

UPDATE ON PROJECT RENITANTELY



Beekeeper harvesting honey and wax from two strong hives

The Renitantly team have focused their efforts on supporting the project beekeepers to maintain their livelihoods, despite the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. To ensure that our activities have the greatest impact, the team have identified the highly motivated beekeepers (56), who will continue to participate in the project. Over the past three months, the primary focus of activities has been apiary expansion. Activity highlights are given below.

Repairing Broken Hives

Expanding the number of hives and the proportion of which are populated with honey bees will provide our beekeepers with more opportunities to grow their income from honey and wax sales. In September, the beekeeping technicians used SEED-donated materials to assist in the repair of all 77 of the beekeepers' damaged, unusable hives. These can now be populated with colonies.



Sainte Luce beekeepers Alphonse, Niry, Eugene, and Vivienne learn about hive construction and repairs

Populating Hives

An empty hive can be populated through two methods: capturing a wild colony and hive splitting. Hive splitting is a technical skill, so few project beekeepers are confident in their abilities to do it on their own, and many also lack colonies that are strong enough to split. In response, the team have been giving trainings on hive splitting and conducting hands-on demonstrations with the beekeepers. The technicians and beekeepers populated 79 additional hives in the month of September alone, 55 through hive splitting.



Beandry beekeepers splitting a hive

Bee Banks

Bee banks are SEED-managed apiaries that serve to supply project beekeepers with honey bees to populate their hives, without needing to buy the colonies. In August, the project's beekeeping technicians relocated the hives of our three bee banks to more suitable beekeeping locations, which are accessible to all six communities. After repairs and the construction of new hives in September, there are now a total of 30 hives within the bee banks, including 11 that are populated. Populating the rest of these will be a priority moving forward. Once the bee banks are filled with strong colonies, the hives can be split to populate project beekeepers' hives.

Honey and Wax Harvesting

The transition from winter to spring has also brought on the beginning of the honey harvesting season. One of our beekeepers in Tsagnoriha has already harvested 20 litres of honey from just four of his hives. To make honey harvesting easier, many beekeepers will use queen excluders, which prevent queens from laying eggs in parts of the hive that the beekeeper wants to harvest honey from. Queen excluders are relatively expensive, but one of our beekeepers has come up with a creative solution: weaving one out of *mahampy* reeds or *ravinala* leaves. The beekeeping technicians will now show beekeepers in other communities how they can do the same. These woven queen excluders will become an even more essential tool, as honey harvesting season continues and hives become strong enough to produce more honey.



Handwoven queen excluder compared to expensive, plastic queen excluder

COVID-19 Information Sessions

In addition to these activities, the Renitantly team have also been conducting COVID-19 information sessions within all six project communities. So far, they have distributed reusable masks, and provided important messages about the symptoms, prevention, and control of COVID-19 infection to 385 community members.