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Women only group leads beekeeping business in Guagusa Shikudad district, Amhara region of Ethiopia



Photo: MOYESH programme youth partner showing high quality packed table honey produced by her women-only beekeepers' enterprise.

This is a story of one women-only youth beekeepers' enterprise in Shenkurta village of Guagusa Shekudad district of the Amhara Region of Ethiopia. Tigist, Asressie, Alemitu and their friends' youth beekeepers' enterprise also enrolled experienced women beekeepers to help them in mentoring and technical guidance. Unlike most youth beekeepers' enterprises, the chairperson



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of this enterprise is a woman, and the members are engaged in every activity, including honeybee colony transfer, honey harvesting and beehive inspection. The MOre Young Entrepreneurs in Silk and Honey (MOYESH) programme established such enterprises to empower women economically and promote women's active participation in beekeeping, by designing socially and culturally acceptable strategies for engaging the women youth partners. The women's only group developed confidence that women could run the business and escape poverty. Currently, they own 53 beehives (30 frame hives, 16 transitional hives, and 7 traditional hives) occupied with bee colonies. The transitional beehives were made by enterprise members themselves.

The gender barrier has laid bare the fault lines of inequality between women and men beekeepers. In Ethiopia, the familiar norms regarding division of agricultural work amongst family members brought into sharp focus associated income inequality between women and men. These norms disproportionately impacted the income that women can earn. It is with clear intent of narrowing this gender-based inequality that the MOre Young Entrepreneurs in Silk and Honey (MOYESH) Programme set out to engage 60% and more women youth beekeepers.

What is the most important change observed on youth after they enrolled in the MOYESH programme?



Photo: The women only-beekeepers' enterprise members working in their apiary

Alemitu Fentie said, "We started from scratch. Before the introduction of this programme, we were spending our precious time supporting our families in preparing foods, fetching water from far distance, taking care of children and livestock, but now engaged not only in beekeeping but also in other complementary farming businesses. When we got around 32kg of honey during the first harvest, we felt like a miracle had happened in our lives. This year we are planning to harvest



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around 750kg of honey from 30 frame hives which would generate around ETB187,000 (US\$3,900) in one season. “



According to the enterprise members, the strong technical and input support from the programme and the business plan they developed are the main driving force for their success. Alemitu added, “Following the colony multiplication training, we are highly devoting our time specializing in honeybee colony multiplication to be a trail-blazer in the area by demonstrating this business to the community. Thanks to the *icipe* and the MOYESH programme, we are succeeding in moving from zero to economic hero.”

The motto of the enterprise is this - **Let's work hard to have a better life for tomorrow.** It really reflects their commitment and aspiration. The enterprise members also rehabilitated the sloppy land provided by the Kebele administration. They made a bench terrace for planting bee forage and placing the hives on the benches. Besides, Tigist and her team are planning to include additional bee forage of osmium, potato, tree lucerne and other perennial plants by applying irrigation to strengthen the bee colony, and at the same time diversify their business to earn better income. These complementary businesses are also useful to maintain environmental health.

The MOYESH programme was designed to secure dignified and fulfilling direct employment and income for 100, 000 unemployed Ethiopian youth (60% women) through provision of appropriate knowledge and skills and enabling them to establish beekeeping and sericulture business enterprises. The programme will have further positive impacts on 14.6 million people along the honey and silk value chains through multiplier effects. MOYESH is a five-year programme (October 2019- September 2024) implemented by *icipe* (<http://www.icipe.org>) in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation (mastercardfdn.org), and several private public sector actors.



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