster relief SOP strategy, and has not prepared the funds and resources to react to an international disaster. In contrast, NGOs are more mobile, flexible and capable than the government. Although Taiwan's government has set up a disaster relief fund, according to the law it cannot be used for major international disaster relief work, so is functionally limited. That is why the disaster relief fund and the functions of its designated appropriation

organization should be assessed. There is also a need to establish a cross-border emergency disaster relief and mutual-help mechanism and resources bank, which is flexible enough to incorporate the power of civil society into disaster relief, and post-disaster rebuilding and recovery projects.

5. Investment in long-term international youth volunteering: Youth engagement in international volunteering has long been an international trend. Youth participation can offer innovative and out-of-the-box thinking and partnerships to programs. Another strength of young people is making connections through social networks, which is seen as an essential advocacy tool for key international development issues. Taiwan's Youth Development Administration, Ministry of Education provides subsidies to encourage young people to volunteer, but its limited resources are concentrated on short-term activities, with not enough attention on long-term, in-depth volunteering projects, including volunteering destination, location, organization and project assessment, volunteer selection, training, task allocation, management, supervision, completion rewards, and other long-term planning considerations, which makes it difficult to establish deeper connections. In the future, there will be more demand for qualified long-term international youth volunteers. Working in partnership with NGOs and the private sector, and through their overseas branches, a variety of placements and internship opportunities can be created to send long-term volunteers (3 months to 2 years) to assist with the implementation of international cooperation projects, and at the same get a proper understanding of international cooperation and development.

6. Corporate social responsibility of overseas Taiwanese business investment: International cooperation and development projects in partnership with corporations, apart from effectively using corporate resources such as funding, personnel, expertise, skills, networks and so on, can also help companies promote CSR locally. According to 2015 statistics, overseas Taiwanese business investment (including mainland China) is over US\$20 billion. Apart from earning foreign currency, these businesses can promote local social enterprise and

sustainable corporate development, which are important strategies. Through cooperation with local NGOs they can implement local partnership programs in education, the environment, health, infrastructure, women's empowerment and other local community developments in need of assistance. Unfortunately, for many overseas Taiwanese businesses the concept of social enterprise goes no further than holding events and offering scholarships, without achieving an overall plan. In the future, international cooperation projects implemented locally by Taiwanese NGOs, combined with the overseas investment resources of Taiwanese companies, can help overseas Taiwanese entrepreneurs promote social enterprise. In addition, the government can establish a reward system to reward and encourage Taiwanese companies investing overseas to promote local social enterprise and fulfill their obligations as global citizens.

- 7. Promote south-south development cooperation through NGOs:** South-south development cooperation is a future international development trend. Through this collaborative framework, developing countries in the global south can work in partnership, and share experiences, knowledge, tools, skills and resources to assess the challenges they face and explore solutions. Furthermore, former developing countries in this area (such as China and Brazil) are now major donors of aid resources, skills and funding to help other countries develop, especially middle-income and low-income countries. Taiwanese NGOs running projects in developing countries should jointly create new methodologies, via knowledge sharing, technical instruction, training, advocacy and other activities, to help south-south countries promote economic, human rights, governance, gender equality and other developments. The government can use NGOs to actively invest in south-south cooperation, and illustrate its concern and capacity for international work.