

*Income Generating
Programmes
of
EZE Partner Organisations in
Andhra Pradesh & Tamilnadu*

*A Report based on
the Proceedings of the Workshop held at ASRC
(10 – 14 November, 1997)*

Organised by

**EZE, BONN
&**

**Centre for World Solidarity
Hyderabad.**

2. Case study on Honey Hunting—Mathew John

Honey hunting in many tribal areas is a traditional activity. Groups of villagers who have acquired the skill of climbing steep rocks, skilfully, as a team, harvest honey combs and from it extract honey. They use selected creepers /vines from the forest for making rope ladders as these are tested for their durability and the villagers have complete faith in these fibrous vines.

Usually 6-8 men constitute a team of bee collectors. Women are not involved in this process, in most places. There are about 250 groups spread over several villages in the area where Keystone Foundation is operating in Tamil Nadu.

A bee hive can have up to 80,000 to 100,000 bees. A comb can yield between 5 and 25 kg. of honey. The honey collectors nowadays feel that due to increasing pesticide use in the neighbouring fields and plantation, the bee population is being reduced. Even the yield per hive has come down drastically.

Earlier honey was sold at Rs. 15 - 25 a kilo to anyone who happened to approach the tribals them. Now with the NGO intervention they are able to earn up to Rs. 70/- a kilo. Marketing the product to areas far away has also been tried successfully.

In order to ensure better quality, the NGO introduced a different method of extracting honey. Earlier, honey was extracted by cutting the comb into pieces and then crushing honey out of them. By this process, the chances of fermentation increased as a lot of dirt, larva and bees got crushed. Also, the honey becomes murky which customers do not like. Hence they suggested that the honey be extracted by draining rather than by squashing.

Moreover the NGOs intervention has also helped in understanding the uses of beeswax in candle making and other cosmetic uses. Marketing of honey after ensuring themselves of its quality is undertaken by the NGO. As a result these honey hunters earn Rs. 600-700/- month during the 4 - 5 month season. Profits earned through the supportive marketing is spent on health care.

During the other months these men are involved in producing organic coffee, pepper etc.

The NGO has received financial support from SIDBI (Small Industries Development Bank of India) are only for value addition purposes - such as for filtering and for bottling of honey.

It took the NGO one and a half years to get the project grounded although the nature of activity being what it is, the groups were already organised.

The impression given by NEERA and Keystone is that sustainability is a time consuming process. It is time consuming because of the level of technology involved, the marketing needs, product innovation, new / diversification of products are factors which determine time and stages of withdrawal of any NGO.

A business idea can also be called sustainable when say a bank would readily agree to extend financial assistance to any group who wants to start a unit.

Sustainability is also achieved when there is a market for a product which is produced by a unit.