# Interviews with wereda officials re Somodo, Jimma – Stage 3 questions

## Mana wereda

[Mana wereda 1](#_Toc433730790)

[About the wereda 1](#_Toc433730791)

[Wereda policies and budget 1](#_Toc433730792)

[Wereda progress 2](#_Toc433730793)

[NGOs in the wereda 2](#_Toc433730794)

[Investors 2](#_Toc433730795)

[Kebele structures 2](#_Toc433730796)

[Wereda report on Somodo kebele 3](#_Toc433730797)

[Wereda relations with their neighbours 3](#_Toc433730798)

[Nutrition in the wereda 3](#_Toc433730799)

[Maternal mortality in the wereda 4](#_Toc433730800)

[Preventive health services in the wereda 4](#_Toc433730801)

[Credit programmes in the wereda 5](#_Toc433730802)

[Interview with the head of Harbu (the only private MFI in the wereda) 5](#_Toc433730803)

[Interview with Oromia Saving and Credit Association Official 6](#_Toc433730804)

[The wereda’s safe water programme 7](#_Toc433730805)

[Marriage interventions 8](#_Toc433730806)

[Under-age marriage 8](#_Toc433730807)

[Abduction 9](#_Toc433730808)

[Choice of marriage partner 9](#_Toc433730809)

[Polygyny 10](#_Toc433730810)

[Widow’s inheritance 11](#_Toc433730811)

[Marriage to a dead wife’s sister 11](#_Toc433730812)

[Female circumcision 11](#_Toc433730813)

[Violence against women 11](#_Toc433730814)

[Rape 11](#_Toc433730815)

[Domestic male violence 12](#_Toc433730816)

[Women’s rights after divorce 12](#_Toc433730817)

[Women’s rights after death of husband 13](#_Toc433730818)

[Women’s rights to inherit from parents 13](#_Toc433730819)

[Other interventions to improve women’s status 13](#_Toc433730820)

[Vulnerable women 14](#_Toc433730821)

[Research officer addition 14](#_Toc433730822)

[Migrating to Sudan and Arab countries becoming one of the HTPs 14](#_Toc433730823)

## About the wereda

### Wereda policies and budget

In the wereda all government programs are suffering from lack of budget. However, education takes the most of the wereda’s resources. In the wereda the MDG fund budget brings a significant change and affects the wereda. In earlier time all of the government activities seriously suffered from high budget deficit. However, since the MDG budget fund all the programs including education, health, agricultural development and others get better budget than before.**[[1]](#footnote-1)** As a result, in the entire programme there is good progress and improvement. Last year the natural resource management (soil and water conservation activities) has been done on campaign with community participation and with their voluntary labour contribution. Moreover, the wereda tried to address adult education programme on campaign base with the fund of Family for Children (FC) which is funded through wereda women and child affairs office.

### Wereda progress

Road is one of the most successful programmes in the wereda. The wereda is constructing roads successfully and connect urban and rural areas of the wereda with each other and the nearby areas. Hopefully, the wereda will no more have any rural and urban areas that do not have road access after two years i.e., the wereda will successfully interconnect all its kebele. There will be no new road construction projects after two years except the maintenance of existing ones. This success is achieved because of the ability of the wereda to mobilise the community and the willingness of the community themselves in terms of contribution of labour and money for the projects. On the other hand, the adult education programme is not successful because of the lack of awareness of the community. The solution will be to provide more regular awareness to the community and encourage them to attend the education through kebele, development teams and 1-5 teams. To do so we have to provide awareness for the leaders at each level of the wereda and kebele and to inspire their commitments so as to make them to mobilise the community at all levels.

## NGOs in the wereda

There are a few NGOs which work on health and women and children issues. Even the wereda administration officers don’t know which NGO is working in the Wereda. Informally (from other individuals who work in the wereda) I can understand that a few NGOs work in the area such as ICAP international which work on HIV/AIDS, IMIRAD (local NGO) which works on malaria prevention, Plan International which works on HTP and IWOP (International Women Empowerment ) which works on adult education and saving. However, none of the NGOs are working in the Somodo.

## Investors

*Has land been leased to investors from outside?*

There are 20 investors who are registered and known to the wereda. 17 of them are involved on washing of coffee and 3 of them are growing coffee. All of the investors are from Jimma zone. Totally 265 hectare of land is leased out. The investors are able to create job opportunity for 74 individuals on a permanent base and for 1836 individuals on a temporary base. They also participate in the development of the wereda particular on road construction. Moreover, as they buy the coffee from farmers this solves their market problem of market and also enables farmers to have more knowledge about the quality of coffee as the investors provide awareness during the harvest period. However, there is no plan for new investment and no land is made ready for new investment.

## Kebele structures

The kebele organisation is not changed and it is identical with the diagram that was provided in the module document.

The sub kebele (Zone) facilitates the development work in the kebele through making the process of information transfer easy. This structure not only makes the process of information transfer easy but also ensures that all the information is delivered properly as the size of the zone is smaller than the whole kebele. The lower-level government structures are the 1-5 teams which also enable the information delivery to be very easy and efficient, to easily mobilise the community for community development, etc. Accordingly the line (chain) starts from kebele Sub kebele (zone) development team 1-5 team

The kebele party structure also starts from party organiser and go to the lower unit called 1-5 team. i.e., Party organiser cell 1-5 team. The party and government have the same forms of structure but they are assumed to work independently.

The problem is that it is difficult to say that this structure is working on the ground. Some kebeles have attempted to implement but it is not fully implemented as it is intended.

## Wereda report on Somodo kebele

The Somodo kebele is one of the kebeles that is good in performing government structures and its development performance. It also has good relationship with the wereda.

*Wereda’s future livelihood plans for the kebele*

The wereda has a plan to finalise the road construction that has been started to connect the kebele with the nearby ones. Moreover, the wereda has a plan to work on improvement of the education quality, and on the expansion of drinking water. There is also a plan to increase diverse forms of farm and nonfarm employment including encouraging people to involve in chicken production, fattening of animals, craft works, trading activities etc. through organizing and providing them a credit. However, there is no plan to have new investors in the area.

*Future Regional and Zone plans for the wereda*

The regional plan for the wereda is to expand safe drinking water in the area and construction of roads that connect different kebeles of the wereda. Accordingly, those interventions are implemented in the wereda. However, there is no zone plans for the wereda.

## Wereda relations with their neighbours

There is good relation with the neighbouring weredas. There is a meeting within 14 days with the neighbouring weredas such as Limmu, Saka, Jimma and Gomma. Different individuals from peace and security, elders of these wereda come together and regularly discuss about peace and security of the weredas, the relationship between the weredas and so on.

There is no historical tension with the neighbours. In 1994 there was a kind of disagreement within the wereda due to religious issues, the clash between orthodox Christian and Muslim in one kebele. However, the problem is completely controlled and no disagreement.

## Nutrition in the wereda

The head of health office and two other health officials stated that child malnutrition is not big problem in the wereda. Screening of malnourished child is done on every three month. As compared with the number of children targeted (by considering the total population) for screening those found to be malnourished is small, and most are medium/moderately malnourished. Meaning there are very few case of severely malnourished children.

There is no Community-Based Nutrition Programme. The available programmes to reduce child malnutrition is provision of supplementary foods (plumpynut) at health centre and health post through the budget assigned by the regional government. This supplementary food is provided according to a standard criterion (the measurement done at upper hand). With regard to the supplements provided there is adequate supply.

Participants stated that there is no school feeding programme and there has never been a feeding centre in the wereda since there is no problem of severe malnutrition in the area, unlike in the emerging regions.

The health extension programme encouraging people to have more nourishing diets is effective. This is because great efforts have been done to aware people about the need of feeding children nourishing diet through awareness raising education. Since 2011 an NGO named L Tank (Last 10 KM) also has been providing refreshment training for health extension workers, who in turn educate the community to create awareness about the importance of nutritious diet to enhance child’s health. This NGO also supply plumpynut (supplementary foods). As a result a number of parents have changed their child feeding habits. For instance, formerly they use to feed children mainly gruel but recently they started to feed them porridge, vegetables and fruits. Efforts also have been made to enable people to plant vegetables and fruits in their garden so as to feed their family, especially children and women with diversified food, which is good to enhance their health. In connection with the reduction of coffee price in last year and this year farmers also have been educated to start plantation of fruits so as to feed their family as well as getting an income. Starting from 2011 also a ‘**community health day**’ has been celebrated annually so as to remind people about the need of feeding nourishing diet for children.

Participants emphasised that more than children, pregnant and lactating mothers are affected by malnutrition. This is because birth complications and work burden has some effect on mothers health. Furthermore, as mothers give priority to feed their children and other household members they do not eat adequate and balanced diet on time.

In order to improve the reduction of children’s as well as lactating and pregnant mothers’ malnutrition participants suggested to strengthen the awareness raising activities and to start admission of malnourished children at health centre.

## Maternal mortality in the wereda

The current policy for reducing maternal mortality is enabling mothers to get antenatal care, promoting institutional delivery so as to avoid birth complications, enabling mothers to get postnatal care. While getting antenatal care mothers get in to agreement to give birth at health institute. As one of the major focuses of the Millennium Development Goals is to reduce maternal mortality these efforts have been greatly influenced by the government.

Regarding the proportion of pregnant women attending ante-natal checks some women do not get follow up service due to lack of awareness as well as negligence. Participants stated that it is difficult to estimate the maternal mortality rate in the wereda as it needs some research.

The practice with regards to the expectation of increasing the number of institutional delivery is good since delivery service is provided in the former three health centres found in the wereda. As to the standard in every health centre one midwife has to be assigned but in one of the health centres there is no midwife. Thus, in this centre only the clinical nurse and health officer give delivery service. As the TBAs already became elderly there is no training programme for them. In general, as the focus is to promote institutional delivery there is no any focus to train TBAs to attend delivery. Thus, there is no any programme to provide clean supplies for TBAs.

## Preventive health services in the wereda

Since the last 5 years the organisation of the preventive health services has been good; activities to accomplish these services have been implemented in a routine manner. The HEW has a role to eradicate communicable diseases and to carry out preventive activities such as providing antenatal care, postnatal care, immunisation, which includes the proper utilisation of all preventive health packages. The turnover of HEWs has somewhat affected the organisation of preventive health services. The reason for the turnover is that the HEW complains that their duty is hard and is not compatible with the salary they are earning. Until the HEWs who are under the training programme graduate (at the end of the year) it is difficult to assign someone to replace those who resigned. When one of the HEWs resign from job it is difficult for the remaining one HEW to cover the area, especially in wider kebele.

To implement some packages the wereda health office has a joint programme with Plan Ethiopia (International NGO) so as to make environment clean via a motto **“Community lead total sanitation’’** by bringing behavioural change. To achieve this Plan Ethiopia has provided education by informing the community members that defecation in open place is a shame and would lead to disease. It also constructed communal latrines on market areas and in other communal places. In every school also there is a club, where by students get information about the need of environmental sanitation that Plan Ethiopia has been providing support.

Regarding health volunteers, participants stated that after HEWs were assigned volunteers were not as such supportive. This may be because in the past (before 5 years) they used to get pocket money for the service they provided but after it stopped they are not supportive. But some are supportive on immunisation campaign. Indirectly the role they had until recently has been accomplished by health army and leader of development teams and networks.

Generally, development teams and 1-5 networks have a great role in disseminating information within a short time as the team and network members are close to each other and have daily interaction. Thus, these teams and networks are specifically very much important in enabling mothers to get prenatal care. As they are close to each other they know who is pregnant and advise such women to get proper follow up services. In case if these women are resistant to do so they inform the health army so as to encourage and support them to get proper follow up services. Every kebele is divided in to 3 zones. One zone has about 20 up to 35 sub zone (*Gere*). Each sub zone (*Gere*) has 20 up to 35 members (whereby 5 members form one network). As every sub zone has its own Health Army, the army have important role in following maternal and child health mostly by educating their respective community members and by linking to the HEW for proper health care and preventive health services.

## Credit programmes in the wereda

The farmers in the wereda buy fertilisers, seeds and other inputs by their own cash. Neither the wereda nor the wereda service cooperative does provide direct credit for farm inputs. The rural residents also do not directly get credit from the bank. The Oromia Saving and Credit Association and Harbu Microfinance S.co are providing credit and saving service in the wereda. There is no organisation in the wereda that provide crop insurance, livestock insurance and other insurance in relation to farming.

The wereda administration officer had little information about the credit service in the wereda and they have weak relation with the credit providers in the wereda. Hence, I contacted two credit service providers in the wereda (one private MFI and Oromia Saving and Credit Association).

### Interview with the head of Harbu (the only private MFI in the wereda)

The objective or Harbu is to provide loan, saving, insurance (before an individual takes a loan he/she should pay to have insurance for the money he/she going to take. i.e. 1% of the money he/she will borrow) and advice.

We provide credit for potential farmers (the farmers who have land and energy but lack money). We provide them a term loan that has to be repaid back within a year. We also provide credit for petty traders and government employees, which has to be repaid monthly (which is instrumental loan). The credit for all categories is group liability where 5-6 individuals come together and get credit and if one of the members fail to pay the group will be responsible to pay.

The amount of loan varies in terms of the frequency at which an individual uses the credit from the organisation, as per the following table.

The interest rate for term loan is 18% while for instrumental loan it is 13%.

The outstanding debt (those who do not pay within the time frame i.e. within 365 days) is about 78,000 birr. However, this does not mean they do not pay. We wait them for some period and if they don’t pay we will directly go to court. So far we do not face such problem as the group pays it back if individual member fail to pay back.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Cycle**  | **Category of whom the credit is given** |
| **Agriculture (farmers)** | **Petty trade** | **Services** | **Manufacture & process** | **Consumption (employee)** |
| 1 | 2250 | 2500 | 3000 | 3500 | 1/3For civil servant based on their own salary bases |
| 2 | 2750 | 3000 | 3300 | 3800 |
| 3 | 3500 | 3750 | 4250 | 4800 |
| 4 | 4250 | 4500 | 4600 | 5000 |
| 5 | 5000 | 5000 | 5800 | 6000 |
| 6 | 5000 | 5500 | 6000 | 6300 |
| 7 | 5000 | 6000 | 7200 | 7500 |
| 8 | 5000 | 6500 | 7500 | 8000 |

### Interview with Oromia Saving and Credit Association Official

The objective of Oromia Saving and Credit Association is to provide credit and saving service for rural residents. In order to access credit individuals should be organised in to group containing 25-64 members and produce evidence letter from their kebele that testify they will return back the loan. The maximum loan for an individual will be Birr 10,000 and the minimum is 2,000. Hence any individual can get a loan within the mentioned range and above the minimum range (>2,000 birr) depending on his ability to pay back.

Individual farmers should make a group saving of 10% from the money he /she will go to borrow and pay back within a year. The interest rate is 15%. If an individual fails to repay back the rest of the group members are responsible to pay.

The organisation also give credit for non- farm business up to Birr 50,000 which should be repaid back within two years period. The individual who needs credit for non-farm business should first organised through micro and small enterprises’ organisers (the MSE Development Agency office) and their list will be sent to our office after it get approval from the concerned wereda officials. Accordingly we provide the loan.

Though it is not uniform, Oromia saving and credit association will reach almost all kebeles of the wereda. As a result many rural households of the wereda kebeles are using the service from the organisation.

In Somodo there are 8 organised groups who are using our credit access.**[[2]](#footnote-2)** One individual who supervise and follow up the progress of three kebeles such as Somodo, Babala Kossa, and Babalsa Karra is assigned.

## The wereda’s safe water programme

In the wereda the coverage of safe drinking water reached 70.5% in 2004 E.C budget year, that is 76% in towns and 65% in rural areas. However, there is a problem in regular provision of safe water in the areas where water points are already constructed due to drying of water especially springs, and to lack of continued maintenance. The main source of water is a borehole and two spring distributions; the rest is on spot spring system (this is a system whereby a masonry construction is made on the source of the spring so as to protect the spring from entrance of animals and others).

There has been no outbreak of acute watery diarrhoea/ cholera in the wereda. I have been working since 2002 E.C and I did not see such outbreak and did not hear about it before in the wereda.

In 2005 there is a plan to construct 40 on spot springs and 50 hand pumps so as to reach the coverage to 80% at the end of the budget year. Accordingly, large water construction projects are running in the wereda and some of them are inaugurated and started functioning. The projects are carried out in the rural towns including Bilida (inaugurated and started to function) with a budget of birr 3.5 million, Kenteri, Wollo Sefer, Sombo mana (inaugurated to function but at the moment stopped due to some technical problem) and Yebu town.

Those projects are funded by MDG, ADB (Africa Development Bank), the wereda budget and contributions from the community.

For the project in Kenteri, about 4 million birr is funded by MDG. For Yebu (birr 2.2 million), Wollo Sefer (birr 1.6 million), Bilida (Birr 2.5million) and Sombo mana (birr 800,000) are funded by ADB. While the wereda allocate a total of birr 1.5 million of which 5% is from the contribution of the community.

In any water project the wereda covers 17% of the total cost and the community contribute 5% of the expenses i.e. the funding agency finances 78% of the budget.

In all the projects that are carried out in the wereda the construction (assigning the constructor) budgeting and other activities are carried out at zonal level. The wereda’s role is to collect money from the community and the share of the wereda and deposit in the account of the zone and to supervise if the need arises, and follow up after the construction will end.

Water points are managed by a committee selected from the community. The community themselves sell the water and maintain the water points by themselves. The wereda provide them technical assistance including assigning plumber, spare parts and also send accountants to make audit two times a year.

In the wereda there is acute problem of spare parts because of 1, lack of budget and 2, partly because the spare parts is not easily available on the market.

There is also a problem of plumber not only at wereda level but also at zone level. We have one plumber and we are lucky in having one because other wereda don’t have a plumber.

Moreover, there is a problem of focus. Even though water is one of the emphases in MDG, there is a lack of focus at wereda and zone level in terms of budget allocation and facilities such as provision of transportation (car and motor cycle) to supervise the proper working of water points in the wereda. We usually hear that budgets are allocated for water but all of these are allocated for construction of water projects that we (the wereda) cannot directly use for other purposes like for fuel consumption in areas where there are pumps operating with a generator. The office does not have transportation and we are simply counting the number of boreholes and spring waters but are not quite sure whether all these water points are working due to lack of regular supervision. We only maintain where we can see and are informed.

To improve the provision and maintenances of water points first there is a need to focus on safe drinking water not only for cities but also for rural areas and allocate sufficient budget.

For instance country wide a budget is allocated for water but the lion-share of it is used for cities and the rural areas are relatively neglected and /or the budget is not properly utilised and it will be given for other sectors like health. Last year for instance country wide about 2 million birr budget that was allocated for water was not utilised and was given to health.

In our wereda after the water projects are constructed the zone handover for the wereda to run and supervise the water points but no budget is allocated that serves for fuel and maintenance. Hence, the burden is put on wereda. For instance in Sombo the water project is constructed and the community has started to use. However, since there is no electricity it uses a generator. The generator consumes 1 litre fuel to pump 1 m3 water. In terms of cost 1 litre fuel is birr 18 while 1m3 water is birr 19. Accordingly, the community doesn’t have any deposit for maintenance and other purpose so that the burden is left for wereda and community to contribute. The same was true for Bilida town in earlier years. Hence, there is a need to cover this cost so as to improve the provision and maintenance of water points.

The other is that there is a need to assign one person per water point. For your surprise our wereda’s plumber is old enough and he will going to retire so in the near future we will face more challenge than now as there is scarcity of plumber at zone level.

Sometimes there is a problem in construction of water points. The water point constructors do not properly construct (very poor quality). For instance in Yebu town the contractor poorly constructed and soon (within a month) they will hand over the project; but the point is damaged and the wereda did it again with its budget.

**Drinking water distribution till 2000 E.C.** (the figure given above for the kebele is more recent – for 2004 EC)

Oromia level

Rural= 49.75%

Urban= 92.7%

Total= 55.91%

Jimma zone

Rural = 28.9%

Urban = 73.6%

Total = 36.5%

Mana wereda

Rural= 50%

Urban = 54%

Total = 52%

## Marriage interventions

### Under-age marriage

Under-age marriage, mostly when the girl becomes about 15 -17 years old, is somewhat an issue in the wereda though overtime its prevalence has highly reduced. This is because a lot of awareness raising education has been provided through women affairs officer. In each and every school there is girls club whereby students get educations about harmful traditional practices including underage marriage. Through this club also drama and music is prepared so as to give lesson for students about the harmful effect of under-age marriage. Due to this students are aware about the bad consequence of underage marriage. As a result of this whenever they hear/notice a case of underage marriage they report to their teacher. The teacher also report to wereda education bureau that in turn report the case to wereda children and women affairs office for follow up.

The legal provision in the wereda with regard to the practice of under-age marriage is that police men, women and child affairs officers, and public procurators work in collaboration since their work interrelate. These three bodies follow up suspected or reported cases properly and take action. Accordingly, there are some instances when they work together and the under-age marriage which was under process is terminated. As an example, participants mentioned one case in the capital of the wereda (Yebu town) whereby the marriage feast was under preparation. The girl’s friend reported the case to women affairs office. Then with the great effort of these three bodies that underage marriage was interrupted. Similarly, they mentioned about one case in one rural kebele (on the way to Somodo) whereby in January this year a teacher brought a young girl student who was on the way to get married. By the integrated effort of the teacher and women affairs officer the proposed under -age marriage was interrupted.

The difficulties/problems in enforcing the law to abandon under-age marriage are that recently the interaction of young girls and men has been starting earlier. Due to this parents fear that their girl may engage in premarital sexual relationship, as a result of which she may be exposed to unplanned/unwanted pregnancy. Thus, rather than giving birth without getting married they prefer their daughter to get married earlier though it is underage marriage. Thus, due to this fear it is parents and relatives who prefer their daughter to get married earlier. But as stated above as students are aware of its bad consequences they are interested and willing to report suspected cases of under-age marriage.

In 6 kebeles found in the wereda (not in Somodo) Plan International in collaboration with wereda women affairs office has been providing education about the consequence of early marriage for the community members. Plan International also arranged a mechanism so that the community by themselves punish those who practice underage marriage so that people aware of its result take action to stop practicing. Formerly also FC (facilitation for change) had been working against HTPs, including underage marriage but their programme has phased out. To improve the enforcement of the law with regard to underage marriage it would be nice if other bodies like Plan International in all kebele would provide education to the local people, especially at grass root level.

**Note:** Regarding to the abbreviation of FC I got some information from others that FC stands for “Family for Children’’ but respondents stated as “Facilitation for Change’’.

### Abduction

Unlike the past nowadays **forced abduction** is not an issue in the wereda. But this has changed into **voluntary abduction**. This is a kind of abduction whereby the man convinces the girl to go with him. Upon this when the girl’s parents report to the police as if their daughter disappeared they will later be informed that she got married whether the girl really wanted to get married or not.

The difficulties in enforcing the law are that while the police men are in process to deal with the case the couple’s parent discuss the case and solve it through elders. In other instances when the case was dealt at the police station the men and his parents convince the girl to confirm that she has run with the man through her interest. Upon this it is difficult to punish the man. As in most cases such cases are reported to police station it is difficult to get the proportion of the prosecutions reported last year from women affairs office.

Getting married by convincing the woman as if she is interested to marry the man is not lifelong. This is because as the couple gets married without plan, without any asset or without having some means of livelihood to lead their life the couple would face economic problem, which might result the couple for divorce. In relation to this the participants stated that the major cases handled in court relate to divorce. Thus, participants suggested a great change is needed to improve the enforcement of the law against voluntary abduction. Still now good change has been seen in the 6 kebeles where Plan International works. As the education provided at the grass root level by the wereda women and child affairs officer is limited due to budget constraint it is not possible to cover all kebeles. Hence, as an example they stated that it would be nice if NGOs will educate girls at school in all the kebeles.

###  Choice of marriage partner

Generally men choose their marriage partner in the wereda. But though women have a right to choose their marriage partner due to cultural influence women do not speak out about this. The law say that both men and women have a right to choose their marriage partner and none of them has to get married without their interest. This has been put in place, mostly since the last four years when parental influence in choosing their children marriage partner has highly reduced. In connection to this participants commented that parental influence in choosing marriage partner is somewhat important. This is because youth do not consider possible future problems. Yet in case the newly married couple face some problem they may not cope-up and their marriage may end up by divorce, whereby the woman will be affected. As an example they told me one case where by youth fell in love and he brought the girl to his parent home. After staying with her for certain time he disliked her and disappeared from the area. After some years the man’s parent felt that she had lived with them too long and wanted to take her back to her family. But she feared how she would get back to her parents’ home after living with him and his parents for so long. Upon this the man’s parents came to wereda women affairs office. The officers advised the woman and finally she got back to her parents’ home but her physiological state is highly affected. Similar to this case, the participants stated that there are many cases whereby men latter on dislike their wife and wives would face psychosocial problem. In light of this the participants suggested the need of discussion among young men and women, and their parents before choosing and deciding/agreeing their marriage partner. As an example they stated that whenever a man, who has nothing to establish an independent livelihood, chooses a woman for marriage it would be nice if the woman first discusses the case with her parent before she agrees. This is because if her parents notice the man economic status and told her that she will face difficulty to establish an independent livelihood the woman might reject the man’s offer and she would be saved from divorce, which may result due to economic problem.

### Polygyny

Polygamy is somewhat widespread in the wereda though over time the prevalence has a bit reduced. Men used to marry a second wife by convincing the senior wife that she is tired, especially if she has long term illness and as if his new wife will help her in domestic activities, to get child if the first wife has not given birth, and to try and get boys or girls in case if the senior wife give birth to girls or boys only respectively. These are the major reasons men seek to marry more than one wife. Furthermore, they believe that their religious doctrine (‘*Sharia*’) allow them to get married to more than one wife if he is capable to manage them all. In most cases they use to marry up to two wives. Even though there is no organizing recording system to know how many legal cases related to polygyny have there been in the past years the participants stated that at least once in a week there is a case of polygyny. If the man gets married to another wife through consultation with and consent of his senior wife the case is not reported and handled by legal entities.

However, some men do not discuss with their wife and get their consent. Rather they simply marry another wife. Upon this the senior wives report to women affairs office and court. Women affairs officer follow the case and support the women by advising them how to describe the case in court so as to get proper decision. Accordingly, the man is punished. In case if the senior wife reports the case on time the court decides to leave the new wife. As an example the participants sated one case that was handled recently. The senior wife reported the case within the week her husband married another wife. Then the court decided to leave the second wife and he was imprisoned for 8 months. However, the difficulty in enforcing the law is that the man may not disclose the fact that he married another wife. In these cases the senor wife does not know the fact and does not report to legal bodies on time. Upon this it is difficult to dissolve polygamous marriage. NGOs (Plan International and FC/Facilitation for Change) is also providing education to abandon HTPs, including polygamy

Generally due to cultural and religious reasons it is difficult to abandon polygamy. This is because as people used to say Muslim religious doctrine allows marrying more than one wife and doing so is common for some men. Thus, some men continue to marry more than one wife. In light of these, to strengthen the effectiveness of the law with regard to polygyny in practice it needs to provide continuous education for grass root level people about the impact of polygamy on family, especially its economic impact. This is because in most cases education is provided for higher officials and for committee members so as to educate latte the community at grass root level. But the way the education provided to the grass root level people is not smooth and continuous. In addition, it would be important to take serious legal action against the men, who married more than one wife. More importantly it will be good to arrange mechanism to educate people, mainly the mal-practitioners (men) at mosque as men use to marry more than one wife by considering that it is allowed in religion.

### Widow’s inheritance

Widow’s inheritance is practiced to some extentin the wereda. Over time the trend of widow inheritance has been highly reduced. Since recently, on average there could be one inheritance case in a month. As compared with other weredas found in Jimma zone, for instance, the practice of widow inheritance is very less in Mena wereda.

Women affairs officers provide education for widowers about their right to marry any men they like, to refuse to be inherited and to stay on their resources with her children. In addition to providing such education women affairs officer also support women whenever they are not interested to be inherited. As most widows are aware of their rights nowadays most of the widows are living alone with their children. However, sometimes widow decide to be inherited when they fear the relatives of their deceased husband. To strengthen the effectiveness of the law with regard to widow’s inheritance in practice participants stated the need of providing continuous information education about widows right to the community at the grass root level.

### Marriage to a dead wife’s sister

Marriage to a dead wife’s sister is not an issuein the wereda since its practice is very rare. The participants stated that over the last five years they have come across only one case in Gube Muleta kebele. As marriage to a dead wife’s sister is not an issue in the wereda there is no intervention made against that.

## Female circumcision

Female circumcision is still somehow an issue in the wereda. Although over time its prevalence has been reduced some people, especially uneducated families, continue to circumcise their daughters secretly. In most cases mothers take their daughter to other villages for circumcision so that nearby people or neighbours do not know about it. For a long time a lot of awareness raising education against female circumcision has been provided to the local community as well as for circumcisers and students at school. Furthermore, legal measures have been taken against the circumcisers and parents who secretly circumcise their daughters. The mandate was given for iddirs to punish any member who circumcises (circumcisers) or parents who secretly circumcise their daughters*.* There are some cases whereby iddir punished 200 birr the mal-practitioners.

Whenever people report cases of circumcision to the women affairs officials and the public prosecutor, efforts are made to catch and punish the mal-practitioners. Now there are 3 cases under process whereby people reported the cases. Circumcised girls are brought to the health centre and confirmed being circumcised and then cases are appointed for punishment. Thus, the interventions undertaken were effective in reducing the prevalence of FGM but still some people do not believe the education provided and as a result they secretly continue to practice FGM. To address this gap, participants suggested it would be vital to aware parents more about the side effects and to take serious legal action against mal-practitioners.

## Violence against women

### Rape

Rape against small female children sometimes prevails in the wereda though the trend over time has reduced. Over the last 7 months there were 6 rape cases reported. Once the case is analysed the abuser is sentenced to jail. As an example participants stated that last year one abuser was taken to jail and will be sentenced for 5 year. The difficulty is that once the girl is raped parents prefer the man to marry her. So they do not report the case on time, only when the man fails to marry the girl. This makes it difficult for medical examination. There are also cases whereby the man leaves the area knowing that he will be punished.

To strengthen the implementation of fighting against rape there needs to be awareness raising of people about the importance of reporting cases sooner so that the abuser gets proper punishment and others limit themselves from committing rape.

### Domestic male violence

Domestic male violence is a big issue is in the wereda. In most cases husbands use to beat their wife in case of lack of mutual understanding, disagreement and perceiving that she did wrong. They try to make the beating invisible. Most drunkard men beat their wives badly. During coffee harvesting and selling time (from October up to March) some men use to drink and violate their wife. It is also during this season that marrying another wife and voluntary abduction takes place.

The problem is that due to social barriers the victim women do not report the case on time. They fear to report to responsible legal bodies. Due to this they are highly affected. Even when they report they do not express well the impact they are suffering as a result of the violence, so that the abuser does not get proper punishment. When they report late it is difficult to get adequate medical evidence that shows the extent of the severity of the violence (beating). Due to this it is difficult to handle the case properly and make proper action against the abuser.

The participants stated that in the women affairs office there is no legal person but as they have horizontal work relationship with the police and the public prosecutor they handle cases of male domestic violence together. To fasten the case handling process recently a ‘justice committee’ has been established. Through the women affairs officers at kebele level education about women’s rights and to stop male domestic violence has been provided.

In this year (2005 EC) there were 7 cases that were handled and men were imprisoned. Cases include imprisonment for 6 months, 2 year and 6 months, 1 year, 2 years etc. Participants think that there is still a legal gap as the punishment and the problem created against women are not commensurable. The major reason for this is delayed reporting and women’s lack of confidence and inadequate description regarding the impact of the violence.

To improve the enforcement of the law with regard to domestic male violence participants suggested to provide continuous awareness raising education to the violators so as they would limit themselves from committing domestic violence.

## Women’s rights after divorce

Participants estimate that yearly there are about 20 cases of divorce in the wereda. First, the women affairs officers try to reconcile the couple through the cooperation of kebele officials and elders. If the reconciliation is not successful they give direction on how to take the case to court. They advise women how to stand in court and by taking the case file number they follow up physically as well as through telephone the decision made at the court. Based on the decision made they advise women what to say in the next appointment.

Starting from when the new family law became practical (2000 EC) every divorce is done at the court. Unlike in former times divorce is no longer done at the local level though elders. Meaning first the case has to be seen at court. For property division the court writes down a letter to the kebele so that elders divide the property among the couple. Upon this the kebele organises elders so as to divide the assets among the couple and later on the kebele report to the court. In case of divorce women have legal rights to get a share of the assets/ properties that the couple got/produced together. But, the man in advance hides the assets so as to reduce the share of the women’s assets. Some women do not even properly know the assets they have; especially they do not exactly know how many trees of coffee the household owns. More importantly if the husband is a businessman/trader he usually says that he is involved in this activity through loans from his relatives and argues that certain assets such as ox belong to his parent as if they gave it to him for his benefit. Thus, in most cases women do not get their proper share of household assets. In case when the women are not happy with the assets they got they report their complaint again to the court. Some try to follow the case up to the end; others stop following the case when they face transportation problem and feel hopeless.

The newly organised mobile court increased people access to legal services nearby their locality rather than having to travel to the wereda capital. In Bilida town there is mobile court service twice a week. The newly established **justice committee’** *(Sirna Haqa*), which is composed of members from wereda administration, civil service, police office, women affairs office and security office also facilitate cases for legal action/solution. These two systems support and strengthen the implementation of women’s rights in case of divorce.

Whenever men think that their wife becomes weaker or tired they want to marry another wife. Then they indirectly mistreat their wife so that she leaves home so that they can marry another wife. Then later on when the first wife takes the case to court the man can say ‘she left her home with her interest what should I do?’ Meaning men set up things as if it is the wife who left home and wants the divorce. As a result they resist the divorce so as not to give her share of assets and they do not leave their new wife rather they want to keep both wives. But when the senior wife wants to get divorce the men are not interested to give out her share of assets. As a result of this they hide their assets but the women do not know their assets exactly. Surprisingly participants stated that even there are men who changed the name on the map of their home (in the town) so as to prevent the women’s share from the house. The case the participants mentioned is the house was recorded to the head/husband’s name. However, when the man quarrelled with his wife he went to the city municipality apply to change his name to other person as if he sold the house so that his wife would not claim her right to share the house. The municipality officer has changed his name as they use to get money for the man illegally (in short they changed the name for their fever to get illegal money from the man, meaning the municipality officers are involved in corruption). Thus, up on this the women do not get their proper share of the couple’s assets.

To strengthen the implementation of women’s rights in case of divorce in practice participants suggested having records of assets/properties while getting married so that upon divorce women know the couple’s assets properly and gets her proper share. More specifically they suggested that education has to be given for women so as to know their assets for sure.

## Women’s rights after death of husband

Since a long time women in case of widowhood have legal rights to own the deceased husband’s properties, including land that the household owned. In case if the widow is inherited by the brother of her deceased husband he equally controls and owns the household assets. But as this practice has highly reduced overtime nowadays there are many widows who did not get married again. Relatives of the deceased husband also do no longer prevent the widow from owning any asset. Since 2000 EC widows are not forced to be inherited by their deceased husband’s brother unless they are interested to be inherited. Thus, these widows are female-headed households who own every asset and lead their lives with their children alone. Participants believe that the implementation of women’s rights in cases of widowhood has been very good in the wereda.

## Women’s rights to inherit from parents

Mostly since over the last two years women have the right to inherit from their parents upon their death. Formerly only men used to inherit from their parents. The customary practice with regard to women’s inheritance rights is that some women get their share of their parent’s assets equally with their siblings. The legal service also supports women claiming inheritance rights. However, still some women do not claim their rights and instead leave it for their siblings, mainly unmarried brothers. Participants stated that the cases reported regarding women claiming inheritance rights are very few in the wereda. To strengthen the implementation of women’s inheritance rights in practice participants suggested it would be good to aware women about their rights so that most women would claim them on time.

## Other interventions to improve women’s status

There have been interventions to increase women’s participation in kebele structures. In kebele councils efforts were made for women to comprise 50 % of the total number of council members. Women kebele cabinet members also increased to 30 %. For the election of kebele administrators as well, women competitors representing the party also comprised 50 %. To achieve these efforts has been made but as rural women are somewhat influenced due to cultural reason to participate full. Such target proportions has not achieved fully. Similarly, there have been interventions to increase women’s participation in wereda structures. In wereda council efforts were made so that women comprise 30 % from the total number of council members. For wereda administration election women competitors representing the party also comprised 50 %. Women wereda cabinet members also increased to 30 %. These all have been practical so as to increase women’s political participation and decision making power. To achieve these efforts has been made and such target proportions in the wereda has better achieved as compared with rural kebeles.

There have been many interventions to increase women’s economic participation. Wereda Micro finance institute (MFI) has been providing training on entrepreneurship, business skill, saving, etc. Agricultural officers, including DAs also provide training on livestock rearing and producing vegetable in their garden. Accordingly, through the new structure of 1-5 women networks women have contributed money on certain time frame (such as weekly, biweekly, monthly basis). With the money they contributed some bought chicken, sheep for rearing and fattening; others started to produce vegetable for consumption as well as for sale or started to get involved in trading. Thus, by involving in these activities women’s are economically empowered and they are supporting their livelihood.

To strengthen these incomes generating activities there has been interventions to increase women access to credit. Accordingly, they have been getting credit from government-related MFI (the Oromia credit and saving institute) and from a private MFI (Harbu credit and saving institute). Training and creating these income generating opportunities are in themselves affirmative action in self-employing women.

The intervention to increase women’s land rights is the provision of land certificates, which started since 2001 EC. To confirm women’s land ownership the name of the wife is also written on the certificate. But the provision of certificates has not yet been completed; it is under process.

To encourage girls’ education efforts have been made to send girls to school like boys. At school also there is a special tutorial programme for girl students so as to increase their skills and enable them to perform well.

## Vulnerable women

Landless women, women living with HIV, OVC, helpless old women and women with little income are vulnerable womenin the wereda. Landless women are those who came to the area for wage work to collect coffee during coffee harvesting season in the past and they continue to live in the area. Plan International has been supporting the children of these vulnerable women with educational materials. Medan Acts faith based organisation, which is local NGO through Kalehiwot protestant church support 68 households (women living with HIV and OVC) financially. They are also getting food support on a quarterly basis. For these households Medan Acts also provide money to start their own means of income, and follow up the activities they are undertaking. In addition, women living with HIV also get financial support from Jimma women affairs office (which may be funded by some NGO or donor).

There are some disabled people who are not known to the community. Participants stated that while they are working at grass root level they report to wereda social affairs office what they come across with people with impairment for possible support. The women affairs officers also give children through adoption to SOS working in Jimma. Last year they gave two children to SOS for adoption; they got one infant while travelling to the rural areas and the other child’s mother is a disabled woman. Since then they are following up these children. Participants think that the all of the above interventions are effective.

## Research officer addition

### Migrating to Sudan and Arab countries becoming one of the HTPs

Participants highlighted that migrating to Sudan and Arab countries is becoming one of HTPs in the wereda. Youngsters, especially young women who complete grade 10 drop out from school and migrate out to Sudan and other Arab countries. The reason for migration is seeking high income; however they are vulnerable to so many risks. There are many cases whereby women come back being HIV positive and pregnant. As it is difficult to convince them to work here rather than migrating out participants suggest that this work against migrating to Sudan and Arab countries needs great attention.

1. No I do not have an idea how big it is. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. During my discussion informally I come to know as many of them use the credit to buy fertilisers and improved seed. However, I do not get detail information from this office (Oromia Saving and Credit Association officials) as I couldn’t get an official assigned for Somodo Kebele. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)