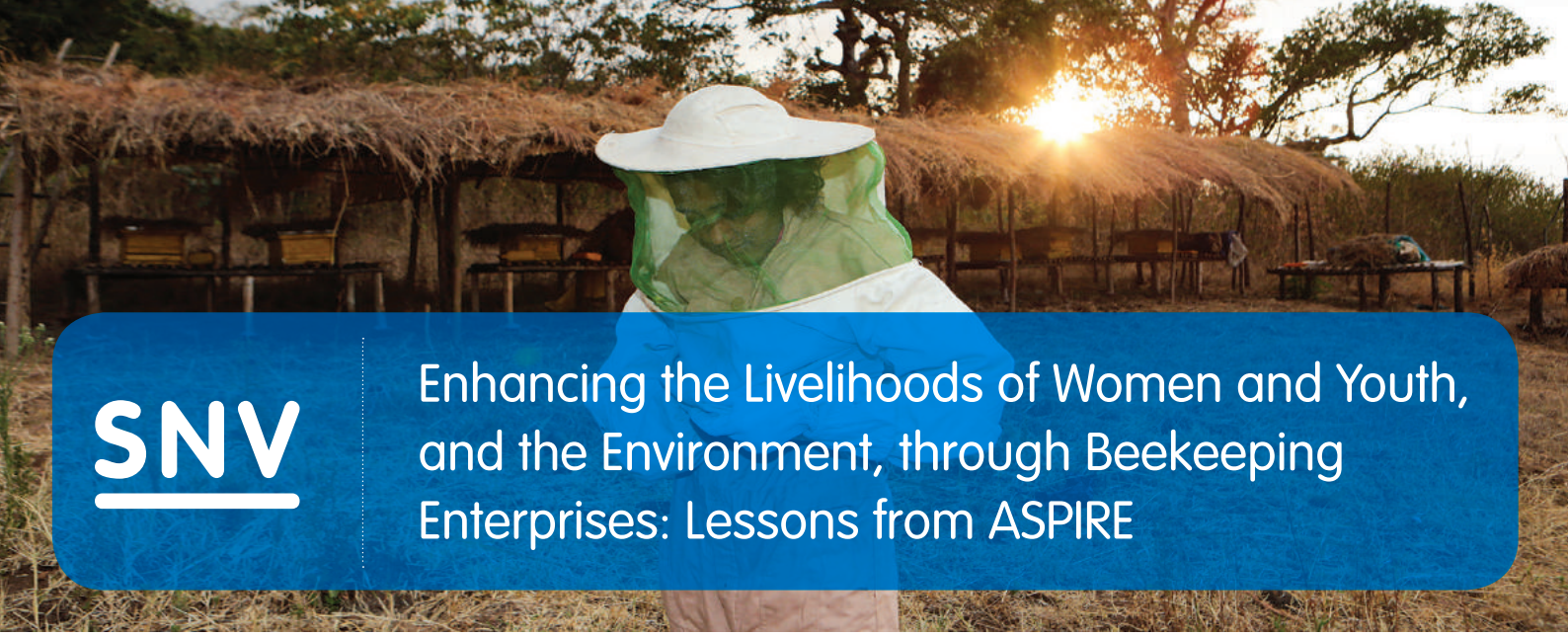

Enhancing the Livelihoods of Women and Youth, and the Environment, through Beekeeping Enterprises: Lessons from ASPIRE

The challenge

Despite the significant role that women play in the Ethiopian economy, such as the 40–60% labour contribution to agricultural production, they face unique constraints and their efforts are inadequately recognised. On average, female Ethiopian farmers produce 23% less per hectare than their male counterparts (ATA, 2016).

This productivity gap can be attributed to the inability of women to access agricultural training, inputs and services (MoANR, 2017). Similarly, rural youth encounter socio-economic barriers in agricultural activities. These barriers hamper not just young people, but have a negative impact on the productivity, efficiency, effectiveness and overall economic progress of the country.

The goal

In order to increase agricultural productivity and efficiency, a gender- and youth-sensitive development approach is needed to inform the provision of extension and other services. Taking steps to redress the gender and age imbalance in agricultural activities will not just increase agricultural productivity overall. It will also help to contribute to greater equality and improve the wellbeing of women and young people.

As an approach to increasing the participation of women in beekeeping, ASPIRE aimed to reach at least 20% women out of the total targeted beneficiaries. The project also encourages the participation of landless rural youth in apiculture development.

The solutions

The ASPIRE project integrates gender and youth across its activities to create more opportunities for women and youth, and to address the challenges they face. In addition, the ASPIRE project facilitates environmental conservation and the rehabilitation of degraded land.

The results

The study results and secondary data indicate that the ASPIRE project has contributed to minimising gender disparities in beekeeping activities and created job opportunities for rural landless youth. It has also contributed to the rehabilitation of degraded land.

About 30% of women participants (6,573 women out of 31,376 beekeepers) received training in the ASPIRE minimum training package, while just under 20% of female copy beekeepers (6,568 of 33,290 copy beekeepers) were supported by trained beekeepers.

With the support of the ASPIRE project, about 4,766 trained female beekeepers (18% of the total 25,519) constructed 11,428 transitional hives using locally available materials. This is a big shift, as hive making is traditionally a job carried out by men. In addition, 2,469 female beekeepers (16% of the total 14,971) own modern beehives. This indicates that a large number of female beekeepers have adopted modern hives as a result of the ASPIRE project.

Using modern beehives, about 7,107 female beekeepers produced about 1,129,086kg (20% of the total 5,707,080kg) of honey in 2016. On average, female beekeepers produced 161kg of honey. This is greater than the average production (143kg) in the target areas, which shows that female beekeepers are more productive than their male counterparts.

ASPIRE is a five-year programme funded by the Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands, implemented by a consortium led by SNV and including EAB, ProFound and Enclude.

In addition, about 715,561kg (20% of the total 3,532,646kg) of honey was sold by female beekeepers, which indicates that female beekeepers are becoming commercially astute. For instance, the PRIN study (2017) revealed that the average income female beekeepers received from crude and pure honey increased to ETB 1,982.96 and ETB 2,893.14 respectively in 2016, from baselines of ETB 133.5 and ETB 375.48.

Lessons learned

- The ASPIRE project has contributed to the socio-economic empowerment of women and landless youth. The core lesson here is that beekeeping is profitable because it needs only a relatively small investment and a small plot of land (the quality of which is unimportant).
- For women and youth, beekeeping is more successful in beekeeping groups. Such groups facilitate information sharing and experience exchange, and enhance peer-to-peer learning.
- ASPIRE contributed to enhancing the environment. Beekeeping creates an opportunity for the community to generate income from conserved/afforested areas without the need to cut trees. This is an incentive for the community to protect forests, and ensures sustainability of the natural resource management interventions.

References

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Case study: The youngest female lead beekeeper, Meleat Gebrehiwot

Meleat Gebrehiwot, a lead beekeeper aged 20, lives in Wukiro District, Tigray. She has a diploma in IT. She learned about beekeeping from her father when she was very young. When her father died in 2010, she inherited his 10 modern beehives. Since then, she has become the breadwinner in the family, supporting herself and eight family members.

In 2015, Meleat received ASPIRE's minimum package training in Wukiro District. The following year, she was selected to become a lead beekeeper and received in-depth and intensive training at Bahir Dar University and Holeta Bee Research Center. Meleat was trained in honey production, splitting, transitional beehive making and business management. She also received beekeeping materials from the ASPIRE project. Meleat cultivates 115 modern beehives on 1.25 hectares of land.

As a lead beekeeper, Meleat has provided training to 500 beekeepers in three districts, and is currently providing special support to 10 beekeepers (four females and six males, eight of whom are youth).

Meleat has benefited a great deal from beekeeping. Besides saving her family from poverty after her father passed away, she has paid for her college fees, built a modern house, and supported her seven siblings by paying for their school fees. She has also set up two businesses: one in livestock production, and the other in 'brick' production used for construction. In 2016, she earned ETB 200,000 from honey and about ETB 40,000 from selling bee colonies.