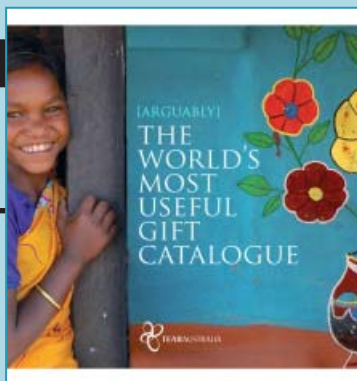


BEE-KEEPING



TEAR Australia supports development projects which focus on the poorest and most marginalised people and give priority to their rights, interests and initiatives. These projects are implemented in partnership with local agencies. One of the agencies providing bee-keeping training is BRAC.

BRAC

The Buhemba Rural Agricultural Centre (BRAC) has been established to help small-scale farmers in rural Tanzania to go beyond subsistence production, earn an income and so improve family life. The region is suffering environmental degradation due to deforestation, erosion and low rainfall. BRAC is responding to these challenges by training farmers in tree planting and building fuel-efficient stoves, and by promoting fish farming and bee-keeping as alternative sources of income. They've also recognised the need for water in the community and have renovated old dams in one village and trained members to maintain the water supply. The dam water is not suitable for drinking, but provides for farming and livestock. A deep bore-well, for drinking water, has been drilled and local people trained to maintain the pump and tank.



A farmer from the Biatika village bee-keeping group, with the new hives set up in trees.

When BRAC run bee-keeping training, they invite local farmers to a series of workshops to learn more about the process, and to form a bee-keeping group. Once a group has formed, BRAC helps them to negotiate some land from the village government. The land then becomes a preservation area, governed by local by-laws to protect a food and water source for the bees. Although the land remains government land, there is an agreement that the farmers can set up their honey production for commercial use.

So far, BRAC has established groups in four villages, of around 15 - 20 members each. All of the members have participated in the bee-keeping workshops, learning how to start bee-keeping, bee behaviour, how to set up an apiary, about bee products and even bee enemies. Each of the groups is a formal cooperative, with its own constitution governing how the honey and hive products can be sold. The groups set up simple wooden beehives in trees around their land. Native beehives are naturally found in hollow logs, but queen bees will move their colony into the locally-produced hives if they are strategically placed. Within months, the farmers can begin harvesting the honey. Though many of the native bees in this region are stingless, some protective equipment is required.



Bees store their honey in waxy sacks which can easily be harvested.

As this is the first time honey has been commercially produced in the region, BRAC is helping the farmers to market and sell their honey at local markets. They've even set up honey-tasting at the local agricultural show, to encourage locals to introduce honey into their diet.

In a typical season, the hives can harvest up to 400 kilos of honey per village, making about 600,000 Tanzanian Shillings (\$580). Though this is split up between the farmers, it's a good profit in a growing industry. BRAC is also investigating ways to use the beeswax for candle and ointment production in the future, further developing and expanding the bee-keeping industry.

OTHER TEAR AUSTRALIA PARTNERS PROVIDING THIS ITEM:

MGVS (India), NEICORD (India), Vision Terudo (Uganda).

GIFT CARD IMAGE: No-one wanted to stand near the beehive to have their photo taken – even though many species of bee in Uganda are stingless!