

# Empowerment

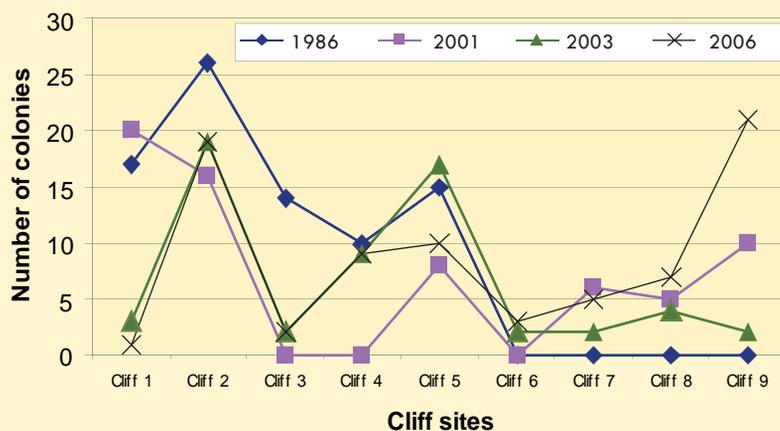


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Extension and promotion efforts in Pakistan

Empowering communities and societies is one of the major prerequisites for achieving secure and sustainable livelihoods. Beekeeping can play an important role in empowering the poor, and it also introduces the concept of fair and equitable sharing of benefits in societies. Beekeeper communities understand the structure of a beehive where life organises itself in a more meaningful and disciplined way. Beekeeping in a community inspires people to organise and work collectively for their common benefit and to trade their product in a systematic way. Empowered communities are able to demonstrate their economic and social power. Most small beekeepers belong to the more disadvantaged groups in society and it is important for development workers and projects to help them achieve better economic returns for their hard work, which in turn will contribute to their empowerment.

Organisation and mobilisation are a central part of community empowerment, and help communities to access resources and achieve economic prosperity. ICIMOD's programmes in Nepal have not only helped beekeeping, they have also helped honey hunting communities to organise themselves and to understand better the importance of cliff bee resources. This has led to the relative stabilisation of cliff bee (*Apis laboriosa*) populations, better income through the establishment of 'bee watch tourism' and improved eco services like pollination for their crops and overall biodiversity management. Figure 6 shows the dynamics of *Apis laboriosa* populations in the Kaski district of Nepal, and the stabilising trend in bee populations as a result of the hard work of the communities during the project period.



**Figure 6: Change in number of bee nests per cliff, Kaski district, Nepal**

There are many other examples from managed beekeeping. The Yucatan peninsula was mentioned above, where more than 17,800 small Maya beekeepers produce about one third of Mexico's honey output and earn a significant amount of money (Arce Arce and van Veen, 1997). In Pakistan some very poor sections of society adopted beekeeping in the 1980s, and reports indicate that their overall economic situation changed within the first ten years. They organised themselves and were eventually able to manage 400,000 bee colonies. Honey sales and exports expanded into the niche markets of the Gulf

countries bringing prosperity to these Pakistani beekeepers. Beekeeping in Nepal is still at a preliminary stage, and most beekeepers keep *Apis cerana* colonies in log and wall hives without any management except honey harvesting once or twice a year. Beekeeping also includes protecting wild bees and bee cliffs as part of the family or community ownership. This means that most of the honey produced in Nepal, both from wild bees and backyard beekeeping, is 'organic'. According to Neupane (2003) there are a total of 145,000 colonies of honeybees in Nepal including 110,000 colonies of the Asian hive bee *Apis cerana*, 15,000 colonies of *Apis mellifera*, and 20,000 colonies of other wild bee species (Table 5). The Beekeeping Development Section (BDS) of the Ministry of Agriculture, quoted by Apinet-Nepal in 2006, recorded some 124,000

**Table 5: Total number of bee colonies and production of bee products in Nepal**

Description	Honeybee species			
	Asian	European	Wild	Total
<b>Bees</b>				
Bee colonies (No.)	110,000	15,000	20,000	145,000
<b>Honey</b>				
Honey production (kg per colony per year)	3	25	20	-
Total honey production (tonnes per year)	330	375	400	1105
Farmer's honey price (NRs per kg)	100	100	150	-
Total honey sales ('000 NRs)	33,000	37,500	60,000	160,500
<b>Beeswax</b>				
Production of processed beeswax (tonnes per year)	2	5	20	27
Farmer's price (NRs per kg)	200	200	200	-
Total sales of beeswax ('000 NRs)	400	1,000	4,000	5,400

Source: Based on data collected by BDS from District Agricultural Development Offices and estimates made by Neupane (2003).  
In 2003, US\$1 = NRs 71



Exhibition and sale of bee-based beauty and healing products

colonies of *Apis cerana*, three-quarters of them kept in traditional fixed comb wall or log hives. Managed and modern beekeeping with *Apis mellifera* is more commonly practised in the central and western development regions of Nepal.

Women in developing countries tend to be disadvantaged, and beekeeping can provide them with a way of improving their position. In Ghana, Africa, the position of women beekeepers changed with changes in the beekeeping business. Now women beekeepers control the cash flow and post harvest processes of honey, including the trade in bee products. In other words beekeeping has given them a chance to prosper and become empowered (Kwame Sarkwah Aidoo 1997).

Capacity building can provide an important route to empowerment. In the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region, ICIMOD's capacity building programme on indigenous honeybees



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Processing honey in a kitchen

triggered a chain of events in empowerment. More than 6,000 poor men and women were trained in *Apis cerana* beekeeping, which changed the art of beekeeping in many project areas. Beekeeping activities increased the communities' direct cash income by 25% on average, and there were further benefits from pollination in terms of agricultural productivity and eco-services. Women's income in the different project areas increased, which provided them with better opportunities for health care, nutrition, and education, also supporting empowerment. Some 27% of the women benefited from the capacity building programmes of the project in the region. The poorest of the poor in particular were trained to organise themselves better, and the setting up of cooperatives and grass root organisations, and management of small grants and endowment funds triggered the growth of the beekeeping industry through the establishment of hive carpentry and other bee-based enterprises.