# Interviews with wereda officials re Sirba, East Shewa – Stage 3 questions

## Ada’a wereda

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## About the wereda

### Wereda policies and budget

Next to salary, development programmes and projects take the highest budget; these include rural roads, water, health post building and health extension programme expansion, Vet service provision, and FTCs building. One Health centre was also built in the wereda last year though building of HP is not done by wereda capacity. Road construction takes a huge amount of budget as 1 km of road construction requires a lot, next to roads, the drinking water project takes a big budget, and then health extension programs. Salary for civil servants takes 90-95%, which is a problem for working well on the above mentioned programs. The wereda has experienced and big salary holders, even those transferred from other places come here as it is a town. There are about 1400 civil savants at the wereda level.

The water programme needs more budget, the water office needs to have big machines to dig deep ground water so as to meet the needs of many that are in need of clean drinking water. Despite the fact that it is given second place in budget allocation, it is suffering from a lack of budget.

The MDG fund helped us positively, mainly on road construction, to link rural kebeles and link them with the wereda. With regards to health, it helped to expand HEP/health extension programme and capacitate the program, there are various funds for different health issues for HIV for instance from various sources that are managed by the wereda health bureau.

Vaccinations are done in the form of a campaign, and we have done it this year too. For it we use UNICEF, and government funds and other donors. Community mobilisation for toilet building through HEWs was done but this had no special fund at all. However, we had no other work done by campaign.

*Wereda progress*

The most successful programme in the wereda is natural resource rehabilitation; terracing, tree planting and soil conservation. The reason for this is, I think, that people in the community have got detailed awareness and could understand the advantages, because the rehabilitation could change the risk of soil erosion, they could feel the weather improvement and they were able to use grasses grown on hillsides etc. The wereda worked hard to raise awareness in the community and follow up and implement the programme routinely, even wereda leaders took part in the work sometimes to be a model and encourage community members. There is budget shortage for this program, because salaries are taking much of the budget. But the government structure from the region to the kebele gave it emphasis and this has helped the success despite the lack of budget.

The road project is still lagging behind, despite the effort from the wereda to keep the zone updated on the conditions; it is not going well with the schedule agreed, and there is a problem in quality as well. This has happened maybe because the authorities concerned are not working properly. This year there was a plan to construct about 60 km of rural roads but it has not started yet because the road for last year’s plan is not finished by the contractors/association who are skilled young engineers brought in to a cooperative by the government. Once these three groups are given the wereda contract, other contractors are not allowed to compete for bids for the next year’s road projects.

URRUP/Universal Rural Road Upgrading Programme is funded by the government and the wereda is not mandated to make decisions on this budget. There are three contractors who won the bid at the beginning and they have to do any upcoming road programme every year based on their performance. However, they didn’t do last year’s programmes and they were not given the remaining budget which also made the work stop, hence the budget for this year is now idle. This has created a pause in financing all contracts, but still we are applying to the road authority at Zone level, though there is no change or result yet.

The road project is a huge one and maybe the government fears that if the programme is decentralised, the wereda may not be able to carry out the management of such big project with huge amounts of money, but I suggest if professionals who are skilled in road works were assigned to the wereda and mandated to the wereda to follow up the accomplishment, it could work much better than this. The road project is a continuous program, and this should be given to the wereda to closely follow up. There should be capacity building given to the wereda, which will help us to carry out such responsibility, like trainings, HR assigning, etc.

There is also a gap in other programmes that we were expected to do; like in FTC expansion and HEP /Health Extension Programme and building of sectoral offices. This lagged behind the expectation of the zone. We had been given a 2.7 million birr budget for these programmes and to build sectoral offices, but the money is kept idle in the bank and there is no activity, because the budget just arrived in mid-year which is not part of the normal expected annual budget. It is given as a reward for excess-revenue collected last year, previously this fund/reward money was flexible to be used for any wereda priority but now we have been told to spend it on the above programmes only. The wereda on the other hand didn’t advertise the projects to attract bidders and begin the work on time which is our weakness.

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## NGOs in the wereda

There are about 11 NGOs functioning in the wereda but the most active ones are; RATSON, Kalehywot faith based NGO, Engage-Now Foundation, Passion Connects- Ethiopia, Kulech a local NGO, and Oromo Ras Gez.

The intervention areas are different, the wereda has 23 kebele and **RATSON** works in 18 kebeles. Recently just last month, 4 kebeles were transferred under the town administration and now we have only 23 kebeles. The programmes for RATSON are; children, education, HIV etc.

**Kalehywot**; works on education, water expansion, and HIV. Last year it provided 40 hand pump water points for the wereda. Kalehywot works on about 4 kebeles mainly. The programme was providing water to schools they build in the kebeles, and they pay teachers’ salaries for two years until the wereda takes it up. But the wereda negotiated and the water was expanded to more kebeles rather than being confined to schools in the four kebeles. That is why we could get those 40 water points to the community.

**Passion connects and Engage-Now NGOs;** work on women to bring them into associations and help them in financing small activities/IGA they may engage in. The latter NGO also works on health like building HPs, and building schools, and providing hand pump water, and this year it has plans to dig bore holes for which it took land from the wereda.

**Kulech NGO**; works on HIV mainly with women working in flower farms, in and around Debre Zeyt.

**Oromo- Ras Gez**; works on zero grazing programs. It intervenes in two kebeles; Kurkura and Kajima kebeles, though now both came under the town administration.

The legislation didn’t affect them/their work negatively because the NGOs functioning here are still here, and they are conducting their work as they did before. But they had to add other programmes like adding issues of HIV if they were confined to children only. Their contact with the wereda is now so close that they submit their plan, their report etc though some are still poor in doing things on time. There is a gap in the activities of the wereda which does not bring them together in one group to discuss issues of the working environment and their accomplishment. The contact is separate with each NGO, which is less productive.

I didn’t hear of any NGOs that failed to get fund due to the legislation, because I see that they are working more than they did before. For example *ENGAGE-NOW* was weak in doing work, and the quality of schools it built before was with wood and mud. Now it is building with bricks, the water points supplied by this NGO have also grown well.

Previously NGOs were bringing funds in the name of the community but they spent it on programmes as they wished. But now there is consultation with community members and they plan with the wereda administration. They should invite the wereda in any major planning session, which helped us to see and control how things should go. But still there are a few NGOs who are not doing well in this regard. Some invite only the relevant wereda sector like the Agriculture office if they are working in agriculture and they say we carried our duty by doing so. We are fighting to bring all the contact points to the wereda administration office.

## Investors

*Has land been leased to investors from outside?*

There were about 101 Investments managed by the wereda administration, but now most of them moved into the town administration when we gave up four of our kebeles to the town. We are left with 10, only three of them working in bull fattening, one Horti-crop/soil research consultant for those who want to engage in flower farms, and 2 Dairy and irrigation farms. The others are involved in fruit production, textile industry, brick factory, and the rest are Hotel and tourism.

For these 10 investments about 50 hectare of land was given out. Many of them are from other areas, mainly from AA, and from Holland. There is one farmer who is from Denkaka Kebele who took an investment license for Irrigation from underground water, by using electric power to pull out the water. This farmer has land and didn’t ask for land from the wereda.

The benefit of these investments is creating employment for people in the wereda, mainly for women, and they learn skills from these investments. The investors are providing water for the community, they are also providing farm tools for watershed management. The investments helped a lot for income earning/wereda earning. Before these investments, say in 2001, there was only 9 million birr wereda revenue, but now it is about 40 million. The wereda collects revenue from land leasing, tax from investors, businesses and land tax from farmers. The money is submitted to the Zone, and zones allocate annual budget for each weredas. But most of the investments moved into the town administration and we can’t get this budget next year, I fear that we might function with a government budget subsidy from zone/region.

There are others, about 13 groups, investing in mineral extraction but this is managed by the water, mineral and energy bureau. These investors are mainly extracting *POMIS/*ingredients for cement production, Stones, red-ash, used to fill the ground when construction of a building starts. POMIS has created environmental problems and soil erosion, which affected 4 kebeles. People are complaining about it.

The government decided not to give land on the Nazret- AA road until the road and railway construction plan and execution begins. However, now it is done and the construction has already begun therefore I think it is open. There is no free land; all of it is occupied by farmers, which might be taken away by paying compensation.

There is a plan for expanding investment, but the problem is displacing farmers, which requires a rehabilitation programme for those farmers. Still there is huge demand for land. An investor has asked for 100 hectares of land but at the moment we don’t have land to cover such huge land requests. The investors apply to our office, and we refer them to the zone only if it is up to 5 hectares. If it is more than this, the region is mandated to decide. The wereda facilitates it and supports investors in any issue in the wereda, providing information. Even though the zone is allowed to decide about any land which is less than 5 hectares, the region still should approve it.

## Kebele structures

With regard to the Kebele structure of Ude kebele; the diagram fits for our kebele structure. However, this kebele has two divisions, both an urban and rural kebele structure both of which contain the above structure. The kebele manager is a cabinet member for the urban kebele only, though he is hired for both. In the wereda there are four emerging towns and to administer these places differently the wereda decided to set up a municipality office as well as a separate kebele administration structure within the larger kebele structure. There is no lower level administration structure. For the party structure we have cells at community level. The problems occurred when the rural kebele administration structure was dealing with the emerging towns, but now we tried to set up the municipality and a separate kebele administration that could manage the town.

## Wereda report on Ude kebele of which Sirba is a sub-kebele

There is a working relationship with the kebeles that is based on reports, follow up of implementation of government programs, and we have continuous meetings and we contact cabinets frequently. Wereda administrators are given specific kebeles in order to give supportive supervision and follow up in that specific kebele. Ude kebele is one of the model kebeles, where people are linked to urban areas and they are more knowledgeable. That helped them to have much better capacity and awareness to implement intervention programs.

The problem in administering this kebele is illegal construction of houses that are mushrooming. It has become hard to control unplanned town development and land sales which are informal.

### Wereda’s future livelihood plans for the kebele

There is a plan to construct internal roads, in the town kebele, but we couldn’t implement it yet, due to budget shortage. Last year one road to the market and kebele office was upgraded in the kebele. There is one vet centre under construction, and we are about to build the health post which was burnt by accident.

There is a plan for agriculture and irrigation; there are various irrigations schemes including canals from rivers/traditional way, Modern building of a dam which is being constructed by Oromia regional government but which is not functioning yet, and pump based irrigation by diesel. The dam is paused due to the decreased water volume from the lake which they had intended to utilise. The plan is to irrigate 3782.75 hectare of land but only 3089.75 ha has been accomplished at the 3rd quarter according to the report and I hope the rest will be accomplished in the remaining quarter.

The harvest from this land was planned to be 892,328.5 quintals, and what has actually been harvested is 1,008,368 quintals of vegetables, mainly onions and tomato.

The plan now is to expand irrigation to 10 kebeles that have access to water in different forms. When the Big dam starts to function, the expansion will go up. There are boreholes dug by the federal government and we hope these will function soon and they will add to the expansion. Previously we relied on rainfall for farming, but people understand the concept of irrigation and its benefits. But limited market for the surplus is a problem for them, this has been caused by all farmers producing similar items and, since vegetables are perishable, they couldn’t store them. Besides, planting in the same season and harvesting at the same time is another problem. The other challenge is a lack of pesticide supply for vegetables at wereda level.

There is now a programme called AGP/a kind of Agricultural Growth and Productivity that encourages and supports farmers by providing inputs for irrigation. This is helping a lot

There is activity to help *farmers’ cooperatives* to encourage them to raise productivity, to provide consumption items for the community like oil, sugar etc and to get income and serve the community. This is to protect consumers in rural places from private traders’ high prices. They distribute the fertiliser we provide to them, and they buy crops and sell them to capacitate their cooperative with the profit. There is training for coop leaders, and there is a progress review with them. There are about 22 such cooperatives, and in some of them there are credit and saving associations created within the coops by the support of the wereda.

There is no plan to create non-farm employment, but as we expand investment and irrigation, we may have non-farm employment as a positive impact of incoming investments. We try to bring youth together in cooperatives and help them in mineral resource extractions mentioned above. On the watershed management area we planned to work on bee-keeping and vegetable production for youths and women in cooperation. There are no new investors coming to us, because we were told not to accept new investments until the railway and road construction to Adama has begun.

### Future Regional and Zone plans for the wereda?

The region is planning for all weredas to develop infrastructure, and bring development in agricultural production. Our wereda is a potential area in the production of *Teff* and other crops, in irrigation, and also the soil is more fertile than other weredas. Because of these factors, the federal government is giving it emphasis and trying to expand Irrigation.

In line with the plan mentioned by the region, the zone plans the same. When the regional government bureau workers shared out the zones for supportive supervision, the regional president took the zone to which our wereda belongs, and when the zone administrators shared out the weredas, the zone administrator himself took Ada (our wereda) for supportive supervision. Therefore this coincidence was an advantage which gives us more help.

The zone and the region now give much emphasis to the expansion of rural kebele linkages and drinking water expansion as well as irrigation in modern methods.

## Wereda relations with their neighbours?

There is a working relationship with all the 10 weredas and three towns in the zone. The following are weredas that are close to our boundaries; Gimbichu, Liben, and Lumea weredas. There are more opportunities to work closely with these weredas.

Review meetings are made here in our wereda by the zone with the above three weredas. And we host such meetings. There is no conflict or tension in resource, administration, and there is peaceful communication among people in neighbouring wereda. There is no communal land or resource that these weredas share and there is no other tension source.

There is a close, supportive relationship between the administration structure from the region to the kebele and within the community by using one-to-five groups and cells.

There is a check list given to kebeles for the measurement and listing of development activities in the kebeles, and there was a sense of competition among kebeles, which has helped us to achieve more than ever before. Competition among zones and weredas is also another area which brought motivation to bring success. There was experience sharing at all levels in review meetings. The reward so far was by congratulating food performers in meetings, but in the future there is a plan to give them new interventions in their kebele as a reward. The review meeting is every six months, and the rewards are annually decided.

As a remark; I see that there is a total shift of attention and effort to new periodical activities/programmes that come from the government and a neglect of other programmes which causes a low level of success in these existing programs. This is a problem from the region down to the kebeles. I wish we had integrated programme implementation and holistic effort.

## Nutrition in the wereda

The wereda health office continues nutritional assessment and growth monitoring in the different kebeles of the wereda. Besides, there is a community health programme by which the health experts provide nutritional advice/counselling to mothers and women’s groups. The counselling includes information on how to prepare a balanced diet at home. This is done every three months and the community knows the day as ‘Community health day’. There is also provision of Vitamin A and deworming (Albendazol) for children. During the three-month assessment, there is a nutrition assessment measure used such as MUAC measures. If there are cases of malnutrition, peanuts are supplied for treatment. There is also a stabilisation centre in a kebele known as Odunu (12 km east of Debre Zeit) where the malnourished children get treatment and supply. However, there have been no reports of malnutrition which led to the stabilisation centre. Despite this, the health centres in all the kebeles provide the treatment when as it is not severe malnutrition.

As the area is a surplus production area, malnutrition is not a problem. There are more than 2-3million quintals of teff produced from the wereda. According to the Ada’a wereda health office head, the wereda produces 1/3rd of the total national teff production. However, preparing balanced diet is still a problem.

Food demonstration is done in five health centres in the wereda where the wereda health office experts go to the kebeles every month and demonstrate balanced food preparation to the members of 1-5 development teams so that they can promote/disseminate the information to the other community members. The challenge here is that the demonstration has not been expanded to other kebeles. There is an NGO called Engine project under Save the Children which has helped for the program.

There is a FTC (Farmer’s training Centre) in a kebele called Godino selected to demonstrate garden vegetables. This FTC is supposed to be used as a model and demonstration site for all components of nutrition so that it can be expanded to other kebeles too.

There is no school feeding in the wereda. The health extension workers in all the health posts are supposed to teach the community about nutrition and demonstrate some of the important ways to prepare a balanced diet. Although there are drop in centres in the health centres, they are not equipped and are not systematised.

The wereda health office head suggests that nutrition is more linked with women. So, the 1-5 teams of women have to be strengthened and be well trained to provide the information to the other parts of the community. There is a big obstacle that the awareness of the community towards nutrition is very low. So intensive community awareness raising activities have to be done.

* Institutional strengthening –the health service system should be strengthened through training capacity building and necessary equipment should be provided to the health facilities.
* Develop agricultural products- diversification of the products will help people to get balanced food from their own farmlands. The technology and agricultural packages should be integrated. There has not been such integrated work of the agricultural packages and the health packages.
* Schools need support to serve as demonstration sites for the community.

## Maternal mortality in the wereda

The wereda health office provides different maternal services to reduce maternal mortality. The main intervention is to strengthen the 1-5 women’s team by providing trainings. The family planning services are provided in all health posts of the wereda. All health extension works are trained to provide all kinds of contraceptives such as injectables, tablets, and permanent implantations. Recently, 4 months ago, the HEWs were trained in insertion of implants and 800 women have inserted implants within the last four months. 96% of the women in the wereda use family planning services. Last year, it was 100%. The coverage reduced this year because there were some administrative changes and some kebeles were merged into this wereda while others had to go to the other wereda.

There is a vaccination service such as tetanus for pregnant and school age in schools. It is provided every three months at the health centres and health post.

There is also antenatal care where pregnant women and mothers get the services. These services are provided at the health post; but when there are cases of STI and HIV, they are referred to the health centres. There is PMTCT (Prevention of Mother To Child Transmission of HIV) service at the health centres aiming to ensure 0 HIV infections. When women are HIV positive, the first best option is to prevent pregnancy. But if pregnancy happens, the women have to get close follow up and should be provided with prophylaxis during delivery. After the child is born, medicines are provided and a blood test is done.

Delivery services are provided at the health centre where they get polite and kind treatments. In the past, the perception of the women towards the services at the health centres was not positive because of various problems such as lack of good quality of health service. There was a lack of polite service from the health workers (mothers were not welcomed by the HEW), lack of Ambulance service and lack of food after delivery as they travelled a long distance before and after delivery. Thus, to solve these problems, the health workers have received training on polite client services; and food (porridge) is provided to the delivered women, so that they feel at home. Besides, the following activities have been done to encourage pregnant mothers to deliver at the health facilities:

* Awareness creation activities through the 1-5 women groups. There is an agricultural extension army (men and women) and 1-5 teams of women for health packages that provide the important messages to the community.
* There is an event called the Pregnant mother’s conference which was started four months ago. It aims to sensitise pregnant women about the services provided at the health facilities.

- TTBA(Trained Traditional Birth Attendants). These women were trained to help in safe delivery services in the kebeles. There are about 46 TTBAs trained at wereda level. This training has helped to bring more pregnant women to the health facilities and to avoid some harmful traditional practices such as the Amechisa-a practice that newborn children shouldn’t be seen by an outsider before the amechisa ritual is performed by the skilled person. This is a ritual where a man or a woman who is known to perform the ritual comes to the new born child and pours some water and blesses him/her. This is done before any other person sees the new born child. After the ritual is performed, the child can be exposed to be seen by other people. It is believed that if a person sees the child before the ritual is performed, the child might be sick or may die. This belief had been a big challenge with the result that many infants died due to different infections while they could have been vaccinated on time and saved.

* There is also discussion between the wereda health officers and the HEWs at kebele level every month.
* The wereda health office also spent about 377,000 birr and provided all the health centres with Oxygen and other necessary equipment, which help to save people’s lives.
* 24 of the best health experts from the wereda were trained in Debre Zeit Hospital about safe delivery services and related topics.
* There is also a porridge eating ceremony after each mother delivers. The wereda health office provides the health centres with some flour, coffee, and charcoal so that the clients get family service and have a home environment.
* There is a national plan to provide each wereda in the country with an Ambulance to solve the transportation problem. The Ada’a wereda expects that an Ambulance will be provided in the near future. Despite this, the wereda health office has already got support of 5 bajaj from an NGO called RATSON. A driver has already been hired for one of the bajajs and the health office is trying to allocate some budget to hire more drivers.
* There is a Grain bank system that has been introduced to some kebeles where the community saves some flour/grain for the porridge ceremony and the grain can be sold to bring some income for the health post and health centres so that the community will be independent of the government’s flour support and has a sustainable functional system. This has been started in the health centres in the kebeles: Akako, Teleba, and Yerer. Some health centres will have to use their extra space in their compounds - rent them and earn some income. This will enable them to provide good quality service, to fulfil the necessary equipment and medicine supplies.

There are changes regarding services, including an increase in the rate of improved delivery services of 200% in the last year. During the last 9 months, there were 472 deliveries (over 50%) at the health services. The deliveries at the hospital have decreased because women can now get a safe delivery service at the health centres. It is expected that this data will increase when the Ambulance comes. The TBAs are rewarded when they assist women to deliver at the health facilities. They are given umbrellas, shoes, etc.

Although the HEWs are trained to provide clean delivery services, they are not encouraged to do delivery unless there is no other choice. It is encouraged that women should get a proper delivery service at the health centres. So far, there are 20 HEWs who are trained in 2004EC about providing clean delivery services.

There are 5 health posts (out of 23) which have electricity. This year, it has been planned that 11 health posts will get electricity and clean water services. All health posts have a separate delivery room.

## Preventive health services in the wereda

As a programme the preventive health service is effective. However, some of the HEWs are not happy with their profession and they don’t work as much as they are expected to work. There is high staff turn-over because they want to live in towns. Besides, their salary is too low to encourage them stay in the work. The HEWs have also drawbacks that:

* They are recruited from non-village areas so they lack interest to work in villages
* There was not enough preparation to train HEWs with all the preventive health packages within only 12 months. It is too short to complete all these packages. They didn’t get field work training before they completed their education
* The attitude of the HEWs is not changed and they still think about upgrading their profession. They are trained as HEWs only because they lack hope of another way of living .
* The nursing college which trains HEWs (Nursing School) has low capacity and has limitations to provide effective preventive health training.

There is a health development army in which women are members and are responsible to provide health related information. However, they also participate in Agriculture, IGAs, and etc programs.

Finally, the wereda health office head suggested the following points:

* All community members should actively participate in the preventive health packages
* It would be good to separate the responsibilities of the 1-5 teams, the health experts to focus only on health related packages.
* It would be good if some NGOs could support the health facilities in fulfilling the equipment and providing capacity building support.

## Credit programmes in the wereda

The name of the organisation is Small Scale Enterprise*, wajira Interprisi wan Microfti Tika* in Oromiffa.

The wereda provides credit for farm inputs through WALKO/OCSSC which means Oromia Credit and Saving Share Company. The credit is distributed in two ways: either our office organises small groups of associations and WALKO gives credit to this group; or individuals approach WALKO and they get credit without our involvement*.* The repayment is required annually for individual farmers, and WALKO officers should go to the rural Kebeles and collect the debts. There are some complaints from WALKO about indebtedness. Mostly those organised in groups/associations are reluctant to repay their debts. Individuals usually have some wealth, whereas those in groups are unemployed youths who are poor and are formed into an association. In the wereda there are no service cooperatives but there are MFIs, named BUSA GONGA, GASHA, EGEZA that are share companies /private, and NGO-based credit sources are the Passion Connects Ethiopia credit scheme and the Engage Now Foundation’s Credit and Saving Service. However, none of these actors are working in Ude/Sirba kebele except WALKO/OCSSC.

WALKO is working widely in the wereda. We organise associations and we provide them training and then we refer them to WALKO for credit access. The associations are required to save in WALKO. Most of the wereda is addressed by WALKO’s service and many farmers could access it, though not for each kebele. The amount of the credit given to associations is based on the business plan. There is no fixed limit but they will not consider very large plans, like more than 100,000 birr.

The contribution of WALKO in farming activities in the wereda is to enable farmers who used to rent out their land to get credit for farm inputs and enable them to plough their own land.

There is a shortage of manpower for the organisation WALKO/OCSSC because they don’t have a lawyer to work on repayments. They don’t have problems in capital. This year the saving is much higher than the credit lent out. Everyone who wants to take credit in an association needs to start with 20% savings and repay the down-payment every month after three months. The interest is calculated annually which is causing dissatisfaction by association members.

The repayment and saving is not this way for farmers, as they repay annually and they are not required to have an initial 20% saving from their loan. The association-based credit is governed by the wereda policy for associations, but the farmer’s credit from WALKO is governed by WALKO itself. The wereda is guarantor to the associations taking credit from WALKO, and if they are unable to pay their debts, the wereda administration office pays it.

There are village savings associations in four kebeles formed by our office, but there are about 15 village saving groups formed by the Office of the Cooperatives Association at the wereda level.

These associations are strong having high saving capital up to 250,000-500,000 birr and now they are asking our office to help them in auditing and other training on financial management. These groups have to pay interest but the interest rate is fair and it is used to build the association’s savings. Some associations make agreements with their members and charge a high interest rate so as to increase the association’s savings.

I am not sure that farmers could take a loan from the bank, because the required collateral includes urban houses and other non-farm properties. I think Banks only serve towns.

There are no other sources of credit except the ones mentioned above.

WALKO gives a large amount of credit, and has wide coverage. After WALKO, GASHA, BUSA MFIs are, in order, the next largest providers of credit in the wereda.

To develop the capacity of HR at WALKO, trainings and orientations on financial administration and customer care etc are given to the Kebele level WALKO officers. It is encouraging many groups and offices at Kebele level to save. These include: Individuals, Iddirs, Associations, Municipality, etc.

The finance for WALKO is from the government, but there is no clear plan of capacitating WALKO (funds from the government and support in human resources), but there is discussion in how to strengthen it in meetings with the wereda.

There is about 500,000 birr in unpaid loans by the Public Mobilisation and Organisation office from 6 years ago. This office was responsible for credit at the time. The WALKO’s unpaid debt is about 80, 000 birr, which is small amount compared to what has been lent out.

There is no insurance for crops. There is no plan even in the future to provide it. There is no insurance for livestock either. There is no plan to provide livestock insurance in the future.

## The wereda’s safe water programme

The office is named as Ada’a Wereda Water, Mineral and Energy office.

Since 2004, we have 111,000 people, not households, and in rural kebeles we have provided 121 public water points out of which 48 are taps and the rest are water wells/pumps. There is a plan to add 11 tapped water points in this working year/2005. There was one outbreak of AWD 4 years ago in one kebele, but there was no death because the health bureau could control the outbreak, and took quick measures. This year’s water expansion budget is from the Wereda and Oromia water Bureau. With regard to maintenance, the Ada'a wereda water office/our office works on minor maintenance, and if it is beyond our capacity, the zone and the region are also involved. There is a community committee that charges hhs every time they collect water and the income is used on maintenance. The Oromia regional bureau helps to maintain most of water points because the money collected by the committee from water users is very small. There is no plumbers’ store here, we get the items needed from the market. The region also gives us any spare parts available to them.

When pumps are broken it is expensive. It can cost more than 100,000 birr and some of the items are not available in the market. There are four tapped water points and two pump water points that are not functional because of the lack of maintenance.

There are five plumbers in our office. We had budget to employ only five workers, and we already hired five workers. There is no budget to hire more, though our office has great demand. The HR in this regard is not enough but we try to involve other staff who are doing something else but who are also trained in maintenance.

For the improvement of the service I suggest that we change to address our weaknesses. For example, our office spends money on underground water studies and get the results, but even when there are promising study results, the implementation is delayed for up to 10 years, so the service can’t be delivered despite a lot of studies done on groundwater. There was less focus on water previously but now there is greater emphasis on the importance of water, and recently the government is giving it much attention. Those old water points are now becoming dried up and some have less power, so there should be a regular study about the water capacity. The studies conducted before the water points were dug said that the points would be serviceable for only 15 years or so, but we have used them for more than this time and they now have less capacity. The shortage of pumps and generators is also a problem. Some water points are not able to serve the community. All wereda offices lack logistics, budgets and cars, including our office. The office has no car though we are expected to reach 23 rural kebeles and 3 rural towns. We reach all these kebeles using 4 motorbikes for 30 staff members and for transporting materials we always beg cars from the Agriculture, Health and other offices of the Wereda. Some nearer kebeles are addressed by paying for horse-carts and Bajaj. Transport problems cause delay in maintenance, and the provision and expansion of the service.

I know that my country has budget constraints but I want the government to give priority for water development and for water offices. If we can build enough water boreholes, it could help many people in the wereda.

## Marriage interventions

### Under-age marriage

Head of the wereda women’s and children’s Affairs office, support provided includes:

* To support the financial and economic empowerment of women, to enable them to be independent and to support themselves.
* The office organises women under different income generating activities such as poultry, fattening, petty trade, etc.
* Sensitises women about their constitutional duties and rights. It helps women to get legal resolutions regarding their family cases and marriage conflicts.
* To enable women to practice their rights by building their confidence and enhancing self-esteem, to learn about equality and about their reproductive health rights so that they can participate in prevention of different RH problems. At this time, in the wereda, there are several groups of women organised under self-help groups, intending to help each other economically and to be able to get health services through different community events and through the HEWs

Underage marriage is not such a big problem. Although it has been common to see marriages arranged by parents while the age of the spouses, and especially the girls, was under 18, this has largely reduced in the last 4-5 years. Despite this, it can’t be said that it has totally been stopped because there is no birth certificate which might be used as evidence of the age of the spouses. Identification of age has continued to be a big challenge when disputes arise regarding the age of the couples. When parents have disagreements with their daughters concerning the age and if they come to the court saying that the age of the child is already 18 years old, the court would produce no evidence of the age unless it requires medical evidence from hospitals.

The government’s interventions regarding underage marriage include raising the awareness of the community about the consequences of underage marriage by establishing such clubs as the girls’ club, virgin’s clubs and HIVAIDS clubs in schools. However, the problem still exists. Most girls in the wereda get married at the age of 15-17 years old, but this has shown a great reduction during the last two years.

* The police, the office of women and children’s affairs and the local security bodies have been working together to control the occurrence of underage marriage. Besides, the health and education offices of the wereda have been integrating their efforts against underage marriage.
* Within the 23 kebeles of the wereda, there are at least two HEW in each kebele who are working in disease prevention programs. Along with their work, they provide information about the disadvantages of underage marriage.
* An NGO called, RATSON (Youth and Child Development Organisation) supports the school clubs, providing them with materials to sensitise the community in school.
* The main problems in dealing with underage marriage are lack of evidence, lack of community participation and delayed reports. Many parents believe that 16 and 17 years old and the physical appearance of the girls are sufficient evidence of the maturity of the girls. The other concern is that the parents as well as the young girls have fears of been late to get married and to have children.
* Thus raising the awareness of the community about the legal, medical and social impacts of underage marriage has been suggested as the best mechanism to eliminate underage marriage in the wereda. Besides, integrating the efforts of the government sectors and NGO resources would be necessary for dynamic change in the practice.

### Abduction

It has been a very common practice, as if the community has taken to be a normal practice rather than an illegal practice for many years in the history of the community until a few decades ago. Despite the fact that the information about the harmfulness of abduction has been provided for more than ten years, through the involvement of government and NGOS, the practice continued to be part of the community’s daily life up until 5 years ago. The integrated efforts of the government and NGO sectors have brought about visible changes and the practice has reduced greatly.

Nevertheless, the risk of abduction for girls who have to travel a long distance to and from school remains. In the past, young girls were abducted when they were alone, fetching water, wood, going to marketplaces and to school. At this time, schools have been opened much closer to residences than in the past. Also, water boreholes, wells and water pumps are all over the villages and so the risk of abduction has greatly reduced. The problem is that young couples are likely to deliberately arrange abduction when they lose hope that their parents would be supportive of their marriage. When parents refuse the marriage of their children, the young couples conduct an abduction so that they can continue with their married life.

When abduction is forced and is reported to the court, it is illegal and the offender might be prisoned for 15-20 years.

There was a recent case of abduction reported by the parents of a girl who was abducted on her way back from school. The parents said that their daughter was also underage so she shouldn’t be married at this early age. The girl, however, said that she wanted to get married and that she is not underage. The debate was between the daughter and her parents concerning the right age of the girl to get married. Although the parents provided a school certificate as evidence of their daughter’s age, she claimed that her age was deliberately reduced when she was registered at school so that the school could accept her and didn’t refuse her for being overage to start grade one.

### Choice of marriage partner

Culturally, it is men who ask women to marry and this has continued to be normal behaviour till this time. Indeed, there are some tendencies of marriage proposals from women who have seen city life; but this is not common compared to the cultural norm that men ask. Changes are obvious in making decisions about whom to marry. Women and young girls are now able to choose their marriage partners rather than marrying a man who is selected by their parents.

According to the law, both couples have the right to choose their marriage partners and now marriages are having formal structure under the municipality offices.

### Polygyny

Not applicable

### Widow’s inheritance?

Not applicable

### Marriage to a dead wife’s sister

Not applicable

## Female circumcision

It occurs rarely in the last 5-6 years, but was common some ten years back

The women and child affairs office, RATSON, Kalehiwot church and all government sectors do work against female circumcision. This effort has been continuously done for about ten years. At this time, it has greatly reduced and is not so openly practised. Despite the fact that there are some parents who do the practice, the local community, especially the young girls, are aware of the illegality of female circumcision and are likely to collaborate in reporting cases to the local courts or to the women’s affairs office.

The school girls’ clubs as well as the virgin’s clubs have been actively participating in gathering information and reporting female circumcision cases. So, the practitioners are not now confident enough to do female circumcision. Besides, trainings and community awareness raising programmes have been done to eliminate female circumcision so that most of the practitioners are trained and have committed to quit the practice. Warnings and other legal measures have been taken against the practitioners so that most of them do not dare violate the law. Once they refuse to do female circumcision, there will be no community member who would seek their service.

## Violence against women

### Rape

There was a recent case of rape reported to the women’s and child affairs office. As it was reported about two months after the case was committed, resolving the case is so complicated. The man who was accused of abducting a young girl denied committing the offence and the girl was the only witness of the problem. Her parents strongly demanded legal resolution, but the court lacked evidence to make a decision. Lack of evidence, lack of sufficient information and delaying of the reporting of cases are the main challenges in resolving rape and abduction cases.

### Domestic male violence

Not many cases are reported to the office or to the court. Although it is common to beat wives and to physically harass marriage partners, it is mostly resolved by traditional ways through the local elders. However, there are at least 2 cases of physical harassment of wives by their husbands in a month. The women’s affairs office at kebele level (the head is also a cabinet member) takes responsibility to see such cases and gets a resolution before it goes to court.

## Women’s rights after divorce

It is reported that there has been an increasing rate of divorce, especially among young couples. Although divorces is not encouraged wherever possible, the court takes final decisions on all cases reported to it. The courts try to delay divorce cases deliberately and advise disputants to see their case calmly and decrease the probability of divorce. So, the court sends the case to be seen again by elders. Divorce is taken as a solution only if the local elders report that there is a basic problem which prevents the couple from living together and they believe that the couple’s marriage would bring further bad consequences for the couple and their family. However, divorce can also be granted when one member of the couple demands it. During the past two months, there were 20 marriage disputes and one ended in divorce, while the others were reconciled.

-it is suggested that the court should provide quick resolutions to divorce cases because most of the time properties of the family are hidden and are changed into the name of another non-family member so that they will not be considered when the marriage comes to an end. Most of the time, women are victims of such mischiefs by their husbands and relatives of their husbands.

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## Women’s rights after death of husband

The law provides women with full ownership rights after her husband’s death. She can own the whole property of the family and she can manage her children. She also has the right to re-marry.

## Women’s rights to inherit from parents

In the past, 20 years ago, it was difficult for women to inherit any property, especially land from their parents. There was perception that “A girl is someone’s property” which meant that she will be taken by a man and should not be given any property to take with her. As a man remains with his parents and his relatives after marriage, the family property was traced by the male line. However, the legal rights of women are now better practiced to give equal property inheritance rights to both males and females.

There is a certificate for land ownership which has the photographs and names of both husband and wife and their signature to ensure that the land is owned by both and neither of them can take separate decisions regarding the land.

## Other interventions to improve women’s status

At Kebele level there is a Women’s affairs head who is a member of the kebele cabinet. There are women’s leagues and women’s federations in each kebele. Their coordinated effort is to empower women economically, politically and socially. These all have structures at wereda level.

There is also a women’s association (although it has not yet expanded its membership to all kebeles) which tries to increase women’s economic participation by providing trainings such as income generating activities, credit and saving services, forming self-help groups, etc.

For any vacancy announcement, there is a special consideration of female applicants and there is affirmative action in schools to encourage female students

## Vulnerable women

Women living with HIV/AIDS, divorced women, women who live in faraway villages where there is no easy access to health, education, and market facilities, and women who have a very poor economic situation are considered to be vulnerable in the wereda. The Oromia Microfinance Office provides some IGA supports for women who live with HIV/AIDS. The respondent thinks that such programmes are helpful for women and that these should be expanded and reach the other vulnerable women. She suggested that the Wereda Women and Children’s affairs should have financial as well as material resources to reach all the women groups who are in need of help in the wereda. Thus, government and NGOs should give due attention to support the office and to enhance its capacity in dealing with women’s issues.