

# NEWS RELEASE



## Three-year Bees Abroad project in Kenya wins Government funding

Bees Abroad has secured major funding from the UK Department for International Aid (DFID) for a three-year project to alleviate poverty through advancing beekeeping skills and supporting bio-conservation and bio-enterprise in the arid and semi-arid land (ASAL) in the Kenyan district of Laikipia.

The Bee Products Enterprise Development (BPED) aims to raise incomes of 900 pastoral households through beekeeping providing for improved production, value addition, trade and profit sharing. It will also increase opportunities for women and marginalized members of society to engage in sustainable economic activity and increase control of their income.

International Development Minister Lynne Featherstone said: "This project will change the lives of over 5,000 people in Kenya, half of whom live below the poverty line and are dependent on food aid. DFID funding will help Bees Abroad give people the skills and support they need to learn a trade which can increase their independence.

"Beekeeping is a potentially vital source of income for these rural communities. As well as teaching beekeeping skills, the project will provide vital training in business and marketing, to help rural communities run successful enterprises. This is going to help generations of families increase their income and become self-sufficient. I hope Bees Abroad can create a real buzz around this worthwhile project."

The project will be implemented for Bees Abroad by John and Mary Home, assisted by David Evans. John and Mary already act as volunteer project managers for several of the charity's projects in Kenya. As well as helping community groups improve their beekeeping skills, they have been responsible for teaching beekeepers how to make value-added products such as hand creams and wax polish.

Another of their innovations is the 'A-maizing' bee suit which can be made for less than £1 by utilizing waste maize sacks and the sound parts of damaged mosquito nets. This application was made possible with help and encouragement from those in Bees Abroad and much support from family and friends.

Support for the project also comes from Bees Abroad patron and television personality Jimmy Doherty. He commented: "This is a major achievement for Bees Abroad, who are a small and growing solid charity, with a core of very experienced beekeepers who really care about helping communities in the developing world. It's wonderful to think that 900 households will be given beekeeping skills that can be used straight away and then handed on to future generations. It's sustainability at its best."

Commercial and community-owned bee product enterprises with a sound ethical, environmental and business base create new economic opportunities for pastoralist men and women. This project will increase economic returns from beekeeping and provide economic incentives for the sustainable use of indigenous natural resources. Product branding and market links will help communities to access rewarding local, national and East African regional markets.

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Creating livelihood diversification will take pressure off water and grazing available in the wider Laikipia ecosystem, contributing to protection of natural resources, particularly in the water catchment areas. An improved ecosystem will lead to wider livelihood improvements such as reduced tension and conflict between communities, greater resilience to drought and greater gender equity within households.

Bee products are culturally and socially acceptable. Honey and wax are already sold in the targeted areas, but at a low and disorganised level. The project proposes to expand existing knowledge and practices, implementing business-based systems to ensure economic viability.

Introducing low-cost beekeeping equipment, often made from locally sourced materials, enables producers to expand to commercial levels. Community cohesion will be supported by the democratic decision-making and participation in the enterprise, especially under fair trade standards.

Better bee colony management also increases the stability of local food supplies through the bees' pollination activities. Understanding the need to preserve natural resources for honey production promotes care for sustainable natural resources.

The development of the national organic market will increase awareness among consumers and the farming community of environmental issues, helping to make the value of Kenyan natural resources better understood and appreciated.

● *The Department for International Development (DFID) leads the UK's work to end extreme poverty. They're ending the need for aid by creating jobs, unlocking the potential of girls and women and helping to save lives when humanitarian emergencies hit.*

● *The Global Poverty Action Fund (GPAF) is DFID's main central funding mechanism for civil society organisations. It's a demand-led fund that allows DFID to support a wide range of projects focused on poverty reduction and pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Projects must deliver tangible changes to poor people's lives through one or more of the following objectives: service delivery, empowerment and accountability, work on conflict, security and justice.*

☞ web link: [www.beesabroad.org.uk](http://www.beesabroad.org.uk)

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*The hives are on the Lolldaiga Ranch. The photo shows catcher boxes waiting for the migrating bees during the flowering season.*



*The mountains are the Lolldaiga range in Laikipia County which is typical of the semi-arid land in which the project will be based*

*For further information please contact:*

*Veronica Brown  
0117 230 0231  
Bees Abroad (Administrator)*

*Roger Ranson  
0845 402 6527  
BHR Communications*