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Taiwan's International Cooperation Program

by C. C. Chang, Taipei *

The Republic of China's practical experience demonstrates that economic cooperation among developing countries in selected areas is not only possible, but effective and money-saving.

Since the end of World War II, considerable effort has been made by advanced countries and international agencies to help developing countries through their economic and technical assistance programs. However, in many instances, they have been far from attaining their goals, as every so often they have failed to appreciate some of the basic problems inherent in the developing countries. With the tapering off of the contributions made through these aid programs in recent years, the situation calls for a serious look into the possibility of promoting economic and technical cooperation among the developing countries themselves as a parallel action to complement the aid efforts of the advanced countries and international agencies.

Rapidly Expanding Cooperation

The Republic of China has enjoyed on its island-province of Taiwan a sustained, rapid economic growth averaging 8.7 p.c. since 1953 and 10.0 p.c. since 1962. It has gathered in the course of this continued economic progress a stock of knowledge and experience useful to other developing countries. Thus, back in 1954, it started to offer training opportunities to foreign technicians in fields in which it had achieved marked success. Its overseas economic cooperation program began in 1959 with the dispatch of an agricultural team to Vietnam and picked up tempo in 1961 when a farming demonstration team was sent to Liberia in Africa. Since then, this program has been expanding rapidly with very gratifying results.

At present, well over 1,000 Chinese specialists and technicians are participating in various technical cooperation projects through bilateral arrangements the Republic of China has made with more than 30 countries in Africa, Southeast Asia,

the Middle East and Latin America. Most of the projects are for agricultural cooperation. In Africa alone, there are now 19 Chinese agricultural technical missions working in 18 host countries.

An outstanding example of the Republic of China's successful efforts at promoting international cooperation is provided by the agricultural cooperation it conducted in the Ivory Coast. A 14-man agricultural technical mission started in March 1963 a demonstration project at a selected site at Korhogo. Work during the demonstration period included reclamation of land, experimentation on new varieties of rice, improvement of cultural methods, development of irrigation and drainage facilities, introduction of simple farming machines and tools, and training of local farmers. In the space of two years, four crops of rice were harvested by the demonstration team with an average yield of 6,300 kilograms per crop, which was more than five times the previous local yield. And since the local practice used to produce only one crop of rice a year, the increase in annual yield was actually more than ten times. Equally impressive was the increased yields of upland crops, watermelons and vegetables introduced by the team.

Promotion of Rice Cultivation

The success of this demonstration prompted the Ivory Coast to launch in the summer of 1965 a nation-wide agricultural extension plan aimed at attaining self-sufficiency in rice. To meet the increased need for Chinese personnel to assist in the implementation of the extension plan, the agricultural mission has been enlarged several times to include presently as many as 160 members. In June 1972, extension work was being carried out in 819 regions covering some 18,000 farm families with a total farm land area of 8,300 hectares, and training was completed for 19,800 agricultural workers.

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The Ivory Coast, which is nine times the size of Taiwan with but one-third of its population, imported 84,000 metric tons of rice in 1966. As a result of the agricultural extension work, rice imports have been greatly reduced since 1967. The country is expected to become self-sufficient in rice in the near future.

Technical cooperation with Latin American countries began in 1963 with the dispatch of a six-member team to the Dominican Republic to assist in its agricultural development. Currently, Chinese agricultural technical teams are working in nine countries in the western hemisphere, which number is expected to increase to 14 by the end of this year.

Everywhere they go, the Chinese agricultural missions have been successful in demonstrating, through the application of their well-tested cultural methods, impressive increases in production in rice and other crops. Except in a few cases where bilateral cooperation has been discontinued from diplomatic causes, prolongation of their service has been sought by every host country after the completion of their demonstration projects to assist in its further development efforts.

Transfer of Industrial Knowledge

Besides agriculture, cooperation has also been extended to countries on the African and European continents in the promotion of a wide range of non-agricultural projects, including sugar milling, distilling, peanut oil production, highway engineering and handicraft. Plans are under way to step up cooperation in industrial development, with special emphasis on the establishment of light industries, in which field the Republic of China has accumulated experience.

With its neighboring Asian countries, the Republic of China naturally has maintained constructive cooperative relations for geographic, cultural and economic reasons. Close economic and technical cooperation is maintained with Korea, Thailand and Vietnam, with which bilateral conferences on economic cooperation at the ministerial level are held annually to review the progress in implementing economic cooperation programs and to make and consider new cooperation proposals. The cooperation activities include the rendering of advisory and technical services, exchange of visitors for observation and consultation, transfer of technology and information, trade promotion, joint industrial ventures and conducting of training programs.

Stationed in Thailand is a Chinese agricultural technical mission working at Sappaya, Chinant Province. A leading rice exporter, Thailand is convinced that it can considerably increase its

production of rice and other crops and raise the income of its farmers by emulating the Chinese cultural methods, irrigation system and farmers' organization.

Establishment of Model Villages

Economic and technical cooperation is extended to the Republic of Vietnam in a wide range of projects. An agricultural team, now in the 13th year of its service in that war-ravaged country, is bending its efforts to assist in the establishment of model villages. Other Chinese technical groups for long-term service in Vietnam include an electric power team and two medical teams. Technical assistance has also been rendered in the fields of infrastructure (railways, postal and telecommunication services, urban planning and reconstruction, rural electrification, port construction, etc.) and industrial development (sugar cane growing and sugar manufacturing, concrete pole factory, machinery repair and maintenance, etc.).

Technical training constitutes an important factor in Chinese international cooperation. In collaboration with the US Third Country Training Program, the Republic of China has offered facilities for training of some 6,800 foreign technicians in various fields over a period of 17 years. Technicians from Thailand (2,456) make up the largest group, followed by those from Vietnam (1,822), the Philippines (577) and Korea (419).

The Chinese government also conducts independently a number of training programs either in cooperation with its own overseas technical cooperation activities or in response to specific requests from interested countries. Since 1962, a series of 13 comprehensive agricultural seminars, each lasting about five months, has been conducted for African agricultural technicians with a total attendance of 639 participants from 31 African countries. Practically all the graduates of these seminars have returned home to engage in agricultural work. One graduate, however, has become the foreign minister of his country. Recently completed was a two-year seminar for 20 Vietnamese technicians in sugar cane growing and sugar manufacture. A similar one was conducted ten years ago to coordinate with the establishment of the first sugar mill in Vietnam.

Research and Training Institutes

Moreover, a number of research and training institutes have been established in the Republic of China under various regional and international cooperation programs. These include the Asian Food and Fertilizer Technology Center established under the auspices of the Asian and Pacific Council; the Asian Vegetable Center initiated by

the Chinese Government and the US Agency for International Development with the support of the Republic of Korea, Thailand, the Philippines, Vietnam and Japan; the Land Reform Training Institute, a joint project of the Chinese Government and the Lincoln Foundation of the United States; and the Chinese Center for International Training on Family Planning set up jointly by the Taiwan Provincial Government and the US Population Council.

The Chinese economic and technical cooperation program has the following distinct features, which have made it highly receptive to cooperating countries and thus have brought it marked success:

Adaptability: Having recently gone through similar stages of economic development, the Republic of China can better appreciate the problems of the cooperating developing countries, and its experiences are more readily adaptable to their needs. This fact is borne out by the effectiveness of the package of Chinese agricultural techniques adopted in the great number of developing countries, in many of which similar attempts by other sources have wound up in failure or with only limited success.

Partnership: A predominant criterion in the selection of cooperation projects is their economic feasibility with regard to the means and capability of both the Republic of China and the host country concerned. The cooperating countries thus work closely together as equal partners sharing the responsibilities commensurate with their respective resources. With the cooperation projects undertaken in the nature of joint ven-

tures, there is a complete absence of the sense of disparity in standing as is often generated by the so-called aid programs.

The Adaptation to Local Environments

Grassroots Contacts: The most effective way to disseminate knowledge and know-how is to get in close contact with the very people actually doing the work and convince them by showing them how to do it. The Chinese specialists and technicians adapt themselves easily to the local environments of the host countries and work shoulder to shoulder with local participants, to whom the techniques are to be imparted. Trainers and trainees mix happily together as friends, living under the same conditions and doing the same type of work.

Optimum Results at Moderate Costs: Another feature closely related with the previous one is that in conducting cooperation projects compatible with its own development experience the Republic of China is able to offer the necessary services with a minimum waste of effort, money and time. Its program can therefore produce the desired results with a comparatively modest budget, whereas a more elaborate approach may often lead to complications besides entailing a higher cost.

The Republic of China's willingness to help other developing countries with its own development experience is limited only by its available resources. But, as testified by the fruitful results of its efforts, the developing countries can certainly benefit immeasurably from stepping up cooperation among themselves.

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