

Supporting Urban Beekeeping Livelihood Strategies in Cape Town



An Interactive Qualifying Project submitted to the faculty of Worcester Polytechnic Institute in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Science.

ABSTRACT

Underemployment is a major problem for many residents in the Cape Flats area of Cape Town. The goal of this project was to assist seven beekeepers from the Cape Flats area in forming a business to utilize their apicultural skills. We sought to accomplish this by working closely with the beekeepers to mutually learn and overcome obstacles. We were able to guide them through the production of a constitution and business plan, filing cooperative forms, obtaining a hive location, securing business agreements, developing skills and conducting their first honey sales.

This project report is part of an ongoing research program by students and faculty of the WPI Cape Town Project Centre to explore and develop options for sustainable community development in South Africa. For more information please go to <http://wp.wpi.edu/capetown/>

The following is an executive summary of a set of project reports that have been implemented as a website available at:

<http://wp.wpi.edu/capetown/homepage/projects/2011-2/sustainable-livelihoods-through-beekeeping>

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PROBLEM STATEMENT

Two major crises affecting a large portion of the South African population are unemployment and lack of education. These problems have arisen for a few reasons that are seeded in South Africa's history yet still have effects that reach into the present.

The unemployment problem in South Africa exists heavily because of relatively recent urbanization and labor shifting. On one hand, the urbanization trend brought people from rural areas into the cities seeking opportunity, as there was little of it in the countryside (Aliber, 2003). On the other hand, the labor shifting left city-dwellers with far less job opportunity. This was the result of employers shifting to productivity-centered systems that employed smaller amounts of skilled workers that could earn higher wages rather than the larger amounts of unskilled workers that could earn modest wages, as it was prior (Nattrass, 2004). The result was an increasing city population with even fewer jobs to compete for.

The problem of the lack of education in South Africa stems heavily from Apartheid, during which whites and non-white were separated physically, socially, and economically. Non-whites were forced into a series of disadvantages, including poorly funded and low quality schools, being distanced from the more prosperous economy, and having less access to job opportunities (Wilkinson, 2000). The disadvantages reinforced each other: few jobs meant little chance of earning money for a better education, and poor educations meant little

chance to get a better job. Thus many of the Apartheid-oppressed were left in a vicious cycle of minimal opportunity.

The Urban Beekeeping Project was introduced by the City of Cape Town as an effort to produce a sustainable livelihood through beekeeping (see Figure 1). Thus seven indi-



Figure 1: The cascading down of involvement in the Urban Beekeeping Project

viduals from the Cape Flats received training in the field of beekeeping. The City encouraged the beekeepers to establish a cooperative which would provide them with continuous income, but the new apiculturists lacked the necessary business skills. Different organizations involved in the project assisted the beekeepers in obtaining these skills, however some issues arose that hindered their progression. This situation caused a loss of motivation for the beekeepers and the project decelerated to a stagnant state.

BACKGROUND

The Urban Beekeeping Project came into fruition as a direct result of the efforts by Dominique Marchand of The Honeybee Foundation. Through his years of experience in the beekeeping industry, he created the idea of a project for the City of Cape Town to implement apiary skills as means of sustainable livelihood for low-income communities.

Beekeeping has been conducted in Africa for centuries and has a well established presence in many cultures. Even today, it remains a widely beneficial activity. Beekeeping helps local flora thrive through pollination, is relatively low cost, produces a wide variety of products, and is environmentally friendly. The products of beekeeping have a wide variety of uses and include propolis, honey, wax, and more.

In addition to its wide variety of products, beekeeping requires relatively small amounts of time input, as opposed to farming, making it quite viable for utilization in relief programs. It has been used as such to improve the communities of many African countries including Ethiopia, Malawi, and South Africa (Illgner, Nel, & Robertson, 1998). See our final proposal for a more in depth discussion of the case studies.

Through implementation of the Urban Beekeeping Project, the city of Cape Town wished to address both the need for jobs and supplementary income of underprivileged communities as well as the need to make a lasting impact in the conservation of important natural resources.

In order to employ beekeeping

as a form sustainable livelihood, those involved must adopt a viable and functional business model. The group of seven beekeepers participating in the Urban Beekeeping Project decided to pursue formation of an officially registered primary cooperative. According to the International Cooperative Alliance, a cooperative is "an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise" (International Cooperative Alliance). By becoming a cooperative, the seven beekeepers are capable of pooling their resources, knowledge, and unique abilities with the aim of succeeding as a whole. The process of establishing a cooperative is also a valuable experience, since the process is labour intensive and requires the utilization of different business skills and knowledge, thereby serving as practice and a preview of future business dealings to come. Additionally, recognition as an official cooperative will offer benefits in terms of credibility as well as greater availability of loans and grants.

METHODOLOGY

The goal of this project was to aid seven beekeepers of the Cape Flats area in establishing a viable apicultural business to serve as means of supplementary income and sustainable livelihood. In order to accomplish this, our WPI project team identified the following objectives:

- Establish a relationship with the seven beekeepers.

- Determine the status of the Urban Beekeeping Project.
- Facilitate progress towards the formation of a registered and productive cooperative (see Figure 2).
- Develop the beekeepers' business knowledge and skills.
- Develop sustainable support structure for the seven beekeepers and other aspiring beekeepers in South Africa.

In order to help develop skills, encourage the beekeepers, and be utilized throughout our project, we decided that it was best to work closely with the beekeepers through the learning process. We do not know everything about business; however, we do have experience with research and utilizing all available resources. This knowledge we shared with the beekeepers to assist them through the process. See Figure 3 for an outline of the methodology.



Figure 2: Projected progress path through the cooperative forming process

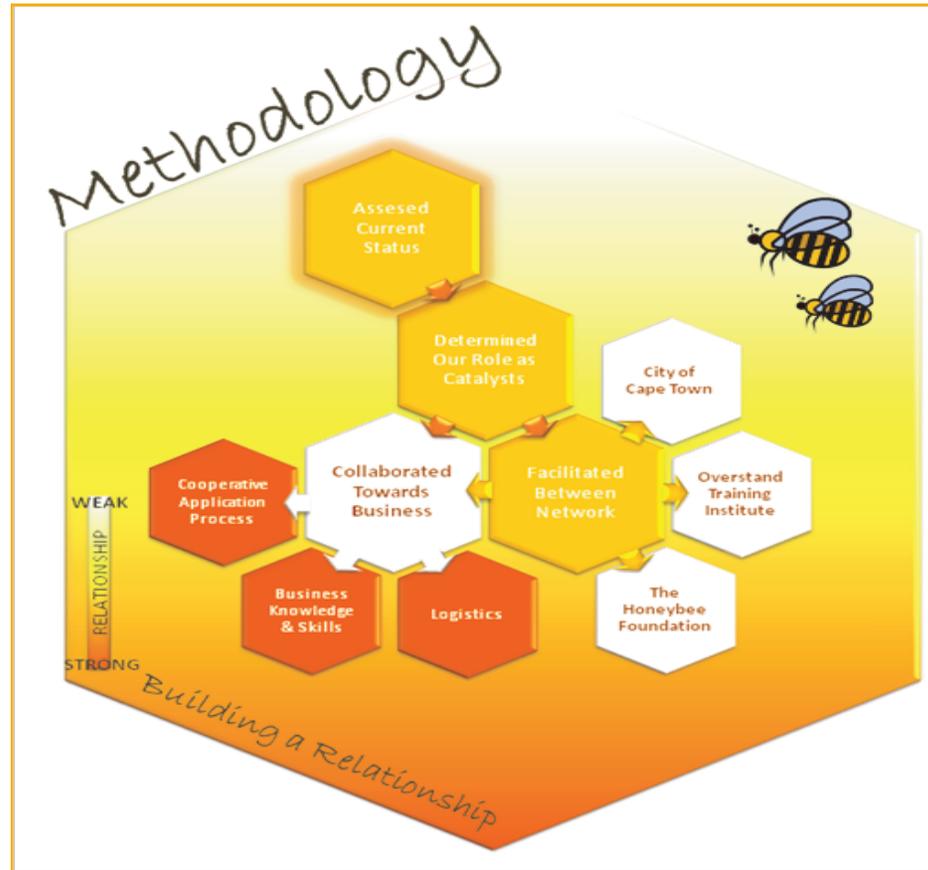


Figure 3: The outline of objectives for this project

ESTABLISHING A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE BEEKEEPERS

To be most successful in supporting the seven beekeepers in their business progression, we first wanted to establish a mutually respectful and trusting relationship (see Figure 4). Our goals were to gain perspective, strengthen their commitment, rebuild their confidence in the cooperative, and be made available as a supportive resource, since the confusing and tedious tasks in establishing a

business can be intimidating and discouraging. The steps we took to develop our relationship included:

- Mutual sharing of personal stories and backgrounds,
- Spending as much time together as possible,
- Showing our initiative and always making ourselves available, and
- Providing reassurance and support for every step along the way.



Fig 4: One of the beekeepers displaying the hive contents to our project group

DETERMINING THE STATUS OF THE URBAN BEEKEEPING PROJECT

Upon arriving in Cape Town, our foremost concern was determining the actual status of the Urban Beekeeping Project. To do this in a timely manner we had to network quickly and effectively with the different organizations that we knew were involved: the beekeepers, The Honeybee Foundation, and the City of Cape Town. Through communication with these groups, we also learned of an additional contact, the Overstrand Training Institute (OTI).

Organizing the first contact with the beekeepers was essential because they were the focus of the project. It was important to establish communication with the City since they were the primary supporter of the project, The Honeybee Foundation due to their mentorship responsibilities, and OTI because they had the critical role of educating the beekeepers in business. We quickly established contact with all of these organizations via the

most rapid means possible: telephone and email. Once the foundation of communication had been laid down, we met with all of the relevant groups in person to intensify the flow of information.

ESTABLISHING A COOPERATIVE

The first few meetings with the seven beekeepers helped paint a clear picture of the project's status. Once we knew the beekeepers had already dedicated themselves to the process of forming a cooperative, we embraced the role of catalysts in facilitating its establishment. The beekeepers' first step towards a business was to identify all of the requirements of filing for a cooperative. They employed the help offered at the Overstrand Training Institute as a resource for much of this information. From there, a projected timeline of milestones was created. Once the goals and steps were clearly laid out in the timeline, the beekeepers' next objective was to tackle the grind-work.

Several workshops over the period of our stay in South Africa were held to provide working time and learning support for the beekeepers through the cooperative establishment process. The workshops involved a mix of collaboration, brainstorming, and group work among other activities. These workshops took place over several weeks at the Honey Bee Foundation's Eco-Theater in Oude Molen Eco Village, the Manenberg's People Center in Manenberg, and the Overstrand Training Institute in Hermanus.

The workshops conducted fo-

cused on completing the following requirements for cooperative formation:

- Founder's Meeting: Agenda and Minutes
- Determining a board of directors and officer roles (see Figure 5)
- All legal documentation and forms (CR1, CR5, CR8)
- Constitution
- Business Plan



Figure 5: The beekeepers voting on officer positions for the cooperative

DEVELOPING THE BEEKEEPERS' BUSINESS SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

To help develop the beekeepers' business knowledge and skills, we felt the most appropriate method was learning through experience. After determining all of the necessary procedures to establishing a cooperative, we encouraged the beekeepers to practice making the necessary phone calls to suppliers and other contacts, writing portions of the business plan in a professional tone, thinking critically through all business planning, and conducting formal cooperative meetings. We wanted to

serve as support throughout this extensive process to instill confidence and reassurance. For confusing and complex tasks, we worked together to find guidance and answers from our available resources. Additionally, we were able to help the beekeepers practice typing while drafting possible label stories and during downtime on our Hermanus retreat.

DEVELOPING SUSTAINABILITY AND A SUPPORT SYSTEM

The ultimate goal of our project was to help the cooperative to become sustainable. For this reason, we wanted to help the beekeepers develop their own skills and tools to ensure their success in business. We also felt it important to describe the potential situations which require

| ACHIEVEMENTS | |
|--------------|--|
| | • Bicycles |
| | • First Hive Site Lease Pulley System |
| | • Cooperative Paperwork: Name Reservation Application Constitution Business Plan Founder's Meeting Agenda |
| | • First Honey Product Sale Logo, Story, Label Supplier Network Cost Analysis |
| | • Portfolios |
| | • Business Knowledge & Skills |
| | • Responsibility & Commitment |
| | • Momentum |

Figure 6: A list of key achievements that are a direct result from our time in Cape Town

these specific skills. For instance, we explained how taking notes is useful for meeting minutes and financial documentation. We encouraged brainstorming sessions in which the beekeepers categorized their business goals into time intervals, this would create a useful roadmap for the business. Our team also stressed the importance of networking skills in reaching out to potential customers and learning about training programs. Using collaborative research, we helped the beekeepers seek out detailed instructions on how to complete cooperative forms and create key documents such as their constitution. We also worked to create a timeline which would include key actions needed for business expansion and cost analysis for business operations. All the useful information on cooperative forms and the timeline were to be included on our website to serve as a guideline for future entrepreneurs.

RESULTS (see Figure 6)

ESTABLISHING A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE BEEKEEPERS

One major surprise in establishing a relationship was how quickly the beekeepers were willing to befriend us. Even from the first time we met, the beekeepers were not afraid of showing us their personalities and joking with us. We found that their comical approach to meeting us was very helpful in breaking the ice. It was not very long until they were more than willing to discuss their history both on an individual scale and a group scale. Through their willingness to openly share their back-



Figure 7: The logo for Cape Flats Honey, the cooperative started by the seven beekeepers

ground, a story was collectively made describing the cooperative's history, values, feats, and credibility, to be marketed with their products and services. Additional successes achieved through building a relationship include:

- ◆ Improved group meeting attendance,
- ◆ New enthusiasm and drive,
- ◆ Taking personal initiative, and
- ◆ Regained faith in the cooperative.

While the beekeepers' level of cooperation was not a subject we could have thoroughly prepared for prior to going to Cape Town, it proved paramount to the success of the project. Had we not found such a dedication, the results may have varied drastically.

DETERMINING THE STATUS OF THE URBAN BEEKEEPING PROJECT

Networking with the organizations linked to the project revealed a few things about the status of the Urban Beekeeping Project. For one, the seven beekeepers had decided to pursue the formation of a cooperative. This would shift the

focus of the project from being one of weighing business options to one of pursuing one of those options. Thus, the role of our project group would be one of facilitation rather than consultation as we had originally anticipated.

The main concern we had for the Urban Beekeeping Project was that it had become stagnant. At the time of our arrival, there had not been major progress in the project for four months. A few reasons for this being the City's trouble locating a site for the beekeepers' hives and OTI's loca-



Figure 8: One of the beekeepers signing the lease agreement with The Business Place

tion being a two hour drive from the beekeepers, hindering their access to business training resources. These major difficulties decelerated the project enough to cause the beekeepers to begin losing interest. This, in turn, harmed attendance and participation and caused further slowing of the project.

ESTABLISH A COOPERATIVE (see Figure 7)

Through the process of conducting the different workshops, many important milestones were reached. Through the beekeepers' hard work, perseverance, and dedication, they managed to complete the vast majority of the goals laid out at the beginning stage of the project. The time dedicated at the various project locations proved fruitful as it led to the following accomplishments:

- ◆ Project timeline and goals established,
- ◆ Founders meeting agenda,
- ◆ Establishment of the first board of directors,
- ◆ CR1, CR5, and CR8 form completion,
- ◆ Drafting of cooperative's constitution, and
- ◆ Drafting of business plan.

It proved difficult at times to retain the beekeepers' undivided attention. The workshops were labour intensive, time consuming,

and required continuous effort. At times, such as when we were drafting the constitution, we all experienced loss of energy and focus. Coffee and tea breaks were implemented to break the routine and keep everyone motivated. Once all the requirements were fulfilled, all that remained was to submit the paperwork and await the legal certification. Figure 8 depicts the signing lease agreement after a long day of constitution deciphering.

When one of the beekeepers filed the name reservation for the cooperative, we discovered that the forms we were provided with were out of date. Fortunately, the Department of Trade Industry was willing to aid the beekeepers in filing the new form.

DEVELOPING THE BEEKEEPERS' BUSINESS KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

The best part of working to develop the beekeepers' business knowledge and skills was witnessing their eagerness and willingness to learn. Many of the seven were instantly driven to improve their business capabilities and utilized our group in any way to fulfil this development. From completing the cooperative's paperwork and additional necessary tasks, knowledge of business and numerous business skills was successfully developed:

- Professional communication,
- Planning and organization,
- Professional writing, and typing skills (See Figure 9)

Additionally, the development of the beekeepers' abilities through practice and first-hand experience boosted their confidence and comfort level. One beekeeper explained that from the intense practicing of business writing: "I am a much better writer than I thought I was." Now that the group has confronted the wearisome tasks for cooperative establishment, they are better prepared to face future obstacles. Not only did the beekeepers grow from experiencing the thorough process, but our



Figure 9: Working together to help the beekeepers develop their typing skills

group learned alongside the beekeepers every step of the way. Working cohesively with the beekeepers, we shared the same questions and joined each other in searching for resources to provide answers or examples. Our group members have agreed that our experiences with Cape Flats Honey's cooperative establishment process will prove beneficial in our own possible future business endeavours.

DEVELOPING SUSTAINABILITY AND A SUPPORT SYSTEM

Our networking efforts resulted in a few beneficial relationships with different organizations. The cooperative signed a lease with The Business Place Philippi to place the beehives on their premises, the beekeepers called possible product providers to ask for quotations, and The Honeybee Foundation agreed to become the provider of jarred wholesale honey until the beekeepers have the ability to function as their own producer. After discussions, we determined that the beekeepers would need additional land and greater startup capital to implement all the operations they wish to pursue. Due to these resource constraints, many prospective services were postponed to a time when the business is further developed. Additionally, we created a website to share our project experience and guide future entrepreneurs. This website contains information about the cooperative application process and helpful organizations in the Cape Town area.

CONCLUSIONS

To our pleasant surprise, we finished our project having accomplished a great deal more than we had initially anticipated. We are leaving the seven individuals at a state of pending cooperative form approval. We suspect that they will be officially recognized by the end of March. At our project's start, the beekeepers were in no state to purchase from suppliers and prepare a product for sale. By the end of this seven week project, the beekeepers were fully prepared to start business, ready to start their first production of



Figure 10: The beekeepers' first sale at the presentations of some of the other CTPC project groups

honey product, and had their first honey sales (see Figure 10). We also helped organize the beekeepers' first independent hive site which included their first business networking and first signed legal document. Additionally, the beekeepers now have bicycles for easier travel, completed portfolios for official beekeeping certification, improved business knowledge and skills, and a plan for future sustainability. Though we have accomplished many measurable things, we feel that our most important accomplishments included reigniting the beekeeper's confidence and drive for the project and instilling a momentum that will continue the beekeepers' success after our departure.

Additionally, we have provided "Establishing a Cooperative: Important Things to Know", a list of significant findings throughout the Urban Beekeeping Project that can provide guidance for setting up small scale cooperatives in South Africa, and examples of the constitution and business plan work for future use by the City of Cape Town or other aspiring beekeepers. We would also like to

leave behind some recommendations for those that will continue to have ties to the project after our departure.

BEEKEEPERS

Though the cooperative has reached some very important milestones, there is still a lot of work that needs to be done. It will be absolutely crucial that the beekeepers maintain the same momentum that existed prior to the WPI team's departure and continue putting in the necessary time and effort without the guidance that has been provided.

In terms of business action, we recommend that the beekeepers continue to accumulate capital for the cooperative through the retail of wholesale honey until there is sufficient funding for expansion. We also recommend, upon the completion of cooperative registration, pursuing government-sponsored cooperative aid such as loans and grants.

CITY OF CAPE TOWN, THE HONEYBEE FOUNDATION, & OTI

It is important that the additional organizations involved in the Urban Beekeeping Project continue to provide the beekeepers with aid when necessary. While we have provided them with all the knowledge that we could, there is still more to know to enter into and thrive in the business world. Also, it may be valuable to consider employing highly motivated students further, as they are capable of dedicating large amounts of time without the corresponding expenses incurred by hiring professionals.

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