

Building Partnerships for Sustainable Rural Transport Development The case of introducing IMT's in Kasese, Iganga, and Katakwi Districts of Uganda

Improved transport services can be effective in improving food security and livelihoods for poor rural communities. Greater mobility for farmers increases their access to markets and market price information, leading to lower agricultural input prices, increased production, less dependency on agricultural traders, and improved income.

This IFRTD Update reviews a 3 year research project designed to develop and promote strategies that will improve the availability and quality of transport for poor rural households in Uganda. Here we describe a methodology used to introduce Intermediate Means of Transport (IMTs) for improved mobility in selected rural districts. **Partnership building** is highlighted as a key catalyst for the sustainable adoption of IMT use in these communities.

Key points of learning

- Capacity building through partnership development
- Improved understanding of poor farmer's needs and the critical mass required to develop a culture of IMT use.
- New channels of communication within and between communities that have led to the cross pollination of ideas and new relationships of supply and demand.
- The scaling up of project learning into national policy and practice through the continuous involvement of government programmes.

Right: Janet Biira, the Project Donkey Trainer showing farmers how to load bags of maize onto donkeys.

Focus on Partnerships

This action research project adopted the *innovation systems* approach outlined by the DFID Crop Post-Harvest Programme (CPHP) that focuses on the **interaction between stakeholders** as a key determinant of the uptake of new technologies or systems. Instead of a linear transfer of knowledge from the research organisation to passive beneficiaries, this methodology recognises that anyone touched by or directly involved in the research process will affect its outcome, and that the role they play, in line with their interests and expectations, may change over time.

The adoption of the innovation systems approach placed further emphasis on a participatory and inclusive approach to **monitoring and evaluation (M&E)**. The programme stressed that participatory M&E should not be limited to the involvement of end-users, but should take a multi-level approach recognising the differing and often conflicting information needs of various stakeholders. The indicators used for performance monitoring reflect this by incorporating a separate set to measure the level and quality of interaction among stakeholders.



Project Bio:

Title:

Improved Food Crop Marketing through Appropriate Transport for Poor Farmers in Uganda

Lifetime:

April 2002 - December 2004

Location:

Kasese, Iganga & Katakwi districts, Uganda, Africa

Funders:

DFID Crop Post-Harvest Programme (CPHP)

Project Co-ordinators:

Natural Resources Institute (lead), Transport Forum Group, Transport Research Laboratory, Silsoe Research Institute

For more information about this project contact:

Dr Charles Kaira, Uganda Transport Forum Group

Email: ckkaira@africaonline.co.ug

Mr Ulrich Kleih, Natural Resources Institute, University of Greenwich

Email: u.kleih@gre.ac.uk

Setting the Scene

The baseline study confirmed human portage as the predominant mode of transport in the three project districts of Iganga, Kasese and Katakwi. As in most parts of Uganda, bicycles are the main form of IMT. Kasese district has a mountainous terrain reflected by its high incidence of back loading and limited degree of bicycle ownership. In contrast 84% of households in Iganga district own bicycles, while in Katakwi district the study revealed the most use of oxen and ox carts. Draught animal power has been in evidence here since the colonial period although in recent decades cattle rustling has become a major problem.

No ownership of donkeys, donkey carts, tractors, trailers, cars or pick up trucks was found, and the ownership of bicycle trailers or wheel barrows is very limited. Physical assets are predominantly owned by men with ownership by women only becoming prevalent in areas with a higher number of female headed households.

Farming and the sale of crops dominate the economic activities of villagers in Iganga and Kasese districts (93% and 98% respectively). In Katakwi household livelihoods are more diverse and include the traditional processing of primary produce and crafts. According to the survey data Iganga markets the most crops (e.g. maize, beans and coffee), followed by Kasese (e.g. coffee, passion fruit and Irish potatoes), while drought in Katakwi has significantly reduced the quantities of produce that are marketed there.

The Research Action Plan

In the first year of the programme a baseline study and workshop clarified research objectives and identified project locations that are representative of Uganda's farming systems, agricultural potential and IMT use. In year two the programme commenced with a **Golden Milestone Workshop**, held to clarify research aims and classify project partners and stakeholders; their contributions, roles and responsibilities.

Stakeholders were identified in three groups:

- **Knowledge providers** – Research organisations coordinating the project
- **Intermediaries** – District level NGOs and community organisations
- **Users** – The farmer groups and individuals in the local communities

The participants of the Golden Milestone Workshop formulated a research action plan for the introduction of the IMTs in the three districts. Among the key principles decided, were the following:

- Introduced IMTs would consist of donkeys as draught and pack animals and donkey/ox carts, oxen and ploughs to support the modernization of agricultural efforts with respect to land preparation, planting and weeding.
- As part of a risk sharing agreement, the project would cover 40% of the cost of IMT introduction with beneficiaries (farmers) meeting 60% of the cost. This does not include costs associated with IMT introduction eg. training, transport of the IMT to beneficiary etc.
- Mostly pregnant female donkeys would be purchased for the project with one or two males placed in each sub-county to promote sustainability through breeding.
- Poor farmers unable to pay cash can pass on the first foal to another beneficiary in lieu of payment.

Turning negative relationships into positive partnerships

The impact of participatory technology development on the relationship between artisans and farmers and the consequent impact upon the development of appropriate transport technologies.

Although artisans in Iganga have been producing ox-carts they had not proved popular with local farmers. The project revealed a lack of communication, with farmers claiming the carts were poorly designed for their needs and artisans blaming the carts' shortcomings on misuse by farmers. The project identified a need for **participatory technology development** and organised *Artisan/Farmer week*, a workshop held in Iganga district to bring together farmers and artisans from all three project areas to test the carts and find some lasting solutions. *Artisan/Farmer week* led to improvements in the cart design, but most importantly to a mutual trust between local artisans and the cart users. This has led to joint pricing of the cart production, leaving a reasonable profit for the Artisan. The farmers now see the value of a well designed cart specific to their needs and are willing as the beneficiaries to pay the extra cost. Previously artisans needed some encouragement to use good quality raw material for cart manufacturing, for example by not using very worn second hand tyres that are at greater risk of puncture.

Leveraging the State

This project has had demonstrable success in leveraging local government involvement and mainstreaming the research findings into the agenda of national government agencies.

The Resident District Commissioner (RDC) for the Kasese District Administration attended the first partnership meeting for the project and stayed long enough to hear the farmers relate their experiences using the newly introduced donkeys. The Kasese farmers described how donkeys were taking the domestic transport burden away from women and children, and were making markets more accessible to the community than roads ever have. This last message was particularly resonant with a local administration whose agenda is heavily focused on road building. The RDC also heard the farmers lament the conclusion of the project in December 2004 before a critical mass of donkeys had been introduced. The RDC promised to take this message to the local government Chairman for appropriate action. By the time the second partnership meeting was held in Iganga district the Kasese farmers were able to report that the Kasese District

Administration had recognised the value of the project and agreed to take it over, providing a regular budget until all of the sub counties of Kasese District have the critical mass of donkeys needed to develop a donkey culture.

By encouraging the participation of national agricultural programmes in research workshops and meetings the project has been able to mainstream some of its findings into their policy making and programme implementation. The Secretariat of the Plan for Modernization of Agriculture (PMA) and National Agricultural Advisory Service (NAADS), both major government initiatives in the agricultural and livestock sectors, have attended research events and were regularly briefed by the research team on policy and implementation issues. NAADS has consequently requested the local project coordinators to visit the West Nile region in Uganda and to make an action plan for the introduction of animal carts in the region. NAADS has also already financed a programme to introduce donkeys in Kabale District which is similar to Kasese in terrain and climate. The Kabale farmers now regularly attend partnership meetings for the original project.

Partnership Meetings

Quarterly partnership meetings were held to review and plan the project process with stakeholders. These meetings were an opportunity for partners to identify obstacles and try to find solutions through genuine discussions, sometimes seeking advice from experts on certain issues. The meetings were also a conduit for lessons of good practice that could be picked up by others for implementation in their own project areas.

Before the first partnership meeting farmers in Iganga had shied away from acquiring donkeys for various socio-cultural reasons, however after listening to the testimonies of fellow farmers from Kasese who had found the donkey to be a keen transporter that relieved the burden of women and children, this bias was swayed. Field visits to Kasese by the Iganga farmers further changed attitudes and Iganga farmers are now acquiring donkeys more than oxen to the extent that the project is unable to meet demand.

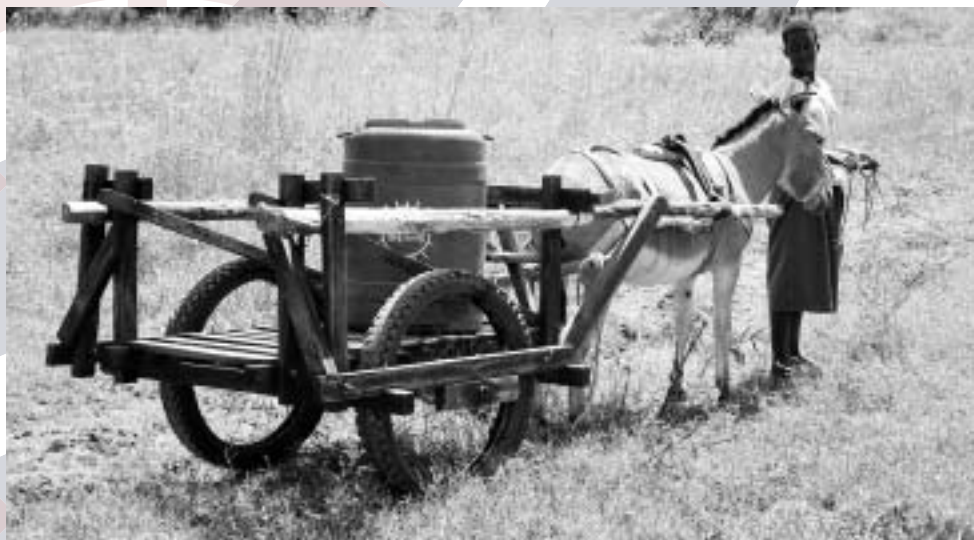
Similarly Iganga farmers were instrumental in convincing Kasese farmers to pay for their IMTs. At the first meeting the Kasese intermediary reported the failure of their beneficiaries to repay instalments of the 60% contribution per IMT. In comparison the

project funds in Iganga have not been able to keep up with the demand. The partnership meeting discussed the pros and cons of the Kasese farmers' failure to honour their agreement. For example other Kasese farmers losing out in the future and the consequences of their failure to reach the critical mass required for a donkey culture to take hold in the district. 3 months later an analysis of instalment payments revealed that Kasese had caught up with Iganga district and in some cases beneficiaries had paid all their instalments in advance.

The meetings have also provided a useful discussion forum between beneficiaries and the vets. Good practices are passed

on and bad ones discouraged. Beneficiaries have developed trust with the vets and are willing to pay for drugs as preventative care or treatment for their animals without waiting for the project to intervene. At the same time, farmers have suggested that two or three of their representatives receive additional training in each community on issues such as hoof trimming, delivery of foals, and how to give the animals injections. These farmers would then be expected to pass on their knowledge or assist their neighbours when required.

Below: A woman using her donkey cart to transport water in Katakwi district.



Final perspective

This project demonstrates how the adoption of an innovation systems approach places particular emphasis on the building of partnerships and participatory monitoring and evaluation, as essential cornerstones of a research project. As a result of this approach the action-research project presented here has been able to achieve a number of success stories including:

- An Artisan week initiated by project partners that has led to improved cart design
- Communication between participants that has encouraged positive outcomes. For example farmers from

Kasese district convincing Iganga farmers to use donkeys or the Iganga farmers convincing the Kasese farmers to pay for IMTs.

- Project partners have taken ownership of the welfare of the animals and adopted appropriate animal care practices ensuring the sustainability of the donkey population established by the project.
- The Government has acknowledged and taken up the research findings and local Administrations are now budgeting for future IMT distribution to farmers.

Sister projects:

Kenya Agricultural Rural Transport Services Project

Contact: Dr Pascal G Kaumbutho, Kenya Network for Draught Animal Technology (KENDAT)
Email: kendat@africaonline.co.ke

Action Research Project on IMTs in Ghana.

Contact: Dr Gina Porter, Department of Anthropology, University of Durham, UK
Email: R.E.Porter@durham.ac.uk



Department for International Development



Natural Resources Institute



About IFRTD

The IFRTD is a global network of individuals and organisations working towards improved access and mobility for the rural poor. It provides a framework for collaboration, information sharing, debate and advocacy that bridges traditional geographic, academic and institutional boundaries.

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IFRTD Secretariat

113 Spitfire Studios, 63-71 Collier Street, London, N1 9BE, United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7713 6699 · **Fax:** +44 (0) 20 7713 8290
Email: ifrtd@ifrtd.org · **Web:** www.ifrtd.org