

## Turufe in 2010

Turufe (abbreviated from Turufe Kechem(e/a) is one of three villages and the administrative centre of a larger kebele in Shashemene wereda in Oromia, not far from the border with the Southern region. The village is surrounded by two rivers and located on fairly flat terrain. It is adjacent to the town of Kuyera (3 kms), to which it lost some land in 2009, and not far from Shashemene (14 kms). Most people live in the central densely populated area of the village (legacy of the Derg villagisation) with piped water at several communal water points and electricity since 2008, obtained with help of an investor who installed an electric mill. The mobile phone network covers the area. The village is linked to Kuyera by a dirt road reaching the main road along which Kuyera and Shashemene are located. Access can be difficult at times of the year for the carts and Bajaj that can now be hired, as the dirt road is no longer regularly maintained by public works as in the past. The proximity of Kuyera and of the booming town of Shashemene (radically transformed and attracting investors since it became the zonal capital in 2006) goes a long way to explain what life looks like in Turufe – notably comparatively better infrastructure and access to a range of services (government and also big private sector expansion in Shashemene and missions in Kuyera involved in education and health), market opportunities for agricultural and other products and wage labour opportunities.

The population is mixed, ethnically with a majority of Oromo and significant minorities of migrants from both northern and southern Ethiopia established in Turufe since the imperial or Derg times as well as recent migrant labourers, and religiously with a majority of Muslims, and Orthodox Christian and Protestant minorities. Different groups in the community therefore have different social/family norms and outlooks on things like divorce (common among Amhara and Tigrayan, frowned upon among Oromo), female circumcision (shortly before birth among the Orom and southern migrants, soon after birth among the Amhara migrants), women's role and generally, the ideal-type household cycle. In 2004 it was estimated that 24% of the households were headed by women. Polygyny was present, with 11% of the male household heads reporting having a second wife.

Turufe is a food secure, surplus producing area, traditionally exporting potatoes and maize to Addis Ababa. Farmers also grow a variety of other crops, all based on rainfed agriculture, and rear livestock. There are many migrant labourers working as domestic workers for households or sharecropping land with them. Some men trade or are involved in informal businesses and brokering and local transport activities. A few richer men have shops or are engaged in lucrative trade. A few people with manual skills (e.g. carpentry, masonry) migrate for work. Women in Turufe engage in farm activities. Besides, they may earn an income from petty trade, running small shops and cafes in the village (a new trend), alcoholic drink preparation and sale – for which some women got credit from a private MFI. A few women have small businesses as traders or sewing clothes.

Pressure on land is high (and likely to increase with the emerging stronger women's rights, see below) and there are many landless youth. Recently the wereda organised a number of them in groups to engage in productive activities for which, after initial opposition by community members, they were given some land (for forestry and horticulture) but it is too early to judge the usefulness of this initiative which also will not meet the needs of most of the youth. Some (male) youth work locally as brokers for the potato trade. A few girls are engaged in road-selling, and some young women do hairdressing. However, due to land shortage and limited employment opportunities many youth leave the village. Many migrate to Shashemene and Kuyera (construction, transport) for the men, and the flower farms in Zway for the young women; some migrate farther away including abroad (including a few young women). In spite of the pressure on land, a plot of 15 hectares of communal land was recently given to an Ethiopian investor returning from Canada, although at the time of the fieldwork he still needed to get final approval from the wereda.

Issues of price, lack of credit, insufficient quantity, unreliable quality and lack of timeliness of supply are strong constraints on the use of fertiliser and improved seeds. The use of manure is being promoted but this is also limited; among others, poor farmers with not much livestock face a

problem. A few farmers have recently engaged in dairy production with crossbred cows and this seems promising as there is high milk demand in the cafes of Kuyera. But there are constraints which stop this from becoming more widespread: cows have to be bought in cash which is impossible for many farmers; concerns that feed is too expensive and cows might not be resistant to disease or could be stolen; problems with untimely artificial insemination services.

There is some credit provision, though at the moment it does not reach many people. A government-related MFI provides group-based loans but this is at the stage of awareness-raising and no group having been formed. One private MFI is working with women, and one NGO helped parents of children they were supporting to organise a savings and credit organisation.

There is evidence that women's rights to land are being established, and of significant progress with regard to other rights and reduction of harmful practices with tangible support of influential customary leaders (who took an oath against widow inheritance for instance) and the active involvement of local women playing role models (e.g. uncircumcised women testifying to easier childbearing). But women's involvement in local administration and politics remain minimal. Women domestic workers and their daughters are vulnerable to abuses and fear to report them.

The community has good access to curative health services in Kuyera at the old Shashemene hospital which is now a referral hospital as a new hospital was built in Shashemene. The community, calling on higher level authorities right up to the Regional President to whom they sent a delegation of elders financed by the local iddir, successfully resisted the plan to turn it into a nurses' college. There are also mission and private facilities in Kuyera and Shashemene (and a plan to build a health centre in the kebele). Given this comparatively good availability of curative services some people say that it would be better to close the health post which does not provide any of these. The prevention, nutrition and sanitation services provided by the HP as per government policy are widely considered as 'things for the women' – although two recent outbreaks of Acute Water Diarrhoea increased people's interest in using latrines. Albeit not yet widespread, the use of family planning is higher than average in the wereda, which people also link to the proximity of the services in town. The health post also does not provide pre and post-natal care. Women with complications have to be taken to the hospital; richer households can get help faster by calling transport and getting to towns' private services.

There is a full cycle primary school in another village of the kebele and a new Grade 4 school in Turufe. Many parents continue to send their children to the older complete school of Kuyera, said to be better. Children can also go to Kuyera and Shashemene for general and preparatory secondary education, which girls tend to do less as many stop to look for work or get married in their late teens. In the past many children started school late and dropped out once they reach secondary level, which the wereda has campaigned to change. There is a government TVET in Shashemene but officials consider it is insufficient to meet the demand. Children from richer families go for private tertiary education, a booming sector although wereda officials express concerns that education is of poor quality because of the money-oriented mind of the institutions' owners. Richer households, and also migrants keen to maintain links with other places in Ethiopia if they had to leave the area, educate their children outside Turufe. A few students from Turufe have attended university, and there are stories of educated people, some of whom got employed and others not.

Given Turufe's heterogeneity a number of broader developments are bound to have significant effects on the community. With the EPRDF policy of regionalisation, positions in the kebele administration are fully controlled by the Oromo. To some extent migrants tend to stick with people from their own group for certain activities (like joint herding) though other organisations are based on neighbourhoods or religions. Around the 2005 election there was unease among migrants recalling the Kembata expulsion of the early 1990s, and although these fears proved unfounded, as just noted some migrants have adopted a strategy of sending their offspring to live, study and work in local towns and in Addis Ababa, to maintain links outside of Turufe. Economically things are

complex: long-established migrants are not disadvantaged, but recent migrants form an underclass of domestic labourers. Religious tolerance prevails but there is a rise in fundamentalisms and some tension between followers of different religions, particularly related to young and poor people converting to Protestantism.

Turufe has been known as a place where youths are involved in theft, with gangs attacking people on their way to market. There seems to be no consensus as to whether this is being properly addressed and is reducing or not (with e.g. contradicting accounts on the effectiveness of the militia, wereda officials claiming progress with the recently established community police but a sense of dissatisfaction among community members with the conditions relating to justice, notably that it is not effective in tackling the problem of continuing theft).

Reflecting the community's broader outlook on education, the kebele leader, who trained as a DA after completing 12<sup>th</sup> grade, is taking a course at a private college in Shashemene. The manager has a diploma in social sciences from a private college. At the same time, the government is tapping the strength of local customary institutions: the wereda formalised the Aba Gada customary institution as a committee (on which two people from the kebele were elected), which sends people to kebeles to settle disputes which wereda officials say, is quite successful in Turufe.

The relationship between the community and the government, mediated by a large number of kebele and sub-kebele level government and party structures as elsewhere, seems to be neither particularly close nor intensely problematic, although as noted earlier at times the community mobilises against plans that it does not like (see above the story about the hospital; there was also popular resistance against the organisation of collective labour for harvesting by the sub-kebele government/party structures).