



Bees Abroad

Relieving Poverty through Beekeeping

Annual Report Summary of Projects Undertaken

January–December 2017

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Introduction

Welcome to our Annual Report for 2017. We hope you find this report interesting and stimulating, providing you with detailed information about our activities this year. Poverty prevents people from achieving their full potential and reducing it is at the core of all our projects. We seek to improve the quality of life for low-income communities by sharing knowledge on beekeeping and making hive products, and by helping people to find ways to market their wares. When overseas community organisations approach us, we are careful only to select those groups that share our vision. We hope this report illustrates the impact each project has had on the people involved and gives you some insight into how our volunteer project managers work. We would welcome feedback on this report and are happy to respond to any questions you might have.

Here are some of the year's significant events:

- Very, very sadly our lead trainer in Kenya, David Njuguna, was killed in a road accident. Mostly because of the wonderful work he had done over the years, a very significant milestone in our development as an organisation was reached. Our team in Kenya formed an NGO to pursue the relief of poverty through beekeeping independently from Bees Abroad in the UK. We will, of course, support their work, but with the intention that the NGO is genuinely sustainable, we have no formal ties with it. In time we hope to do the same in other countries. Fortunately, our Kenyan team is our strongest, and we will be able to maintain and expand our work.
- We launched our much-improved website in October. We think it shows far better what we do in the relief of poverty through beekeeping. For the first time, it includes an online shop. Our new range of gift cards and our Christmas cards were a big success in the run-up to Christmas.
- We started a new project in a country that was new for Bees Abroad - Sierra Leone. We are partnering with the charity Rory's Well who were already working in the area. Their local knowledge and contacts enabled us to make a quick start and hives established early in the year were soon colonised. We have already identified opportunities to expand beyond this initial project.
- We also started our first project in Rwanda which has an almost perfect climate for beekeeping. When we arrived, we found that a large charity had given the group hives, but without any training in how to use them, so they were left in a big pile.
- We continue to receive far more requests for help than we can satisfy. However, we are finding it easier to recruit volunteers because of the enormous increase in interest in beekeeping in recent years, and the positive work we have been able to achieve through your donations and help. We hope to find new sources of funding in 2018 to expand what we do.
- We implemented new online accounting and banking systems which are already saving us time and providing us with better information to manage what we do.
- Last, but far from least, our congratulations to John Home who, in March, became a Master Bee Farmer. If you haven't already read it, I commend John's very own book featuring Bees Abroad "*Home & Away – Adventures in Beekeeping in UK & Africa*". There is no doubt in my mind that the more qualified individuals are in beekeeping, the better they are likely to perform when it comes to teaching/training in country and maintaining standards. The better qualified can help the less skilled amongst us. We have five Master Beekeepers (out of only about 100), one Master Bee Farmer and two Bee Inspectors in the team. I became a Master Beekeeper in 2017. I think the fact that we are beekeepers, and good beekeepers make us different and should be something the beekeeping community will respect. We should all be proud of the fact that we have in our team some of the top beekeepers in the country.



You can learn more about us at www.beesabroad.org.uk and by following us on Facebook.

Please help us by making a donation, sponsoring a project, leaving a legacy or through payroll giving. Only with your help can we continue our support.

Richard Ridler

Chairman

Projects Undertaken

CAMEROON

Background

The work in Cameroon currently centres around the Akwaya project, working with a local NGO, FORUDEF (Food and Rural Development Foundation), to train beekeepers and support the production of honey in the South-West Region of the country. We continue to liaise with our earliest project, another NGO, BERUDA, situated in the North West Region, and another project in the isolated village of Ote; a very hard-to-reach area of the Akwaya region near the Nigerian border.

The villages are remote and access by road is in the 3-month dry season only. In Akwaya town, the regional capital, there are a few standpipes in the street for water, and only very basic amenities. Honey production is part of the tradition in Akwaya, which is a region between the rainforest and savanna, with a huge diversity of plants, ideal for beekeeping. They traditionally use very small pot hives, or hollow tree trunks so production has always been on the small domestic scale. Bees Abroad are therefore working to improve production and gain new beekeepers. Most people are afraid of bees and the women do most of the farming but, unsurprisingly, do not keep bees on their land.

During 2016/17 there was a certain amount of unrest in the country that has impacted our work. This has mostly arisen from differences between the francophone population of the east and the Anglophone population of the west of the country. The differences have existed since the unification of Cameroon as the English-speaking territories joined with the French speaking in 1961 but have hitherto not caused serious interruption to our work. However, in 2016/17, tensions spilled over and the internet and phone signals were turned off in the Anglophone area for several months, so we were unable to communicate with our partners in country. We are doing our best, working when the signals are on, to organise training of our beekeepers and support of our projects. Tensions are on-going, and we are waiting for them to be resolved so that we can resume in-country visits.

Honey production is very valuable in this area with so little in the way of resources. It produces a cash crop which means that families see an increased standard of living. Income being in the hands of women also sees improved health care and nutrition in the children, and so we seek to encourage more women into bee keeping. Infant mortality has traditionally been high, but this is improving, and the increased number of children in the remote areas is testament to this. Education levels are also low, but with extra income, school fees and resources can be paid for. In the few years since Bees Abroad have been working in the Akwaya region, subtle but significant changes can be detected in standard of living, school attendance, housing quality - with more metal roofs and less straw shacks, and general well-being.

A pot hive in Akwaya produces only a very small amount of honey (Photo: Jo Hiscox)





Improvised protective clothing – anything goes (photo: Jo Hiscox)

Projects

Akwaya

In 2016 a co-operative was registered in Akwaya, with about 75 members. All hope that beekeeping will increase their income and improve the lot of their families. A programme of training and support visits is being undertaken whereby visits will take place from the BERUDA project which is only a 2 day journey away. These will train the beekeepers in making more efficient hives, the Kenyan top bars, using entirely locally produced materials. Most people naturally want to avoid being stung and so there is great interest in the veils and hats that have been developed by the BERUDA team which they can trade, or even learn to make. I naively thought any woman could sew a suit, but so many of them have poor eye sight and with a lack of spectacles, are unable to undertake such detailed work. They also have little experience of sewing, and a complicated garment such as a hood and veil is beyond them. The advantage of younger, more skilled women from Beruda, which has better connectivity to roads and towns, working with us, is that they are available to give this support.

With better protective clothing, better support and regular training visits it is hoped the honey production will grow. Some co-operative members have attended our training in the past and are already producing large amounts of honey using our methods, but it will take more support from trained in-country individuals to build a body of good beekeepers and help them overcome setbacks. This is now our aim moving forward. With more beekeepers, we are hoping to grow a honey business based on the cooperative, to process that honey and move it out to the south of the country where the stock can be sold at a profit.

Ote village

The village structure has changed significantly with more than half now being under the age of 25. This means that there is a lot of energy in the village, but the village lacks resources and opportunities particularly the young men. We continue to work with them, and they have the honey collecting centre which we helped to build, so other beekeepers from Akwaya can bring their honey to ship to market and we hope that this will encourage potential beekeepers, so that honey trading can be productive for the village. By helping them to collaborate, and join in the training provided for the cooperative, they too can increase production so that honey becomes a viable agricultural product.



Moses Tabe Director of FORUDEF meeting Simon Ngwaimimbi, Director of BERUDA (photo: Jo Hiscox)

Beruda

Our original project, started over 20 years ago continues to thrive. They are major honey and wax producers, and under their founder Simon Ngwaimimbi, support a number of projects from beekeeping to orphan programmes, to helping disabled or disenfranchised groups within the community such as widows. It is because they have worked with us for so long and their beekeepers are so skilled that they are able to offer support to other projects around Cameroon. Travelling out to Akwaya, a 2-Day journey away, and undertaking training and education and sharing their knowledge, gives their trainers and honey processors valuable additional income, but also provides a nearby source of inspiration and support for the Akwaya beekeepers.

On the last visit, we were able to support FORUDEF to make an application for a grant for a 4x4 vehicle so that they can reach a town about 80km away, so this will reduce the journey the beekeepers will have to make to get their honey and wax to market. This application is still ongoing, and we await the outcome.

Into the future

The year 2017 has been a difficult one for us, but we remain encouraged and convinced that our work will continue to grow and will bring real benefits to the area. There are always setbacks, but it is our ongoing and unwavering support that makes the people of Akwaya trust us and believe in us and to continue in what they are doing. Since last year when we brought the founders of Beruda and Forudef together, the partnership has grown in strength, and it is remarkable how they are working together, both to build FORUDEF, and to extend the influence of BERUDA for their mutual benefit.

During the current year we have also been very fortunate, in that one of our supporters has raised funds personally through garden parties and personal efforts, so that the training can continue into the next year. We hope that we will be able to report success in this area despite other difficulties of working in such a hard-to reach area.



Innovation, Sabiye beekeepers, try a new local material (photo: Trisha Marlow)

GHANA

Projects

Better with Bees: Cashew Farmers' Project



This project began in 2016 with training in two communities in the Banda District of Brong Ahafo region. In 2017, they were joined by four further groups in three villages and one town; all of them on a journey towards less precarious livelihoods through beekeeping in what is a very impoverished part of Ghana.

Three further groups of trainees in the villages of Atakurom, Nkwonakranja and Teselima received training in April, as well as members of a town beekeeping group at Berekum, visited in December. The Berekum course provided an excellent opportunity for our new trainee trainer, Joshua, to learn how Bees Abroad delivers courses. It gave him the chance to practice his skills just a month after being selected to join the team.

One hundred and fifty trainees took part in these courses bringing the total number trained to 195; a total which included around one-third of women. Training apiaries were sited in each community. The availability of local materials is low due to climate and environmental degradation, Timber is just too costly to provide hives to individuals, so we have to work hard encouraging group co-operation and putting new honey money into increasing the number of hives. One group is trying a new palm material, and a metal worker has a colonised metal hive from scrap offcuts – we advised that he heavily shade this hive, and wait to hear whether his bees stay – it is encouraging that this group is already *“thinking outside the box”*.

Honey-hunter, Atakurom (photo: Trisha Marlow)



The project manager, Trisha Marlow, visited in April and assisted Thomas with the Atakurom course. Honey hunters are men who, in these areas, fell large trees to take honey from feral bees, destroying the colony and the tree during the process. Convincing these honey hunters of the benefits of becoming bee farmers is a key aim in these rural areas – and some fifteen attended the Atakurom course. The village Chief and his sub-chiefs in traditional dress came for a day to see what we were doing, and to lend their support to the project.

In November, a follow-up visit to the new village groups showed that all three were making progress, but it is still early days. High levels of illiteracy, as well as communication and logistical issues, have provided challenges, but we have worked hard to overcome these challenges, and



Vibrant market at Nsawkaw, close to two of our groups: first honey will hopefully be on sale this year

the team has focussed on optimising the chances of colonisation to obtain a reasonable amount of honey during the first significant harvest in March 2018. We are hoping that the two villages near Nsawkaw may be in a position to sell some honey in the weekly market within the next few months.

Meanwhile, both of the original groups have a good level of colonisation in their apiaries and have begun to harvest honey.

As an important aside to the Cashew groups, our trainer Thomas grasped the challenge of coordinating and processing a trial shipment of beeswax to a French company in Burkina Faso, and they were delighted with the result. We are now in a position to recommend groups in Brong Ahafo and the north of Ghana for further contracts. This is excellent news as the subsequent three-year contracts will allow far greater security for planning for growth as opposed to casual purchases by a passing trader.

Women construct a top bar hive, Atakurom village course (photo: Trisha Marlow)



Extension work, Teselima community (photo: Trisha Marlow)

A job well done, a batch of hives ready to take to a new apiary site, Atakurom community (photo: Trisha Marlow)



Bee Club member – Bandaman school (photo: Trisha Marlow)

Bees-for-Fees_Bandaman-Senior High School



Bandaman school Bee Club continues to develop, with theory meetings and interest from the teaching staff. The girls enjoyed the taste of their first litre of honey very much! However, the temperament of the strong colonies attracted to their top bar hives on the cashew farm has proved to be too much for the group at this early stage of their training. The bees are indeed, compared to other local bees, quite 'hot'. It is hoped that the training team will be able to split the colony with the calmest temperament, and the club members will learn to handle these with confidence as small colonies.

In the meantime, the school is fortunate to have a member of Nyu Nunu beekeepers – one of the Cashew Farmer groups - on the maintenance staff. This person will oversee the apiary until the youngsters have more confidence in their skills. In the meantime, the Year One members will initially learn honey and wax processing and how to make skin products. Flexibility is key to projects in Africa and Trisha will visit again in March 2018 to ensure the project is back on track.

Intermediate-Regional-Training, Nkoranza, Brong Ahafo

Bees Abroad ran an intensive three-day course for fifty members representing seventeen different beekeeping groups and a large cashew farmers' group from across the Brong Ahafo region, Ghana. Vital administrative support was provided by the National Beekeepers Association (NATBA) - an in-country NGO.

Trisha Marlow (project manager) introduced a more cost-effective way to reach many more groups than was feasible through individual group training. Together with Bees Abroad Nigerian trainer Idris Muhammad Barau, they group-trained selected members of several communities to a high level. This has embedded local 'on-call' help and advice to all the communities, all the time. The course included 'Unity Training' which demonstrated the benefits of active group working – an approach which, like beekeeping itself, can be very challenging at the outset.

The course included PowerPoint presentations, despite several power outages. The team used large-size photos to provide clarity on issues that had previously puzzled the participants. It was essential to bring updated information to the beekeepers on bee pests and diseases, which are appearing in West Africa; these include varroa.

The beekeepers were taught to make a small hive, known as a 'catchbox' from bamboo, to emphasise the advantages and affordability of sustainable materials. Sadly, even bamboo is not always available, but rewardingly, there is some innovation in our project communities to try new materials where this is the case. More hives provide more sites for bees, and local bees can choose their favoured type of hive.

Wax cleaning was demonstrated, and practical sessions held at NATBA apiaries. The Bees Abroad maize suits performed extremely well compared to some of the "modern" suits brought by attendees.

The course attracted the interest of the Ghana News Agency, which provided welcome awareness-raising of our work in Ghana. Radio broadcasts will follow the course, giving airtime to sensitise farmers to the main topical issues raised on the course: overuse of pesticides, theft and poisoning, and bushfires.

Plans

Two new trainee trainers, Joshua and Nana, were selected. Joshua has already assisted Thomas with a training course for beginners. When funding becomes available, there will be some new projects in Ghana, so new trainers are essential. Also, Richard Okoe, with his organisation NATBA, is now established as the in-country NGO for the east of the Brong Ahafo region.

Intermediate Course participants with their completion certificates, Nkoranza, Brong Ahafo, November 2017 (photo: Trisha Marlow)



INDIA

Under The Mango Tree - a new chapter for Bees Abroad

Background

The year 2017 saw Bees Abroad returning to the Indian sub-continent with an agreement for cooperation and collaboration signed with Under the Mango Tree Society (UTMT), an Indian and India-based Non-Governmental Organization that promotes beekeeping as a tool to help alleviate poverty by employing experienced beekeepers in India to travel and train Indian farmers in beekeeping.

In India, 84% of farmers own less than two hectares of land. More than 80% of farmers in the areas where UTMT is active live below the poverty line of two US dollars per day. To date, UTMT has reached 129 villages in the three Indian states of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra.

Currently, there are four species of honeybee 'at home' in India. Two species live in the wild; *Apis dorsata* – the 'rock' bee, and *Apis florea* - the 'dwarf' bee. The two of interest to beekeepers in India are *Apis mellifera*, the European honey bee, which has been introduced rather recently, and the indigenous local 'Indian' or 'Asian' bee, *Apis cerana*, its smaller, docile sister.

While *Apis mellifera* produces more honey, it has some disadvantages. As an imported species, it can spread disease among the local species, and it competes for forage, to the detriment of the *Apis cerana*. As a result, *Apis cerana* is under significant pressure, and numbers are dropping, which is terrible news for the environment as some plants depend on *Apis cerana* for pollination.

What brings Bees Abroad and UTMT together?

As well as seeking to alleviate poverty, both organisations share the aim of promoting a healthy environment for people and pollinators – specifically the best locally adapted

species of bee. Co-operation between Bees Abroad and UTMT increases organisational capacity to reach and support beneficiaries in India, to achieve shared goals.

The agreement with UTMT gives Bees Abroad a strategic mechanism for geographic and demographic expansion to support beekeeping development work in India. Cooperative working means there is no requirement for experienced beekeepers to travel from the UK to train Indian farmers in beekeeping – a significant cost saving. Bees Abroad will have access to local experienced and skilled resources already on the ground, with appropriate language skills and experience of different honey bees in different environments. UTMT benefits from support to spread its accumulated skills even further and build capacity locally for sustainable beekeeping.

A Master Trainer (photo: Martin Kunz)





The Honey Harvest (photo Martin Kunz)

Cooperation and Collaboration

To date, one project has been scoped and funded with a grant of £1634 from Bees Abroad. This is to provide a group of 6 to 7 Master Trainers, Junior Technical Experts and Team Leaders from UTMT's technical wing in Gujarat, with training in strengthening bee colonies, advanced queen rearing techniques, maximising quality honey production, wax/pollen collection and storage and flora management.

Part of the training is on the keeping of stingless bees (*Trigona*) in man-made hives. These tiny bees are particularly valuable pollinators of mango trees – one of the main cash plants for farmers in areas where UTMT is active. All was ready for the course at the end of 2017 – when a typhoon struck, and it had to be postponed - to the great disappointment of all concerned. A new date was set in early 2018.

Future activities

The cooperation will be further strengthened by Bees Abroad, with Martin Kunz (Bees Abroad project manager India) to consult, run and agree on future projects with UTMT. UTMT will continue to identify appropriate trainees to benefit from the training project who will work with farmers on UTMT's beekeeping programmes on meagre incomes (below US\$200) to enhance their crop yields and thereby assist in the relief of poverty.

The training of one master beekeeper (who can look after a group of 25 novices) costs 30,000 Rupees (around £350), while bee-friendly seeds and saplings for one village will cost 50,000 Rupees (£560).

Longer term there is potential for Bees Abroad to respond to new enquires for beekeeping assistance from India by iterating new agreements for project work to support work with indigenous bee types, increase the number of beneficiaries and alleviate poverty.

KENYA

Positive developments for Bees Abroad in Kenya

Overview

For the last 12 years, John and Mary Home (project managers) have endeavoured to develop the work of Bees Abroad in Kenya. This report gives an overview of the work they have done in the past year, and Bees Abroad plans for the future in Kenya.

Our work centred on the promotion of beekeeping in rural areas, and the benefits to subsistence farming families and their communities. This work is a pleasure to undertake even though it was a steep learning curve with many different approaches needed due to the diverse cultures and tribal loyalties, together with problems associated with money management for people whose day-to-day poverty affects their whole lives. Other issues include climate, seasonal patterns and an arid or semi-arid environment. Throughout this, we are humbled by their cheerfulness and the overwhelming generosity of people with so little.

Over the years we have put much emphasis on networking with local chiefs, regional and national government officials as well as the Beekeeping Educational facilities that exist in Kenya. This has had a double benefit in that these groups support Bees Abroad and are aware of the areas where project work has been initiated. This has led to the opportunity for Bees Abroad's voice to be heard on various forums.

Much of our in-country success can be attributed to working with our friend and colleague David Njuguna whose passion and motivation for beekeeping was to benefit his fellow Kenyans. His untimely death recently was a sad loss to us, and to all who knew him. His legacy lives on with those who were privileged to learn from his teaching, especially those who were trained by David during the recent 3-year DFID project.

Tribute for the work of David Njuguna



David Njuguna (photo: Steve Bates)

David Njuguna lost his life in a road accident on 27th August 2017 in Kenya. Without his support, commitment, knowledge and enthusiasm over the past ten years, Bees Abroad would never have achieved so much in Kenya. David worked in beekeeping development in various African Countries before he approached Bees Abroad, having learnt of the charity's work through someone in Cameroon. When in Kenya we met with him and realised his passion for beekeeping, and how similar his approach was to that of Bees Abroad. That was the joy of working closely with David. He

brought benefits through honeybees and their management to the people for whom he cared so much. All those who visited Kenya appreciated David's thoughtfulness and programme planning to achieve the most benefit during the visit. He was an extraordinary person, and all looked on him as part of our extended family in whom we had complete trust. He was an example to all who met him for his energy and dedication and willingness to help anyone who called on him. The beekeeping community highly respected David; so much so that many messages have been received expressing how much David will be missed. His earthly life may have ended, but his contribution will remain in the memory of all of us.

Activities in 2017

Bee Products Enterprise Development

In March 2017 we were thrilled when we received exciting news from the UK Department for International Development (DFID). Our project had been completed in over three years and created a new economic opportunity for 900 pastoral households to diversify their livelihoods in the arid and semi-arid land of Kenya. The project, entitled 'Bee Products Enterprise Development' supported the participants from basic beekeeping training through to market chain integration. The progress we made on this 'journey' is reported in previous annual reports. We had to rely on the team in Kenya to implement the plan initially approved, and we were able to monitor by regular communication using emails, text messages and an annual visit.

The project was seen by DFID to be 'highly relevant', and there have been many interesting outputs as described in the 'key achievements and results'. Beekeeping-based activities provided a level of resilience to extreme weather events that typically impact livestock and crop production in these areas. In light of the evidence available DFID scored this project with A+ (outcomes moderately exceeded expectations).

Key achievements and results

- The outcomes from this project are sustainable
- Four honey co-operatives are at various stages of implementation
- The value added to the hive products is embraced by the women who can create their income by selling honey and cosmetics in their local markets
- The project increased household food security and income while ensuring sustainable management of natural resources.

The sustainable aspect of the work is acknowledged in research outputs written by Tom Carrol and Chris Davey 'Lessons from the field: Building from experience to improve support for beekeeping in Kenya and Uganda', reported in May 2017.

Co-operatives in Laikipia supported by Bees Abroad

Laikipia West Cooperative was taken through an organisation self-assessment, after which it was supported with a matching fund which they used to purchase honey from farmers and packaging materials. Further support, in the form of seed capital, allowed the cooperative to lease an outlet that is used as an office. The co-operative chairman reported that the business is doing well.

The **Laikipia Central Cooperative** was likewise taken through an organisational self-assessment. The members followed up by contributing cash which they invested in buying bulk honey which they have been selling and restocking since. The chairman has reported that they have made £250 in profit, which they have reinvested in the business. This cooperative has leased a house where they can do the honey processing. Currently, they are exploring a matching seed capital to boost their business.

For **Ruai Beekeepers Co-operative**, (an early co-operative that had gone downhill but was revived through the DFID project) the business has been doing very well, and they have been linked up with an agency that will help them market their produce in East Africa. This was achieved through a government agency that focuses on small and micro-enterprises.

For **Laikipia North**, the cooperative had many challenges and had not moved forward due to drought and resource-based conflicts that affected the area for much of the year. We are encouraged by the news that talks with Field Officers Joseph and Francis are centred on how in the future we can revive it by doing an organisation self-assessment once peace returns and the area and the rains return.



Share Certificate of Ruai Beekeeper - surname obscured (photo: Steve Bates)

Kirigani Community Development Network

Support was on-going for this network, with several visits from David Njuguna giving encouragement and suggesting ways of overcoming challenges. David assisted in making applications for further funding from the County government and other funders to facilitate premises and equipment for the group to process and market their honey centrally. David had undertaken some training at the school before the time of his death.

Mary and John were briefly visiting the chairperson of the group and learned that the group has continued to grow and improve their beekeeping. They now have the support of an experienced NGO which has made available some processing equipment and can help in building a simple honey house for the group. Although the group was affected by the drought, which reduced the expected honey crop, the members are prepared to continue the support and training at the school. This brings us closer to the end of funding for this project, but there remains a small balance for a further visit from one of our trainers to both the group and school in one visit when the need arises.

Palmy

This project is unusual, and we knew it would present some challenges. These were acknowledged from its conception; most of the members were young people still in full-time college education so training needed to be out of term time.

A visit was planned for August but did not materialise due to the politically charged environment in Kenya at the time. A recent report from the group has indicated that it was still doing well and that the group had obtained a honey crop from their ten hives very recently of about 25 kilos of processed honey. The responsibility for this project is now in the hand of Joseph Kisio, a field officer/trainer, and he is making the necessary arrangements for the next training visit.

Nakhuuba Young Farmers Group

This project was able to move forward following a satisfactory assessment visit which observed that there was a good potential for beekeeping. The group comprises some 30 members who are mainly young people relying on agricultural activities that are centred on very small family farms of between one and three acres; so the addition of beekeeping needing little land space will fit in well and subsequently benefit the farmers both through pollination of crops they grow and from the production of honey and beeswax.

Some hives from a previous initiative were available, so the emphasis during the three days training covered the full range of essential topics identified in the Bees Abroad curriculum at the start of the project. The training was well received, and contact was maintained during the year to encourage the group to persevere with their beekeeping. As a result, very recently, the group harvested and processed their crop, which yielded 75 kilos of liquid honey. We are pleased that John Kibue, one of our trainers, has taken over this project and is discussing plans to visit in the New Year and continue training and support to the group.

Ewangan Maasai Village

This project came about when Professor Jacquie McGlade was introduced to John and Mary Home by a friend after she mentioned her interest in beekeeping with the Maasai people in Kenya. We were delighted to share our experiences of working with Bees Abroad and found that we had a shared passion for wanting to help improve the lives of underprivileged people in the developing world.

Jacquie is Professor and Director of the Sekenani Research Centre for Resilience and Space Research at the Maasai Mara University, Kenya <https://ewanganmaasai.org>. While in



Ewangan Maasai Village sign (photo: Mary Home)

Kenya, we were invited to visit the Ewangan Maasai Cultural Village Self Help Group whose aim is to propagate Maasai culture through the lives and activities of members of the village and its surroundings. The community supports sustainable development, conservation and ecotourism in the Maasai region.

We spent five days at the village in November 2017 and experienced Maasai village life, living in their village. During our time there, we were able to help and give advice for their new set up beekeeping project as well as demonstrating some value-added products.

We were treated to a fantastic safari drive as well as a short bush walk looking at medicinal plants. Croton in Kenya fills the large forest gaps and forest margins, so it is prolific on the Maasai Mara. The flowers provide nectar for honey bees; the honey produced is dark and has a strong flavour. The potential is there to expand the beekeeping in the future.

Cheptebo Rural Development Centre

The support given in 2017 by the Worshipful Company of Wax Chandlers to Bees Abroad has produced very positive results. We at Bees Abroad, both in the UK and Kenya, really appreciate the support from this recent grant which went towards the work in Kenya for the development of beekeeping at Cheptebo Rural Development Centre in Kerio Valley. Since our last report, it has moved forward in several ways.

Partnering with their Agricultural Training Centre has enhanced new opportunities for community empowerment and the alleviation of poverty. The Wax Chandlers' grant initially funded John Kitilit, the newly appointed farm manager, to attend a one-week residential advanced training course at the National Beekeeping Institute in Nairobi. This has proved very beneficial as his skills with the bees, and his enthusiasm in setting up the hives for student training was apparent when Bees Abroad visited in November 2017.

Bees Abroad will be responsible for the beekeeping element of the one-year agricultural course for 50 students. In the past year some 800 local farmers attending a one week introductory course; this again included some beekeeping training. John Kibui is one of the Bees Abroad team in Kenya who will be supporting the project in Cheptebo and helping with the course.

The grant also provided the resources which have been utilised in fencing a one-acre apiary site with wire mesh, barbed wire, and fencing posts, and purchasing the twelve new hives



John Kitilit - farm manager, with John Kibui - Bees Abroad Trainer (photo: Mary Home)

that will be run for commercial honey production and the practical training that students will undertake. The area was chosen in a remote part of the farm, away from people and animals. Part of the training area has essential shade from the trees for the hives. The trees provide valuable pollen and nectar and allow the beekeepers to hang the hives to prevent an attack from the destructive African honey badger as well as from termites. At the lower end of the area, the bees can access water from a small stream.

The existing training apiary was established in 2010 with four hives. It is now too close to the road up to the college. This area will be retained and has been supplied with examples of four different types of hives that are in common use. They will not house honeybees and are purely for demonstration; two types of log hives, Langstroth hive and Top Bar Hive.

We received the following message from the farm manager after the November visit:

'On behalf of Cheptebo fraternity, we wish to thank most sincerely the support of the Wax Chandlers and Bees Abroad for their tireless commitment and dedication in helping us and communities in ASAL (Arid and semi-arid land) regions to know beekeeping as an income generating activity. We promise to work faithfully with John Kibui.'

Hives hanging on wires in a shady area



Beekeeping at the Centre has been allocated a small secure room for the storage of the protective bee suits, the extraction of honey, and the making of added value hive products. The Centre is another facility that will benefit all students receiving training at the college. Faith and Ruth are part of the team here making body cream with beeswax. They have both previously received training from Bees Abroad and can pass on these skills to other participants.



Inspecting a hive at Molo Brecon Self Help Group (photo: Mary Home)

Molo Brecon Self Help Group (MBSHG) in Kenya

While in Kenya, Mary and John went to see the work of a UK charity which worked through the Red Cross in the district of Molo. The days we spent there involved exploring the possibilities of beekeeping with a UK beekeeper Richard Stevens. We received encouraging assistance from Cornelius Kasisi who had previously worked at Baraka Agricultural College in the Bee Unit.

During our time there, visits and training were given to three groups with disabilities, and one able-bodied group, both on the benefits of beekeeping and the making of added value products including honey and beeswax. This enabled them to set up a small combined group for producing items for sale. A comment from one of the group was very telling: 'now we can create some income for ourselves and not sit at the roadside begging'.

The importance of networking in Kenya

On their return to Nairobi, Mary and John always appreciate the generous hospitality very much from Peter Paterson. They describe how they are then able to visit the National Beekeeping Institute and share time updating them on the progress of our Bees Abroad projects in Kenya to Grace Asiko (Officer in Charge) and her staff.

Robin Mbae is Deputy Director of Livestock Production and is responsible for apiculture and climate change for the Kenyan Government. As always, he makes time to see us and talk through the support that he can give to our work in Kenya. We had the privilege of receiving an invitation from Dr Michael Lattorff (Head of Environmental Health at the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICEPI)). He was generous with his time and showed us around the new African Reference Laboratory for Bee Health. Of particular interest to us was their experimental work with African plant extracts; some of which appeared to yield successful results against the varroa mite. He took great interest in learning the extent of Bees Abroad involvement and contribution to beekeeping in Africa.

Plans for the future

Project work continued to be managed by David Njuguna, until his untimely death. John and Mary visited the project in October, and following a meeting with the administrator, accountant and BPED staff, responsibilities were allocated to the Field Officers/Trainers.

The Centre for Equality Rights (CERA) supported David with a staff administrator Joseph Gitonga and accountant Magdalene Karoki. Our recent visit to Kenya focused on the way forward with the support of our team in the office and the field officers who continue to be positive about the benefits that they can deliver through beekeeping.

To this end, it is envisaged that the existing Bees Abroad projects and any future work in Kenya will be undertaken by our field officers/trainers some who are also involved in, and supportive of, the Honey Co-operatives that resulted from the DFID project. We are personally grateful and proud of them for all they are prepared to undertake to benefit their communities. Our one overriding desire has always been to give the Kenyans themselves the responsibility and ownership for their beekeeping enterprises. This can have risks, but overwhelmingly it brings significant benefits and provides greater opportunities to local trainers, who under David's management developed the skills necessary to manage and train community groups.

The following are examples of the training they can deliver

- Group dynamics and governance
- Introduction/Revision of basic beekeeping
- Hive making and setting of the apiary
- Bees husbandry and pest management
- Natural resources management and setting up of the tree nursery
- Bee suit making
- Honey harvesting
- Processing and value-added products
- Standardisation, business skills and marketing

The relationship we have built up with our team enables us to communicate regularly and the confidence to know that we continue to move forward with the Bees Abroad work in Kenya.

Two further projects in Kenya were reported by another of our project managers – David Evans

*The new honey store nearing completion
(photo: Joseph Gitonga)*



Kishermoruak

The year 2017 was our final training year for this project. When Ridgewood Rotary club in the USA first contacted us, the objective was for a group of 30 women from this Maasai village to be trained in beekeeping skills. They planned to use any income from beekeeping to help pay towards keeping their daughters in school rather than being pressurised into early marriage.

'The Mothers of Kishermoruak' as they call themselves have all been taught how to manage their bees, to harvest honey and wax and to make products such as soap, candles, and face and body creams. They now have 32 hives in their local area. 12 girls are being supported in education, and income from beekeeping is contributing towards this.

The experience of working together as beekeepers have encouraged the women to support some members of the group in new businesses not associated with beekeeping.

The women have built a honey shop on the main highway leading to the entrance of the Maasai Mara wildlife reserve, and they plan to sell to the visiting tourists. On behalf of the women, Jerry Kallman from Ridgeway Rotary has put up a plaque commemorating the life of their great friend David Njuguna who sadly lost his life this year.

Kisii

Kisii is in the South West of Kenya and is a fertile area ideal for beekeeping. Our work here involves training members of organisations from two villages very close to each other. The proximity of the two groups has enabled us to combine training visits to minimise our operating costs.

The first group consists mainly of women, and they were already in possession 15 Langstroth donated hives. They needed to improve their bee husbandry skills and to work towards enhancing production and making 'value-added products' such as soaps and hand creams.

The second group was made up of young people. They had access to some traditional hives that were not very productive.

In 2016 some basic training took place, and in 2017 some additional training was provided for the women's group; this focused on producing added value products. However, further training was cancelled because of the untimely death of the lead trainer in Kenya, David Njuguna. We are very fortunate that we now have a new senior trainer in the shape of John Kibui and he will recommence training again in January 2018. We wish him all the very best at Kisii.



Hanging up a hive (photo: John Kibui)

Group meeting (photo: Joseph Gitonga)



NIGERIA

Overview

Bees Abroad has a long-standing relationship with Nigeria. Over the last twelve years, we have actioned over 25 enquiries for assistance. Given difficult in country operating conditions we selected just six enquiries to develop into projects, the majority of which are now self-sufficient. Two ongoing projects, in Delta State and Rivers State are 'on hold' as they are in areas deemed too dangerous for us to operate. However, we are in touch and trying to support them in the work they are doing. As well as delivering beekeeping training and support, our focus has been on training local trainers and developing relationships with beekeeping groups and networks. One of the ways we do this is by asking projects and organisations we work with to join the Bees Abroad Nigeria network.

A good example of this is the Margo Abayomi Evergreen Foundation (MAIME) in Osun State, whose forestry workers received beekeeping training from Bees Abroad in 2015/2016. The MAIME Foundation employs forest workers to work on 200 acres of virgin forest used to produce palm oil as the main income-producing activity for poverty alleviation in the local area. The site is located in a virgin riverine forest by the Osun River, 20 miles from nearest big city Ibadan, Nigeria. After completing beekeeping training and receiving their Bees Abroad certificates, MAIME forest workers continue to develop their beekeeping and have earned modest extra income from the sale of honey and secondary products. The longer-term plan is to generate additional income from the manufacture and sale of top bar hives.

In 2018, the Foundation will offer a Wood and Bamboo workshop for sustainable forest management as a local response to deforestation. As a consequence of their exposure to Bees Abroad's sustainable beekeeping training, the foundation has included a beekeeping module in this workshop. The workshop will include training rural dwellers in forest development and sustainable use of forest materials for hive construction, energy and income generation. The Foundation is a member of the Bees Abroad Nigeria network.

During 2017, Bees Abroad project manager Brian Durk supplied a reference to support a funding application by the Beekeeping Extension Society (BES, Nigeria run by Idris Muhammad Barua) to a UN Staff Organisation in Geneva to build a beekeeping resource centre in Northern Nigeria. We are delighted that the application was successful and the centre is now up and running.

Plans

By the end of 2017, Bees Abroad had three registered projects in Nigeria, where we continue to work with project groups. Four enquiries are still open, with good potential to be developed into projects for delivery in 2018 and beyond.

Api Expo Nigeria 2018

Nigeria is to host its first international beekeeping conference. The ApiExpo Africa 2018 will take place from 25th to 29th September 2018 at Abuja International Conference Centre in Nigeria under the theme 'Beekeeping Industry for Sustainable Development, Wealth Creation and Economic Diversification'. Bees Abroad aims to work with key members of the Bees Abroad Nigeria Beekeepers Network in 2018, to support the development of small-scale / smallholder beekeeping in Nigeria, through the delivery of beekeeping training, talks, demonstrations and workshops.

New and ongoing projects

In 2017, we saw good examples of the value of focusing on the development of local teaching capacity and developing relationships with groups and individuals with beekeeping skills.

Bees Abroad School Beekeeping Project

This project, funded by INTO Giving, is situated at Okun owa Multilateral Grammar School, South West Nigeria. In this school, the students come from farming families on very low incomes; poverty leads to poor nutrition, high mortality at all ages and inadequate access to healthcare and education. INTO Giving is an exemplary charity; projects are nominated by INTO employees who raise funds used to support development activities (<http://www.into-giving.com/projects/bees-abroad>). In 2017, 28 projects were nominated by staff for consideration, and Bees Abroad was delighted that our proposal came out joint top in the assessment process; INTO Giving is funding 100% of the essential project costs.

Plans

In the first year of this three year training project, Bees Abroad will train two beekeeping trainers and ten selected pupils as beekeepers, to build their hives (two hives per trainee), make their bee suits and manage their colonies on their account. The trainers will become a school resource and establish a school beekeeping club with beekeeping as a topic on the curriculum. A teaching apiary with 30 top bar hives to will be established in 2018 within the rural government-run school to enable the school's beekeeping trainers to deliver beekeeping training to ten new trainees in year two and three.

Typically, good beekeepers are naturally observant and inquisitive. They should be interested in the environment, in trees, insects and plants, possess the strong work ethic needed to check hives regularly, be innovative in solving problems, and notice details regarding their hives, their bees, and the local conditions.

INTO Giving's donation covers the cost of delivery of beekeeping training, including training the teachers, materials needed for start-up hive construction and personal protection equipment, provision of instructional training materials and manuals, costs of apiary establishment and harvesting equipment.

From 2020 onwards, the sale of honey and secondary products should provide an income stream for the school beekeeping club to be self-sufficient. Over 98% of these students contributed financially to their households. In the longer term, the project will train young people from the school in beekeeping skills to help provide additional income at home.

The Bees Abroad intervention is not based on handouts – trainees will be required to build or make inputs from scratch as appropriate, from local resources, so they experience the options for differentiating roles and interests within beekeeping. Roles range from carpenters building hives to tailors making bee suits or specialisations such as producing secondary bee products (such as skin creams) or providing pollination services to farmers with crops that need bees for pollination, or as has happened with past projects, trainees become beekeeping trainers themselves!



Okun-Owa School Banner (photo: Bisi New)



Hive construction lesson – waxing the top bars (photo: Bisi New)

Quality honey in sealed comb (photo: Bisi New)



Our focus is to train the students to be active beekeepers and manage their bee hives and not their bees. We emphasise producing more honey from each hive as the route to increasing productivity rather than having more hives. Our strategy requires better skills from the beekeepers and less investment in equipment.

Training is in modern beekeeping management techniques in line with the British Beekeepers Association (BBKA) Tropical Syllabus. Bees Abroad will apply sustainable methods, for example, hives and bee suits made from local materials, and there will be an emphasis on pollination, the environment and conservation. Trainees will be provided with Bees Abroad Basic and Advance beekeeping manuals for reference as well as hands-on training in the field during the local bee season. The theoretical and practical training modules will be delivered by a (Nigerian) Bees Abroad trainer locally, whom we have worked with successfully for many years.



Trainees with homemade solar wax melter made from scrap

After training, students will practice beekeeping on their account in their communities, thus creating a second income which will help to pay their school fees and support their extended families.

Jorafarm and Associates

Bees Abroad delivered beekeeping training to the Jorafarm group to 2015. They were an exemplary group who deserve to go far. Over two years they went from absolute beginners to certified trainees who built their hives, made their bee suits and now operate personal and group apiaries. Some trainees went further, becoming advocates for sustainable beekeeping and running their training groups as beekeeping trainers. Jorafarm ran a series of workshops in 2016 to demonstrate beekeeping to local young people, and to share skills acquired through their training. In 2017 a Bees Abroad trainee, Akinrotimi Odedele successfully organised free workshops and seminars for participants in Abia and Osun states in Nigeria. Jorafarm is very proud of his work and achievements, as are we.

In late 2017, Jorafarm submitted an initial proposal asking Bees Abroad to support their development of a beekeeping training centre in Osun State. Before they submitted their proposal, they sourced, funded and secured the purchase of land for their centre. Their vision is that the centre will serve local farmers, unemployed young people and women in their area, which is situated on the outskirts of the town. Target groups are local farmers, secondary school students, primary school students, as well as students at the universities and polytechnics in the area. The centre will be located in Akiriboto village, which is close to the target population. Bees Abroad will work with the group in 2018 develop a proposal to support the beekeeping training aspects of their proposal.

Interglobal Green Blossom (IGB)

Bees Abroad are working to establish a relationship with this organisation to support beekeeping training and development for groups in Abia State. IGB has benefited from support from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and is in touch with a number of groups who need training in modern beekeeping techniques, beekeeping and value-added products. Co-operation and collaboration will extend Bees Abroad's geographical network in the county.



The view from Bumba, across the lake to the Democratic Republic of Congo (photo: Paul Bloch)

RWANDA

Background

During February 2017 Dawn Williamson and Paul Bloch visited Rwanda to carry out an assessment visit for a potential project. This is what they learnt.

It was difficult to determine in advance what we might find by way of equipment, beekeeping skills, project leadership and potential group members but through Father Patrick, our contact, we had a rendezvous date, time and place agreed in Kigali. The journey to the site involved several bus changes and about five hours of slow travelling to Bumba. The altitude is over 5000 feet, with steep hillsides and plentiful water sources. There are local feral bee populations and some domesticated ones, and there appears to be ample forage for bees.

Project activities

There, we found 70 reasonably well-made hives stacked in a shed, a few bee suits, one competent beekeeper who used local reed hives, enthusiastic project members and a strong project organisation. Father Patrick had persuaded various embassies to supply money for projects including buying wood and building hives, and he had found a top bar hive design on the internet.

Instead of stopping our work at the assessment stage we decided to use our three available days to provide some basic training, to work with project members to repair and prepare hives and to establish several apiaries which potential participants could follow.

Basic training session





Hive repair and manufacture



Local hives in an apiary with some shelter from sun and rain



Filling the holes and cracks with a mix of clay and cow dung (photo: Paul Bloch)

Lemongrass (in a paper bag) for rubbing inside each hive (photo: Paul Bloch)



We very quickly found that our biggest challenge was to protect baited hives and bee colonies from ants. We applied used engine oil but had not entirely solved the problem by the time we had to travel on to Ngororera.

At Ngororera once again we found a stock of hives, some bee suits, some local expertise in beekeeping, well-organised projects with clear leadership and enthusiastic local members. More steep hillsides, once again plenty of water and forage. We set about repairing and baiting hives and preparing a small apiary as an example. It took shape quickly. The holes and cracks were filled with a mixture of clay and cow dung. The trainees rubbed lemongrass inside each hive as bait to attract bees.

Plans

We have been able to secure some Bees Abroad project funding to supply more bee suits and to support some training for future trainers. We also found some local funding in the UK to supply gloves. The local solution for beekeeping gloves were rubber work gloves that come in a single size (very extra-large) and provided no feel or control.

In November 2018 we will return to Rwanda to carry out much more training, to establish project set up and controls and to have feedback systems in place so that we can continue to support the projects from the UK.

SIERRA LEONE

Background

This project aims to alleviate poverty in five villages (2,500 people) in rural Sierra Leone through establishing a sustainable, community-led livelihood initiative to harvest, process and market honey (and other products). The sale of honey will bring income and to both male and female beekeepers. Further anticipated impacts beyond those trained to keep bees including blacksmiths making beekeeping equipment and tailors making suits. It is hoped that this will result in more children attending school.

The project is supported by Rory's Well, which has provided start-up funding for hives and bee suits for this visit. Neil Brent, the project manager, would like to thank Tony and Karen of Rory's Well for all the logistical support provided, including the use of the truck, the lodge and training centre, his wife Kath, who trained participants in value-added products, and the support given to local people funded by Rory's Well.

Activities

Rory's well....gets buzzing

In November 2017, Bees Abroad visited the project. Neil, as a new project manager, was accompanied by Brian Durk (UK) and Victor Ayebo. They travelled to Taninahun, Barri Chiefdom, Pujehun District, Sierra Leone.

Brian and Victor spent time teaching Neil various techniques of African beekeeping. Victor proved to be a valuable member of the project team and highlighted how to use every opportunity at the hive to achieve training objectives. Neil was shown how to train participants in keeping calm and be gentle with bees and at the same time, Victor added to his skills by seeing how wax foundation, creams and lotions were made.

Seven hives had been set up in February, before Bees Abroad involvement. All but one were occupied, one had honey ready for harvesting, but the remainder had been affected by ants, wax moth, and small hive beetle. These hive inspections provided an opportunity to train bee farmers in how to manage these pests and safeguard their bee colonies.

Two hive building courses were run, one for men and one for women. Four non-beekeepers, including the truck driver, learnt to build hives. There are now six villages with hives. The women's group made their hives in a shorter time, so making foundation, skin cream, and body lotion were included in the training session.

Examination of the hives already located in Rory's well project land found that they were sited on stands in the bush surrounding the five villages. Problems included gaps in the hives, stands (made with bush wood) that were too high, overhanging branches, and a lack of grease on the stands allowing ants to enter the hives. The bee-farmers were urged to check their apiaries regularly, cut back intrusive plants, and apply grease to the ant-detering grease bands.

Maryam (a trainee beekeeper) with baby son Ibrahim (photo: Neil Brent)





Men's hive building group (photo: Neil Brent)

Set-up equipment

A recycled sewing machine was donated to the project, and a local blacksmith identified who would make hive tools at an equivalent cost of around £1.50 per tool. The bee farmers knew to use chicken feathers as bee brushes, and two participants will be exploring making bee smokers from locally available materials. Each village received a saw, tape measure, and hammer so that more hives could be made. A gallon of grease was left with the lead bee-farmers for future use deterring termites. Three food standard buckets, three sieves, and five 20-litre storage containers were purchased locally.

Hive building

Around 25 trainees were taught to make hives using wood and local split bamboo – making the groups self-sufficient and able to teach others. Where these materials were in short supply, participants were already trying other materials by the end of the training. In total, 24 hives were built, with more promised. Three hives were immediately occupied.

Bee-suit manufacture.

At start-up, a local beekeeper, who was also a tailor, was commissioned to make 12 suits. Five suits had already been made during a preliminary visit early in 2017, and funding was provided for materials to make a further 14 suits.

Processing

A temporarily processing centre was set up, and honey from one hive was processed. A total of nine pounds was extracted and potted. The reaction of the bee farmers present was one of amazement that something so clear and clean could be produced. The honey usually available from honey hunters is not very clean and usually has bits of a bee in it. The bee farmers tasted the honey and took some away to share with their village. One took a pot to a wedding in Bo and received very positive comments. Processing beeswax was demonstrated, and those present were able to assist and then make foundation for baiting their hives and wax used for creams and lotions.

Plans

Currently, there is no honey and no wax-based skin products for sale at the local markets in Poteru and Mwala. Plans are being made to sell honey in very small quantities and develop the market over time. Other potential outlets include the hotels in Bo, and in hospitals, although there is not a history of using honey in wound treatment. There are plans to meet with local health officials during a later visit. Very positive meetings were held with the two main supermarkets in Bo.

A permanent processing centre for honey and wax and a storage facility for honey and equipment is planned for the Taninahun Rory's Well training centre.

Subject to funding, further visits are planned during times when honey is likely to be available for harvesting. By 2019, once the packaging and marketing issues are resolved, the initiative will expand beyond these five villages as there are already requests from nearby communities to involve them.

Future visits will focus on training three individual bee farmers who have the aptitude and desire to be trainers, illustrated by their willingness to support others throughout all the training. These three beekeepers will be equipped to train others. This has been a very positive start, and there is huge scope for income-generation through beekeeping in this region.

First honey harvest (photo: Neil Brent)



TANZANIA

Background

Uyogo is the main village in a small cluster of communities in the Tabora Region of western Tanzania. The area is within the extensive indigenous Miombo Forest, and honey from the trees is popular throughout Tanzania. Kenilworth is a small town in the UK Midlands which formed the Kenilworth Uyogo Friendship Link (KUFL) charity among the occupants of Kenilworth. For 20+ years the town has been providing support to Uyogo (school buildings, water supply, medical training etc.) as well as facilitating visits in both directions. The village requested help to improve their beekeeping, and KUFL approached David & Margery Blower to see what could be done, working with Bees Abroad.

Activities

Uyogo Beekeeping Association

In 2017 Bees Abroad, with KUFL as a funding partner, started working with the project (then in its third year, with 22 members). It will give local beekeepers, now working as a co-operative, the capacity to help the community make better use of the Miombo honey opportunity. The project aims to help beekeepers to move from local beekeeping to modern beekeeping by training on apiary management, bee management, honey harvesting, and post honey activities such as candle and soap making, and beeswax making, thus helping to improve local living standards.

Three key elements were identified in achieving improvements in living standards:

- Addressing the needs of local beekeepers by using locally available resources to develop sustainable management practices in modern beekeeping.
- To seek active participation by each member of the Association and each resident in the village and thus make the initiative sustainable.
- To train local beekeepers in modern beekeeping practices; bee management; honey harvesting and post-harvesting activities.



Hanging a TBH in a tree away from the termites (photo: David Blower)

To achieve these aims, Bees Abroad supported the local lead trainer, Innocent Mkasu, to complete a Diploma Course at Tabora Beekeeping Institute. Equipped with this training, Innocent adopted a participative approach to the course he ran.

Uyogo training course – April 2017

(information provided by Innocent Mkasu)

Day 1: We had a meeting with the entire group members discussing the benefits of modern beekeeping. How will they benefit? What were the duties of each member? Community benefits? The challenges of group beekeeping? Suggestions on the way forward.

The same day, the group leaders planned how to help Uyogo Association to advance more in beekeeping, such that it can be a role model for other beekeepers in the district. The group selected around a dozen members in the group to help support the training.

Day 2: Construction of Kenyan Top Bar hives (KTBs), and its benefits with the twelve selected members, using the electric saw and other tools supplied by their friends in Kenilworth. Group discussions on the ease of operation of KTBs compared to traditional hives.



Learning to make a TBH (photo: David Blower)

Days 3 & 4: Manufacture of KTBs by groups – each group making two hives – resulting in a total of ten hives to start off the new apiary.

Day 5: Bee suit manufacture, group discussions on bee management, baiting the hives using beeswax, transferring bee colonies.

Days 6 & 7: Twelve selected members were trained in harvesting honey, using some of the early hives from before Bees Abroad arrival. The group were shown how to clean the hives of moths, beetles, ants, termites, and lizards.

Day 8: Group discussions on harvesting and preparing good quality, saleable honey and beeswax.

A training apiary has been founded which will serve as the focal point for the future training and support these beekeepers will provide to the 120 other members of the community who want to become beekeepers. Bees Abroad will help them provide training and locally sourced materials so they can raise their family income above subsistence levels.

In November 2017, David and Margery Blower (project managers) visited Tanzania to review outcomes of the initial training, current honey production, identify new beekeepers, and deal with any issues arising. They found a thriving association, with 28 active members, of whom six were women.

- The table saw was producing good quality timbers from local materials at a reasonable price. They are making their own hives, and making others to sell – another income stream.
- The local tailor used start-up capital to make twenty bee suits, and is investigating making veils and spats.
- Despite the honey harvest being lower than in previous years due to drought, the organisation has decided to 'retire' log hives when they are no longer productive, and replace them with KTBs.

As well as the direct benefits, one of the participants described another important advantage to David and Margery. Margery described what they found.....

"...during our visit, the members of the group told us how they appreciated the opportunity this project gave the community to work together to achieve something. Many could contribute their different skills and feel valued. I got the feeling that other projects had been 'done to them' rather than 'done with them'. This is an important finding for Bees Abroad that it is getting the approach right."

Plans for the future

Overall, things are going well for this group, which is full of enthusiasm and has well-prepared plans for the future. Subject to funding, they hope to achieve the following in the coming year.

- Improving processing and packaging to make the product more visually attractive
- Women are keen to start making value-added wax products (skin creams etc.)
- The local organisation is planning to move the table saw to a better site
- The local organisation is planning an improved room for processing and packaging
- Improving record-keeping to keep track of the honeybees (identified by Innocent)

Many thanks go to the Kenilworth Uyogo Friendship Link which has provided start-up resources for the Uyogo community. They are responding to this friendship and funding with very positive results for the whole community.

UGANDA

Abughama Self-Help Group – Hima

Background

The project lies in the foothills of the Rwenzori mountains in Western Uganda, 50 miles north of the Equator. The group has members in rural communities just outside the town. Our project is in three separate settlements accessed by small dirt tracks: Muhumza, Karungibati and Rugendabara.



Community meeting of potential beekeepers

The group was established to improve the life chances of members through cooperation in different areas including agriculture, disability support and skills training; including the training of masons. Group members are subsistence farmers living by selling a little surplus produce for cash; all are very serious about working hard to improve their opportunities in life. The area is well suited to beekeeping, and some local beekeepers are using traditional hives.

The Project

This project started in 2017. It is the first large project to be delivered entirely by our trusted local partner, LIDEFO, based in nearby Kasese. Forty-seven people were initially trained – each representing, on average, a family of ten. At the start, five half-day training sessions were run in each of the three communities. Protective clothing, smokers, hive tools and materials to make 188 hives were provided. The first of a series of four monthly support and coaching sessions for each family took place in November. At the start of December, 60 hives were colonised; which is the most encouraging progress.

Plans

During 2018 the focus will be on further colonisation of hives and building the colonies to become fully productive. Support and coaching sessions will continue, and harvesting and jarring

Top Bar Hives awaiting installation





Making hives is hard work (Photo: Richard Ridler)

equipment will be provided, alongside appropriate training. With the co-operation of the group leaders, we hope to test ways of better measuring the impact of our projects. Rather than just measuring honey production we hope to assess the changes made possible to the lives of individual families.

Bwindi Batwa – Buhoma, Uganda

Background

The Bwindi Batwa are a community of hunter-gatherers recently displaced from the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest in South Western Uganda. This forest is home to the rare giant gorilla, and the Batwa people were forced out of the forest as a precaution against the transmission of human diseases to the gorillas; they were given no compensation, land or support. They struggle to adapt to their new circumstances and helping them presents unique and challenging problems. As hunter-gatherers, they practised beekeeping, and are keen to establish beekeeping as a livelihood.

The Project

Thanks to the generous support of the ladies of the Inner Wheel District 6 (led by Sandra Wood), Bees Abroad is working with the local organisation, Community Initiatives for Biodiversity Conservation (CIBC). Apiaries were established in three Batwa settlements during 2016, training was given and protective clothing provided. Ongoing support was provided by a local beekeeper who sadly died. A new support beekeeper was found, and he was trained at our project in Kasese, Uganda in 2017.

Colonization and build-up of hives have been slow; probably due to a lack of attention to detail – something which will be addressed during this coming year. We have given harvesting, storage and jarring equipment which has enabled modest quantities of honey to be sold. To earn extra income, the project now offers visits for tourists visiting the gorillas, and they have the opportunity to buy honey.

Plans

We will spend a week reviewing the project and planning with CIBC how best to move the project forward. At the same time, we will teach the Batwa how to make candles and skin creams, which we anticipate will be popular with tourists.

A newly built hive (Photo: Richard Ridler)



Murambo Beekeepers' Association – Kabale

Background

The organisation's mission is to 'transform communities through beekeeping', and their vision is to 'create a self-sufficient community through affordable agricultural practices'. We first met this group in 2016 and were particularly impressed by its leader Ezra Sigirenda. He learnt beekeeping from his father, showed great enthusiasm and was clearly a successful beekeeper. We decided to back him in developing and growing the association. Murambo is a short distance from Kabale in the South-Western corner of Uganda; it enjoys ideal conditions for beekeeping.

The Project

In Ezra's own words this is what has been achieved:

- Improved beekeeping skills through workshop we conducted and reading materials such as wax processing which is now important to us because we are utilising all harvests.
- Incremental improvements in total honey production: the number of beehives has been increased, harvesting methods improved, honey processing and packing also improved leading to increments in total honey production.
- Improved storage mechanisms: the airtight buckets and jars have improved the storage of our honey and our honey is currently hygienic and safely stored.
- Honey collection is easier now that we have bee suits, hive tools, smokers, boots, gloves and other gadgets.
- Improved markets: we have managed to reach the urban markets of Kabale town, Kampala and Kigali. The support of stickers and jars has helped us to hit this market.
- Increasing numbers of members: more and more members are joining us and joining our cause of transforming communities through beekeeping.

Future Plans

The first phase of the project is complete. During Richard and Jane's visits on behalf of Bees Abroad in 2018, we will explore ways, and we hope to use Ezra as a resource to start new projects within reach of Kabale.

Simion Ndungo of LIDEFO demonstrating how to make skin creams

Noah's Widows – Ibanda Parish

Background

This small project started in 2016. Its objective is to provide additional income for a group of widows in Ibanda parish which lies in the foothills of the Rwenzori mountains in the far West of Uganda. Being widows, these women are particularly disadvantaged. They have no land and in the main no families to support them. Rev. Noah attempts to care for them and regularly thanks us for our assistance.

The project

By the end of 2016, the initial ten hives were well colonised. A further and final ten hives were added in mid-2017 and training





Simion Ndungo of LIDEFO demonstrating how to make skin creams

was given in making skin creams based on beeswax and other locally-sourced ingredients. The Vice President of Uganda, Edward Ssekandi, visited in September.

Plans

The apiary with 20 hives is approaching full production, and the final project appraisal will be carried out in 2018. The project has been delivered on our behalf by our trusted partners LIDEFO in nearby Kasese. We will remain in contact with Rev Noah to ensure the apiary continues to provide the level of poverty relief for which it was intended.

The Women's Beekeeping Project, Hoima

This project began in May 2012 and was essentially completed in the April of 2016 with the registration of the project's 16 groups as the Women's Beekeeping Association. At this stage, the project had been deemed a great success largely due to the continued commitment and esprit de corps shown by the groups together with ongoing support provided by our local partners, the NGO Bigasa Sustainable Development Foundation (BISUDEF).

However, in order to put a little 'icing on the cake' it would be a real bonus if the Association was able to demonstrate its ongoing development and sustainability, not only in terms of it starting to provide an adequate return on investment for Bees Abroad and our funders but of course also for the women themselves in terms of their continued empowerment within their local communities and contribution to the income of their households.

It was with this in mind that Bees Abroad project managers Geoff Redwood and Stuart Andrews visited Hoima again in March 2017 to assess progress. During the preceding months before our visit, we had started to become concerned as to whether the Association was actually becoming a reality or was still existing only on paper. Our concerns were based on a relatively new development—poor communications from BISUDEF. This was disappointing as not only had our relationship with our local partners been so enjoyable and productive up until this stage but in reality, it was only through BISUDEF that we were able to maintain contact with the members of the Association.

However, knowing the ladies so well, we shouldn't have doubted their capabilities and commitment to the cause. Within a few days of our arriving in Hoima we had not only met with BISUDEF but we had also had two separate meetings with the Association's office

holders and senior members (some of the former project group leaders): the first sitting in as observers on one of their regular meetings, the second contributing to a discussion on the current status of the Association, their concerns and plans for the future. We had also delivered another practical workshop, specifically requested by the members of the Association, in which we re-visited the harvesting, processing and bottling of honey, together with separate sessions on how to set up an apiary and how best to deal with pests and other commonly encountered problems in the field. It was towards the end of the practical session that some of the members decided to lead a very lively and spontaneous discussion on the financial benefits to be had by selling their honey fully processed rather than just partly so. That such entrepreneurial spirit lives within the Association bodes well for the future.

As the week progressed we became more encouraged as to the state of the Association; not only had it been registered but an active committee had been formed, and an action plan produced which included a scheme which had already been implemented to provide some micro-financing services to its members. It certainly appeared that the former group leaders had started to take ownership of the Association.

Although our communications with BISUDEF have continued to be poor since returning to the UK, the NGO has at least told us that the Association's members are meeting regularly, which is heartening information.

These more recent experiences with the project have highlighted the difficulties and ongoing challenges associated with maintaining communications with NGOs, and the beneficiaries, once a project has been formally completed and managing the transition to self-dependency. Our efforts are now being focussed on trying to establish communication directly with the Association's members. If this can be achieved, then it might be possible for at least one of our project leaders to visit Hoima again during 2018 to help oversee the ongoing transition of the project and the further development of the Association.

Group member had set up a mushroom farming business (photo: Stuart Andrews)



Some of the members of the Women's Beekeeping Association



EASTERN UGANDA

Introduction

This set of projects take place in Iganga, Mbale, Olochoi and Kyere, supported by the Bees Abroad project manager, Dave Bonner.

A significant step forward has been taken with the Bees Abroad projects in Eastern Uganda. In 2016, Akol Lucas, from Mbale, was sent to the Beekeeping Station in Nairobi for advanced training. Since then he has been able to assist Bees Abroad by visiting local projects and conducting specific training sessions. While Akol is not employed by Bees Abroad, Bees Abroad is prepared to pay him for his time and out of pocket expenses for doing this work.

Once again, in 2017, the bad weather has been a problem across the whole of Eastern Uganda. Early in the year, there was a drought, and the crops failed again. This is the third year running that this has happened. The rainy season was much delayed, so once again there was a negative knock-on impact on the amount of honey produced, and the timing of the honey crop.



*Top bars were not the right width
(photo: Dave Bonner)*

The poor weather of the past two years has certainly had an impact on the motivation in the groups. However, farmers were, despite the poor weather, seeing the benefits of pollination by the bees on their crops.

Rural Youth Empowerment on Beekeeping - an Integrated Skills Project

Oluwa Youth Activity Group (OYAG) – Mbale

The Project Manager visited the group in February to review progress. Visits were made to several apiary sites that had been set up. Over 100 KTBs are deployed, and around 30 Beekeepers are involved in the group.

In the main, apiary sites were well maintained. However, in some locations, we had work to do to repair some damage when hive stands had collapsed. Some top bars needed replacing in hives where the beekeeper had used inappropriate wood as top bars. Another issue identified was that not enough bee suits had been made to cover all the beekeepers

involved. Some beekeepers did not have protective clothing and so were not visiting their apiary sites when required for fear of being stung; e.g. when stands had collapsed. The group committed to making another fifteen bee suits.

In our training, we stress the fact that apiary sites should be away from family compounds. Despite this, some people have the bees close to their houses for security and ease of visiting. In November, Akol was called to a beekeeper where the apiary was close to the compound. The bees had been disturbed and were very defensive – attacking a young girl and killing two goats. The beekeeper, who had a protective suit, saved the girl and Akol then worked with him to relocate the ten colonies to a new location. A salutary lesson for the whole group.

A well-maintained apiary (photo: Dave Bonner)



Olochoi - Soroti

The Project Manager visited the group in February. This was a review of progress and two days of training. Since the last visit, the group have acquired four hives, making a total of five hives for the four active beekeepers.

Day 1 training – Review on Apiary Management, visit sites, honey harvesting and honey processing. Question and answer session covering all aspects of beekeeping.

Day 2 training – Wax recovery, wax processing and candle making.

The knowledge that is being gained by the group is being used. Despite the poor weather the group is still determined to make this a success.

Since our return to the UK, we have been informed that the group have another six hives – 11 in total, all of which have been colonised. The recent honey harvest provided only one bucket full of honeycombs.

Hope Care Child Foundation – Atira

The Project Manager visited the group in February, but despite the enthusiasm shown at the previous visit in 2016, little progress had been made, and there was no sign of a commitment to beekeeping. We have decided to close this project.

Young Farmers and Entrepreneurs Network (YOFENET)

This was an assessment visit; the group has submitted a proposal to Bees Abroad for support in 2016.

This group is very committed and progressive, having already established mushroom growing across the whole region and is in the process of creating passion fruit as a primary crop. The group is very well linked to the local government resources and also the local communities.

The target is to have ten groups of beekeepers benefitting 100 families within three years and 30% of the families being female-led. They are so well organised that we arranged for Akol to visit in March to conduct basic training – making bee suits and essential hive management. As part of this training, YOFENET had arranged for a local carpenter to attend and he demonstrated building a KTB, copying one bought from Soroti.

The group continued to progress so, in July, we arranged for Akol to revisit this group to help them with honey harvest and also train on honey processing. This visit coincided with a large Government sponsored event at Jinja – the “National Agricultural Trade Show”. It was agreed with YOFENET that the group would send the 30 beekeeping students to this event and the cost would be split equally between YOFENET and Bees Abroad. The training overall lasted four days.

Later, YOFENET acquired a further 18 KTBs – five donated by the District, eight funded by YOFENET for their training apiary, and two beekeepers purchased five hives.

In December, Akol returned to the group and conducted a further two days training with 28 students attending. This time recapping on apiary management and honey processing. He introduced the new topic of wax recovery and wax processing.



Top Bar hives made from a felled tree (photo: Dave Bonner)

Local community fish farm initiative – Kyere, near Soroti

This was an assessment visit; the group has submitted a proposal to Bees Abroad for support in 2016. The group's objectives are:

- To establish a demonstration apiary.
- To train 8–10 people who will become the trainers.
- In three years' time, to have about 100 families with beehives (1,500 beneficiaries).

The area, on the shores of the lake, is suitable for beekeeping, and the group has a realistic plan and a realistic timescale. Kyere is located close to Soroti, so our trained beekeeper from Soroti can be paid to go to Kyere to do training and provide support. There is a local carpenter with the skills to make Top Bar Hives. There is a local demand for honey which sells for between 7,000/= and 10,000/= per 500ml (0.5Kg). In UK units, this is between £2 and £2.50 per pound.

Fishpond under construction (photo: Dave Bonner)



This group has shown commitment to its community-based projects; they have dug out, by hand, three fish ponds – each nearly an acre in area, to create a fish farm.

The chairman of the group had already cut down some trees and employed a local carpenter to split the trees into planks to make KTBs and an area of land identified for the community apiary.

In December it was agreed that Akol would visit this group to conduct their first two days of basic training. Sixteen students attended and taught how to make bee suits and the fundamental aspects of beekeeping in KTBs.

