



Celebrating International Youth Day

12 August 2020

The UK beekeeping community and the BBKA encourage beekeeping among young people through activities such as the BBKA's Bees in the Curriculum programme, the development of the Stoneleigh apiary for schools and support for the annual International Meeting of Young Beekeepers. Counties and branches also welcome young people.

In the developing world things are very different. Beekeeping offers an opportunity to contribute financially to a household, gain respect and be of value in the community. It's gender-neutral, sustainable and requires only locally available resources. And that is very important in a country like Uganda, where 50% of the population is aged 15 (18% in UK); 83% of 15-24 year olds are unemployed and 1 in 4 women have a child by the age of 19.

These case studies give some insight into the work of Bees Abroad with young people.



The Young Farmers and Entrepreneurs' Network

Cathy Bonner, Bees Abroad partnership manager, Eastern Uganda

When I was asked to write this article my husband Dave and I had just returned from our Bees Abroad projects visit to Eastern Uganda. We were on a high. The trip had gone extremely well and we had seen strong evidence of productive training and project successes. Despite concerns of desert locust plagues and unpredictable weather patterns in Uganda and countries around the Indian Ocean, we were optimistic for all of our projects. One stood out – The Young Farmer & Entrepreneurs' Network (YOFENET) in Iganga, Busoga region, Eastern Uganda.

Bees Abroad first became involved with YOFENET in 2017 through a four-year beekeeping project. YOFENET was an established group of young people aiming to alleviate poverty through farming initiatives – Agriculture for Wealth – in the Iganga district. Mushroom- and passion fruit-growing projects had already been successful and the group was also researching and assisting in the marketing of these products.

It was clear to YOFENET that sustainable beekeeping could play an especially important part in their vision for Agriculture for Wealth – honey and wax products, crop pollination and carbon reduction with bee-friendly tree protection and planting. Their vision is focussed on the transfer of skills, inclusivity and equality – everything that Bees Abroad strives for. Thus, their objective is to establish more than 500 top-bar hives cared for by about 100 beekeepers in ten groups around the region.

They have continued to impress and humble us with their approach each time we visit. They are a highly organised group of young people whose vision – a better world for themselves and their fellow Ugandans – is at the forefront of their activities. We were so confident in YOFENET that before we returned to the UK from our first meeting with them, we arranged for our in-country beekeeping trainer, Akol Lucas, to start training them. Once

trained, they shared their knowledge with some of the poorest communities in Iganga.

One of these communities is Bukeleba, a village of 500 people living on forestry land with little land and resources of their own. It is extremely poor even by Ugandan standards. Thanks to YOFENET skill sharing, the beekeepers of Bukeleba were able to donate some of the proceeds from honey sales to build a health centre for their village. They were awarded second prize in the 2019 UK National Honey Show in the Charitable Organisations category. Deservedly, YOFENET were awarded first prize in the same show.

In 2017, YOFENET established a demonstration training apiary on a corner of land owned by a farmer named Christopher. This is rare for Bees Abroad projects as land is paramount to subsistence farming but unaffordable for most groups. It is a well-managed site used by YOFENET members and to train others in the community. It is complete with catcher boxes to attract swarms for YOFENET to use or to give away.

Their beekeeping knowledge is strong and they are keen to learn and expand their skills. Led by Akol Lucas for Bees Abroad, and Dave and me when we visit, young men and women work together to support themselves and others in all aspects of beekeeping. This year we trained them in making value-added products such as body lotions, lip balms, honey-enriched shampoo and polish, and business costing and marketing. YOFENET's enthusiasm and excitement at the potential of such products was infectious.

YOFENET networks with the local government agencies, including the regional entomologist (who has a particular responsibility for honey bees) so that they can understand the legislation to benefit their projects. Their members are skilled in promotion and their market knowledge is strong. In February 2019, the commissioner from the Ugandan Ministry of Agriculture, Madam Alice, visited. In March 2019, they exhibited at the second Uganda National Agricultural Extension Symposium in Kampala, where their honey stand was visited by the Minister of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries. YOFENET also exhibited in the National Agricultural Show, the biggest agricultural show in Uganda, and at Uganda's International Youth Day, an event set up by the United Nations to encourage youth around the world to raise awareness about the situation of fellow youth in their country.

Uganda is a country of young people with little full-time employment, so most people survive on subsistence farming. Ugandans understand the nutritional value of honey and its health attributes, especially esteemed in a country where health care is often unavailable or unaffordable. Honey and bee product sales can significantly increase their income, helping to pay for daily necessities, healthcare, school fees and for re-investing in their farming activities.

Young people in Uganda and across the developing world face many daily challenges. Dave and I learned that the young people we met in Uganda will do what we would think impossible, even during the covid-19 crisis. YOFENET, in partnership with Bees Abroad, is a shining example of young people looking to and working for the future. As Bees Abroad marks its 21st birthday, we celebrate these young people and their future, vision and hope.

I thank those of you who have supported projects such as the YOFENET partnership – you are making a real difference! Happy birthday Bees Abroad – here's to the next 21 years and to the young people across the world who will take this forward!

Kinyamaseke Youth in Development

Jane and Richard Ridler, Bees Abroad partnership managers, Western Uganda

Members of Kinyamaseke Youth in Development (KYID) in Western Uganda are from challenging backgrounds. They may be deprived of education; girls may have married early for bride wealth and then abandoned; they may be unemployed, illiterate, exploited and so on. 'School drop-outs' has a special meaning in Uganda. They are the children from large families whose parents have run out of money for their education.

KYID's objective is to improve the life situations of its members so that they can become independent and play a part in the community. They provide vocational skills in woodworking, joinery, tailoring, knitting, hairdressing and plant growing. The group's leader, Noah, is able, enthusiastic, dedicated and trained in youth work. It is very encouraging to see that many of the committee members who have come through the system are pleased to be giving back something to the organisation which has helped them.

Bees Abroad arrived in 2018 and started to roll out beekeeping as another skill. The training, hives and essential beekeeping support were provided through a local project delivery partner. Today KYID members have the opportunity to learn beekeeping, and the teaching apiary provides an income which supports the group and management. Members are advocates for bees and beekeeping in the local community, including promoting knowledge in bees as pollinators, and other green issues.

Multilateral Grammar School

Bisi New, Bees Abroad partnership manager, Nigeria

At the Multilateral Grammar School in Odogbolu district, Nigeria, 90% of the students come from poor farming families. Poverty here means going to school in the morning hungry, going to bed hungry, high mortality rates and scarce access to healthcare.

Bees Abroad has worked with the school to set up a teaching apiary, train staff and establish a beekeeping club. Beekeeping students can take their skills into their community, thus creating a second income which will help to pay their school fees and support their families. Beekeeping at the school also provides an income stream for the school to buy extra resources.

Bees Abroad

Bees Abroad, now celebrating its 21st anniversary, works with the poorest communities worldwide, enabling them to produce and sell honey so that they can buy medicines and household essentials, and pay school fees. We are all volunteers and all the project managers are beekeepers.

To find out more, visit www.beesabroad.org.uk

email info@beesabroad.org.uk

or invite us to present to your group by Zoom.

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