

Mwekera Beekeeping Forum

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The Mwekera National Forest reserve was strategically designed to be a buffer for the Kafue River owing to the numerous streams found in the forest area. However, the forest is under extreme pressure from human activities including illegal settlement, charcoal manufacturing and farming.

There were few links between the forestry college and the local community on matters of sustainable development. The beekeeping curriculum at the college lacked an essential skills development aspect for sustainable beekeeping practice. There was little networking with nearby local schools or civic organisations. It seemed it would be useful to explore options for communal beekeeping and for how to add value to bee products.

Ruth Mulenga, Edgar Bowa and Musunke Chisenga from the Zambia Forestry College thus decided to establish a Beekeeping Educational Forum with stakeholders from the college (students, members of staff), Mwekera Combined School (learners and staff), the Forestry Department (Beekeeping Section) and members of the local community.

Following approval from college management, stakeholders met for discussion and at the first meeting, a semi-structured questionnaire was used to help identify gaps in the current apiculture programme. During the first phase of the project, a teaching beekeeping model was developed as well as plans for a well set-up classroom from sawmill planks for on-site teaching and learning. A billboard for the apiary at a nearby main junction was also planned.

The second phase focused on site selection. A plot was demarcated in an ideal forest area close (15m) to the Kamfinsa-Mwekera feeder road, bearing in mind availability of bee forest species, security and water.

Benefits include hands-on skills development in apiculture among the learners. A modern apiary with an onsite classroom will support teaching of Geography to school pupils. The 1 ha site will be totally protected from human disturbances which will enhance conservation of biodiversity and the nearby Kamatebela stream.

Involving all college staff and community members should foster an active community of practice focused on environmental protection and sustainable development. Beekeeping is a suitable activity for people of all ages from learners at nearby schools and to elderly community members. Increased pollination by honeybees should benefit many different crops and increase yields. Finally, the forum should foster self reliance and would also encourage networking through cooperatives for beekeeping.

The way forward includes making of hive stands, establishing external boundaries, acquiring hives (both modern and traditional) and beekeeping kit, making an onsite classroom, tree tagging, hanging of hives. A variety of hives (10 modern hives, five calabash hives, two reed mat hives, two bamboo hives and five bark hives) will be established for demonstration purposes.



“The project, being owned and managed by [a range of] stakeholders, has created the sense of ownership which excites everyone to see it succeed and be sustained.”

“The change project has [contributed to] creating a centre of excellence in apiculture owing to the educational research based approach...”

Ruth Mulenga

