# Somodo site-specific topic: Chat chewing

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For Somodo community, chewing chat is their best favourite and day to day activity. Almost all of the communities: men and women, boys and girls, old and young, Muslims and Christian are chewing. I observed that even women who were carrying on their backs going to markets and to grind crops were chewing. This surprised me very much since I did not experience before. In addition, both men and women were chewing while they were on meeting except very few of them. The kebele administrators chew during lunch time; unless they could not lead the meeting.

The other point that surprised me was young girls chat chewers. I met some girls in front of the tea shop and observed them chewing and carrying some leaves of chat on their hands. They were waiting for their mobiles to be charged in the tea shop since they were from village areas where there is no electricity. I discussed with them about some issues, their education, from where they came as an introduction. Then, I asked them about chat, why they chew, and problems related with chewing. They said that it is common for all the community including girls to chew chat. It has no side effects on them and has no reason for chewing and explained that they do not chew as much as the youths and adults.

It is common to see people chewing early in the morning. If they are not chewing and want to complain for someone to give them chat, they usually say, ‘afaan qullaa jirrakaa’ means we have nothing in our mouth. This implies that they have to chew, always have chat in their mouth. I heard this talking and observed while I was there for 12 days. Most of the community has chat in their garden and, but I observed them chewing day and night, I did not see them selling. I want to ask them how much of their chat product will be consumed by themselves. However, I could not get time for the interview.

My other observation about chat chewers was in Jimma town, in Aweto recreation centre. It was at about 6 pm that I wanted to take some rest at this centre since I was very tired on my way from Somodo. I observed a group of youths sitting together and chewing chat. In addition to this, some were smoking. All are males, and they had books and notebooks and were reading. I watched two groups who were nearer to me and one group were learning high school since they were reading textbooks for high schools. The other group, I thought, might be most probably from the university as they were older than the first group and were also reading their own notes.

To conclude, I thought and observed that chat chewing became a dominant habit in Somodo and in the town Jimma. I thought that it would hinder the development and economy of this kebele. Because part of their land is covered by chat plant from which most the production would be used for their daily consumption. I wrote this from my observation during my fieldwork at Somodo. I could not get time for interview, but want to share what I observed there.