

Finding alternatives to illegal gold mining

In northern Côte d'Ivoire, around protected areas such as the Comoé National Park, one of the largest protected areas in West Africa, and the Sanzanou forest, many communities work in illegal and artisanal gold mining. For many, gold mining is a relatively easy way to generate income, however, it carries health, environmental, and safety risks. It also often leaves individuals vulnerable to Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs) who seek to benefit from illicit activities and are suspected to use protected areas as shelters.

Since March 2023, EAI works with communities to identify alternative income generating activities. Communities identified beekeeping, which is allowed

in protected areas. Beekeeping facilitates plant and crop reproduction which relies on pollination from bees. It also increases and diversifies the food supply, offering more opportunities to sell products at the local markets. In Sanzanou, the community installed a beehive in the women's



Preparing beehives in Sanzanou

market garden, recently fenced off by R4P to help foster the growth of their cabbage, tomatoes, okra, and eggplant.

Over the course of a year, communities have worked with local beekeeping experts who showed them best practices and techniques to prioritize environmental preservation and maximize production. Previously, to harvest honey, community members would cut down trees, and displace the bees using fire, which not only

increased the risk of bush fires and exacerbates deforestation in protected areas, but also caused conflicts with local government staff. Now, communities come together and work alongside government authorities to facilitate management of protected areas.

Community members' interest in beekeeping as an alternative source of income to illegal gold mining is growing. A group of young people in Madina heard about the beekeeping activities on their way back from gold panning sites. They expressed their interest to R4P and requested training sessions. Over one hundred individuals have participated in beekeeping activities, and they have set up 22 beehives around their communities.



Visit to colonized hive in Madina

"We are very happy to have learned how to prepare and install a beehive. It is an activity that we can do outside our gardening to multiply our sources of income."

"We did not know much about beekeeping, which is why we were not interested at first. Today we understand that it is economically profitable, and that it does not prevent us from carrying out our farm work."