

GENDER ISSUES IN BEEKEEPING: THE UGANDA CASE

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Introduction

Uganda is an Agricultural Country .There is a gender in balance in this sector .Workforce in the Agriculture Sector is mainly Women .

There is an increasingly need for women to participate actively in the Beekeeping sector. This will enhance increase in crops yield since bees play a major role in pollination crops and abundant harvest from the hives as the flowering plants/crops will be a source of nectar & pollen for the bees

Women Participation in Beekeeping

As far as we know ,Beekeeping in Uganda has been exclusive male activity since the time of our forefathers .The Development and promotion of Keeping through the involvement of NGO's has ushered in Women's participation through Beekeeping Project .Much as Women participation is on the increase there are still various factors limiting and constraining the practice e.g.

Group Formation in Beekeeping is a new phenomenon. Many Women's Beekeeping groups /Associations have just sprung up within half a decade .This mostly after hearing theoretical successes of their fellow women performances or after undertaking half baked training .They graduate with high expectation of easily & quickly acquire wealth from the hives product within a short period .This expectation usually turn into frustration as Theory and Practical in most cases are not easily blended to produce result.

Women's Attitude

The majority of the Ugandans Women live in the Rural areas of course with their husbands and the children. Few have had basic education due to cultural practices favoring boys. Even fewer had the opportunity to exposures to the world outside their homesteads and villages. Because of the tradition that men original task should be perform by men. This limits women active participation during siting hives, Apiary Management, Honey harvest, honey & bees wax processing. Let alone the sale of the hives products. Only few serious & exposed members of the Groups/Association participation actively.

Men's Attitude:

The majority of Ugandan males still hold on to traditional of keeping Women out of most men's activity. However some enlightened men are gradually adopting change in culture. Its just a matter of time when the limited contribution to decision making will be unlimited to the women. Thus a full time occupation with the hives for women without a rock block from men.

Uganda Aggressive Bee Species: *Apis Millifera scutellata* the dominant Bee Species in Uganda are mostly aggressive. Their nature usually does not permit Apiary management Hive inspection and honey harvest during the daytime. The activity is best done either very early in the morning or late in the evening. This conflicts with the time when women are busiest with household chores in their homes.

Women Heavy Work load: A gender analysis workshop conducted by Uganda National Farmers Association (UNFA) in 1999 for the District Farmers Leadership indicated that the Uganda rural women work long hours a day (16-18 hour). This has been the order of the day since the time of our forefathers. The ushering in of Women Beekeeping Projects adds to the work load. There is a great need for gradual change of culture and tradition to favour women where men take up what are termed as women's work so that women may have time to attend to the Beekeeping activities.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO THE GENDER ISSUES

The following are some of the possible solutions

- Services near homes. (water, health units)
- Tree planting (Agro Forestry) both for fuel and forage.
- Biogas from zero grazing for cooking and lighting.
- Sensitization of both men and women on gender role and sex role. In most cases the two are mixed up.
- Credit Availability to both men and women.
- Techniques Labour saving techniques e.g. for honey and bees wax processing
- Meeting time and place should be convenient to women.
- Training: Gender and leadership Training for both men and women.
- Promote: Bee keeping as income generating activity for women.
- Facilitate economic empowerment of women.
- Men to assist with some household tasks traditional label women tasks.

CONCLUSION

The Uganda Rural Women Beekeeper needs to take up challenges in the 21st century. No Beekeeping activity should be considered sole male activity. The courage and joy of making hives (both traditional, improved & modern), siting hives, Apiary management, honey harvesting and processing, consumption and sales of the hives products but most of all a gradual change in **culture/tradition** will make Uganda a prosperous, healthier and wealthier nation. The theme of the congress would have become a reality. "Bee keeping Against Poverty." Long Live the Bees Race!

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