

Power to the People

Weeding is a thankless task. It is slow and hard work and the weeds keep growing back. Left to grow, weeds will compete with crops for nutrients, moisture and light resulting in typical reductions in crop yield of 30%. For over 250,000 households in the Teso Farming System of northern Uganda, the situation has been made even worse. HIV has reduced the number of people available for agricultural labour and civil disruption in the 1980s and 90s led to a shortage of draught animals. Development projects have sought to 'restock' Teso and about 50% of households now own oxen and farmers are already using them to plough their land. However, greater use could be made of the cattle. Women and children mainly undertake the toil of weeding, thereby restricting women's involvement in other activities and keeping children away from school. It is cheaper to hire oxen than to employ manual labour.



Commercially produced weeder



Project farmers demonstrating DAP weeding to their neighbours

Project R7401 is working to alleviate labour constraints and drudgery through the use of draught animal power (DAP). In sorghum fields, DAP reduced the time spent hand weeding from 157 to 34 hours/hectare; and with groundnut, not only did DAP reduce labour inputs but also increased yield. The introduction of DAP weeding has given women a better quality of life, enabling them to pursue more rewarding activities, and children are receiving a better education. This project developed a farmer-to-farmer extension system which promoted DAP weeding technology to more than 3000 farmers – a very effective means of effecting rapid technology adoption.

Great emphasis has been placed on ensuring that the benefits last well beyond the lifetime of the project. Agricultural implements have been developed, in collaboration with farmers, by two manufacturers to ensure that these tools match farmers' requirements and to ensure sustainable supplies of appropriate equipment (200 units sold to date) in the future. Staff (950) of NGOs working in Teso have been trained in DAP for weeding, ridging, planting and groundnut lifting. Ridging of sweet potatoes and groundnut lifting have been widely adopted in those communities receiving

training. Ridging reduces labour costs to a fifth and this has led to an expansion of the cropped area, improved food security and increased income. It is anticipated that in the longer-term even the poorest households will benefit from mechanisation as 'hire' markets develop for DAP services – they already exist for ploughing and,



Farmer proud of his groundnut crop weeded using oxen

R7401: Improving production in the Teso farming systems through the development of sustainable draught animal technologies

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