

6 Urging Corporate Efforts for the Development of Industry

— A Story of an On-The-Job Senior Volunteer Making Great Contributions in Saint Lucia —



Endless blue ocean and skies, white sandy beaches, green islands in the distance, the sound of steelpans*¹ carried drifting on the breeze – located in an area surrounded by islands on the Eastern edge of the Caribbean Sea, Saint Lucia is an island nation with a small population of 170,000 and almost the same size as Awaji Island of Japan. Since the Age of Exploration, it has gone back and forth seven times as a colony between the British and the French, and it became independent from the United Kingdom in 1979.

Mr. Tsugunao Tsujii grew interested in the Senior Volunteers Program when his former colleague talked him about it. He applied to the program with a request to be dispatched to fill a vacancy in Saint Lucia. When Mr. Tsujii was employed, he became the first Senior Volunteer to use a system in his company, KDDI, had introduced to provide their employees with an opportunity to become Senior Volunteers. Now Mr. Tsujii is in Saint Lucia.

Currently, nearly 20 volunteers have been dispatched from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to far-away Saint Lucia, a relatively large number of volunteers compared to the size of the local population. Volunteers including teachers, physiotherapists, and many other professionals have been engaged in various activities such as music instruction, forest management, and the promotion of sports.

As for Mr. Tsujii, he has been assigned to the Ministry of Communications, Works, Transport and Public Utilities of the government of Saint Lucia as a communication policy advisor. His colleagues include Mr. Augustine, the Director-General of the Department for Public Service and Mr. Perry, an engineer and Mr. Tsujii's counterpart. While he is a skilled engineer, Mr. Perry turns his hand to designing and sewing frills onto clothes as carnival approaches in July, and even served as the leader of a carnival band.

The communications sector in Saint Lucia was not

very active, with a low incidence of landline telephones and high internet and mobile phone fees. In order to solve this problem, the government of Saint Lucia eased the regulations in cooperation with four neighboring nations and established a law to promote market entry of the start-up communication companies. The introduction of these measures had the fees for mobile phones and other communication devices drop, but the effect was only temporary.

Faced with this situation, Mr. Tsujii was convinced that it was his role to revitalize the market, which in turn would stimulate efforts on the corporate side. Full of conviction, he started giving various kinds of advice, including his views on the relaxation of the regulations. An official from the Ministry of Communications in Saint Lucia now recalls that Mr. Tsujii's input more or less influenced the policies that they have formulated.

Mr. Tsujii also wrote a book, "A Short History of Competition in the Japanese Mobile Phone Market," writing about the case where competition-driven price decline and new technologies had increased the number of users, benefitting companies in the form of a stable market. He says, "Promotion of corporate efforts plays an important role in developing the industry."

At the same time, the arrival in Saint Lucia of a wave of global competition in the communication sector has resulted, among other developments, in the halving of internet fees and sales of mobile phones with new functions.

"Competition in the market is something to be welcomed if it promotes corporate efforts to reduce prices and improve services," says Mr. Tsujii.

It is hoped that Mr. Tsujii's wishes will bear fruit in Saint Lucia, where the communications sector is gradually being revitalized.



Meeting with staff of the Ministry of Communications (Mr. Tsujii and Mr. Augustine, right and left side on the front side, respectively, and Mr. Perry in the far left). (Photo: Mr. Tsujii)



Ministry of Communications, Works, Transport and Public Utilities in Saint Lucia (Photo: Mr. Tsujii)

*1 A drum-like Caribbean instrument with a music scale, made from a drum can.