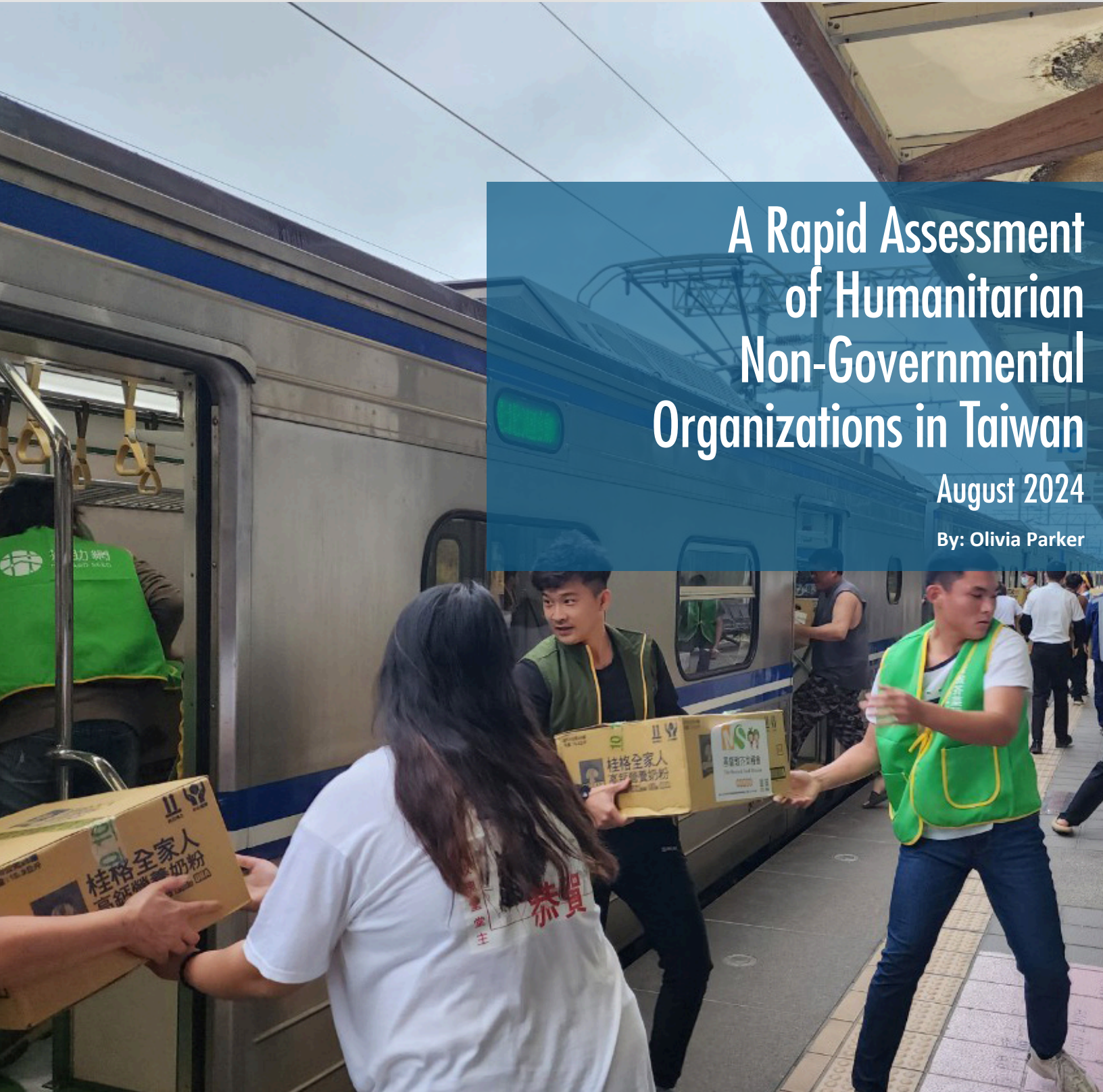




CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT & HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY



A Rapid Assessment of Humanitarian Non-Governmental Organizations in Taiwan

August 2024

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Front Cover by The Mustard Seed Mission. Mustard Seed Mission humanitarian response during the 2024 Hualien earthquake. <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=819569490213563&set=pb.100064815573808.-2207520000&type=3>

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Abbreviations

921	Chi-Chi Earthquake (Refers to the date of impact 09/21)
ACT	Action by Churches Together
AIT	American Institute in Taiwan
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CCRA	Chinese Christian Relief Association
CFE-DM	Center for Excellence and Disaster Management
ESG	Environmental, social, and governance
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
HADR	Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Response
ICDF	International Cooperation and Development Fund (Taiwan)
IDFC	International Development Financing Corporation (U.S.)
INGO	International non-government organization
MSM	Mustard Seed Mission
NCDR	Taiwan National Science and Technology Center for Disaster Reduction
NDRF	National Disaster Recovery Framework
NGO	Non-government organization
PCT	Presbyterian Church of Taiwan
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
TDRF	Taiwan Disaster Relief Fund
TECRO	Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office
TFCF	Taiwan Fund for Children and Families
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government

1. Executive Summary

This report aims to improve our understanding of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Taiwan that specialize in responding to natural disasters and humanitarian crises. Based on field interviews conducted in March 2024 with representatives from half a dozen NGOs, the report details the networks, operations, and capacity of these organizations at home and abroad.

Key Findings

- 1. Taiwan humanitarian organizations use both the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF) and the Emergency Management System employed by NGOs such as World Vision and Mercy Corps to execute disaster prevention, response, and recovery missions.** Though Taiwan lacks an equivalent agency to FEMA, and has a limited international NGO presence on the island, humanitarian organizations nonetheless find these frameworks useful for training staff, identifying critical disasters, and equipping citizens with disaster response skills.
- 2. A large portion of Taiwanese humanitarian organizations have the capacity to assist during international disasters and crises.** Several large organizations have headquarters overseas, including in Southeast Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe. Organizations have responded to both natural disasters and conflict-related humanitarian crises. Notably, Taiwan NGO humanitarian action abroad is not limited to countries that officially recognize Taiwan. Faith-based networks – both Christian and Buddhist – play an important role in forming and sustaining these networks.
- 3. A variety of networks link large and small organizations to ensure effective disaster response in Taiwan and overseas.** Established organizations can offer funding and resources to smaller organizations and local actors with unique disaster response skills. Regardless of the location or demographic, these organizations collaborate and assign specific tasks to respond to disasters efficiently.
- 4. There is a strong culture of philanthropy in Taiwan.** Donating to humanitarian organizations, including NGOs, church organizations, and other groups, remains a significant part of Taiwanese culture even after the COVID-19 pandemic. Major corporate donors and small dollar citizens constitute a more important source of funding for the NGOs interviewed than Taiwan government funding. Donations dramatically increase during disasters – both in Taiwan and regionally – and remain steady during normal times.
- 5. Taiwan NGOs depend heavily on a large cohort of volunteers to carry out response activities. The average age of volunteers in Taiwan is increasing, while the number of new volunteers is decreasing. More action must be taken to sustain the number of volunteers needed to successfully complete humanitarian missions.** The average age of volunteers ranges from 45-67 in the organizations interviewed. These groups are working to develop innovative ways to encourage the next generation to volunteer.
- 6. NGO access to indigenous communities remains limited, creating various outreach challenges.** The challenges include mistrust of relocation initiatives, religious and cultural barriers, and establishing preventative mechanisms for natural and manmade disasters.
- 7. The level of confidence in preparedness for a future large-scale natural disaster or armed conflict varies significantly between the organizations profiled in this report.** Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, only some of the organizations have begun discussing plans for a large-scale conflict on the island – including stockpiling necessities, coping with sustained power outages, and developing locally grown food sources. Emerging partnerships between NGOs and the private sector are promising avenues for scaling up storage, shelter, and food security initiatives.

Recommendations

Taiwan is among the most hazard-prone locations in the world, but as an industrialized nation with a well-developed disaster management system, its ability to cope with these hazards is relatively high. As such, the need for external support to Taiwan's governmental disaster response landscape is somewhat limited. This is also generally true for Taiwan's humanitarian and disaster response NGOs.

However, the extent to which either the government or non-governmental sector are prepared for a complex emergency – namely an invasion or blockade by the People's Liberation Army (PLA), the armed forces of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) – is uncertain. The ability of the U.S. Government (USG) or other likeminded international partners to provide humanitarian assistance to Taiwan during such a crisis is also unclear. In recent years, U.S. efforts to understand Taiwan's disaster management architecture have focused almost exclusively on the government side, with relatively little attention paid to the NGO sector, with the notable exception of the U.S. NGO Spirit of American which supports a handful of newer civil defense focused NGOs.

It is important to correct this imbalance. In the event of a protracted humanitarian crisis in Taiwan, the NGOs profiled here will be the ones on the ground working to meet the needs of the population. As such, it is imperative to establish partnerships focused on disaster relief initiatives in Taiwan that reach local NGOs and civil society. Entities like the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) should explore more partnerships with local NGOs that include ways and means for effectively distributing funds in a disaster scenario. This could include partnerships and knowledge exchanges between USAID, implementing international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), and Taiwan NGOs.

Second, this research only profiles six organizations on Taiwan. To comprehend further the scope of the humanitarian landscape, more field research should be collected on the other 35 organizations identified and cataloged in this report but not interviewed directly. The list of organizations is located in the Annex of this report. A thorough mapping of the humanitarian NGO landscape is imperative, with a focus outside of northern Taiwan to include organizations operational in areas of the south and east.

Finally, the USG should continue to monitor the impact from a recent U.S. International Development Financing Corporation (IDFC) and American Institute of Taiwan (AIT) partnership with Taiwan's International Cooperation and Development Fund (ICDF) on humanitarian assistance and disaster response (HADR) initiatives. This partnership, signed in 2022, works to collaborate with various organizations on the island and has potential to be effective in understanding the intricacies of the networks focused on HADR. If successful, this could stand as a blueprint for several other types of partnerships in line with Taiwan Relations Act guardrails.

2. Methodology

This research took a mixed-methods approach, combining a desk study with semi-structured qualitative field interviews. Open sources were used to identify and build profiles of humanitarian organizations operating in Taiwan and for a comparative historical analysis of disaster response from the 1999 Chi-Chi earthquake to the April 2024 Hualien earthquake. Desk research provided a background and interview list for primary data collected in Taipei and Taichung, Taiwan, over a two-week period in March 2024. Representatives from six organizations were interviewed as depicted in Table 1. All interviews were conducted in Chinese and later transcribed into English using the transcription service Transcribe.ai.



Photo 1: Author interview with Joe Wang, President of Tzu Chi Foundation, Taiwan Branch, Taipei, March 2024.

The interviews covered a wide range of topics, from the history of the organizations to their partnerships, key donors, and successes in responding to previous disasters on the island. The following questions served as an interview guide:

1. What are the strengths of humanitarian organizations in Taiwan?
2. What challenges do the organizations face when preparing or responding to disasters?
3. What areas of the island have the most coverage by organizations, and what areas lack assistance?
4. What civil-military coordination mechanisms exist, and are they successful in disaster response?
5. Do these organizations have the capacity to respond to a large-scale disaster or armed conflict scenario?

Background interviews were also conducted with the Taiwan National Science and Technology Center for Disaster Reduction (NCDR) to gain a better understanding of the topic and the most effective approaches for interviews. NCDR made a unique contribution through their partnerships with several organizations, allowing them to understand the intricacies of each element of the research approach. In addition to coordinating research and interviews, they also provided translation assistance for some of the interviews.

Table 1: Taiwan NGOs Interviewed

Organization	Contact	Purpose/Activities	Partners	Staff/Volunteers
Chinese Christian Relief Organization 中華基督教救助協會	20F, No.1, Baosheng Rd., Yonghe Dist, New Taipei City 234; 886-2-8660-1070; http://www.ccra.org.tw/ ; support@ccra.org.tw	Disaster relief, emergency relief for families in need, after-school tutoring for disadvantaged children, foodbank. CCRA has established 1919 service centers in 324 villages & townships in partnership with 1,566 churches into a community care network able to react and deliver assistance effectively to disaster events. The 1919 Food Bank is one of the largest food banks in Taiwan.	Tzu Chi, Mustard Seed, several private enterprises like Google and Costco	30/14,600
Presbyterian Church of Taiwan (PCT) 臺灣基督長老教會	3, Lane 269, Roosevelt Road, Sec.3, Taipei,106613 TAIWAN; 886-2-2362-5282; pct@mail.pct.org.tw	Variety of missions on Taiwan and overseas, including youth development, disaster relief, and civil defense initiatives. Overseas work in Turkey, Ukraine, and Sichuan.	Mission 21	30-40 /1,271 congregations with 257,550 members
Tzu Chi Foundation	Hualien/ 花蓮縣新城鄉精舍街88巷1號; (03)8266779; https://global.tzuchi.org/	Emergency aid, recycling, medical. Second-line assistance on scene, including drinking water, hot food, and shelter. Operate Tzu Chi hospitals throughout Taiwan Signed memorandums of cooperation with over 16 central ministries & academic institutions and 22 local governments to improve disaster prevention/response. Volunteers in 68 countries.	Local churches and foundations, including Mustard Seed, CCRA, and PCT	1000-1200/97,000 (worldwide)
Taiwan Disaster Relief Foundation 政災基金會	5F., No.200, Sec. 3, Beixin Rd., Xindian Dist., New Taipei City 231, Taiwan; 886-2-89127636; relfoundation@rel.org.tw	Established by the Executive Yuan in 2001. Use social resources, coordinate private sectors, and assist with natural disaster relief works in the affected areas. Sent aid to Japan for recent disaster events, Hualien Earthquake of 2024, and sent aid to Ukraine and Gaza.	Public and private sector; PCT and NGOs like Mustard Seed	25-30
The Mustard Seed Mission 基督教芥菜種會	9F.-2, No.4, Ln. 609, Sec. 5, Chongxin Rd., Sanchong Dist., New Taipei City 241, Taiwan; 886-2-7741-6000; msm@mustard.org.tw ; https://www.mustard.org.tw/English/Default.aspx	Provides resources in response to local needs such as children sponsorship, youth employment, and food banking, building a solid network for disadvantaged families, children and youth, women, seniors, indigenous, new immigrants, and other vulnerable groups of society. Creating several storage points for areas most affected in times of disaster, including rural communities.	Government sectors, schools, churches like PCT, Tzu Chi, and local indigenous non-profits	10/1,300
Taiwan Fund for Children and Families 財團法人台灣兒童暨家庭扶助基金會	No. 228, Min-quan Road, Taichung 403508, Taiwan; 886-4-2206-1234; fund@ccf.org.tw ; https://international.ccf.org.tw/	Livelihood assistance, medical care and health promotion, learning and education support, vocational training, living environment improvement, community development, livestock program, global networking establishment, and family support in cash and kind.		1,592 employees (of which 1,278 are female)/7,458

3. Natural Hazards

Located roughly 100 miles off the southeast coast of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), the island of Taiwan is home to almost 24 million people. Widely known for its advanced industrial economy and flourishing democracy, Taiwan is also one of the most hazard-prone locations on the planet. Three to four typhoons hit Taiwan each year and the island sits atop at least three-dozen active faults. As many as 8.6 million people live within 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) of these faults.¹ Over the last century, Taiwan has experienced 188 typhoon landfalls, and over 239 earthquakes with a magnitude greater than M6, including the devastating Chi-Chi earthquake in 1999.²

Chi-Chi served as a wake-up call for the Taiwanese government to re-evaluate their infrastructure laws and ensure that all standards were being met. Additionally, several disaster response organizations were established, and existing ones adapted their practices to target proper building codes and standards. For instance, the Tzu Chi Foundation undertook the reconstruction of over 50 schools, utilizing the most efficient steel available to comply with the updated regulations. Following the disaster, significant efforts were made to improve the construction quality of public facilities. To prevent excessive demolitions, the government decided to retrofit various concrete buildings to make them earthquake-proof under the new guidelines.

These advances were apparent on 3 April 2024, when a magnitude 7.4 earthquake struck off the coast of Hualien, a city with a population of just one hundred thousand in eastern Taiwan. Hualien experienced destruction that hadn’t been seen in over 25 years. Yet only 19 people lost their lives in the quake. Taiwan authorities attributed this relatively low loss of life to legislation and building mitigation measures that had decreased infrastructure vulnerability across the island in the decades since Chi-Chi. It was also apparent that disaster response organizations had improved their capacity and coordination in the intervening years.

The Chi-Chi 921 Earthquake

On September 21, 1999, the Chi-Chi earthquake struck central Taiwan, resulting in more than 2,000 fatalities. This was the first earthquake over a magnitude of 7 to hit Taiwan in nearly 50 years. Five bridges collapsed and seven more were damaged. The surface rupture was more than 90 kilometers (55.9 miles) long with vertical displacements ranging from 3 to 8 meters (9 – 26 feet). It was the worst disaster to hit Taiwan since the Second World War, releasing energy equal to 46 atomic bombs in less than a minute. The disaster also destroyed families and left 134 children orphaned.



Photo 2: As the Mustard Seed Mission was driving supplies to Hualien, it began to rain incredibly hard. The organization quickly called and arranged for a train to load up the supplies and transfer them to Hualien. On the other side, volunteers from other organizations waited to receive the supplies and distribute them to the city. Source: Mustard Seed Mission

1 Wei, Chen, and George Chen. 2019. “Lessons from the 921 Earthquake.” Tzu Chi Culture and Communication Foundation. <https://tzuchiculture.org/rhythms-monthly-254/>.

2 U.S. Geological Survey. 2022. “M 6.9 - 90 km E of Yujing, Taiwan.” Earthquake Hazards Program. <https://earthquake.usgs.gov/earthquakes/eventpage/us7000i90q/executive>. Taiwan Central Weather Administration, “Typhoon Impact in Taiwan” https://www.cwa.gov.tw/V8/E/K/Encyclopedia/typhoon/typhoon_list02.html#typhoon-16.

The Mustard Seed Mission (MSM), known as the oldest social service organization in Taiwan, collaborated with bus and truck companies to send supplies from western Tainan to eastern Taitung.³ Meanwhile, the Tzu Chi Foundation, headquartered in Hualien, activated its disaster relief response team within 45 minutes and implemented emergency response protocols at the Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, providing blankets and financial aid to survivors and smaller organizations.⁴ Within the hour, the Chinese Christian Relief Association (CCRA) rushed to the most affected area and established evacuation centers in a school, a park, and a gymnasium. Each organization knew its unique strengths and allocated tasks efficiently. The CCRA, which has experience running a food bank, collected and distributed water and food and set up its mobile kitchen to prepare more food for victims. World Vision collaborated with the Taiwan Fund for Children and Families (TFCF), another smaller NGO on the island, to set up children's care centers.⁵ These activities highlight the organizations' quick response times and their commitment to understanding their strengths and working together to respond effectively during disasters.

4. Complex Emergencies

Beyond the regular occurrence of natural disaster hazards, Taiwan faces the threat of a conflict-related humanitarian emergency. Mainland China claims Taiwan as a province and has vowed reunification by force if necessary. This perennial threat was given new urgency following the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine under a similar territorial pre-text. While legitimate questions about Taiwan's defense capabilities are increasingly the subject of debate, much less attention has been paid to Taiwan's ability to sustain its civilian population in the event of a conflict with mainland China. Though the context of the emergency would be different – likely more prolonged, potentially encompassing a greater area of need, and with greater threats to first responders and humanitarians among other unique challenges – humanitarian aid would still be a critical element. As Ukraine underscores, local civil society and NGOs are, for reasons of necessity and efficiency, critical for access and aid delivery. Ukraine also demonstrates that large international donors often struggle to get funding and support to these NGOs for a variety of reasons, including a fundamental lack of knowledge that they exist, their reach, activities, strengths, weaknesses, as well as the inability of these often small organizations to meet various compliance requirements to receive funding.

With Ukraine in mind, a potential complex emergency in Taiwan presents a number of unique challenges. Unlike in Ukraine, there will likely have been no significant bi- or multi-lateral assistance programs or UN presence if/when a conflict erupts. This presents a steep learning curve for would-be international donors. Second, the flow of relief goods onto Taiwan would be more difficult than in Ukraine, given the island's geography and the demonstrated capacity of the People's Liberation Army Navy to project force around the island. This suggests that support to Taiwan NGOs and its governmental disaster management institutions and systems include a large component of disaster preparation, stockpiling, and building community resilience across a number of disciplines. In other words, the most important support to Taiwan's NGO sector may need to be undertaken right now.

³ The Mustard Seed Mission. 2024. "Rebuilding Homes in the Wake of Eastern Taiwan's Earthquake." MSM. <https://www.mustard.org.tw/English/OnePage.aspx?mid=534&id=1109>.

⁴ Tzu Chi. 2024. "Tzu Chi Activates its Taiwan Earthquake Disaster Relief Response – Tzu Chi USA." Tzu Chi USA. <https://tzuchi.us/blog/tzu-chi-activates-taiwan-earthquake-disaster-relief-response>.

⁵ Fulton, Angela. 2024. "After Taiwan's Powerful Earthquake, Christian Aid Groups Work to Rebuild Lives | News & Reporting." Christianity Today. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2024/april/taiwan-earthquake-hualien-christian-disaster-relief.html>.

5. Findings

Mission Execution

Some organizations cited their reliance on FEMA's national response framework structure as the backbone of their mission execution process. MSM shared their approach of leveraging the Emergency Management System, which is also used by World Vision International, to structure their emergency response.⁶ This system includes response management, security, programming, operation, support, and liaison, and is designed to train personnel and assign specific roles in the event of a disaster. This ensures that non-rescue team members can quickly be converted to aid relief missions, thereby increasing staff numbers. Many organizations, including MSM, have successfully implemented this structure during the COVID-19 pandemic, effectively managing staff and mission details. Staffing flexibility is a key advantage of NGOs over governmental agencies. MSM, for instance, has a relatively small team of only 10 rescue team members. However, when disaster strikes, personnel are trained and equipped to switch seamlessly to rescue work.⁷

International Partnerships

Upon analyzing the achievements of several Taiwan NGOs abroad, it is apparent that they possess clearly defined objectives and protocols to tackle natural calamities or other emergencies. Notably, Taiwanese organizations have exhibited competence in extending crucial assistance to affected communities in foreign countries. The Taiwan Disaster Relief Fund (TDRF), situated in New Taipei City, serves as a prime example in this regard.

While TDRF does not have its own volunteers, merely funding, they were able to coordinate with Turkish Airlines to create a memorandum designing a flight path straight to Turkey with supplies following the 2023 Turkey-Syria earthquake that killed over 50,000.⁸ The planes flew filled with supplies from Taipei to Turkey and back with any Taiwanese volunteers from other organizations. These airline partnerships are still in effect and can be utilized for other flight paths in the future if necessary.

There have also been instances of organizations responding on mainland China. One prominent example is the Sichuan earthquake of 2008. Both the Tzu Chi Foundation and MSM sent volunteers to aid in the disaster. Tzu Chi emphasized how disconnected their organization remains from political aspects in their missions and messaging. Nearly half of all Taiwanese donations to the Sichuan earthquake were via the Tzu Chi Foundation.⁹

Faith-based Organizations

The war in Ukraine remains a prominent example of how religious organizations internationally have unique networks to aid in crisis response. Taiwan's network, including the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan (PCT) and the CCRA, played a large role in this coordination effort. Both organizations discussed the impact of the Action by Churches Together (ACT) alliance, an ecumenical organization under the World Church Council.¹⁰ Through the ACT alliance, organizations such as the PCT donate domestically raised funds to global humanitarian causes.¹¹

The PCT also owns and operates three hospitals across Taiwan where it trains nurses and doctors for deployment overseas as part of a Taiwan ICDF certification program. Once certified, nurses and doctors are able to

6 Mustard Seed Interview, 14

7 Mustard Seed Interview, 16

8 TDRF Interview, 4

9 Tzu Chi Interview, 3

10 ACT Alliance. 2024. "Who We Are." ACT Alliance. <https://actalliance.org/act-humanitarian/>.

11 Presbyterian Church Interview, 6

deploy abroad with partnered churches in the event of a humanitarian emergency.¹² This unique network connects NGOs and INGOs with local actors to collaborate and work to complete more missions on the ground in less time. Presbyterian doctors and nurses have gone to Ukraine since the outbreak of the war to train locals on emergency medicine.

The TFCF, a Christian charity, established a psychological trauma team to help families for months after the Chi-Chi Earthquake is active in Vietnam, Jordan, Eswatini, Paraguay, Kyrgyzstan, and Mongolia.

Structures and Networks on Island

This assessment has discovered numerous successful initiatives by organizations that aid in making disaster response mechanisms more efficient. These initiatives involve networks that connect larger and more established NGOs and government funding channels to smaller local actors around the island.

The TDRF was established after collecting significant donations and government funds for the 921 Earthquake. The foundation has a structure with multifarious NGOs on a committee to aid in various response elements. Donations continue to flow in from the private sector, and the fund remains untouched until there is a disaster.

The emergency response committee, under the TDRF, is composed of seven government entities and civil society organizations. A majority must pass any initiative, making sure the government cannot control the decision to accept or veto the proposal. In a disaster scenario, once tasks are delegated to each organization, the foundation can distribute funding accordingly for any outstanding resources needed for the mission.

Partnerships with the Private Sector

Various partnerships exist between private companies and NGOs to supply necessary resources, such as food, water, and local storage in the event of a disaster. Tzu Chi, the CCRA, and MSM have partnered with 7-Eleven and Family Mart to provide food and resources during disasters. Volunteers have access to an unlimited 7-Eleven card, which they can use to collect as much food and water as necessary for their designated district. There are over 6,700 7-Elevens and 4,164 Family Marts in Taiwan, making this relationship very efficient for disaster response.¹³ The PCT collaborates with Costco for storage options in case of a large-scale disaster. The large facilities can keep resources chilled for 37 days and provide shelter for citizens if necessary.¹⁴ There are currently ten Costco warehouses located in the northern, southern, and western regions of Taiwan.¹⁵ The church also partnered with local truck companies with freezer containers to keep non-perishable items chilled longer.

Taiwan Government Funding for HADR

Since 2001, the Taiwan government has funded humanitarian response abroad through its international aid and development agency, the ICDF. The Chen Shui-bian administration (2000-2008) worked to broaden the scope of the ICDF mission to address other issues, such as refugees, and promote the long-term development of human rights and higher living standards.¹⁶ Yet, support for overseas humanitarian missions was limited, with yearly humanitarian response funding to ICDF falling from US\$1 million in 2003 to US\$400,000 in 2007, a period with significant global emergencies, including the Indian Ocean tsunami.¹⁷ Taiwan NGOs did much of the international work during this period independently with private donations.

¹² Presbyterian Church Interview, 7

¹³ Tzu Chi Interview, 10

¹⁴ Presbyterian Church, 7

¹⁵ Shapiro, Don. 2018. "Costco's Taiwan Success Story - Taiwan Business TOPICS." Taiwan Business TOPICS. <https://topics.amcham.com.tw/2018/09/costcos-taiwan-success-story/>.

¹⁶ Guilloux, Alex. 2016. "Taiwan's humanitarian aid/disaster relief: Wither or prosper? | Brookings." Brookings Institution. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/taiwans-humanitarian-aiddisaster-relief-wither-or-prosper/>.

¹⁷ Taiwan ICDF Annual Reports, 2001-2007 <https://www.icdf.org.tw/wSite/ct?xItem=4600&ctNode=31575&mp=207>

The 2010 International Cooperation and Development Act, passed during the Ma Ying-jeou administration, led to more government aid and development abroad. The Act outlines a focus on supporting recovery efforts for natural and manmade disasters, as well as setting up joint funding mechanisms with global NGOs like Mercy Corps and World Vision. ICDF budgets increased to US\$8 million annually. There was also more collaboration with the military for humanitarian assistance; for example when the Taiwan Air Force delivered relief supplies to Haiti in 2010.¹⁸

In the 2024 Japan Earthquake, over US\$17.25 million was donated between the private sector donations and Taiwan government funding.¹⁹ Around US\$414,000 of this was sent from the Taiwan Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Japan-Taiwan Relations Association.²⁰ The ICDF and Taiwan NGOs sent a combined US\$113 million in humanitarian assistance to Ukraine.²¹ However, political tensions have constrained the delivery of aid. Due to the PRC's relationship with Ukraine, Kyiv has been hesitant to receive direct financial support from Taiwan, therefore the government has routed its aid through city governments, churches, and regional NGOs.²²

“Volunteering means different things to different generations. For the older generation, volunteering involves going out to different communities and providing food or rebuilding homes. But for the new generations, volunteering can mean posting on social media or working at an event for one day.”

-Joe Wang, Tzu Chi Taiwan, President

Donation Culture

Over the past few decades, nonprofit organizations and social welfare delivery mechanisms have been growing across Taiwan.²³ According to the Directorate General of Budget Accounting, charity donations average about US\$1.43 billion per year.²⁴ The largest recipients of charitable donations are religious groups, followed by social welfare organizations. In years, with a natural disaster, this number drastically increases. As of 5 April 2024, donations surpassed US\$934,848 in just one month with these funds being distributed into local accounts to support relief efforts.²⁵

Organizations frequently convene events and activities to attract partners and donors. For example, the CCRA has partnered with Costco to receive soon-to-expire food items, which they then donate to local food banks around the islands.²⁶ Additionally, they host events that are attended by representatives from companies interested in donating equipment or other supplies. While many organizations still rely on traditional forms of

18 Ibid.

19 Taiwan Today. 2024. “Taiwan private sector sends US\$17.25 million in earthquake relief to Japan.” Taiwan Today. <https://taiwantoday.tw/news.php?unit=2&post=247895>.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 Hsiao, Russell. 2023. “Taiwanese Support for Ukraine: Humanitarian Aid, Economic Sanctions, and Volunteer Soldiers.” Global Taiwan Institute. <https://globaltaiwan.org/2023/06/taiwanese-support-for-ukraine-humanitarian-aid-economic-sanctions-and-volunteer-soldiers/>.

23 Liu, Helen K. “Taiwan.” In Global Philanthropy Environment Index 2022, edited by the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy. Accessed April 1, 2024. <https://scholarworks.iupui.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/64211696-6410-4c0f-851f-31af785e3922/content>.

24 Liu, Helen. 2020. “2022 Global Philanthropy Environment Index Taiwan.” IUPUI ScholarWorks. <https://scholarworks.iupui.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/64211696-6410-4c0f-851f-31af785e3922/content>.

25 Chen, Hsin-yi. 2010. “Raising the Public’s Compassion Quotient.” Taiwan Panorama. <https://www.taiwan-panorama.com/en/Articles/Details?Guid=77aa375c-52cd-43d6-acee-21bcfcbec6d&CatId=7&postname=Raising%20the%20Public%27s%20Compassion%20Quotient>.

26 CCRA Interview, 8

donation, such as donation boxes in convenience stores and local facilities, the increasing popularity of social media has made it more convenient for international donors to participate in events and donate to specific causes.²⁷ According to the donation pages for all six organizations, they have successfully funded an average of 86% of their annual goals, even during the pandemic. This demonstrates the effectiveness of their campaigns and the significance of humanitarian efforts to local communities.

Volunteer Culture

Volunteering for humanitarian missions is the core of many organizations, and they have maintained stable volunteer numbers to complete projects on the island and overseas. However, Taiwan is facing a large aging population, which is also reflected in many of the organizations profiled in this report. For example, the average age of Tzu Chi volunteers is 62, with over 25% of volunteers over 65.²⁸ This culture has benefits and challenges. Several organizations emphasize the importance of giving the elderly population a purpose, which volunteering provides. However, there is now a need to find innovative ways to encourage the younger generation to volunteer. The President of the Taiwan Tzu Chi branch, Joe Wang, points out that, “Volunteering means different things to different generations. For the older generation, volunteering involves going out to different communities and providing food or rebuilding homes. But for the new generations, volunteering can mean posting on social media about an event or working at an event for one day.”²⁹ Organizations are now more aware of this mindset and are taking action to mitigate the problem. TFCF has started funding scholarships for international students to study social work and related fields at Taiwanese universities.³⁰ MSM developed a Women’s Service Center in two major cities to invite migrant women who may be married in Taiwan to become volunteers.³¹ Several universities, such as National Taiwan University, have also partnered with NGOs to sponsor semester-long internships for students focusing their studies on social welfare.³²

Private enterprises are also focusing on partnerships with NGOs to promote social change on a broader scale. Taiwan recently changed regulations for companies related to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) guidelines. Companies are now required to submit an annual sustainability report following specific ESG guidelines.³³ Several enterprises have used this to their advantage by supporting NGOs with ESG core values, hoping to promote social change on a broader scale.³⁴ For example, companies like Google have donated both money and supplies to CCRA.

One reason for this focus is organizations unable to fully train a large increase of volunteers, which is the fear with a future disaster. As news travels throughout communities, several young volunteers will appear but don’t have the proper training. Therefore, organizations focus on equipping their staff and building up networks of volunteers before the next event to have well-trained volunteers prepared for the next disaster.³⁵

27 CCRA Interview, 9

28 Tzu Chi Interview, 4

29 Tzu Chi Interview, 4

30 TFCF Interview, 3

31 Mustard Seed Interview, 20

32 Mustard Seed Interview, 20

33 International Comparative Legal Guides (ICLG). “Environmental, Social and Governance Law in Taiwan.” ICLG.com. Accessed April 30, 2024. <https://iclg.com/practice-areas/environmental-social-and-governance-law/taiwan>.

34 Global Legal Group. “Environmental, Social & Governance Law Taiwan 2024.” Published January 17, 2024. Accessed April 1, 2024. <https://iclg.com/practice-areas/environmental-social-and-governance-law/taiwan>

35 CCRA Interview, 15

Indigenous Populations

The indigenous population in Taiwan constitutes approximately 2% of the island's total population, consisting of over 14 different recognized tribes.³⁶ Additionally, there are around half a million people belonging to unrecognized tribes, each with unique religious practices, dialects, and cultures.³⁷ Over the past few decades, humanitarian organizations have been working to establish best practices for communication and building relationships with these diverse populations.

In terms of natural disasters, these indigenous populations are among the most vulnerable in Taiwan. Historically, they have retreated from major cities to the mountainous regions of the island, where they have developed their religious and cultural practices.³⁸ Even today, these regions continue to suffer the most severe infrastructure damage from floods, earthquakes, and typhoons. Organizations have identified three primary challenges in cooperating with these communities for disaster relief and prevention: encouraging relocation after major disasters, maintaining a presence long after relief missions, and overcoming religious barriers.

Two significant disasters in southern Taiwan, specifically in the Kaohsiung region, shed light on these three barriers. The 2009 Morakot typhoon resulted in the loss of over 500 lives.³⁹ In the aftermath, several organizations reached out to the Kaohsiung local government to collaborate on the response efforts. For example, Tzu Chi offered to build new housing in Kaohsiung, while the government assisted with transportation from the mountainous region to the city. However, both religious and cultural barriers presented challenges for these organizations. Many of the affected tribes have Christian roots, and the destruction of churches during the disaster initially led to distrust between the tribes and Tzu Chi. Nevertheless, after months of effort, they managed to establish cooperation with the local tribes and signed an agreement to rebuild housing communities.

MSM established the Moroka Rehabilitation Program, which successfully relocated and built infrastructure for over 500 people from three different villages.⁴⁰ These structures and relationships remain in place, facilitating more efficient future transactions. The foundation partnered with local tribal leaders to organize community-building events. Organization leaders attended these events with tribal leaders, creating comfortable environments for new villagers relocating to housing in the city following disasters. In this way, MSM has been able to overcome the challenges of encouraging relocation, maintaining a presence long after relief missions, and overcoming religious barriers.

Disaster Preparation

Over the past decades, there has been a concerted effort by various organizations to equip citizens in Taiwan with disaster prevention and preparation skills.

These skills range from building storage facilities for food security to teaching water filtration techniques and providing medical services. In mountainous regions, organizations are setting up storage points to combat the 'island effect,' referring to communities that become isolated in times of



Photo 3: Photo of Mustard Seed volunteers unpacking supplies into a storage point in Western Taiwan.

36 Taiwan Council of Indigenous Peoples. 2024. "The Tribes in Taiwan." Taiwan Council of Indigenous Peoples. <https://www.cip.gov.tw/en/tribe/grid-list/index.html?cumid=5DD9C4959C302B9FD0636733C6861689>.

37 Ibid

38 Ibid

39 Tzu Chi Interview, 3

40 Mustard Seed Interview, 18

disasters. Community leaders and NGOs are teaching citizens how to convert abandoned buildings into facilities to store food and resources and how to utilize them in a future disaster.

Currently, MSM is converting three buildings into such storage facilities in Hsinchu, Taitung, and Haiduan. The project hopes to complete 15 more storage points, with help from local donations and grant funding. Overall, the project will require US\$965,000. Additionally, there are educational programs for children, including lessons on recycling and food labeling.

There is a discrepancy among organizations regarding their preparedness for conflict scenarios. Some organizations, such as the PCT, have developed full-scale plans that involve increased collaboration with the military, civil defense programs, and the government. These plans include initiatives like establishing air defense shelters, implementing food storage plans for up to 37 days, the maximum time the organization has calculated in a series of workshops and interviews with the private sector, that existing food stocks could last in the event that all imports were cut off, and setting up emergency power facilities.⁴¹ PCT has held planning meetings to discuss methods to combat sustained power outages in the event of conflict, including the idea to lengthen the shelf life of perishable foods by using cold storage trucks rather than coolers and freezers in supermarkets. It has also met with civil defense groups, such as Spirit of America and the Formosa Academy, to exchange ideas and training for communities. Lastly, they are discussing with the government how to plant small gardens with edible roots and vegetables. Certain tribes, like the Amis, survived during past wars using this method and plan to teach PCT medical staff how to preserve the plants for consumption. In short, they are using lessons learned in Taiwan during previous periods of instability as a template for building resilience towards a future similar disaster.

The PCT, however, was an outlier among the six NGOs interviewed. Other organizations said they had no specific new plans for resilience during conflict and would instead rely on existing natural disaster response planning. These organizations expressed confidence in their ability to efficiently deliver goods and services to communities around the island if provided with the necessary resources.

Organizations also touched upon the lack of coordination between the NGOs and military teams deployed in a disaster. One organization mentioned, “All the soldiers do are carry bodies. They have good equipment and vehicles. If you train them well they would have a lot of power to help. But all they do is pick things up.”⁴² This, however, seems to be slowly improving. MSM for example has been including military personnel in disaster prevention and response training across the island that include civil defense cadres and the Taiwan government.⁴³

41 Presbyterian Church Interview, 5

42 TDRF Interview, 23

43 Presbyterian Church Interview, 15

8. Conclusion

The renowned seismologist Ma Kuo-Fong 馬國鳳, has recently published a map estimating the probability of earthquakes hitting Taiwan in the next 50 years.⁴⁴ While it is extremely difficult to predict these disasters, the map serves as a stark reminder of the potential destruction that could affect the small island, emphasizing the critical importance of preparedness. In 2015, the team predicted a 55% chance of another M7 earthquake, which tragically became a reality this year. The Central Weather Bureau has implemented a regional earthquake warning system, which proved to be effective during the recent Hualien disaster. However, the swift response of officials and organizations is paramount in saving lives.

This research aimed to shed light on the stories of key organizations that are making a difference every day in Taiwan and beyond. Through their unique partnerships and preparation techniques, they showcase Taiwan's capabilities to respond to humanitarian disasters. As the island continues to recover from the most recent earthquake, it is crucial for the USG to monitor its progress and success stories to determine the most effective ways to enhance relations with local actors. These organizations will be at the forefront in the future, defending their communities and providing crucial assistance to those in need whether in natural disaster or conflict.

⁴⁴ Gao, Pat. 2012. "Taiwan makes a new breakthrough in earthquake research." Taiwan Today. <https://taiwantoday.tw/print.php?post=14129&unit=8%2C8%2C29%2C29%2C32%2C32%2C45>.

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Table 2: Humanitarian and Development NGOs operating in Taiwan

Organization	Location	Purpose/Activities	Partners
World Vision Taiwan	02-8195-3005 www.worldvision.org.tw pr@worldvision.org.tw	Providing food assistance, increased access to medical care for children, access to clean water and sanitation	Taiwan ICDF
Mercy Corps	https://www.mercycorps.org/	Agency's missions include emergency relief, sustainable economic development and civil society initiatives.	Taiwan ICDF
Taiwan ICDF Donor	12-15F, No. 9, Lane 62, TianMu West Rd., Taipei 111047, Taiwan 886-2-2873-2323 https://www.icdf.org.tw/wSite/ct?xItem=5527&ctNode=31548&mp=2 https://www.icdf.org.tw/wSite/ct?xItem=4500&ctNode=31600&mp=2	Helping partner countries to upgrade public health and medical services, managing our overseas volunteer program, and providing overseas humanitarian and technical assistance.	Over 26 INGOs
Terre de Hommes	https://www.tdh.org/en/contact-us	Helping children escape poverty, violence, inequality, injustice, and poor health and social conditions on migration routes.	Taiwan ICDF
Luke International INGO	No. 546, Section 3, Taiwan Blvd, Taichung City, Taiwan, https://lshope.org/taiwan/#info@lshope.org	Provides resources in response to local needs such as children sponsorship, youth employment, and food banking, building a solid network for disadvantaged families, children and youth, women, seniors, indigenous, new immigrants, and other vulnerable groups of society. Creating several storage points for areas most affected in times of disaster, including rural communities.	Government sectors, schools, churches like PCT, Tzu Chi, and local indigenous non-profits
Salvation Army INGO	3F, 273 Dun Hua s. Rd Sec. 2, Da-An District, Taipei 106, Taiwan 02-27381171 http://en.salvationarmy.org.tw/	Disaster relief response/ provides grants to families affected by the disaster	
Global Medic NGO	1-416-916-0522 https://globalmedic.ca/ info@globalmedic.ca	Six core missions for aid: Water, Food, Rescue UAV, Flood, Medical, and Shelter	
Caritas Taiwan CSO NGO	ucarit@tpts1.net.tw	International Volunteer Program, working with Migrants, partnering with catholic church to translate documents	
Andrew Charity Foundation	5F., No. 99-2, Wugong Rd., Xinzhuang Dist., New Taipei City 248016 , Taiwan (02)2290-2248 https://www.chaca.org.tw/?fbclid=IwAR0_OIs0VdTEf0IJfEW4DBKSM0OyKKIRsz1b4ocPSbc-Vlwxhcxah3Ml3jU mail@chaca.org.tw	Provides immediate disaster assistance with relief funds and various materials based on the conditions of the disaster area and the needs of the victims	
Taiwan Root Medical Peace Corps	http://www.taiwanroot.org/?l=en tradm@taiwanroot.org	Sets up monthly tents in different cities and works to improve the local communities' current condition and offers resources for developing self-reliant healthcare systems.	
Dharma Drum Mountain	https://www.dharmadrum.org/portal_h1.php	Provides disaster relief assistance focusing on the rebuilding schools in disaster-affected areas.	
Noordhoff Craniofacial	Rm.708, 7F., No. 54, Sec.4, Minsheng E. Rd., Taipei 10574, Taiwan 886-2-27190408 https://www.nncf.org/en ncf@nncf.org	Providing medical care and assistance to several countries for cleft care as well as medical equipment	
Taiwan AID Members	https://www.ccra.org.tw/index.aspx	30 members for aid work overseas	
Bjorgaas Foundation	7F., No. 358, Sec. 5, Zhongxiao E. Rd., Xinyi Dist., Taipei City 110, Taiwan (R.O.C.) http://www.bjorgaas.org.tw/ service@bjorgaas.org.tw (link sends e-mail)	Care for elderly and women and children/ community development	

Organization	Location	Purpose/Activities	Partners
CP Yen Foundation	No. 57, Fu-Hsing North Rd., Taipei, Taiwan, 3F service@cpyen.org (link sends e-mail)	Dialogue activities, dialogue facilitation, dialogue training	
Chaoyang International Volunteer Club	https://www.facebook.com/CYUT.WVT 886-4-23323000	Volunteer overseas club with past aid to help Vietnam	
ECPAT Taiwan	ecpattw@ecpat.org.tw	Human rights based and professional service to minorities	
ELIV International Service	No. 2-2, Lane 26, Pu Cheng St., Taipei 106, Taiwan 886-2-23621738 service@elivtw.com	Efforts to end poverty and to provide proper assistance to those in need	
Eden Social Welfare Foundation	https://eden.international/index.php 886-2-22307715	Services for those with disabilities, including employment, caregiver, new immigrant, and assistive device services.	
Formosa Budding Hope Association	http://www.buddinghope.org.tw/ 886-7-8121260	Cambodian Child Sponsorship Program, Poverty Reduction Program, Education awareness program, rural health promotion program	
Frontier Foundation	10F-A, No.273, Sec. 3, Roosevelt Rd., Taipei City 106, Taiwan http://www.frontier.org.tw/blog/ 886-2-23689895 Shu-fang Tsai: frontiertw@gmail.com	Policy Research, grass root education programs, media and forums for the public, information systems and modern management	
Fubon Cultural and Educational Foundation	3F, No. 258, Sec 4, RenAi Road, Taipei 106, Taiwan 886-2-27048856 http://www.fubonedu.org.tw/%C2%A0	Youth empowerment, parenting, and literacy education around the island	
Harmony Home Association	66 Chongde St., Hsin-Yi Dist. Taipei, Taiwan http://www.hhat.org/ 886-2-2738-9600	US-based 501(c)3 nonprofit organization building philanthropic partnerships in Taiwan, china, and Hong Kong	
International Climate Development Institute	No. 51. Ln. 286. Sec.1 Jianguo S. Rd., Da'an Dist., Taipei City 106 Taiwan 886-2700-1241 https://www.icdi.network/	Provides professional knowledge and skills in climate governance (climate service workshops, publications)	Climate Action Network International
International Cultural Youth Exchange	https://www.icye.org.tw/ icyetaiw@ms1.hinet.net	International volunteer students in Taiwan from 3-9 months for cultural exchange	
SAR Headquarters Taiwan INGO	rescue.taiwan@msa.hinet.net	Includes emergency response specialists and dedicated volunteers from retired military personnel, academics, and community groups	
Kids Alive International Taiwan	ho.ansf@msa.hinet.net	Rescuing at risk children and providing holistic care as well as teaching Christian values	
Landseed Culture and Education Foundation	No. 77, Guang Tai Lu, Pingzhen City, Taoyuan County 32449 886-3-4910011 http://www.landseednpo.com.tw/ npo@landseed.com.tw	Support international medical aid and cooperation	
Overseas Medical Mission Center, Changhua Christian Hospital	4F., No. 20, Jianbao St., Changhua City 886-4-7238595 ext: 8475 138440@cch.org.tw http://www2.cch.org.tw/layout_4/index.aspx?id=99009	Mobilizes the resources from diverse collaborators to conduct the long-term and short-term medical service as well as missionary in order to match the Millennium Development Goals in promoting the sustainable health care in developing countries	
Sunshine Social Welfare Foundation	3F, 91, Nanking East Road, Section 3, Taipei City 104, Taiwan 886-2-25078006 https://www.sunshine.org.tw/ sunshine@sunshine.org.tw	Brings together social workers, physical and occupational therapists, psychological counselors, vocational counselors and social educators, all cooperating as a team to provide comprehensive services to burn survivors and people with facial disfigurement.	

Organization	Location	Purpose/Activities	Partners
Taipei Overseas Peace Service	Rm. 3, 4F., No.23, Sec. 1, Hangzhou S. Rd., Zhongzheng Dist., Taipei City 100, Taiwan (R.O.C.) 886-2-33936900 ext: 22 https://www.cahr.org.tw/?page_id=12937	Focuses on humanitarian aid at the Thai-Myanmar border, providing education and empowerment assistances to those refugees fleeing Myanmar	CAHR for advocating human rights initiatives in Taiwan
Taiwan Alliance Healthcare Excellence	B2F., No. 9, Ln. 130, Sec. 3, Minsheng E. Rd., Songshan Dist., Taipei City 105 , Taiwan (R.O.C.) 886-2-2718-1881 https://www.medicalexcellencetaiwan.org/about-met_en.html medicalexcellencetaiwan@gmail.com	Under the guidance of the Ministry of Health, assists in gathering medical institutions and the health care industry, to build a resource network platform and bring an integration effect.	Associated with several clinics, non-governmental organizations and dental associations
Taiwan Dental Association	10F., No. 420, Fuxing N. Rd., Zhongshan Dist., Taipei City 104, Taiwan R.O.C 886-2-2500-013 https://www.cda.org.tw/	TDA seeks to participate in international dental forums and associations, in addition to engaging in overseas dental missions, in order to facilitate more information exchanges and new technology transfers leading to enhanced dental quality and standards.	Networked with 22 local dental associations throughout Taiwan.
Taiwan Green Technology Industry Alliance	No.195, Kunda Rd., Yongkang Dist., Tainan City 710, Taiwan 886-6-2050782 crchen369@yahoo.com.tw	Promoting renewable energy, renewable resources, low-carbon life and sustainable environment-related matters.	
The Garden of Hope Foundation	1F., No.2-1, Shun-an St., Xindian Dist., New Taipei City 23143, Taiwan 886-2-8911-8595 https://www.goh.org.tw/about/	Empowers young women, especially assisting those living under sexual exploitation and abuse, domestic violence, and human trafficking	Garden of Hope New York
Lions Club (shang bin)	5F., No. 65, Wenchang St., Dajia Dist., Taichung City 437, Taiwan https://www.e-clubhouse.org/	Helping communities following natural disasters by providing for immediate needs such as food, water, clothing and medical supplies – and aiding in long-term reconstruction.	
Rotary Club	Humble House No. 18, Songgao Road, Xinyi District, Taipei, Taiwan (Meetings Thursdays at 1) https://www.rctaipei.org.tw/rotary.taipei@msa.hinet.net	Taitung service project and several international community service projects	
Kiwanis Club	https://www.kiwanis.org.tw/	Anti-drug, emergency relief, community activities, and international aid	



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