

Discussion on Theme 1: Status Quo Analysis, Characterization, and Assessment of Performance of Irrigation in Ethiopia

Chair person: Dr. Deboorah Bossio

Rapporteur: Makonnen Loulseged

The chairman for this session introduced the theme and the floor was opened for questions, comments and suggestions.

Questions and Discussions

Marginal environments are means of living for people who are habitats of the area. Unless there are other means of income we can not avoid (stop them) growing crops on marginal lands. The environment has not been benefited from technologies promoted under optimum conditions. Then, how can we say agriculture in marginal environment causes poverty?

Ans: Marginal lands with steep slopes are being farmed, on the other hand there is plenty of irrigation potential in low land areas where communities can make use of it.

The data base is organized for modern irrigation schemes. Do we have a plan to set up a data base for traditional irrigation schemes in Ethiopia? Please give attention in collecting GIS data for the traditional irrigation systems.

Ans: IWMI is willing and interested to collaborate with other institutions in setting up the database for traditional irrigation.

When we talk about challenges in irrigation schemes, the impact of land degradation is not captured in the study? Why irrigation projects only focuses on the dam and command area but not the upper catchment; so also the research results?

Ans: There are many intrinsic problems associated with irrigation and drainage. In SNNP alone there are about seventeen schemes that have failed. In line with the policy statement, future

irrigation development should be undertaken in an integrated manner in order to ensure its sustainability.

Why the presenter did not see with respect to integrated watershed management.

Ans: Irrigation schemes are operating within the environment of complex watershed activities. Sedimentation is the cause of failure in many schemes as a result of poor watershed management. Therefore, due attention should be given to sound watershed management practices.

Do you have bench marks from other countries for your comparison of performances of irrigation schemes in Ethiopia?

Ans: As the conditions of irrigation schemes are different it will be un fare to compare their performance with other countries; for example a scheme in Ethiopia bench marked with a scheme located somewhere in US. Instead we can bench mark better performing schemes with in the country. For example Methara under the same environment with other scheme located somewhere in Ethiopia

The scope of irrigation development is beyond putting physical assets on the ground. This is about 25% of the tasks. The remaining 75% covers a complex and wide range of tasks that we need to put in place and achieves production and income objectives. The experience in the last 2-3 decades shows irrigation schemes are not fully or properly

utilized due to inadequate attention being given to skill in O&M, skill in irrigation water and irrigation extension, markets, credit services, input supply, institutional arrangement in managing schemes, catchment treatment, etc. These issues were discussed in the past. However, policy makers and practitioners are not responsive to these complex issues. Now thanks to researchers (IWMI) and others that we have good evidence to feed into an informed decision to focus on the issues beyond construction. Future success in irrigation development will depend on willingness to draw lessons from our experiences and proactively engage in rectifying the issues mentioned above.

Ans: Acceptable suggestion

Attempt has been made to compare Melka Sedi irrigation scheme with Sile and perhaps with others. Because of differences in climatic factors (rainfall, etc), soil salinity, age of the scheme. How about issues of management?

Ans: The performance of each scheme is identified in terms of its technical performance. However, the evaluation and establishment of indicators on the internal management process at scheme level has been found difficult. As a result comparison between schemes has not been easy.

Rainfed agriculture has low production and productivity due to erratic nature of rainfall in Ethiopia. But some downstream water users argue that poor farming practice and

management is the main cause for low water productivity of rainfed agriculture in Ethiopia. The contribution of rainfall variability and poor farming practices to the low productivity of rainfed agriculture should be studied comparatively such study would have paramount contribution towards water allocation among competing water users.

Ans: Climate variability has a seasonal impact on the agricultural production depending on the timing and amount of rainfall in each season. Poor farming practice has also a negative impact on agricultural production. However their relative impact has not been studied in this project as it is beyond the scope of this study.

Why factors that are responsible for the performance at scheme level were not identified? What was the purpose of comparing number of irrigation schemes unless these factors are identified?

Ans: Factors that have contributed to low performances of community managed irrigation scheme (Hare) and state farm (Sille) are mainly management and deterioration of physical infrastructures. It is however, hardly possible to identify the details of indicators of external performance indicators such as output and water supply at scheme level. Instead we need to consider on farm process indicators (accepted international indicators).