

Adjumani farmer turns apiculture into green enterprise

BY MARKO TAIBOT

ADJUMANI. In the quiet rural setting of Leaguru Village in Pakele Sub-county, Mr Zake Eberu is steadily building a livelihood from an unlikely but thriving enterprise, apiculture.

Eberu's journey into beekeeping started in 2005 when he enrolled in an adult literacy training programme. It not only equipped him with basic literacy skills but also opened doors to hands-on training in beekeeping, honey processing, and value addition.

From those humble beginnings, Eberu has grown into a skilled apiarist who now produces a range of honey-based products. Beyond selling raw and processed honey, he makes propolis tincture and comb honey, locally referred to

as "cenom."

He says his next target is to venture into bee venom production once he acquires the necessary equipment.

"I started small after the training by Community Empowerment for Rural Development (CEFORD). But with time, I realised beekeeping had great potential," Eberu says.

Today, he is recognised as a lead farmer under Friends of Zoka, where he champions environmental conservation through apiary farming. Around his homestead stands a mini forest whose trees he carefully protects because they are essential to his bees.

"When you enter the forest and start cutting down trees, it will be the bees to drive you out. That is how my trees

have remained intact," Eberu says with a smile.

For him, beekeeping is not only an income-generating activity but a natural shield against deforestation. Eberu notes that the market for bee products is readily available both within the dis-

trict and beyond. He sells a litre of processed honey at Shs24,000, alongside other value-added products that attract steady demand. The returns have transformed his household.

"I own a house, thanks to beekeeping. We have food and I pay my children's school fees," he says.

According to the team leader of Friends of Zoka, Mr William Amanzuru, Friends of Zoka, in partnership with Rural Initiative for Community Empowerment West Nile (RICE), Sustainable Plan and Action for Community Empowerment (SPACE), is implementing a three-and-a-half-year project called Strengthening Environmental Accountability and Climate Action in West Nile.

"The project covers Adjumani, Zombo,

Madi Okollo, and Obongi with an aim of achieving improved protection and sustainable utilisation of natural resources among the communities in the West Nile sub-region," he said.

According to the Global Forest Watch, in 2020, Adjumani had 99kha of natural forest, extending over 32 per cent of its land area. In 2024, it lost 3.3kha of natural forest, equivalent to 1.4mt of carbon emissions.

Mr Moses Apiliga, the parish chief working in Pakele Sub-county, reaffirmed their commitment, as a refugee-hosting Sub-county to continue sensitising the communities about environmental degradation.

"From the onset of the refugee influx, the sub-county experienced immense tree cutting, opening of land, and charcoal burning," Apiliga said.

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Beekeeping is not only an income-generating activity but a natural shield against deforestation. The presence of hives has discouraged illegal tree cutting, allowing vegetation around Mr Zake Eberu's home to flourish.