

By Moses Kigongo

In Purongo town council, Nwoya district, a quiet transformation is underway, driven by determination and long-term social impact investments.

For farmers like Dennis Torach Okot, 36, and his older friend Alphonse Okema, 52, beekeeping has become a source of pride, discipline and renewed hope.

Their journey is part of the Community Agriculture Initiatives (CAI), a programme supported by TotalEnergies EP Uganda and implemented by Community Integrated Development Initiative (CIDI) to strengthen livelihoods across the Tilenga project host districts.

The two friends' story began years before the project arrived, built on simple exchanges of firewood, food and farming experiences.

Okot, originally from Lungulu sub-county, Nwoya, relocated to Purongo after purchasing land. Their friendship later became the foundation for a thriving beekeeping venture.

When the project introduced beekeeping, Okot quickly realised his land size would limit him. He approached Okema with a proposal to collaborate – a suggestion Okema welcomed. Together, they received 14 beehives, strategically placing them across two sites with strong bee activity.

A NEW CHAPTER

Like many farmers in the region, Okot's life before the project revolved around small-scale cassava and groundnut farming, largely for household consumption and school fees. Accessing beehives on his own would have taken years of saving.

"I could easily buy beans from the market and plant them, but getting beehives is a long and expensive process," he said. "So, when the project offered me this opportunity, I knew how valuable it was."

For Okema, beekeeping was completely a new terrain. At 52, learning a new skill was no small feat, but he embraced the process with enthusiasm, supported by hands-on mentorship from CIDI extension workers and agronomists.

"At my age, learning something new is not easy, but through training and guidance, I now understand and appreciate beekeeping," he said.

Their initial harvest, though only a fraction of their full potential, was encouraging. Okot earned roughly sh160,000 from his first batches of honey, while Okema used his sh80,000 profit to purchase a bee suit and a proper storage container.

Yet the impact has gone far beyond income. Beekeeping has brought new discipline and a sense of direction. Okot admits with a smile on his face that his former habit of spending on alcohol has declined because tending to bees requires sobriety and responsibility. He has joined a village savings group and now saves consistently for the first time in his life.

For Okema, the pride of being known as a beekeeper has added

HOW TILENGA PROJECT IS SHARING VALUE WITH HOST COMMUNITIES



Okot and Okema, some of the beneficiaries of the Community Agriculture Initiative, a programme supported by TotalEnergies EP Uganda, in one of the apiaries

to his social standing. Visitors often stop by his home to see the apiary and the presence of bees has even helped deter theft of fruits from his trees. His household now enjoys regular consumption of nutritious honey, something he had never previously considered as an accessible food.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Godfrey Lukwago, the stakeholder engagement manager at TotalEnergies EP Uganda, said this progress reflects the broader structure and intention of involving project communities in their region's development.

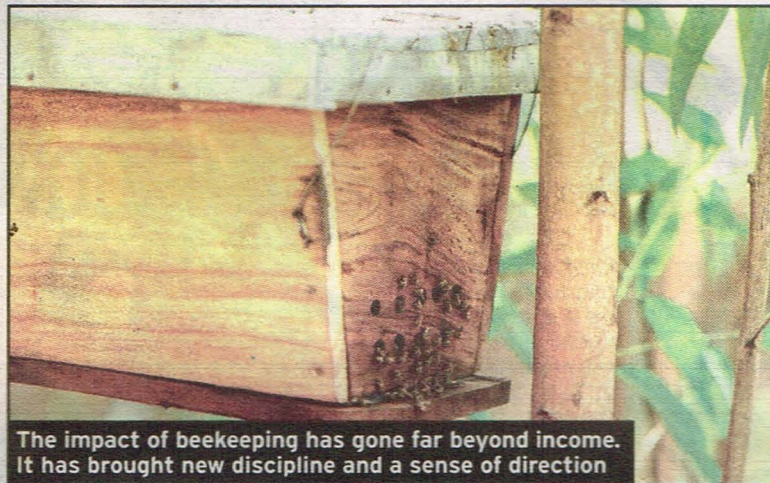
BETWEEN THE LINES

Each of the 81 project villages across Buliisa, Hoima, Kikuube, Nwoya and Pakwach is assigned dedicated extension workers and agronomists, who guide farmers through every stage of their agricultural activities.

He said continuous engagement between the company and communities is central to the programme's success.

"Our community liaison officers [CLOs] are geographically mapped to various host communities. Each CLO continuously engages individuals within their assigned communities regarding socio-economic benefits and operational updates on a relational basis.

"During these engagements, CLOs



The impact of beekeeping has gone far beyond income. It has brought new discipline and a sense of direction

document community feedback and relay it to project leadership, enabling responsive and adaptive management throughout the project life cycle," he said.

This is achieved through village meetings and community barazas, quarterly stakeholder engagements, routine field visits, and a dedicated toll-free line that beneficiaries can call for assistance. Such regular interaction helps build trust and ensures that challenges are identified early and addressed quickly.

Daphne Natukunda, the social package manager, said the training and mentorship is another cornerstone for CAI. Farmers are supported through pre-season training on land preparation and seed selection, mid-season coaching on crop management and pest control, and post-harvest handling

sessions aimed at reducing losses and improving market quality.

Monthly on-farm visits encourage effective implementation in line with the guidance provided by extension workers. Each of the 81 project villages across Buliisa, Hoima, Kikuube, Nwoya and Pakwach is assigned dedicated extension workers and agronomists who guide farmers through every stage of their agricultural activities.

The programme has so far benefited more than 5,000 farming households across the project districts.

Additionally, 80 acres of multiplication and demonstration gardens based at schools and in the community have been established to promote agronomic learning and support school feeding programmes. Over 2,000 post-harvest handling materials have been distributed, and

SCALING UP FOR SUSTAINABILITY

For Dennis Torach Okot and Alphonse Okema, these opportunities mark the beginning of a future. Okot plans to plant more trees to expand his apiary and to pass on his skills to his children. Okema has already become a trainer in his community, eager to encourage neighbours to explore beekeeping.

"The knowledge I have gained is something I want to share because this is a sustainable source of income," he said proudly.

Looking ahead, Daphne Natukunda, the social package manager, said the programme is actively creating pathways for farmers to scale up production. It is hoped that these pathways will lead to commercial honey production, value addition such as branding and packaging, and processing of staple crops into higher-value products. Farmers are being linked to structured buyer networks, co-operatives, and market linkage actors who will support aggregation and bulking.

Through expos, trade fairs, and farmer field days, beneficiaries are gaining exposure to buyers, technologies, and new markets.

The programme is only part of the broader value the Tilenga project is sharing with the project host districts.

Through structured training, dedicated community engagement, and strong focus on market readiness, TotalEnergies EP Uganda's Community Agriculture Initiative continues to help households build resilience, diversify incomes, and strengthen their futures.

178 farmer groups formed.

These efforts have boosted yields through modern agronomic practices and diversified incomes via livestock, honey and small enterprises. Families now pay school fees, access healthcare, reinvest in farming, and enjoy improved food security and dietary diversity.

TotalEnergies EP Uganda uses a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework to ensure transparency and accountability.