

BEE, Tanzania

This four-year project is restoring the livelihoods of beekeepers in the Tabora region of Tanzania, who were left floundering when their cooperative collapsed.



What is the problem or need the project is addressing?

The Tabora region is one of the most isolated and deprived regions of Tanzania. For people who struggle to scratch the most basic living from farming, the production of honey is a vital source of income.

At its peak, the Tabora Beekeepers Cooperative Society had over 6,500 beekeeper members and provided essential services such as buying, processing and selling their honey. Its virtual collapse due to financial mismanagement has left beekeepers floundering, with few support services and little access to markets.

What is the project doing?

This four-year project is helping beekeepers organise into groups to better access services and market their honey, improve their production and honey quality, and develop new market linkages both locally and internationally. Local service providers are also being trained, to provide essential services to the beekeepers. These include technical services, for example making protective clothing or building beehives, and other services such as training in entrepreneurship and contracting with buyers.

The project also aims to help the beekeepers achieve Fairtrade certification for their honey.

So far the project has:

- Helped 793 beekeepers to organise into 10 groups. These groups are formally registered and have constitutions and elected leadership.
- Established an umbrella body, the Tanzania Beekeepers Cooperative Union (TABECU). TABECU is intended to provide a platform through which beekeepers in Tabora can market their honey and voice their interests. Having a representative body is also a prerequisite for Fairtrade certification.
- Trained five service providers from the local area in organisation and business skills and effective service provision. These service providers then went on to train the beekeeper groups in topics such as group formation and dynamics, leadership, action planning, constitution building, record keeping and financial management.
- Trained 30 people from the local area in technical skills such as how to make bee suits, smokers and modern hives.
- Provided training to the beekeepers in how to improve their honey quality.
- Begun construction of two honey centres, which will act as honey 'hubs' where beekeepers can take their honey to be tested and bulked and also access up-to-date market information.
- Initiated the process for getting Fairtrade certification.
- Facilitated relationships with a number of Tanzanian companies that are buying honey either through TABECU or direct from the beekeeper groups.

What impact has the project had?

Now over half way through, the project is already having positive impact. A mid term review found that:

- 86% of people interviewed have experienced increased incomes (71% have experienced an income increase of 25% or more).
- 54% have increased their spending on education, and 57% have increased spending on health.
- Honey prices have risen and this has spurred interest and investment in the apiculture sector.
- Beekeeper groups are selling all the honey produced, with demand exceeding supply. All honey is being sold within three months as opposed to six months before the project.
- Average production has increased from 348 litres to 382 litres.

The beekeepers are using their income from honey to improve their quality of life. Henry Mugao, who supports his wife Mary and seven children, says

"I have been able to buy livestock to help with the ploughing and have made a cart. If I get more money for my honey I will improve the house and make sure my daughter continues to study and the young ones – if they pass – they should also go to secondary school".

The review also found the project is providing increased employment opportunities for the wider community. Each beekeeper needs a team of 4-6 people to support the harvesting process (climbing the trees and lowering the hives, carrying the honey back to the camp, providing security and so on), which creates lots of casual employment.

There are also the smaller transporters who use bicycles and motorbikes to transport honey from the camps to homes and markets during the honey flow seasons. Other people make a living by buying honey in the camps and selling to buyers on roads, markets and collection centres. The project is therefore having wider impact and positive knock-on effects than we had originally anticipated.



Our local partners

Our local partner in the project is Faida MaLi, a Tanzanian organisation which aims to link people to markets and increase incomes in rural areas.

How is this project funded?

The project is funded by the European Commission, grant-making trusts, and donations from individuals.

