



## On the side of the disadvantaged in an engagement for a human existence

### The BMI as organization

The Bethlehem Mission Immensee (BMI) is a Catholic missionary organization with its headquarters in Immensee (Switzerland). In cooperation with other religious and civil organizations, it is engaged worldwide on behalf of the disadvantaged in society. It provides specialists for specific and temporary assignments in the projects of partner organizations and promotes the processes of international solidarity.

Its motivation is the vision of a just and peaceful world and the desire to work together in partnership with people from other cultures and religions. The basic necessities of life for all and dignity and rights for every person are its most important concerns.

The specialists consciously lead a simple life style and thereby share the life and are fully present with the people of the area. They make careful use of the means at hand in order to avoid a dependence on them.

### A general view

The island of Taiwan has had a troubled history and even today is still fighting for its independence. Taiwan was a Japanese colony from 1895 until 1945. From 1947 troops under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek fled from China to Taiwan and formed a Chinese exile government there. This military government ruled the island republic for 50 years. The change to the democracy of today with its multi-party system and free elections only began at the end of the 1980s.

With about 23 million citizens, i.e. 635 per square kilometer, Taiwan is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. The island state which was looked upon as an under-developed country until after the 2nd World War experienced the start of an overwhelming economical and technical boom in the 1950s and 1960s and today belongs to the «Tiger Nations».

The quick economic growth radically changed the population structure of Taiwan. Today the greater part of the population lives in the overcrowded areas of the cities of the north and west of the island while the south and east of the country, especially the mountain villages settled by indigenous peoples, are affected by the exodus and a resulting development stagnation. The social relationships and support networks which the family originally provided no longer function; many people cannot cope with the pressures of the performance-orientated society of the Taiwan of today. The boo-



ming economy has drawn hundred thousands of migrant workers from neighboring countries in the last 20 years and they are subjected without any protection to various forms of exploitation.

The Bethlehem Mission Immensee (BMI) has been actively engaged for 55 years in Taiwan. To begin with the SMB Missionaries (members of the Mission Society Bethlehem) who were expelled from China in 1953 worked to build up the local Church and social amenities amongst the original inhabitants on the east coast in the Diocese of Hualien. The cooperation with the Diocese Gaoxiong on the west coast and with church based NGOs in the greater area of Taipei began in the 1990s. The BMI has also been working since 2000 in the Diocese of Xinzhu.

### Thematic priorities and targets

The country program of the BMI for Taiwan consists of the thematic priorities: Integral Pastoral Work, and the Basic Essentials of Life, as well as the geographical priorities in the counties of Hualien and Taidong on the east coast and Xinzhu in the north west of the country. The aim of the engagement in the Integral Pastoral is to strengthen communities in their cultural and religious identities and in the awareness of their social responsibilities. The BMI supports the local Church und NGOs in their efforts to build up supporting networks. It is involved in projects in which members of various religions and confessions are working together for a human existence, especially for the indigenous people of Taiwan. The aim re-



# Country program

## Taiwan

## Bethlehem Mission Immensee

garding the basic essentials of life is to fight against exploitation and discrimination as well as to safeguard the human rights of migrant workers and handicapped people.

### Target groups

The local population of the province of Hualian and the migrant workers in the industrial areas in the north of the island state are the main target groups.

### Partnerships and networks

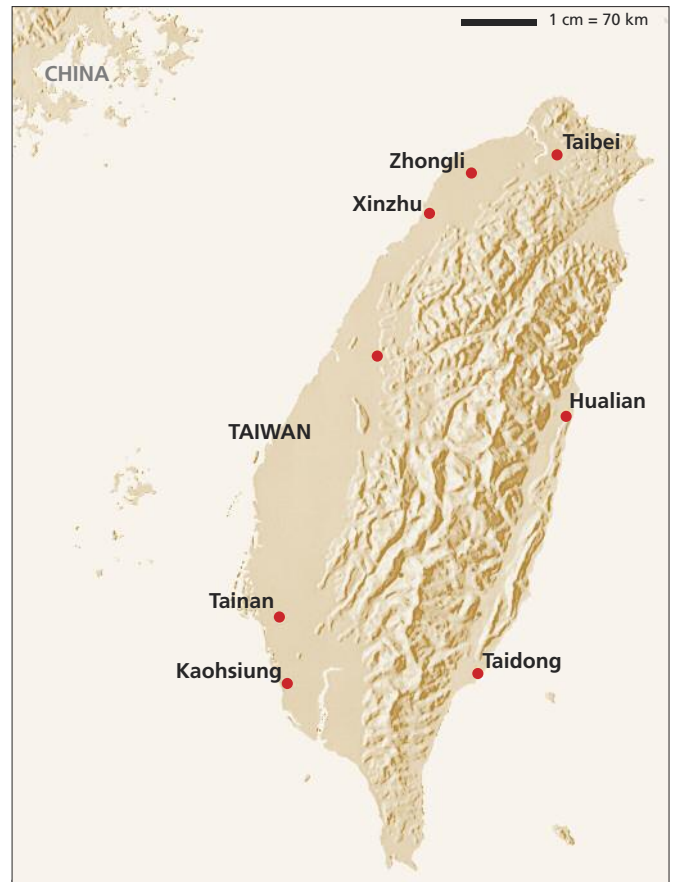
To date the most important partner of the BMI in Taiwan is the local Church and a Buddhist NGO. In addition to the Dioceses of Hualian and Xinzhu and the NGOs they support, the Tzu Chi Buddhist Foundation which is engaged in public health, social, and inter-religious peace work is an important local partner. The Presbyterian Church of Taiwan (PTC) is also a partner organization. The BMI-Coordination and the specialists are working closely together with the SMB Priests and Brothers in Taiwan in various local networks.

### The BMI in Taiwan

The BMI is locally represented by a coordinator who is the contact person for the partner organizations, guides the specialists from Germany and Switzerland, and is responsible for assuring the quality of an assignment.

The partner organization bears the responsibility for the project and provides the necessary framework for the specialists to work within. A local responsible person oversees the work of the project together with the coordinator.

It is the duty of the skilled person to work in the project according to the quality criteria mutually agreed upon.



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### Facts

Area	36 000 km <sup>2</sup>
Population	23 037 031
City population	81%
Life expectancy	78 years
Population below the poverty line	0,9%
Literacy rate	96%
BIP per head	17 116 US\$
Main export goods	tic products, Optoelectronics, IC-Chips (67% of the world market)
Main export countries	China (incl. Hong Kong) 40%, ASEAN countries 14%, USA 13%, EU 10,8%
Foreign debts	93 Mrd. US\$

Facts: Basic facts from [www.gio.gov.tw/taiwan-website/5-gp/glance/ch7.htm](http://www.gio.gov.tw/taiwan-website/5-gp/glance/ch7.htm) and [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov), The CIA-Worldfactbook