

MVUWA SCHOOL PRODUCTION UNIT RECEIVES BEEHIVES FROM COMACO

COMACO is always concerned about the wild animals, forests and trees. So when we saw the school natural resources of Mvuwa Primary School burnt to ashes, we had to think how to make better their environment and conserve the trees.

One of the challenges that we face to the conserving of natural resources is bush fires. As we head towards August and September of every year, the communities in the villages start burning the forests. During this period, the forest trees and grasses are dry with a lot of dry debris in the forest. This is also the period when the temperatures are high making any fires to go uncontrollable. Bush fires contributes to carbon emission and degradation of the forests. Bush fires affect beekeeping because bees depend on the flowers for this period to produce honey for November/ December. Every year we experience low honey yields during December honey seasons.

The Mvuwa Primay School Production Unit was given 10 beehives from the donation from Klaus Hermann. These beehives belong to the 'old' technology called 'Kenyan Top Bar Hives'. But COMACO has invigorated and re-engineered this technology by making it into a 'hybrid' beehive (swarm box and main box into one). These beehives are hanged very high above 3m on trees using a pulley system and rope from the ground hence protecting them from bush fires and vandalism. To make this possible, these beehives come with metal hooks and strong wires. Hanging the beehive high increases chances of the beehive attracting bees to occupy it. The quality of honey harvested is also very high as it is not mixed with pollen and brood. Each beehive is given a number or unique ID and a GPS coordinate is collected.

In receiving the beehives, Mr Charles Ngenda who is headmaster of the school and has been teaching in rural schools for 37 years expressed happiness for the beehives as it will help them in fundraising for the school. Mvuwa Primary School is located in Nyalugwe chiefdom of Nyimba district. It has classes from Grade One (1) to Seven (7) with a school population of 362 pupils.

The School will ensure that their surrounding trees and forests are not burnt and will sensitize the pupils on the importance of natural resources and beekeeping. "If we can turn the school kids to look after the bees, then we have won the future" (Klaus Hermann from Germany).

PHOTOS OF MVUMWA SCHOOL KIDS HANGING BEEHIVES



Its all smiles! The School pupils at the apiary site with 10 beehives.



BURNT AREA! The two pupils carrying the beehive to the next tree. The school headmaster has promised to prevent bush fires around the school



One hive is hanged and 9 more to go for hanging! Mr Mwanza who is the teacher in charge of production unit rearranges the top bars and checking that the top bars have foundation wax.



The beehive has four (4) holes (two on each side) where the wire passes through to form an X. The younger pupil is pulling the wires from the direction of the older pupil so that it can have equal length.



After passing the wires through the holes, the wires must be joined and tied at the central point with the metal hook. *Above photo:* The pupils are tying the wire at the central point and balancing it so that it does not tilt over when hanging it on a tree.



HANGING THE HIVE! When hanging the hive, we use the rope which has hook at the end. The rope is used to pull the beehive up the tree. *In the photo:* The school pupil is pulling the blue rope up till it reaches where the hook can hang on the tree then the rope will be unhooked from the beehive by the mentor holding a straight pole.



When hanging the hive, we always look for the tree that has leaves or thick tree crown cover that can provide shelter or shade for the bees to avoid the beehive overheating or bees absconding. *Above Photo:* The pupils staggering around in search of a tree with shade because of destruction of trees. Disgusting!



Each beehive comes with a hook and wire. The beehives comprises the metal lid, 22 top bars, and a wooden box. *In the photo,* Mr Mwanza, who is the teacher in charge of Production Unit, check the number of top bars and align them on top of the beehive.