# Gelcha site-specific topic: Irrigation

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## Male irrigation user

During the Derg period a person called IH who was living in Addis Ketema started to produce peppers using irrigation water from the outflow of the sugar estate. Learning from him, a person named NB who was living in Gelcha (Somali village) also started to produce peppers. Later on, they (I and N) began to produce maize in addition to peppers. Then three additional individuals from nearby (Somali village) joined the production of maize using the irrigation water.

I started in the last fifteen years with other three neighbouring people. After we had worked for about seven years, many more people started to use irrigation water. Gradually, the numbers of irrigation water users reached about 60. Of these, only 4 individuals from town (Addis Ketema) use irrigation and cultivate about 8 hectares of land, while about 16 hectare of land is cultivated by Gelcha community with irrigation water.

The irrigation is very important for the community, particularly for the users. The users are able to cope with drought and improve their livelihood better than non-irrigation users. Previously, many of the current irrigation users were living from firewood and charcoal selling. However, after they engaged in crop production using irrigation water, they were able to produce crops for home consumption as well as for market and stop selling firewood and charcoal.

However, there is a dispute with the sugar factory over irrigation water, as the factory is reluctant to allow irrigation water. For instance, last year, the factory blocked the irrigation water and prevented the community from using the water. Hence, there was a conflict between the irrigation users and the Guard of the factory. In the conflict, one guard had his leg broken and another one also lost three of his teeth. Then the police arrested some of the community members who had participated in the conflict. Then the water users contributed and paid 9000 birr as compensation to the injured individuals. Now the problem is almost settled and since then there is no dispute. Moreover, there is no dispute among the water users because there is a committee who control the fair distribution of the water among the users.

I have 1 hectare of irrigated land. There is no land distribution in the kebele so far. I simply started to cultivate the land without getting permission from the kebele. Now I am paying tax for the land I am cultivating. I have produced two times a year. I usually produce maize for home consumption and tomatoes and onions for the market sequentially (one after the other). Since last year, I used fertilisers that arrived in the kebele for the first time. However, I never get any support or extension package from DAs and/or other concerned body.

As I am disabled, I am working in share with another individual who assists me in labour and shares equally after harvest. Last year, I produced 40 quintal of maize and shared 20 quintal. I also produced tomatoes and sold them for 10,000 birr and shared 5000 birr. Hence, I am able to buy sheep for rearing and able to feed my family a balanced diet.

During peak agricultural periods such as land preparation, sowing, weeding and harvesting, I call for ‘Jige’ (a labour organisation that enables the community to exchange labour for different activities) and also hire daily labour for 30-40 birr per day. Moreover, all my family members including my wife are involved in the agricultural activities. The female members of the household are mostly involved in weeding and preventing the livestock from entering the farm.

Previously (before I used irrigation), I faced difficulty to feed my household. I solely depended on PSNP food/cash aid and had no livestock. However, now I have no problem to feed my family and am able to assist other relatives. I have also bought more than 15 sheep and goats. The non-irrigation users still lead the worst life. Some of them sell grass from the sugar plantation and firewood. Others also sell their livestock to cover their family expenses. Hence, I am by far better off than many of the non-irrigation users and am able to be food secure.

There is a good relationship between irrigation users and non-irrigation users. I have good assistance and cooperation with non-irrigation users in different regards. The non-irrigation users assist me with their labour when I need their help which usually takes place in the form of ‘Jige’. I and other irrigation users also provide them post-harvest crops for them to use either for consumption or market or for their livestock feeding. Moreover, the irrigation users pay more land tax than non-irrigation users. For instance, last year I paid 100 birr for tax while non-irrigation users paid 45 birr regardless of their land size. Hence, there is no jealousy or conflict with non-irrigation users, as we are neighbours and share much social life together.

## Female irrigation user

During the Derg period N’s grandparents came from around Harar and had been starting to use irrigation around Mosque village. N is one of the investors who are involving in irrigation work in the area. They were producing vegetables like onions and tomatoes and fruits in small quantity like Habab and papaya. They were greatly benefiting and became rich, and the land was starting to be degraded; then they left the area and returned to their home place. Now the land is totally coved by Lake Beseka and weyane trees; it is about two hectares. Since then different investors had come to the area from Addis Ketema and previously had interaction with the area. There are about five investors who had been involving on irrigation work during the Derg regime, except one whose name is X. She listed in order/rank according to their activities on it, those of O, N, T, U and X. Those investors are involving both in annual and seasonal cash crops so that they produce vegetables like tomatoes, onions and green peppers and fruit like mango, papaya, banana and avocado.

The community members didn’t benefit from their intervention, except gaining work skill from them. They were bringing daily workers from other places for preparing land, planting, weeding and harvesting their crops. People also couldn’t benefit from the by-products of the irrigation, which were used by the daily labourers.

The investors lent money to the rich, but the poor weren’t able to access credit from them. There was no conflict with kebele officials or community members. The diversion canal is different from the community one. They participate in community contributions including land tax; therefore they have good relations with officials and people.

Within the last ten years, some persons have been initiated by them to start irrigation work by using the diversion of the animals’ drinking water. Since then the number of users has increased though time, especially after the modern irrigation schemes were established in the neighbouring kebeles. Then the interest of people in using irrigation was increased. Every person started to enclose land for irrigation and she did that five years ago. The land is about half a hectare and she produces mostly maize which helps for household food consumption. In a good production season the produce covered about four/five months of the family consumption food. Sometimes, during summer season, when rain water could be available, she produces vegetables like onions and tomatoes, and cabbage. Similarly, in a good production season she has got income and buys livestock which are important to sell in hard times. She also covered school, health service and other consumption good expenditures with such income.

She buys inputs like improved seed and fertiliser from Ilallan (modern irrigation access area/kebele) from individuals. She doesn’t have a labour shortage, because she has two young males who participate in ploughing sowing/planting, weeding and harvesting. She also involves in all activities with them, except ploughing.

The problem that she faces which hinders her from producing frequently, is that others who have irrigation land around there are not involving. That means it is difficult to produce alone, because the crop is exposed to different animals (both domestic and wild), so to minimise the problem producing together is necessary. Consequently, it blocks her potential for irrigation activities because of waiting for each other.

The output produced is not always the same, it fluctuates over time depending on the availability of water and the weather condition of the area. As a result the living standard of the household varies up and down with the outcome of the result of the produce.

There is no problem to sell her produce, the traders comes to the place when the produce is ready to sell.

Before having irrigation she lived with a similar situation to those not having irrigation. She didn’t have food consumption from her own production.

## Male non-irrigation user

I do not involve in irrigation because my land is not accessible for irrigation water.

The irrigation users are much better off than non-irrigation users in many aspects. First, during the mid of the year, we (none-irrigation users) don’t find pasture to feed our cattle while the irrigation users have crop residue from their farms for their cattle and they pass the hard time without difficulty. Second, the irrigation users produce different types of crops two times a year for consumption as well as for market. Hence, they are food secure and in better income status than me and many non-irrigation users.

There is good cooperation between irrigation users and non-irrigation users including myself, as we are neighbours and share social life. We exchange labour for agricultural activities and other purposes through ‘Jige’. They (irrigation users) also let us share from the produce during harvest period and allow us to use post-harvest crop for our livestock and consumption. Moreover, they also assist us in different aspects in crises particularly related to food, which is one of the important things of irrigation for the community. However, there is no conflict among the irrigation users as well as among non-irrigation users. The irrigation users have a water committee that manages the fair distribution of water among the users. Hence, there is no dispute that arises over water.

## Female non-irrigation user

The irrigation activities are important for those accessing water from the factory. They could produce food grains like maize and vegetables like onions and other vegetables for sale. In a good production season the produce could cover at least four months of the household’s food consumption or if it was cash crops which are an important income source, when they could buy livestock which helps to improve the lives of the household.

The availability of water is blocking their activities to expand as they want. Now youngsters have started to prohibit young males who come from other places for labour work during planting/harvesting time. Sometimes conflicts are arising between irrigation users over land and water distribution, however, it was resolved by elders or often the case reached the social court, when they came to the dispute places to resolve the problem.

Because of lack of water source she couldn’t engage in irrigation work, because the water couldn’t reach her land. When she compared herself with irrigation users, they are benefiting and being in good situation, even if the crops failed often. They are in good situation concerning income, food security and livestock, because they could produce at least twice a year, which enables them to save or buy at least two/three shoats in the year. Therefore this is a great difference between irrigation users and non-irrigation users.

The relations between her and irrigation users are normal as with others neighbours and friends. When they need her labour support, she helps them in weeding. She is benefiting from the outputs of their produce at harvest time. She was getting a small amount of maize (Eshet) and vegetables from her neighbours and friends.