



# Newsletter

## **Farmers in Ghana benefit from UMCOR's Sustainable Agriculture & Development Program-some life transformation stories**

**April 2019**

Dear Friends,

Greetings from my family and friends in Ghana!

"This season of Lent opens doors for us to change into the person that God wants us to be. Step up and do your part. Christ will soon offer His life to us. Be the first to offer your life to God." The foregoing quote is my most favorite Lenten message. It encourages me even much further to commit myself to God's divine ministry in which I serve and I wish to use this period of Lent to thank you all again for the great support you have offered to me in ministry and in prayer. I am your hands and feet in ministry. You cannot imagine how your support impacts life in Africa. The beneficiaries of your generous support cannot thank you enough. They've asked me to let you know you have touched their lives with your generosity and all they could do is to pray for you and your families as you also keep praying for them and sending your gifts through this ministry.

This newsletter is at the behest of farmers in Ghana who have requested me to share their lives' transformation stories with you. They are indeed very grateful to you for serving through me and have asked God's blessings on you. I will be sharing special stories on beekeeping in my next newsletter highlighting how support from a church in California has helped to provide hives to several farmers and the expectant boost in honey production in beneficiary communities with increased income levels and eventual improved standards of living. Beekeeping is becoming a farming activity of choice in Ghana and in Africa. Several farmers who have been trained over the past last 10-15 years through UMCOR-SA&D's novel beekeeping training program testify about how the activity has transformed their lives. Farmers have their incomes increase more than 10-fold and have honey which is highly marketable and also unperishable. This enterprise in beekeeping is therefore already sustainable and also very ecologically friendly thus helping to offset the losses and challenges encountered due to climate change.

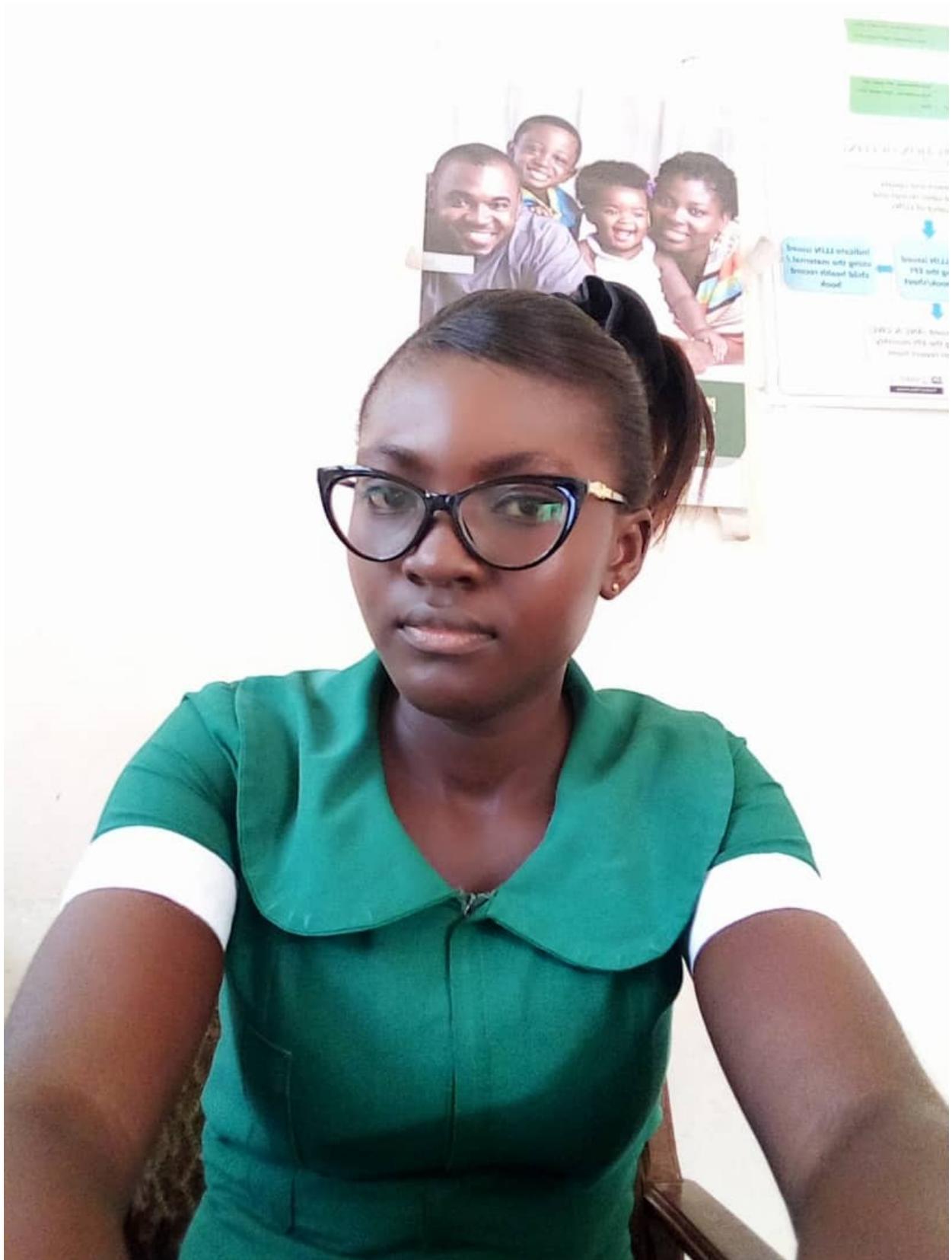
As a business enterprise, beekeeping offers not only diverse products, for example honey and wax among others, which can be sold in local markets and become an important source of regular income for farm families, but can also provide complementary services, such as crop pollination. Moreover bee products improve farm family nutrition and can provide for traditional health care remedies.

Brief Story as told by Abraham Breseh:

“I am Abraham Breseh, a 50-year old farmer from the village of Osramanae in the Krachi West district of the Oti region of Ghana. I am married with 5 children. Josephine Breseh, my eldest daughter is 23 years old and a nurse at the Government hospital in Kete Krachi about 18 miles from our hometown of Osramanae. Josephine has been able to get this far in education and her profession out of the sheer generosity exhibited through the support given by several United Methodist churches to the sustainable agriculture program of UMCOR of which I am a major beneficiary. I wish to thank the Sustainable Agriculture Program of UMCOR and its leadership for the great support they have given to me and several others in Osramanae that has enabled us to transform our families. I can say without mincing words that most of us in Osramanae are on the way to becoming food secure and also earning additional income that has enabled us to meet the basic necessities of life and are able to send our children to school. My daughter Josephine has been a proud example of your indirect support. One of the fondest stories on my lips is the transformation story of my life since I benefitted from UMCOR's beekeeping training some eight years ago. I have been in farming since I was about 23 years old but the profits from my beekeeping activities over the last 6 years surpasses all that I have gained from my farming activities of over 20 years. There is virtually no comparison between these past 6 years of my life and the previous years. The following is the story of my journey out of poverty’;

After I was trained in beekeeping, my life started to change for the better. It all started after I was trained by UMCOR, SA&D. I started with three (3) beehives and two colonized, after the first harvest from the two beehives, I compared the beekeeping with my yam, maize, cassava and beans farm and the expenditure involved. I realized immediately that beekeeping was profitable so this prompted me to increase the beehives with the little income from subsequent yearly harvests. I currently have 86 beehives. Bees offer a large potential with minimal investments. I have come to realize that as an agricultural enterprise, beekeeping does not require land ownership or rental, it can be started with equipment and tools that can be sourced locally and in many instances skills and knowledge required for such an enterprise are found within local traditions. We have made several adaptations to local situations of the knowledge that we gained from beekeeping and as a way of giving back to the community, I have sacrificed my time and resources to share the knowledge with as many as are willing to learn. We are changing the entire economy of my community with this enterprise in beekeeping.

Through these efforts, and my spirit of volunteerism and leadership at the community level, I was identified and nominated by Mr. Mozart Adevu, UMCOR-SA&D Africa Regional Coordinator for training at the Asian Rural Institute (ARI) in Japan in March 2017. It was my first ever air travel and the first time to travel out of my native country, Ghana, a great motivation for me. I completed the training in Organic Agriculture and Rural Leadership at ARI in December 2017 and have since been back home, transferring this knowledge to my community members and farmers which is helping us a lot. We can now produce organic fertilizers and pesticides which are environmentally friendly and cheaper compared to chemical fertilizers and pesticides which the poor farmer cannot afford to buy and which also adds on environmental degradation. A relative of mine in Krachi East district, who learned of my rich knowledge and experience in agriculture invited me to help start a poultry farm. We've started and the farm has been doing well so far. We have well over 1700 chickens”.



*Josephine Breseh (above) aged 23, a qualified nurse is a daughter of a beneficiary of UMCOR-SA&D*



*Poultry produced by Abraham Breseh who formulates organic poultry feed*

Regina Ntosour is a 62-year old female from Osramanae and is one of several female farmers making great strides in her community. She shares her brief story of transformation as follows:

“After the training in nutrition and soap making organized by UMCOR-SA&D about 8 years ago, I started preparing soy kebab which I have been selling in the schools and to the fishermen along the banks of the Volta Lake. The income derived from this has helped me to cater for my grandchildren after they lost their mother, besides this it's also helping me to buy my personal needs for my home. I also have been able to save some money and started soap making and all these efforts attributed to UMCOR's support for our community have taken me away from extreme poverty and have virtually made me a 'new person' of respect in my community”.

Similarly, Naomi Addae, 42 years, married with 6 children also of Osramanae has an interesting story to tell;

“I was really a 'nobody' in the community of Osramanae until I was fortunate to attend a training in nutrition using moringa and soy as was organized by UMCOR-SA&D in 2011. That was the beginning of a life transformation story. I learned how to use moringa and soy in daily diets, besides that we also learned how to make soy kebabs so I took immediate advantage of the knowledge and started a very small business of preparing and selling soy kebabs in the schools and nearby villages and this has brought me enough income to care for my children in school and to meet daily needs at home. Ever since I started adding moringa and soy into our daily family diet and also using the green leaves of moringa as tea, none of my children have fallen ill to visit the hospital. We as a family are always very healthy, I have also generated enough income to invest in beekeeping and have currently constructed (5) beehives, I believe by this time in 2020 my dream which is to live sustainable life will come to reality”.

Solomon Koduah is 40 years old and has received UMCOR-SA&D's support in his community of Jeduako in the Sekyere Central district of Ghana since 2001. Jeduako has a population of about 3,500 and 95% of the adult population are farmers with small farm sizes of an average of about 0.5 hectare. Solomon was a poor young farmer of about 22 years when Mozart Adevu, UMCOR-SA&D Africa Regional Coordinator first visited his community. UMCOR was the very first supporting organization to ever provide hope to the people of Jeduako and the results have been amazing over the last 18 years of accompaniment.

Solomon was one young person in Jeduako full of optimism of UMCOR-SA&D's visit to his community for needs assessment and he availed himself as a volunteer to spread and share information that could benefit his community. Solomon soon became the leader of a small livestock improvement program that was introduced by UMCOR-SA&D in collaboration with the community and the local Methodist church of Jeduako. Solomon was later trained as a para-vet and was on hand to support his community members with diagnosis and treatment of minor ailments on their sheep and goats. In 2008, when beekeeping was introduced in Jeduako, Solomon again emerged as a willing and vibrant participant and currently leads the beekeeping group of his community. He owns 30 hives and is leading the community to distribute over 150 beehives that have been secured through a recent support by a United Methodist Church in California

Solomon was identified and recommended for training in Organic Agriculture and Rural Leadership at the Asian Rural Institute for nine months in Japan in 2015 and he has since been back with enthusiasm in serving his community. Solomon offered to share a bit about himself and two others of this community of Jeduako for this newsletter.

Solomon has the following brief story of his journey of change:

“After my ARI training program, my dream has been to change my community from the indiscriminate use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides to natural or organic farming methods. I have employed servant leadership skills in my engagement with my community and we are making steady progress. I have conducted some training for community members since my return from Japan and have been campaigning against chemical farming. I am very encouraged by the recent support from UMCOR-SA&D to conduct Farmer Field Schools in Organic Agriculture and I am sure this will further improve the knowledge of the members of the community in organic farming. I have so far influenced some 50 young farmers who are practicing organic farming and are producing very healthy crops. I am sure this is also the way to go in mitigating against the effects of climate change. We will do the very best in our own small way. I am grateful to UMCOR for how far they have brought me. My family and I are fully food secure and I can now invest my time in giving back to my community. My harvest of honey yearly gives me a good enough income that pays the school fees of my four children and I hope to invest sufficiently in the education of these children so they could have a better life in the future”.

Solomon works also with several female farmers. Yaa Owusua and Sarah Adoma are two women who have been outstanding in the promotion of the ideals of Solomon. Adoma says she loves organic farming because it is safer and cheaper than chemical farming. She said also that to acquire the knowledge was difficult but after Solomon's training she is sure to sustain organic farming and to produce healthier crops and maintain her family's good health”.



Solomon Koduah controlling insects on his farm by applying wood vinegar prepared by himself



*Yaa Owusua applying liquid fertilizer to her crop of garden eggs*



*Sarah Adoma preparing her land for organic production of vegetables*

## **PLEASE PRAY FOR ME:**

My family and I cannot thank you enough for your show of love through your prayers and support me. I am grateful to you all for such great support over the years. What an amazing relationship this has been. I often receive individual greetings cards from several well-wishers and I often receive several greetings on my birthday as with my 61<sup>st</sup> which falls on Palm Sunday, April 14.

Please continue to bear my ministry in prayer.

My daughter Selma who is in Medical school in Ghana will soon commence the second year. She stayed back in school this recent holidays to support her colleagues and friends who could not pass all the courses. Selma has offered to help in their studies as they prepare to re-write some papers. By October of 2019, Selma would have begun clinical work. Please bear her in your prayers in her journey to qualify as a medical doctor-her longtime dream.

Please pray for my son, Toni. Unfortunately he could not get a visa for the second year running to pursue a Master's program in Actuarial Science at the University of Windsor, Ontario, Canada. He applied for a student visa really very late due to a late sponsorship and it was already too late when he was invited for a full interview by the Canadian Embassy in Ghana. Thankfully, he has been offered admission once again by the University and this time around, he will apply in good time for the student visa as his sponsor is ready to provide all the necessary support to see him through. I hope to report positively on this in my next newsletter

We too will keep you all in our thoughts and prayers. We wish you all a Happy Easter. Thank you all again for your kindness and generosity in sustaining your support for me and my ministry. God Richly Bless You All.

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