

OISCA in North and Central American countries

HONDURAS

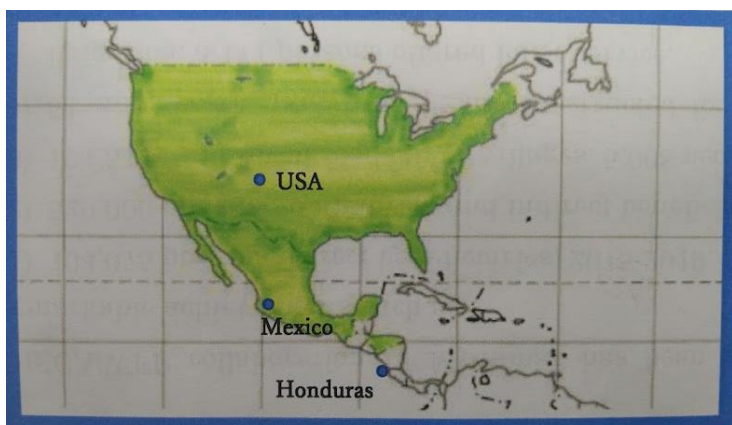
November 1st 2011 became a historic day for those who know of where Honduras is. Why? OISCA-initiated Children's Forest Program (CFP) germinated on this day in this Central American country with the population of 9.59 million.

Back in 2009, Mr. Marcia Yumar Fernando Roman was at the OISCA training center in Japan as one of the OISCA/JICA agriculture course trainees. While at the center, he learned about CFP and developed in his mind an idea to launch it in his *furusato* (home land) , Honduras.

On November 1st 2011, finally, he was able to make his dream came true, namely, CFP tree planting began at one of the elementary schools of his *furusato*, Atlantida Department (Province). Planting trees was not common in his *furusato*, for most people were

thinking that trees grow themselves in the absence of human hands. In fact, ever since 1980 when OISCA's LOVE GREEN movement was launched, OISCA has learned through field experiences that people in tropical and semi-tropical regions as a whole think like those in Honduras. Marcia began CFP by convincing school teachers and parents on the importance of artificially planting trees. His challenge was not so easy at the beginning, but ultimately, he was able to get a positive breakthrough.

Then, in order to gain children's interest in environment, he first organized games at school garden and then insisting the children to plant trees. Children enjoyed planting trees and at last, Children's Forest Program (CFP) set a root. Indeed, November 1st 2011 was a historic day. Since then, CFP has been expanding in this central American country. The trees planted on Nov. 1st 2011 grew twice as tall as children's height in two years. Children were not only happy but also excited as the photo on page 3 indicates. By means of taking care of trees and also vegetables, children are learning about the importance to live in harmony with nature and natural environment in Honduras. Marcia surely deserves a big credit.



MEXICO

OISCA⁺-International's association with Mexico began in 1995 with the Children's Forest Program (CFP) just like in Honduras. 10 years later in 2005, OISCA national chapter in this country emerged with the initiative of Mr. Jose Martin Atela Echevarria whose leadership is actively going through to 2021.

CFP opened a door for OISCA in Mexico

When a young Japanese was undergoing a field training in the Philippines as an OISCA trainee sometime in early 1990's, he encountered with Children Forest Program (CFP) that got his interest. Later, he joined WFP (World Food Programme of the United Nations) and assigned to Mexico. As one of his field activities, he launched a program to encourage school children to plant trees in Queretaro State. It turned out to be a CFP. Unexpectedly children enjoyed participating in planting trees without realizing themselves at the beginning that their actions were leading to conserving environment around them. For them, planting trees might be an eye-opening experience.

Birth of OISCA Mexico

CFP activities caught the attention of Jose Martin. Then, he came to know this program was originated by a Japan-based NGO called OISCA-International. What is OISCA?, he asked his Israeli instructor of agriculture if he would know something about this NGO. The Israeli instructor Mr. Raanan Katzir was the Secretary-General of OISCA Israel. What a great coincidence and surprise! Katzir advised Jose Martin to take an initiative to give a birth to OISCA in his homeland and thereafter OISCA national chapter was born in Mexico in 2005 as the first national chapter in North American continent.

4 girls as active agents

Jose Martin set up a plan to guide the people make tree planting a day-to-day work for them with a message "gratitude to the nature". Step by step, tree planting expanded from schools to communities in Puebla State where houses OISCA Mexico's key activity center. In the meantime, OISCA Mexico sent 4 young girls to Japan, one each a year, to attend practical agricultural skill training at OISCA training centers. Having come back to home land (*furusato*), they became active agents of OISCA Mexico to promote such activities as CFP tree planting activities, organic poultry, and simple hydroponic farming to produce broad leaf vegetables by local people themselves.

Innovation while keeping tradition alive

At the same time, traditional culture to live in harmony with soil, that the ancestors used to follow, has begun to be accepted by local people, with innovative means, such as hydroponic farming. The hydroponic farming that OISCA Mexico advocates is very simple, therefore, easily acceptable by people and even by children. It is an innovative practice by itself, being a modification of Israeli technology of drip irrigation system with minimum utilization of available water resources. This idea is one of the useful skill transfers from OISCA Israel to OISCA Mexico. The traditional basic philosophy in Puebla State "development is the action to protect home community and to keep it alive" is being transferred to the emerging generations thanks to Children's Forest Program (CFP). Indeed, it is very much in common with OISCA's basic philosophy – Agriculture, the great education of mankind (ref: Bulletin Board No.122). OISCA Mexico's hydroponic farming project is helping less privileged people to get access to fresh broad leaf vegetables.

Honduras



School children are learning on trees from Fernando Roman.



School children are experiencing passing through broad leaf trees



In 2 years, a tree has grown like this.

A child is excited



School children are learning about vegetables, too.



This tree planted in 2011 has grown like this in 2014

Mexico



Training-graduates-in-Japan 4 girls are key workers of OISCA Mexico.



Children's Forest Program tree planting



Boys with cactus seedlings in their hands



A little girl with vegetable in her hands. Behind her is broad leaf vegetables growing through hydroponic system



A cactus is believed to store pure water more than 5,000 liters



OISCA USA members oath taking led by OISCA-International President on August 2nd, 2012



OISCA-International President, August 2nd, 2011



Ambassador of Japan to UN at the inaugural ceremony of OISCA USA on August 2nd, 2012.



The first Children's Forest Program tree planting in U.S.A. at John F. Kennedy Elementary School, Raritan, New Jersey, in April, 2013



Well grown *sakura* tree at one of the elementary schools. A lady in the center is its principal.

Production of broad leaf vegetable by people themselves is an innovative, too. As in 2021, 200 families are practicing this farming method. A photo on page 4 shows a little girl holding in her hands a stick-like vegetable, behind her, broad leaf vegetable is growing. For the people living in arid and semi-arid area, broad leaf vegetable is like a gold.

Another photo on page 4 is also a project site. Two boys are holding cactus seedlings. Cactus are growing as if it is a forest. For the people living in cactus forest area, fresh broad leaf vegetable has been a dream. Marginal scale yet in 2021, OISCA Mexico has been supporting local people to eat broad leaf vegetables.

Eco tourism

San Martin del Valle is included in OISCA Mexico activity areas. This Valle is a part of Tehuacan-Cuicatlan Valley, that was registered in 2018 as a Mixed Culture and Natural Heritage by UNESCO. This heritage site is in Puebla State, the home of OISCA Mexico activities. OISCA Mexico has launched an eco-tourism project in collaboration with local residents to introduce the history and natural beauty of this area. Visitors can plant cactus seedlings here. OISCA Mexico encourages visitors from all parts of the aqua planet to visit this water marginal site. Of course, Children's Forest Program (CFP) activities are going on to educate school children the importance of preserving their environment, biodiversity and traditional legacy.

Indigenous children too are beneficiaries of CFP

Indigenous people are living in Tehuacan-Cuicatlan Valley. One of them is Popoloca tribe. OISCA Mexico has been organizing Children's Forest Program (CFP) for Popoloca children, too, in an effort to plant in their hearts the spirit of pride by means of letting

them plant trees on the ground. Trees can be cactus. Children are pure in heart and so quick to absorb the value of protecting their motherland's natural environment.

U.S.A.

OISCA USA founded in 2011

A golden opportunity to give a birth to OISCA in USA emerged on August 2nd 2011 with Dr. Prospero Tayco as its Founding President with its home base in Raritan, New Jersey State. The Ambassador of Japan to the United Nations made a congratulatory speech at the inaugural ceremony. So did OISCA-International President.

About a year later, in April 2012, the first Children's Forest Program (CFP) tree planting was performed at John F. Kennedy Elementary School. See page 5. A group of 20 member OISCA volunteers from Japan graced the first CFP event in USA. Since then, CFP tree planting has been taking place every year at different schools in the State. Trees have been planted not only at schools, but also at gardens of public library, township offices, public sporting ground, and so forth in NJ State. Most of the trees planted are "*sakura*" (cherry), as if OISCA USA is trying to make Raritan region as a *sakura* garden community through Children's Forest Program.

Children's Forest Program (CFP) has reached 37 countries and regions by May 2021 with as many as 5,343 schools participating. With determination of Dr. Tayco and his team of OISCA USA, CFP is firmly setting its roots in USA.

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