



Update report on TDT small grant for bee hives project in Mahuninga village of Iringa Rural District

1.0 Background

Mahuninga village is in Mahuninga ward of Iringa rural district of Iringa region in Tanzania. The community relies on cropping, small livestock rearing and brewing local beer as other sources of livelihoods. The village is part of the Waga Community managed Wildlife Management Area (CWMA) which is facilitated by Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS). The Mahuninga community had been practicing bee keeping already but in a more unstructured way using the traditional log type beehives. Beekeeping is widely practiced in Tanzania and by the fact that this village is part of the CWMA, the mindset of the communities is tailored to conservation. Habitat conservation is vital as it also serve the wildlife in the area. It was noted through the situational assessment that the main challenge which affected the bee keeping in the area has been, training on best honey practices, use of traditional hives, poor markets, poor record keeping.

2.0 The Problem and justification

Beekeepers had a challenge of accessing the modern beehives because of the cost and poor economy. Modern hives yields more honey (25kg) unprocessed honey compared to 8kg from the traditional type. The modern hives are user friendly for all the gender because of the mode of placement due their shape, this is in contrast to the traditional log type which are normally hanged on tree branches and that makes it very difficult for women the African context Traditional models use destructive method of harvesting to the bee colonies and this has led to uncontrolled wild fires. Again the traditional hives are normally harvested during the night which further compromises the quality of the honey because of poor lighting. Further to that bee keeping has been done in an uncoordinated fashion, the beekeepers have no specified market intelligence and the lacked quality training skills.

3.0 Objectives

1. To show the progress and activities made in modernizing the beekeeping in Mahuninga through training and distribution of Tanzanian top bar beehives
2. To suggest ways which can further benefit and sustain the beekeeping groups through soft skills and market linkages

4.0 Activities accomplished to date

a. Training

The training was through collaborative work of the local government officer and Wildlife Conservation Society. The training covered all the concepts of best beekeeping practices on the production side. This strengthened the knowledge the community had on the choice of hives, linking it to production, the destructive effect of using the traditional hives on harvesting. The beekeepers appreciated the economics of using modern hives in terms of financial returns and they noted the competitiveness of beekeeping vis-à-vis other enterprises. The use of modern hives further gives advantage on the quality of honey. Knowledge of the linkages of beekeeping and conservation was well drilled by the trainer.

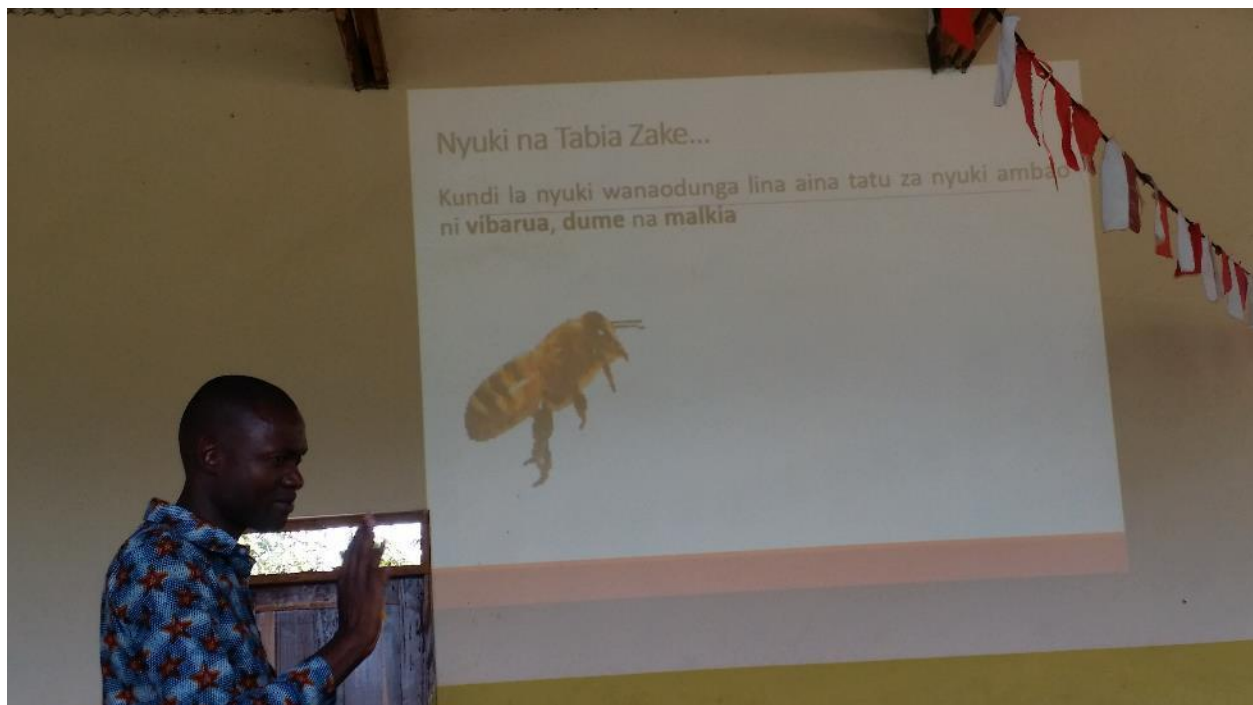


Fig 1: The beekeeper explaining the character and classes of bees to the participants



Fig 2: Gender encompassing enterprise through modern hives introduction: women participants during training



Fig 3: An illustration of the different units of the modern Tanzanian top bar beehive by an expert to the beekeepers during training in Mahuninga village



Fig 4: Group photo of the beekeepers, integrating beekeeping and elephant conservation in their area

b. Group formation and constitution development

The beekeepers were made to form organic groups for easier management. A total of 10 groups were made in different village communities.

Each and every group selected its own executive; thus the chairperson and secretary. After the development of the groups; the ten different groups were assigned to develop their constitutions governing the activities of the group. Prior to this, it was part of the training on how well managed groups should be doing their business and they should have a constitutions,for them to be registered. The beekeepers seem to understand the multi benefits of groups apart from showing organization, the groups can easily access loans if they are registered and marketing will be made easier.

c. The record keeping

It is critical to keep the institutional memory of each group, recording each and every activity is fundamental for success. It further helps tracking and monitoring of activities. Each group received a file which is kept by the secretary. The file will help to keep the constitution, activity calendar, task allocation, management record, financial any other vital information to the group.



Fig 5: Justice and the beekeeping group leaders after distribution of the files for record keeping

d. Hives distribution

Through the grant acquired from Tanzania Development Trust, the core business was to procure the modern hives (Tanzanian Top Bar) as seed capital to the community. A total of 10 hives were procured and distributed to the 10 groups; one hive per group. The hives were handed to the group leaders.



Fig 6 Bee keeping group representatives just before the distribution of hives at the Mahuninga village office.



Fig 7: Beekeepers and the hives



Figure 8 Justice distributing beehives to different groups

Fatuma Mbambati was asked to chronicles the essence of beekeeping in the area and how the distribution of the Tanzanian Top Bar hives is going to revolutionalise the enterprise.



“My name is Fatuma Mbambati, I have been doing beekeeping on a very small scale for the past two years. I am a resident of Mahuninga village and there are a lot of bee colonies around because there is abundance of trees including the mango. There are many other cultivated crops like sunflower which constantly provide flowers for bees. I have been doing beekeeping using these pots and I am pleased to say that through your help we are now going to see the real financial benefits of doing beekeeping. Beekeeping is very important as a source of livelihoods, you get money to supplement household needs, you can use honey for making the local beer, also have some for home consumption. I have been getting 3kg of honey, from this pot hive. From the training, and now I realise that the Tanzanian top bar beehives are very easy to handle; you can harvest a lot of honey and you can harvest any time of the day without killing the bees and the quality of the honey is going to be good. I am so grateful, keep on supporting us”

5.0 Proposed further steps to assist the beekeeping to realise the full benefits of the use of the modern hives

- Finalisation of the registration with Iringa district offices for the groups to be entered into the national database
- Provision of the continuous monitoring which is going to be done through the local beekeeper and Wildlife Conservation Society. The tracking should include following up to see the different sites for the hive placement; also checking if the record keeping is being done well. Feedback reports from the beekeepers can only be captured through follow up
- Training on market linkages , quality control and general marketing principles
- Linking the beekeepers to the market and continuous observance of the market system. The beekeepers have already been linked to the Ruaha farm however they are free to find other alternative markets if they so feel it good.

6.0 Conclusion

After three months, everything is in place however I shall be leaving Iringa. The systems are in place for further supervision on the bee keeping project through the local beekeeper and Wildlife Conservation Society. The keepers have the best model which shall be easily replicated in other areas because of the business nature of the model.