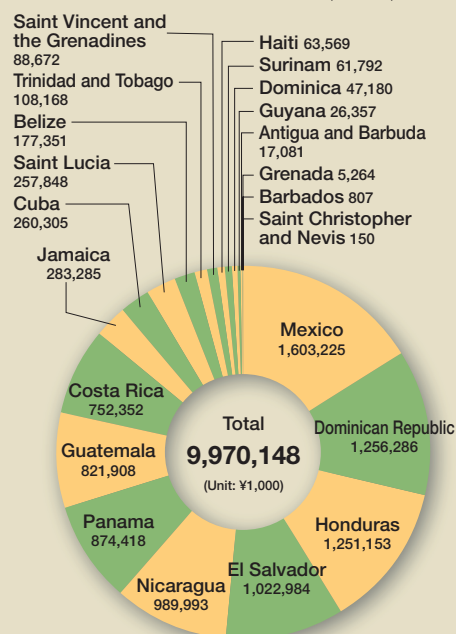


Central America and the Caribbean



Pillars of Aid Poverty Reduction/Sustainable Economic Growth/Regionwide Cooperation

■ Cooperation results by country in Central America and the Caribbean (FY2006)



* This is the total amount of bilateral cooperation. The amount of cooperation provided to North and Latin America including cooperation that covers a group of countries is 20,455,245 thousands of yen.

Poverty reduction is the utmost priority issue common to most countries in Central America and the Caribbean in their development policies. Poverty reduction plays an important role in removing destabilizing factors, represented by the internal conflicts that Guatemala, Nicaragua, and El Salvador have experienced, and promoting peace-building in the region.

Additionally, in order to solve poverty issues from a medium- and long-term perspective, sustainable economic growth to increase employment and improve the quality of people's lives is essential both in individual countries and the region. Considering the characteristics of the region, which consists of adjoining small countries, it is necessary to address issues, including environmental problems and infectious diseases control, on a regional scale across national borders.

In addition to a national- and regional-level perspective, JICA considers it essential to provide cooperation to Central America and the Caribbean from the perspective of human security with a focus on individuals. To that end, JICA actively supports self-help efforts of individual countries from the viewpoint of capacity development, and also pays due consideration to the socially vulnerable, such as women, children and

poverty-stricken indigenous peoples.

In order to address priority issues in the development policies, JICA prioritizes cooperation in the following areas and contributes to human resources development and nation-building in aid recipient countries.

- 1) Education
- 2) Health
- 3) Agricultural and rural development
- 4) Industrial development and development of socioeconomic infrastructures
- 5) Environmental conservation
- 6) Disaster prevention
- 7) Citizen security

As a method of cooperation, given that the region consists of adjoining small countries with common characteristics, regionwide cooperation targeting a set of countries is promoted to address similar development issues. JICA also supports South-South cooperation, in which countries in the same region provide cooperation for one another, and collaborates with organizations related to regional integration such as the System of Central American Integration (SICA) and Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and gives consideration to coordination with international organizations such as Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and other donor countries.

Current State of Development

Central America and the Caribbean region consists of 23 countries, of which eight countries are in Central America and 15 are in the Caribbean region, including Guyana and Surinam, which are located in the South American continent, and members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). The region has many small countries with land areas of less than 10,000 km² and populations of less than one million people. Many countries in the region are dependent on the production and export of primary products. Though tourism is good in some countries, the manufacturing sector has yet to be developed except for Mexico and Costa Rica.

When looking at the situation of the whole region, peace-making proceeded in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala in the 1990s, and individual countries have worked on democrati-

zation and economic reforms, resulting in political and economic stability throughout the region, except for a few countries. Relatively small countries adjoining this region except for Mexico often share not only histories, cultures, and languages, but also development issues. Thus, based on the common recognition that regional development requires collaboration and unity among countries, the movement has gained momentum towards regional integration and cooperation, represented by the System of Central American Integration (SICA) and CARICOM.

However, despite these self-help efforts, disparities within and among countries are still very prominent as stated in Japan's ODA Charter. As a result, poverty, security, and environmental issues have become critical in more countries. Since the region consists of a number of small adjoining countries, these issues have

crossed national borders and influenced neighboring countries; therefore, the region needs proactive support from the international community to solve the problems.

Mexico, the country with the largest land area and population in the region, is a so-called more developed country, which has relatively advanced economic development. It is also one of the Latin American countries with close ties to Japan, as represented by the Economic Partnership Agreement that became effective in April 2005. Mexico has already implemented South-South cooperation for other Latin American countries and JICA actively supports this effort. However, poverty and environmental issues have to be overcome in the country.

All other countries in the region except Costa Rica, which enjoys relatively advanced socioeconomic development, are facing serious poverty issues. Aiming at peacebuilding and achieving democracy after a peace agreement, Japan has actively supported nation-building and human resource development in the region since the 1990s. In 1995, the Japan-Central America Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation was established to promote mutual understanding between Japan and SICA member countries and strengthen ties in areas such as diplomatic policies, economic and technical cooperation, and cultural exchange. A total of 10 deputy foreign minister meetings were held until 2006.

Year 2005 marked the 70th anniversary since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and five Central American countries (Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras,

Nicaragua, and Costa Rica). At Expo 2005 held in Aichi Prefecture, those five countries sponsored the Central America Joint Pavilion as SICA members jointly with neighboring countries Panama and Belize. This led Japan and eight SICA member countries including the Dominican Republic (associate member) to designate year 2005 as the Japan-Central America Year. In conjunction with the Exchange Year, the Japan-Central America Summit took place in August. The Tokyo Declaration and Action Plan adopted at this meeting call for strengthening ties between Japan and Central American countries and clarify the priority areas and direction of future economic and technical cooperation. JICA proactively implements cooperation in fields such as education, health, and disaster prevention, and makes efforts to realize what the declaration and action plan stated.

Though many Caribbean countries are small in size and population, and have gained independence only in recent years, their per capita income is relatively high and their economy scale is small. Accordingly, Japan does not have a strong record of cooperation in these countries. In the Caribbean, which consists of similar small island countries, it is effective to provide support by region in addressing development issues common to the region using regional organizations such as CARICOM. Based on the results of annual working level diplomatic meetings, namely Japan-Caribbean Community Consultation, JICA carries out regionwide cooperation in such areas as disaster prevention, conservation of marine resources, and tourism development.

Priority Areas for Cooperation

JICA provides cooperation in Central America and the Caribbean in the following priority areas and future direction.

Education

The utmost priority is given to cooperation in basic education, particularly quality improvement in primary education, through technical cooperation projects, dispatch of volunteers, and training courses. The Project for the Improvement of Teaching Method in Mathematics implemented in Honduras is a typical example of cooperation, resulting in the development of teachers' manuals, children's workbooks, etc. This outcome is expected to extend to other countries in Central America such as El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala.

Health

In the area of health and medical care, priorities are given to the reduction of infant mortality, maternal and child health and reproductive health for improvement of the health of pregnant women, infectious disease control targeting the poverty group, improvement of regional health including training for nurses, support for persons with disabilities, and supply of safe drinking water. In this area, as in the area of education, many experts and volunteers play active roles. The Project for the Vector Control of Chagas Disease implemented in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador is a typical example. Chagas disease, which is common among the poor in rural areas, is a serious disease. Once it enters its chronic stage, there is no effective cure. JICA is bringing results, from supporting persistent activities to eradicating the dis-



Training participants discussing Kaizen in the field of medical care (Quality Management in Health in Latin America, JICA Tohoku)

ease. These activities include extermination of the vector of the disease (assassin bugs), improvements in housing environment to prevent entry of assassin bugs, and educational campaign activities run by school and health volunteers.

Agricultural and Rural Development

The economies of many countries depend on the production and export of primary commodities mainly from agriculture. Many in the rural and fishing population are poor. In response to the aim of poverty reduction, JICA provides cooperation under themes such as development and dissemination of production techniques for better livelihood and promotion of rural development with citizen participation. JICA also conducts training courses targeting the region of Central America.

Many experts and volunteers are working actively in this area as well.

Development of Socioeconomic Infrastructures and Industrial Development

Medium- and long-term regional development requires cooperation to build socioeconomic infrastructures such as roads, ports, schools, and hospitals. JICA proactively provides technical cooperation while organically collaborating with on-going grant aid and loan assistance.

Recently the countries in the region concluded in succession a free trade agreement with the US. Amid advancing economic globalization, Japan is urged to assist with the promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises, promote trade and investment, and support tourism development. JICA dispatches experts and senior volunteers and conducts training courses targeting the region.

Environmental Conservation

As the economy grows, population and industries gather in urban areas, thus requiring an immediate response to waste disposal treatment and water contamination issues. From the viewpoint of foreign currency revenue, a rich natural environment is a valuable tourism resource, and its destruction is a serious problem. In addition to bilateral cooperation, JICA has been providing various types of cooperation for environmental conservation across national borders with a regional-level perspective.

Disaster Prevention

Hurricane Mitch, which struck Central America in 1998,

caused serious damage to the region. Countermeasures against natural disasters, such as floods caused by torrential rain and earthquakes, are important issues for all the countries in the region.

JICA provides cooperation to promote disaster prevention on an administrative and community level in the region by utilizing Japan's experiences related to natural disaster control. JICA's cooperation is showing outcomes in organizations such as the Center of Coordination for the Prevention of National Disaster in Central America (in Guatemala), which is affiliated with SICA, the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (in Barbados), which is affiliated with CARICOM, and the National Disaster Prevention Center (in Mexico). In the future, these organizations are expected to become the bases for regionwide disaster prevention activities.

Citizen Security

The improvement of public safety, which realizes the regional development of stable and healthy economy and society, is an issue shared by the countries in the region. JICA has cooperated with the Central American Institute of Advanced Police Studies (in El Salvador), which is affiliated with SICA, and the United Nations Latin American Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (in Costa Rica). In addition, JICA has conducted in Japan a training course intended for police-related personnel from countries in the region to introduce the Japanese police system.

Front Line Dominican Republic

The Study on Integrated Urban Solid Waste Management Plan in Santo Domingo de Guzman, National District

Comprehensive Measures to Realize a Clean City

Worsening urban environment

Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic, is the first city Columbus built in the New World facing the beautiful Caribbean Sea. However, due to the living disparity between rural and urban areas, a population influx from rural areas has continued, causing serious urban environmental issues such as solid waste and waste water. In response, the Santo Domingo city office devised a slogan, "Ciudad Limpia (Clean City)," that strives to solve these environmental problems.

In 2002, when JICA first dispatched a group of senior volunteers to the city office of Santo Domingo, JICA started cooperation for reinforcement of environmental administrative capabilities, including waste control. In addition to daily on-site instruction by volunteers, more than 10 personnel from the city office received training in Japan utilizing various group training courses. Since July 2005, the Study on Integrated Urban Solid Waste Management Plan in Santo Domingo de Guzman, National District, has been implemented, and a comprehensive waste management

master plan has been made.

Through this development study, in addition to the creation of the master plan, the first cleaning code was established in the Dominican Republic. Furthermore, there were landmark movements. The minister of health and the minister of the environment signed on the declaration of activities to address problems related to medical waste and infectious disease medical waste.

Donating small secondhand garbage trucks

When senior volunteers returned to Japan temporarily, they approached the local governments of their hometowns, which decided to donate six small secondhand garbage trucks. Grassroots grant aid was utilized to transport the trucks, and a drawing (prizewinning picture in picture competition on the theme of the environment) by a local primary school pupil was printed on the body of the garbage trucks. These small, cute garbage trucks totally changed the old image of garbage trucks, and work well in small alley-

ways. The city immediately decided to introduce an additional 24 trucks.

With such comprehensive support from JICA, Santo Domingo became a pioneer in solid waste management, and JICA receives requests for support from many local governments in the country.

Nonetheless, solid waste management in Santo Domingo is still in its infancy. Aiming to implement the master plan, JICA will provide cooperation for the improvement of administrative capabilities of solid waste management in the city.

(JICA Dominican Republic Office)



A garbage truck and the primary school pupil who drew the picture that adorns it