

“The ramped, vegetated and healthy slopes enable us to grow our food and protect our village from landslides and flooding”

In 2020, a community assessment conducted by the Haitian Red Cross together with community members identified that families in food insecure situations are usually using detrimental and irreversible coping mechanisms. The reversible coping mechanisms included selling their stock of seeds and livestock in the market, while the non-easily reversible ones involved cutting trees to produce charcoal for sale. The charcoal production has become a key livelihood source to compensate for the decrease in income from agriculture in the whole country and specially in the South Region that records 41 percent of the total charcoal supplied to the capita¹.

However, the local communities and farmers are aware of the negative effects and degradation of their environment and the consequences of their unsustainable livelihood practices. More specifically, farmers are aware of the loss of soil fertility, which results in lower quality and quantity harvests and the drying of water sources. Some community members welcome the project approach with a very high level of interest and are eagerly engaged in restoring degraded ecosystems to enhance community resilience.

Odes Eliassaint is a farmer who has lived for more than 30 years in Tiburon, the very last rural municipality located at the Southwest tip of Haiti. Odes and his family live in a mountainous landscape named Galette, 3 hours' walk from the coastal area and municipality centre. Odes is 48 years old. He has a small woodlot along with a little house on the slope of Galette, where he lives with 5 members of his family (himself, his wife, an elderly person to take care of, and his two children). The family primarily depends on agriculture for their livelihood. Rain-fed agriculture has been traditionally

practiced following a rotation technique with slash-and-burn techniques for land preparation. The second source of income comes from his three goats, which he would sell in case of emergencies. The third source of income is charcoal production during the dry season to earn some money to pay for the school tuitions of his children, debts, and buying essentials.



The Red Cross has made my family's agriculture practice sustainable, this year I did not lose crops during the cyclone season. Soil conservation has helped me harvest three- or four-times more beans' than ever before. I am really happy because my family and I will not have to be hungry; we will be able to eat the whole season and save some seeds for the next harvest

- Odes Eliassaint, Rain crops farmer from Galette village, Tiburon, South Haiti



Odes Eliassaint is using his donkey to transport seedlings from the community nursery to be planted on his land. Photo Credit: Joesmy Louis. Haitian Red Cross /Netherlands Red Cross.

1. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/697221548446232632/pdf/-134058CharcoalHaitiWeb.pdf>

Like Odes, there are other families in his village who depend on rain-fed agriculture. Harvest sold at markets serves as a primary source of income for families seeking to pay school tuition fees, household necessities, and for other basic needs. Unfortunately, the need to solely depend on harvests from beans and maize does not serve as a sufficient means of livelihood. There is a clear need for income diversification to support a sustainable livelihood. Like Odes, other families seek an alternative source of income by raising cows and goats to be sold later in the market for meat or resorting to producing charcoal.

Land degradation is caused by two main forces: first, the impact of unsustainable practices through human-induced large-scale deforestation to cover the needs of an overpopulated society. Second, climate change exacerbates natural phenomena which increases the frequency and intensity of hazards (hurricane season, seasonality of rain-dry periods).

Galette village, like many rural villages in Haiti, has been impacted by low yields from harvests and amplified food insecurity. Odes is one of many good examples of closely engaged farmers from Galette Village who have understood the importance of the Ecosystem-based Disaster Risk Reduction (Eco-DRR) approach. Odes has implemented the right agriculture techniques on his own land while sharing the learnings in his own community. His most notable accomplishment is the reduction of landslides on his agricultural land during the rainy season. This is primarily due to his implementation of live barriers and slope terraces.

"I am really happy. The project helped me because earlier, the soil got washed to the sea" - Odes

The Haitian Red Cross, supported by the Netherlands Red Cross, aims to build long-term resilient communities using an integrated community-driven approach to mobilize community groups and local authorities. Traditional practices such as collective work (called kombit in Creole Language) are further utilized for maintaining solidarity bonds and community relations. These factors are key for developing ecosystem restoration work, enhancing agriculture techniques, and increasing/diversifying livelihood sources by addressing food insecure households' current needs. This was done by enhancing their coping mechanisms to withstand shocks. Overall, the whole community, including youth, will gain higher capacities to be less dependent on external support for future crises.

The project has trained Community-based Organisations (CBOs) including farmer groups from the local communities. Within these farmer groups, you have members like Odes who are able to showcase and implement sustainable agricultural practices within the community. These sustainable agricultural practices include soil conservation techniques in slope terrain, the establishment and management of nurseries, collection, and reproduction of seeds in seedling nurseries, planting live barriers in slopes, improved bean planting techniques, and harvest management. As a result of the project's technical support and seeds distribution, Odes has tripled his yield of black beans and maize on his farmland. Odes is a clear example of how transforming and discontinuing practices like slash-and-burn to practices like spacing between plants and seed treatment can result in a greater harvest with less investment. Odes has been able to store part of the harvested beans for the next planting season and for food consumption while still being able to buy some cattle (few heads) and pay for school fee of his two children, instead of selling everything in the market.

“ ***I will continue implementing the Eco-DRR approach and I would like others to continue as well*** - Odes Eliassaint, Rain crops farmer from Galette village, Tiburon, South Haiti ”



Community-based Organisation members are working on preparing a tree nursery. Photo Credit: Joesmy Louis. Haitian Red Cross/Netherlands Red Cross.



Cassia seedlings are growing in the community nursery that will be planted later on the farmer lands. Photo Credit: Joesmy Louis. Haitian Red Cross/Netherlands Red Cross.



PARTNERS FOR RESILIENCE

