

## **The Riverine Initiative for Rural Sustainability: Toward Concerted Diversity**

How can the academics sustain such a nontraditional mission of pursuing rural sustainability? The advocacy of universal responsibility for sustainable development has pushed the higher education institutions in Taiwan to engage in solving related problems in their neighbouring communities since the early 2010s. Universities with expertise, talents, and networks could have played a critical role in improving local welfare but remained apathetic for different reasons in different countries. The lack of financial resources has been the most obvious one. Under the financial support from the government, universities in Taiwan started to initiate a wide variety of projects and built up a new trajectory of an engaged scholarship.

However, the major challenge was to sustain such sustainability actions through project-based subsidies. Periodical renewals through reviews following the sponsor's key performance indicators might result in the suspension of the projects under fierce competition. Such termination would weaken the long-term commitment needed in a university-community partnership and reduce the stability of the participants, including administrators, faculty members, and students. Specialising in humanity and social sciences, National Chengchi University has struggled to manage this structural issue via its University Outreach Office. First, it set up an ambitious goal to transform the project-based practices into a long-term campaign, under the title of the Riverine Initiative, incorporating a set of core values and practical models that can attract diverse financial resources in addition to the government. Second, it worked with local entrepreneurs to create innovative operational models that can enhance financial independence and consolidate multiple sources of participants by training young entrepreneurs in this initiative.