

Uyogo village community, Urambo District, Tabora Region, Tanzania

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## 1. Background.

Kenilworth Uyogo Friendship Link (KUFL) is a UK charity formed among the churches in Kenilworth and for 20+ years has been providing support to Uyogo (school buildings, water supply, medical training etc.) as well as facilitating visits in both directions. The village has requested help to improve their beekeeping and KUFL approached David & Margery to see what could be done, working with Bees Abroad.

## 2. The Visit

The trip was arranged through Mr Lucky Mgeni, the District water engineer who we had met in the UK last year. He did an excellent job sorting out transport and accommodation for us. He also ensured that our visit was known by the local District Officers and for that reason we spent the equivalent of 1 day visiting various offices to sign visitors books, introduce ourselves and receive their welcome. Rather formal but probably necessary to avoid embarrassment for our hosts.

The first stop was the Beekeeping Training Institute in Tabora. A national facility where we were pleased to hear of their preference for top bar hives ('transitional' hives) rather than Langstroth ('commercial' hives). The students learn how to make them from local materials. Stingless bees as well as honey bees are on the syllabus. Students need 3 passes in science based subjects at local A level standard and the Institute offers 2 year and 3 year courses, plus short courses. Our impression from the facility, staff and some graduates was that the Institute turns out good



beekeepers that would be an asset on any BA project in Tanzania. Good quality top bar hives, made from softwood produced in Iringa, were on sale at TZs100,000. (~£40)



On Sat Feb 14th we met the leaders of the village group, around 50 of us packed into the village hall. More welcomes and David gave a talk on the value of bees, emphasising the need to conserve the excellent local habitat (Miombo Forest). We discussed the programme for the coming training days.



Sun Feb 15th we went back to the village to see some of the beekeepers and learn more about the current situation. Most are using traditional log or bark hives suspended high in trees away from honey badgers. They harvest twice a year, working at night to smoke the bees out then 'rob' the hive from the back. They seem to appreciate the need to leave honey for the bees and not

to take brood. They work quickly to minimise being stung and accept bees will get killed. There was little understanding of the importance of the queen etc..



We met one beekeeper who had a couple of top bar hives. The one pictured was not in use. It was made from hardwood and was very heavy. The top bars were not accurate enough with the comb groove spacing varying between 20mm - 45mm. It was also too short. There was general interest in using top bar hives as a perceived modern method giving better yields, but little experience.

The villagers currently produce honey for sale locally, using recycled water bottles as containers and getting TZs 5,000 /lt.. The village production was estimated at 8t per annum but there is no record kept.

The villagers knew that their honey was often bought by traders from Arusha, Dar and Nairobi who process and package before selling at TZs 15,000 - 20,000 /lt.. They believe that if they could improve the quality of their honey for sale and package it correctly, they could sell locally through shops (Urambo and Tabora), as well as further afield. We did not see any honey processing but were told they use a simple filter from woven grasses along with sealed plastic containers. We suspect these were recycled from other products including water, spirits etc.. The sample of local honey we saw confirmed the degree of processing employed.



Mon 16th Feb we were joined by Innocent Msaku, a 23 yr old graduate from Tabora Institute living in Urambo. With him as translator we delivered training on making a veil and on how to inspect a colony, correctly equipped with veil, smoker and hive tool. (Innocent was a tremendous help and we hope the project can support his continued involvement in the field). The main challenge for us was the numbers. We had

expected about 12 trainers to be trained. Imagine our surprise when 120 turned up. More maize sacks were procured and the attendees divided themselves into 24 groups for veil making.



Tues 17th Feb saw us return to the village to tackle making the top bar hive and some wax processing for candles and basic creams. There were fewer taking part this time. About 20 took part in the hive building, with most work done by the 2 carpenters, while around 16 women took part in the wax workshop. The hive was made from local timber, the semi hard brachystegia from the miombo forest, and fashioned using hand tools. The result was much better than the hive seen above especially as it was a training exercise with



limited tools available however the top bars took some time to make. More practice needed or better equipment (table saw?). The estimated cost of materials and labour for the hive and roof was TZs 45,000 which is less than half the price they were at the Institute in Tabora. Bees Abroad paid for the materials used in the training.

The wax processing group were pleased to see how they could make candles and hand creams so much so that before the end of the workshop the women had organised their own candle making committee, elected officers and paid their joining fees.

At the end of the training we had a few items to give the beekeepers. By now over 330 had signed up to be part of this initiative and with the help of the village Chairman, Owden, the bee suits, NBU manuals, smokers and miscellaneous tools were shared between the 6 village community groups. We were very pleased to receive some Uyogo honey as a gift from the village.

Before leaving the village we were shown the school buildings, well and bridge that had been built and equipped with the support of KUFL. Progress on the current project was slower than planned apparently because of the time taken to get the funds transferred from the District Council to the village project.



That evening we had dinner with the District Natural Resources Officer, the Community Development Officer, the Environment Officer and an Economist. They were very keen to hear what we had been doing and invited Bees Abroad to help them extend the activity to other communities in the Urambo District. The District Council has constructed 2 buildings that are standing empty and as yet, unused. The first is a District honey extraction facility and the second is a market place or trading centre, intended to be the place where local producers can sell their produce (not just honey) to visiting wholesale buyers. We agreed to visit the buildings as we left Urambo and to consider how they might

be helpful for Uyogo. They looked ok from the outside but we think the extraction facility is too far from Uyogo to be used by the village for their extraction (1 hr by private transport).

### 3. Summary of the current situation

The area around Urambo is blessed with very good forage for honey bees in the miombo forest. The honey from this area is sought after in Tanzania and Kenya. (In fact while in Arusha we were served some very good honey with a drink so we asked if it was local, "Yes", came the reply, "it is from Tabora"!)

Beekeeping is established in this location but it is not seen as a cash generator in the same way as tobacco is. By comparison it is a cottage industry producing a little cash at harvest time. We feel there is a good opportunity for the village to increase the income earned from honey and other hive products. There is interest at the District, Regional and National level in making better use of this natural resource. An income stream from beekeeping based on the natural indigenous forest reduces the forest encroachment for tobacco and other cash crops and is good for environmental conservation.

Uyogo has beekeepers experienced in traditional methods but they need help with processing, packaging and marketing their honey. This can help them increase the income from their current harvest leading first to interest in increasing the yield and quality and then to the modern style of hives which are easier to manage. To increase the income they need help in establishing a market. Unlike some other commodities honey and wax are traded openly and

prices are not currently fixed by the Government. Rather than each beekeeper trying to create their own market we suggest they pool their resources and work as a co-operative to sell Uyogo honey and wax. A properly funded and managed co-operative can buy the local honey, holding stock until the required price is obtained. Income produced by the co-operative can be reinvested.

#### 4. Next steps

This is a provisional list drawn up with Lucky but subject to agreement from the village via the Chairman. Each step will require breakdown to tasks, owners, timing and costs. Overall objective is:- For Uyogo villages to become the producers and sellers of the best quality honey in Urambo District.

##### 4.1. Phase 1.

- 4.1.1. Establish Uyogo Honey Bee Co-operative (UHBC).
- 4.1.2. Deliver training on assessing and ensuring honey quality, processing and packaging. Cascade to beekeepers.
- 4.1.3. Set up UHBC extraction & processing facility.
- 4.1.4. Deliver workshop on honey & wax sales & marketing, leading to UHBC strategy.
- 4.1.5. Develop and implement UHBC marketing strategy.

##### 4.2. Phase 2.

- 4.2.1. Implement scheme to assist move to top bar hives
- 4.2.2. Set up training apiary using modern top bar hives.
- 4.2.3. Provide training to lead beekeepers to cascade. As per manual 1. Basic beekeeping, hive construction, hive inspection, tools & equipment.
- 4.2.4. Locate local source of hive parts, especially good quality top bars, smokers and protective wear.
- 4.2.5.. Provide on going technical support in field for trainers.

5. (Footnote: Since returning to the UK, while looking through the Apimondia material, we have seen publicity for an initiative called Tanzania Asali (honey) focussed on a corridor that runs right through Urambo and Tabora. It looks like a Government initiative and apparently legislation has been passed to allow the Government to buy and sell honey and wax. Are the District buildings part of this scheme? More information required.)