

Central America and the Caribbean

The countries of Central America and the Caribbean*1 share many commonalities in respect of language, culture, etc. At the same time, however, the region has diverse needs due to marked differences in the sizes and socioeconomic situations of each country.

While taking into consideration the unique context of each country as well as the regional integration and intra-regional cooperation initiatives to overcome region-wide development

issues, JICA assists in the stable development of this region by placing a priority on the following three areas: 1) infrastructure development for sustainable economic growth; 2) addressing global issues (measures against climate change, environmental conservation and improvement, disaster prevention); and 3) poverty reduction from a human security perspective.

Key Aid Strategies

Supporting Stable Development by Addressing Common Issues Facing the Region

The Central American Crisis (a collective term for the series of civil wars that occurred in numerous Central American countries), which continued for over 10 years starting from the late 1970s, heavily impacted the social and economic development of the Central American region. Later, as the various conflicts wound down and the peace process advanced in the 1990s, democracy began to establish itself and today most Central American countries are experiencing stable economic growth.

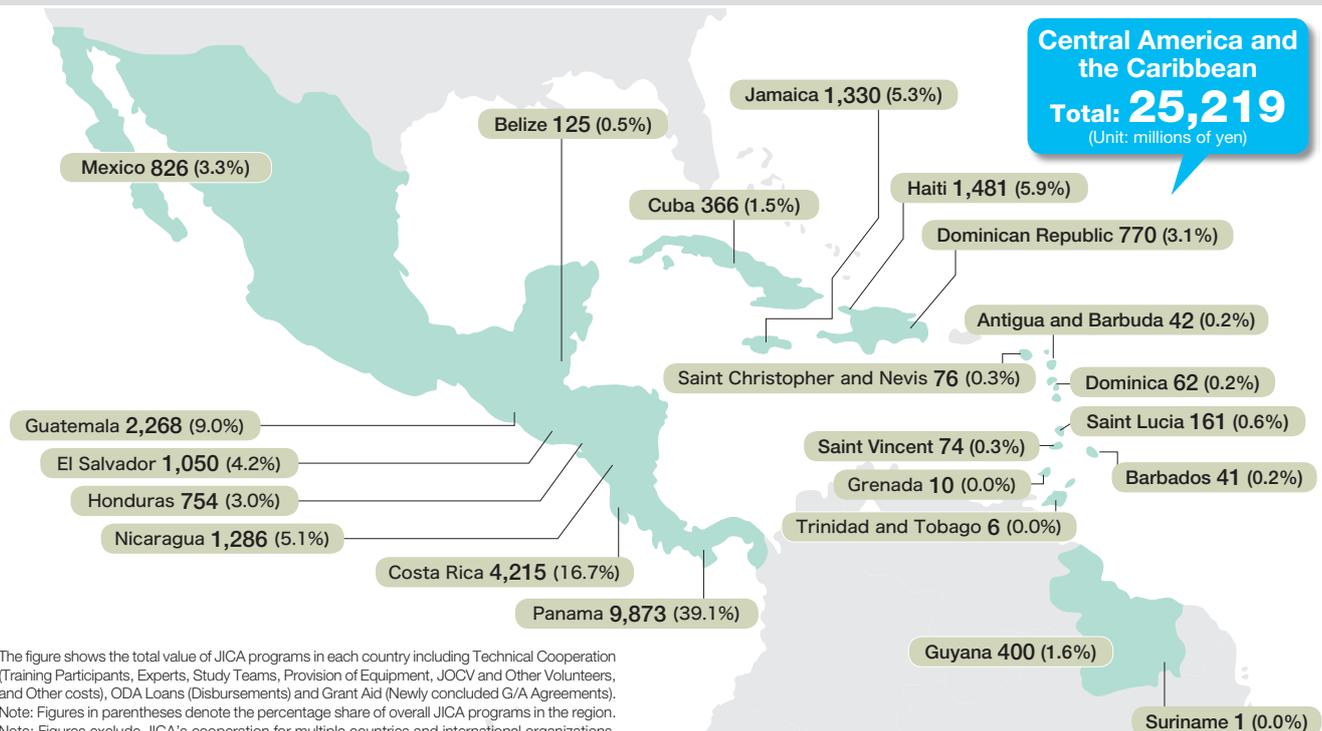
The Caribbean region is also maintaining a certain degree of economic growth thanks mainly to its tourism industry and to remittances from migrants residing in the United States. Meanwhile, however, Central America and the Caribbean continue to face numerous challenges, as every year the region experiences natural disasters such as hurricanes, and also on account of its

vulnerable economic structure, which remains dependent on the export of primary commodities and on remittances from overseas. With the aim of overcoming these common issues, regional organizations such as the Central American Integration System (SICA) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) work actively to promote regional integration and intra-regional cooperation.

In consideration of language and cultural commonalities and regional integration as well as intra-regional cooperation frameworks, JICA works to provide assistance on a regional scale (regional cooperation) to overcome common development issues that affect each country. JICA works in partnership with international organizations such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and other aid-donors.

Celebrating 70 years of diplomatic relations between Japan

JICA Programs in Central America and the Caribbean (Fiscal 2010)



Promoting Effective Cooperation in View of Regional Integration and Intra-Regional Cooperation

and five Central American countries, 2005 was designated as the Japan-Central America Year and was marked by the Japan-Central America Summit, which led to the issuing of the Tokyo Declaration and the Action Plan*². Using the Action Plan as a guideline, JICA implements assistance for the establishment of peace and democracy, further economic cooperation, development, promotion of tourism, and disaster prevention.

In consideration of the agreement concluded at the 2nd Japan-CARICOM Ministerial-Level Conference held in September 2010, JICA is providing the CARICOM member states with assistance for environmental and climate change countermeasures, mitigation of the impacts of the economic crisis, reconstruction following the Haiti earthquake, etc.

JICA promotes triangular cooperation through such frameworks like the Japan Mexico Partnership Programme (JMPP), which supports emerging countries such as Mexico to provide assistance to developing countries in the region.

Priority Issues and Efforts

Infrastructure Development for Sustainable Economic Growth

Historically, the long-running civil wars in the region delayed basic economic infrastructure development and stood in the way of economic growth. JICA provides cooperation to fund development projects for roads and bridges in order to streamline region-wide logistics. (ex. ZONAPAZ Road Improvement Project financed by ODA Loans, construction and replacement of bridges along borders provided by Grant Aid) Moreover, JICA has provided ODA Loans to El Salvador for the La Union Port Development Project in order to develop the port into a logistics hub, and for a hydroelectric power plant in Costa Rica through the Pirris Hydroelectric Power Development Project. In this way, JICA provides comprehensive assistance mainly in the form of financial assistance necessary for sustainable economic growth in the region.

The global financial and economic crisis that started in late 2008 and the decline in foreign direct investment and remittances slowed economic growth in this region, which has close economic ties with the United States. In response to this situation, JICA is providing assistance, including the dispatch of experts to improve the productivity of small and medium-sized enterprises in several

countries that contribute to the revitalization of economic activities throughout the region for industrial promotion and reduction of dependence on other countries.

Furthermore, Japan's economic relations with Mexico, with which it enacted an economic partnership agreement (EPA) in 2005, continue to deepen. With the aim of promoting partnerships with the Japanese private sector, JICA is implementing Technical Cooperation projects, such as the Project for Human Resource Development in the Technology of Plastic Transformation and the Project for Human Resource Development for the Electronics Industry in Maquiladora Zone in Baja California, which are supporting the training of human resources for these industries.

Addressing Global Issues

Climate Change Measures, Environmental Conservation and Improvement, and Disaster Prevention

JICA helps countries to address climate change by providing support for mitigation measures such as encouraging the use of renewable energy and teaching energy conservation, as well as adaptation measures such as improving disaster prevention capabilities. In January 2011, JICA concluded a memorandum with the IDB on climate change. Based on this memorandum, JICA will implement financial assistance for renewable energy and energy conservation promotion in Central America and the Caribbean Region [→ See the Case Study on page 20].

Furthermore, JICA supports environmental improvement through ODA Loans in countries such as Costa Rica and Panama, where waste processing and water pollution amelioration measures are becoming priority issues in urban areas due to the high concentration of population and industry*³. In the areas of waste processing and total management, JICA provides Technical Cooperation on a regional scale based on Japan's knowledge and experience to support the efforts of various countries that aim to promote understanding of the "Three (3) Rs" (Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle), and the formation of a sound material-cycle society.

Due to the frequent occurrence of hurricanes, earthquakes, and other natural disasters in the region, strengthening disaster preparedness capabilities in this region is a tremendously important issue. In efforts to enhance the ability of local governments and residents to prepare themselves against disasters, and to facilitate their coexistence with such disasters, JICA is working to share and disseminate expertise on community disaster prevention for disaster prevention agencies in Central America and the Caribbean. JICA is also working to support reconstruction following the massive earthquake that

The Pirris Hydroelectric Power Development Project supports sustainable economic growth in Costa Rica (ODA Loan project completed in September 2011).



*1 Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Dominican Republic, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Christopher and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent, Surinam, Trinidad and Tobago, and Cuba.

*2 As a follow-up to the Tokyo Declaration and Action Plan, Japan and the Central American countries hold the Japan-Central America Forum every year in order to continue dialogue and strengthen relations.

*3 Examples include the Metropolitan San Jose Environment Improvement Project in Costa Rica and the Panama City and Panama Bay Sanitation Project in Panama.

struck Haiti in January 2010 [→ See the Case Study on page 65].

Poverty Reduction from a Human Security Perspective

While Central America and the Caribbean are achieving a certain degree of economic development, there are still large numbers of people living in poverty who do not have access to basic education, health and medical services, nor to safe drinking water. In consideration of the principles of human security, JICA remains strongly aware of ensuring that benefits reach the socially vulnerable and supports the capacity development of local communities and individuals in partner countries. In so doing, JICA is actively providing comprehensive assistance for promoting efforts to share the experiences and results of previous cases from various countries within the region, as well as efforts by individual countries to address common regional issues.

In the education sector, for instance, the expertise in developing mathematics teaching materials and training teachers that was acquired through the Project for the Improvement of Teaching Methods in Mathematics in Honduras is now being shared and disseminated to four neighboring countries. As one result of these efforts, the teaching materials developed through this project are being used as nationally designated textbooks and improvements have been observed in children's grades.

In the health and medical sector, JICA is providing assistance for countermeasures against infectious diseases such as Chagas disease. JICA also carries out a leading role in supporting the Central American Initiative for Control of Chagas Disease, which is a joint undertaking between Central American countries in the region. As a result of this assistance, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially recognized the interruption of



Japanese experts and their counterparts discussing teaching materials created in the Project for the Improvement of Teaching Methods in Mathematics.

transmissions resulting from foreign reduviid bugs in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua. JICA also supports the Project for Strengthening Nursing Education and In-service Training in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic in order to train health professionals that play central roles in improving public health services [→ See the Case Study below].

The countries of Central America and the Caribbean each share common linguistic and cultural backgrounds, making it possible to boost the effectiveness and efficiency of cooperation by sharing experiences. Moreover, by supporting initiatives and forming networks not only at the national level, but also on a region-wide scale, it is possible to promote regional undertakings to address development issues and increase the sustainability of results achieved. JICA will continue to promote such region-wide cooperation in Central America and the Caribbean.

Case Study

Project for Strengthening Nursing Education and In-service Training in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic

Winner of the Outstanding Performance Award at the High Level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation

In November 2010, this project was awarded the Outstanding Performance Award at the High Level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, which was co-hosted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other organizations. The project was commended as a superior example of South-South cooperation that has allowed a country to utilize its own experience and strengths in assistance for other developing countries. The project's coordinator, Consuelo Olano de Eilas, presented the project's results at an award ceremony in Geneva, Switzerland.

The "Proyecto Angeles" (The Angels Project)

This award-winning project based in El Salvador has been implemented in Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and the Dominican

Republic since 2007. It is a region-wide nursing education program commonly referred to as "Proyecto Angeles".

What makes the project so special is that local nurses who have undergone past JICA assistance programs in El Salvador are now working with Japanese experts to train nursing education instructors in neighboring countries. Trained counterparts in turn pass on project knowledge to others. A TV conference system is used to connect participants for joint undertakings to improve the quality of nursing education and promote friendly cooperation in all five countries.

A basic nursing curriculum has been drafted in each country and participants are promoting a collaborative practice model for

nursing education and on-site training. Project leader Masako Ogawa has created a network of nurses ("angels") that drive the project forward. She commented that in the future she hopes to form a regional "Nurses Without Borders." It seems the achievement of her dream may not be that far off.



Project members in El Salvador receiving a report on the progress of the other four countries during a TV conference.

Helping to Restore Infrastructure and Improve Lives

A massive earthquake struck Haiti on January 12, 2010. The disaster left more than 316,000 people dead and nearly 310,000 injured. It also caused extensive damage in the capital of Port-au-Prince, destroying numerous buildings, including hospitals and schools. JICA dispatched the Japan Disaster Relief Team (medical team) immediately after the earthquake. Since then, JICA has continued to provide assistance, helping the people of Haiti to restore infrastructure and gain skills for reconstruction and development through training.



Trainees observe Nagata Ward in Kobe City, which was successfully reconstructed after the earthquake.

Rapid Initiation of a Survey and Project Immediately After the Earthquake

The international community took the catastrophic damage caused by the Haiti earthquake very seriously. Many countries swiftly announced intentions to extend support. JICA participated in the reconstruction needs survey carried out directly after the disaster by the Haitian government together with the United Nations, the World Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank.

Based on the outcomes of this survey and reconstruction plans drafted by the Haitian government, JICA launched the Urgent Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Support Project for Haiti in May 2010. It was forwarded three pillars: 1) reconstruction of living conditions in the disaster areas including restoration of infrastructure such as water supply systems; 2) assistance to help the Haitian government draft a national land use plan; and 3) confirmation and implementation of technical surveys related to additional assistance needs. JICA also opened a field office to further coordination with the Haitian government and manage project operations.

Alongside emergency reconstruction assistance, JICA began work to train human resources for the future development of Haiti, which is one of the poorest countries in Central and South America. Since October 2010, JICA has been implementing the Project on Technical Training in Agricultural Production System in Mountainous Areas to Technicians

of the Republic of Haiti in order to foster agricultural technicians and bolster Haiti's food production. This project was carried out through cooperation with the Dominican Republic, Haiti's neighbor on the island of Hispaniola.

A Resident Participation Model for Reconstruction and Disaster Prevention from Hyogo

In March 2011, JICA Hyogo accepted a group of Haitians for post-earthquake reconstruction training.

Fourteen persons from Haiti's central government, local governments, and NGOs participated in the training program. The participants gained knowledge on reconstruction activities implemented by local governments and NGOs in the aftermath of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake. Following the training, each of the participants created a concrete action plan based on the knowledge they acquired through the training program.

Action plans included projects such as "Care for the Heart," an effort suggested by a trainee managing an orphanage. Another trainee who works at the Haitian Red Cross Society proposed the "Shelter Construction Project." The former project aims to provide mental healthcare and counseling for children orphaned as a result of the disaster, while the latter will work to construct disaster prevention centers that can be used ordinarily as disaster prevention education facilities. JICA is continuing to support these trainees in realizing their action plans.

From the Grassroots

Pierre Louis Germaine
Supervisor, Haitian Red Cross Society

I had wanted to forget about the earthquake before the program, as it was such a sad event. Visiting each of the local governments and NGOs in Hyogo, I could tell that everyone possessed a strong will to overcome tragedy through reconstruction and to prepare for future disasters. I learned about the "rebuild better" concept, in which we do not forget disasters, but learn from them, rebuilding in a better way than before. The people of Haiti tend to rely on the government. I want to promote reconstruction and disaster prevention together with the people using the action plans that we created. I hope to empower people and help them raise their voices. I want them to engage in reconstruction on their own.

From Our Officer in Charge

Hajime Tsuboi
Central America and the Caribbean Division, Latin America and the Caribbean Department

Even before the earthquake, Haiti experienced political unrest for many years and its poor governance had become a major issue. As the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission set up in the wake of the earthquake showed, to rebuild Haiti, the international community and the Haitian government need to work together based on a mid- to long-term perspective. Japan has continued to assist Haiti as a member of the international community ever since the disaster. Aside from JICA, a great many organizations, including UN peacekeeping operations, NGOs, and others continue to assist Haiti. There is a lot of support for Haiti in Japan. This support comes from both local governments such as Hyogo Prefecture as well as individuals and groups. We will continue to offer cooperation and assistance, utilizing our respective strengths to help Haiti recover and rebuild as quickly as possible.



A public water hydrant established by the Project. From October 2010, cholera infections increased in Haiti, causing a large number of deaths. Efforts continue to deliver safe and clean water to the people of Haiti.