

UN Climate Change Adaptation Initiative Introduces Bees for Business 10/14/2011



Bees are the Earth's chief pollinators

October 2011, Nairobi - For Haleka Shishay, being unemployed left him feeling desperate. A resident of the Tahtai Maichew district in Ethiopia's Tigray region, Shishay used to travel during the rainy season to find seasonal work. That was before bees came into his life. Today, Shishay, 25, is the proud owner of bee hives that now give him a regular income.

Shishay is one of 600 unemployed youth who have been trained in the bee business by the Climate Change Adaptation and Development Initiative (CC DARE), jointly implemented by UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and UN Development Programme (UNDP). The initiative seeks to create opportunities for integrating climate change adaptation projects among communities in Sub-Saharan countries and Small Island Developing States.

"I used to migrate during the rainy season to western Tigray to look for seasonal work, or I would cut trees from the forests to sell in the nearby town for firewood or construction material. Now I have gained new skills and tools for making bee hives and splitting bee colonies thanks to the CC DARE project," he says proudly.

In an effort to address climate change impacts and food insecurity in Ethiopia, CC DARE assisted the country with a timely-targeted bee farming project called *Local Solutions for the Challenge of Unemployment and Food Insecurity based on Adaptation to Climate Change*. The one-year project focused on bee-keeping and the planting of trees and shrubs that serve the purpose to tackle climate change impacts and give work to farmers and unemployed youth.

Bee farming is not only a source of employment but has become a viable long-term solution for addressing the food crisis in Ethiopia. The drought that has ravaged the Horn of Africa has not spared Ethiopia, a country where over 85 percent of people depend on agriculture. While bee-keeping has historically been one of the most important income-generating activities in the region, land degradation and climate change has threatened the business as never before.

The bee business can be a complex enterprise. The insects are the Earth's chief pollinators and most crops which provide global food security are bee-pollinated. Of the 100 crop species that provide 90 percent of the world's food, over 70 are pollinated by bees.

But bees are also sensitive to climate change and human interventions like insecticides. And when there is no forage, there are no bees. The current crisis in the Horn of Africa -Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, where over 12 million people are in dire need of food and clean water, is yet another reminder of the importance of bee farming for food security and improving livelihoods.

According to a UNEP report earlier this year entitled: *Global Bee Colony Disorders and Other Threats to Insect Pollinators*, there are multiple factors linked with the way humans are rapidly changing the conditions and the ground rules that support life on Earth. It points out that bees are early warning indicators of wider impacts of climate change on animal and plant life and that bee colonies do not adapt easily to new, larger spaces and micro-climates. Moreover, their forage dries out faster during drought.

Under the CC DARE project 1,000 multi-purpose trees and shrubs have been planted whose species are critical for bee forage and which ultimately help to reduce the risks of climate change and the associated problems such as a loss of water resources.

In addition the project has trained farmers and unemployed youth in the bee-keeping business, producing honey, hives and wax. The success of the six-month trainings has inspired the country's Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) to scale up funding to replicate the capacity trainings in other parts of the country.

"These CC DARE projects daringly help tackle climate change in spite of, but generously because of, our vulnerability in Ethiopia," said Tewolde Berhan Gebre Egziabher, Director General of the EPA.

The CC DARE project also works in line with the objectives of Ethiopia's National Action Program for Adaptation (NAPA), contributing to the aims of the government's poverty reduction strategy programme.

"The Danish government decided to support the CC DARE with a view to addressing the need for a strong link between poverty alleviation and climate change. Good climate change adaptation is good development cooperation," said Pernille Dahler Kardel, Denmark's Ambassador to Ethiopia.

This success story from Ethiopia is just one amongst many under CC DARE which has helped to remove barriers for the implementation of climate change adaptation in addressing food insecurity in Sub-Saharan Africa.

However, more work needs to be done in countries in Sub-Saharan Africa with similar challenges like Ethiopia. With the current CC DARE project ending in May 2012, more funding is need for bringing the business of bees to other countries.

Notes to the Editors:

With targeted short-term activities, the CC DARE project has demonstrated that integrating adaptation into national development policies can strengthen and enhance the resilience of countries and communities against the impacts of climate change while also contributing to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The CC DARE Programme has provided countries in sub Saharan Africa with concrete climate change adaptation actions that will continue to sustainably provide them with resilient livelihoods under a changing climate. The programme has spurred impacts in multiple fronts including catalytic, Strategic, Policy and innovative. The merits of the approach is evident in the engagement of local communities, using local materials, keeping the implementation process simple and thus, making adaptation actions more efficient, more effective, more affordable, more equitable, and more environmentally sustainable. The CC DARE approach has demonstrated that, it is possible to achieve consolidated solutions for national priorities on adaptation to climate change that serve communities.

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