OP-208 [Beekeeping for Rural Development]
Beekeeping development in Ethiopia; a twelve year review of practice and impact

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Bees for Development Ethiopia, based in Amhara, Ethiopia, is a specialist beekeeping NGO. Founded in 2012 our mission is to support beekeepers, conserve the environment and support sustainable rural livelihoods. Since 2012 we have delivered a wide range of projects. Amongst our core values is a determination to continuously learn and improve. We strive to be accountable to the donors who give us funds and to the communities we are working with. It is against this background that in 2025 we reflected on our achievements to date and asked ourselves some questions? What have we learned about project implementation and beekeeping development? How do we most wisely spend money to achieve the greatest impact?

We designed an internal framework of analysis. This combined a review of documents and achievements, followed by an internal reflection process whereby key staff presented project results to other team members and sought feedback and questions. This was then followed by an external community-based impact assessment.

A number of learning points emerged. We struggled to evaluate one of our earliest projects because we did not have a good beneficiary list and data was not curated in one central database – instead project results were scattered in different formats. On the plus side we reflected that we had refined our indicators of achievement over the years and we felt more confident in measuring beekeeping progress based on skills and scale of beekeeping enterprise. In terms of approaches to development we are convinced that in-depth training, and longer projects are necessary to achieve transformational change. We implemented a mentoring approach to beekeeping learning – whereby beginner beekeepers are assigned mentors within their own communities. This proved successful and has been scaled up. Although no beekeeping system is ideal for every context we are confident that top-bar beekeeping is accessible and suitable for many. Yet replacing tried and tested indigenous beekeeping systems with new approaches is rarely necessary or successful.

This review process has given us confidence to deliver excellent work going forwards. We resolved to develop standard indicators our work and establish stronger data collection and evaluation protocols.

Bees
for Development Ethiopia

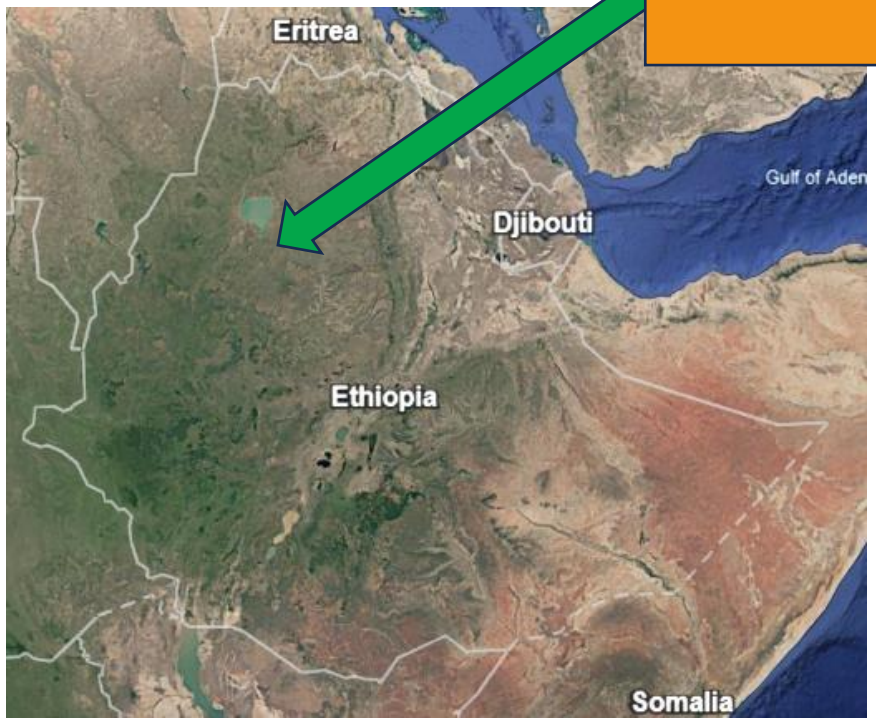
Beekeeping Development in Ethiopia; a Twelve Years Review of Practice and Impact

Getsh Kassa & Janet L.

APIMONDIA
SCANDINAVIA
SWEDEN | DENMARK | NORWAY
23-27 SEPTEMBER
2025

BEES FOR DEVELOPMENT ETHIOPIA

- **Established:** 2012 as local resident CSO, registration number: 2753
- **Mission:** Promote beekeeper friendly beekeeping practices in Ethiopia that is well integrated with the environment thereby contributing to sustainable rural livelihoods.
- **Geography (MAP)**



12 YEAR REVIEW – PURPOSE

- **What works?**
- **Accountability**
- **Improvement**

12 YEAR REVIEW – APPROACH

Beekeeping livelihoods stronger – post-project?

Did women's lives improve?

Legacy of land restoration work?

BEEKEEPING ENTERPRISES BUILT AND SUSTAINED?

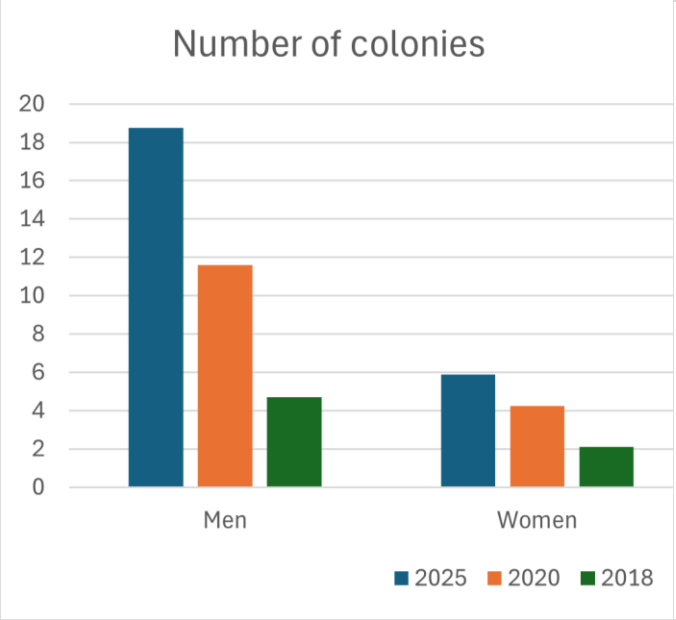
- **Business thinking**
- **Premium prices**
- **Peer to peer mentoring**

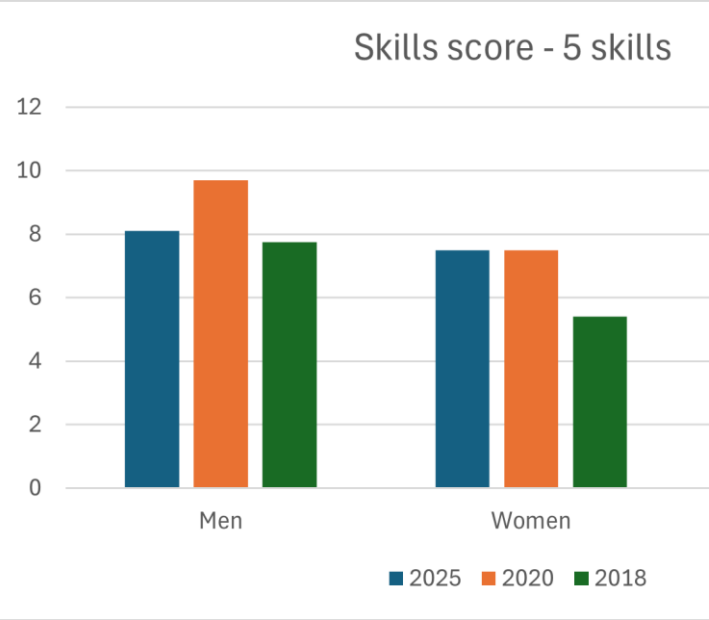
- **Most still active**
- **Growth in hive numbers**
- **Spending on education, inputs, assets**

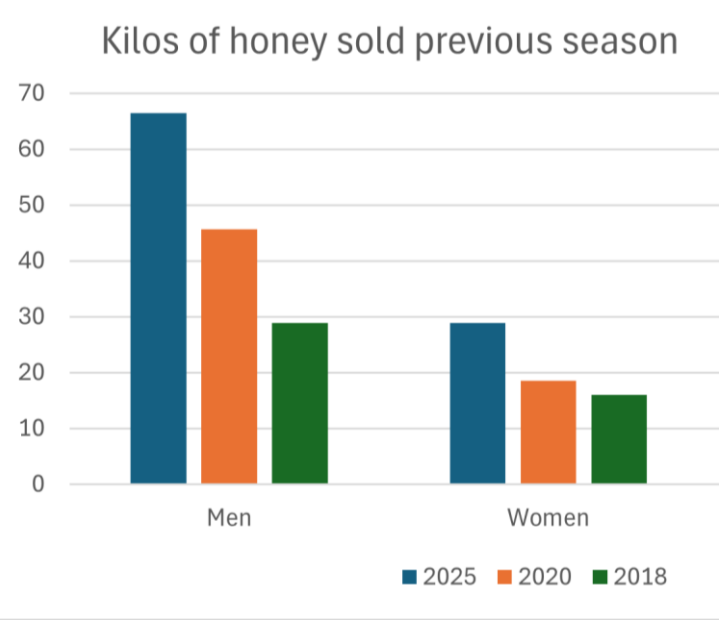
Before I had 7 colonies.
Now I have 30.
Bitaw Baye, Wonjeta

QUANTITATIVE DATA:

- **Number of bee colonies**
- **Skill-score** [average of 5 skills, self-assessment]
- **Kilograms of honey sold in previous season**







Main project completed 2018. Targeted follow-on support ended 2020. No project support 2020-2025

WOMEN'S PARTICIPTION AND BENEFIT

- ❖ **Quantitative benefit is less than men**
- ❖ **Relative impact is greater**

- ✓ **Greater agency and voice**
- ✓ **Regular income raises confidence**

- ➢ **Caveat: when men make the sale, may control income**

When we earn money – then we are listened to.
FGD, Derbanta

LAND RESTORATION – LINK TO BEEKEEPING

Dokmit site: Reclaimed & reforested. Still protected 5 years after project.

Now there is deep forest. We harvest 2x a year, before it was once. FGD, Ysala.

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND WHAT NEXT?

- **Top asks:**
- Skills refreshers – and more advanced
- Protective clothing
- Market linkages
- Pesticide reduction
- Access to credit
- **Data systems:**
- Govt. workers keep registers, but variable
- Monitoring can be costly

BOTTOM LINE AND ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS

Yes – positive livelihood impacts.

Need - skills refresher and finance.

Yes – assets and agency.

Need – more work to mitigate income control.

Yes – strong ecological gains.

Reinforcing loop.

MY PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

- Livelihoods - keep gains durable
- Women - convert participation into agency
- Restoration - protect what works, feed the bees
- Risk controls - stop avoidable losses
- Data - one simple system

Thank you

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