



Training Leaders for Community Transformation in Madagascar

I am highlighting our partners' work in training leaders for community transformation in several countries in Africa. I am posting information provided by our mission co-workers deeply involved in this work. This is the third post in the series:

The Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar (FJKM) is working to [equip leaders to be agents of community transformation](#). In 2007, the FJKM's Ivato Seminary launched an innovative Environment and Development course for its fourth-year seminarians with the help of the church's Development Department (SAF) and PC(USA) mission co-worker [Dan Turk](#).

"We start the week with this program," said Rev. Juliette Razafiarisoa, the seminary's director. "All students learn how to sow, how to transplant, how to graft and how to take care of the ground."



Mission co-worker Dan Turk shows off the Ivato fruit tree nursery.

Dan Turk, an agro-forester who did his doctoral research on the trees of Madagascar, helped the seminary to establish gardens, a demonstration orchard, and a nursery where students can gain practical experience. "They can experiment and decide which trees they would like to grow at their first parish," Pastor Juliette explained. In the FJKM, most theological students are assigned to serve a rural parish following their fourth year. "When they go," said Pastor Juliette, "they can choose ten plants to take."

The initiative not only helps pastors to provide food for their families so that they can minister to otherwise underserved communities, but it also enables them to share the techniques with local people. "They teach the congregation to plant sweet potatoes so that they can have food and even some income," Pastor Juliette said. "Even if there is nothing, they can manage to fight poverty."

Rolland Razafiarison, a SAF staff member, recalled the example of Matilda, an Ivato graduate posted to a remote village in the arid south. “The people there weren’t doing vegetable gardening or growing fruit trees. When they saw what she was able to grow, they were amazed. She told them, ‘God has helped me, and if you are interested in planting and growing, God will help you, too.’ So she was able to pass on her knowledge and now that whole area has begun to grow vegetables and fruit trees.”



Rolland Razafiarison and Pastor Juliette Razafiarisoa



Ivato seminary students tend the demonstration gardens.

“These pastors are really making a big difference in the places where they are living because there is often a big lack of vitamins,” Rolland continued. “As many as 70% of the people who visit rural doctors are diagnosed as malnourished or lacking vitamins, so these vegetables and fruit trees are a great way of helping the population. And having the pastors share this knowledge is a wonderful way to spread it to all parts of the island because the pastors go everywhere. This helps to protect the environment and improve people’s livelihoods. No other group in Madagascar has a program like this.”

As Pastor Juliette said, “The new pastors are not only able to preach the gospel directly, but also to demonstrate the good news that God cares for all people.” Like a mustard seed, that message is bearing fruit all over Madagascar.

To help support the FJKM’s transformative agricultural and environmental education initiatives, please [make a gift to ECO account E047980](#). To help sustain Dan Turk’s ministry, please [make a gift to E200418](#).

To help equip thousands of leaders around the world through the Training Leaders for Community Transformation campaign, make a gift to [E052151](#).