



In the summer of 2002, I was dispatched to the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office (TECRO, our *de facto* embassy to the United States) in Washington D.C. During my two years' service as a health adviser there, I was fortunate enough, by means of an introduction from Professor Liu Zhou-wan, to meet Taiwan's doyen of the campaign against malaria, Dr. Liang Kuang-chi, and sought several times to consult him on his experience of antimalaria work. At a dinner, it was mentioned that the 40th anniversary of Taiwan's eradication of malaria was approaching, and it would present an opportunity to hold an international conference to invite international experts, as well as eminent domestic figures of the campaign, antimalaria veterans and scholars, to present and pass on Taiwan's experience of malaria eradication. I am delighted that this thought has finally been realized, and that this special edition has been completed.

Taiwan's malaria control and prevention work had begun during the Japanese colonial era, but it came to a standstill with the outbreak of World War II, when large numbers of city dwellers who were not immune to the disease moved to the countryside, making malaria common once again. After the war, in 1946, the national government collaborated with the United States and the World Health Organization to implement a malaria control program drawn up by experts at the Taiwan Provincial Malaria Research Institute. After 20 years of hard work with cooperation from health units in all counties and cities, and from the general public, the eradication of malaria was finally achieved in 1965. Meanwhile, senior personnel behind the Taiwan Malaria Eradication Program had received invitations from the regional headquarters of various United Nations agencies and other health organizations to provide Taiwan's experience to many countries that were conducting antimalaria work.

Foreword by the Director of CDC

During the maintenance phase, the Taiwan Provincial Institute of Infectious Diseases and the National Institute of Preventive Medicine under the Department of Health (DOH, Executive Yuan) carried out follow-up prevention work through the island-wide malaria surveillance network by making regular visits to all parts of Taiwan; only with these efforts did Taiwan avoid, unlike Sri Lanka, India, and Indonesia, a resurgence of the disease.

Malaria remains a major public health issue globally. About 1 to 1.3 million people die from the disease worldwide every year, second only to those who die from pulmonary tuberculosis. Of those deaths, some 90% are in Africa, where approximately 3,000 people die from the disease every day, with the majority of morbidity and mortality occurring among children aged five or under. Every 30 seconds, a child dies of malaria. Of all malaria deaths worldwide, approximately 60% are concentrated among the poorest 20% of the world's population. It is the disease with the clearest correlation to poverty.

Despite Taiwan's difficult position in the global balance of power since our withdrawal from the United Nations and the World Health Organization in 1971 and 1972 respectively, we have eagerly given back to the international community through all forms of foreign aid channels for the technology and funds we received from the World Health Organization and the international community, as well as for their assistance in the implementation of much infectious disease prevention and health protection work in the wake of World War II. In fact, as early as 1959, an agricultural technology team was dispatched to Vietnam to provide short-term assistance in agriculture, fisheries, and animal husbandry, which became Taiwan's pioneer in foreign aid. This was followed by a Committee of International Technical Cooperation, an International Economic Cooperation Development Fund (IECDF), and, on July 1, 1996, the International Cooperation and Development Fund (ICDF) was founded. The ICDF is currently Taiwan's official corporate body with the special responsibility for providing foreign aid.

The year 2002 marked the beginning of a new era in Taiwan's antimalaria diplomacy. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) began cooperating with our African diplomatic ally, the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, on a project in which MOFA deliberated on ideas raised by both the Center for Disease Control (DOH) and other experts in the field, and drew up a plan whose implementation was entrusted to the ICDF. Ever since Taiwan has announced the eradication of malaria, the majority of the cases of the disease have been imported, but because these cases are very far and few between, most of the treatment providers and technicians have become less familiar with the clinical diagnosis of the disease and the interpretation of the test results. In addition, most of the highly experienced disease prevention personnel have already retired, which results in a crisis involving a shortage of experts. In 2003, in Taitung County, two cases of introduced malaria were reported, which particularly highlighted the urgency of malaria prevention work. In relation to the Sao Tome and Principe malaria control project, it provides an illustrative model for training future malaria prevention personnel and for building up strength in health diplomacy. Through

the good offices of Taiwan's senior malaria prevention personnel, and with Taiwan's field experience of malaria eradication as the linchpin, the necessary prevention work has been put into practice in Sao Tome and Principe.



From left : Professor Liu Zhou-wan, Dr. Liu Jia-qing, Dr. Liang Kuang-chi and Dr. Kuo Hsu-sung

Foreword by the Director of CDC

In the course of the project, doctors and epidemic prevention personnel have been sent overseas to carry out training, and to expand their experience in the field, so that they can serve as the driving force behind malaria prevention on their return to Taiwan, while a diplomatic ally can eliminate a major public health problem that has affected its economic strength. Internationally, a successful outcome might also raise the image of Taiwan's health teams, and the nation's general international profile, generating capital in the field of health diplomacy and increasing Taiwan's bargaining chips in its bid to enter the World Health Organization. It is a single strategy with multiple benefits.

The content of this special publication constitutes a complete picture of Taiwan's malaria control and prevention work, in the hope that it will boost morale among colleagues fighting epidemics and make international exchange and cooperation a professional aspiration through the promotion of malaria prevention. Furthermore, I wish Taiwan an early return to the World Health Organization so that our successful experience of disease prevention can contribute all the more to the international community, at the same time realizing the ideal of disease prevention without borders.

Kuo Hsu-sung, M.D., MPH, Ph.D.
Director, Center for Disease Control
Nov. 2005

