



SNAPSHOT

Bee Business for Youth – Young Entrepreneur Excels!

Devon Thomas is among the many youths, who benefitted from the USAID-funded COMET-II grants initiatives.



Above: Devon Thomas showing his product – honey, bottled straight from his bee hive.

Below: Devon working on his bee hive at his backyard.

One year ago, 25-year old Devon Thomas never dreamed that he would be managing a business single-handedly, bottling and selling honey to his community of Mount Charles, St. Andrew situated in the southeast of Jamaica.

The young entrepreneur shared some of the challenges he faced when he started bee-keeping. “My main challenge was not having the money to buy gear and equipment. I started out by catching bees in the wild and asking my friend who is a carpenter to make the boxes for me. Because I didn’t have the veil needed to catch the bees, I got a lot of stings in the beginning”.

The young father and husband quit his construction job and joined the Bee Busy for Youth Program in his community where he attended classes in the theory and practice of bee-keeping. Devon and 24 other youth between 17 and 29 years benefitted from the course which was facilitated by Jamaica’s Rural Agriculture Development Authority and funded by the USAID Community Empowerment and Transformation Project, Phase II (COMET II).

Clive Hawthorne, Bee Busy for Youth Program coordinator and Devon’s mentor, was not surprised when the youngster went on to expand his own business. “From the beginning Devon showed a lot of interest and passion for bee-keeping. And, although he lacked formal training and knowledge, we could tell that he had a natural talent and love for what he was doing”.

The young entrepreneur intends to scale up and shared his marketing strategy. “I have a lot of mango trees where I keep the bees, so when they take the nectar from the trees the honey comes out with a slight mango taste. Because of that, people seem to love it and so I market my honey that way and make more money from it.”

Bee-keeping is one of Jamaica’s great investment prospects. Last year Jamaica’s Ministry of Agriculture projected that the bee-keeping industry could generate an estimated J\$1 billion in earnings from honey production in 2015. Devon Thomas has joined the army of youth revolutionizing Jamaica’s economic growth through agriculture. But he says at the end of the day, “I want to be able to provide for me and my family doing something that I love”.