

Somodo in 2013

Somodo borders Jimma town but the kebele centre is 17 kms from the centre of Jimma. There has been an all-weather main road through the kebele to Jimma since 2008 providing good access for vehicles. The kebele is 20 kms from Yebu, the wereda town, and 4 kms from Billida the nearest large market centre. There is no kebele town but there is ribbon development along the main road from Jimma to Limu Genet. The altitude is favourable for farming and the area is flat with some sloping land. There are three rivers. The good agro-climatic zone is suitable for many crops including improved varieties. The fertility of the clay loam soil is declining over time leading to a need for increasing fertiliser. There are 12 hectares of forest and wild animals eat crops and livestock.

The 11 *jiga* (1 mainly Yem, 3 mainly Sufi, 5 with *Wahabi* majorities and the others more mixed) still existed; the settlement was denser along the all-weather main road and roadside land was in demand but very expensive. There were 3 schools, a FTC, health post and kebele office in one compound, electricity (about a third of the households, not accessible in some *jiga*) and mobile phone (since 2006, now 1 phone in most households). There were minibuses and city buses on the main road, crowded on market days. An all-weather road connecting neighbouring kebeles to Somodo had been recently built with community labour and cash contributions; internal roads had not changed much but some PWs were organised to clear them. Rains were regularly good although in 2011 and 2012 they started late and the 2011 crop harvest was poor.

The population (1,209 households, 90 female-headed) was Oromo (81%), Yem (18%) and Dawro (1%); 85% Muslim, 10% Orthodox and 5% Protestant. The community was better off than in 2003 (better coffee farming, chat, remittances), with an estimated 17% very rich and rich, 66% middle and 17% poor, very poor and destitute; but inflation and falling coffee prices in the past two years had affected incomes. Most youth married late because it was difficult to establish an independent livelihood. Almost all children were at school but Grade 8 results were poor due to different issues related to inputs, teachers and students. Most students continuing to secondary education failed at Grade 10 and joblessness was discouraging. There were issues in implementing women's rights provisions. Most women continued to have little independence; before the ban in October 2013 many young women had legally migrated to Arab countries but this reportedly had not changed their status as most families did not save for them but spent the money on themselves. Diets were more diverse especially in richer households. Safe water was not an issue although people in some villages had to walk longer distances. HEWs had been in place since 2007. Their focus seemed to be latrines, vaccination, family planning, malaria prevention and treatment (there were severe epidemics in 2008 and 2009) and recently, a big push on skilled delivery (the nearest HC was in Belida, 4 km, and there was an ambulance from mid-2013) although with mixed results.

Land certification (by spouses jointly) had not been completed maybe because polygyny was still common. Land had been given to hundreds of youth (without certificates) but by 2013 many had left it, some land had been taken away from youth groups, and there was alleged corruption of kebele leaders in relation to land allocation. Crops grown included chat and eucalyptus - high demand and good market but no extension services; teff, wheat, barley, beans with varieties introduced by the DAs and Jimma ARC; and irrigated vegetables (85 farmers in February 2013). The local economy remained dependent on coffee and maize. The falling coffee price (by half from 2010 to 2012) hit coffee growers, local traders and 'investors' (outsiders owning washing plants) who in turn, were unable in 2013 to advance money for the traders to lend to farmers (who repay in coffee) – yet many needed these loans to buy inputs for their other crops. Credit was available from WALKO for those eligible (an estimated 60 people had taken a loan, uptake was low partly due to *Wahabi* influence) but not from the SC which provided fertiliser and seeds – although in 2013 the SC had arranged for credit from WALKO given the breakdown in the coffee lending chain. The extension services paid much attention to coffee production (improved varieties – the DAs recently had bred 1 million seedlings; training on handling techniques; quality control at collection points) and this was

appreciated. Some people wanted the SC to invest in a coffee washing plant; others thought the SC could not compete with the outside investors.

There were issues with supply and uptake of modern inputs, especially for maize. The 2011 and 2012 harvests were poor and some attributed this to poor quality SC seeds; the seeds seemed suitable for some parts of the kebele and not others. In 2012 only 35% used inputs willingly; some were threatened with prison. What farmers said they would buy was more than they actually did buy leading the DAs and SC to over-estimate needs which resulted in financial losses for the SC left with unsold surpluses. Farmers appreciated the Jimma ARC as they demonstrated each activity practically and followed up closely. In 2013 for the first time ever DAs got some funds and undertook demonstrations on the FTC land. Irrigation was expanding: a few farmers followed outside investors who showed the way with pump/furrow irrigation on the Abay River; others used water from wells; most used wetland cultivation. There was no wereda support but a new and energetic crop DA said he planned to address this.

There were fewer cattle than in 2003 due to land and fodder shortage but the quality was gradually improving; artificial insemination was beginning to take off and many fed cattle at home. The DA wanted to introduce modern milk production techniques and link producers to Jimma market. Oxen and shoat fattening was expanding. Livestock extension also focused on modern honey production but the kebele lacked an extractor and moulder and modern hives were expensive. Coffee harvesting and trade were major but seasonal occupations for many. There was daily labour on other agricultural tasks and in Jimma (many commuted daily). There were grain mills, many shops of various sizes, tea-houses, local drink houses in the Christian area, 2 restaurants, petty service providers, transport service providers, and carpenters, including a self-initiated small group of youth who bought machines to produce furniture which seemed promising. Apart from three stone cooperatives, one successful for a while but all three non-functional by November 2013, nothing was done for the youth. Many migrated (male urban migration and illegal migration to Sudan, female mainly legal migration to Arab countries), which injected cash into the local economy but reduced the community's young labour force. Some shop-owners were complaining that they had to pay taxes in excess of their income, and some youth with shops closed them and migrated.

There continued to be conflicts and tension between religious groups, e.g. Muslims who occupied all top leadership positions were accused of 'hidden negligence'; and tensions between Sufi and *Wahabi* Muslims and between the government and *Wahabi* followers, e.g. when religious representatives were elected at kebele level. In the 11 *jiga iddir*s, leaders were also DT leaders and bridged with the kebele and mobilised people for development activities; *iddir* elders got cases from the kebele and social court and shared property in cases of divorces sent by the wereda court. Elders were trained by the wereda court and police to prevent conflicts during the coffee harvest. Both modernists and conservatives liked transport, grain mills, electricity and mobile phones. Modernists, including youth, also liked modern farm technologies although some youth did not want to engage in agriculture.

In 2005 many Yem voted for Kinijit and subsequently faced discrimination; in 2010 they voted for EPRDF and things became better. The 2013 local election led to shifts in the top kebele positions. There were mixed accounts of people's appreciation of the leaders, including allegations of corruption, non-Oromo Muslims feeling dominated and poor people feeling neglected. Some leaders said that the zones, DTs and 1-5s supposed to channel information, make people work together and monitor each other's activities and strengthen security, were appreciated but others said they were hated as 1-5s had been given input quotas to enforce on their members. In November 2013 organised female 1-5s were not functional but the DAs and HEWs said that of late the kebele officials, party leaders, DT leaders and 1-5s were supporting them better.

The federal MDG Fund provided better budgets for a number of programmes. The wereda plan was to complete inter-kebele road connection, work on education quality and safe water supply and

expand farming and non-farm activities. Key informants said that Somodo needed diversification through ox fattening, Artificial Insemination (AI) and milk production; irrigation; and wood- and metalwork for the youth.