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Beekeeping: Benefits Come in Layers

“The problem of writing about a place as remote as Africa and getting it right is more than academic. Events on that continent come at us like intermittent dispatches from a distant front....No causes, no connections, no patterns” (Parker 13). There is still a civil war going on in Sierra Leone, in realistic terms, there has been a lot of discouragement and lack of faith in the country. Sierra Leone is a resource-rich continent that by all rights should be economically wealthy. Yet Sierra Leone in fact is one of the poorest countries in the world, with millions of its people facing malnutrition and starvation. Why is Sierra Leone so poor today? There is no simple explanation for why Africa’s economic development has been stunted and why Sierra Leone remains so grievously poor. Lack of capital and high skilled personnel is a factor. Sierra Leone is ongoing civil strife, which, besides its human toll, tends to be disruptive and costly to long-term development schemes. It is obvious from the shameful fact that Sierra Leone is the home of, perhaps, the poorest people on earth, despite having abundant natural resources that the government of Sierra Leone has failed to successfully address the most crucial issue that affects the livelihood of each and every Sierra Leonean. How can the daily deprivations of millions of Sierra Leoneans be instantly become lessened and their economic future put on hold? Since 1991, the country has suffered war, terror and a deep, merciless crisis against humanity, which have left it devastated (global). “From 1991 to 2002, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel forces fought the government for control over the country and its diamond wealth. Diamonds played a central role in the war, and were used by the RUF to purchase arms and mercenary support from Charles Taylor, then president of Liberia. This conflict is particularly known for the large number of child soldiers and the widespread amputation of civilians” (Brea 1). “Forced displacement has effected more than half the population estimated at 4.5 million” (global). Between 20,000 and 75,000 people have been killed and thousands disfigured. Displacement of people, the brain drain composed by the war, and destruction of schools have worsened the educational crisis in the country, which has a literacy rate of about 20 per cent (global). Even though it has been several years since this civil war, the war has restrained agricultural production significantly, cut government revenues from mining and seen the destruction of hundreds of schools, health clinics, and executive facilities (global). The people Sierra Leone are in need of guidance, education, and hope for the future.

A family farm is very poor in Sierra Leone, and it lacks a lot of resources to have a successful farm. Since these people live in tribes, they are very remote from society. Because of this, they are closed from the world and the many possibilities of technologies that could help make their lives better. They say that a family of eight people on a farm can make a large sum of one thousand six hundred dollars in one year (Wekesser 23). Eight people are a large number to be in a family but can people imagine just having three or four people in a family? Obviously these people lack the education and resources to really help themselves. They are barely making money to feed their families, little a lone make a living or take care of their personal needs. That means that the farmers don’t have machinery to do their work and to be as efficient. Instead, they are still doing farming by hand. They are planting seeds, watering their vegetation, and picking the food by hand. With the lack of money, the farmers cannot buy better equipment or be able to become more efficient on making the most profit as possible.

It is very often that there are droughts in Sierra Leone. Since there is hardly any water around, water is the most scare resource. If there is no water, it is almost impossible to grow vegetation for themselves or animals that they raise. Also because of the lack of technology and studies, Sierra Leone’s water is very polluted (global). People are drinking polluted water everyday and the families are getting

sick because of the lack of clean and healthy water. With more and more people becoming ill from polluted water, less income is being made. And because the family is not making as much income, it is causing the family to go through malnutrition and starvation.

Because of the devastation and shock that the people of Sierra Leone felt from the Civil War, women do not know exactly what to do to get back on their feet. Women, already disadvantaged and vulnerable prior to the outbreak of fighting in Sierra Leone, have suffered in egregious way (global). From the war, twenty three percent of women were widowed or separated due to the war. Not only are women targets of violence simply because of their gender, but also the low social status of women interferes with their ability to obtain treatment and ensure protection from future attacks, particularly in the climate of social breakdown that has existed in the country for the past 10 years and the process of the war (Crowther 808).

Many of those who became pregnant as a result of rapes are now faced with the task of raising their babies as single mothers. Many have few parenting skills, and are limited in their ability to support themselves and their children (Crowther 800). In some cases, families reject either their daughters or their babies, leaving these young women and their children in extremely vulnerable positions. Some live in fear that the fathers, members of rebel groups, will come back from the bush to claim their babies (Ayyittey 47).

Men are becoming more and more scarce from the causes of the war. Now, women and children are taking a large role in trying to survive and make a living. They need a type of agriculture that is so easy that women and children can take part. There is one element of sustainable agriculture to consider and that is beekeeping. Benefits come in layers.

Because Sierra Leone is consistent on its temperature, it is very possible to have bees all year long. Beekeeping can help keep the environment in Sierra Leone intact because of the demand of plants from nature that the bees need to make their food (Crowther 788). If there is not a proper environment for bees, bees will not prosper and be able to make honey and other bee products. This type of agriculture can help protect the environment. Beekeeping can also encourage the environment to expand so that the bees can continue to thrive.

The most common use and outcome of beekeeping is the honey. The honey, that the bees produce, can go towards making different types of food in the tribes. They can make different cakes, dishes, and drinks with the honey. Honey can be kept and stored for several months and still are good enough to eat (Hooper 78). Food isn't the only positive thing that comes from beekeeping there are actually a lot more great products that can from it. Honey can be used to help the people by feeding starving people and help the people stay healthy. The substances have a great potential for medical uses. With other ingredients, it can create cough syrup and asthma relief for people (Tompkins/Griffith 58).

Another product is the beeswax and the people can use it to create batik textiles in marketable amounts. If they really use beeswax to its full advantage, more people will be able to have jobs and make income to support their families. (Hooper 92) "Beeswax is a valuable commodities with many uses in traditional societies: it is used in the lost-lax method of brass casting, as a waterproofing agent for strengthening leather and cotton strings, in batik, in the manufacture of candles, and in various hair and skin ointments practical" (Tompkins/Griffith 69). Beeswax is also in demand in the world market. Sierra Leone, there is a lot that can be done to increase retail honey and beeswax sales. Rural people can find it hard to get tools, packaging and containers. The answer is not only to donate the items but also to train local people to make their own gear and tools, and find access to good containers and packaging, and praise with which to gain by them. If people tried improving and diversifying packaging, more could be

sold considering Sierra Leone at this moment has a small volumes market. Marketing proposals can involve promoting honey and beeswax in the media, communicating with consumers and traders to increase honey and beeswax use and sales, and creating links with packaging suppliers. Honey consumption increases because people are keen to buy honey and beeswax when it is well presented and they have more confidence in the product (Tompkins/Griffith 105). The first aim of a marketing plan should be import replacement, which means ensuring that local honey and beeswax is packaged and presented as attractively as the imported brands. Only when the local need for honey and beeswax is satisfied should export be planned, as inexpensive honey and beeswax is readily available on the world market (AFRICA 35). In some countries, producers have benefited from having their honey or beeswax certified as organic or produced according to fair-trade criteria. This type of certification can help small-scale produce producers to find niche markets that pay premium prices.

And finally, beekeeping can make the product propolis. Propolis is the glue that bees collect from certain tree buds and the glue can be used to create and construct furniture and other house old items to be sold in the local markets. (Hooper 11) And finally the most common use of beekeeping is the honey. Honey can be used to help the people by feeding starving people and help the people stay healthy. The substances have a great potential for medical uses. It can produce salve; cough syrup when mixed with garlic, and asthma relief. (Tompkins/Griffith 1)

In order to make these products, the products have to be taken from the beehive. The people need to have protective clothing and equipment to work with bees. Other countries can provide imported clothing and equipment, but beekeeping clothes can be made locally, thus providing a useful incentive for local industry The smokers are very important, because that is what calms the bees down. Smokers can be manufacture by village blacksmiths, which adds to local livelihoods. “Some beekeepers merely put a plastic bag over each hand, secured at the wrist with a rubber band. Rubber bands also prevent bees from crawling up trouser legs or shirtsleeves” (Tompkins/Griffith 12). The equipment needed for beekeeping can be simple and it is as simply as a plastic bucket. The plastic bucket is one of the most essential items (beekeeping). What’s especially great about the bucket is that it is so affordable that even beekeepers living in remote places can use it to its full advantage. They will use the bucket to keep their honey clean until they are able to sell it. Honey of good quality can be harvested as long as clean buckets are accessible. Sterilizing the bucket by washing will keep honey fresh and disease free (Tompkins/Griffith 11). These are cheaper examples that they can use to protect themselves from bee stings.

“In poor societies, lack of recognition is a major constraint to everyone concerned with selling and buying honey” (Tompkins/Griffith 198). Beekeepers with honey don’t intend to receive a lot of cash from the honey collection that is owned by independent traders. They would rather sell their honey in small amounts in the markets to obtain an instant but low cash return. “The argument that for communally oriented Africa, socialism is the natural life . . . is a myth, contradicted on every African street corner, and in the rural areas of Africa, where, as everywhere else, small farmers are most productive working their own land” (Ayittey 49). People need to help supply these people get set up to sell and make a profit off their honey products. People buying honey need to be praised during the honey season. Lack of recognition can lead to irrelevant amounts of honey being available for sale, no interest from traders, and an inactive industry. (Ayittey 50). The more people promote honey, the bigger and better the industry will get.

Economic progress, in a sense, requires Africans to be allowed to be Africans, to return to their free market traditions. If the country of Africa pulled together and each country gave three percent of its taxes to the bee project, than it would be more than enough to have a well-established bee farms and honey harvests. If the United States and other industrial nations around the world want to genuinely help lift Sierra Leone out of poverty, they will create policies that save native African market economies. National policies are needed to encourage agriculture and protection for the pollinators. There needs to be

laws to push the beekeeping industry forward and to help local farmers be able to make a living. As African governments request Western aid to introduce planning programs for nutrition, the main question now is how to channel this aid effectively. Providing education to beekeeping to the famine-stricken regions of Sierra Leone is a necessary and effective way of reducing hunger. If people that are experts at beekeeping could give up their time and come to Sierra Leone, it would be just as helpful as giving the country money. Also, groups of people in Sierra Leone should specialize in one special task. A word to describe people splitting up and doing a special task is called the division of power. If different groups of people did the same thing over and over again in different areas of bee production, it will speed up the output and the bee business would become more efficient. People could also donate a couple millions of dollars to this project, the people of Sierra Leone would be able to finally earn a living and be proud to have been able to support themselves and a family. Even though money is very important, nothing can be accomplished without knowledge of how to do a skill. By teaching the tribes how to take care of bees and to extract honey, than it can also give a product to sell. With the profits from selling food, Sierra Leone's can finance development projects that will strengthen their economies and help prevent future famines.

Women and children are the main population in Sierra Leone because of the after math of the Civil War. The harsh realities and chores of farming are very overwhelming, considering that these mothers can be as young at fourteen years old. Beekeeping is a much easier type of agricultural because it requires less tiring labor. Children could take responsibilities with beekeeping. Women and children will survive off of bee products and also make a living by receiving income. Teaching these people how to take care of the bees, create beeswax, medicines, honey, propolis, and other products are just as valuable as giving the country money. Beekeeping can help provide a better future. There are so many positives, and its amazing all the things and products that can be created by bee products. The beekeeping industry will help families and workers to be employed.

The people Sierra Leone are in need of guidance, education, and hope for the future. It is shocking that so many people were left devastated from the war and how thousands of people were just slaughtered and killed because of different political beliefs. These people are very uneducated in their everyday lives and because of that, they are one of the poorest countries in the world. Women are now going to take a new role in Africa as more and more men are disappearing and dying. The overwhelming feelings that these women feel must be horrible, not only from losing their husbands, fathers, or brothers, but starting a new life all over again. Women really need to be supported and with all the violence, sexual abuse, and low social status, they are not being respected in their own society. Because they have to work hard, they are in need of direction and assistance. Their children and other women will have to work together to help each other survive. By beekeeping, everyone can take advantages of the outcomes. People now not only make food by bee production, but they can make furniture and medicines. Beekeeping is so affordable, that if people have clean and sterilized equipment, all things are possible to create products. Because these products are a high demand around the world, women can take a new course and go towards the business world by negotiating and making new plans and ideas to help the country's economy and the people's self-esteem to go up. This will give women a new outlook on life and a sense of power they probably thought wasn't even possible. Women are visionaries and hard workers, and when given the chance, they can do amazing and wonderful things. By having these women work in a higher level of status, women will have a new respect that they never had before. Women will actually show importance and they will be validated by the world. People need to believe in these women and feel that they have a right to have a chance at life and achieve to do well. The least people can do is give them a chance to show the world what they are capable of doing and that they are of true hearted because they want to be able to support themselves and their families. With a little hope, the world and the African government can recognize the need to help women and children to become productive. The community needs to acknowledge the fact that the beekeeping is not the only way to address the problems of hunger and other ideas should not be considered in isolation (Topouzis 37). Health, education, and the

improvement of women's workloads are all central to Sierra Leone's hunger crisis and a constant and desperate need of continued support by development of planners in the world that seek a better future.

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