



BOTSWANA - NOTES ON THE FIRST STAGES OF A PROJECT

*ed. Tony Moody - in correspondence with Mr.E.A. Kilon,
Apicultural Project, Kweneng Rural Development Association
(Brigade) Molepolole.*

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In 1977, International Voluntary Services Inc., (Washington) provided the Kweneng Rural Development Association at Molepolole, Botswana with a Tanzanian apiculturalist to initiate a production and training bee-keeping project with this important Brigade.

The Brigade Movement in Botswana began in 1965 in Serowe. Despite the names, the Brigade had never had any involvement with military or para-military activity. They are in fact named after a similar movement "the Workers Brigades" of Ghana, which were instituted to employ young men and women in productive activities. The concept of a "Brigade Centre", as used in Botswana, refers to a cluster of brigades (e.g. builders, carpenters, auto-mechanics, farmers etc.,) organized under a single local governing authority in a single locality. The movement has evolved and changed considerably in the last decade.

The Movement was founded by Patrick van Rensburg, then Principal of Swaneng Hill Secondary School. Mr. van Rensburg and his staff members were beginning to think that the kind of academic school they were creating would not touch many of the new country's problems. Botswana lacked her own bricklayers, carpenters and other tradesmen. More secondary schools were being built, but primary education was also expanding and nothing was being done for the large and growing numbers of children who were squeezed out of the educational system after Standard VII. But if some sort of training scheme could be devised which would meet these needs by blending them together, it would have to be very cheap to run; if possible it should cover its costs. A further factor was the building of Swaneng Hill School itself. The use of trainee builders was likely to be cheaper than a contractor.

The Serowe Builders Brigade started operations in March, 1965. Two years later a carpentry section opened. By this time the brigade idea has aroused interest, and in April the Department of Community Development started a builders' brigade at Lobatse; through the Department, Government was thus involved in brigades from an early date. Research at Serowe had meanwhile developed further, resulting in the launching of the Serowe Textile Workshop for girls, and the Serowe Farmers Brigade. By the end of 1967 two new types of brigade had started, a leathercraft workshop at Mochudi, and a handicraft project specialising in sisal work at Lobatse.

January 1968 saw the opening in Francistown of a new builders brigade, again under the Community Development Department. But for a variety of reasons it became increasingly difficult to keep this brigade going and in October it closed. Only three other brigades started in that year - a builder's brigade at Mochudi, another on the site of the new Shashe River School and a second farmer's brigade at Mochudi. So by the end of the year there were some nine brigades in existence under the control of three organisations: Swaneng, the Community Development Department, and the Kgatleng Youth Development Association (Mochudi) .

Kweneng Rural
Development
Association

This brigade centre is located 60 km west of Gaborone in Molepolole. It originally started in 1969 as a discussion group investigating possibilities in rural development. In 1971, the association was formally registered at a trust operated by people elected at public meetings.

K.R.D.A. has a Builders' Brigade with 40 trainees which emphasises training rather than production. The Boishoko centre can be considered a Textile brigade where training in dressmaking and crafts is given. Completers of this training may enter the Thusanyo workshop. Here garments, mainly primary school uniforms, are produced on a co-operative basis.

The Boikanyo mechanical and engineering programme has recently started with the aims of training mechanics for employment, maintenance of local machinery and vehicles, and light engineering work.

Other activities include an active forestry programme, a builders supply outlet, and the construction of a hotel using local materials and furnishings.

The Association has many plans for the future: a bicycle assembly plant, horticultural projects, a dairy farm, and an inclusive farm supply and service centre.

The Apicultural
Project

Since his arrival at Molepolole, Mr. Ephraim Kilon has launched the pilot apicultural project at Kweneng. He reports that there is little traditional beekeeping in Botswana but that Apis mellifera adansonii is present, although its activities are somewhat restricted in the higher latitudes of Botswana by the marked winter season. There is a period of dearth, and the bees are confined to their hives, between mid-April and mid-August.

This, however, makes them relatively hardworking during the subsequent period of colony development, especially on the first flowers of the pepper tree (Schinu molle) and the Eucalyptus camadulensis which flower first in the spring.

The honey flow season in Botswana appears to be between October and March.

Fifteen modified Langstroth hives and 5 Top Bar hives have been built in the Brigade workshops with pine-wood and weather-proof chip-board. Two other Standard Langstroth hives have been imported.

Ten of the hives are situated in a Eucalyptus plantation and 6 of them are occupied by bees which have been collected either from nests in trees or in termite mounds. Not a single hive has been occupied by passing swarms, as Mr. Kilon has experienced in Tanzania.

Beekeeping has entered the syllabus of Kweneng Brigade and three Batswana have been sent for higher technical training in Tanzania.

References

Government of Botswana "Botswana's Brigades", Government Printer, Gaborone, 1976.

Correspondence with Mr. E. Kilon.