

The Taste of Honey Brings Hope to Lotumbe

By: Paul Turner of Global Ministries



The Development Office for the Community of Disciples of Christ in Congo (CDCC) is constantly seeking new ways to generate income for rural posts. These posts operate programs that serve the population with healthcare and education. Local residents also need additional means of generating income to support their families. To meet these needs, the Disciples of Christ post at Lotumbe has initiated a project to train members of the community in beekeeping. Honey is widely consumed in the Equator Province, but is considered a specialty product because there are not enough beekeepers to keep up with the demand for fresh, wild honey.

The idea resulted from a brainstorming session during a trip to several interior posts late last year. The honey is usually distributed in re-used glass jars that once contained instant coffee or jam. Lotumbe's Principal Supervising Pastor (PSP), Rev. Jean Boyaba Kula says, "we're very excited about this training because it will provide a new source of income for many families." The beekeeping training is a partnership with Hand Up Congo and a Congo-based bee-keeping association that provided the trainers.

For the CDCC Development Office, this project is also an experiment with Bottom of the Pyramid (BoP) marketing. BoP marketing is a huge trend among development organizations, and some companies, who realize the poor spend their limited resources with an expectation of gaining value. The concept is based on the book, *The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid* by C.K. Prahalad, where he argues that people at the bottom of the income pyramid – the 2.7 billion people in the world that earn less than \$2.50 a day – are not just victims of poverty, but savvy consumers.

To be sure, the Equator Province has a population that fits the description. Yet, BoP marketing can be an elusive process because of unrealistic assumptions and poor planning. The 5 Ds of BoP marketing were developed to help institutions be more effective. Below are the 5 Ds and how the beekeeping project in Lotumbe lines up with each one.

1. Development – Does the business enhance social and economic development? The beekeeping project is predicated on enhancing livelihoods and addressing poverty

2. Design – Is the solution well designed...contextually relevant, appropriate and affordable. Not only does it meet the above standards, it's also environmentally sustainable because the training involves forest protection.

3. Distribution – Is the product widely available or does a supply chain need to be developed from scratch? The product can be distributed through various channels such as open-air markets, convenient stores and directly from producers.

4. Demand - Is there a demand for the product or can one be created? Locally-produced honey is in high demand and complements many food items that are part of the regular diet in the area.

5. Dignity – Does the product preserve and ensure the dignity of the customer? This project is not about charity, but about development and community organizing that involves new skills and respects the environment. In this case, the customers are the participants in the training and the end users of the product.

That last point is crucial. Dignity is an important value at Global Ministries, and a determining factor for how the development office at CDCC engages in development activities. The beekeeping training empowers community residents to organize and lead an effort to diversify income streams, while also serving as a model for future food processing projects that can improve nutrition and food security.

Please pray for God’s continued blessings on this endeavor, and for the men and women participating in the training who stepped forward to transform their lives.

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