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PEACEMAIL

VOLUME 11 • ISSUE 12

YOU ARE HELPING HONEY COLLECTORS BUILD THEIR BUSINESS

ACT FOR PEACE

CONFRONTING INJUSTICE TOGETHER
THROUGH THE **actalliance**

The international aid agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia.

Peel gently to open

Peel gently to open



Act for Peace's partner on the ground is the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka (NCCSL). Three years ago, the NCCSL identified an opportunity to assist the small village of Pattalipuram which was at risk of exploitation by middlemen when selling their jungle-collected honey.

In an effort to reduce the bargaining power of the middlemen, with your support, NCCSL and the Matur Methodist Church have opened up an alternative selling and distribution channel. Further, for the last two years they have been providing these villagers with fair interest loans to help grow the honey project and meet other community needs.

This small business program also empowers village women. Through a female community organiser, women are educated in various aspects of managing the project, such as the loans scheme, and resolving issues in the community. This business project has provided women with a vital role which increases their self-esteem.

Your support is making a difference:



can equip 5 men from the village to take part in a 6 day expedition to collect honey from the jungle. This includes transportation, storage containers for the honey, food, a torch and mosquito coils for sleeping in the jungle, plus a stipend for the family while they are away – avoiding the need for high interest loans from middlemen traders.



can provide a training workshop for 24 women to learn about micro-finance and loans management to increase the ownership of the complete honey collecting business within the community.

All gifts of \$2 or more are tax deductible.

Thank you for your generous gifts in FY16.

Your support makes projects like the Honey Collectors possible.

You may also have received our appeal to help refugees fleeing the war in Syria. There is an urgent need for food and shelter for families. If you are able to give at this time, you can make a donation online at www.actforpeace.org.au or call **1800 025 101**

Your end of financial year tax receipt will be posted to you in July. If you have any questions please contact Act for Peace – info@actforpeace.org.au or **1800 025 101**.

Act for Peace

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Dear Friend,

I live in a village of around 300 families near the town of Mutur in eastern Sri Lanka with my husband and children. The people here are mostly of indigenous 'Vedda' ancestry. Thanks to your support, we are developing our village business using the natural resources that surround us. In the nearby jungle, along with wildlife and plants, there is high quality honey.

Traditionally we collected honey just for ourselves but for some years we have found people outside our village wish to buy our jungle honey. Every April to July, up to a hundred men from our village go into the jungle for 6 days at a time to collect honey. The women's role is vital as they arrange equipment, tents, food and transport to and from the jungle for the men's trips.

We are not sophisticated in the ways of the business world and our inexperience has exposed us to exploitation by middlemen traders. These middlemen provide us with short-term, high interest loans to cover the costs of honey collection. Once we have the honey ready, often the middlemen traders demand we sell it to them at a low price to quickly repay the loan. The traders may pay only 500 rupees (\$4.50 AUD) for 750mls of our honey. Every year it has been hard to make a profit and get ahead. As a village we thought: "How do we make our honey selling business better?"

An alternative way to get our honey to market is taking shape through the work of Act for Peace's partner here, the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka (NCCSL). Reverend Stephen from the Mutur Methodist Church and the NCCSL wanted to prevent our exploitation and reliance on middlemen. His church and the NCCSL are working with an initial small group of 24 honey collectors and the women who work with them.

Now, once these 24 men return with the honey, the women do the bottling - sterilizing, filtering, pouring, labelling and packing - on the grounds of the Methodist Church. The NCCSL then buys our honey at a fairer price - up to 800 rupees (\$7.20 AUD) and sells it through its networks.

Any profits made when the Church and the NCCSL on-sells our honey is put back into community welfare needs. We've recently had a marketing and microfinance workshop for this initial group of men and women. Participants learned the benefits of selling all year round as prices are higher outside the honey season, plus the need to seek wider markets. NCCSL has also helped us group together before meeting with middlemen traders so we can collectively bargain for the best price instead of negotiating individually.

The future of our jungle honey business is looking bright. It is exciting to see our work bear fruit for our village. Rev Stephen's work with us has seen strengthening in local Hindu-Christian relationships. It is good to know that people care. Thank you for helping us.



Collecting honey in the jungle

Subhashini*

*We have changed Subhashini's name to protect her identity.