

Institute of Sidama Studies – Newsletter  
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*Malga hut style*

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## HU President's Message

It is an honour for me to extend my warm welcome to you, the readers of this newsletter. The Institute of Sidama Studies is one of the three Institutes of our university.



As it is known, Ethiopia is the home of cultural and linguistic mosaics, historical and natural heritages, deep-rooted indigenous knowledge, and ecological diversity, all of which have been maintained for centuries and handed down from generation to generation.

Yet, the identity of indigenous people and their ways of life are not well addressed that need to be rigorously researched, documented, preserved, and integrated into the system of the modern world. Our university, along other universities in the country, is contributing to the efforts of preserving indigenous knowledge and cultural heritage of our country.

As part of its efforts of research and community services, HU is addressing the needs of the nearby Sidama community in diverse ways in its education and research. The IoSS is established to carry out the above tasks.

May the years to come be years of success and accomplishment to the IoSS!

Sincerely

Dr Ayano Berasso (President, HU)

## Director's Message

The Institute of Sidama Studies (IoSS) of Hawassa University was established in July 2020. The mandate of the Institute is: to conduct Sidama related research; to promote culture and indigenous knowledge, to enable language development, and to establish library and documentation services.



Since its inception in the past year and half, IoSS has been working on capacity building and institutional infrastructure.

So far, IoSS has successfully completed a number of projects including conducting a need assessment and preparing a workshop on indigenous knowledge and *Enset* production. Moreover, our language development and promotion team are working to produce a quality dictionary that will support ongoing and future scholarship on Sidama studies as well as the standardisation of the language. We are also on the process of completing the resource library and documentation centre in the University main campus.

This Newsletter aims to inform all stakeholders about the recent activities of the Institute of Sidama Studies.

Sincerely

Dr Seyoum Yunkura (Director, IoSS)

## How IoSS was formed?

The Institute of Sidama Studies (IoSS) of Hawassa University was established in July 2020. Hawassa University, which is one of the biggest research universities in the country, is located in Sidama. The Sidama people, like other ethno-national groups of Ethiopia, have enormous indigenous knowledge and cultural practices; some of which are recognized at the global level. One example of the latter is the recognition of *Fichee-Cambalaalla*, the Sidama New Year celebration, by the UNESCO as one of the world's intangible heritages in 2014.

The main goal of the IoSS is to document, preserve, and promote the culture, indigenous knowledge, language, and overall socio-economic life of the Sidama people through comprehensive research. The Institute also incorporates a cultural museum unit where the material culture will be collected, stored, and made available for visitors and researchers interested in the Sidama ethnographic and historical studies.

The IoSS serves the following purposes for HU and the local community where the University is operating. First, it supports the HU's endeavour of thematic and disciplinary research as more than half of the thematic research areas of the

University are in the Sidama area. This further strengthens the HUs stand as a research university at the national level. Second, it will motivate and attract more researchers interested in studying Sidama's socio-economic life, culture, language, art, and history which in turn may expand the horizon of HU networking and partnership with other universities, organizations and research institutions.

Third, noting that we live in a dynamic world where the indigenous way of life and cultures are prone to changes, the IoSS serves as one of the institutes that will preserve and transmit the culture and indigenous knowledge of our country to the next generation.

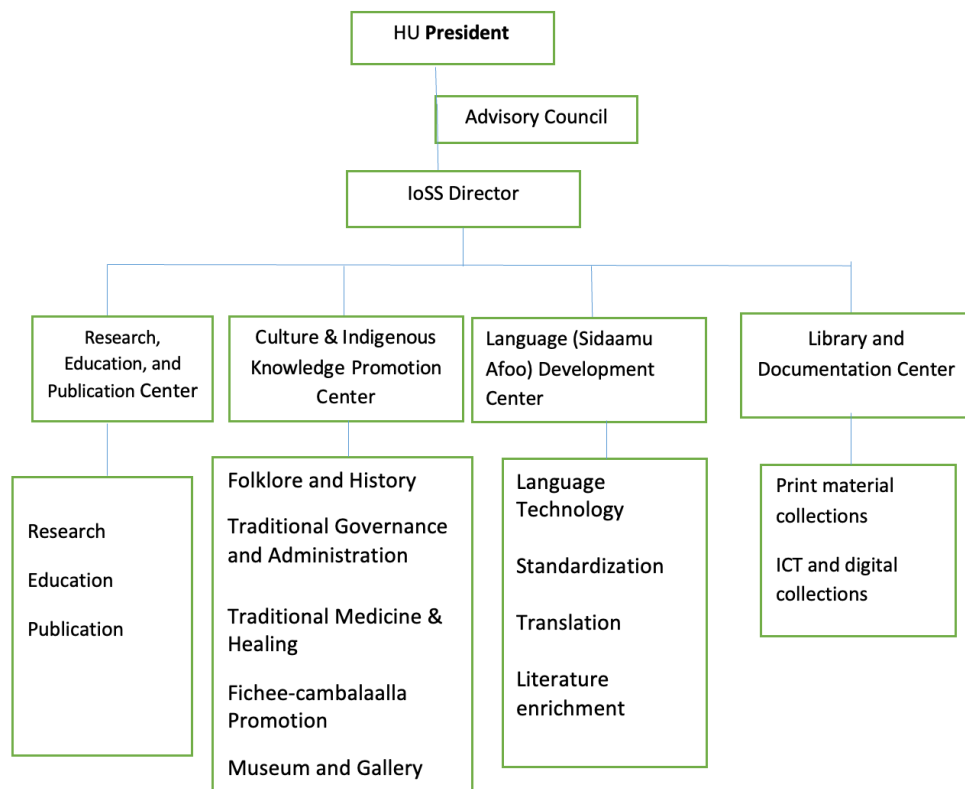
Finally, HU is currently offering the undergraduate programme in the Department of Sidaamu Afoo and Literature, which is part of developing local culture and language. IoSS will be a partner of the Department as the later advances to offer postgraduate degrees programs. The same principle of collaboration and partnership extends to the Sidama National Regional State administration and to international partners.

## Mission, Vision and Core Values of the Institute

<b>Mission</b>	Preserving and promoting the Sidama culture and indigenous knowledge through research, documentation, and education.
<b>Vision</b>	The IoSS aspires to become among the best culture and indigenous study institutes in Africa by 2030.
<b>Core Values</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freedom of Inquiry</li> <li>• Equality and dignity of all persons</li> <li>• Inclusiveness</li> <li>• Promoting innovation</li> <li>• Professional integrity</li> </ul>
<b>Objectives</b>	The overall objective of establishing the IoSS at HU is to undertake research, documentation, and promotion of research findings of all disciplines on the overall ways of life of Sidama people.

## IoSS Structure

Organizational and management structure



## IoSS Centres and Activities

### 1. Research, Education, and Publication Centre (REPC)

[Centre Lead: Henok Wariso]

Research, Education, and Publication Centre (REPC) initiates and executes multidisciplinary research projects on Sidama socioeconomic, cultural, environmental, and political issues per the HU thematic areas through inviting professional investigators collaborated from different disciplines.

In the last year, the following are some of the major activities accomplished in the 2021.

- a) Need assessment to identify priority areas of research in Sidama.
- b) Thematic research which includes 4 sub-components.
- c) Consultative workshop on indigenous knowledge.

#### **a) Need assessment**

The institute has conducted the need assessment (gap analysis) to work out priority research areas, to select the relevant scholars to establish criteria (intervention project) for action plans and to find solutions to the gaps identified by the assessment. The Institute also formed collaborative work with appropriate sector bureaus of the Sidama National Regional State in areas of identified needs to

advocate for the implementation of certain thematic research findings.

Consequently, the main findings revolved around the need for scientific study support to solve the problems; the inadequacy and poor quality of available base line data which cannot be used as benchmark. Moreover, the available data are biased due to the practice of using cooked data for the last three decades. Moreover, almost all respondents perceived that conducting research is important for successful accomplishment of the sectors. The result strictly revealed that most works waited to be done and there have not been base line data; what have been doing seems not supported by scientific research.

In general, the result indicated that the need of applying scientific study in the region is significant. Besides, the most urgent areas of the research needs collaborative work of the sectors and supporting institutions so as to work cooperatively in order to come up with fruitful solutions were identified. The assessment made us to conclude that it is not only important but also necessary for the concerned institutions to work collaboratively with different sectors or bureaus of Sidama National Regional State in order to bring incremental change in the region. The major recommendations made include: availing more advanced methods

of data recording system; promoting a habit of using research investigation; giving priority on identified gap of the major operational areas of the sectors; creating awareness among administrators about the importance of research application in solving problems; and inviting all stakeholder specially professional institutions to work collaboratively should be focusing areas for the successfulness SNRS service in providing quality service to its customers.

The need assessment was presented alongside a consultative *Workshop on Indigenous Knowledge Research*. The consultative workshop took place on 04 June 2021 at Hawassa University, Main Campus.

Subsequently, the Institute of Sidama Studies team travelled and observed some good experiences in two universities; namely Arba Minch and Wolkite where there are some trials made on Enset. Then the institute conducted a workshop on preserving the variety, production, processing and usage of Enset in which leading professional scholars of the universities who have long experience in conducting research investigation on Enset and made visible trials on modernizing its usage. Moreover, professionals from the regional Agriculture Bureau, and other partner institutions participated.

This workshop was held in HU on 20 November 2021 in Africa Hall.



- 1 Enset workshop

The workshop was attended by sixty (60) HU community, leading researchers from the colleges who have deep experience in conducting studies in Sidama region and some concerned experts from different departments of Hawassa city as well as Sidama National Regional State Bureaus.



Dr. Samuel Jilo described IK as the cultural and social experiences that drive a community to adapt certain values, practices, and norms to coexist in the environment sustainably. Thus, IK plays an indispensable role for environmental management and coping strategies as well as making people more resilient to environmental change.

Subsequently, Mr. Henok Wariso presented the need assessment result of priority research areas in Sidama National Regional State.

The results of the need assessment indicated that there are different major areas of research support needed from Hawassa University and its professionals in the following priority areas:

### **1. Culture Tourism and Sport Sector**

- Traditional medicine and healing practices
- Tourism potentials reserved areas (Aabbo Wonsho, Asaraado Meerro, Haweela Buunamo, Teelamo Xummaano).
- Customary legal system and governance among the Sidama,
- Sidaamu Afoo usage, dialects and standardization, preparing monolingual and multilingual dictionaries.
- Sidama cosmology and lunar calendar are the main research support areas.
- Harmful traditional practices such as FGM.

### **Education Sector:**

- Quality education.
- Incorporating indigenous knowledge in the education curriculum.
- Supporting ICT based teaching and learning practices.

### **Agriculture Sector**

- Traditional fertilizers,

- Different species of livestock,
- Quality of coffee production,
- Natural resource conservation,
- Market oriented agricultural production.

### **Women, Children, and Youth Sector**

- Participation of women and youth in economic, social, and political affairs,
- Child rights and management of unwanted pregnancy.

The participants suggested the following recommendations to IoSS and HU for future work:

- Inviting key local indigenous resource persons and collect, store, distil, disseminate their knowledge and lived experiences.
- Continuing and enhancing partnerships with other local as well as international HEIs.
- Enhancing linkages with relevant government agencies in each sector.
- Building a separate and well-designed edifice that reflects the culture of Sidama at Hawassa University.
- Preserving and working on those medicinal plants.
- Revitalizing and modernizing Sidama culture.
- Creating the functional network between the education sectors and HU so as professional researchers of the university are invited to conduct research.

- Incorporating the indigenous knowledge and culture in education system (curriculum)
- So long as IK is interdisciplinary, it has to be at the top in the structure, it has not to be treated as a unit.

#### b) Thematic research

Apart from conducting the needs assessment and collaborative workshop on IK, the IoSS is working on thematic research entitled: “*Sidama Indigenous Knowledge: An Assessment of Ethnomedicine, Customary Legal System, Language and Lunar Calendar*”. This research is being conducted and on a progress. The thematic research includes four interlinked subcomponents and the title of each sub-project and their focusing area are described below.

**Sub-component I:** “An Assessment of Sidama Traditional Medicine” aims to assess herbal and non-herbal traditional medicine among Sidama society so that medicinal plants that are commonly used in Sidama can be documented and preserved.

**Component II:** “*Assessing Sidama Customary Legal System*” aims to compressively studying traditional customary law and governance of Sidama society.

**Component III:** “*An Investigation of Sidaamu Afoo Use: Dialects, Terminology Development, and Writing Convention*” aims at investigating the use of Sidaamu Afoo in terminology development, dialect, and writing conventions so that contributions can be made to language planning policy decision.

**Component IV:** “**Exploring Cosmology and Time among the Sidama**” aims to investigate over all Sidama calendar system and assessing how the traditional Sidama calendar dates could be integrated with the conventional Ethiopia and Gregorian calendars. The activities of each sub-component of the thematic research are being carried out according to the planned scheduled and in a good progress.

## 2. Culture and Indigenous Knowledge Promotion Centre (CIKPC)

[Centre Lead: TBD]

Culture and Indigenous Knowledge Promotion Centre (CIKPC) implements IoSS plan and diverse activities that preserve and promote Sidama material and non-material culture. The major components in this regard include introducing and promoting *Fichee-Cambalaalla*, Sidama history, and the autobiography of people who have significant places in Sidama history;



indigenous medicine and healing practices; traditional law and governance, and music and art just to mention a few.

This CIKPC will collaborate with the Research, Education, and Publication Centre to prepare and distribute educational materials (such as leaflets, videos, audios, and performing arts) intended to educate the public, especially the young generation, on Sidama culture.

Through the museum and gallery, the centre strives to collect, store and preserve material cultures such as traditional tools, agricultural and production equipment, economic (marketing and exchange) goods, items used to prepare and serve food, and clothing, and attire.

The museum exhibit artifacts for visitors, and arrange planned events of the exhibition for elementary, junior, and high school students to enhance their knowledge of Sidama material culture and embedded indigenous knowledge. The Centre will also plan and execute training on selected indigenous issues of the Sidama culture.



*“During the festival, clan leaders advise the Sidama people to work hard, respect and support the elders, and abstain from cutting down indigenous trees, begging, indolence, false testimony and theft. The festival therefore enhances equity, good governance, social cohesion, peaceful co-existence and integration among Sidama clans and the diverse ethnic groups in Ethiopia.” [UNESCO](#)*

### 3. Language Development Centre (LDC)

[Centre Lead: Abraham Kachara]

Language Development Centre (LDC) also called Sidaamu Afoo Development Centre was established in December 2020.

The Centre undertakes activities that contribute to the advancement of Sidaamu Afoo to be the medium of research and publication at national and international forums. The Centre plans and implements various language enrichment packages such as digitizing, standardizing, translating, providing soft skill training, and publishing in the Sidama language.

According to the need assessment study, the core points forwarded include:

- Preparing advanced grammar book written in SidaamuAfoo
- Dictionaries – Monolingual dictionary
- Bilingual or trilingual dictionary
- Capacity building or skill-based trainings on Sidaamu Afoo usage and writing skills
- Translation and interpretation
- Speech (code switching and code-mixing related problem)
- Organizing professionals Associations
- Collecting oral literature
- Standardization related issues etc

Accordingly, the topics especially related with Sidaamu Afoo Comprehensive Monolingual Dictionary (*Kamalaancho Borqaalla*) found to be urgent and priority issues.

After workshop presentation and findings forwarded, Hawassa University soon took action and facilitated half day consultation programme. The programme was attended by HU higher officials including president, professionals from Hawassa Teachers Education College, and staff of Sidaamu Afoo and Literature Department. On the consultation, additional inputs gathered.



In order to carry out Sidaamu Afoo Comprehensive Monolingual Dictionary, three teams were formed, namely, Administrative, Consultative and Technical (language expert). Subsequently, experience sharing relating to what is working on Afaan Oromo took place. Then HU supported the training for 21 trainees inviting trainers from AAU prominent linguists. The Sidaamu Afoo Comprehensive Monolingual Dictionary is an ongoing project.

#### 4. Library and Documentation Centre (L&DC)

[Centre Lead: Asmamawu Demisse]

This Centre organizes and catalogues print and digital (including audio and videos) copies of publications of all disciplines on the Sidama to make them available for researchers and students. This includes compiling reports of the research conducted by HU researchers in the Sidama.

##### **Activities undertaken**

The development of museum and library centre is completed and a few weeks later the centre will be fully functional. Several materials are purchased and ready for the view of students and researchers.

This centre includes the overall Sidama nation cultural material displayed in a modern mirror displayer. Those collected cultural materials are used for different societal interaction, modern booking shelf with digital computerized system, cultural video and performing art displaying material also ready in a centre.

This centre helps students and researchers who want to study and know about Sidama indigenous culture. The Centre works to help develop Sidama material culture, artifact and indigenous way of life.

#### Future plans

**Research and education** – thematic research, translation of useful research works to Sidamu Afoo, produce newsletter, and plan the commencement of the Journal of Sidama Studies, etc.

**Indigenous knowledge** – Conduct a workshop on indigenous knowledge; Equip and furnish the museum, etc

**Language promotion** – Monolingual Dictionary, Create a database of Sidamu Afoo corpus, Produce triangular self-study guide book (pdf) web-based, and mobile app in association with Wachamo University, etc.

**Library and documentation** – Equip and furnish the library with books including digital, etc.

#### Contact Us

Institute of Sidama Studies can be reached at the Main campus of Hawassa University. Digitally, it has its website section on: <https://www.hu.edu.et/index.php/academic/institutes/institute-of-sidama-studies>

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