

# Bugiri rice farmers smile at harvest time

By Andrew Ssenyonga

Over 200 rice farmers from five sub-counties of Bugiri district received 10 post-harvest rice machines known as threshers.

The sub-counties include Buwunga, Muterere, Nankoma, Bulesa and Budhaya.

A thresher mills, cleans and sorts rice.

While handing over the new machines to the beneficiaries, the Bugiri district agriculture officer, Jimmy Mugabi, said the equipment would go a long way in improving rice growing in the country.

"The machines would help reduce post-harvest losses estimated at 1,250 tonnes of the 3,000 tonnes of rice produced last year," Mugabi explained.

He adds that the equipment was donated by the Build Me, a local non-government organisation aimed at changing the lives of youth and women.

"Build Me conducted research in the area and saw that much of the farmers' produce was wasted during the post-harvest period," Mugabi said.

Deo Bwire the executive director of Build Me, while donating the threshers at Bugiri district playgrounds, said these machines will be accessed by farmers in their groups.

"The machines are free; you only have to maintain them and buy fuel to run them. I warn you leaders, do not take any money from the farmers," Bwire warned.

Rehema Musa, a rice farmer in Buwuni village, Bulesa sub-county said it is a good innovation for the rural people, but also noted



A rice thresher

that farmers should be trained to handle rice from harvest to milling.

"If post-harvest losses are reduced to 15%, it may have a greater impact than planting new varieties. Rice should be harvested after 35 days, when the grains start shooting out and should not be left to become too dry in the field," Musa advised fellow farmers.

Fred Mukaga, a farmer in Buwunga sub-county, said the threshers will save them from the stress they have been suffering during the post harvesting period.

"In the process of spending longer time while harvesting, the rice becomes too dry, grains fall and most of it is wasted during the milling. These machines will save us from all that," Mukaga said.

Ritah Mulondhi, a farmer from Nankoma village, said farmers need to be trained in post-harvest management such as threshing and milling; some of the major problems facing Ugandan rice farmers: