Learning for rural change

14 stories from Ethiopia

IFAD

Enabling poor rural people to overcome poverty

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Centre for learning on sustainable agriculture

Learning for rural change

14 stories from Ethiopia

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Preface

In line with IFAD's overarching goal to improve rural food security and nutrition globally, the IFAD Ethiopia programme engages in innovative multi-dimensional poverty reduction projects. Focusing on three priority areas – small-scale irrigation, rural finance and pastoral development – IFAD's engagement with the government and people of Ethiopia is mainly through the following projects; Pastoral Community Development Project (PCDP); Participatory Small Scale Irrigation Project (PaSIDP); Agricultural Marketing Improvement Project (AMIP); Rural Financial Intermediary Project (RUFIP); and Community Based Natural Resources Management (CBNReM).

In partnerships with the government, development agencies, small-scale farmers, NGOs, rural community based organisations, and public institutions and co-operatives, IFAD champions various initiatives in the fight against poverty, promoting pro-poor systems of governance and policies for the development of sustainable agriculture and natural resource management.

These innovative poverty reduction approaches have led to many relevant lessons learnt during their implementation, which often remain largely unreported. Analysing successes and identifying the limiting and favorable conditions is critical, as is recognising the will and dedication of those involved in captivating innovative approaches. A review of IFAD's interventions in Ethiopia, and the consequent sharing of these context-specific experiences, can result in a dynamic learning process, creating a body of practical knowledge for future interventions.

To achieve this, two practical training workshops were conducted to enhance the capacity of staff in all projects, equipping them with practical hands-on skills. This publication represents the results of one of these workshops. It provides detailed descriptions and analyses of project results, and shows the impact of some of the activities undertaken by IFAD-supported projects the country. IFAD would like to express its gratitude to the ILEIA team who facilitated the workshops and created the necessary environment for a positive exchange of

ideas and knowledge. This publication contributes to the development of programming methods and assists the future documentation of lessons learnt and knowledge gained, thus creating the necessary space and framework for scaling up processes.

This book also contributes to the creation of an archive of experiences within given programmes, and ignites a forum for the exchange of knowledge between and among various stakeholders, including implementing partners, public institutions and rural communities. It is an attempt to initiate learning processes from past successes and failures so as to ensure more efficient and effective innovative interventions, now and in the future.

The exchange of knowledge is critical for enhancing programme efficiency, developing synergies and creating a supportive environment for joint monitoring, planning and evaluation. This publication is a first step, although not the end, of an initiative to build on positive results and improve the conceptualisation of impediments and hurdles faced.

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September 2013

Introduction

In April 2012 and July 2013, a group of agricultural and rural development practitioners, most of them staff of IFAD projects in Ethiopia, participated in two documentation workshops.

In the first workshop they learned the basic steps of a documentation process: how to set the boundaries of your case, and how to describe and analyse your experience. Particularly this *analysis* is often missing in regular a documentation activities. Many projects and organisations write down their stories, but often they do not analyse what helped make the experience a success or a failure.

Another missing link is actually *writing* the story. Many practitioners find it hard to present their experience in a logical and attractive manner, so often the experience does not get shared beyond the project itself. In the four days of the second workshop all participants wrote interesting, highly readable articles about their own concrete experiences. Their articles are compiled in this booklet.

Together, the two parts of the training form a "sandwich": the bottom part of the sandwich is the introductory course in documentation, while in the top part, the second course, participants develop their case into a story. In between these two slices of bread is the juicy filling: the information from the actual project that completes the story.

This sandwich course on documentation forms part the documentation activities carried out by ILEIA with the support of IFAD in Eastern and Southern Africa. In these activities we use ILEIA's time-tested methodology to immerse the participants in documentation: not only concerning the theory of documentation, they also enjoy the satisfaction of achieving a tangible result. As one of the participants expressed during the course evaluation, "*now my wife can read what we are doing in our project. I am proud to share this story with her*".

The stories in this book come from different projects and contexts, and all authors choose different styles to tell their stories. Six stories reflect on experiences with irrigation; four stories tell about various

activities in pastoral communities; and two are about marketing groups and accessing market information. The last two stories in this book focus on knowledge sharing.

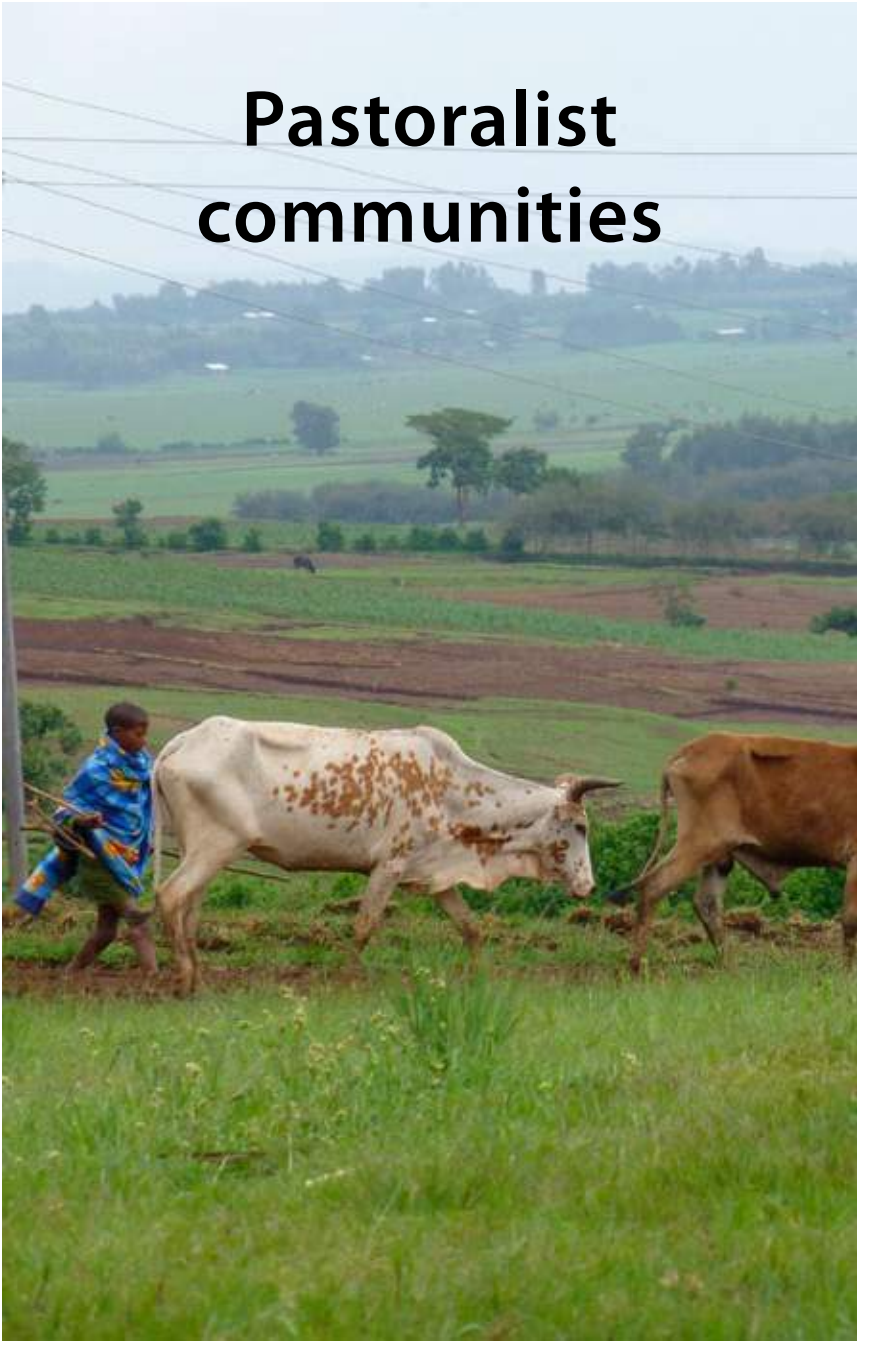
Though each story is unique, a red thread runs through this book. All stories illustrate that development starts with people in the communities who build trust in their own and in each other's capacities. The awareness of communities about their own strengths and potential is key. Farmers and pastoralists, women and men, young and old: they all have their own unique wisdom, skills and capacities. Projects use different strategies to strengthen communities' competencies: role plays and visits to other communities, for instance, or working closely with traditional leaders. Several stories illustrate how organised communities can better access government services.

Another red thread is knowledge. Communities need technical know-what, but they also need institutional know-how: about how to manage their farmer association or where to find information on sesame prices. And they need to find ways to share their knowledge in a systematic manner. Where there are organised communities, knowledge will flow and reach more people, like water.

We wish to express our sincere appreciation to all authors for their dedication to improve the lives of rural people, and for sharing their experiences.

Edith van Walsum
Director ILEIA, Centre for Learning on Sustainable Agriculture

Pastoralist communities



A drop of water matters

The arid and semi-arid areas of Ethiopia are periodically affected by drought. As a result, communities go through food shortages and livestock losses. To minimise pastoralists' vulnerability, small-scale irrigation schemes, particularly drip irrigation, can play a vital role. Micro tube drip irrigation is a cheap technology that can be afforded by the majority of pastoralists, it is simple to operate and is the most efficient way of bringing water to the fields. Activities carried out in the Dida Mega community showed numerous benefits of this simple technology, and also how it can be shared with similar communities.

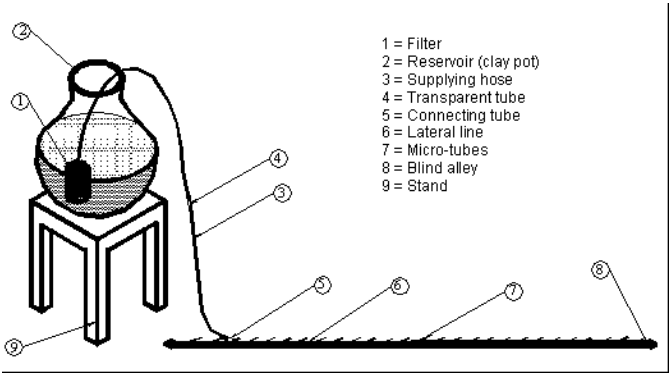
Berhanu Tadesse

Aiming to improve the livelihood of pastoralists in a sustainable way, the Federal Government of Ethiopia started the Pastoral Community Development Project (PCDP). PCDP aims to improve

rural livelihoods and reduce the vulnerability of pastoral and agro-pastoral communities in 33 districts through different community driven development interventions. One of the components of this project, Participatory Learning and Knowledge Management, focuses on small-scale development initiatives built around direct, active participation and learning approaches. One of the many activities carried out under this component is the introduction of a simple drip irrigation technology such as the one seen in the Dida Mega community of the Dirre district, in the Borena administrative zone of the Oromia regional state.

Introducing simple drip irrigation

Due to the low annual rainfall in Dida Mega, the community's agricultural productivity has been low and pastoralism predominates. A new technology for collecting the scarce water resources for irrigation purposes was necessary. To give community members an alternative to livestock rearing only, PCDP introduced the rope pump micro tube drip irrigation technology in 2011. The aim of this initiative was to cultivate vegetables and fruits with little water resources, both effectively and efficiently, using a simple approach that can easily be constructed



Components of a drip irrigation system

with local materials. Water is collected in community ponds, the main source of water for pastoral communities. This water is then transferred to clay pots (containing 30-40 liters) or to fiber glass containers (1,000-10,000 liters) that function as a water reservoir on the pastoralist's fields. The water is then distributed using plastic tubes or hoses.

PCDP adopted the rope pump micro tube drip irrigation technology developed at the Arba Minch University and introduced it to its project district. Trained development agents at district level discussed with the community members how the technology could be implemented, and whether the community thought they would benefit. First, a voluntary participatory action learning (PAL) group of 30 members, consisting of elders and also including women and young people, was formed. This group was then shown the system and taught how to use it in a very simple and participatory way. Finally, a grant was given to the PAL group (67.350 Birr) to buy the necessary materials, such as the rope pump, micro tubes, and water reservoirs. The PAL group was also expected to prepare a pond and a plot of land.

Finally, they were convinced and promoted the technology to their neighbours.

Using the drip irrigation technology, the groups have been able to cultivate different types of fruits and vegetables like banana, papaya, green pepper, tomato and onion. They use these products for personal consumption and are able to sell them to nearby communities. Women use this money to buy household items like salt, sugar or coffee.

Challenges

Some elders initially showed resistance and did not want to accept this new technology. Opposing new ideas or technologies at a preliminary stage is a natural phenomenon, especially when people's livelihoods are directly at stake. They were hesitant about the effectiveness of this new technology, and were eager to learn more about it before making a decision. Finally, after many discussions and after

observing the results, they became convinced and even started sharing it with their neighbours. Similarly, continuous discussions helped to solve the problem of unequal participation of the community during the construction and management of the ponds.

An initial lack of trainers in the vicinity was solved as the project financed the training of community development agents, as people who could support the community when necessary. Unfortunately, a lack of funds prevented the project to reach the wider community. Yet, even though PCDP stopped promoting it, the technology is becoming popular and getting a wider acceptance in the rural areas. Due to the communal way of life of these pastoral communities, the people in the vicinity of the PAL groups closely observed the effect of the new irrigation methods. Getting fresh vegetables and fruits in arid areas is so uncommon that the outcomes of the drip irrigation system made many neighbours curious. Since the technology is simple and easy to manage, others can easily replicate it without outside support.

An effective tool

The initiative was participatory in its implementation, since ponds in pastoral areas are developed and managed by larger community. This is necessary because pond management and construction is labour

The benefits of drip irrigation are clear to farmers and their visitors

intensive, and because land is owned communally. Elders or selected leaders are often in charge of the distribution of the communal water.

Our work has shown that the use of drip irrigation improves the health of the rural population, since they get access to a balanced diet from the vegetables and fruits they consume. It also increases the income possibilities as they are able to sell their products to nearby markets. Moreover, it is environmentally friendly because it minimises the risk of erosion and increases soil fertility.

This technology can easily be constructed from locally available materials, which makes it a cheap option for increasing agricultural productivity. It is simple to operate with the provision of a very short training. As villagers were quick to mention, any person can easily put it in practice. It decreases the workload of the community, especially of women, since it is developed using light materials and nearby their camp.

This initiative has shown that micro tube drip irrigation technology has paramount importance. If the achievements from the technology are properly documented and communicated to similar communities through different means, it can easily be replicated. The task of up-scaling this technology now lies in future initiatives undertaken by the government, civil society and development partners.

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Prosopis: Minimising harm and maximising benefits

(photo by Dinesh Valke)

The Pastoralist Welfare Organisation (PWO) is a non-religious, non-partisan, not-for-profit and non-governmental organisation established in 2003 by pastoralist elders and intellectuals. Its aim is to improve the livelihood of pastoralists and agro-pastoralists. The main causes of food insecurity of this group are water scarcity and the degradation of rangeland resources, but also the invasion of exotic tree species. In the Gaad village, PWO's work has made a big difference to the community.

Teshale Nega

PWO is currently operating in the Liben and Citi administrative zones within in Dollo Ado Somali Regional State. Among others, the organisation is implementing the second phase of a project

entitled "Shinile Pastoral Development Project", funded by the Norwegian Development Fund. This project started in 2012 in the Shinile district in the Citi zone, in five target villages which suffered from food security problems, namely Jedeni, Barak, Gaad, Bisle and Fedeto.

The village of Gaad is located 15 km from Shinile. The number of inhabitants and the and livestock population in the village are 4,500 and 11,000 respectively, showing the importance that raising animals has for the local economy. In May 2011, PWO helped the community identify and prioritise their problems using a Participatory Rural Appraisal method. The community identified their problems one by one and came up with concrete options to solve them. The presence of *Prosopis juliflora* was among the problems that got highest priority.

Prosopis juliflora

Villagers pointed out that the invasion of *Prosopis juliflora* has seriously affected the lives and livelihoods of pastoralists and agro-pastoralists. This invasive alien tree species has largely covered both the pasture and farm lands indiscriminately. This has led to the decreased availability of palatable indigenous grass and legume species, as well as of multi-purpose fodder trees, affecting the production and productivity levels and threatening people's livelihoods and food security. The sharp and poisonous *Prosopis* thorns cause injuries to people and livestock. Poisoned and wounded animals cannot produce milk as they cannot travel long distances to search for grazing land. In the worst cases, the animals die due to secondary infections from the wounds, resulting in significant economic losses.

***Prosopis* has several good qualities, but became a problem**

Prosopis, or *wangai,* as it is called here, is not native to Ethiopia. It was introduced to the country in the 1970s by the Ministry of Agriculture for conservation purposes. Initially it was introduced in the Eastern Harargae region and later taken to other areas, including Shinile. *Wangai* is known for its positive qualities in its

native habitat in South America, Central America and the Caribbean. It is a multipurpose dryland leguminous tree or shrub, but which became a problem.

Solving the problem

PWO made solving these problems a priority in Gaad. Following the consultative meeting, the Muruqmal co-operative was established in July 2012 in Gaad, being initially formed by 25 members (20 men and 5 women). With the assistance of PWO, the co-operative was established by interested individuals who were willing to work together and were previously engaged in charcoal production. Since its creation, the co-operative aims to minimise the negative impacts and maximise the benefits of *Prosopis* by clearing the invaded land. This land is converted for crop and pasture production, allowing for the diversification of income sources by producing charcoal and fuel wood from the removed *Prosopis*.

Before this initiative, no organised group dealt with the presence of *Prosopis*. PWO organised, trained and equipped all members with basic technical skills, using practical demonstrations in Gaad. The training, which took place in July 2012, aimed to:

- deepen the group's knowledge about the benefits and losses of *Prosopis*;
- develop technical skills and options to control the invasion and manage cleared land; and
- share the experience of different organisations in the Afar region and also in Kenya in controlling and managing cleared lands from *Prosopis*, identifying the main lessons learnt.

A total of 100 trainees – 80 male and 20 female – attended the training, where different mechanical control methods applied elsewhere were presented and discussed with the trainees. Prescribed burning, uprooting seedlings, and removing the stump up to 50 cm below ground level were among the options covered. Control experiences in the Shinile district, particularly with those implemented as part of the Productive Safety Net Programme were raised and

discussed by all participants.The training was supported with hand tools such as pick axes, axes, bow saws, three-finger hoes, shovels, protective devices like gloves and boots, and kiln material.

Furthermore, the legalisation of the co-operative is in process. PWO facilitates this by teaching the co-operative members about the procedure to follow and about the benefits this process brings. PWO also informed the members about bylaws: what they are, why they are necessary and how to formulate them. As a result, the Muruqmal co-operative has its own bylaws and a bank account. The members have different responsibilities, such as chair person, secretary, or cashier.

Improved livelihoods

In July 2012 the co-operative cleared the *Prosopis* thicket from over one hectare of land. From this, 350 sacks of charcoal and 64 m^3 of fuel wood was produced and supplied to the local market. Those involved in charcoal and fuel wood production and marketing obtained an additional income that helped them cope with food insecurity.

With their increased income the members could cover their household expenses

Previously, members produced charcoal from *Prosopis* independently. On average, their monthly income was 500 Birr, and they did not use the cleared land either for crop production or pasture. But after our work, co-operative members earn an average of 1,100 Birr per month, allowing them to save a total of 8,000 Birr per year in their co-operative account. With this income, members have been able to cover their household expenses like clothes, school uniforms and medical services. They have also been able to feed their children three times per day with milk, bread, meat and eggs; they have bought mobile phones and improved their communication possibilities. They built up their asset base by purchasing livestock. Before the intervention they did not use bank services.

Clearing *Prosopis* trees creates new products for the local market (photo by Paul Robinson)

An unfortunate aspect is that, after the whole process, some members of the co-operatives withdrew their membership, because they preferred to claim the cleared land separately. We are currently trying to re-organise the co-operative: community officials and village leaders are now discussing the best way forward.

Lessons learnt

The experience in Gaad shows that it is possible to control the spread of *Prosopis* into farmlands and key pasturelands by promoting the efficient use of this species. This provides an economic incentive if planned and regulated carefully. Areas cultivated after the clearance were reclaimed. In most cases, pasture lands cleared from *Prosopis* were "reinvaded" by seeds in the soil bank, as a result of the presence of animals coming from infested areas, or from coppices. Ploughing checked the re-growth of *Prosopis* from seeds and stumps, but this

has proved to be a major issue due to the free mobility of livestock. There is no ready-made solution for this. Rangeland users need to come together and agree on possible management options with the technical support from professionals.

Another important point to highlight is that all these results would not have been seen if people had been working on their own. The engagement of community-based organisations helps to mobilise human and financial resources at a local level, strengthen social interactions and build their assets in a short period of time. Local organisations are important to solve economic and social problems. Livestock rearing alone could not provide food security, but now the cleared areas can be converted into both pasture and land for crop production. At the same time, earnings from the collected wood can be used to diversity their income sources and minimise shocks.

Looking into the future, the areas invaded by *Prosopis* and the areas at risk of invasion need to be identified and mapped. Alternative uses and restoration plans need to be developed, paying attention to the potential use. Local people in these invaded areas can play an important role. To assist them, different control methods and different utilisation options should be researched, and shared. An appropriate forum can be established, to regularly share experiences among the different institutions and community members involved in the management of *Prosopis* within the country. Networking and sharing with others facing similar problems, both within the country and internationally, can help communities find sustainable solutions.

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Co-operating in SACCOs

Ethiopians have a long history of working together in co-operative-like institutions, or "cultural co-operatives". Debo, Jigge, Wonfel, Edir, Ekube and Senbete, to name only a few, are some of these examples, which were the basis of modern co-operatives. Although these cultural co-operatives still exist now, new forms are emerging in the country. The newly introduced Saving & Credit Co-operative is one of them, complementing the already existing associations in a community.

Damena Lemma

The Pastoral Community Development Project (PCDP) is financed by the World Bank, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), regional governments and the beneficiary communities. Starting in 2009, PCDP started establishing Pastoral

Saving & Credit Co-operatives (SACCOs) under its Rural Livelihood Programme sub-component, in collaboration with the Federal Co-operative Promotion Agency. Similar "cultural co-operatives" existed for a long time, but were not recognised by law. In its first phase, PCDP tried to support different income generating groups in the pastoral areas of the Oromia region. However, these groups did not continue functioning properly when the project stopped supporting them. More efficient SACCOs had already been established in the area, and provided inspiration for PCDP. In order to ensure the sustainability of its work, PCDP planned to establish SACCOs in its second project phase.

Establishing SACCOs

The activity of establishing pastoral SACCOs took place in areas where there is little or no infrastructure, frequent drought, and where communities are mobile. A poor savings culture existed in this region, as well as a lack of engagement in different income generating activities. The pastoralists depended on livestock alone, and practiced no income diversification activities.

The objective of this activity was to develop a culture of saving that would contribute to the livelihoods of the local population, and to empower them. To realise this objective, co-operative accountants hired by the project and co-operative promotion officers from government offices were asked to help to establish the SACCOs. Membership was on a voluntary basis, available to those living in PCDP supported districts and villages. In 2010 the project staff started providing awareness courses about the importance of SACCOs in the villages, followed by the establishment of the SACCOs according to the "SACCO establishment guide line" that the project prepared. In the next three years, a total of 168 SACCOs were established in the region.

The objective was to develop a culture of saving

PCDP has continued to support these co-operatives by providing training to SACCO members and SACCO leaders at the beginning of each process, and

with an additional course every year based on their needs. A co-operative accountant was hired, and office materials like tables, chairs and safe boxes have been provided in every case. The trainings given to SACCOs focus on topics such as how to prepare a simple business plan, how to diversify income generating activities, or on the ways to ensure the repayment of loans. These SACCOs get seed money as a grant from the project. In all cases, the members have opened a joint bank account and provided a loan for at least six months from their own savings. All of the 168 SACCOs in the region are functioning, although some do so better than others (see box).

Seka Muma SACCO

Seka Muma SACCO is one of the best performing SACCOs established in the Oromia region, located in the Bale zone. The SACCO was established in 2010, with 43 founding members. Currently, there are 59 members, out of which 7 are female. The total savings of this SACCO has reached 76,410 Birr. Until now, the SACCO has disbursed 401,720 Birr to its members since its establishment. Thanks to these loans, members have become involved in the fattening of goats and oxen and also in petty trade. As a result of this intervention, the members have improved their saving culture, increased their assets and sent their children to school. The experience of Seka Muma has been shared widely through field visits from other SACCOs. Many other SACCOs have since copied their success.

SACCO success

The SACCO members who took out a loan started engaging in different activities like fattening livestock, trade and vegetable production. As a result of these activities, the SACCO members are not in touch anymore with loan sharks who ask high interest rates. They also

Pastoral SACCOs allow farmers to invest in livestock

started using improved agricultural activities, and have been able to cover the education and medical costs of their family members. Their saving culture improved, and they have encouraged non-members to join the SACCOs as well.

All in all, the establishment of pastoral SACCOs in this region has been successful. Because there was a good collaboration among different stakeholders in the region and project staff, the beneficiaries – especially women – have become empowered, the saving culture of the beneficiary communities improved, and their incomes increased.

The next phase

Even though the established SACCOs benefited their members by serving as a source of finance, the co-operatives faced some challenges. Some SACCOs were not functioning well after they received seed money from the project. There was a low amount of compulsory saving. In addition, members were still engaging only in a few income-generating activities, without trying new options. Annual audits were not conducted by the concerned bodies and there was a shortage of co-operative professionals at a district level. To address these problems, in 2013, PCDP stopped establishing new SACCOs and focused on strengthening the existing ones.

Due to the mobile nature of pastoralists, the establishment of SACCOs concentrated in the urban areas, or with farmers from the highland areas. Learning from the results, PCDP has now planned to help establish more SACCOs in all the pastoral and agro-pastoral districts of the region in its third project phase, starting in 2014.

Lessons learnt

In order for the SACCOs to be sustainable and effective, there is a need to have a co-operative structure at the district level where relevant professionals are active. The SACCO members need to diversify their income generating activities to be able to get a better price for their products. Increasing the amount of compulsory savings will contribute to the long-term success of SACCOs as well. Finally, it remains important to conduct continuous capacity building activities for members and SACCO leaders, and to stimulate experience sharing forums among SACCOs.

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Abolishing "Mingi"
in Southern Ethiopia

There are a number of harmful traditional practices (HTPs), which have been followed among different ethnic groups in parts of Ethiopia for a long time, and for various cultural reasons. These have had profound impacts on the social and economic life of the respective communities, and adversely affected the efforts of making development interventions effective in the communities practicing them. For this reason, the Pastoral Community Development Project (PCDP) added specific activities in its programme to eliminate these practices.

Gezahegn Gelebo Borkawa

In the Southern Ethiopian Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNPR), different HTPs still persist among the more than 53 nations, nationalities and people constituting the region. South Omo is among the 13 administrative zones where more than 50% of the regional pastoral communities reside. In this zone, more than 40 different practices have been indentified as HTPs, which together with the intra- and inter-ethnic conflicts, have seriously affected the socio-economic development of the area.

The practice of most of these HTPs has been reduced by increasing awareness regarding the impact they have on the lives and livelihood of the concerned communities, through the initiatives taken by development partners and collaborators. Nevertheless, a significant number of such activities are still followed by various social groups in the country. The problem becomes very significant in the pastoral areas, where the level of awareness and conscientiousness on its

The "*mingi* mountain" in Benna-Tsemay, where many *mingis* have been put to death

origins and consequences is still very low, and the development of basic infrastructure and social services delivery is relatively poor.

"*Mingi*"

For a long time, various efforts to abolish HTPs have been tried by the government, development partners, community-based and religious organisations. While a large number of these practices have stopped among different communities, others are still in operation. "*Mingi*", which was practiced among the Benna, Tsemay, Hamar and Karo communities in the Hamar and Benna-Tsemay districts of the South Omo zone, is one of these HTPs. This is the practice of getting rid of "deviant" human beings – especially infants and sometimes adults – and even animals that are believed to bring about a bad fate to the concerned community. Bad luck is believed to come if the *mingis* are

allowed to grow and join the community, including failure of rainfall and crops, occurrence of disease epidemics, death of livestock, etc.

In the Benna-Tsemay district of South Omo zone in SNNPR, where the majority of the population follows a pastoral livelihood system, three ethnic groups (Benna, Tsemay and Birrallet), with their own distinctive cultures and social values, harmoniously live together. Many HTPs have been practiced as part of the cultural system of these communities, among which *mingi* is only one.

A comprehensive development plan

Various separate efforts have been undertaken by various actors to abolish this practice in Benna-Tsemay. But it is only after the establishment of the Pastoral Development Sector at the federal and at regional levels of government, that the efforts have been successful. The Pastoral Development Sectors have the mandate of addressing the unique and multifaceted development problems of the pastoral areas and the pastoral communities. They led a joint initiative that took place from 2005 to 2011, involving the district council, community HTPs control committees, NGOs, and other development partners like the PCDP, community elders and leaders and the community at large.

initiatives to abolish *mingi* aim to bring about change in people's mindsets

As part of an overall effort towards improving the quality of life in the pastoral areas, these efforts aim to bring about change in people's mindsets, in order to alleviate the negative social, psychological, physical and economic impacts of *mingi* on the socio-economic development of areas like the Benna-Tsemay district. Controlling or abolishing HTPs is one of four major areas of focus in the pastoral development plan (others are improving infrastructure and social services; human resource development and awareness raising; and conflict management and good governance).

PCDP works towards identifying and documenting the communities' indigenous best practices, and raising awareness towards the

abolishment of the harmful ones through collective learning and action. The process of eliminating *mingi* involved organising a series of awareness raising meetings with the communities at various levels (district, village and community), followed by a series of joint annual workshops among the relevant stakeholders and collaborators operating in the district. A series of discussion sessions were then held with key figures in the community, including the community elders, tribal/clan leaders, religious leaders and others.

After various workshops and discussion sessions for and with different community groups (including women, youth, elders, and tribal/clan leaders), all the actors jointly concluded that *mingi* is a practice that needs to be abolished. This was clearly expressed by an elder and clan leader, Mr Adnew Garsho, upon reaching the agreement: "*God created creatures for a reason but we interfered and killed humans on unproved grounds, so this has to be stopped!*"

Involving community leaders

After the community agreed, bylaws were formulated at the community level. Control committees were established with the kebele chief administrator, kebele chief speaker, a teacher, a development agent, a health extension agent, two elected community elders, two elected clan leaders and a religious leader as its members. This committee oversees the proper implementation of the bylaws and brings the violators to the formal justice system. Finally, the results of the community's change in attitude have been disseminated among other communities, using the local FM radio, biannual brochures and quarterly newsletters. The materials are usually read by teachers, development agents and health extension agents, who transfer this knowledge to their communities.

Unfortunately, during the first three/four years, the practice re-emerged, showing that some of the essential steps have not been implemented properly. Some people in the community, even some of the leaders, mistakenly regarded the elimination of *mingi* as interfering with their traditional culture. To solve this problem, clan leaders and elders have put additional efforts in making the negative

Clan leader Adnew Garsho with boys considered as *mingi*, all of whom survived becase of his efforts

effects of *mingi* more obvious in the community, reinforcing the ultimate decision to abolish *mingi* at the debriefings at community level. Women who lost their children to *mingi* without their consent, publically talked about *mingi* as a HTP, and got more involved in decisions regarding their own lives. It was found that acting through the tribal/clan leaders and community elders is a very important point of entry to make the development interventions as effective as possible.

A collaborative commitment

Abolishing *mingi* has a paramount importance in making development interventions more effective and sustainable, and to bring about a positive change on pastoralists' lives. Not only was this initiative successful in achieving the intended aims, it also paved the

way to abolish other HTPs with similar impacts on peoples' lives and development interventions.

It achieved the intended aim because it was able to bring Benna-Tsemay people into mutual ground, and agree as a community, that *mingi* is a HTP, and even a crime. Those still involved in it are now fined according to the agreed bylaws. The decision reached has community support, because the process included all the actors involved in undertaking the practice, those affected by it, and development partners and collaborators.

Involving all the relevant stakeholders has also increased the chances of a sustainable effect, as they came to a mutual understanding of the negative impacts of the practice, and jointly decided to do something about it. The initiative is also sustainable because it received strong institutional support. The government has firmly supported the abolishment of HTPs for a long time, and now that the community agrees and sets the ground rules, the results will be assured.

Getting rid of any HTP is possible, but it needs time and a continuous commitment and devotion from those involved in the process. It is important to note that individual actions by development partners rarely lead to the intended goals. Only a joint effort of multiple actors and attention for diversified opinions bring about effective and lasting solutions. Finally, the involvement of community elders and clan leaders has been very important to overcome various developments roadblocks like the HTPs, and to capitalise on the potential opportunities in the tribal communities like the pastoralists in southern Ethiopia.

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Markets

Working together for innovation

Most of the smallholder farmers of Ethiopia are using traditional post-harvest systems, such as threshing their harvest with the use of animals. In many of these cases, more than 10% harvest losses occur. In order to minimise such a loss we intended to scale up the use of a post-harvest handling technology, as we did in Minjarshenkora. This is the success story of the wheat thresher machinery.

Abebe Molla Ayenew

Minjarshenkora is one of the districts of the Amhara region, found about 130 km to the northeast of Addis Ababa. Wheat is one of the most common staple food crops of Ethiopians. It is cultivated widely in Minjarshenkora because the conditions of the district are favourable for cereals – such as the right altitude and annual rainfall. The yield per hectare averages at 750-1,000 kg. By following simple innovations such as line sowing, farmers can see their yields go up to more than 3,000 kg per hectare.

An efficient machine

Using a wheat thresher has many benefits for smallholder farmers

A wheat thresher runs on a diesel engine, which makes it appropriate for the rural areas of Ethiopia where electricity is not available. Using a wheat thresher has many benefits for smallholder farmers. First, it saves time. Using the traditional system, to thresh 1,000 kg takes more than 36 hours, while using this modern thresher it takes not more than three hours. Since

High yields, but up to 10% is lost

the thresher helps to clean crops within a short amount of time, harvests are no longer delayed. Secondly, the thresher produces quality products and minimises harvest losses, as it removes only contaminants like dust particles. In addition, its use minimises labour. Only two people are required to handle the machine, in comparison to the six people needed when threshing a similar amount of wheat in a traditional way. Reduced labour needs are reflected in the amount of energy and money required to prepare food for the labourers: an additional burden for women in the past.

Organising farmers

In order to buy and use a thresher, farmers have to form marketing groups. Marketing groups are informal organisations based on the similar commodities that farmers are producing within a certain geographical area. Marketing development experts at the district level facilitated the organisation of marketing groups in the context of the Agricultural Marketing Improvement Project (AMIP). These experts mobilised farmers, helped raise awareness, and selected the appropriate technology. Community based organisations and other

existing local structures were the basis for the establishment of the marketing groups.

One marketing group has three to seven members and includes both men and women. In Minjarshenkora we saw the establishment of four marketing groups. These were not all organised at the same time: two groups were formed in October and the remaining two in December 2012.

Forming marketing groups helped the farmers to borrow money from selected microfinance institutes like ACSI (Amhara Credit and Saving Institution) and from RUSACCO (Rural Saving and Credit Co-operative Union) by using the group as collateral. After borrowing the money, the marketing groups of Minjarshenkora approached Nathret, a tractor-producing factory which is found at a distance of around 80 km southeast of Minjarshenkora. The cost of one thresher is slightly higher than 2,500 US dollars. Of course, if an individual farmer can afford the thresher, he can buy and use one by himself. However, acquiring and using one via the marketing group has more advantages. It helps farmers establish market linkages and develop their bargaining power as a group. Moreover, the marketing group is a way for members to access short term trainings on topics like commodity-based marketing and value chains.

The wheat thresher in action, helping farmers sell quality products

Improved livelihoods

Using their thresher, farmers experienced a better output compared to the traditional system. Despite some challenges, such as the bureaucratic procedures of the microfinance institutions and the doubt that some of the farmers initially had, the marketing groups and the wheat thresher have helped farmers improve their living standards significantly. Their quality products are in high demand in domestic and international markets. The farmers got a better return on their quality wheat, and are now able to consistently supply the market. Moreover, it saved them time to engage in other activities.

This technology proved to be a cost-effective solution for the wheat farmers of Minjarshenkora. The thresher is produced within the country, and is therefore a relatively cheap machine. Moreover, it is easy to use and easily accessible through the marketing groups. This makes its use, and its benefits, highly replicable. In fact, because of the benefits seen in Minjarshenkora, farmers of the adjacent districts are now motivated to use the machine as well. The many benefits of this approach were summarised by Mr Kassahun, a farmer from Minjarshenkora. His recommendation was clear: "*we can use this technology now, we should not worry about the past. Let us just hurry and take advantage of this machine right now!*"

In the end, it was the collaborative efforts of the farmers in Minjarshenkora and their readiness to play their own role in reducing poverty that made a difference.

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Market information matters

We live in the information era, and there is a wide recognition of the advantages that information brings. With this logic in mind, the Tigray Agricultural Marketing Promotion Agency (TAMPA) has started a thorough information-sharing process involving farmers, exporters and traders. This article focuses on the resulting market linkages made around the production and commercialisation of organic Humera type white sesame. Providing market information has resulted in considerable benefits for all those involved.

Kahsay Aregawi

Prior to the establishment of TAMPA in 2004, the marketing system was weak and producers were not able to benefit from their products, despite the high demand for organic sesame. Producers had no market information regarding sesame and they sold their product to scattered buyers. The Agency focused on awareness-raising activities so as to expand the marketing options. It started its promotional activities by first forming different

organisms, such as a district market council and a regional core market council, and encouraging and supporting individuals to become "district focal persons" and thus helping the agency in spreading information. With council members who live and meet in the communities themselves, these councils have played a very important role.

From producer to consumer

Many other stakeholders have also taken part in this process, including officers from different governmental departments, exporters, and farmers and traders themselves. They have contributed greatly in the training sessions that TAMPA has been conducting, and continue to do so. These training sessions, led by the senior experts of TAMPA, focus on value chains, on the timings and process for harvesting sesame, on ensuring the quality of the product, and also on modern marketing systems. In these sessions, discussions among the trainees are especially encouraged. Trainings are held yearly for farmers at Farmer Training Centers, for focal persons at a district level, and for core market councils at the regional level.

Broadcasting sesame

Different media are also used to reach exporters, traders and farmers, such as the printed and electronic media, in additional to the annual trainings and the assessments that are regularly made to see what the gaps are. We use a radio broadcasting programme, which is accessible in remote areas. Every Thursday, for 15 minutes, the "Voice of Woyane" informs farmers about the market prices of selected crops at that moment. Data on these prices is obtained via the focal persons in the 21 IFAD-supported districts, after which it is analysed by the market information expert.
By sharing this information on sesame prices, a market linkage is made among the traders and the producers.

Success comes from the dissemination of information

The results of the programme so far encourage us to continue and strengthen this effort. We have made assessments through discussion meetings and questionnaires regarding the extent to which the market information reaches the beneficiaries, and also regarding the benefits they're getting from it. The reality is that these farmers need more information so as to sell their products on legal markets. By law, sales of sesame have been limited to specific market places. The provision of information has helped the sesame market actors to act peacefully and successfully, and they all benefit from it.

Increasing incomes

Sesame farmers and traders have developed their bargaining power in the market: they uncovered the market secret and now understand where and when to sell or buy. Because the government determined the places where farmers can sell their sesame, the market chain is considerably short and farmers are able to get a fair price. The livelihood options of these market actors have improved considerably. Before having access to the market information, farmers and traders were selling one quintal of sesame for 900 Birr. This increased to more than 3,600 Birr today. The local government has also been able to obtain considerable hard currency, as the sesame crop is being exported to countries such as China and India. We can easily conclude that this is all due to better market linkages.

Organic sesame is now fetching a fair price for farmers (photo by UNAMID Photo)

Market information on sesame now successfully reaches farmers and local traders. The use of radio broadcasts enabled us to make the information accessible, since every farmer in the region has his/her own radio set and is very eager to get information. The radio programmes are made in the local language, Tigrigna, and the content is easy to understand. In addition, because they too benefit from quality products, many traders joined the system. Since the provision of market information is possible and can easily reach the beneficiaries, the changes have been substantial. Therefore, it is safe to say that this programme contributes to poverty reduction.

Way forward

The agency is determined to continue working on market linkage activities like these. Its success in improving the regional marketing system calls for the dissemination of more market information and the creation of stronger linkages between farmers and traders in order to benefit even more actors. Currently, the radio broadcasts are made on a weekly basis for only 15 minutes. There is a need to increase the air time, but this will need additional funds. Moreover, the different organs established at a district and at a regional level still need to get assistance that helps them stay updated with market issues. Improvements can be made by conducting continuous assessments to identify upcoming problems and fill possible gaps.

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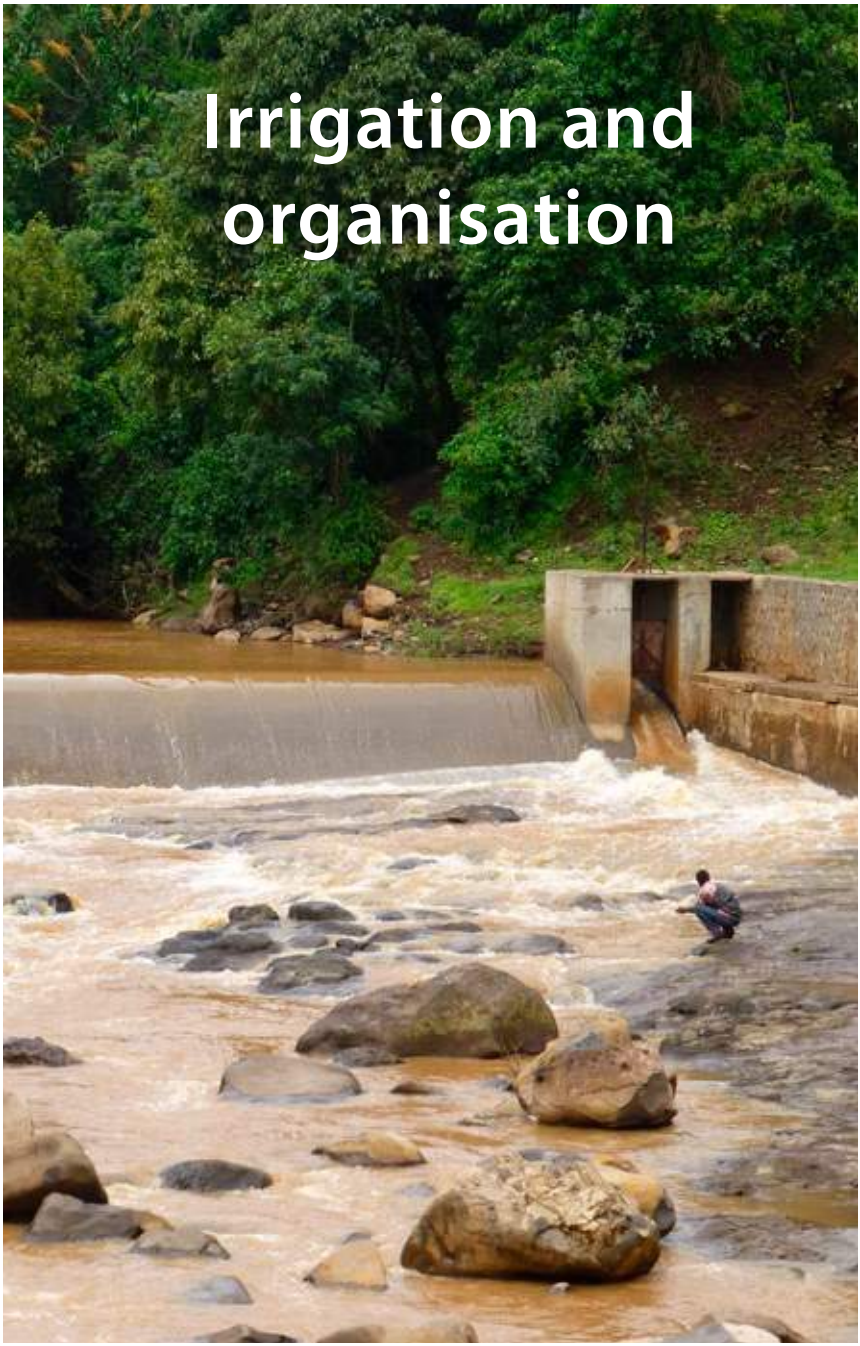
Irrigation and organisation



Changing mindsets for fighting poverty

Changing the mindsets of farmers and of actors at large is an important part of the process of fighting poverty in Ethiopia. The Participatory Small-scale Irrigation Development Programme (PaSIDP), financed by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Government of Ethiopia and the farmers themselves, sees this as one of its aims in the Amhara region. Despite comprehensive efforts, irrigation water management is often not effective and efficient due to a low level of community engagement. The use of role-plays can change this.

Mastewal Ejigu Ademe

PaSIDP's primary objective is implementing small-scale irrigation projects to fight poverty. The programme has run in the region since July 2008. Experience has shown that the main difficulties are seen when trying to organise farmers for effective and

efficient collaboration at all levels, and to bring different actors to work together. We faced these difficult challenges with the assistance and facilitation of the Improved Management of Agricultural Water in Eastern and Southern Africa programme (IMAWESA), an initiative that aims to support water management efforts in East and Southern Africa. PaSIDP's primary objective is to develop a sustainable, farmer-owned and -managed system. In doing this, PaSIDP builds on indigenous knowledge and traditional values, while paying attention to a sustainable use of the natural resources.

Role-plays

Two farmer-owned and -managed irrigation schemes were selected for a pilot project in the Amhara region: Tinishu Fetam, irrigating 87 hectares of land, and Upper Quashni, irrigating 240 hectares of land. In May 2012, four experts, two focal persons and more than sixty farmers got together. Group discussions at those two irrigation sites showed that the main challenges for ownership and strong participation in these communities stemmed from a low level of self-reliance, a lack of unity in the community and not enough consideration of the different gender and age groups, all of which is generally related to a lack of transparency regarding plans and upcoming challenges.

To address some of the challenges we designed a system using role-plays as opera drama

A systematic approach is required when problems are less obvious. To address some of these issues we designed a system using role-plays as opera drama. In total, we came up with seven short role-plays (see box). Each role-play lasted for about three minutes, after which we started a discussion to help farmers reflect about what they saw. In about two hours, they were given the space to explain their views and their ideas about what they saw happening. For example, what does the particular role-play mean in relation to their activities? How does it relate to the way they manage their water resources? Many of the participants, both the "actors" and the audience members, wanted to say something and give an opinion.

The role-plays were recorded with a small camera and then shared in the wider community, spreading the effect even beyond the direct participants. Mr Simeneh Alene, one of the farmers who did not participate in the role-plays at the Upper Quashni irrigation project, had an opinion about it nonetheless: "*I heard of the role-plays. We learnt how to work together with others in the area. Not only me and my community benefitted, but the plays taught us how to work together so tthat we can all benefit from the Nile river!*"

The "river crossing" role-play

This is a role-play without words, where strings and pieces of paper represent riverbanks, an island and stepping-stones in the river. Two poor men come to the river and look for a place to cross and get food on the opposite side. The river current is very strong and they are both afraid to cross. A third man comes along, shows them the stepping-stones and encourages them to step on, but both are still afraid. The third man agrees to take one on his back at a time, but becomes too tired after carrying the first, leaving him on an island in the middle of the river. When the second man wants to climb on his back, the third man refuses. Instead, he takes his hand and encourages him to step on the stones himself. Halfway across, the second man starts to manage alone. They both cross the river. When they get to the food, they are extremely pleased with themselves and they walk off together completely forgetting about the first man still standing alone on the island, who had not wanted to try to cross on his own.

With this play, farmers see that they cannot depend on outside support for everything. They understand that they need to work themselves to achieve success. On top of that, they learn that a lazy person cannot achieve his or her livelihood. They agree that they have to be self-reliant. They agree to set clear goals to tap opportunities and to address the constraints in the development process of their community.

Changing mindsets

The most important result of the role-play is that farmers start an open discussion and they agree on the challenges they need to tackle. They become more co-operative and they plan activities together. The use of role-plays is a powerful method to facilitate community engagement, even if the whole process requires training and practice.

Unfortunately, some community members, especially many of the women, did not participate in the role-plays. Nonetheless, scaling up activities organised by the project involved those who did not participate as well. Another positive factor has been that, since the plays are a powerful and inspiring tool, farmers keep talking about them everywhere, such as during their coffee ceremonies in each village.

The role-plays have proved to be so interesting that they have been used beyond the intended target group. As a result, communities now plan and co-ordinate together, which is rare among other projects. On top of this, their mindset is now oriented towards change. These role-plays have inspired farmers to invite mentors to help guide their own activities, unlike before.

While discussing the role-play, farmers commit to engage

Video recordings make the experience easy to share

After the role-plays, people become eager to jointly co-ordinate and plan future activities. As a result, for example, the community in Upper Quashni built a 5 km access road themselves, with district financial support that they lobbied for themselves. On top of this, farmers worked to protect the main canal from siltation and runoff damage. Following the community's initiative, the district officials covered the cost of gravel and of the construction of the necessary bridges. The access road now allows the communities to negotiate good farm-gate prices, buy the necessary inputs and get the support of different buyers, suppliers and service providers.

Learning from role-plays

Agricultural water management requires the participation of all community members. During the past years, IMAWESA has helped to encourage community engagement in already constructed small-scale irrigation projects in the region. Farmers and water users can learn to work together to achieve shared benefits. Tools such as role-plays, like other participatory methods, can be used effectively to facilitate collaboration. Articulated role-plays help farmers be more motivated, think differently, and collectively face problems in an innovative way. These interventions are not an end to eradicate poverty themselves, but they help to increase community engagement, which provides the base for future collective activities. In order to fight poverty successfully, we need to upgrade participation and the innovation capacity of beneficiaries.

We also need to upscale the process of strengthening community engagement in each project area. The interactive role-play films are resources that we can utilise for national and international workshops as well. They have already been presented in different national and international forums, such as the AgriKnowledge Share Fair in Addis Ababa in October 2012 and the IFAD Regional Implementation Workshop of November 2012.
The videos have also been distributed as CD-Roms to each project district.

Farmers start an open discussion and agree on challenges more quickly

There is no doubt that changing the mindsets of farmers and other actors contributes to fighting poverty in Ethiopia. For this reason, I encourage others to use capacity building methodologies that visualise the different challenges and thereby motivate farmers to work together. Supporting such initiatives for broader actions in the country is crucial for change.

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For an example of the role-plays see
http://www.youtube.com/user/mastewale

More than canals

in Upper Quashni

Small-scale irrigation development is one of the main activities facilitated by the PaSIDP programme in the Amhara region, for it helps farmers to produce high quality food products. With an irrigation scheme in place, farmers are able to produce crops three times a year. Experience has shown that a key issue is the need to strengthen the local water users' associations (WUAs). Community members need to be encouraged to join these associations and benefit by doing so. This is the story of the water users association of Upper Quashni.

Abel Ejigu

After the construction of an irrigation scheme by IFAD, in collaboration with the community, the Participatory Small-scale Irrigation Development Programme (PaSIDP) saw that it was still necessary to carry out a number of activities in Upper Quashni.

A multi-faceted programme

We selected a nursery site to share our ideas on how irrigation can be helpful to improve the frequency of production. We used cash crops in the nursery site to help farmers grasp the importance of irrigation. And in line with this, the PaSIDP co-ordination unit helped raise awareness among the WUA members regarding the need to work together as a community.

The WUA committee now consists of thirteen men and two women. PaSIDP helped the community develop bylaws as part of their water management efforts. For the irrigation scheme to be sustainable, the water users needed to maintain the canals and prevent problems. The bylaws helped to achieve this. Moreover, a set of incentive mechanisms motivated farmers to use water more efficiently. The system consisted of eleven blocks, with three distributions on each block, managed by a unit leader per block. The leader ensured that the use of the water in his block is based on the need of each farmer in his block.

Apple trees are one of the many additions to the project site, helping to reduce erosion and diversify products

Using irrigation water, fields can now produce at least twice as often

PaSIDP and agricultural experts conducted capacity building trainings in the community, but also organised demonstrations so as to share ideas and information with all farmers, and ran a series of activities to address gender issues and improve women's participation. Female-headed households were provided with improved seeds and seedlings. In addition, we helped farmers to replant trees around the irrigation scheme's head-work in order to prevent siltation. A cutoff drain was constructed by farmers themselves. Another activity which contributed both to reducing siltation and improved the situation of women, was the introduction of stoves. This type of stoves is easily constructed and significantly reduces the amount of firewood needed for cooking. Women spend less time collecting firewood and can cook in healthier surroundings. In addition, the use of these stoves is also beneficial for the environment: fewer trees are cut down for firewood, preventing erosion.

Change in Upper Quashni

Because of the efficient use of irrigation water and farm land, farmers are now able to produce two or three times a year. An overall improvement of the working culture, in addition to some practical activities such as the production of potato seeds, has contributed to this higher production levels. The farmers of Upper Quashni have ensured their own food security and enhanced their family's nutritional status. The products cultivated in the land are in demand on the market, allowing farmers to generate an additional income (the average annual income is now 10,000-40,000 Birr per head). Children not only get a balanced diet, but are able to go to school.

Since the new, durable irrigation scheme is costly to build and maintain, the commitment shown by the farmers is vital for the sustainability of the scheme. In Upper Quashni, this commitment is clearly present among the leaders and among all WUA members.

As it often happens in our country, projects like these face the resistance of a few members in the community. But in Upper Quashni, members are very willing to contribute with their time, energy and resources, because they see themselves as owners of the irrigation scheme. Farmers were involved in the project from the first day onwards and were consulted on a regular basis. In addition to this, continuous assistance for the production of cash crops helps farmers benefit optimally from the market.

This experience has shown that, in addition to community commitment, capacity building is the best method to enhance community engagement for better irrigation water use. We are currently working so that those who are not members of the WUA join, hoping that in this way they can also benefit from the irrigation scheme. We orient them towards the advantages of irrigation, and will continue doing so until all farmers of the command area become members.

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Training farmers in Goche

The Goche irrigation scheme is found in Hawora, a village in the West Bawacho district of the Hadiya zone, in the Southern Ethiopian Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region. After a project feasibility study was conducted in 2009, IFAD funded the construction of the local irrigation system. This scheme, medium in size compared to others in Hadiya zone, provides water for 90 male- and 24 female-headed farmer families. With training, the farmers of Goche have been able to change their lives.

Gezahagn Lire

The participating farmers are united in the Goche Water Users' Association, headed by the water committee. This committee is led by seven members, elected by all members. The Participatory

Small-scale Irrigation Development Programme (PaSIDP) trained these farmers in both theoretical and practical water management issues.

Learning a new way

From 2009 to 2012, IFAD supported training sessions for farmers to learn about the IFAD programme and to introduce the new technologies in their village. In the Hawora village training center, farmers gathered to learn about irrigation development, irrigation water application, irrigation scheme management, natural resource management, gender equality and so on. During the different sessions we have focused specifically on achieving food security, improving income generation and ensuring gender equality.

They all became interested in replicating their neighbours' success

Although the results have beeen many, perhaps the most important outcome of the training process has been the farmers' commitment to change their traditional ways of using water. Before, farmers fetched water from the river manually for their home gardens and dug wells by hand. The construction of the irrigation scheme, in combination with the training, helps farmers to use the river for irrigation in a new and less labour-intensive way. During the training a few participants were a bit reluctant, as change would mean trying a new and "unknown" approach. No irrigation schemes had ever been set up in the area, and farmers did not know much about this all.

Not only did the farmers receive training, but we also took them to visit another irrigation scheme in the area. We selected twenty model farmers, both men and women, to learn from the best practices in the Boloso Sore district in 2010, an area where this "new" approach was already in place. Following their visit, these twenty farmers shared their lessons with their community back in Goche. By seeing the effectiveness of an irrigation system in a very similar community to theirs, Goche farmers understood the value of the irrigation scheme. They all became interested in replicating their neighbours' success.

Using irrigation, farmers were able to produce more crops for the market

Changed lives

Now, the Goche farmers are also able to show their irrigation system, and use it to produce two and even three times within a year. They produce surplus crops such as maize, onion, tomato, potato and pepper. Farmers use these products themselves in their households, and can even supply markets in the neighbourhood.

Moreover, their understanding of equal water distribution has helped solve conflicts among water users. Farmers in the community are enthusiastic about the results. They have asked us to come back and give more trainings. Together with my colleagues, I want to keep helping them, to help create these changes in their community, so I hope that projects like PaSIDP continue their support here, providing appropriate trainings, but also monitoring and evaluating the results. These changes are tangible: it is clear to see that farmers feel like the owners of the scheme, and are personally convinced that it helps to solve both the economic and the political problems in Goche. Now we need to upscale these results.

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The Arata Chufa Water Users' Association

A shortage of rainfall in many developing countries makes irrigation one important way to combat food insecurity. In the drought-prone areas of Ethiopia, the construction and use of small scale irrigation schemes serves as a food security strategy. For the efficient and effective use of irrigation water, the establishment of Water Users' Associations (WUAs) is a basic pre-requisite. For this reason, the Participatory Small Scale Irrigation Development Programme (PaSIDP) aims to develop the capacities of farmers to manage their irrigation schemes through these WUAs. One successful WUA, Arata Chufa, serves as an example for many others.

Adugna Fite

In addition to the construction of a small scale irrigation infrastructure, WUAs play an important role in enabling farmers to make optimal use of the available water. PaSIDP trained farmers on how to strengthen their WUA, how to improve their water management activities and on how to increase their production levels. Even though equal capacity building activities were given to all 52 WUAs being supported at the PaSIDP intervention areas, the performances of WUAs greatly differed from scheme to scheme.

Arata Chufa

The Arata Chufa WUA, which is found in Ziway Dugda district (in the Oromia region), is one of the WUAs which put into practice all the newly acquired skills in terms of water management. It is also one

Experts give technical advice to farmers on their own fields

of the few groups that have shown the greatest improvements. The community of Arata Chufa was experiencing food insecurity before the construction of the small scale irrigation scheme. Their geographical location in the lowlands means that they experience short rainy seasons, limiting yields if they depend on rain alone. These farmers were waiting for emergency food aid to feed themselves and their families. Wanting to escape the cycle of dependency that had been with them for a long period, the farmers were happy to try out new irrigation mechanisms.

The 324 members of the Arata Chufa WUA (279 men and 45 women) now work together in different ways. Every year, they jointly prepare

an annual work plan, outlying all the activities that will be needed to properly maintain all infrastructure and distribute the water. They distribute irrigation water according to the decisions of beneficiaries, using a strict time schedule, monitored by the WUA committee members. The WUA collects operation and maintenance fees on a regular basis within harvest times, and maintains and clears canals frequently. The WUA members conduct regular meetings and discussions to coordinate their activities, and to resolve potential conflicts regarding the use of irrigation water. Their conflict management practices allow members to discuss problems internally, rather than going to court. Finally, the WUA members have also formed a multipurpose co-operative which helps them provide members with different consumer goods, and which has helped develop new market linkages.

A successful WUA

In Arata Chufa, all the farmers benefitting from the irrigation canals became members of the WUA. They come together to discuss different issues, helping them to improve all processes. Because of their complete membership, they are in a position to fully implement the bylaws that help them use irrigation water efficiently. The members take ownership of their own development and implement all activities with great commitment.
As a result, the efficiency of all water management practices has greatly improved.

Sharing Arata Chufa's experience helps others to move on the right track

The farmers in Arata Chufa now harvest two and even three times a year, fully utilising their resources (farming land and water). Their own food security has been strengthened, and their families' nutrition and health conditions have improved. The average annual income has grown from an average of 2,000-4,000 Birr to 30,000-40,000 Birr per family. The children in the community can now go to school, and many members are even able to save money in the bank. The overall living standard of all beneficiaries has improved significantly.

Sharing the experience

With the support of PaSIDP, farmers in Arata Chufa have compiled and shared their experiences in order to help other WUAs improve their water management practices: while some WUAs successfully managed their irrigation structures and changed their communities, many other WUAs in the programme have not been doing as well. Sharing Arata Chufa's experience has helped others to move on the right track. Different demonstrations were carried out with participation of the beneficiaries to introduce new farming methods and to introduce new yield increasing technologies.

In all small scale irrigation schemes it is fundamental to take several aspects into account. From Arata Chufa we have learnt that both the high commitment of members and the involvement of all the water users in the association, play an indispensible role in making

More than higher yields: neighbouring WUAs are now convinced

With better harvests, family nutrition has improved

the WUA an authoritative and successful association. It enables an efficient implementation of the necessary water management practices, as well as the committed participation of all beneficiaries. But Arata Chufa has taught us more. After seeing the successes of the water management practices in Arata Chufa, neighbouring WUAs were more convinced to take a similar committed approach than when they had only heard about the benefits from the PaSIDP staff. This shows that for many farmers, particularly when we ask them to change their way of working, to see is to believe.

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A strong association in Denkusha

A water users association is a legal entity that helps farmers manage a common water source on the basis of a shared sense of ownership over it. This is especially important when the rains are irregular and when collective action is needed. This organisation helps people to use the available water properly and also helps to maintain the canals. In the Amhara region, the Ankesha district houses a WUA that functions exceptionally well.

Degarege Alemneh Akalu

Denkusha is a village found at an elevation of approximately 2,000 meters above sea level, and has about three to four months of rainfall per year. People living in this area depend on mixed farming: their main crops are pepper, maize, potato, tef and wheat, and they often care for a variety of animals such as oxen, cows, sheep or goats. A few years ago, 127 farmers showed an interest to build an irrigation system. They had access to surface water, the river Zinginy, but lacked the financial support to build a system to divert the water to their fields. The lack of irrigation prevented them from producing sufficiently to feed themselves all year round. Faced with a lack of food for two or three months a year, and a lack of income, the children were not able to go to school and the family's health suffered.

A request for irrigation

The farmers took the initiative and asked the district and regional government repeatedly for assistance in building the necessary infrastructure. After some time, and largely because of the attention

Irrigation water is distributed in an efficient and fair way

given by the government to irrigation and agriculture, the Denkusha farmers received the support they had been asking for. These 12 female and 115 male farmers are now benefitting from an irrigation structure built with the support of PaSIDP, the Participatory Small Scale Irrigation Development Programme, the national government and also with the labour and local material support of the Denkusha farmers themselves. This was built and started working in 2011, irrigating 60 hectares of land, including the fields of 12 female headed households. One beneficiary, Ayna, showed its relevance: "*Before, we couldn't dream that it would be constructed. We were seeing the river and the way it flows for a long time. Thanks to our government, now we are going to use it, now we are happy.*" It soon became clear, however, that more was needed than the canals alone.

Water distribution

To support the equal distribution and maintenance of the irrigation water, Denkusha now has a water users association (WUA), called Yabebal Zinginy. Its 12 leaders, including two women, were elected democratically. In the establishment of the association, creating awareness took up a great role. Up to now, 98 of the 127 water users have become a member of the association, including eight women.

The association's leaders are working hard to bring all the water users into the association.

PaSIDP has encouraged farmers to adopt modern irrigation activities, and introduced new technologies to the area, like improved stoves and crops. The programme staff, together with district co-operative experts and other external irrigation experts, provided trainings on water management and organisation. With their support, the farmers in Denkusha have prepared a set of bylaws that helps them manage their water collectively. A number of farmers, selected by the whole community, tried out and demonstrated the new technologies during field visits. By showing the results of these practices in their own and neighbouring communities, the work culture and unity of the community changed.

Water is now distributed to all farmers in a fair and efficient way, preventing soil erosion and water logging. In this way, while conserving resources, the equal water distribution allows farmers to increase their production. The farmers started to grow marketable crops two or three times in a year. Their incomes help improve their lives and have even allowed them to open a bank account and save money. Neighbouring communities, like Chebacebasa, have visited the association and have become inspired by the results.

The equal water distribution allows farmers to increase production while conserving resources

More than water

In 2012, the community of Denkusha prepared their own nursery site by giving a group of youngsters part of their communal land. These young farmers manage the nursery with the permission of the water users of Denkusha, and have found a way to gain an income. The nursery, in combination with trainings by PaSIDP, allows the farmers to grow new marketable crops such as carrots cabbages or beetroots. As with the "older" members of the association, their income increased enough to open a savings account in the bank.

The nursery allows farmers to grow marketable crops

An important lesson

Before the establishment of the water users association, the farmers of Denkusha had already seen the benefits of a strong farmers association in their own community. This showed them that it can be profitable to work together, a lesson they implemented in their own association as well. As a result, the farmers in this community participate actively in the association and the elected leaders are motivated to maintain a successful association. The active participation of the farmers was motivated by their interest in the new irrigation system. It was clear to them that this system, if well managed, could improve their lives. Consequently, all farmers participated in the process of organising and strengthening the water users association, and all farmers are active in maintaining, using and managing the water supply. This level of participation and sense of ownership felt by the farmers contributes greatly to the sustainability of the project.

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The Lenda Irrigation Water User Association

The Lenda peasant association was formed in one of the 38 communities in the East Badewacho district where irrigation schemes have been constructed. Located 135 km from the major regional town of Hawasa, it is one of the four PaSIDP project sites in the Hadiya Zone in the south of Ethiopia. The Participatory Small Scale Irrigation Development Project (PaSIDP), working in other zones of southern Ethiopia as well, aims to achieve sustainable poverty reduction and reduce food insecurity by introducing modern irrigation systems. The experience in Lenda shows a "best practice": a well managed water user association made a big difference in the community.

Shamebo Ermias

Lenda has light and easily undulated soil, which allows water to penetrate it easily. This is one of the factors that can easily contribute to the destruction of an irrigation canal; it lets water get easily "lost", and it also leads to siltation. Because of this, Lenda requires special consideration. It needs a periodical removal of silt for any irrigation system to be effective. As part of the PaSIDP activities, the Lenda irrigation system was constructed. Unfortunately, the community still suffered from poor management among water users, water scarcity, and so on. It needed an irrigation water users association to make the system work.

A Water User Association

Lenda's WUA was organised three years ago, in 2010. It holds 220 members (180 male and 40 female), and is led by a main committee of 30 members (of which 22 male and 8 female). Its main objective is to solve the conflicts that arise between upstream and downstream water users. In addition, it was to function as a way to collectively remove silt, to maintain some super passage structure, to minimise seepage loss and manage the periodical use of water. The members of the association set clear rules and regulations on how the beneficiaries can use the available irrigation water without affecting others. They decide when to use the irrigation water, for how many hectares, and how to co-ordinate activities throughout the year. They also establish the season for the periodical removal of the silt, determining when and by whom it will done.

They set clear rules on how people can use the available water without any effect on others

When problems arise in the irrigation system, different stakeholders have different responsibilities in trying to solve them. Since 2011, PaSIDP prepares the budget, has provided two trainings for the water users, assigns experts for periodical follow up, and continuously monitors the way the system works. The trainings have been conducted by irrigation specialists from the Regional Small-scale Irrigation Development Agency, and have focused on using irrigation water properly, determining the amount of water that different crops need,

From clear rules to better water distribution

and planning an appropriate irrigation schedule. A next step has been ensuring the commitment of all community members: they are the ones who benefit directly from all of their efforts in conserving the watershed, managing siltation or removing the silt every year after the harvest.

Problem solved

The positive outcomes of these activities were the effective and efficient use of irrigation water as allocated, the maintenance of the irrigation structure, and a changed attitude among members of the community on how to use the irrigation water without any conflict. The difficulties we still face are because some members lack the knowledge or experience needed for repairs and maintenance, and they expect experts to do such activities. Other jobs in their busy lives also make them participate less actively – especially because they need to work on a voluntary basis.

Setting up this Water User Association has been a very important contribution towards the community's development. It helps reduce the problems that the area has been facing for a long time. Before, the discharge balance was not equal to the command area, meaning that the available water was not enough to irrigate all crops accordingly per schedule. Some farmers started irrigating their fields by illegally destroying the main canal without any technical expert's recommendation.

In general, the Water User Association in Lenda has done vital things and solved many problems related to poverty as well as food security. Its success convinced the neighbouring village of West Badewacho to copy their experience. It remains crucial to keep supporting the area financially and with frequent trainings. Since this area faces siltation problems more than any other, every concerned body should pay attention to the results achieved.

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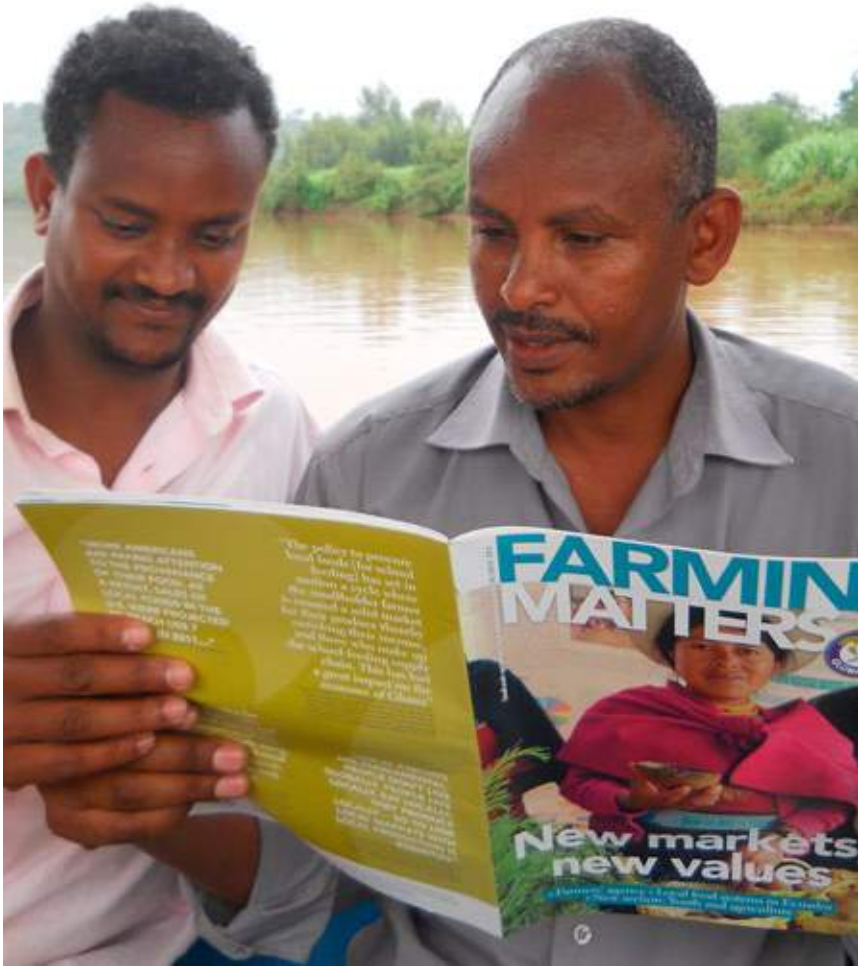
Knowledge sharing



Thirteen secret water ways

The Upper Blue Nile basin covers a large part of the Amhara region of Ethiopia. Here, rainfall is limited to four months in a year. However, efforts to manage the rainwater are badly developed. As a result, the majority of the tributary streams cannot supply enough water for irrigation and domestic purposes. At the watershed level, poor partitioning of rainwater intensifies environmental degradation, contributing to poverty and food insecurity. We need to understand more clearly how poor water management practices contribute to water scarcity and siltation, and how these practices can be changed.

Mastewal Ejigu Ademe

In the Upper Blue Nile basin, rainwater is lost in the form of runoff and evaporation, leading many farmers into poverty. Pollution, siltation, water scarcity and nutrient losses are major concerns that are affecting agricultural production. Birr, Leza-2, Tinishu Fetam, Barneb, Lower Zinginie and Yekomit are some of the examples of small-scale irrigation schemes in the Amhara region. These, and many other irrigation and domestic water supply interventions, often focus on using water from the river without taking into account the water that is lost in the form of run-off. Moreover, many water users do not follow water saving practices. These are very important issues in the fight against poverty at a community as well as at the household level.

Thirteen water routes

I have worked for about 15 years in the Upper Blue Nile basin focusing on agricultural water management. Having learnt from the farmers I worked with, I came up with thirteen water routes that rainwater travels (see box). I call them "secret"'water ways because so few people are aware of them all and of how they are interlinked. It requires understanding of these water routes in different circumstances – including soil type, land slope, vegetation cover, rainfall amount, and land management practices – to be able to address water scarcity in many river and groundwater systems.

All water users need to collaborate to regulate water losses, which requires knowledge of the different routes that water takes. Current land and water management practices lead to runoff, erosion and sedimentation because people are unaware of all the different water routes. During the four months of rain, there is excess rainfall. In the dry seasons, however, the reservoirs of left-over water become so small that communities in most places suffer from water scarcity. To maintain an adequate water balance the whole year round, water needs to be saved at appropriate times and places.

Few people are aware of the importance of regulating routes

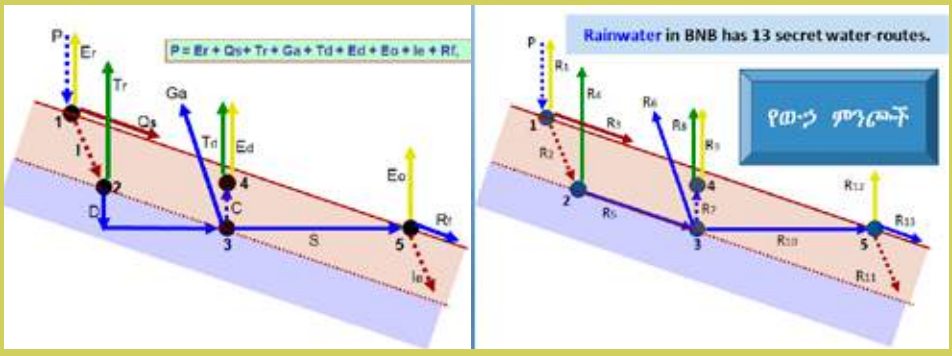
I found that farmers in most places traditionally regulate evaporation during the dry season on their farm lands. Other farmers also attempt to prevent run-off. Some forested areas also help control the water routes that contribute to water loss. Although farmers do regulate some water routes, few people are aware of the importance of also regulating flows in springs, for instance, which are the source of domestic and irrigation water.

Making use of water knowledge

How can farmers use irrigation to produce more food to feed an ever-increasing population, while facing environmental changes? For this, knowledge of the thirteen "secret" water routes can have a huge implications, and can have a particularly large impact when

The thirteen water routes:

P = Precipitation/Rainfall
D = Deep percolation
I = Infiltration
C = Capillary raise
S = Spring flow
Rf = River flow
Qs = Runoff
Ga = Groundwater abstraction
Er = Evaporation in rainy season
Ed = Evaporation in dry season
Tr = Transpiration in rainy season
Td = Transpiration in dry season
Eo = Evaporation on open water surface
Ie = Infiltration for environment



In these figures we see different ways in which water travels, in liquid form and through evaporation. The red arrows indicate soil moisture and runoff, the green arrows indicate tree consumption, the blue arrows indicate the water flow underground and on the surface, and the yellow arrows indicate evaporation. After precipitation in the rainy season (P), water commonly evaporates immediately (Er), infiltrates into the soil (I) or gets lost due to run-off (Qs). This happens at partitioning points, key points where water molecules can move in any way forward. Identifying these points and the possible routes the water can take at each point, helps to regulate and increase water availability – for instance through groundwater abstraction (Ga). Knowing all the routes helps to make informed decisions on how to manage water.

By understanding and regulating different water routes, more water can be available for agricultural and domestic purposes

implemented at the community and household level. Few farmers follow the principle of regulating all possible water routes around their village simultaneously and most are therefore unable to ensure a sufficient amount of water for domestic purposes as well as for irrigation, while maintaining enough water for downstream water users and without harming the environment. These cases where all routes are considered lead to better infiltration and run-off levels, to lower evaporation rates and with it to higher yields. Communities

that regulate the thirteen water routes make better use of springs and ground water.

Trans-boundary rivers like the Nile need an integrated approach in order to manage the water potential for now and for future generations. In different places there are many efforts taking place to regulate water losses. However, they are largely focused on the need to regulate runoff, which is only one of the thirteen routes that water takes to leave an area. These efforts thus lack the integrated approach needed to optimise the availability of water in a sustainable manner. A major challenge is that the presence of the different water routes and partitioning points are not easily visible to many actors, including farmers.

The critical question is how many farmers and experts fully understand the different paths rainwater takes to regulate all possible water losses. To optimise the use of rainwater farmers first need to regulate runoff, and then provide a shed mechanism throughout the year to regulate evaporation. In addition, minimising water consumption using new technologies, such as drip irrigation, is an important area of intervention.

Using the thirteen secret water-routes can be a win-win situation for all river users

These principles are followed in a few communities and households, in order to manage all water resources in a sustainable way. Pollution, soil erosion, siltation, nutrient and water losses are well regulated. Farmers' incomes increase by the improved production resulting from better irrigation. Fighting poverty is possible with better water management. However, since hardly anyone is aware of this potential, these routes continue to be secrets to the larger farming community.

The way forward

Understanding the thirteen secret water-routes for multiple water uses and acting accordingly can be a win-win situation for all river

users: it allows them to produce more food and increase incomes. Furthermore, it also facilitates co-operation among riparian countries to better regulate water losses.

My experience has shown that the thirteen secret rainwater routes need to be taken as a conceptual framework to increase water availability for domestic, irrigation and hydropower purposes in the dry season. Conducting practical trainings based on this conceptual framework is necessary for producing more food in a sustainable way. More short practical video films, such as those which are currently being prepared with the assistance of IMAWESA (the Improved Management of Agricultural Water in East and Southern Africa programme) will help to show the important role of each water route more easily to farmers.

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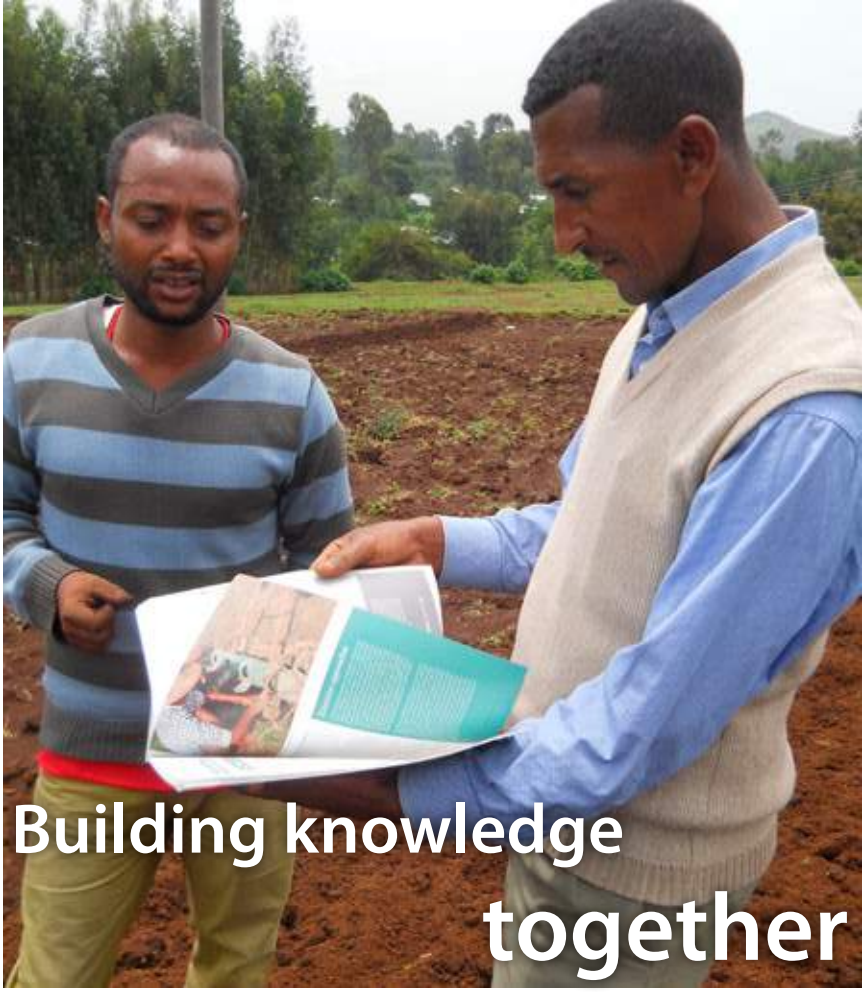
A short movie on the water routes is uploaded on the Water Channel under the category of integrated water resources management: http://www.thewaterchannel.tv/en/videos/categories/viewvideo/1887/integrated-water-resource-management/blue-nile-river13-water-routes-by-mastewal



Building knowledge together

A successful knowledge management strategy is seen when the teams and individuals in projects or programmes develop the know-how they need to make their task easier and to improve their performance. Knowledge feeds performance within a given context, while knowledge is also derived from performance. All too often, we forget that a sound planning and a participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) system can offer an opportunity for learning. Improved communication, complemented with a sound documentation process of the successes and failures of field activities, is fundamental for better results.

Belayhun Hailu Mamo

The IFAD Ethiopia programme supports different poverty-reduction projects, such as those described briefly in the other chapters of this document. Reflecting on their results, all these projects have valuable lessons to share with others. Successful poverty reduction initiatives are worth scaling up. In this process, knowledge plays a role that is at least as important as the financial support.

Knowledge management in Ethiopia

IFAD country programmes are complimentary, multidimensional, and implemented at different levels. However, there has been poor synergy among the different programmes, despite similar target areas. In the past, internal monitoring systems were often developed on a project-by-project basis to respond to donor funding requirements, discouraging the development of consistent practices across the various implementing agencies.

Moreover, most of the programmes have been implemented by different organisations at a regional level, and the institutional arrangements differ from region to region. There has been a lack of joint planning and collaboration, and our communication and experience-sharing efforts have been weak. Efforts and approaches have been duplicated without taking other initiatives into account. In addition, there has been an insufficient documentation of the many lessons learnt.

A monitoring and evaluation process can be a major source of information and provide the basis for a strategic and systematic knowledge management (KM) approach. Knowledge management is not about IT systems, and not about piles of documents and files. It is about teams and networks, and about the way they learn from and with each other. It is with this perspective that the Country Programme undertook a series of activities so as to mainstream knowledge management in the IFAD-supported projects at all levels.

With the assistance of PICO, a consultancy company, these activities took off about one year ago. A fulltime KM officer was asked to

facilitate regional training workshops at different levels, involving all projects and the public and private stakeholders. Most of the work involved facilitating the establishment and implementation of a "Country Level KM&L Strategy and Action Plan". Components of this plan included the sensitisation of government agencies on the importance of knowledge management so as to increase their support, organising regional knowledge sharing events, and enhancing the documentation of field activities.

Documentation efforts need to be embedded in all projects

Working with a group of "KM focal point persons", the IFAD Country Programme has been able to establish a community of practice – a knowledge network of 35 practitioners (called CoPs) which also includes seconded persons from the respective ministries hosting the IFAD programmes. These practitioners have participated in workshops and trainings, and now drive the roadmap towards continuous innovation and learning. This model of innovation, learning and sharing will develop into a national strategy that can stand the test of time.

Managing knowledge more successfully

The thematic teams and CoPs are now the heart and soul of our knowledge management activities, especially at the regional level. An extraordinarily good start has been made in launching at least four thematic teams as well as a group of CoPs in all regions. Most staff appreciate the contribution they bring, knowing that they are adding considerable value to IFAD's goals and objectives. It is thus possible to say that the IFAD Country Programme has achieved a lot in a relatively short time, and with relatively modest resources. The results of workshops, field surveys and focus group discussions suggest that most of the IFAD-supported programmes are now aware of and agree with the general knowledge management strategy. Although for some of them this strategy is not completely clear, there is a consensus among all programmes about the objectives and the path to achieve them.

We have achieved a lot in a relatively short time

The meetings, surveys and discussions in which we were all involved in the past few months have shown that a number of positive results have been achieved. Overall, the national level workshops have helped the external audiences and the public sector recognise the fundamental importance of knowledge and knowledge management. In addition, all IFAD-supported programmes have agreed to give a high priority to knowledge sharing. Needless to say, we need to develop a set of indicators, both qualitative and quantitative, that will help us demonstrate the impact of our knowledge management activities on the local population, but we are working towards this.

From lessons to recommendations

Although a large volume of knowledge resources has already been generated, most staff do not have easy access to these resources, which become available in a fragmented way. It is therefore strongly recommended that the IFAD country office develops and implements a consistent, integrated communication and documentation strategy. This will help programmes to continuously plan, monitor, and provide feedback.

From implicit to explicit knowledge

These efforts need to be embedded in all projects. Together with external consultants, all team members (IT specialists, field officers or the executive team) need to be involved. The M&E officer needs then to become the source of learning-oriented information. As part of these efforts, the IFAD Country Programme needs to play a facilitating role by providing guidance and continuously developing the general strategy. This will help programmes and projects to work in synergy, effectively and efficiently, supporting and challenging each other by planning jointly, monitoring, managing their common information sources and sharing knowledge and information. This will help them all learn from their experiences and continuously improve performance.

A consistent communication and documentation policy needs therefore to be developed and implemented, considering formats, users, and especially roles and responsibilities at all levels. We need to develop a thick, rich picture of what practitioners actually do, and the explicit and implicit role of knowledge in these activities. Specific services will help beneficiary communities to gain access to knowledge as an economic factor of production, and to follow a knowledge management approach in their own localities. In this respect, a documentation effort like the one followed with the help of ILEIA can kick-start a sharing and learning process among all teams and among target communities. It is therefore essential that the two-step documentation workshops run during the past months are upscaled, and that more people join.

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Many rural development initiatives attempt to improve the lives of small-scale farmers. Some succeed, some fail – but all of them can offer valuable lessons for the future. In a two-phased documentation workshop, a group of experts working in IFAD-funded projects in Ethiopia described, analysed and wrote down some of their most promising experiences. This book presents the results of their work. The fourteen articles provide different lessons and challenges relevant for professionals in the field of agriculture and rural development.

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