



SAIIA REPORTS

Report number 43

Taiwanese Development Aid in Africa

Natasha Skidmore

Reports

SAIIA ARCHIVES

DO NOT REMOVE

**Taiwanese Development
Aid in Africa**

Copyright © SAIIA, 2002

All rights reserved

THE SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

ISBN: 1-919969-25-X

SAIIA Report No. 43

Please note that all amounts are in \$,
unless otherwise indicated.

SAIIA National Office Bearers

Fred Phaswana
Elisabeth Bradley • Moeletsi Mbeki
Brian Hawksworth • Alec Pienaar
Dr Greg Mills

Taiwanese Development Aid in Africa

Natasha Skidmore¹

Introduction

Since the early 1960s, Africa has been the primary battleground of the 'foreign policy war' between Beijing and Taipei over international legitimacy, recognition, and status.²

Ever since Taiwan lost its United Nations (UN) seat to the People's Republic of China in 1971, more and more countries have shifted official recognition from Taipei to Beijing, and fewer and fewer international organisations have accepted Taiwan's membership. One way in which Taiwan has tried to counter its diplomatic isolation is by channelling its economic strength and resources into assisting developing and underdeveloped countries, particularly in Africa. Its aid takes the form of technical assistance, training, donations, and humanitarian and disaster relief.

For countries in Africa, this economic assistance and other aid have been a lifeline to development at a time when the interest of the great powers in the continent has declined. Africa has lost the bargaining position that it had to obtain concessions from the superpowers during the Cold War.³ However, despite their

¹ NATASHA SKIDMORE was the Asia-Pacific Senior Researcher at the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), based at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

² Yu GT & DJ Longenecker, 'The Beijing-Taipei struggle for international recognition', in *Asian Survey*, 36, 5, May 1994.

³ Taylor I, 'Africa's place in the diplomatic competition between Beijing and Taipei', in *Issues and Studies*, 34, 3, March 1998, p.131.

remoteness and economic weakness, states in Africa form a significant voting bloc in international bodies such as the UN, and thus are important players in the struggle for diplomatic recognition between Taipei and Beijing.

Information on Taiwan's aid to Africa has not been systematically documented, nor has it been placed in the public domain. Taipei considers information on foreign aid and the accompanying statistics confidential. This report aims to examine Taiwanese development aid to Africa and its relation to economic growth on the continent, focusing, in particular, on aid in agriculture. The report will also examine the dynamics of Taiwan's aid to Africa, using Swaziland as a case study.

Background: Foreign Aid and African Development

Africa comprises more than 53 countries, many of which are characterised by low gross national income, conflict, and unstable, weak governments. These economic and political complexities offer Taiwan the opportunity to gain some political leverage through delivering aid to various African states, even though China has a growing presence on the continent.

Whether or not aid from Taiwan contributes to the economic development of these countries needs to be questioned from the outset. As stated by Leistner, 'it is one of the great delusions of our time that the large-scale dispensing of financial and other resources — so-called foreign aid — is essential if the development of Third World countries is to take place at a reasonable rate'.⁴ Many studies focusing on the efficacy of aid have found that no relationship exists

⁴ Leistner GME, 'International aid and African development', in *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, October 1995, p.61.

between aid and economic success in Africa,⁵ because it has no impact on job creation or the competitiveness of the recipient country's economy.⁶ If the correlation between the volume of aid received and a country's economic development is tenuous at best, then it becomes relevant to examine the primary reasons for a country's disbursement of aid. In this case, is Taiwan merely providing aid in return for international recognition and political leverage, to serve its own national interest? Or is there genuine interest on the part of Taiwan in assisting African countries in their economic development?

Two-thirds of Africa's states remain dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. The key to achieving economic development in Africa would thus seem to lie in the strengthening of this sector, and in building up the indigenous human capital that will ultimately be responsible for bringing about sustainable growth. Foreign aid dispensed to Africa needs to focus on increasing agricultural productivity if there is to be any hope of economic revival in Africa.

Elements of Taiwanese Policy towards Africa

The competition between China and Taiwan over international recognition during the 1950s and 1960s was the main determinant of Taiwan's aid policy towards Africa. For China, aid to such countries was a means of isolating Taiwan and diminishing its international standing, while vying to become the leading supplier of aid to the developing world. For Taiwan, the purpose of its aid was not to bid for leadership, but rather to attempt to secure its own survival by

⁵ Herbert R, 'Conditionality as a tool of reform', in Mills G & E Sidiropoulos (eds), *New Tools for Reform and Stability: Sanctions, Conditionalities and Conflict Resolution*. Johannesburg: SAIIA, 2004, p.180.

⁶ *Ibid*, p.183.

winning friendship and support for its legitimacy as an acceptable participant in world politics.⁷

From the outset, in the 1950s, Taiwan's foreign aid programmes were financed by American surplus agricultural products sold in Taiwan. Although the idea of foreign assistance to other countries was initiated by Taiwan, it can be argued that the money came mostly from the US.⁸ The emphasis at this early stage was derived from Taiwan's own development strategy: first, land reform, and then agricultural expansion brought about through simple, low-cost, labour-intensive programmes. This formula, which was aimed at helping countries to achieve sufficiency at a grassroots level, became the focus of Taiwan's foreign aid policy to developing countries during the 1950s and 1960s.

In 1979, the US withdrew its recognition of Taiwan. Taiwan's foreign aid programmes since the 1980s have been more extensive than before, demonstrating its greater financial resources and economic clout, and indicating the trend towards political autonomy in that country. Technical co-operation programmes have been extended to include fisheries, engineering, medicine and several other areas. While technical and agricultural assistance still form part of Taiwan's aid programmes, financial loans, grants and contributions to multilateral organisations have been added.⁹

In 1988, Taiwan launched its dual-recognition foreign policy, which allowed those states who recognised Taiwan the opportunity of doing so without breaking ties with China.¹⁰ This led to an increase in the number of states that recognised Taiwan (including many in Africa). At present, there are seven countries in Africa that maintain

⁷ Wei-chin L, 'ROC's foreign aid policy', in *Asian Affairs*, Spring 1993, p.333.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ China strongly opposed this and did not follow suit.

diplomatic relations with Taiwan. These countries are Burkina Faso, Chad, the Gambia, Malawi, São Tomé e Príncipe, Senegal and Swaziland.¹¹ Since then, foreign aid has become an important tool in assisting Taiwan to achieve one of its top foreign policy objectives, which is, as previously mentioned, the winning of wider international support for its existence as an independent political entity.

Another significant foreign policy objective is the need to maintain strong external economic relations, which is why Taiwan seeks engagement with Africa through trade and investment. Trade between the seven countries in Africa that recognise Taiwan and the latter has grown. In most cases, there has been an overall increase in the period between 2001–02 with these select countries. In contrast, this is significant in that Taiwan’s trade with the continent declined over 2001–02.

Table 1: Total trade between Taiwan and Africa (in \$)

<i>Country</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>Growth rate (%)</i>
Burkina Faso	2,532,537	5,140,616	103
Chad	1,652,324	419,741	-75
The Gambia	752,304	929,287	24
Malawi	7,363,481	6,535,529	-11
São Tomé e Príncipe	19,278	24,585	28
Senegal	2,783,613	3,732,806	34
Swaziland	7,393,612	17,353,532	135
Total	22,497,149	34,136,096	52
Total (with Africa)	3,391,680,955	2,691,540,775	-21

Source: *www.trade.gov.tw*

There has been a significant improvement in total trade between Taipei and both Burkina Faso and Swaziland. This indicates the importance that Taipei attaches to official recognition by a state. Countries who have cut diplomatic relations with China in favour of

¹¹ Taylor, *op. cit.*, p.128.

Taiwan have usually been rewarded by an outpouring of aid from the latter. For example, Burkina Faso, broke off diplomatic relations with China in 1994 to establish links with Taiwan instead, which has subsequently received a steady flow of aid from the island state. In the latest agreement signed between the two countries, Taiwan has granted Burkina Faso approximately \$14 million for water supplies, irrigation and rural development projects over the next three years.¹² Most of the money will be used to sink 1,000 boreholes and build 25 reservoirs to improve irrigation in rural areas; the remainder will be used to improve the roads in five provincial towns.¹³ This agreement represents the first tranche of a \$32,5 million Taiwanese aid package agreed last year to cover the period 2004–06.¹⁴

Foreign aid also smooths the way for an increase in outward investment, and gives Taiwanese investors the leverage to enjoy preferential treatment in countries that have been recipients of Taiwanese aid.¹⁵

The scope of Taiwan's foreign aid

At present, Taiwan's aid to other countries covers six geographic areas, namely, Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Southern Pacific, the Middle East and Eastern Europe. Southeast Asia has been a priority in Taiwan's foreign aid programmes because of its geographical closeness to Taiwan, and its economic vitality. In 1991, Indonesia and Thailand each received \$1.7 million in aid to further 'substantive' relations.¹⁶

¹² See www.irinnews.org for additional information.

¹³ *Ibid.*

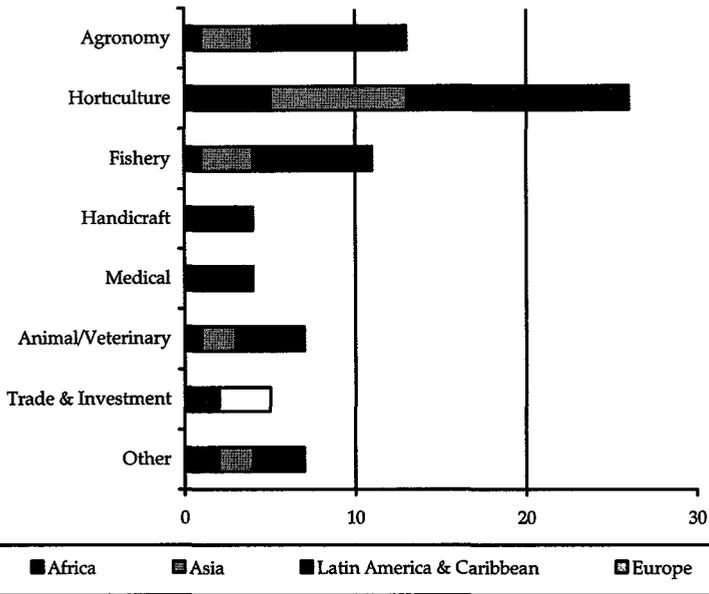
¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Taylor, *op. cit.*, p.346.

¹⁶ *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 19 October 1989 and 14 November 1991.

A large proportion of Taiwan's aid has been directed towards Africa since the 1960s. Liberia received 15,000 tons of rice in 1988–89, and \$212 million for road construction and educational improvement after that country had normalised relations with Taiwan in 1989.¹⁷ Lesotho received \$30 million in aid in 1989–90, while Nigeria was offered \$38 million in aid.¹⁸ South Africa also received a \$60 million low-interest loan in 1991 to provide agricultural and technical assistance to the disadvantaged sectors of the population.¹⁹

Figure 1: Distribution of technical mission projects by location



Source: ICDF (data as of July 2001)

¹⁷ Wei-chin, *op. cit.*, p.336.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *China Times Weekly*, 9–15 February 1991, p.12.

The largest distribution of Taiwan's foreign aid programmes is to be found in Latin America, followed by Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe. South Asia and the Middle East have been relatively neglected, primarily because of a lack of dialogue and substantial trade relations between Taiwan and countries in these regions, and partly because of the volatile situation in the Middle East.²⁰

The implementation and initiation of Taiwan's foreign aid

The decision-making aspect of Taiwan's foreign aid programme is shared between the ministries of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and Economic Affairs (MOEA). The Committee of International Technical Co-operation (CITC) and the International Economic Co-operation and Development Fund (IECDF) are the implementation bodies.²¹

The CITC, formerly known as Operation Vanguard, was established in 1961 to provide agricultural and technical assistance to African and Latin American countries. The IECDF was established in 1988, with the goal of distributing \$1.2 billion in foreign aid to developing countries within five years.²² In order to expand the scope of international co-operation, the CITC was allied with the new IECDF on 1 July 1996. The new body consisted of representative officials from the MOFA, the MOEA, the Council of Agriculture, the Central Bank and the Legislative Yuan. In addition to the technical co-operation, investment and loan operations that were previously offered by aid programmes, education and training and humanitarian assistance have also been included in the range of foreign assistance functions offered by the IECDF.²³

²⁰ Wei-chin, *op. cit.*, p.343.

²¹ *Ibid*, p.334.

²² *Ibid*.

²³ See www.mofa.gov.tw for additional information.

In terms of the initiation of foreign aid programmes, specifically agriculture, a country normally requests technical assistance. Taiwan responds by sending a mission of experts to the country to conduct a feasibility study into its agricultural policy, the status of agriculture and the limitations and possible solutions to the country's technical problems. A proposal is drafted by the mission and presented to the host country. If both parties agree, the proposal is formally written into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and signed by both parties. Each agreement is valid for a period of two or three years, and is renewable after mutual consultation.²⁴

Technical missions operate according to two principles: providing technical know-how and experience; and ensuring that a number of local people work closely with the experts in the field.²⁵ The programme is carried out in accordance with the MOU. A budget for the project is completed and machinery, equipment and other supplies are sent to the co-operating country to support the project. The mission submits written reports to the host country and the CITC on a regular basis. Most agricultural projects take the following form:

- a field experiment;
- a field demonstration;
- the introduction of a greater variety in crop types; and
- the transfer of technology through training.

Projects focused on crop production, fishery, veterinary and medical services, and agriculture are regarded as the most important.

The fact that Taiwan's foreign aid programme is the responsibility of the MOFA and MOEA suggests a dynamism in the approach to the dispensing of aid. The MOFA views aid as a diplomatic lever, while

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

the MOEA sees it from an economic angle, examining the most effective use of money disbursed to recipient countries.

From Humble Beginnings: Taiwanese Aid to Africa

Taiwan's economic success is largely attributable to the development strategy followed by the Taiwanese government in the early stages of the island's development. The government focused primarily on agriculture and land reform as the bases for its first stage of growth. This was followed by a period of concentrating on light and heavy industry, and later by its current specialisation in advanced technology.

Taiwan's agricultural experience

Taiwan's push for agricultural development relied on three elements: government policy, innovative farming techniques and social reforms. The success of this strategy was attested by great improvements in agricultural productivity and in the country's overall economic development.²⁶

Because Taiwan occupies a small area of land and has a high population density, the government implemented a land-to-the-tiller policy after that country's retrocession in 1945. This led to agricultural development under a small-scale farming system. The stable political environment and involvement of government allowed for extensive land reforms, which reduced the number of tenant farmers from approximately 60% to 9%, while raising the number of land-owning farmers from 40–81%.²⁷ These reforms

²⁶ Yu-kang M. *The Story of Taiwan Agriculture*. Taipei: Government Information Office, 2003, p.12.

²⁷ Yu-kang M, *op. cit.*, p.38.

improved the living conditions of farmers and increased productivity. Farmers were also assisted through the introduction of improved farming technologies and skills, and investments by government. As a result, agricultural development in Taiwan increased the overall production and income of farmers, led to more equitable distribution of wealth and eliminated the disparities that had previously existed between rich and poor farmers.²⁸

In order to sustain the increase in agricultural production, the government then implemented a series of measures that included expanding the variety of crops grown, introducing new ways to protect crops from insect pests and plant diseases, providing irrigation works, supplying fertiliser, promoting the use of farm machinery, and improving the distribution channels.²⁹

Between 1952–2001, the indexes of agricultural production were as follows: 21.2 in 1952, 53.4 in 1971, 75.4 in 1981, and 95.2 in 2001.³⁰ However, those applicable to individual categories of agricultural products varied substantially from year to year. Having achieved high agricultural production, the Taiwan government was able to move on to the next step of economic growth, the development of its industrial sector. Prior to 1963, the agricultural production value occupied a higher percentage of Taiwan's GDP than the industrial production value. For example, the former contributed 35.8% of Taiwan's GDP in 1951, in comparison to the latter which contributed a mere 19.1%. However, by 1961, agricultural production had dropped to 27.5% of Taiwan's GDP and industrial production had increased to 26.6% indicating the change in the national economy. During the 1970s, Taiwan's rapid industrialisation boosted the country's economic progress.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.13.

³⁰ The year 1996 is used as the base year.

Operation Vanguard

'There can be no genuine development in the Third World nations without giving first consideration [to] agricultural development'.³¹ Agriculture is the single most important generator of economic growth and development in Africa, and thus has an important role to play in the overall development of the African continent.

Taiwan's foreign aid programme to Africa began modestly when it was still an underdeveloped agricultural nation in the 1950s. At this stage, the Taiwanese economy had not yet taken off, but a series of landmark agricultural reforms had transformed its economic foundation. That country's first efforts to provide technical support to newly-independent African states, took the form of agricultural assistance. This aid programme, known as Operation Vanguard, began in 1959. The first large-scale agricultural technical mission was dispatched to Liberia in 1961 and a year later another mission visited Libya.³² The programme focused on addressing basic human needs through the production of basic crops and staple foods. This first stage was followed by the creation of employment opportunities in livestock and poultry farming, veterinary care, handicraft markets, fishing, and aquacultural activities.³³

The primary objective of Operation Vanguard was therefore to share Taiwan's agricultural experience with African countries to assist them to achieve self-sufficiency in food production, while making use of their own manpower and natural resources. Taiwan sent agricultural specialists to Africa to survey the general agricultural situation in order to determine the type of assistance required.

³¹ Dadzie KKS, 'Economic development', in *Scientific American*, 243, 3, September 1980, p.59.

³² See www.mofa.gov.tw for additional information.

³³ Hu JC. *The Republic of China on Taiwan: Our Role in Assistance and Co-operation*. Taipei: Government Information Office, 1995.

Responsible individuals and agricultural technicians from Africa were also invited to Taiwan to observe its agricultural practices.

Taiwan's success in this sector has been attributed to the increase in both domestic and overseas demand for agricultural products. This in turn stimulated growth because the country became a large-scale exporter of agricultural products.

A Shift in Focus: Taiwan's International Technical Co-operation Programme

As Taiwan's economy moved into high-tech manufacturing, its technical co-operation programmes to Africa changed, and were expanded to cover animal husbandry, veterinary medicine, fishery and aquaculture techniques, handicraft making, food processing, medical services, sugar production, floriculture and highway engineering.

As previously discussed, in 1996 the IECDF, an independent foundation, was established to consolidate the planning and implementation of these programmes. The criteria for selecting projects were clearly defined. The most important were that the project should be 'urgently' needed by the recipient country, and that both the people and the government of the recipient country should take a keen interest in the project and be prepared to work closely with Taiwanese experts and technicians.

Under Taiwan's technical co-operation programme, the total number of technical missions undertaken between December 1959 and December 1996 amounted to 105 in 68 countries worldwide.

Table 2: Taiwan's technical missions and staff distribution (1959-97)

<i>Region</i>	<i>Country number</i>	<i>Mission number</i>	<i>Taiwanese personnel</i>
Africa	25	44	7,006
Caribbean	9	10	552
Asia-Pacific	11	15	1,306
Middle East	4	8	752
Miscellaneous	2	3	13
Total	51	80	9,629

Source: *www.mofa.gov.tw*

At present, Taiwan has 47 technical missions served by 389 staff members, who have been posted to 33 co-operating countries across the world. There are 11 missions currently working in Africa, involving 109 experts and other technical personnel, includes seven agricultural, three medical and one handicrafts mission. Taiwanese NGOs have also become involved in humanitarian aid to Africa.

Table 3: Outline of Taiwan's technical missions (at present)

	<i>Africa</i>	<i>Central America</i>	<i>South America</i>	<i>Caribbean</i>	<i>Asia-Pacific</i>	<i>Middle East</i>	<i>Total</i>
Agriculture	7	7	2	7	8	2	33
Fishery		3		1		1	5
Handicraft	1	1					2
Sugar					1		1
Medical	3						3
Printing					1		1
Highway engineering					1		1
Sub-Total	11	11	2	8	11	3	46
Planned	133	95	26	61	62	43	420
Assigned	121	92	21	62	56	37	389

Source: *www.mofa.gov.tw*

Taiwanese Aid to Africa: Swaziland as a Case Study³⁴

Swaziland is a small landlocked country with a limited domestic market. More than 60% of its population are engaged in subsistence agriculture. However, commercial farming is also done in the country, and the wide range of agricultural activities produces sugar cane, cotton, corn, tobacco, rice, pineapples, sorghum, peanuts and livestock. However, Swaziland's farmers are faced with persistent problems, which include overgrazing, soil depletion, drought and occasional floods. This is one of the reasons why, in recent years, agriculture has accounted for only 10–12% of GDP, even though it is fundamental to the manufacturing industry (which contributes about 40% of GDP) and also affects the services sector (which accounts for the remainder of GDP).³⁵ Swaziland's economy is largely dependent on exports, the most important being soft drink concentrate, sugar and wood pulp, that is, processed agricultural products.

Diplomatic relations between Taiwan and Swaziland were established in 1968. Since then, relations between the two countries have strengthened and trade has increased substantially, from approximately \$7.3 million in 2001 to \$17.3 million in 2002 (134%).³⁶

Subsequent to the technical co-operation agreements that were signed by the governments of the Kingdom of Swaziland and Taiwan, two technical missions were sent to the country. One, launched in September 1969, was for agriculture, and the other, starting in February 1973, was dedicated to handicrafts. These missions were integrated in July 1998 in order to streamline their

³⁴ The author would like to thank Tim Hughes, Parliamentary Research Fellow at SAIIA, for the information he provided on Swaziland following a field trip he undertook to the kingdom in November 2003.

³⁵ See www.ecs.co.sz for additional information.

³⁶ Trade figures obtained from www.trade.gov.tw.

administration. The technical co-operation agreements have been continuously reviewed and revised since their inception, so that different projects and schemes can be introduced as the situation changes. The overall objective of the missions has been to aid the Swazi government's efforts to foster agricultural development and handicraft training.

At present, there are 13 Taiwanese staff members working with the technical mission in Swaziland. These include 10 agricultural specialists. The mission works with the Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operatives (MOAC), Tisuka Taka Ngwane, the Central Co-operative Union (CCU) and the traditional tribal authorities. Three senior specialists in handicraft training are working with the National Handicraft Training Centre (NHTC) of the Ministry of Enterprise and Employment (MEE).

Recent technical co-operation programmes undertaken in Swaziland include the Agricultural Technical Co-operation Project and the Handicraft Training Project. The former has two ventures in hand, the Swazi/Chinese Smallholder Maize and Sweet Potato Project and the Royal Corporation Assistance Project, which are joint undertakings by the Taiwanese technical mission and the MOAC. The latter comprises the Handicraft Co-operation Training Project, sponsored by both the Taiwanese technical mission and the NHTC of the MEE in Ezulweni.

The Swazi/Chinese smallholder maize and sweet potato project

This project started in 1980, and aims to provide technical assistance (farm inputs, farming facilities and marketing channels) to the MOAC. It will do this by establishing and operating a sustainable project to enable smallholders to produce the national staple foods, maize and sweet potatoes, at a high level of yield, quality and profitability. The cultivation of maize in the project would be

demonstrated on small areas of farm-land, while sweet potatoes would be grown on a larger scale.

In co-operation with the Extension Service of the Agriculture Department of the MOAC, the current contributions of the Taiwanese are as follows:

- They have provided the newly recruited maize farmers (approximately 420 annually) with the required inputs for an initial maize crop covering one hectare, and supplied sweet potato cuttings (seedlings) for the owners of 80 hectare farms;
- They have given farmers free use of 130 motor-powered maize shellers and two trucks for transporting their maize harvests and the farm inputs required for the subsequent crop;
- They have sponsored and participated in the regional farmers' workshops on the production of maize and sweet potato crops; and
- They have been members of the Project Management Committee (PMC), which manages project activities.

There has been a significant increase in the average yields of maize (approximately three times higher) and sweet potato (approximately two times higher) since the project's inception. To date, over 12,330 maize and sweet potato farmers have benefited from the project. Three varieties of sweet potato introduced from Taiwan have demonstrated their crop viability and suitability (in other words, that their suitability to the Swaziland climate, high yield and satisfactory flavour makes them a crop that farmers choose to cultivate). During 2002, the sweet potato nursery in Matsapha supplied farmers with cuttings for planting 100 hectares of sweet potato in various regions. However, probably the most significant effects of this project have been the forging of links among the farmers and the Central Co-operative Union, the National Maize Co-operation and the government Extension and Mechanisation Services.

The Royal Corporation Assistance Project

This programme was initiated in 1976–77 to assist in the operation of two model projects, the Avolitchi farm and the Entuthwini ranch, where local workers can acquire technical skills and assist in the commercial production of various crops for profit.

The Taiwanese have provided technical assistance in the following:

- They have managed the Avolitchi farm, where various crops such as local and exotic vegetables, rice and sweet potatoes are grown, and supervised the sale of its produce to ensure that a profit is made; and
- They have serviced the Entuthwini ranch, which specialises in cattle rearing, disease control measures and ranch maintenance.

There has been a great improvement in the day-to-day and seasonal operations at the Avolitchi farm. Profits in 2002 were estimated at twice those of 2001. At present, a total area of 30 hectares of land is in use, and 29 local workers are employed to cultivate 12 different kinds of exotic and local vegetables, grown seasonally to meet local consumers' needs. There are 267 head of cattle at the Entuthwini ranch (which covers 717 hectares). The daily management of the ranch and of herding has also improved yearly since 1998. The herd has increased by 85 head, of which 35 have been sold. In order to introduce mixed farming into the model ranch operation, 600 mango and 300 litchi trees have been planted, and another 200 mango and 300 litchi trees will be added shortly. Also, 136 hectares has been converted to growing sugar cane in the last year.

The Handicraft Training Co-operation Project

This undertaking began in 1973, with the aim of providing technical assistance to the MEE in establishing and operating a sustainable training programme in the National Handicraft Training Centre

(NHTC). More specifically, it is designed to provide young Swazis with training in handicraft skills and vocational know-how that will prepare them to enter the Swazi job market and open small businesses.

In co-operation with the NHTC, the Taiwanese have contributed as follows:

- They have supplied the NHTC with four instructors for the training programme; and
- They have provided financial assistance to cover the costs of operating the courses, and acquire the equipment and facilities necessary for training.

A total of 2,119 persons have completed the training course, under eight different subject programmes, since the project's inception. There are six Swazi instructors holding teaching positions in the NHTC, who have been recruited from the graduates of the NHTC. The localisation of teaching staff is encouraging, because it assists technology transfer. The Industrial Sewing Machine Operator Training Course (which lasts for one month) has been completed by 669 Swazis, most of whom have been able to find employment in the local garment factories. Other handicraft courses include wood or stone carvings, ceramics, leather craft, fine arts and tool making.

The Ngwempisi Young Farmers' Training Project

Another project that has been launched as a joint venture is the Ngwempisi Young Farmers' Training Project (NYF). This project, initiated in 1995, was designed to provide technical assistance to the MOAC's Young Farmers' Training project. This aims to help novice farmers develop their farming skills through supervising production and helping them to market their produce for profit. The project is also intended to develop the land in Ngwempisi for use as both commercial smallholdings and residential settlements.

The Taiwanese contributions to this project are as follows:

- They have supplied daily meals, classroom stationery and the farm inputs required by the trainees for the basic farming programme (which lasts approximately four months);
- They have helped to formulate the training curriculum and to teach basic field farming practice;
- They have provided farmers with farm inputs for the initial crop grown after the completion of the basic farming phase;
- They have given the Farmers' Association a broiler house and the initial feed and materials required for them to rear 500 broiler chickens and to conserve chicken manure to use for sustainable farming;
- They have taken part in the ad hoc workshops on production, marketing and farm management; and
- They have formed part of both the Training and the Management Committees, which manage the project.

A total of 82 trainee farmers have completed the basic farming programme. Thirty-eight of them are farming on the 59 hectares allocated under the second-phase farming programme. The National Agricultural Marketing Board (NAMBOARD) has signed production contracts with 10 of these young farmers who have demonstrated their ability to produce baby vegetables for domestic as well as overseas markets. A total of 72 hectares of arable land with an irrigation system has been made available, and more than half of this land is being used for vegetables and other crop production. The development of the Ngwempisi land into commercial smallholdings has also started to show progress.

In recent years, the technical missions' services have been extended to the rural areas. The involvement of Swazi farmers in the Agricultural Technical Co-operation Project has increased significantly. There has also been a clear improvement in the standard of living of those farmers who have participated. In terms

of the Handicrafts Training Project, more than 2,119 students have graduated from the NHTC, having acquired the handicraft skills necessary to sustain themselves and their families.

Conclusion

Two-thirds of African countries are dependent on agriculture as the basis for their economies. The development and strengthening of this sector, in this case through the provision of foreign aid, is thus of critical importance if the economic growth and development of these countries is to take place at a reasonable rate. Although there is a weak correlation between the provision of foreign aid and economic development, it can be argued that in Africa, in which many countries are plagued by low gross national income and weak and unstable governments, any attempt to increase agricultural productivity is better than nothing.

The fact that Taiwan's own successful economic transformation was initially based on agricultural development has made its agricultural and land reform policy 'attractive' to African states. Although Taiwan's motives in providing aid have been questioned given the so-called 'scramble for Africa' as an expression of rivalry between China and Taiwan, it is important to recognise the benefits these programmes have brought.

In the case of Swaziland, where more than 60% of the population are engaged in subsistence agriculture, the provision of assistance, both in equipment and technical know-how, is of paramount importance for the economy. Through its technical co-operation projects, Taiwan has equipped local farmers with the necessary skills and technology to sustain themselves and their families. Technology transfer takes place through a hands-on process by learning through doing. The mission's staff work together with the local farmers in every aspect

of the operation, and this 'self-doing' approach has led, in many cases, to self-sufficiency in food production and an increase in yields per unit acreage. This has resulted in the development of farming competence, an increase in farm produce, new employment opportunities and, in the long term, an improvement in the standard of living of those farmers involved.

The success of the projects carried out in Swaziland can be attributed to the following dynamics. Firstly, Taiwan has provided basic need projects that have demonstrable results (yield per unit acreage/labour/unit has increased, as has agricultural production). Secondly, technical teams from Taiwan strongly encourage maximum participation by the local population, which makes appropriate technology transfer a natural and practical matter. Thirdly, the technicians and advisers from Taiwan are diligent workers, and labour with the people they are teaching. Fourthly, Taiwanese programmes cost relatively little for recipient governments to implement, and yet are remarkably effective.

In many countries where a dire need for development exists, Taiwan has assisted in providing necessary inputs and the technology transfer and skills that are required in the initial stages of development. This may take place at a grassroots level, but on a continent where such a high proportion of the population are dependent on agriculture, this assistance and development has been, and ought to be, welcomed.



The South African Institute of International Affairs
PO Box 31596 Braamfontein 2017 South Africa
Jan Smuts House, East Campus,
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
E-mail: saiiagen@global.co.za
Tel: (+27 11) 339-2021
Fax: (+27 11) 339-2154