



The bee whisperer

Beekeeping is his hobby. Yet BASF employee Fritz Danzeisen doesn't stop there, for 15 years now, he has been sharing his passion with **people in East Africa**. // By Kristina Seebacher

► At the age of two, Fritz Danzeisen was stung so severely by 30 or 40 bees that he lost consciousness. However, that didn't stop him from working at an apiary as a teenager. After 30 years of keeping bees himself as a hobby, he has lost none of his passion. Since 2000 he has also shared his extensive knowledge and experience with people in East Africa. "Honey is Africa's liquid gold," he says. "When villagers learn the right way to handle bees, they can satisfy their own needs and make use of several valuable bee-related products for medical purposes."

In keeping with this, beekeeping seminars in developing countries concentrate on helping people to help themselves. Beekeeping promotes long-term employment, whilst the sale of honey, wax and colonies can secure the livelihood of entire villages. To ensure this succeeds, Danzeisen travels to East Africa at regular intervals to teach locals about safe and high-yield methods of beekeeping. What prompted him to start teaching? His sis-



ter has been working in Tanzania since 1986, where she runs a Christian publishing house in the capital city of Dodoma. Reports from Mbese, a village in the south of Tanzania, made Danzeisen realise that beekeeping skills tailored to local conditions could be helpful. In order to dispel the fear of getting stung, Danzeisen, who is an engineer, devised some goggles as well as a model of a bee stinger and a toxin sac. His homemade creations illustrate how bees see and how they defend themselves. They also show the villagers how the right conduct can minimise the danger. "When people understand how bees behave and when they know what they have to do, their fear of the animals is alleviated," he explains. Using videos, workshops, bee-free exercises and self-devised games for children, Danzeisen, who has four children of his own, explains the special features of the lives of bees. The safety of people and animals is always of paramount importance, because the maxim "safety first" applies in Africa too.

Although beekeeping is considered a male occupation on the African continent, women and children are especially welcome at his workshops. "If as many people as possible can acquire and pass on knowledge about beekeeping, there is a good chance that the conditions of life in Tanzania will continue to develop in a positive direction," he adds. Danzeisen considers his commitment to East Africa as far from finished. He intends to continue travelling there over the coming years to keep helping the people to help themselves; paying his own way, as he has always done. ■

Busy bee

Fritz Danzeisen teaches beekeeping with top-bar hives (TBH) in Tanzania. Top-bar hives can be made with simple means. He shows villagers how to construct them with local materials and to work in a way that does not harm the bees. Thanks to its movable honeycombs and low material costs, this type of hive is especially suited for small-scale operations.

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