Beekeeper training in Vietnam

Harvesting wild honey is a centuries-old tradition in south-east Asia. In Vietnam, as forest habitat for wild bees has diminished, the demand for premium ‘forest honey’ has exceeded supply, creating economic opportunities for beekeeping.

In 1978, the Vietnam government began organising beekeeping programmes throughout the country to boost income for some of its poorest communities and to increase the honey supply for both domestic consumption and export. The National Apicultural Joint Stock Company began supplying beekeeping tools and materials to all the provincial companies. The training of beekeepers became primarily the responsibility of Vietnam’s internationally respected Bee Research and Development Centre (BRDC). BRDC understood bees and beekeeping very well, but they had no experience in participatory training techniques. They relied on “extended lectures that were not focused on the practical application of the knowledge, the needs and concerns of beekeepers, nor the ability to manage bee colonies,” according to a report by FAO. Recognising that more effective training methods were needed, Tam Quyet Dinh of BRDC and entomologist Gard Otis, a long-time friend of Dinh’s at the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada, gained funding through the Canadian International Development Agency (now part of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development). A joint University of Guelph/BRDC training project began in 2007 in Ha Tinh Province, north-central Vietnam. The project had four objectives: to teach instructors to use participatory training techniques, to recognise beekeeping as a significant strategy to alleviate poverty, to have rural communities value bees as pollinators, and to promote gender equality. When the project ended in 2012, all four goals had been met to varying degrees, and there have been residual effects throughout Vietnam. According to a November 2012 evaluation report by John Devlin and Nonita Yap, both on the Faculty at the University of Guelph, experiential learning techniques have been used in beekeeping courses. One BRDC staff member offered the following reflection on the Ha Tinh programme: “Before the project, the teaching was about 80% theory and 20% practice, and there was no work with real bee hives. With a defence that allows it to escape its most fearsome predators? I am curious to know. The bees have drawn me in.

More information
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To learn more about the project visit
www.youtube.com/watch? v=44vn_jonGVg Beekeeper
Support for beekeepers in Vietnam

Beekeepers in the very poor Province of Ha Tinh experienced terrible floods in October and November 2016. Livestock of all types were lost (bees, cows, pigs, hens) and people’s homes greatly damaged. Bee hives were swept away. People in this Province rely on beekeeping as an important source of livelihood.

In December 2016 Bees for Development launched an appeal to help to replace the bees and equipment destroyed by floods.

Generous beekeepers around the world kindly donated, and in May we were able to send £12,500 (US$15,770; €14,190).

This enabled our partner organisation, the Vietnam Bee Research and Development Centre (BRDC) to provide 250 Apis cerana colonies and equipment to beekeepers in two communities most badly affected by the floods.

Beekeepers received training in how to protect the bees and equipment if floods recur

Unloading the hives with Apis cerana colonies

Apis cerana colonies are secured for the motorbike journey to their new home

Delivery of the bees and equipment created great excitement in this remote and deprived area