

Cows, Plows and the End of Hunger

The Luapula River flows through central Africa creating a natural border between the countries of Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Many people in this rural area are very poor. Some of the homes are constructed from little more than dried grass; others are built from mud bricks, dried in the hot Africa sun. Drinking water is often drawn from deep wells in the ground. In some villages, where there are no wells, people simply drink from the river – the same source that animals drink from and where people do their laundry. Children often get sick from drinking the dirty, polluted water.

Growing enough food for everyone is always a great struggle in the Luapula region. Cassava (ca-sau-va) is grown here because it is a hearty root plant that will survive in the poor soil of the area. The women make a doughy food called nsima (en-shee-ma) from the cassava. The cassava flour is mixed into boiling water and cooked. The food has little nutritional value, but it makes people feel full when they eat it. Peanuts (more often called groundnuts) are also grown. People eat them plain or cooked in soups. (See the recipe for making African Peanut Soup.)

As far back as anyone can remember, people in the Luapula region have grown small family gardens in their communities by hand, using crude shovels and hoes. Gardens prepared in this manner often take up to three months just to prepare and plant. Outreach International field staff members realized this was a serious problem for people in the region. Not enough food could be planted to feed everyone for an entire year. Outreach International staff members discussed this matter with people in the Luapula region and encouraged them to explore the various aspects of this problem. How could more food be produced so people could avoid being hungry? Was there a way community members could work together to improve their situation? How could a greater variety of crops be planted that would provide more nutrition to local residents?

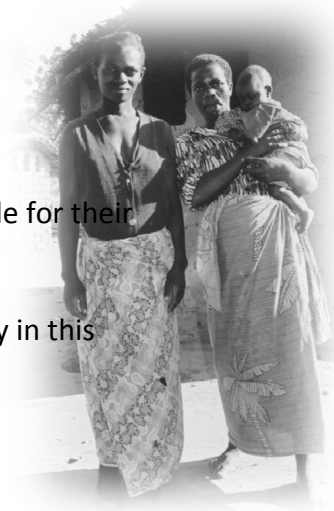
Through a strategic process of exploration and research, Outreach International staff members helped people in the Luapula region discover the benefit of developing a large community garden and the use of large working cattle and a simple yoke and plow. Using the large plow behind two of these big, strong animals, the garden that would have taken months to cultivate took only one-and-a-half weeks.

The family gardens are now also being made larger in this area which will mean more food at harvest. New crops such as tomatoes, corn and pumpkin have been introduced and are being successfully grown. These new food items will be a greater source of nutrition for community members. Together, residents constructed a storage building to store their additional crops that should last throughout the entire year. There is enough, in fact, to sell at a very affordable price for people in neighboring villages that presently struggle. Neighbors are now very

Story

interested to replicate the process of working together and purchasing working cattle for their communities.

With the use of working cattle, hunger and malnutrition may soon be only a memory in this part of Africa. Sorrow and despair will be replaced with joy and improved health.



How to Make African Peanut Soup

Many people are surprised to learn that peanuts (commonly referred to as groundnuts) are an important food item in Africa. You can create African Peanut Soup from the following recipe. (Keep in mind that Africans in rural communities would not likely have all the ingredients this recipe calls for.)

1 tablespoon vegetable oil
1 garlic clove, chopped
1/4 medium onion, chopped
1/3 cup tomato paste
2/3 cup creamy peanut butter
1/8 teaspoon cayenne
4 cups chicken broth

In a saucepan, heat oil over moderate heat until hot but not smoking. Cook garlic and onion, stirring until golden – about 1 minute. Add tomato paste, peanut butter, cayenne and 1/4 cup broth and stir until smooth. Stir in remaining 3-3/4 cups broth and simmer, covered, stirring occasionally, about 10 minutes. Simmer soup uncovered for 10 minutes, or until oil floats to the surface. Skim oil.

Makes about 4 cups.

This is good served over cooked white rice.