

SHEPHERD FOOD MINISTRIES

Biannual Newsletter of SFM

Issue 26: July - Dec 2023



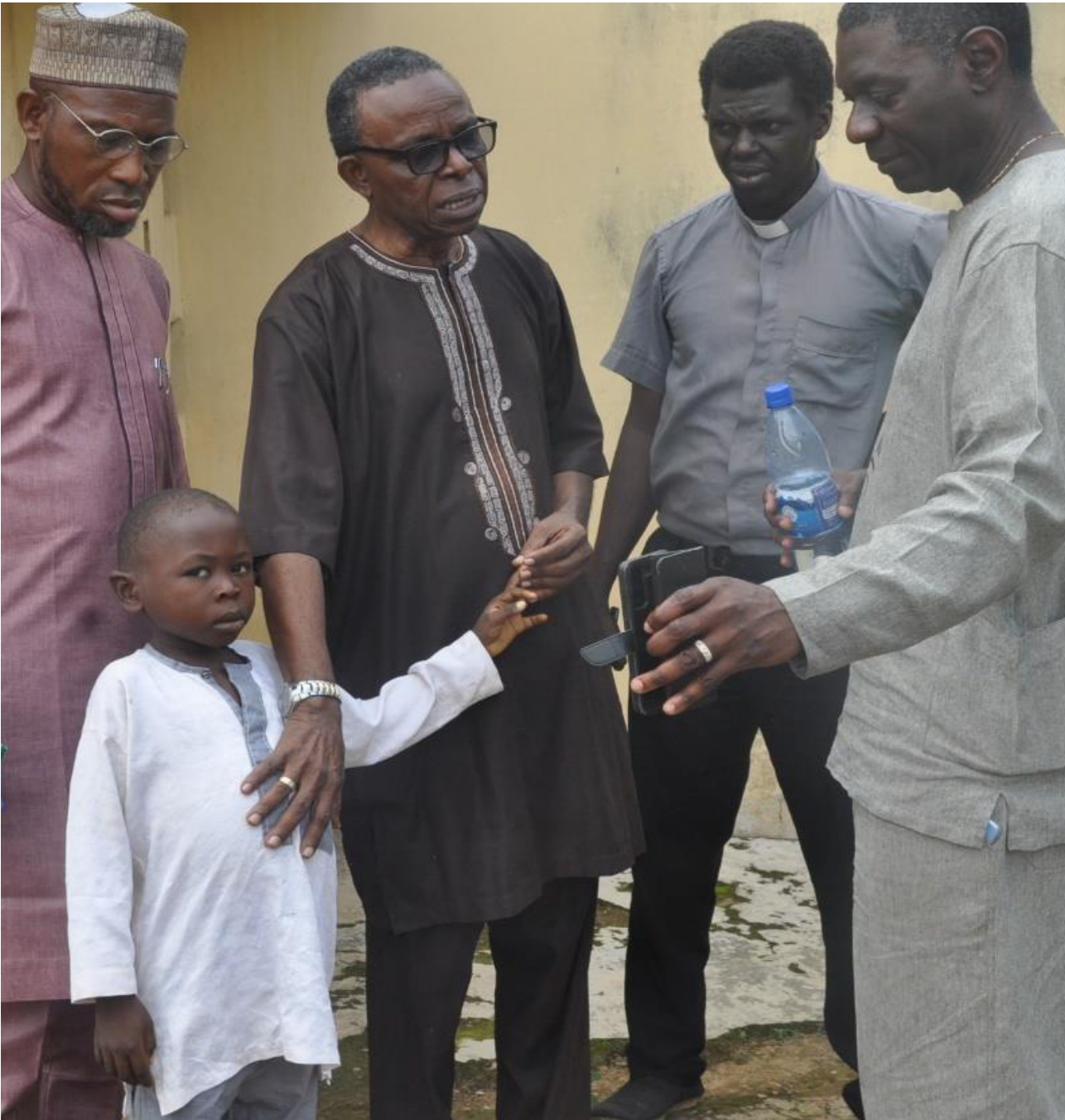
MISSION TRIP TO NIGERIA: REFLECTIONS AND TESTIMONIALS

It was a pleasure to embark on a mission trip to Nigeria for the first time since the pandemic. Despite not being on the ground for three years, SFM outreach to the vulnerable groups extended to new locations and touched over 320 widows and elderly people. We give thanks to God for this growth and for His provisions to reach out to more people who became victims of the pandemic due to a loss of income and a lack of access to micro finance to grow their business. We visited nine locations across four States (Osun, Lagos, Oyo and Ogun) to see the beneficiaries of SFM Empowerment Programme. We heard uplifting testimonies of the impact of SFM outreach in reducing the scourge of hunger, revitalising businesses, ensuring children stay in education, and providing timely health intervention. For instance, the members of Shepherd Empowerment Coop in Inisha, Osogbo, shared their achievements and challenges with us. Their membership has grown from 60 to 80 widows as a result, the money for micro finance is not enough to go round. They appeal for donation to boost it. Nevertheless, there is evidence of spiritual growth as more people attend the prayer meeting every Wednesday.

Donation to SFM via www.shepherdsfood.org.uk

A CASE OF A LACK OF BALANCED DIET

There was no doubt that the pandemic reversed some of the economic and social gains as many more people were plunged into poverty and hunger in Nigeria. While SFM beneficiaries had some support, many more vulnerable people joined the Coop stretching the resources available for micro finance and food support. The rate of hyper-inflation did not help as prices of goods skyrocketed. Statistics show that the ‘annual inflation rate in Nigeria accelerated for a sixth month to 22.79% in June 2023, the highest since September of 2005, compared to forecasts of 22.9%’ (Trading Economics, 2023). We saw the consequence of this during the health promotion programme we did at Dada Village, Ibadan, Oyo-State. A doctor and some nurses joined my wife to see over 80 people. They observed a lack of balanced diet among some of the children. The case of a young boy in the picture below is so critical that the doctor referred him to the University Teaching Hospital (UCH), Ibadan, for further examination. Her mum was concerned about the cost of treatment. SFM donated a small amount for the examination. The young boy has now registered at UCH and will be seeing the doctor for diagnosis and treatment.

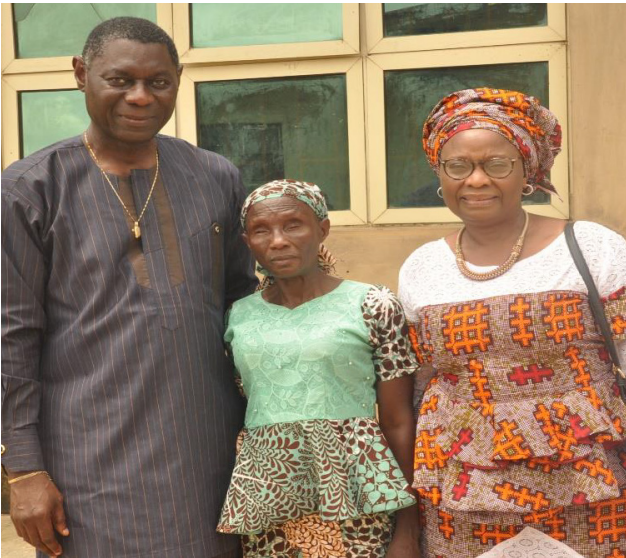


A CASE OF A LACK OF FINANCE FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT

According to the International Trade Administration, healthcare infrastructure in Nigeria is still underdeveloped and lacks modern medical facilities. The country’s healthcare indicators are some of the worst in Africa. It has one of the fastest growing populations globally with 5.5 live births per woman and a population growth rate of 3.2% annually (ITA, 2023). As a consequence, access to medical facilities is expensive and beyond the reach of ordinary people. We saw a woman who is recovering from a stroke during the health promotion organised in association with Most Excellency Summit (MES) in Ibadan. She had run out of medication and could not afford to go for follow up treatment. She was seen by a doctor and referred to a clinic. Her case was urgent, hence, SFM paid the clinic to admit and treat her.



We also saw a woman at the health promotion in Kurere Village, Abeokuta, who became blind at age 6 from river blindness because of a lack of money to seek treatment. She is now a grandmother and being looked after by her daughter. She said she went swimming in the local river and became sick not long after. Her mum did not take her to the hospital because she was waiting for her dad to return from her work trip. By the time he returned, it was already too late to reverse the damage caused to her retina.



A CASE OF A LACK OF DIGITAL LITERACY

Without digital literacy all SFM's efforts to lift vulnerable people out of poverty would amount to nothing. Financial inclusion will help beneficiaries to take advantage of opportunities, achieve their potentials and contribute to socio-economic development. Therefore, 'the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) with reference to SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities) claim to be working to reduce inequality within and between countries, communities, and populations by extending access to technologies and knowledge to disadvantaged segments of society' (ITU, 2021).

SFM has witnessed the effects of a lack of digital literacy among the farmers it supports. One of these is a lack of financial inclusion as they could not access microfinance and make financial transactions. When we found out that none of the members of Shepherd Farmers Coop (SFC) had a bank account, SFM liaised with a manager of a bank in Iwo town, the nearest town to our Odo-Ogun village, to come to the village and register them.



The manager came after much persuasion and registered 70 farmers in 2019. This eased the process of obtaining microfinance through SFC and making payments and regular savings through the bank. Having a bank account served SFC members in good stead when the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) forced a cashless policy on Nigerian from November 2022 to May 2023. Despite the hardship it caused, the CBN argues 'the cardinal aim of the cashless initiative was to reduce the number of naira notes and coins used for business but not to eliminate cash usage in its entirety and seeks to ensure a seamless, inclusive and equitable implementation of the exercise for the overall benefit and growth of Nigerians, the financial system and the economy as a whole' (ThisDay newspaper, July, 2023).

While the government is focusing on reducing digital inequalities in the cities, many young and old people in the rural areas do not know how to use technology properly and are in danger of being left behind. SFM is planning to intervene by building a Digital Literacy Hub (DILAC) which will equip young people in the rural communities with the skills and know how to use technology and to connect with the peers in other parts of Nigeria and overseas. The Hub will be equipped with computers and iPads for training. There is accommodation facility for young people who visit for a few days to befriend, train and engage in cultural activities.

SFM has launched an appeal to build DILAC. We are looking for 100 donors to pledge £1000 over 10 months. Through God's grace, 13 donors have already pledged. If you would like to pledge, please email admin@shepherdsfood.org.uk

A CASE OF OUT OF SCHOOL CHILDREN

A 2022 UNESCO report noted that approximately 20 million Nigerian individuals of its approximately 200 million population are not enrolled in school. This amounts to 20 percent of Nigeria's entire population and is more than the overall population of various countries in Africa (The Guardian, Nigeria, Feb., 2023). SFM's enquiry in the three primary schools in Kuta in 2019 found that some pupils are not coming to school because their parents could not pay school fees and buy school materials. As a result, SFM launched a scholarship scheme to keep them in education. We now have 35 pupils on the scheme whose fees are paid and who receive school uniform, shoes and reading materials on a yearly basis.



A case of 18 years old Tunji Olugbile from Kuta town stands out. He got an admission to a Polytechnic to study marketing, but his parents could not afford to pay his fees. He was going to lose his admission when SFM heard about him. SFM paid his fees, and he was happy to join the matriculation ceremony on 13 April, 2023. He shared with SFM his photography wearing a gown.

SFM is grateful to those who have adopted a pupil. Please feel free to contact SFM if you would like to adopt.



A VISIT TO SFM DEMONSTRATION FARM

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) defines food security as having sufficient food to generate a calorie requirement of about 2200–2300 calories per day for adult females and 2900–3000 calories per day for adult males. Children require a lower calorie level to maintain themselves in adequate health. The IMF went further that in Nigeria, ‘the North-East and North-West regions have the most acute levels of food insecurity’. While there are many reasons for food insecurity including conflict, internal displacement, banditry etc, the high level of post-harvest loss, estimated at about 50 percent, exacerbates food insecurity across Nigeria. SFM’s approach to SDG1 and 2 (Poverty and Hunger) is to establish a demonstration farm to demonstrate best farming practice and best post-harvest crop handling to small holder farmers to reduce wastage on the farm and enhance their income. We visited SFM farm and could see progress in terms of maize plantation. SFM is diversifying by planting cash crops, for example, palm trees, and will soon start animal and fish farming.

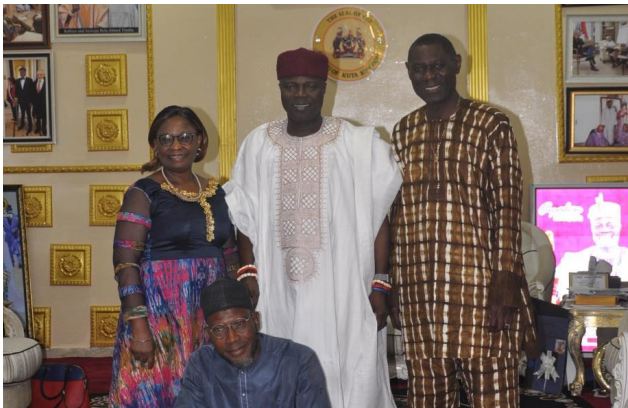


SFM EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME

SFM has the capacity to shell maize, bag and preserve it for up to four years if necessary. We use a special bag recommended by Nigeria Stored Product Research Institute (NISPRI)

A VISIT TO THE KING'S PALACE

SFM team paid homage to Olowu of Kuta, HRH Oba Adekunle Oyelude Makama, in his palace. HRH has given his unflinching support for SFM since 2010 when we settled in his domain. SFM team was warmly welcomed and shown around the new palace. We saw the photo gallery and we also took a lot of pictures with HRH. SFM President updated HRH about the progress on SFM demonstration farm, the microfinance for members of Shepherd Farmers Coop and the plan to a build Digital Literacy Hub to reduce digital inequalities among young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and foster friendship with their peers in the West through digital connectivity. HRH Makama was very pleased to hear about this new initiative and promised to support us.



SFM team also paid homage to the King of Inisha, Osogbo, HRH Oba Joseph Oladunjoye Oyedele Fasikun II, who received us warmly. He is a historian and told us about the history of Inisha, especially about Jalumi War, where the advancing Fulani warriors were stopped from over running Yorubaland. According to scholars, 'Jalumi War, also called the Battle of Ikirun, was a battle that took place on 1 November 1878 in the north east of present-day Osun State, Nigeria. A war cannon monument marking the end of the war is located at the Odo Otin River bank, Inisa, Odo Otin LGA till today'. SFM team was unable to visit the site because it was late in the evening when we left the palace.



VISITS AND TESTIMONIALS

The visit by SFM team to nine locations across four States produced some moving testimonies about the impact of SFM's outreach programme. We bring you a few of those.

A VISIT TO KURERE VILLAGE, ABEOKUTA

SFM team visited Kurere Village, Abeokuta North Local Government area of Ogun-State, to see the beneficiaries of the food support scheme. We were warmly received by Baale Kurere, Pa Augustus Oyetade Oduwaiye, the Chiefs and community leaders. They recounted the impacts of the food support in alleviating food poverty among vulnerable people, especially during the festive seasons. They said they are organising themselves to form a cooperation to be associated with SFM. SFM President responded by welcoming the initiative and offering support in terms of training and micro finance. He thanked the Baale and the leaders for giving SFM the opportunity to support vulnerable people in the village over the years. He believes that our partnership with wax stronger. The meeting ended with group photographs.



A VISIT TO INISHA, OSOGBO

SFM team visited the members of Shepherd Empowerment Multipurpose Cooperative Society in Inisha which is coordinated by Venerable Williams Sunday Ojelade. The Coop was registered with Osun State Government Ministry of Trade and Commerce, Cooperative Services Department on 20 April, 2021. The society has over 350 members including Muslims residing around the Anglican Church. Over 90 members have benefitted from the microfinance. One of the beneficiaries was a widow of over 35 years and responsible for her 34 years old son who was born deaf, dumb and with a withered hand. She has benefited tremendously from the microfinance to grow her business.



The members are also beneficiaries of SFM’s food support programme during the festive seasons to ensure that no one is without food to celebrate. Reflecting on SFM outreach programme, Venerable Ojelade enumerated a few impacts including encouraging more people, especially women to be regular at church programmes; promoting peace among members; giving members finance independence; freedom to request for loans without molestation; providing an alternative to high street loans which come with a high interest; and making them proud to belong to a Society that seeks their common good. In terms of challenges, very few have defaulted in repaying their interest free loan. The vicar appeals for donation to increase the funds available for microfinance.



HEALTH PROMOTION IN IBADAN

SFM team in association with Most Excellent Summit (MES) organised this event in Ibadan which was attended by over 60 widows. According to MES, ‘this testimony of impact is written to express our sincere gratitude for your generous support and to share the significant impact your sponsorship has had on our organization and the vulnerable individuals we serve. Our mission is to see widows and orphans becoming excellent within themselves through this scheme as well as our programmes that assure self-esteem and ease of socio-economic integration.



This is done to empower women and children. With the invaluable support from sponsors like you, we have been able to make remarkable strides in achieving our objectives’. Key accomplishments have been achieved over these six years. With the contribution from Shepherd Food Ministry, the widows and orphans have been able to receive more incentives during our programmes further touching and impacting their lives. For example, Ms Esther Akeredolu, a less privileged has shared her testimony. She suffered from a partial stroke and is in need of medical attention but lacks the money. However, her medical bills have been paid for by SFM. She shows deep gratitude to the organization for this. Also, Taiwo Adepoju stated that the incentives given goes a long way in her life. She thanks the organizers and prays for more blessing.

The support from the SFM has contributed to the sustainability of our non-governmental organization. We believe that every positive change begins with a collective effort, and our partnership exemplifies the power of collaboration in bringing about meaningful change. Together, we can continue to uplift and empower vulnerable communities, providing them with hope and opportunities for a brighter future.



MEMBERS OF THE MOST EXCELLENT SUMMIT WITH THE SFM TEAM

MES coordinators recall that 109 people consisting of 18 children, 59 widows and 32 less privileged benefited from the Easter 2023 donation. We collected information on their socioeconomic and socio-demographic status. We gave the widows and less privileged a tally number card each to make the distribution of items easy and orderly. They said the food received goes a long way toward keeping them going. For example, Oluwakemi Muidini sells water and minerals out of a storefront in front of her home. Additionally, she cares for herself and three children. She needs access to micro finance to grow her business.



HEALTH PROMOTION IN DADA VILLAGE IBADAN

SFM team visited Dada Village with a medical team to conduct health promotion for over 70 young and old people. The doctor had to refer two young people to the general hospital for further examinations because of the urgency of their medical condition.





One of the beneficiaries, Ms Deborah Yelakin, who sells maize custard, said she was happy to know the status of her health and get advice on how to manage it. I received free medical test, health advice and free medicine. No one has ever done this before in this our village, so, thanks to SFM. Moreover, I would like SFM to support us to start cooperative in this Village with access to microfinance and training. Many of us here need this wonderful opportunity because there's no one to help us financially. Another beneficiary, Ms Emily Faniyi, who sells fruits and grows cassava, maize and coco yam, said she now knows better about the kind of food we should eat to maintain a balanced diet. I look forward to joining the cooperative when it starts. A beneficiary, Ms Abiodun Showunmi, a trader, said it was evident that SFM wants something good for the people of the village and to end poverty in the society. And Mr Olugbade Akindeji, a pensioner, commended the good work of SFM because this village is too far to the city where we can get medical attention. However, SFM made it possible for us to receive treatment and seek advice from the doctor at no cost. 'I want to say a big thank you. We look forward to another event like this'.



EASTER 2023 FOOD DONATION: DONATION IN KURERE VILLAGE

SFM in association with Sarah Ayoka Oduwaiye Foundation (UK) gave over 100 packs of food palliatives and cash donations to more than 11 physical challenged people, widows and widowers. The empowerment support and palliatives to alleviate food poverty was attended by over 90 community women, widows, widowers and persons with disabilities.





DONATION IN KUTA

SFM organised this event at the palace of Olowu of Kuta , Ayedire Local Government Osun State Nigeria. The beneficiaries, about 27 pupils who are on SFM scholarship scheme, received a donation of food items and school materials.



EMPOWERMENT IN LAGOS

SFM team visited the beneficiaries of Food Support Scheme at Kingdom of God Mission (KGM), Lagos. It was a good time of fellowship and to hear about the impact of the food support and the initiative to start an empowerment cooperative to give members access to microfinance and training.



TESTIMONY OF A CHEF

A chef who is a member of Kingdom of God Mission (KGM) was empowered to restart his business by SFM. His story was brought to our notice after SFM’s Easter food donation at the Church. Mr. Chijioke Fortune Adiele, 30yrs old, lost the premises he uses as a canteen due to government demolition action. He has no recourse for compensation. Without a place to cook and sell food, he could not support his child and wife. He became the first beneficiary of SFM’s pilot Coop scheme in the Church. He received a sum as grant and a sum as interest free loan. He will be mentored by Pastor Lekan of KGM and his success should be an inspiration to others. SFM team saw him when it visited the Church in July and was pleased to hear about the progress his has been making to revive his business.



VISIT TO ABBEY ACADEMY



SFM team visited Abbey Academy, located at Aboru in Iyana-Ipaja, Lagos State, Nigeria, with the aim of partnering with the school to enhance educational opportunities for children from disadvantaged background. The school's vision tallies with the UN's 4th SDG to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. According to UNESCO (2022), there are about 20 million out-of-school children in Nigeria making it one of the highest in the world. The school has over 500 students, but has limited resources to provide the needed classroom, computer and laboratory facilities. Hence, the school is appealing for support to enhance students' learning experience. The school wants to complete a two-storey building project; buy comfortable furniture for students; equip science laboratories, library, ICT room, medical section (or sick bay) and sports hall. SFM team was well received by the Director and staff. We listened to well recited poetry from the pupils. The visit ended with a presentation of a plaque to SFM President. Please contact admin@shepherdsfood.org.uk if you would like to adopt a pupil and support their education.



PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF SOME BENEFICIARIES OF FOOD SUPPORT SCHEME



SFM in association with Kingdom of God Mission (KGM) made a donation to widows, single parents, vulnerable people and the Clergies. Some of the beneficiaries of the food donation include Mrs Funmilayo Rotimi, 44 yrs old, who sells food items and provisions. She was widowed five years ago and has four children with no help from anyone.

She is Ayomide Aikomo, 22 years old, and a single parent. She has no job but would like to trade. She has no help from extended family.



She is Mrs Temilade Ogunlana, 44 years old and a hair dresser. She lost her husband in 2022 and has four children. One of them gained admission to the University in 2022 and she has no help from extended family.



TESTIMONIES FROM THE FARMERS

Ms Kalifat Abdusalam is a palm oil farmer from Mamu Abimbola Village. She joined Shepherd Farmers Coop in 2019 and has benefited immensely from it. She said her life has changed because she now has access to finance to grow her business. ‘I used the money to buy lots of palm cannel from the farm to produce palm oil after which I sell it and make some profit’. She also benefited from the regular medical check up for Coop members. ‘An organisation like SFM is very rare in the society’. She would like SFM to help modernise the palm oil processing to increase productivity and maintain high standards.

Ms Toyosi Ajayi is a provision trader from Obielu Village. She was one of the foundation members of Shepherd Farmers Coop when it started in 2017. ‘I have benefit from this cooperative in many ways because I always borrow for business and return the money on time. There is no organisation like SFC in Nigeria today that will give a no interest loan’. I want to say thank you to SFM for giving us free medical check-up and medicines.



Fidelis Joshua is a trader living in Odan Village. I joined SFC in 2021 and has never regretted it because my business has grown through access to micro finance and training. As a disabled person, I would like to start livestock farming, especially goat. I will need the support of SFC to learn how to do this.



APPRENTICESHIP IN CROP AND ANIMAL FARMING

SFM offers 10 months residential apprenticeship in crop and animal farming for young people who have a passion for practical farming on its 103 acres farmland in Kuta. The beneficiary must have a sponsor and have access to land they can use after their apprenticeship.

The sponsor will apply on the beneficiary's behalf and pay a fee of #800k per month. In return, the beneficiary will have a residential place for the duration of the apprenticeship, get a monthly stipend, mentored by experienced agriculture tutors and local farmers; combine indigenous and modern knowledge; engage in agribusiness; get regular feedback; and get a seed grant on successful completion of the programme. For more information, please email shepherdfarmers@gmail.com

HOW TO GET INVOLVED IN SFM PROJECTS

Donate towards micro finance for widows; Become a partner to build the digital literacy hub; Sponsor a pupil in the scholarship scheme; Offer your skills.

For information on how to join or donate, please email admin@shepherdsfood.org.uk or visit www.shepherdsfood.org.uk

Donate via: www.shepherdsfood.org.uk/Donate
Email: admin@shepherdsfood.org.uk

In USA via Zelle: 256 371 9061 or mail cheques
SFM, 20 Edgefield Way, Anniston AL 36207, USA.

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter



Shepherd Food Ministries
(SFM)



@Shepherdsfood

www.shepherdsfood.org.uk | Reg Charity no. 1120943

