

Case 6

Sharing Sustainable Agricultural Methods between “the Sister Countries of Española Island” in the Caribbean

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1. Introduction

The project of Technical Training to technicians in the Agricultural Production System in the mountainous areas of the Republic of Haiti aims to contribute to an increase in the production of food crops by farmers in the Central Province of Haiti by way of advancing the technical farm skills of agricultural extension officers. The project, started in October 2010, runs until October of 2013.

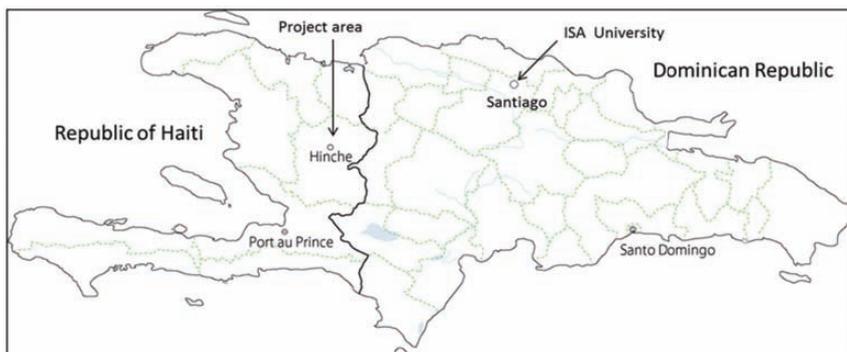
Serving as a pivotal country, the Dominican Republic, through the Ministry of Agriculture and ISA University, are extending support to Haiti to improve the farming skills of Haiti. The main Haitian participants are the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Rural Development of Republic of Haiti (MARNDR). NGOs working in Haiti are also benefitting from the project. JICA plays the role of catalyst in the project activities.

Given the absorptive capacity of Haiti, the project is being implemented on a modest scale, comprising training programs in the Dominican Republic, followed by field visits to Haiti by the Dominican Republic’s and Japanese counterparts after the participants return home. So far, results are encouraging: though output is rather limited, the project has made available such agricultural techniques as homemade composts and fertilizers, drip irrigation systems using readily available materials such as plastic bottles, and rafting techniques using coating materials easily available to Haitian agricultural workers. The enthusiasm of Haitian members is high, and they are starting to work proactively. The next section contains an overview of the countries involved, project background information and mentions of achievements. Section 2 attempts to analyze the case from the perspective of capacity development, or scaling up. And the final section provides conclusions.

2. Case Overview

2-1 Development Challenges confronting the Beneficiary Country and the Context

Figure 1. Location of Project Area



Source: Prepared by the author

(1) Republic of Haiti

Haiti is an island nation located in the Caribbean Sea. After Columbus came to the island in 1492 and claimed it for the Spanish crown, in subsequent years France and Spain fought for supremacy over the island that the Spanish named *La isla La Española* (Española Island). In 1697, a third of the west side of the island became French territory (now Haiti); and the east side, Spanish territory (now the Dominican Republic). With the revolt by the African slaves in 1804, Haiti became independent from France. This independence was the first of its kind in Latin America, the second in the Americas, and it created the world's first black republic nation. Since independence, however, the country's domestic political turmoil has continued to this day and the economy has persistently been in a stagnant state. Major developed countries had not provided much in the way of direct support; most support for Haiti is from domestic and foreign NGOs.¹ However, in 2006, the coming into power of the Alexis Administration brought about a policy shift in the international community leading to their support in the development of Haiti. Finally, the situation in Haiti began to stabilize.

Haiti created and submitted the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (GPRSP) in 2007, and the International Conference toward a New Future in Haiti was held in 2009. The Japanese Government

¹ Hearing from the (then) Deputy Director of the JICA Dominican Republic Office

expressed support in their seat (from 2009 to 2011 providing \$50 million USD out of the \$324 million USD total pledges).

Food and agriculture were raised as the two key areas of the GPRSP, while expansion of agricultural production, the promotion of sustainable agriculture, and the development of market infrastructure have been serious challenges. In January 2010, as the country worked on reconstruction based on the GPRSP, a major earthquake (magnitude 7.0) struck claiming the lives of over 310,000 people.² Immediately afterward, the government launched the Action Plan for National Recovery and Development of Haiti (HAC) with the support of donor countries, following the GPRSP and choosing agriculture as one of the four major priority industries. The main donors in the agricultural sector are Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the United States of America, Canada, and the World Bank.

(2) Dominican Republic

The Dominican Republic occupies the eastern half of Española Island. Although they were independent from France as a part of Haiti in 1804, they resented being under Haitian rule, and won independence from Haiti in 1845. Thereafter, both Haiti and the Dominican Republic followed a similar historical transition to civilian rule³: military occupation by the United States followed by a dictatorship. However, the Dominican Republic achieved phenomenal economic development in contrast to its neighbor. The Gross National Income (GNI) of the two countries was almost the same in 1960, but the Dominican Republic's rate of economic growth from 1960-2010 averaged 5% and the country rose in rank to first place⁴ in the Latin American region, with a GNI per capita of \$5,240 USD in 2011⁵. In contrast, the 1% average economic growth rate in Haiti was the lowest⁶ in Latin America, with a GNI per capita of \$700 USD in 2011⁷. The Dominican Republic implemented organizational reform and decided to develop a long-term national development

² Action Plan for National Recovery and Development of Haiti

³ Haiti, Republica Dominicana: Más que la suma de las partes Un Estudio Sobre las Relaciones Económicas Bilaterales, P3

⁴ Haiti, Republica Dominicana: Más que la suma de las partes Un Estudio Sobre las Relaciones Económicas Bilaterales, P3

⁵ World Development Indicator

⁶ Haiti, Republica Dominicana: Más que la suma de las partes Un Estudio Sobre las Relaciones Económicas Bilaterales, P3

⁷ World Development Indicator

strategy (Estrategía Nacional de Desarrollo 2010-2030 un Viaje de Transformación hacia un País Mejor), which aims to modernize the nation for the first time. As one example, the Ministry of Economy Planning and Development (Ministerio de Economía, Planificación y Desarrollo :MEPyD) was established (2006) to serve as an organization for establishing and implementing economic policy and coordinating international cooperation. JICA dispatched an expert to help build the capacity of the MEPyD for the Dominican Republic to be an effective pivotal country.

(3) Sister countries in a state of mutual distrust

Historically, despite some of the long-standing problems and delicate mutual public sentiments between them,⁸ the Dominican Republic and Haiti have been mutually dependent, one extending a helping hand to the other from time to time, with the Dominican Republic working more actively to support Haiti. In 2004, when Haitian President Aristide was exiled, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) moved in as a peacekeeping force. Since then, the Dominican Republic has positively supported the stabilization of Haiti. Following the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, an emergency donor meeting was held in the neighboring Dominican Republic, and since then, the Republic has hosted a base for the transport of emergency relief supplies to Haiti.

2-2 Background of the Project and Project Details

(1) Background of triangular cooperation

Responding to a request by the Japanese government, JICA dispatched a preliminary mission to the Dominican Republic and Haiti in 2009. As a result of the dialogs, JICA implemented what it terms “triangular training,” (“third-country training”) in the area of agriculture. It was decided that the Dominican Republic will be the pivotal-country offering the training. GPRSP and HAC pointed out that, as the agricultural sector of Haiti required funds, human resources, technology and infrastructure, a comprehensive package of countermeasures was needed. JICA had a long history of implementing support in the area of agriculture in the Dominican Republic and the Dominican Republic was familiar with JICA’s modes of operation and with Japan’s agricultural technologies.

⁸ They include, for example, illegal logging along the border and illegal immigration from Haiti to the Dominican Republic

The Dominican Republic designated ISA University as the institution responsible for the cooperation.

Prior to this, some joint preparations for the support of Haiti were made by the Dominican Republic and Japan (JICA), which helped the actual project formulation process. In the early 2000s, when Haiti’s political situation was unstable, the JICA Dominican Republic Office conducted a survey in Haiti that revealed the country’s formidable needs.⁹ Assuming the Dominican Republic’s potential as a future partner in supporting Haiti, the JICA office proposed a joint third-country training¹⁰ as a trial, which was subsequently completed.

The Dominican Republic has also received a number of benefits by taking part in aid for Haiti; it was believed that the aid would help the two sister countries alleviate thorny problems between them, such as illegal immigration from Haiti, illegal logging along the border, and poverty along the border, among others. Illegal logging had a negative impact for both countries for which tourism is important. Border regions in the Dominican Republic are poverty stricken areas where numerous Haitians have settled, and with dysfunctional government control, public disorder was rampant.¹¹ For the Dominican Republic government, Haiti is the only neighboring country that bisects the island. With the geographical proximity and the close tie between the two countries,¹² the Republic has been proactively engaged in the formulation process of this triangular cooperation program.

(2) Triangular cooperation initiatives

The triangular cooperation comprised training programs for agricultural extension officers and NGO field workers. The trainees were then

⁹ Hearing from the (then) Deputy Director of the JICA Dominican Republic Office

¹⁰ “Improved diagnostic imaging technology training in Central America and the Caribbean region” 2005-2010

¹¹ According to the Constitution of the Dominican Republic (2010), the condition to acquire nationality was changed from birthright (*jus soli*) to lineage (*jus sanguinis*). Thus, the children of illegal Haitian immigrants now can acquire neither Haiti nor Dominican Republic nationality. This has developed into an international human rights issue. Both countries have problems that they need to tackle together. Illegal immigrants are currently estimated between 900,000 to 1.5 million people, which are putting pressure on the population of the Dominican Republic (9.93 million people, 2010). Most workers on sugarcane plantations and construction sites and in paddy fields are Haitian, which shows how dependent the Dominican Republic is on these workers.

¹² Feedback from the (then) Deputy Director of the JICA Dominican Republic Office

expected to transfer the technology to farmers. Some 15 participants were invited to the University of Agriculture in the Dominican Republic to attend a one-month training program whose focus was advanced agricultural technology (soil conservation, irrigation, and cultivation techniques for vegetables, among others).¹³ The training institution was part of ISA University, which had accepted many Haitian students in the past. The professors in ISA University were training-program lecturers. As resources for the training program, organizations who had worked with JICA in the past also participated, such as the Secretary of Agriculture (SEA) and the Dominican Institute of Investigations of Agriculture, Livestock and Forest (IDIAF). An expert was dispatched from JICA. The textbook was prepared in the French-based Creole language spoken by Haitians for the convenience of the participants.¹⁴ The training program consisted of lectures and practical training in the field. The program contents included Española Island's hydrology, soil conservation in the mountain slope, irrigation, vegetable cultivation, use of organic fertilizer, and producing composts. Upon completion of training, participants are expected to carry out an action plan in their working field. The training will be held four times during the period of 2010 to 2013.

As a follow up to the training, lecturers and the JICA expert made field visits to Haiti to support the trained participants.

On-site advisory support in Haiti by the professionals in the PROAMOH project

The project demonstrated that off-the-job training, if accompanied by the appropriate follow-up, leads to positive results. For example, how to improve the quality of soil to increase the production of agricultural crops was one of the training subjects. Having learned this skill, some of former trainees, after returning home, started to manufacture compost fertilizers. One former trainee wrongly used low-grade soil containing sand not suited to composting. Seeing the fruitless effort, the ISA University lecturer and the expert on the field visit suggested using leaf mold instead, because leaf mold promotes the fermentation of the compost, which yields a better result.

¹³ "Cholera Prevention" was added later.

¹⁴ The native language of Haiti is Haiti creole, a combination of French and the languages of West Africa spoken by the slaves brought to Haiti.

Figure 2. Practice of Production of Compost in the Dominican Republic



Source: Go Kimura

2-3 Achievements through Efforts and Challenges

Though the program is still ongoing, several encouraging achievements have been reported. For instance, the former trainees started to experimentally introduce some of the techniques they learned upon returning home. Another positive sign is the gradual self-help scale-up process after the program. Having developed a strong sense of unity among themselves during the training, the ex-participants, as a team, voluntarily organized a workshop a few months after the training, for the benefit of extension officers and those workers who did not have a chance to participate in the training in the Dominican Republic, with the financial support of the Haitian Ministry of Agriculture as well as the JICA Haiti Field Office. These self-help initiatives have been enhanced by the informal network and the rapport created among participants during the training.

The possibility of further positive results is also likely. Trained officers and workers asked JICA to provide additional training at the advanced level, which was not covered in the original plan, and JICA accepted

their request. The advanced training was completed in November of 2012. Farmers are adopting the technology passed on by the extension officers and the use of contour cultivation¹⁵ and the production of compost are already spreading.

The remaining challenge is the further strengthening and refining of the efforts to facilitate the building of a network among the training participants by which they liaise with other existing networks.

3. Case Analysis

3-1 Success Factors

Factors supporting these developments, as described above, are stakeholder's ownership and various drivers of change.

(1) Stakeholder ownership

Training participants from Haiti demonstrated a strong motivation to learn from the training because they knew that the knowledge they acquired would be directly linked to their success on the job. During the program, they tackled the tasks required of them with great enthusiasm, and successfully completed challenging assignments. The Dominican Republic's professors also developed a deep commitment to the project in ensuring the quality of the program. It has been reported that the Japanese expert had to lead the process of formulation and execution at certain times in the initial stages of the project. As the project progressed, however, the Dominican Republic's counterparts started to increasingly play the lead role in the program. For instance, a Dominican Republic instructor took the initiative to add the subject of cholera prevention¹⁶ to the training curriculum, which was highly relevant to the health of the rural population in Haiti.

(2) Change drivers

Several drivers facilitated the progress of the project.

- ✓ **Policy environment:** The general policy guideline provided by GPRSP and HAC, clearly stating that agriculture should be revived

¹⁵ The farming method which recommends creation of a furrow along the contour of the slope to prevent the deletion of the topsoil by rainwater.

¹⁶ After the earthquake, in October 2010, cholera broke out. In Haiti, cholera had not occurred for over 100 years. After the earthquake, health conditions deteriorated to the point where believed that they caused cholera outbreak. Another belief is that the peacekeeping force brought the bacteria to Haiti. According to the Haitian Ministry of Health approximately 580,000 people were affected and approximately 7,500 died (as of July 22, 2012).

as one of the most important industries, has ensured the policy relevance of this triangular program.

- ✓ **The role of JICA Expert:** The expert made a conscious effort to build an equal partnership with the Dominican lecturers with mutual learning. In addition, the expert strategically identified key persons at ISA University who could help improve the training contents and cope with the various operational problems. To make sure all participants felt at home in class, the expert helped create an atmosphere in which all the counterparts could closely work on the preparation and execution of the program as a team. The expert also ensured the provision of complementary and supportive advice on the activities of the participants.
- ✓ **The engagement of key persons at the host organization, the ISA University:** The expert strategically engages key persons of the ISA University including the former Vice-Chancellor Ing. Cesar E. Cruz, and Dean Dr. Rafael Amable Vásquez. The commitment by these key persons promoted the project’s visibility and presence on campus.
- ✓ **The presence of highly motivated instructors (ISA University and other organizations):** Working closely with the JICA expert, lecturers have also developed a sense of ownership and started to eagerly contribute to the training programs. Among the lecturers from outside the university, some had participated in JICA training in Japan, which added to their sense of belongingness to the project. They worked as equal partners with the JICA expert. It is noteworthy that those who visited Haiti started to have a strong motivation, witnessing the country’s situation on the ground and listening to the voices of local Haitians.
- ✓ **Network:** The training participants who returned to Haiti continued to exchange information among them. It was there that they hit upon the idea of holding additional seminars. Many of the trained officers and workers share workplaces in Haiti and, hence, have many opportunities to meet to maintain their network. At these seminars, new information is shared and new ideas are born. When the trained officers and workers resume working back home, they usually do not have someone to consult, this gap was filled partly by fellow trainees.
- ✓ **Strategic selection of trainees:** One of the key factors of a successful training program is that it strategically recruits the right kind of participants. To this end, pre-training seminars were

organized in Haiti by the Haitian Ministry of Agriculture, Dominican Republic officials (Ministry of Agriculture and ISA University) with the attendance of the JICA expert. Also invited to these seminars were Haitian professionals who had attended earlier training programs and who could adequately advise prospective seminar participants. This pre-training process engaging ex-trainees helped facilitate the smooth induction of trainees into the program.

- ✓ **Follow Up:** This program organized in the Dominican Republic has been followed up by an advisory and support mission to the field of ex-trainees in Haiti. The advisory team consisted of the Dominican Republic's Ministry of Agriculture and ISA University, the Haitian Ministry of Agriculture, and the JICA expert. This follow up is a great opportunity for ex-trainees to seek advice, gather together, and get feedback on their activities. They can share experiences, challenges and successes and further discuss and reflect on the pertinent issues that need special attention. This practice helps generate new ideas.

(3) Mechanisms for continuous mutual learning and joint solution discovery

Many efforts are made to ensure that the process of mutual and continuous learning takes place. They included:

- ✓ **Small meeting opportunities:** The lecturers and the JICA expert have small meetings periodically between individual training sessions (classes) to determine what to add to or change in the training contents, or how to improve the implementation system as a whole. They are well-aware that such timely adjustment even during the course will improve the effectiveness of the program.
- ✓ **Feedback mechanism for continuous program improvement:** At the end of the training, a carefully prepared questionnaire is passed out to trainees asking them to evaluate the quality of contents and the organization of the training. They also hold a dedicated participatory workshop at the end to directly hear the assessment of the program quality by participants. The information collected at the workshops is sent to the appropriate organizations and the project organizers for subsequent action (such as a change of lecturers, or an addition to courses).
- ✓ **Adequate follow-up strategy:** The practice of follow up mentioned above was not only beneficial to former participants but also to the program organizers. The visits enabled the program organizers to

grasp the latest conditions of the local area in Haiti such as the farm’s agricultural and economic conditions. Through the field visits, the project could see the reality in the field and the information thus collected was fed into the planning process for the subsequent training program.

3-2 Roles of External Actors and Approach toward CD Assistance

Now we look at the role of external actors in a project aimed at improving agricultural techniques in Haiti.

The role of the JICA expert in the project can be described as both that of a facilitator for all project members and that of a complementary coordinator for key project activities. As touched on above, the project made numerous efforts to meet the needs in Haiti, including the follow-up actions in Haiti, the preparation of textbooks in Creole which is the Haitian local language, and joint selection of trainees. These efforts have further improved the quality of the project and made possible the smooth collaboration among the project members with the assistance of the JICA expert.

The JICA expert and ISA University counterpart nurtured an equal partnership, jointly overseeing training through continuous and close mutual exchanges involving the program management and content. Through such close exchanges as the equal partner, the members from ISA University started to further strengthen their sense of commitment to the program. They became increasingly eager to be involved in the management of the training.

3-3 Facilitating Mutual Learning and Collaboration

Because many of the trainees use Haiti Creole as their common language, the project prepared Creole text materials from materials written by training lecturers in Spanish. These materials incorporated numerous examples explaining the new techniques discussed in training, such as drip irrigation; therefore, the materials can be used as tools for dissemination.

As explained earlier, the project’s careful selection of training participants was a key factor in ensuring effective learning. Taking advantage of the recruitment training seminars organized in Haiti, applicants participated in a question and answer session with the ex-

trainees. Thanks to information provided by the ex-trainees, the project received hardly any complaints later on. As for the selection of the trainees, priority was given to individuals who demonstrated a strong potential. As for candidates from NGOs, the project made it a rule to accept applications both from the local and the international NGOs.

As mentioned above, a number of small opportunities or “Ba” for networking were consciously organized throughout the program as well as in the follow-up phase. At the initial stage, particular care was taken to ensure rapport building among the participants. This fostered a sense of the participants being a team during the one-month training. The program organized a wrap-up workshop which offered the opportunity for all the participants to share and mutually discuss the action plan that each participant prepared for the follow-up activities upon his/her return to Haiti. With the help of these program designs, most trainees have been continuing to exchange information and lessons learned through practice even after their return to their fields in Haiti.

4. Conclusion

Though the project we have examined is one with a modest input and a short time frame and while it is still too early to make a definitive evaluation, several encouraging signs are evident. Most typical is the continued enthusiasm and commitment to the project demonstrated by the Haitian workers, despite their harsh working environment. The project has also produced tangible outcomes, though, given the conditions the Haitian farmers face, obviously much remains to be done. Among the points examined in the case analysis above, three conditions seem to have been of utmost importance in contributing to the thus-far satisfactory trajectory of the project.

First, so long as the project is designed to help impact or generate the kind of knowledge and skills that are directly linked to the needs of the beneficiaries, it is likely to succeed.

Second, if practitioners who share similar problems or missions meet and foster a relationship of trust, and if they are given adequate facilitation and opportunities, they will continue to build a network of learning. New and innovative ideas can be born when information and experiences are exchanged through this network. The information exchanged at these meetings will then help trainees when they return to

their workplace. Bonded by this network, the members maintained contact; thus, the atmosphere remains friendly. The time and space the trainees used to exchange and share information became “Ba”, and the idea of holding a seminar for the extension officers that could not take part in the training was born.

Third, as stated above, such knowledge creation cannot happen by chance; it must be supported by careful and continuous efforts of coordination and facilitation.

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