

# Restoration Cases Flagship Collection

## Case #17: Reforesting watersheds through comprehensive development in Southern Haiti



*Women carrying seedlings from nursery to plant on steep hillsides. Photo credit: Michael Anello*

Author: Robin Chazdon, Forestoration International

Contributors: James Rhoads, Michael Anello, Martha Johnson, Haiti Reforestation Partnership;  
Sarah Payne, NASA Develop Program

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## In brief

### Overview

For the past 32 years, The Haiti Reforestation Partnership, together with the Comprehensive Development Program (CODEP), has worked to implement reforestation, soil recovery, and community development in the Cormier Watershed and adjacent areas in Léogâne County in Southern Haiti. CODEP began operations in 1991 as a loose consortium of small, multi-household groups led by 15 local leaders. CODEP has planted approximately 16 million trees, with a survival rate of 81%, despite drought, feral goats, and disease. Forty-one nurseries produce 500,000 seedlings annually for planting in local watersheds on CODEP members' land holdings. Reforestation has stabilized soils, improved water flows in local springs, and improved livelihoods and food security for local communities. Reforested areas and agroforests supply diverse products for local use and livelihoods, from peanuts to charcoal.

### Exemplary practices

Although many reforestation projects in Haiti have failed, CODEP succeeded. Key to their success was integration of strong technical support with community development and support of local leaders. Other successful practices include adaptation of informal land and tree tenure systems and capacity development of local communities in appropriate techniques and practices. CODEP practices enriched social, human, and community capital while providing modest salaries and other economic incentives for members. For every tree harvested, 4–5 trees are newly planted nearby. CODEP founded a local school and is training youth in reforestation practices. A mentorship program is underway to ensure a new generation of capable, motivated, and highly trained youth can sustain leadership and broad community participation long into the future.

### Key lessons learned

- ◇ *Building local technical capacity and trust develops leadership skills and community capital across all age groups.*
- ◇ *Women make effective leaders and essential workers on reforestation teams.*
- ◇ *Restoring watersheds is a social enterprise and requires leadership from a local organization that supports the values, cultural traditions, and informal relationships that maintain social equity.*



- ◇ *A small and steady subsidy for work can go a long way to build long-term commitment and engagement of community members and reduce dependency on external funding.*
- ◇ *Livelihoods of those who most depend on forests are a crucial leverage point for reducing deforestation and increasing reforestation.*