



# Beekeeping in Uganda

Bee-keeping is an important seasonal activity in almost of all parts of Uganda.

Traditionally, bee hives are built from timber, bamboo palms or woven from forest vines and reeds. Honey is usually taken from hives twice a year.

Bee hunters and keepers prefer placing their hives in forests rather than in open fields for three reasons. Hives hidden in forests are protected from smoke caused by bush fires, from the heat and the wind and from unscrupulous honey stealing or hive destruction.



Figure 1 - Top Bar Beehive honey comb

## Project summary

The primary purpose of the Honey Beekeepers Project (HBP) was to provide Empower and Care Organization (EACO) beneficiaries with new skills that would allow them to improve their income generating capabilities and gradually become financially self-sufficient allowing them to escape the poverty trap and achieve more humane and dignified living conditions.

The secondary goal of the project was to provide EACO with a source of revenue with which it would supplement donor provided funding for its continued operation and its many socially oriented projects.

EACO has identified a population of about 200 potential beneficiaries who could benefit from the program and who would be interested in producing natural honey and wax as a means of income.

## Beekeeping in the Mukono district

The market for locally produced honey in the Mukono district is profitable even though beekeeping is not well understood. Honey is either gathered from wild honey bee colonies or it is produced by local beekeepers and sold through local shops and super markets. The industry is limited by production yield and honey sales are not meeting demand. As a result a viable industry has emerged over the last decade, Local people/farmers have driven this success and the industry continues to attract strong support from all levels within communities.

EACO has set out to take advantage of this situation and in a sustainable manner wants to participate and assist in the growth of the Uganda honey bee industry. The project is teaching



Figure 2- Mukono district, Uganda

people to construct their own honey bee hives and to produce their own protective head veils, clothing, tools, and hive smokers.

## Beneficiaries

EACO's activities are targeted towards vulnerable women, particularly widows, people living with HIV/AIDS, as well as vulnerable children, youth, and the elderly. There are now 40 women led beneficiary households in rural and urban areas of which 80% are women. 10 local volunteers were involved in this project and many will continue through the evolution of its activities.



Figure 3 - Women building traditional vine beehive

## Project objectives

The fundamental **objectives** of this project are the introduction of beekeeping as a means of providing personal income for vulnerable people, the alleviation of poverty in rural areas of Uganda and the provision of an ongoing source of local income for EACO as a social enterprise

## Project implementation

The Honey Beekeepers Project (HBP) is being implemented through a **value added chain** of honey and wax production, processing, packaging, marketing, distribution and sales program activities that will engage existing and future beekeepers as well as other beneficiaries. The HBP project has accomplished its goals through a phased implementation.

### Phase One

During this phase the project emphasis was on promotion of the concept that beekeeping is a very viable source of income and that the training necessary to be successful would be available through EACO. The primary sources of honey and wax production were the existing beehives operated by existing rural beekeepers that joined the program.

Some traditional hives made with local reeds and vines were manufactured and people learned how to make them.

Processing was done using simple homemade tools and equipment. Distribution was achieved through direct sales by beneficiaries in street and town markets. Product quality was not at an export product level. This phase started in early 2013.

### Phase Two

The primary objective of this second phase was to expand production and improve its quality. EACO engaged local carpenters to build a number of KTBH (Kenya Top Bar Hives), purchased suits and smokers and made them available to selected rural producers.

During this phase EACO built KTBH hives using a proven



Figure 4 - Kenya Top Bar beehives (KTBH)



Figure 5 - Operator in beekeeper's suit with smoker

design and trained selected beekeepers. Beekeeper suits and smokers were purchased and made available to beekeepers on a loan basis. This phase started in late 2013.

**Phase Three**

To address the increased demand EACO expanded its honey and wax production by building more **top bar beehives**, and by adding some high productivity **Langstroth** beehives to the inventory. EACO also obtained additional suits, veils and smokers.

Centrifuge equipment for the removal of honey from the new beehive types and honey packing supplies were purchased and kept in this safe new building.

EACO obtained a location where to build a storage and production facility to house the expanding processing and packaging operations.



Figure 6 - New Langstroth beehives

With the expected higher production EACO plans to expand its marketing activities in Uganda and in other countries through *fair-trade marketing* organizations. This phase started around April 2014.



Figure 7 - Centrifuge equipment and packing supplies

**Future activities**

With the acquired know-how and skills there is an opportunity for EACO to become a beehive manufacturer and distributor. Good beehives are expensive, have a limited life and need to be replaced.

This implies carpentry training for some local young people.

**Measuring success**

The **success** of the beekeeping program is being **measured** by an increased number of people who keep bees rather than collect honey from wild bee colonies, an improvement on the trade of bee products on the domestic market, increased food security and the alleviation of poverty.

Many of the people who joined the program are now capable of building their own traditional beehives and some have now the knowledge to build KTBH beehives.



Figure 8 - Honey processing and storage building

## EACO

Empower and Care Organization (EACO) has been registered since 2006 as a Community Based Organization. It operates in the Mukono District, Central Uganda. Its mission is to reduce poverty and the incidence of HIV/AIDS through the creation of economic empowerment and educational opportunities. Its activities are targeted toward vulnerable women, particularly widows, those living with HIV/AIDS, vulnerable children, youth, and the elderly. EACO is committed to a development process that promotes equality.

### Shadrak Kyobe

Shadrak Kyobe has eight years' experience in community-based project management and implementation with orphans, vulnerable children, vulnerable women, and refugees. Shadrak has worked with families, communities, and children affected by poverty, HIV/AIDS, conflict related displacement in Africa.



Figure 9 - Shadrak Kyobe

### Additional information

- [Uganda Beekeeping – gender and trade](#)
- <http://www.new-ag.info/00-5/focuson/focuson2.html>
- [Successful African Beekeeping](#)
- [Beginners' beekeeping guide – Apiconsult](#)
- [The Kenya top bar hive beehive](#)
- [Beekeeping in Africa – FAO study](#)
- [Financial cost-benefit analysis of beekeeping](#)
- [empuganda@yahoo.com](mailto:empuganda@yahoo.com), [kyobeshadrak@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:kyobeshadrak@yahoo.co.uk)
- [www.eacouganda.org](http://www.eacouganda.org)
- <http://answers.practicalaction.org/our-resources/item/how-to-make-a-movable-comb-top-bar-beehive>
- <http://answers.practicalaction.org/our-resources/item/an-introduction-to-beekeeping>

*Beekeeping in Uganda* was written by Nando Aidos, a volunteer with EACO, Uganda. Shadrak Kyobe is a social entrepreneur in the Mukono District in Uganda. All images were created by Shadrak Kyobe. EACO is a non-profit organization that operates in the Mukono district of Uganda.

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