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ANIMAL TRACTION

IN KURON PEACE VILLAGE

IMPACTS AND CHALLENGES

Break up your fallow ground. Hosea 19:12

Since 2000, Holy Trinity Peace Village Kuron, has been working with a variety of techniques and methods for agriculture production in the Toposa lands. The soil is fertile and can produce a great deal of food if managed properly. The rainy season is substantial enough to support large fields of cultivation. The area is sparsely populated and the Toposa are mainly pastoralists who move with their animals as the seasons unfold. However, the women have always traditionally supplemented food income by cultivating millet and sorghum.

Instrumental in the first stages of the Animal Traction program were Mr. Thomas Mogga along with Mr. Milla Elizeous, both of whom were trained in Agriculture. They began the initial demonstration farm and animal traction programs in the very early stages in the history of Kuron Peace Village (2000 to 2005). Initially, the Peace Village used a tractor which plowed a very large plot of land along the Kuron River across the road from the current Village site. This field produced a great deal of maize, cabbage, sorghum, vegetables and other crops. Toposa saw the success and asked for help in plowing their fields. However, this was not sustainable with a mechanized machine in a subsistence culture.



Figure 1 Toposa move with their cattle depending on the season



Figure 2 Toposa Cattle are Sanga Breed

In 2000, Animal Traction was seen as a viable alternative to increase land cultivation and reduce the burden on the women who do most of the planting using a crude hoe. Modern plows pulled by animals were introduced through workshops, trainings and on site follow-up visits. At first, the Toposa were interested but within a short time they decided that using their cows for work was not in their interests. The local people are very quick in accepting something like animal traction but slow to adapt to the new methods. The program is going up against thousands of years of a mentality that cattle must be treated gently. The local people did not see the need to accept this type of intervention.

Field preparation is very labor intensive and has been traditionally done by women. With the introduction of the Jembe (hoe) there has been an increase in cultivation while at the same time making it a bit easier for the farmer.

As part of the effort to expose the Toposa people to other forms of agriculture, visiting tours to Kenya and Uganda were planned. In 2015, members of HTPVK and several community members from this area went to Kisumu, Kenya. The members of the tour were able to see how other farmers are working the land and perhaps to widen the vision of the Toposa. Some of those who went on this trip replicated what they learned. However, few of them were convinced in the utility of using cows to plow fields.



Figure 2 Girls using old tool (rt) and new Jembe (lt)



Figure 3 Agricultural inputs of seeds and tools has helped build trust

Cows, bulls, and donkeys have all been proposed as viable animals for ploughing the fields. Numerous workshops and trainings have been held. Animals were distributed to select farmers. People were actually given hands-on practical training in the field. Ploughs, animals, seeds, and tools were handed out. Even then only a few continued.

IMPACTS

Over the past 20 years, a small group of farmers have been taught in how to use animals for garden plowing. Several animals have been trained in how to plow. However, the use of animals by individuals in the villages is almost nil. The people have not accepted the use of cows for traction. They have even cut off the harnesses used for the plow and reins.

The field visits to Kenya and Uganda over the years have impacted the participants in opening their eyes and vision wider. Some of the participants have gone multiple times and this has re-enforced the new concepts and methods. However, it has not affected their lack of interest in using animals for traction.

Residually, food production has increased and the Toposa find a ready market in selling to the staff of HTPVK.

The donkeys given to be used as animal traction are now being used to carry supplies and goods long distances. At least they are being used.



Figure 4 Burrows used for transportation of goods

CHALLENGES

Cows are almost sacred to Toposa and other ethnic groups. The people are very reluctant to use them for plowing. As cows are seen the most important to the people of this region, it is not easy to introduce hard work for the cows. They say the milk production will decrease. They say the cows will lose weight and become injured. Patience and understanding have to be in mind by staff who work with them.

Burrows/donkeys could be a good substitute for cattle but the Toposa need time to accept this.

One challenge is there is not yet any lead farmers. Should one family or two families start to use animal traction on a daily basis to prove the value to others that this can be viable, the program could catch on.

One influential Toposa Woman, (Mama Kuron), has been on several exchange programs. She has two bulls which she had designated to be used for animal traction. She has only been trained once on how to plow. However, to date she has not used the cows to plow.



Figure 5 Using burrows to carry supplies

The youth tend not to want to work in the fields. They say that agriculture is too hard. They think this is impossible for them.

LESSONS LEARNED

(what worked and what did not work so well)



Figure 6 Women are traditional Agriculturalists

Before starting any intervention in such traditional areas, one must learn the disposition (likes and dislikes) of the community. HTPVK was relatively new to this area when the idea of Animal Traction was created and implemented before really understanding the deep-rooted beliefs and customs of the Toposa. There has been very little acceptance of this program. However, other programs in Agriculture have been accepted by the local people. The difference was the cattle were not involved in other programs.

Some ideas may be good for a community but they might not be ready for the implementation and change of their mind set. The idea of animal traction may have to be put on hold while trust and confidence are built up with other programs. Only when the people are ready for such inputs will the program succeed.



Figure 7 More men are beginning to cultivate

Women are most likely to be involved in this method. We found that if we work with a few who accept the idea, it might spread to others. It was no use trying to get many of them to accept the oxen plowing through the word of the agriculturalist alone.

Living and working in the area is essential to learning what can be acceptable, what can work, and what the people need. The Toposa men and women are resistant to using cows for plowing but some are willing to try. However, they need constant reassurance. This can only be done by staff being residential with daily contact.

Local contact persons have to be established in the villages and then concentrate on motivating these people. They in turn will ensure that activity continues in the village when program staff cannot be there for some time.

There could be more program cooperation if the projects start with animal medicines and how to care for the animals. This builds trust and can lead to other, more challenging ideas such as plowing in the future.



Figure 8 Meeting with communities in the village is essential for acceptance of programs

(Sources: Documents, Reports, and Interviews with Juma Chilimo and Milla Elizeous and edited by Gabe Hurrish: 05.Nov.2021 gh)

*** The following pictures are scans of paper pictures from 2005 ***

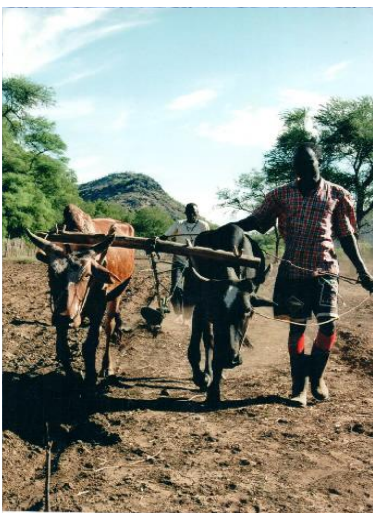


Figure 1-2-3-4 Plowing using animal traction

