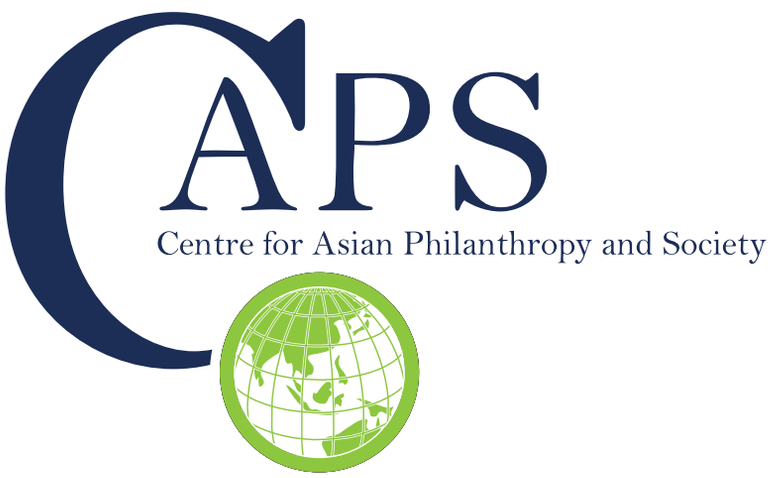

Building Collective Impact

New Homeland Foundation: Empowering a Disaster-Struck Community in Rural Taiwan

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NEW HOMELAND FOUNDATION: EMPOWERING A DISASTER-STRUCK COMMUNITY IN RURAL TAIWAN

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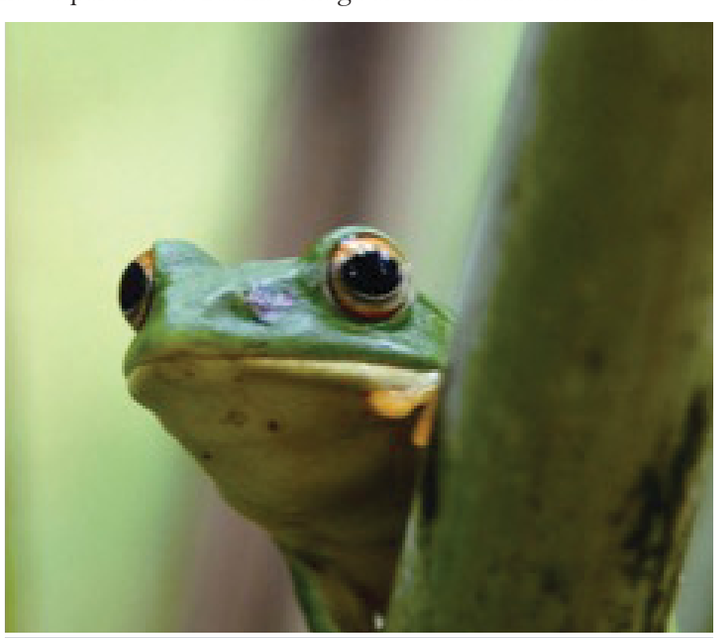
With the help of the New Homeland Foundation (NHF), the poor mountain village of Taomi emerged from the tatters of a catastrophic earthquake as a premium eco-village and tourism hotspot.

On the outskirts of Puli Township in Nantou County lies the small rural community of Taomi, with a population of 1,200 people. Some 80 percent of Taomi Village sits on mountainous terrain meaning that the only profitable cash crop it could cultivate was sweet bamboo. However, this industry was all but decimated during the 1980s when purchasers took their business to mainland China. Having lost their sole source of income, Taomi's residents looked on as their economy collapsed and their lands became fallow. Young people left for bigger towns or cities after graduating from middle school, while the elderly residents left behind had little choice but to lease out their land as dumping grounds. When the landfills overflowed, the community came together in protest, successfully preventing the creation of new dumps. Still, the decline of the bamboo industry and Taomi's image as a dumping ground had destroyed the



One of Taomi's iconic frogs. (NHF)

community's self-confidence, and residents had few positive affiliations with their hometown.

In 1999, a disastrous earthquake struck, and the destruction brought further suffering to local residents. In response, a non-profit organization (NPO) called the New Homeland Foundation (NHF) stepped up to the plate, helping the community to channel resources for the emergency response and the eventual regeneration of Taomi's economy. NHF worked with experts from different fields to sketch out a roadmap for Taomi to re-invent itself as an eco-village. Local residents initially struggled to grasp the direct benefits of ecological conservation and tourism. Though early attempts to transition from traditional agriculture to organic farming, and from conventional infrastructure to ecological engineering were derided, residents eventually came to understand that improving the environment could also be of commercial benefit.

Education and communication were essential to changing the mindsets of the villagers. Over the course of a decade, external professionals and NHF empowered local residents to see the value of the environment and rural lifestyles for their economic prospects: a pre-quake bamboo grower would became an ecological guide and B&B operator. NHF also transformed itself along the way. Initially acting as a champion for Taomi to restructure its aid-reliant economy, NHF became an eco-tourism entrepreneur itself when it established a learning park that became a major tourist attraction. In doing so, it became a critical player in Taomi's eco-village economy and continues to play an important role in its ongoing success. Taomi's economic transformation exemplifies how a collective endeavor can regenerate an entire community. At the same time, it is also about a NPO's journey to becoming a social enterprise, turning challenges

The hills of Puli Township, where Taomi Village sits. (NHF)

into opportunities to help the local community to build a triple-bottom-lined sustainable economy.

DISASTER STRIKES: ENTER THE NEW HOMELAND FOUNDATION

On September 21, 1999, a magnitude-7.3 "earthquake of the century" ripped through central Taiwan; it remains the second-deadliest natural disaster in the island's recorded history. The township of Puli, set in a shallow basin among picturesque high mountains, was hit especially hard given its proximity to the epicenter. Post-disaster relief is a comprehensive undertaking, as disasters themselves and the subsequent rebuilding process can magnify existing social problems. But in the case of Taomi, this window created unique opportunities for volunteers to push for change — at least for those residents willing to embrace it. In the aftermath of the earthquake, while other communities focused on the logistics of food supply, shelters, and repairing broken homes, volunteers in Taomi saw an opportunity for the village to redefine itself as it rebuilt. One such individual was Professor Chiang Ta-shu of National Chi Nan University, who actively participated in the community relief efforts. As a board member of the newly founded New Homeland Foundation, he invited the NPO into the fold to help change the face of Taomi for the better.

Husband-and-wife journalists Liao Jia-zhan and Yen Xin-zhu moved to Puli Township in 1996, just three years before the disaster plunged the region into disarray. During the 1990s, the social reform movement in Taiwan was experiencing a shift from a top-down approach to bottom-up community work. The government, through the Council for Cultural Affairs (now the Ministry of Culture), was now encouraging academics and practitioners to return to the communities as a means of reshaping society. In this spirit, Liao and Yen accepted a commission from the Community Empowering Society, a think tank, to develop a nationwide publication on the topic of community building. Upon publication of the inaugural issue of *New Homeland* in March 1999, Liao reached out to other social and cultural workers in rural communities throughout Taiwan to establish the New Homeland Foundation with the purpose of promoting community development and lifelong learning. NHF's initial focus was on improving public spaces such as parks, schools, and neighborhoods. The foundation had one full-time employee at the time, and with the support of a public grant partnered with the *New Homeland* magazine, for which Yen served as editor-in-chief.

Just seven months later, that deadly earthquake turned life in Nantou and other parts of Taiwan upside-down, shattering the carefully laid plans of Liao and Yen. The couple now faced the choice of staying in the area or relocating somewhere safer. NHF called an ad hoc board meeting, where the board decided that though it would be difficult to stay and help with the rebuilding effort, their commitment to the area was irreversible. As chairman of the NHF board, Liao recognized that if a local organization did not take up the challenge, there would be no champion for Puli to secure urgently needed resources and help from outside. The publication of *New Homeland* was largely eclipsed by the difficult and urgent work of breathing new life into a devastated community. NHF would become an important platform for the reconstruction and regeneration of Puli Township, of which Taomi Village was to be an important focal point.

STAGES OF REBUILDING

Disaster Response: Building Shelters, Understanding and a Vision (1999-2001)

As Taiwan came to grips with the horror of the earthquake that took more than 2,000 lives and displaced many more, people came together. There was a massive outpouring of volunteer hours, funds, material aid, and professional know-how for the afflicted areas. In Puli, it quickly became apparent that the influx of aid and resources would require a trustworthy intermediary between donors and recipients in the disaster zone. NHF's

local roots, along with Yen and Liao's experience and connections as journalists and community workers, meant that it was a natural candidate for this role. At the same time, public policy was undergoing an adjustment, with cross-sector approaches being encouraged for disaster recovery and to streamline bureaucratic processes. This would empower civil society actors such as NHF in a way that was previously not possible.

In this context, NHF emerged as an intermediary for the public, private, and academic institutions involved in the reconstruction effort. They grew rapidly to support the distribution of goods and relief, employing some 24 workers at one point. *New Homeland* magazine ceased publication as Yen transitioned from editor-in-chief to the chief executive officer of the foundation, bringing with her a number of talented cultural workers. During this period, the bulk of NHF efforts were funded by government grants and private-sector contracts. They handled the distribution of aid and provision of recovery services, while working with specialists from universities on basic research and planning for the reconstruction effort. Tseng Shu-cheng, then a professor of architecture at Tamkang University in northern Taiwan, brought a contingent of students to take a census of the post-quake schools and communities. A prevailing sense of anxiety within Puli Township brought Liao to consider developing a pilot reconstruction project to give survivors confidence and guidance as they undertook the difficult work of rebuilding their homes. Though Taomi was just one of several affected towns receiving help from NHF, Liao had observed how some residents from this remote village had demonstrated initiative in starting over, pointing toward Taomi as a potential "model town" for the recovery effort.

The Hong Kong chapter of the Salvation Army had already pledged funds for prefab homes in Taomi, and local residents provided land for these temporary homes for two years. Alongside the disaster response, NHF wanted to develop Taomi's resources in a way that was consistent with the thoughts, wishes, and beliefs of its people. By the end of 1999, NHF staff had helped to convene a Taomi Reconstruction Committee. Comprising staff from NHF and local residents, it would serve as a platform for people from all walks of life to share their opinions on the future of the commu-

Community engagement has been a important aspect of building consensus for Taomi's economic regeneration. (NHF)

nity beyond its recovery. At the first meeting, the committee resolved to clean up Taomikeng River through a community trash collection initiative.

But a low turnout meant that residents mostly stood by watching. "They had brought in a few university students and made a big fuss over it, but in the end only three locals showed up," remembered one participant. Many locals saw the clean-up as a fruitless effort, and saw little connection between restoring the health of the river and rebuilding their own lives. Even so, the event became a topic of discussion in the small community, and sowed the seeds for public participation in the future. "Some called it a failure, and there were voices of discontent all throughout the village, but basically everyone was participating just by expressing their opinions," said the same participant. "So the first clean-up set a model for how to participate in public affairs. Even their criticisms and idle commentary were positive developments [in this sense]." If nothing else, the river clean-up drew the attention of individuals to their community and environment.

In 2000, NHF brought in several teams of professionals to assess the community's socio-economic prospects, one of which was a research group from the Tourism Department of Shih Hsin University in Northern Taiwan. In their vision for Taomi's future, the village would become a retreat for city dwellers, and residents could generate incomes by constructing and managing recreational farms for urban tourists. At the same time, the Reconstruction Committee also brought in the Endemic Species Research Institute (ESRI), a public agency, to survey Taomi's natural resources. Peng Kuo-dong, deputy director of the institute, gathered a team of researchers who devoted their weekends to examining Taomi's biodiversity and identifying its natural assets. After months of investigation, they concluded that there was in fact a silver lining to Taomi's stymied economic development. This had inadvertently helped to preserve an incredibly rich ecology, with a diversity of plant and animal species. Taomi boasted a pristine wetland, making the area a perfect nesting ground for frogs and dragonflies — Peng's team discovered 21 different species of frogs and 45 different species of dragonflies in the village. This pointed the community in a new direction, putting it on a path toward ecological conservation as opposed to becoming a recreational farm destination.

For residents who believed that their hometown had little to offer the outside world, the discovery of its surprising biodiversity created a new sense of confidence. For Peng, the process of ecological conservation could be turned into something that was of economic value for the community. "Only by showing locals the value of it [conservation], can we make them enthusiastically willing to protect the environment," he said. By closing the distance between the people and their environment and creating an industry out of Taomi's unique biodiversity, Peng believed that there was a path to "making life more ecological." In late 2000, he began giving talks to a group of Taomi villagers who had no prior understanding of conservation, feeling that they were already familiar enough with the wildlife they saw every day. Peng used his expertise and academic credentials to show them that there is so much more to learn. But as was the case with the river clean-up, local skeptics did not see the value of basing their community's future on ecology or tourism.

NHF recognized the need to translate abstract ideas into something that the residents could relate to, and they began with a welfare-to-work program funded by the Council of Labor Affairs (today's Ministry of Labor). "I guarantee you that the people who started listening to the lectures about community building did it because the monthly allowance offered by the Council of Labor Affairs required them to come to the night classes," observed one resident, who later became the operator of a guesthouse. By the time a third group had signed up, it was standing-room only. "If this can be said to be manipulative, I think it was a sort of virtuous manipulation," he said. The series of ecological courses organized by NHF and run by Peng went on for a year, with the intention of Taomi being piloted as an experiment in ecological tourism.

This series of courses was the beginning of efforts to incubate knowledge and train future workers, with funding from the public and private sectors that was managed by NHF. But what remained missing was an understanding of the true potential of such a knowledge economy in Taomi. "Even if I am a certified eco-tour guide, who am I supposed to talk to? Ghosts?" asked one skeptical resident. By September 2001, trained tour guides were hosting the first group of visitors brought in by ESRI. But it was the first paycheck that really demonstrated how Taomi and its residents could directly benefit from a new development path. "When I got my first payment, I realized that the knowledge economy we were told about by the professors was real," said the resident.

On the back of this initial success, NHF, ESRI, and the community worked through the details of developing a Taomi eco-village based on the area's rich and unique ecology. Peng helped the group to localize the concept of an eco-village, "intentional communities whose goal is to become more economically and ecologically sustainable" as defined by the American sustainability thinker Robert Gilman in 1991. In the case of Taomi, it would take the form, in Peng's words, "of a hybrid of ecology-based planning and development coupled with economy-based practice and management". In other words, the town would generate income not through agriculture or industrialization — it simply didn't have fertile soil or flat land to build factories on — but by trading upon the unspoiled land itself.

Reconstruction: Conflict and Changing Skills and Mindsets (2002-2005)

It is no straight-forward task to turn an archetypal rural village into an educational hub for organic farming, conservation, and recreation. In the case of Taomi, it required substantive investment into environmental rehabilitation and community planning to get there. Throughout the process, NHF based its strategy on the belief that education can change mindsets, which would transpire into real action. NHF used its media and communication skills to secure funding for Taomi's transformation, writing proposals to apply for grants. It achieved some success with a government administration that was open to innovative, entrepreneurial proposals for community development. Basic infrastructure development began when NHF secured approval for its first four-year plan in 2001 from the national government.

This included a project to collect seeds from endemics plants to nurse more than 100,000 trees, and the training of tour guides, guesthouse and restaurant operators, and related services personnel. In the course of their discussions, local people who had never worked in the service industry began to learn the ropes and even visited other communities to see how things were run. "We spent years explaining, but we also took all available residents to see ecology pools and guesthouses," recalled Yen. "They had never seen what we were trying to introduce, so we wanted them to see first-hand. It was critical." A number of challenges arose, the most common of which were related to ecological engineering. NHF forged ahead by organizing residents into a Taomi Ecological Engineering Construction Team (TEECT), which offered work opportunities for locals while also championing the value of eco-technology. One of their reconstruction projects was for the preservation of the Maopukeng River Wetland, but even that was not without controversy. "The elderly were against it, because when you rented out their land, they questioned why you weren't farming on it and [leaving it] idle to raise frogs and dragonflies instead. Their criticisms were quite fierce," recalled one team member.

The distribution of resources for recovery and reconstruction was another cause for conflict and suspicion in the changing community. In the beginning, NHF and Peng of the ESRI took the responsibility for deciding how to implement projects for the protection of rivers and wetlands. NHF worked to keep the discussion open and enable the people of Taomi to be involved from the very beginning, for example, asking residents where work should first take place and what the key priorities

A community meeting in Taomi. (NHF)

were. But these steps were not enough to dispel rumors that resources were being unfairly dispensed. "So we changed tracks and started thinking about how to communicate with the community effectively," said Yen. "You need to get things stable internally before you can continue the fight." Hsiou-mei Huang, a Council for Cultural Affairs official at the time, saw the challenge that NHF faced first-hand. "They understood pretty well that the spirit of community building is about communicating with the community and respecting residents' wishes; helping them to identify their problems and figuring out just what it is they want to accomplish," she said. "Sometimes, if you're an intellectual, it is hard to get close to the community. This is an issue — a limit, caused by identity." To mitigate such concerns, NHF ramped up its efforts to engage with the community, to let them know their voices had weight in the plans being drawn up. "Participation and conflict in the community were necessary to make us think about where to head next," said TEECT member Guan Yu-fu in hindsight.

At this point, government funding made up more than 85 percent of NHF's revenue, including funds for the four-year plan endorsed by the Council of Agriculture and the post-earthquake community-building initiative of the Council for Cultural Affairs. NHF helmed 15 different community-building projects within Puli Township, but Taomi was a flagship project for NHF with its focus on building knowledge and empowering residents to realize the value of their way of life and surroundings. Liao believed community building was about the transformation of existing mindsets in a silent revolution. This was a concept inspired by Chen Chih-nan, a former deputy chairman of the Council for Cultural Affairs, who famously said that "community building is not just the building of a community. It is, in essence, people-building." For a place like Taomi, even the concept of a "community" meant little to people worried about making ends meet. The key for NHF's approach was that it supported residents in meeting economic needs through the common purpose to create a successful ecological village. The process would be slow, as observed by Chu Bor-shung, a prior NHF board member and Puli local. "We needed this sort of idealism to go on for a long time, to be internalized in people's minds so they know there is no shortcut to community building," he said.

NHF and ESRI took on the bulk of the responsibility for developing the local knowledge and

skills required to run an ecological village. NHF became Taomi's point of contact with the outside world, assuming the role of media relations for Taomi Community Development Association. In this capacity, it helped to resolve multiple issues ranging from tour planning to tour guide shift rotations and pricing, acting as a booking center for accommodation and tours. NHF gradually handed these operational responsibilities to the community members, and in doing so, planted the seeds of self-sufficiency. The foundation shifted its efforts to providing back-end support, for example, helping to write funding proposals. Gradually, the community members learned to identify operational problems and figure out solutions on their own, which NHF was happy to encourage. NHF believed that the sharing of resources was important to allow for the benefits to trickle through to the community. One way of doing this was to encourage Taomi's new eco-entrepreneurs to employ women, and to forge links with other indigenous industries and businesses. Over the years, Yen advocated a philosophy of "sharing in good fortune" through a voluntary pooled community fund, which receives 5-10 percent of gross proceeds from all eco tours conducted in the area to support ecological preservation and maintenance.

By emphasizing jobs, industry, the environment and community building, the proposals that NHF developed helped to secure the financial, human, and technical resources to meet these objectives. The Taomi eco-village received praise and admiration in the years leading up to 2005, as the media and government departments showcased it as a poster child for rural tourism. Eventually, Taomi residents came around to the understanding that a concern for the environment could also be commercially beneficial, and it became inseparable from how they made their living. The village's rejuvenation efforts was further bolstered when new residents began migrating to Taomi to make their lives in an eco-village, and former residents returned to take advantage of its new economic prospects. With the support of NHF personnel, those residents who subscribed to vision of an eco-village developed new skills in areas such as business operations and ecological management. As others in the community noticed how their neighbors were reaping rewards, they gradually followed suit. "As locals got a brand-new understanding of a place, it created a new set of values, and when those values [were] repeatedly put to use, it created a new awareness," said Cheng Kuen-quan, a former NHF staff member.

Post-reconstruction Period: NHF's Own Transformation (2004-2008)

Public funding for Taomi's reconstruction began to fall off in 2002, and by February 2006 all subsidies had to come to an end. While government and civic sector funding had undeniably helped the disaster-struck community to get back on its feet, the question of sustainable development in a post-aid Taomi remained a major concern for local stakeholders. Professor Jai Ben-ray, a seasoned field researcher, pointed out the real risk of progress halting or even regressing in the absence of public funding. "As an NGO, what we feared the most was a 'Cinderella' story," he said. "That once it hits 12 o'clock things go back to how they once were ... [and] we are back where we started." Yen agreed. "Government funds and private-sector contributions were basically emergency blood transfusions," he said. "How we produced our own new blood cells was the actual determining factor in how this NPO and this community could march forward to the next task."

In 2004, there had been a series of internal discussions about NHF's future. The options on the table were either to downsize and phase out, or to expand and transform the organization. Late that year, NHF's board set up an auxiliary unit that would conduct commercial activities, signaling a new direction. The goal was to maintain the momentum of reconstruction and ensure that the experience and knowledge that the residents had accrued would not be lost. As Taomi became self-reliant, NHF would evolve from a community champion into a "social enterprise" that would use

deploy commercial tactics to survive and maintain or create social impact for the community at large. But there was no clear roadmap for how to realize this concept.

An overseas visit created an opportunity to move forward. When Liao led a team to Japan to attend the tenth anniversary memorial of the 1995 Kobe earthquake, he found himself fascinated with the venue. Consisting of 58 paper pillars, the Paper Dome was designed by the celebrated Japanese architect Shigeru Ban, and had served as a temporary site for the destroyed Takatori Catholic Church. The Paper Dome, a symbol of the Kobe Earthquake, had been both a place for worship and a gathering point for various community services in the aftermath of the earthquake. After a decade as a spiritual focal point for community reconstruction, the dome was due to be replaced with a permanent structure. Upon hearing this, Liao suggested its relocation to Taiwan, to "make it a platform for exchanges on rebuilding between earthquake survivors in Taiwan and Japan," he said. His off-the-cuff comment surprised all attendees at the event, but within three days, an agreement was reached between the architect, the church, and the Noda-Hokubu Community Building Association in Kobe. Liao's suggestion became a reality, and the Paper Dome was to be moved to Taomi.

This raised new challenges for funding and organization, which inadvertently sped up the process of internal transformation as NHF rose to meet them. There was the obvious financial risk of relocating an aging structure across the sea, without the support of government subsidies or private funding. NHF was not even eligible to take out bank loans, and it could only borrow from its own board members. As the foundation refocused its mission, there were around 7-10 employees working at NHF, none of whom had prior commercial experience. During the course of acquiring and developing land to house the Paper Dome, they sketched the roadmap for a Paper Dome Experiential Learning Park. NHF envisioned this as a platform for community activity related to Taomi's ecological credentials, hosting activities for the elderly and primarily supported by selling food and beverages to visitors. Over the years, through trial and error, they were able to expand to the promotion of community-made handicrafts and various fee-based activities for visitors, such as artisan baking and organic farming.

The period of 2006-08 was critical to NHF's transition from a non-profit to social enterprise — a very difficult time for the organization, financially and operationally. As it struggled to find a viable business model, NHF faced challenges on two fronts. At its heart, NHF was a cultural and community-building organization with no real business experience, but necessity forced the organization to find ways to acquire new skills in areas such as merchandising and restaurant management. They also had to restructure to handle concerns over revenue, profit, and loss; objectives that some staff felt were paradoxical to NHF's social mission. Externally, NHF had to overcome more doubt and suspicion among Taomi residents. Because NHF no longer had to coordinate between the community and the outside world, some residents feared that they had been abandoned by the foundation and lacked confidence in their ability to stand on their own. Others who had never heard of social enterprises, and could not understand the drivers and objectives of the ongoing transition were fearful that the launch of the new Paper Dome might take away their existing business.

NHF responded to the crisis by promoting what it called "networks of responsibility," working closely with locals up through to the opening of the Paper Dome Park on September 21, 2008 — nine years to the day after the quake. This was done to help community members to understood how they stood to benefit from the park: as a platform for cooperation between social enterprises and the community; as a developmental base to preserve Taomi's identity as an ecological tourism destination; and as an educational site for visitors to learn about Taomi's post-disaster rebuilding and community building. It was an unchartered and

challenging route to develop the Paper Dome Park, but it proved to be a fruitful one for both NHF and the community. The park would eventually become a showcase for Taomi's history and progress, and emerge as an important economic asset. Domestic and international attention for the Paper Dome drew streams of tourists to Taomi, bolstering the eco-village economy. In the process of transforming into a social enterprise, NHF had become embedded in the very community that it served.

Sustaining Action (2009 – Present)

NHF split into two separate branches: a social enterprise and common welfare department. It was a challenge for NHF to become profitable with its investment into the Paper Dome, and it took more than three years for the commercial arm to break even. With nearly half a million visitors per year and an annual turnover of around NT$130 million (around US$4.3 million in 2014), the Paper Dome Park has emerged as a successful enterprise in its own right and a major draw for tourists. Steady growth meant the organization could begin paying back its loans, but NHF remained wary of focusing its attention on turnover to the detriment of social impact. To ensure that it would avoid mission drift and stay focused on collective values, NHF set a directive for 30 percent of profits to be used for promoting the community welfare.

As for Taomi itself, the establishment of a self-reliant ecology-based tourism sector ultimately encouraged more interaction and exchanges between people. "They needed to step forward, to go to their own ideas, and this required a process. In the end, they developed the ability to put antagonism — differing opinions — aside and can have people bring up conflicting ideas and discuss them in a conference room," said Yen, who acted as chief executive officer of NHF for more than a decade. "They needed an opportunity to learn how to become their own masters," she said. Over the years, people in Taomi have learned how to liaise with outside stakeholders to meet different needs, and the community now has a unique collective governance structure run by an alliance of four local organizations, including NHF. Former bamboo grower Liu Ming-huan exemplifies what was made possible for a Taomi Villager. "Professor Peng gave us advice on different aspects of running ecological tourism, such as ecology engineering and green aesthetics. After over a year of classes, teachers started bringing visitors in, we had an income, and the idea of an eco-village became clearer," said Liu. NHF advised him to rent out a room, allowing visiting tourists to experience life with a rural family, and he eventually set up a bed-and-breakfast business. "We had a grasp on ecology the first or second year, but it wasn't until the tenth year that I really understood what it meant: a place with a very friendly lifestyle." By appreciating the ecological values associated with their village, Taomi's residents are now reaping returns from the new economy they have built together.

LESSONS AND CHALLENGES

An Influential Champion

NHF was a consistent force throughout Taomi's rebuilding, helping to shape the strategic direction, bring in resources, and eventually fostering self-sufficiency. Coming in from the outside, the organization played a central role in forging consensus among disparate parties and presenting a clear vision for reconstruction. "If it weren't for NHF, there wouldn't be the Taomi we see today," said Chu Bor-shung, secretary of the Puli Township Vision Committee. NHF's understanding of local conditions and its commitment to clear communication with residents gave it the credibility to take up a leadership role. Reconstruction is not something that a single organization can accomplish alone, and in cooperating with others, the role of NHF as a coordinator was crucial, as Yen observed. "We had to be like a magnet pulling everyone in. It required patience, tolerance, perseverance, and ideals, along with continuous enthusiasm," she said. NHF brought in teams from ESRI, various universities, and other expert

organizations to fill gaps in resources and bring expertise that the community could not provide itself. Its long-term commitment to Taomi helped NHF to forge successful and supportive partnerships that stood the test of time. "Liao benefited from being able to be one of them and being very approachable and sympathetic, so he was able to create a sense of togetherness with the community," said Hsiou-mei Huang, who was with the Council for Cultural Affairs at the time.

Urgency for Change

The urgency of the needs in the aftermath of the 1999 earthquake pulled people together and allowed them to believe that a new approach to development was necessary. "The roads were shut down and there was no work. It was a chance for old and young alike in our community to sit down and talk about a lot of things," said one Taomi resident. "After we came to agreement, we knew that the future would be difficult and filled with challenges, and that gave us a desire to work together to find a solution and a way out." In pre-quake Taomi, people gave little thought to lifestyle changes in spite of the poor economic conditions. The earthquake literally shook its residents out of that holding pattern, forcing them to address Taomi's desolate economy, the village's demographic imbalance, and the drain of skilled workers. The physical and emotional destruction hit everyone at once, pushing the community toward a common solution to a common problem. "Let's say there was never an earthquake; if you tried to get community members to put forth their own resources and money for a community-wide resource pool, or to come to a consensus and stand together, it would be totally impossible," observed the same resident.

In Taomi, the earthquake served as the single largest catalyst for change. Research on disasters has shown the transformation and resilience they can bring, and there are handful of Taiwanese communities that have been rejuvenated in the wake of a disaster. While some have thrived, many more have suffered divisions over the sudden influx of resources. Community awareness has made the difference, and NHF is an example of how new stakeholders can play an effective intermediary role to good effect. Beyond the initial urgency of the disaster, NHF and other actors had taken a long-term view of Taomi's prospects and helped to create an environment where a new economy could be realized.

A Common Agenda and Communication

To achieve collective impact, all participants must eventually reach the same understanding — a common agenda — and utilize their collective power to solve problems. As Taomi's experience has shown, discussion and debate can bring participants together toward an agreed objective. In the case of Taomi, that common goal was the ecological village. It was critical that the vision was not imposed from the top down. Ultimately, the common goal would be informed by the value of the community's available resources and the wishes of its residents. The socioeconomic enquiry took place over several years, with a variety of teams examining different aspects of life in Taomi, to generate the data and awareness

The Paper Dome at night. (NHF)

required for the villagers and NHF to develop the economic roadmap. While NHF and ESRI eventually spearheaded the eco-village concept, it did so through local groups such as the Reconstruction Committee, the Ecological Engineering Team, and the Community Development Association. Diffusing information and ideas through local actors helped to make the process more inclusive, and change mindsets within the community.

Persistence as Key

Taking a cue from Taomi's success, other communities have since brought in Peng of ESRI to give lectures. However, unlike Taomi, few were able to commit to a longer-term sustained effort, and the eco-tourism concept faltered in these places. What differentiated Taomi was the long-term approach to building up learning and experience; even today the community hosts more than 100 hours of classes per year for residents. Many local guides have more than 1,000 hours of training under their belts, and they continue to improve upon their qualifications and knowledge. "Taomi was once the poorest part of greater Puli with the worst talent drain," said Peng. "If Taomi can find success, who can't? What should be copied is the continued spirit and promotion of educational advancement."

Peng saw Taomi as a model for other communities, but it is by no means perfect. Enthusiastic as they are, the tour guides of Taomi fall short of the expertise and professionalism of other organizations such as the Society of Wilderness and the Wild Bird Foundation, both of which are staffed by school teachers and academics. There continues to be room for improvement in the community's ecological understanding, and a need for residents to educate and train themselves to maintain Taomi's reputation as a national eco-village of note. This consciousness is reflected in the way that Taomi's residents are living their lives and running their businesses. "To me, ecology is part of my life. This is the way I take care of my homeland," said hostel owner Guan Ba. Inside his establishment is a painting of the "Frog Professor" teaching three little frogs that sit at his feet. "Because of Professor Peng and NHF, this small community has developed into an eco-village," explained Guan. "Now the frogs are our bosses."

OUTLOOK

In 2009, NHF marked the tenth anniversary of the earthquake that shook Taomi Village to its core. Drawing upon its experiences from the rejuvenation of Taomi, it invited interested stakeholders to join a Puli Township Vision Committee in 2010. A local enterprise provided seed money to the Puli Area Tourist Association, which then commissioned Peng to conduct a natural resources survey. The survey focused on the butterfly population once prevalent in Puli, which had declined due to high demand for their use in commercial handicrafts. With Peng's survey revealing some encouraging signs, NHF launched a 2011 initiative called "Rediscovering the Butterfly Kingdom — The Building and Developing of an Experiential Learning Network in Puli Township." Modeled on the success of Taomi's eco-village concept, it focused on the conservation of Puli's butterfly species as an ecological asset, and on creating alternative opportunities for sustainable development. In early 2016, the Puli Area Tourist Association elected Liao to further spearhead the project.

From the frogs of Taomi to the butterflies of Puli, people in these economically marginalized communities have discovered their local symbols and recognized the value of their assets and working toward a common agenda. "To blend disparate interests for local development is to let everyone strive together for a common future," said Liao. Once again, the job for NHF is connect the dots, and to help bring together the community along the way.

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QUANTITATIVE INDICATORS

Financial

Planned budget or income versus actual expenditure for the fiscal year*	Planned budget: NT$51 million (US$1.68 million) Actual budget: NT$57 million (US$1.88 million) Planned expenditure: NT$51 million (US$1.68 million) Actual expenditure: NT$57 million (US$1.88 million)
Income composition by source: individuals, corporations, events, trusts, other (please specify)	Business operations: 84% Project income:14% General income (donations and events): 2%
Income composition: domestic versus international	Domestic: 100%

Personnel

Staff retention rate	19 (67%)
Turnover rate	9 (33%)
What is the board composition?	17 board members Occupations: education, 3; non-profit sector, 4; business, 5; research, 4; government, 1. Gender: men, 14 (82%); women, 3 (18%)
How many meetings does the board hold per year?	1-2
How many staff members are there?	28
How many staff members have attended some non-profit or management training course?	Internal courses include: service manners, tour planning, participatory learning, fire drills and emergencies, and collaboration with NPOs Three team members were qualified as ecological guides, receiving more than 300 hours of training. Staff also attend seminars and workshops run by government, non-profit organizations and educational institutions on issues such as the management of leisure farms, the cultural and creative industries, environmental education, and community development

Quantitative Indicators Continued

Organizational

Do you publish an annual report?	Yes
How many sites/locations do you currently operate in?	The main focus is on the land-locked Nantou County.
Do you measure results?	Yes. Indicators tracked include: • Quality • Sustainability • Cross-sector collaboration • Innovation • Service commitment • Public welfare • Operations management
What types of outreach?	Print direct mail, multimedia, radio, Internet, publications, community bulletin boards, loudspeaker vans, word-of-mouth, seminars, town hall meetings, newsletters
Do you regularly meet with government representatives? If yes, on a scale of 1-3 how close is the relationship with government? 1 = not close; 2 = somewhat close; 3 = very close	Yes Closeness of relationship = 2

* For the year 2014. Average exchange rate of NT$30.3 = US$1 (OANDA).