Using competition to promote best practice – experiences from Uganda

In 2015 The Uganda National Apiculture Development Organisation (TUNADO) launched The Best Apiary Enterprise Award for the first time – Dickson Biryomumaisho explains...

Beekeepers work very hard, yet are not always appreciated. In some cases development projects and government programmes do not recognise normal local beekeeping practices and organise apiculture learning and exposure visits to distant places, at great cost. Yet every day, local beekeepers interact with their bees and invent new practices, but their expertise remains untapped. Where beekeepers are located in remote, rural areas their skills and innovations are easily overlooked. It is hard to reach all beekeepers, yet a great thing to do. It is also true that many so-called beekeepers that attend national events and project workshops turn out not to be beekeepers at all! How often do we hear big talkers at such meetings - but we later find little evidence of their work on the ground? When thinking of approaches to building up the sector we often design expensive and ambitious programmes - perhaps there are simpler approaches?

One day in a TUNADO staff meeting, the Membership Development Officer, Mr. Bomujuni Allon, said that we need to appreciate and motivate the best beekeepers. The idea picked up and Sarah Mugoya our Communication Officer started mentioning names of those people who usually attend and contribute during workshops. The Programme Manager suggested that we visit them and give recognition to those with best apiaries. It was agreed and visits were organised ...but we were in for a surprise! Guess what... most of them had no apiaries while the rest gave excuses that they were not at home. On returning to the office everyone began discussing their disappointment. Out of this discussion came the idea of The Best Apiary Enterprise Award.

The Award

The purpose of the award was threefold

• to promote beekeeping enterprise best practice in Uganda
• to recognise good beekeepers
• to locate apiaries to serve as learning and demonstration centres.

The first thing we did when planning the Award was to ask for input from stakeholders. We used a participatory approach and called Government representatives, beekeepers, private sector and development partners to a multi-stakeholder meeting. Presentations were made, voting done and we ended up with an agreed approach. The criteria, process and outcome are below.

Minimum requirements for entry to the Award:

• Contenders must respond to the announcement by calling a given number on a set day
• must be a practising beekeeper with no less than 20 productive colonies (not empty hives!)
• must be able to give a physical address and be available to be visited

Announcement

The Award was announced on the national radio station (Uganda Broadcasting Corporation) for one month. UBC reaches all parts of the country and broadcasts in local languages - this was important to ensure all members of society
were included. The Award was also announced in print media and an SMS message was sent to every number in the TUNADO database.

**Respondents call in to enter**
The announcement asked respondents to call one number at the TUNADO office during set days and times and one member of staff was put on duty to answer the calls. Callers were checked for eligibility against the minimum requirement for entry. A total of 2600 callers responded to the announcement but many were ineligible. A number of callers rang the radio station instead of the designated number (they were also counted), while others asked for information about how to start beekeeping! Of the 2600 callers 42 met the Minimum Requirements.

**Judging**
The Ministry of Agriculture made physical visits to the 42 who passed the Minimum Requirements and the apiaries and beekeepers were assessed against these criteria:

- membership of TUNADO
- apiary accessibility and visibility
- apiary arrangement
- management practices
- equipment
- innovativeness
- storage /processing facilities & equipment
- record keeping
- evidence of business acumen.

**Prize giving**
Recognising differences in regions, the country was divided into seven sub-regions for the purpose of the Award. One winner and one runner-up was announced in each of the seven sub-regions. The prizes were non-cash Awards of US$ 264 for each winner and US$132 for each runner-up. The investment is to develop their beekeeping enterprises and TUNADO paid the funds directly to the winners’ supplier of choice.

**Observations**
1. To our surprise, most of the prominent beekeepers we thought might win did not call to enter the Award, and other prominent beekeepers who did enter did not win.
2. A number of the winning beekeepers were not previously known to TUNADO, and this was surprising as TUNADO is the apex body for the sector.
3. It was found that beekeepers who had learned from other beekeepers (as opposed to employed trainers) performed well. This approach is known as beekeeper to beekeeper extension (see below).
4. Most of the beekeepers who won were using local-style hives, while a few were using top-bar hives. None were using frame hives - sometimes called ‘modern’ hives in Uganda.
5. On reflection we realised that exposure visits - previous to this process – usually take learner beekeepers to distant apiaries with complicated technology – and yet good simple practices are being used in their local community.
6. During the Award ceremony, one could observe that the beekeepers who won, and were never known to us before, were excited and moved with confidence to pick up their certificates.

**Lessons**
We learned that local innovation and good practice is widespread in rural communities.

We learned that where beekeepers are coached and provided with technical backstopping they perform well as trainers in their local communities.

We learned that the best and most practical beekeepers are not necessarily the most active and vocal in meetings and workshops.

We learned that we can make exposure learning visits cheaper if we stay within the local communities and identify excellent beekeeping enterprises in those communities.

We learned that next time we need to think how to increase the number of eligible entrants compared to the total number of responders.

The detailed report is available at www.tunadobees.org.

We thank **Bees for development**, Trias Uganda and SwissContact Uganda for supporting **The Best Apiary Enterprise Award**.

**Chairman of TUNADO, Mr Jackson, congratulates a prize winner**

**Beekeeper to beekeeper extension model**
Selected prominent beekeepers are trained and they are given the capacity and motivation to train at least 10 beekeepers. This model is now being applied in other parts of Uganda by TUNADO with support from Trias, **Bees for development** and Oxfam.