1 TRANSFORMING KNOWLEDGE THROUGH THROUGH LIVELIHOODS SHARING

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"A problem shared is a problem halved" – a proverb that inspires sharing of experiences for purposes of transforming the livelihood of the rural poor.

CHALLENGE

Under the government agricultural programs, West Nile region was zoned as one of the bee keeping areas due to its ecological conditions that are apt for apiculture. Having recognized apiculture as one of the enterprises that can contribute to wealth creation among poor families, government and other stakeholders devised interventions to further its development in the region and ensure substantial production of bee products such as honey, propolis, bee waxes and honey wine. One of the activities involved bee hives were distributed to selected bee keepers to increase out put.

Taking the lead, SNV organised the regional and district apiculture multi-stakeholder platforms where it emerged that beneficiaries have not gained much from some of the interventions like the improved beehives. Many of the hives have decayed and apiaries have been abandoned by the beneficiaries. This prompted SNV to carry out further critical analysis of the situation together with the beneficiaries of the NAADs programme who are also members of the clients supported by SNV in order to improve future plans.

2.0 Situational Analysis

Through government programs including the National Agriculture Advisory services (NAADS), farmers had received apiaries which were found to be neglected. The beneficiaries claimed that the hives provided by such programmes were sub standard. However, upon closer examination, it was discovered that farmers had insufficient knowledge on improved apiculture management practices and this resulted in low colonization rates, high desertion rates due to lack of water sources, high infestation rates and limited forages. All these contributed to poor production conditions for the bees. Nevertheless, some of the hives were found in good condition and could still be put to good use. SNV therefore embarked on brokering knowledge on improved production practices using successful and tested bee keepers' as well as local capacity builders(technical people)

A neglected and rotting KTB hive at one of the demonstrations sites established in Moyo District.

CLIENTS

Upon realization of the bigger problem and noting that there were successful bee keepers within the region including Moyo Bee Keepers Association and Blessed Bees for life trade post who are clients supported by SNV, under our Producer Group Strengthening product, we decided to bridge the gap of insufficient knowledge and skills among the producers by helping them acquire relevant knowledge from successful and experienced producers and technocrats.

METHOD / SNV INTERVENTION

Knowledge sharing sessions and regular comprehensive trainings were organized to guide bee keepers within their groups. The Trainings focused on apiary improvement, modern technologies including making own bee equipment and queen rearing. For every 10 beekeepers, there was a local trainer to supervise, ensure follow up and offer guidance at least twice a month. Additionally, a local capacity builder was assigned to periodically visit bee keepers to assess progress on the utilisation of the knowledge and skills and provide back up on the challenges faced by the bee keepers. Encountered challenges were isolated and further shared in the MSPs in order to get appropriate practical solutions to salvage the rotting bee hives.

During this period, it was noted that dissemination of practical knowledge kept the farmers interests high and this helped to achieve the much desired results and impact. In total 389 (101 females and 288 males) bee keepers from Moyo Bee Keepers Association and Blessed Bees for Life participated in various trainings and local exchanges visits

OUTCOME

To date, there has been marked improvement in colonization rates and reduction in abscondment. The Apiaries previously abandoned have been rehabilitated and the hives that had never been colonized since their erection have now been colonised leading to the current average colonization rate to stand at 70% up from the previous 30%.

A good case is Moyo district where 12 producers under Moyo Bee Keepers Association have witnessed bees returning to their apiaries and confirmed that poor management practices led to the abscondment of bees. The good practices they tried included provision of water points near the apiaries and increasing vegetation cover near the apiaries by planting grass around the apiaries.

There is increased investment among the producers supported as reported by 18 producers who bought more hives especially KTBs to expand their apiaries in order to produce more honey for sale.

IMPACT

Mr. Drici Eusebio of Moyo Bee Keepers Association says, *"I was given 30 hives through the NAADS programme to establish a demonstration site from which other producers were to learn. However after some time I did not see bees getting into the hives, I waited patiently for their colonisation and after some time of waiting only a few KTB hives got colonized. Then the bees vanished which demoralized me.*

I decided to use my time for other enterprises which seemed more practical and appealing. I abandoned the apiary which grew into bushes. None of the community members came to visit this site for learning purpose because it had nothing special to show.

After the meeting organized by SNV for members of Moyo Bee Keepers' Association, I realized I could still benefit from this apiary since I was not doing some of the things we discussed in the meeting. Fortunately I was picked to visit and share experience with successful farmers in Arua district which motivated me to work harder like they do.

I was also picked as one of the trainers for my group. After the training I decided to put in practice things I used not do in my apiary before. As a result bees started returning to the apiary which impressed me.

As of now my apiary is almost 80% colonized. Last season, I was able to harvest 325 kgs of honey which I sold to Moyo Bee Keeper's association. The money I got I used it to buy iron sheets to roof my house. I thank SNV for the letting us interact with successful bee keepers which opened my eyes that bee keeping is profitable."

Mr. Drici besides his hut

Mr. Drici's newly thatched house

In Arivu sub county, Mr. Alete decided to give a try on queen rearing. He is one of the farmers carrying out queen rearing on commercial basis. This he learnt from a training organized by SNV and facilitated by a seasoned farmer from Kabarole District.

His apiary was also used as a training site during the training since it had modern bee hives that he acquired from BNU under the NAADS programme. As the training went on, participants helped him to rehabilitate the abandoned apiary. He is currently helping to colonize hives for other bee keepers at an affordable cost.

Mr. Alere standing beside his new house

As a youth it is my wish to live a decent life, life in a grass thatched house is painful indeed. I will do whatever is possible to complete this house. Bee keeping is my hope and I believe my dream will be realized. My plan in future is that I want to start buying all the honey within my community and sell it outside my community at a profit. This will help me earn more income and solve my financial problems. Thanks to SNV for the training."

With his expertise and services, he has helped other bee keepers to colonise their hives. Indeed, others have now bought more improved bee hives to expand their apiaries.

One of the beneficiaries of his service is Mr. Anguwazu (above right) from the same sub county who after earning UShs 560,000 *(approximately US$250)* from

honey which he produced using local bee hives decided to buy KTB hives which Alere helped to colonise.

Mr. Anguwazu acquired other good management practices from Alere. He now owns 20 KTBs and over 45 local hives. This is evidence of adoption from local to improved technologies and has increased Mr. Anguwazu's appreciation of bee keeping in his life. Though he has been using local bee hives, the income from honey has helped him to educate his two sons up to University level. He plans to continue with bee keeping and he has reserved another portion of his land for bee keeping.

In Moyo District Mr. Matalocu Fred, after realizing that he could not rehabilitate the dilapidated hives earlier provided to him , he decided to buy new hives since the ones he had, had already been destroyed by termites due to neglect.

He has now established a new site with 25 KTBs and 5 Langtroth; he has fenced it using local materials and ready to spend a substantial portion of his time on bee keeping. He vows to try whatever knowledge received for maximum benefit in terms of honey production.

"I am sure this time I will get some thing out of apiculture. Had I got all this knowledge before, I would be far much better than now because I received hives free of charge and if they were productive, I would have earned a lot of money.

Now I am beginning afresh with 25 new hives that I have bought using my own money, I know it will take me some time to start getting money back but I am not ready to give up until I recover the money I paid for the hives."

Mrs. Kadija Lala, a member of Blessed Bees for Life Trade post (BBLT) in Yumbe District is one of the bee keepers whose apiary hosted bee keepers training. She commended the leaders of BBLT for selecting her apiary as training venue. She did not only benefit from the knowledge and skills but also participants helped her to erect the hives appropriately. She also received more improved hives (KTB and Langstroth) from BBLT so that the site can effectively serve as demonstration to the rest of the bee keepers on the village. The participants also helped her to clean the site. She has of now attained 87% clonisation of her hives.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Provision of equipment to bee keepers is not the ultimate solution for increased production; it requires a combination of interventions to create change. Without continuous knowledge and skills the modern bee hives cannot be effectively used by bee keepers.

- Bee keepers learn easily from people they consider successful in bee keeping rather than from people with technical expert but without much to show on

ground. As the saying goes, **'if others can, I can**'. Bee keepers get challenged by a successful beekeeper which motivates them to adopt the practices the successful person is using.

- Bee keepers are interested in acquiring simple knowledge and skills for immediate use from fellow farmers rather than the broad and complicated issues normally presented by technocrats. This shows that for effective transfer of knowledge, it is critical to identify early adopters and use them as providers of knowledge and skills to others.

- Though SNV targets its interventions at meso level, it is important to maintain contact at micro level in order to register significant impact. This case study highlights outcomes achieved at micro level but the analysis of the problem was done at meso level and it required rather micro interventions in order to create the change. This means, much as we focus at meso level, it is critical to come up with innovative approaches to solve constraints at micro level especially through use of community owned resource persons who reach further than SNV.

Conclusion

For effective use of the resources to achieve impact, a combination of interventions should be put in place that addresses both access to equipment as well as access to knowledge and skills.

Although development agencies may in one way or another not be able to have a combination of interventions, it is important not to work in isolation. There is need to work hand in hand with other development agencies in order to complement each others' activities for increased impact hence the need to strengthen multi-stakeholders' platforms which improve on the coordination of stakeholders within the value chain.

In this particular case, SNV seized the opportunity to prove its relevance as a capacity development organization by organizing beekeepers to revamp the unutilized resources within their communities. Other organizations had provided equipment to farmers without limited effort to improve on their knowledge and skills and SNV filled this gap by using simple approaches of local exchange visits with the above mentioned results which are impressive.