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Working Together During a Pandemic

By Sarah Corson

SIFAT Co-founder

More than two years have passed since COVID-19 turned our daily lives and our work into a different world. Each day that passes makes us more thankful for the network of SIFAT graduates. For more than 40 years, we have been training community leaders in integrated development—spiritually and physically. One of our basic principles is **help people to help themselves**. Often, handouts take away people's dignity and make them feel like beggars. Now that COVID-19 keeps us from traveling to countries where many of our projects are, we are more thankful than ever that we taught the principle of self-help. Graduates have returned home to teach their neighbors all that they learned. They have already been developing their own communities. So, it was easy for them to work together to help their neighbors during this pandemic. COVID-19 also produced another pandemic—a pandemic of hunger throughout the world. Food security is a great need everywhere. Our graduates are prepared and have stepped up to direct projects in their home areas. By helping our graduates get seed money, SIFAT has empowered them to direct their own development.

Samuel graduated from SIFAT in 2009. He returned to his home in Haiti and began to teach his needy community

the things he learned. Today, he is the director of a nonprofit called AKA, which focuses on training in agriculture and spiritual development. Their goal is to bring about a sustainable change to overcome some of the problems the communities are facing. They work with widows and abandoned women with children. The agricultural classes teach them new techniques to make terraces to prevent erosion in the mountainous soils. Producing their natural fertilizer with compost helps them to bring degraded soils back into production. They also

learn how to operate a plant nursery to start their own plants from seed. Included in their agricultural project is an orchard to grow citrus fruit.

Samuel started out with 50 women who did not have enough income to buy school supplies for their children to attend school or even to provide their

children enough food. Today, their lives have totally changed physically because they learned to grow crops with a surplus to sell. Their children are now in school and well-fed. The women have changed spiritually, too, and are living out the values Jesus taught. They now have a spirit of love and compassion to help each other, and they share their products with those in need. The women work together in a cooperative, and they take 10 percent out of the proceeds of their products to help others and to make the cooperative self-sustaining for the benefit of all. The community appreciates the SIFAT graduates, because





SIFAT graduate Samuel works with women in Haiti to teach them agricultural techniques that increase production, protect the land from erosion and provide an income for their families. His successful international graduate projects are helping communities by giving a hand up, not a handout.



they teach development for body, mind and soul. Their community has become a more peaceful, happy place! Samuel leads AKA to teach them irrigation to save their crops, sanitation to save their health and loving Christ and their neighbors to save their souls.

When the latest earthquake hit Haiti, it damaged Samuel's house, so that his family could not live in it. They slept out in the yard on the ground for some time until they could repair the damage. But none of them complained. They were just praising God that they were all alive. Samuel's positive attitude and his leadership skills have changed not only the community where they did this pilot project, but also nearby communities, where he has started additional projects. Samuel continues to mentor his first projects that are still on-going, too. We look forward to receiving Samuel's frequent inspiring letters and pictures of his work. SIFAT supporters have given seed money to help each project get started through our approved international graduates' projects, and our staff have given him spiritual encouragement and technical advice. Email allows us to go into places where we can no longer travel and mentor communities through our graduates, such as Samuel.

Thank you for donating to SIFAT! Your gifts allow us to continue *Sharing God's Love in Practical Ways*. Please remember to pray for our graduates like Samuel in communities throughout the world who are facing the effects of the pandemic, as well as difficult economies, natural disasters and other obstacles.

Don't Forget Learn & Serve Summer '22!

Are you looking for a summer experience for your youth (individuals or groups)? Sign up today for our Learn & Serve Summer Experience. This year, sessions start on Sunday and end on Thursday morning. Get all the details at www.sifat.org/learn-serve.

This summer's theme is *Thy Kingdom Come*. The kingdom of God that we read about in Scripture is rarely what we see in the world around us. Howz can we walk out our faith in a way that builds God's kingdom here? And what kind of tools do we need to make that happen? Join us for *Thy Kingdom Come*, and let's encourage each other to step out in new ways!

See you on campus this summer!

