

# Ship Report

26 May 2006 | Monrovia, Liberia



## Mercy Ships agriculture project impacts Liberia

It all started with some seeds. Before the ship left South Africa to sail to Liberia in October 2005, Marcel Eveleens bought several seed packets, intending to give them away during the months to come. Eveleens, a plumber onboard the Mercy Ship, came to Liberia expecting to spend the seven-month field service doing the work he was used to.

He and his co-workers in the Engineering Department got involved in a small project in Monrovia's New Georgia community, and he took the seeds to distribute there. Eveleens, a landscaper by training, also asked permission to do some technical training on agriculture there.

By December, he and John Briggs – a Liberian plumber who was working onboard the hospital ship – had run one-day workshops five different places.

A month later, Gene Tate and Ken Winebark, who coordinate all of the Mercy Ships agricultural activities, came to the ship. Eveleens accompanied them as they ran a two-week workshop in the town of Levumah. Tate and Winebark's training was biblically-based. This struck Eveleens as very different from the training he'd received, and it intrigued him. "[In my training] there was never the connection made between God, creation,

the Bible, and agriculture. When Gene and Ken came, they made a connection. And everything became clear for me," Eveleens asserted.

Eveleens and Briggs facilitated six workshops in six locations, teaching more than 131 students on a wide range of topics that focus on agriculture's foundational role in the Bible. Participants in the five villages and in the Monrovia Central Prison have seen transformation happening as a result, both in them and around them.

Pastor Joshua Goba, from Kamara Town, has watched change happen in his village: "*For the past month, we've seen people using their hands to work out in the soil. This biblical agriculture came into our community to open our eyes on things that we did not used to do. This time around we are doing it.*"



Another Kamara Town participant, Musu Kamara, shared what she'd learned of the connection between God and agriculture. She said, "*It was God who first created all things. He was the first gardener because He made the trees, the gardens...even the food that we eat, He made it.*"

Eveleens was particularly impressed with the Kamara Town class's understanding of the material and of their subsequent generosity. He asked them to consider giving a gift to the agriculture class in the prison, so they could

start their garden. *“I didn’t expect so much,”* Eveleens declared of the donation of cassava sticks, potato leaves, sugar cane, and seeds.

The prisoners, too, are excited by the change happening. They have planted about 15 beds of fruits and vegetables: cucumbers, water greens, watermelons, and others. They’ve also learned to make their own fertilizer and to water their plants with a simple drip irrigation system. Many of them hope to start small agriculture businesses when they are released from prison, and they are confident that their new skills will be very beneficial.

Othello Zeahwon, one of the participants, states, *“As for me, when I leave this place, what I will do is I will pray to the Almighty God, lobby around for financial support, get seeds, go in the rural area, and make a very big garden!”*

Things are going so well with the prison’s agriculture program that Victoria Freeman, a correctional officer at Monrovia Central and the head of the Agriculture Department there, has made a proposal to the government to expand activities. *“Mercy Ships is the first people that have brought us on this level.... So we are promising that we will continue. If the ship comes back, you will meet progress back here.”*

