

At the beginning of this summer I spent five weeks in Haiti working with Dr. McGrath, Linnea Carver, and Elizabeth Segal on a reforestation program known as Zamni Café (Partners in Coffee). Dr. McGrath created Zamni Café to supply a sustainable program that would reforest parts of Haiti. Haiti's landscape lacks trees because the forests have been converted to farmland and the trees have been cut down for short-term profit. This program provides Haitian farmers with coffee seeds and other tree seeds, both of which will produce fruit at maturity. These trees will give the farmers a sustainable income via the selling of coffee beans and carbon sequestration. In turn, this will prevent the farmers from cutting down trees.

Since this project is in the beginning stages, multiple tasks needed to be completed before the program could run at full capacity. The three main tasks that I focused on were constructing and maintaining the nursery where the coffee and tree seedlings will grow, collecting baseline data for Plan Vivo (the carbon sequestration program that Zamni Café is working with), and educating the farmers.

Before I came to Haiti, I knew very little about nurseries. Within the first week I worked with the local farmers and helped expand the nursery. Once we finished adding onto the nursery, we went straight into planting coffee, mango, and other tree seeds. In order for me to be of any help, I needed to learn how to maintain a nursery. In my free time I researched how to successfully grow seedlings, such as coffee, and what precautions would be needed to keep the seedlings as healthy as possible. For example, a main issue of growing coffee is pest infestation. I researched how to prevent this particular problem and how to create an all-natural pesticide, and is now being used on the seedlings in the nursery. I not only retained

knowledge of how to build and maintain a nursery, but I also developed the skills of how to use that knowledge in field scenarios.

As said earlier, one of the main tasks was to collect data for Plan Vivo, the carbon sequestration program that will help provide a steady income for the farmers. Plan Vivo required baseline carbon stock, which is the amount of carbon already stored in the land, for each farmer's property and also the state at which the farmer is in economically. When I went to interview farmers, I asked them to point out the trees on their land. I found out how big each tree was and the age of the tree. Plan Vivo will use this information to find the baseline carbon stock. During the interviews, I found out the farmers annual income and what crops they were growing. This data was collected to compare to the data that will be collected in the future to see if the program is improving the overall livelihood of the farmers. These interviews taught me how to deal with situations that are unfamiliar to me. With the help of Haitian coworkers, I learned how to interact with Haitian farmers and ask them personal questions in a polite manner.

The third task that I had to complete was successfully educating the farmers about the program they were joining. This task was harder than I thought. These farmers are very intelligent people, but they did not receive the same education as we received. So one of the main issues was educating them about what they are getting themselves into, but in a way that they would understand and in creole. During my first interview, I was working with a Haitian coworker. One of the questions that we ask during our interview process, which I ignorantly thought to be an easy question, was on the lines of "Do you want to sell carbon?" The farmer

replied with another question, “What is carbon?” The question is important for the interviewing process, because it makes sure the farmers know what they are getting into and that it is a program they want to participate in. It is essential for us to educate the farmers so that they know exactly what they are joining, and therefore are willing to follow through with the program.

Throughout the five weeks I learned multiple things that will stick with me and help me in future job experiences. I learned how to interact and communicate with a supervisor, Dr. McGrath, both in person and via Internet. I now feel comfortable using knowledge I gathered from research for use in the field and explaining it to others that I am working with. I feel that having to speak a different language while trying to complete certain goals helped me realize that I can handle unfamiliar situation in a productive manner.

A definite low point during the five weeks I was in Haiti was the inescapable poverty. It is something that I almost got use to because it was everywhere, but once and a while I would think about it and become a little sad. My sadness disappeared when I saw how happy the Haitian people were. Even though they were in some of the worst conditions, they still lived a happy life. One family in particular welcomed me in. I was able to spend time at their home. They always offered me food and drink. They tried to make me feel at home. I did. I will never forget that family and the way that they let me into their lives like I was a part of their family. So even though I was in a very poverty-stricken area I did not feel that way, and it is due to the personalities of the Haitians. The Haitians have very rich and happy souls that mask the almost unlivable environment.

This internship helped define my career goals. I have always wanted to become a doctor so that I could help people out daily. This internship reiterated that I do want to help people that are in need. This internship introduced me to another side of the health of a person, which is the health of the environment they live in. If someone lives in a poor environment, doctors can only do so much to help heal them. The environment needs to be healed also before the humans living in that area can be fully healed. If I ever become a doctor I hope to remember the connection between the health of the land and the health of the people living off of the land, because that is a vital connection for doctors to know.