# Do’oma site-specific topic: Irrigation

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## First settlers in the village and earlier irrigation users

### Informant 1

BB is one of the first settlers who came to the area with his parents in 1986 when he was 8 years old. He owns 2.5 hectares of irrigated land from which he harvests maize, sweet potato, teff, aleko/shiferaw, and mango. Last year he produced quintals 7 of maize, and sold one of it for 400 birr, and five quintals of sweet potato, all consumed by the family. He owns about 18 livestock while supporting a large family of about 10. He said that he is advantaged in having irrigated land as it has helped him to remain food secure to support his large family without problems. He never received food aid, has never been a PSNP beneficiary and there was no time he had to look for credit for any family issue.

He said that having access to irrigation is vital here, as the rain is undependable; as a matter of fact, he said that he clearly sees that those households who remained in dry land have serious food shortages and are affected by recurrent drought. Even though it is half a hectare, it is found helpful to households to support themselves rather than having bigger dry land. As a criterion in PSNP anyone having irrigated land shouldn’t be included in the support, because it is clear that people having access to irrigation have a high probability of filling their food gap or don’t have a food gap at all.

In addition to food security, having irrigated land allows to build assets if high value products like onions are grown on the land. There are many people who could change their hut into a corrugated iron sheet roof house, buy livestock and improve facilities at home.

If you have irrigation, you are sure to grow the plants you prefer unless pests are problem as they are this year, but those who plough dry land are less motivated because they are not sure that the rain will come at the right time, with adequate amount, and leave at the right time and in all the cases risks are attached to it in addition to the threat of pests.

Everyone wants to access irrigated land but it is clear that most of the land is occupied by early settlers, there are complaints from the young men in the community, but the complaints didn’t reach formally as a request for a share. There was no conflict over issues of access to it so far. He mentioned that on Zage river there was a conflict with people from Menena Abaya kebele, when people in Womala/the sub kebele want to expand their canal in 2010. There was no injury in the conflict as the militia could keep the situation under control, the case was taken to the wereda , but my informant doesn’t know what decision was given. A year previously there was also a conflict with Hoya Degeza kebele people when Do’oma people on the border tried to access the river called Masta, a few people were injured and the wereda administration decided the new canal on Masta River should be stopped.

### Informant 2

CC is a 41 year old man who was awarded as model farmer in 2008. He owns 3 hectares of land out of which 2 hectares are being irrigated. His main income comes from livestock fattening and his second livelihood is farming, mainly vegetables by using irrigation. He was one of the first settlers in the area since 1986 and had the chance to have access to a large irrigated farm. He said that having irrigated land is his main reason for success. He said that he had the following assets/wealth when he was chosen as first most successful farmer in Do’oma; 10 milking cows, 14 oxen, 15 bulls, 7 cows not having given birth yet, land in town purchased for 34000 birr in 2008 on which a house was built in 2011, corrugated iron sheet covered house in village which is cement plastered and well done, 2 hectares irrigated land, 1 non-irrigated, 10,000 birr cash at home. But he invested 37,000 birr for the house construction in town.

He mentioned that he had no food gap at all from when he moved to the kebele, he never received food aid and has never been a PSNP beneficiary. In general he had no time when he had economic problems.

The informant mentioned that having access to irrigation is an advantage for a household to escape from food insecurity, those with at least half a hectare of irrigated land are safer than others, because they can produce twice and they can survive with it. However, those who lack access to it usually get in to trouble during the dry season, facing a food gap, and the worst season is when the amount of rainfall is low or if the period is disrupted. Most of the time families are affected by drought and food shortage, and as a result they sell their assets, get in to indebtedness, and it affects happiness and cheerfulness of the community. According to him there is no major expansion on the dam, but canals are expanding and he feels that the dam is now fully utilised, and said , if we have to reach more farmers, it is a must to upgrade the canal or have another canal on the same river Zage, or from Masta river.

## Sub-kebele official

There is one river – the Zage River. The volume decreases between December and May, but the water can still be enough, if the investment doesn’t take a big share. The investment takes huge water and even in this low water season, the sub-kebele only gets very small and insufficient water for about three months. The water users fear the investor as he is legal, but they fight among themselves to share the small amount. But elders and kebele administration usually resolve the conflict. The effect on the farmers irrigating land is mentioned to be deduction of income from fruits but maize can grow if it gets water twice a year.

Flooding was frequent when the rain was too much on the highlands, for example it happened in June 2009, June 2010, and July 2011 for a week.

The damage from floods is on riverside farm products like mango, avocado, banana mainly, maize, sugar cane, and red pepper. Some of the products are damaged totally, and others recover depending on the landscape of the specific farm. There were many farmers who faced food shortage and about 200 farmers were given support from the wereda, mainly seeds and fertilisers for free, and food support for two months from emergency food aid of the wereda.

There are about eight groups of irrigation users, for each there is one organiser and turn supervisor who opens canals to share water equitably. The organiser is elected by the users of a group. DAs, mainly NRM, were assigned to organise the group activities and supervise group leaders. There is a rule that governs the water use and turns are clearly known for each farmer, and there is a 60 birr fine if one attempts to take others’ turns. If the fine is missed the penalty is canal clearing work and a 10 birr fine. If anyone fights in case of water turn community elders will penalise them up to 150 birr for each disputant.

The informant said that those group leaders need some training about effective water management and avoiding of wastage, and about fairness. Because sometimes there is negligence about proper use of water and unfair distribution to their closer people that causes conflicts. The problem is that there is no rule that states the penalty if group leaders are biased, and they are not penalised.

The main technology available to the main kebele is the modern canal system provided by UNICEF, last year the dam was damaged by flooding and the wereda tried to repair it but still the repairing is not enough, it might be totally damaged if a serious flood comes. Even now the dam is not working properly because the water is getting a way out before getting in to the canal. There was maintenance every year whenever needed, but not a big one. There is no new improved method or technology so far. But clearing of canals is done by users.

In the sub kebele the canal is made by users’ cooperation, which is just traditional by putting stones, wood and mud to make a dam and canals are also built by farmers. This one needs huge labour efforts by the sub kebele, because whenever the water is powerful it damages the dam and every year they have to build a new one.

The role of the government is minimal to work for the irrigation upgrading.

The kinds of items produced in irrigated lands are vegetables like cabbage, onions, red pepper, and tomato; fruits like orange, mango, avocado, sugarcane, banana, lemon, and papaya; and crops like maize, teff, haricot bin/BOLEKE, sesame, sweet potato.

Out of the crops mentioned above onions, red pepper, sesame, maize, banana, and mango are the main cash crops sold. The first four are new types of products begun in the kebele in the last five years. These items were first shown on the farmers’ extension experimentation farm in 2007 but when the Amharas began to do it the community began to adopt from them.

Those people who accessed irrigated farms are earlier settlers who arrived before 1988, but latecomers up to 1998 could also access small plots of land, but later on they had to purchase in contract agreements or work for sharecropping. Therefore late immigrants and youth have less or no access to irrigation.

He said that except the Amharas none of the local people have better economic status without irrigation, because they don’t want to work hard on non-irrigated land. Amharas work on this dry land the whole day. The other thing is that the Amharas plant red pepper in summer and when the rain is not enough it can resist. But the local people plant maize and it fails when the rain is insufficient. The main point here is hard work, because the Amharas are hard workers and able to use the dry land to improve their life while the local people are complaining.

Those who have irrigated land and are able to produce vegetables are becoming better off, but still it depends on the size of the land and the level of effort they could make. The effect on the family in general is: good housing in the village, houses in Wacha town, they have more cattle, up to 20 and above, sending children to preparatory school in Selamber town and elsewhere, and their food, clothing and house furniture is well improved. These people are well off and never receive support, or food aid.

There are about 325 irrigation users out of which about 25 accessed it in the last five years though contract purchase, because some sell when they leave the area, some sell when they face serious problem like illness, and some sell part of their irrigated land for different reasons. Out of the 325 there are about 120 having big land 2 to 4.5 hectare.

There was conflict in 2009 with Hoya kebele when Do’oma community made a canal to bring water from another river called Masta, because the river has been used for many years by Hoya kebele farmers who now refused to share it. The kebele applied to the wereda, and the wereda said they could share it , but the people are still against it.

In 2010 there was new a canal made in Womala sub kebele from Zage river but the Menena kebele farmers began to fight against Do’oma people; this case was also taken to the wereda but the wereda said they should keep the canal as it is rather than causing fights.

## Recent irrigation user

IU is a 31 year old man who supports 8 household members from farming as sole means of livelihood. He is a PSNP beneficiary since 2008; since then he has received the support and saves it in order to buy irrigated land in contract agreements. Then in the first year he saved about 1500 birr. He sold his ox and bought half a hectare of irrigated land in 2009, which he says is a very important asset for the family. He plants onions on the farm from which he earns more than 3000 birr in one season. He mentioned that he had to work as a farm labourer, exerting too much energy on his dry land which is only a hectare, but there was a food gap, and constant food insecurity and drought. He received food aid 2 times before he joined PSNP in 2008. Now he says life is improving, as he could build a corrugated iron sheet covered house, and is able to feed his family very well. But when he is asked why he complained not to graduate from PSNP, he wanted to access ox from the PSNP package. After he complained to the wereda in 2010 that the kebele had decided to graduate him after two years support, then the wereda decided that he should continue, and could access 4000 birr credit.

He said that life without water is insecure here, now if the onions are not good for him, he can plant maize at any time and feed his family, he should not see the sky and pray for the rain to come.

He borrows money from his relatives living in the highlands whenever there is food shortage. I says he will change his life in the coming few years, and he is planning to have another half hectare of land if he gets someone willing to sell.

## Those with no current access to irrigation

### Informant 1

FR is a 26 year old young man having a wife and a baby, who only owns 1 hectare of dry land which he says doesn’t produce him anything. He tried many times but he could harvest only a little at times of good weather. He mentioned that he had to survive by engaging in sharecropping from which he gets about two quintals of maize in two production seasons. This is the main earning from which he tries to feed his family. As it is not enough for the whole year, he engages in various labour work and herding community livestock for households who failed to cover their turn. He also cuts grass and sells it in town. But since last year, he is sick around his neck and couldn’t move freely, which is hindering his work.

He said that if he had his own irrigated land he could have covered his family food needs and wouldn’t have entered into many back-breaking paid works. His family is poor, there is no security, if the land owner denies access for sharecropping at any time, it would be disaster for the family. When there is good rainfall he can harvest about 3 quintals of maize from his dry land, but as he is discouraged from his earlier experiences, he doesn’t hoe all his land. There are many times he is left with nothing. He didn’t try other items like sorghum, and spices on it, but he saw that some people are planting them, and if he gets the seeds he wants to try them.

Due to food shortage and drought, he suffers a lot, for example last year he had to get a 150 birr loan to service food gap time from April-July. He repaid the debt by working in farm labour. The problem was worse because his wife gave birth and he was sick when his bones on the jaw broken suddenly. He didn’t get any treatment so far because he couldn’t afford it, and he said that he is recovering, but still he can eat potato and banana but not other things.

He is not hoping to get his own irrigated land, because these days, it is becoming problematic, as there is no land left, and buying from those who have plenty or have retired requires too much money that he can’t imagine to afford.

### Informant 2

PP is a 45 year old man who is now living with his son who is only 9. He mentioned that he had about 1 hectare irrigated land. But his four children died due to malaria and other diseases that he doesn’t know at different times and his house burned in 2005 with ten goats and all his property inside. The family sold their irrigated land for 4500 birr to survive and rehabilitated with this money, but life afterwards became harsh. At this time he divorced peacefully after the discussion he had with his wife. The kebele gave him a small plot of land on which he is trying to plant maize by ploughing using the ox borrowed from the PSNP package.

He said that I am a good example how the water is life in this kebele, and my life tells how life is difficult with no land or dry land.

He had no problem before the house, the livestock, and the irrigated had land gone, but he is feeling useless, powerless, and unable to feed himself and his lonely boy. He is a PSNP beneficiary, who should do the public works to access food or money to support himself.

Those who don’t have irrigated land have the same fate to be food insecure either as PSNP beneficiaries or food aid recipients or having no support left with hunger and trouble in the family. Some of those who don’t have assets to sell should find a relative or friend elsewhere or in the village to rescue them.

There is no expansion of the irrigation allowing others who failed to access it.