

MID-TERM EVALUATION REPORT

ON

PEACE BUILDING PROJECT BETWEEN OROMO PEOPLE IN EAST
WOLLEGA ZONE OROMIA REGIONAL STATE AND GUMUZ PEOPLE
IN KAMASHI ZONE, BENISHANGUL GUMUZ REGIONAL STATE

IMPLIMENTING ORGANIZATION: ETHIOPIAN EVANGELICAL
CHURCH MEKANE YESUS (EECMY)

SUBMITTED TO

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN FREE CHURCH OF NORWAY (ELFCN)

COMPILED BY EXTERNAL EVALUATORS:

ADRIAN J. FEHL

TAMRAT DEMISSIE

ADDIS ABABA

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Mid-Term Evaluation

April 2014

1. Project Profile

Project Title: Peace Building Project between Oromo people in East Wollega Zone, Oromia Regional State and Gumuz people in Kamashi Zone, Benishangul Gumuz Regional State.

Project Holder: The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) Peace Office.

Donor: The Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Norway (ELFCN).

Project Location: East Wollega Zone (Oromia) and Kamashi Zone (Didessa Valley)

Project Duration: 2012-2016 (five years).

Project Budget: 9,284,205 Birr

Beneficiaries: The population of the following four Woredas: Sassiga, Belojigonfoy, Haro-Limu and Yasow.

2. Background

In 2008 a conflict broke out between the Oromo and Gumuz people in Kamashi and Eastern Wollega Zones. The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus Peace Office and the Lutheran Free Church of Norway intervened into the situation.

After having a preliminary study and assessment of the situation and its challenges, the Oromo Gumuz Peace Project was prepared by the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus Peace Office and submitted to the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Norway.

3. Description of the Project

The project is for five years from 2012 to 2016 and has activities such as the following: Peace-building and conflict resolution trainings, trauma healing trainings, Training of Trainers (TOT) on preventing domestic violence, organizing reconciliation conferences, organizing and hosting sport festivals, and other activities.

Before the project officially started in 2012, there were different preparation activities in the pilot project in 2010 and 2011.

The main focus of the project deals with “extending peace and reconciliation efforts to the grass root levels, in Belojigonfoy, Sassiga, Yasow and Haro-Limu Woredas. As indicated earlier, peace and reconciliation conferences have been carried out at Woreda levels bringing together community elders, government officials, religious leaders, women and Youth groups. What remains to be done is activities promoting face to face engagements by elders at-gross root levels, that is, at peasants associations and villages.” (Excerpted directly from the project document on page 9, emphasis added.)

4. Evaluation Purpose

The main purposes of the evaluation are:

- a. What are the main results of the project - both positive and negative – and in all spheres of the affected societies?
- b. Considered the mid term of the project, to what extent have the objectives been reached?
- c. Are the project going according to plans, have activities been implemented? Consider project document # 3.7.
- d. Give recommendations to the continuation of the project up to year 2016.

5. Methodology used to evaluate the Project

- a. **Document Review:** Project documents, Annual Narrative Reports, Mid-Term Narrative Report, Progress Reports, and the Annual Income and Expenditure Financial Reports.
- b. **Field visit and observation:** Four main affected areas of the 2008 conflicts (Haro-Limu, Sassiga, Belojigonfoy, and Yasow Woredas)
- c. **Discussion with:** a) project staff at the Addis Ababa Peace Office b) key personnel at the Mekane Yesus HQ (especially members of the Management Committee responsible for making decisions concerning the project) c) project staff at the Nekempte Central Synod project office and d) key administrative personnel at the Central Synod Office.
- d. **Interviews:** General stakeholders, Woreda officials, police forces, schools, and faith based organizations.
- e. **Schedule:** The evaluation will take place between 14-30 April 2014.

6. Project achievements

- a. April 2012: Trauma Healing Training at Nekempte.
- b. August/September 2012: Conflict prevention training at Nejo, Gimbi, and Beghi.
- c. October 2012: Workshop to organize sport coordinating committee at Gimbi.
- d. 2012: Purchased project equipment (Video Camera, Digital Photo Camera, Photocopy machine and LCD projector).
- e. May 2013: Sport Festival at Soge town in Belojigonfoy Woreda.
- f. June 2013: TOT training to organize peace walks in Gimbi.
- g. July 2013: Peace walks occurred in 3 of the 4 target Woredas (Yasow excluded).
- h. August 2013: TOT for church leaders on peace building and conflict resolution in Gimbi.
- i. August 2013: Meeting in Assosa to plan for the establishment of two information centers in Gimbi and Nekempte.
- j. September 2013: TOT for church leaders and Government Officials on the Prevention of Domestic Violence.

- k. December 2013: Peace Seminar for Peace Committee members and Government Officials at Soge town in Belojigonfoy Woreda.

7. Project strengths

- a. The Sport Festival held in the project area at Belojigonfoy was a resounding success. Multiple people we interviewed from both the Oromo and Gumuz people groups cited this singular event as a highlight of the year. Thousands of people attended the festival, and the intended outcome was realized: people from both sides came together for a peaceful time of positive social interaction, competition and fun.
- b. TOT for church leaders was particularly effective in engaging these leaders to take leadership roles in their local peace committees.
- c. Ato Eyob Yishak, the project leader since early 2013, has worked very hard to organize the project activities despite many daunting obstacles beyond his control. Were it not for his personal initiative, the project would have seen almost no positive results.
- d. Financial accountability is strong. The Peace Office has opened a separate bank account for its funds, and an annual external audit has been conducted for both 2012 and 2013. All funds appear to have been used properly, and unused funds are correctly accounted for.
- e. Progress Reports for achieved activities have been written and sent to ELFCN.

8. Budget and resources

Per the Audited 2013 Financial Statement, the Fund balance as of December 31, 2013 was 2,635,811.01 birr.

9. Findings and analysis

a. Manpower Problems:

- 1) Ato Mamo Wejega (the author of the project and its original manager) left his position at the EECMY Peace Office in April 2013. The activities accomplished to this point in the project were extremely minimal, and the project was in jeopardy of complete failure.
- 2) Ato Eyob Mishak (Assistant Coordinator of the Peace Office) became the acting Coordinator and the defacto Project Manager at that time. Since his installment, Ato Eyob has done his best to fulfill the objectives of the project.
- 3) While the project called for the immediate hiring of a project coordinator at the Nekempte Project Office, no coordinator was hired until October 2013. At that time Kes Tamaru Tuli was hired on a contract basis (presumably to be renewed at the end of each contract period). The lack of a local project coordinator for the first 1 year and 9 months of the project greatly hindered the project staff from accomplishing the project activities.
- 4) While the project called for the immediate hiring of a two part-time staff at the Woreda level as project facilitators, no such people were ever hired.

Analysis: The lack of adequate and skilled manpower stands as one of the greatest weaknesses of the early phase of the project. Because the structure of the EECMY assigns the authority for hiring project staff to the Management Committee (MC) of the Church, responsibility for this project deficiency rests with the MC.

b. Project Office Location:

- 1) The EECMY Peace Office and Main Project Office is located in Addis Ababa, 580 km from the farthest Project Site (Yasow) and 345 km from the nearest Project Site (Sassiga).
- 2) The local Peace Office is located at the offices of the EECMY Central Synod in Nekempte, 260 km from the farthest Project Site (Yasow) and only 15 km from the nearest Project Site (Sassiga).

Analysis: The great distance from the Main Project Office to the Project Sites greatly limits the number of times the project staff can actually go to the project area. Because Ato Eyob (the principal trainer and project implementer) lives and works in Addis Ababa, his contact with people at the grass roots level of the project is also limited. In fact, up to the date of the evaluation, neither Ato Eyob nor Kes Tamiru had ever visited one of the four main project sites: Yasow.

c. Project Vehicle not purchased:

The process for purchasing a Toyota Landcruiser was initiated in 2012, but the prices of new vehicles had risen above the budgeted amount for a vehicle in the project. Therefore, the Management Committee (MC) decided to pursue the purchase of a used vehicle. The MC proved not to be nimble enough to respond in a timely manner to the fast-paced used vehicle market where decisions, deposits, and purchases happen very quickly.

After failing to buy a used vehicle already in the country, the MC decided to use a “traditional process” of buying a used vehicle from a “known importer” who had previously imported a vehicle for the EECMY. The church entered into an agreement with this “known importer” and paid him 750,000 birr as an advance payment. The church did not, however, require an “Advance Payment Guarantee Letter” from either a bank or an insurance company prior to the effected advance payment.

During our visit we were informed that the car dealer has plead bankruptcy and could not import the vehicle as contracted. We were also informed that EECMY is aggressively pursuing the matter in the legal courts of Ethiopia with the hope of recovering all or some of their advance payment.

Analysis: The lack of a project vehicle (in our opinion) has hampered the efforts of the project staff, but it has not had a devastating effect because the project staff has been able to sign out vehicles from the EECMY motor pool for needed trips to the project site. Had a vehicle been purchased as planned, it is a near certainty that more project activities would have been accomplished to this point.

d. Peaceful Condition between the Oromo and Gumuz

- 1) “The long-term goal of the project is to build a lasting peace and to normalize relations between the two communities.” (Project Document page 14, **3.7 Project goal and Objective**). In light of this main goal, it must be stated that our findings in the

Project areas were that a peaceful situation currently exists between the Gumuz and Oromo. Local interviews confirmed that there has been a normalization of relations in areas that were once highly volatile. Interviewed local people confirmed the following:

- a) There is no current active violence in the target areas.
- b) The two groups are once again using common markets in areas along the borders of the two areas.
- c) The government has made strides in officially demarcating the boundaries in many contested areas.
- d) The annual sport festival is a highlight of the year to which thousands of people again plan to attend.
- e) Business activities in the contested areas (especially Soge town and Yasow town) have returned to normal.
- f) While mistrust may still simmer in the hearts of some people, there is a general feeling that things are much “better” than they were 6 years ago at the height of the conflict.

Analysis: It was very encouraging to experience first-hand the attitude of peace that now exists in the target area. Virtually all of the government officials interviewed expressed their appreciation for the project and the support role it has in the peace process. Again and again, the sport festival was singled out as a focal point of the project's efforts. The overall feeling was one of receptivity to the work of the project, and this feeling needs to be capitalized on.

e. Government Initiative in creating Peace Clubs and Peace Committees

The Ethiopian government has been extremely active in helping to further the peace process in the project area. At the government's initiative, many positive strides have been made, including the following:

- 1) Virtually all high schools in the target area have peace clubs.
- 2) Virtually every peasant association in the target area has a peace committee.
- 3) The Ministry of Federal Affairs has worked to officially demarcate the boundaries in contested areas, and it is working with peace committees from both sides to get full acceptance of the new demarcations.
- 4) Every Woreda has a fully staffed and active Security Office with the specific goal of ensuring peace in the target area.

Analysis: In areas of conflict, it is common to hear comments like “the government isn't doing enough to help the peace process.” Fortunately, that is not the case in the project area. The government is taking a very active role, and this provides a great opportunity for the project to capitalize on the government's work and to support it with key initiatives.

f. Activities Cancelled

1) Drama (theatrical shows) planned for every year of the project have been cancelled. We were informed that bids to produce the planned dramas exceeded the budget allocated for their production.

2) Reading materials to be used by local peace clubs were not produced due to a lack of applicants willing to bid for their production. According to the Mid Project Narrative Report, an advertisement was posted three times at different places within the network of EECMY locations, but no EECMY applicant pursued the competition.

3) Education Modules on existing Ethiopian Laws addressing domestic violence were not created, and no explanation was given.

Analysis: The scope of project activities is incredibly broad, and the lack of manpower (as noted above) necessitated that some activities be abandoned. In the case of the drama, it seems that a proper feasibility study was not performed to accurately determine the cost of such a theatrical production. Once the real price was discovered, however, there did not seem to be the will or capacity on the part of the project staff to amend/revise the project budget as allowed in the Project Agreement.

In the case of the Peace Club Reading Materials, if no suitable EECMY member came forward in the application process, a search outside of EECMY should have been conducted. It was not.

g. Information Centers not in the Project Area

1) According to the Project Document, "Information Centers may be established at peasant associations, villages or at schools. Their duties will be to provide information to peace councils (committees) at Woredas wherever symptoms of conflict make appearance in their respective communities. The objective is to enable peace councils to handle (manage) conflicts before they flare up into violence." In stark contrast to this clear directive, the project personnel met with regional officials in Assosa in August 2013, and the result of the meeting was to establish two Information Centers in Gimbi and Nekempte.

Analysis: Neither Information Center is in the project area, and neither Information Center will achieve the intended result as stated in the above excerpt from the Project Document.

h. Virtually all trainings done outside the Project Area

1) The Project Document states that the main focus of the project deals with "extending peace and reconciliation efforts to the grass root levels, in Belojiganfoy, Sassiga, Yasow and Haro-Limu Woredas. As indicated earlier, peace and reconciliation conferences have been carried out at Woreda levels bringing together community elders, government officials, religious leaders, women and Youth groups. **What remains to be done is activities promoting face to face engagements by elders at-gross root levels, that is, at peasants associations and villages.**"

2) During our document review (and confirmed by our field visits to all four project sites), we noted that virtually all of the training activities completed to date have been conducted outside of the actual project area. The locations chosen for trainings have been the towns of Nekempte, Gimbi, Nejo, Mendi, and Beghi. While these locations are convenient for the Project Staff to reach, and they have comfortable accommodations and meeting halls,

the selection of venues for training outside of the project area is in direct opposition to the stated objective of the project.

Analysis: There are several problems with conducting trainings outside the project area.

1. The training is not always given to the intended beneficiaries from the grass roots level. Instead, the training is given to the same group of people that were trained in the pre-project years of 2010-2011 (community elders, government officials, and religious leaders). In the case of the Trauma Healing Training in Nekempte, which was intended to directly address individuals who had suffered trauma in the 2008 conflicts, training was given instead to community leaders.

2. The beneficiaries of the training must bear the burden of traveling far from their homes to the training sites.

3. All of the training sites are in Oromo areas, so any Gumuz participant must go to what is clearly not a “neutral” site for training. This simple fact has negatively effected participation at trainings. As an example, during the Trauma Healing Training at Nekempte in April 2012 there were 33 participants—29 Oromo and 4 Gumuz. During an interview with Gumuz people in Belojigonfoy, they explained the imbalance saying that “it was difficult to travel far away, we had schedule conflicts, and we couldn’t find escorts for female participants who wanted to go to the training.” It is our opinion that another reason (though not stated by the person being interviewed) was that the Gumuz felt it was “unfair” to have to go to training in an all-Oromo town not even in the project area.

4. Finally, unequal treatment of the two communities by the project staff will have the opposite effect from that intended by project. Instead of engendering a feeling of equality, cooperation and peace between the peoples, it will fan into flame feelings of inequality, injustice, and discord.

i. No activities at all conducted at the Yasow Project Site

While a sports team from Yasow participated in the Sports Festival held in Belojigonfoy in May 2013, no project activities have been conducted in the Yasow Woreda. Surprisingly, no project staff has even visited Yasow during the project period to date.

Analysis: Yasow is the most remote Project Site, 260 km from the Nekempte project office. The lack of a dedicated project vehicle has clearly hampered the project staff’s ability to travel to this site.

j. Highly Bureaucratic Procedures of EECMY

It was noted in the Project Document (page 20) that an identified weakness of the Peace Office is a “Low Level of Autonomy. This has resulted in highly bureaucratic procedures of fund release.” Unfortunately, this weakness has been realized during the early parts of the project.

Analysis: The Management Committee has maintained the authority to make all key decisions regarding the project, and some of these decisions have not been made in a timely manner—vehicle purchase, manpower increases, project amendments, etc.

k. Commitment of the church leadership

The EECMY has entered into an agreement with the donor on this very broad project to be implemented in four woredas spread out over a very large area. So far, two years and four months have passed since the beginning of the project, and as we have stated above, major portions of the projects have not been completed at all, and other portions have been done improperly.

Analysis: We are forced to raise the question: Is the EECMY church leadership really committed to managing this project in a way that will help it meet the project objectives? When we encounter such low results, we are led to doubt the commitment of the church leadership.

10. Evaluation Questions from the Terms of Reference

a. Outcome and impact.

- *Are the project activities adequate to realize the objectives within its lifetime? With reference to project document # 3.7. Project Goal and Objective?*

Yes. The activities of the project, if completed in accordance with the project, are adequate to help build a lasting peace between the Gumuz and Oromo people in the affected area.

- *Has the project contributed to peace and reconciliation in the affected area? And if so, how?*

Yes. The Sports Festival has been a tremendous success, well beyond the hopes of the project staff. More than trainings at distant sites, the sport festivals give a broad cross section of the targeted communities a chance to benefit from the efforts of the projects.

- *With reference to UNSCR 1325, how does the project address the conflict's affect on girls and women and their role in the peace and reconciliation process?*

Up to this point, the project has not addressed this issue.

- *With the reference to project document # 3.7.2, what strategies are in place to address gender issues, children and youth, in relation to the conflict and the local affected societies?*

The only strategy currently in place is to give training to a handful of government officials in the Women and Children Offices and urge them to give training to the local people in their areas.

- *Does the project affect the societies ability to resolve conflicts peacefully? If not what might be improved?*

Yes. TOT trainings aimed at local church leaders (who often are key members of local peace committees) have informed and empowered local leaders to help lead the peace process forward.

b. Project relevance.

- *Are the project's objectives and activities relevant to locally defined needs and priorities? If not, what changes can be made in order to ensure that the project activities are more relevant?*

Yes. If the project activities were performed in the target area in accordance with the project document locally defined needs would be met. A greater emphasis on the role of sport as an opportunity for peaceful social interaction should be made.

- *Should the direction of the project be changed to better reflect those needs and priorities?*

Yes. As noted above.

c. Project sustainability

- *To what extent does the project establish processes and systems that are likely to support a continued implementation of peace and reconciliation in the local society in the long term?*

Trainings given to community leaders and church leaders will have a lasting impact for the ongoing peace process, because these people do not change often. The same is true for the leaders of the peasant associations at the grass roots level. It is for these very reasons that the project is supposed to target these individuals and not government officials at the Woreda level. If the project is executed as planned at the grass roots level, a long-term foundation will be laid for an ongoing peace process.

- *Are the involved parties motivated and able to continue the peace and reconciliation process on their own, after the project period is over?*

Yes. We were very impressed by the motivation of those interviewed (at all levels) to be actively involved in the peace process. It is believed that this involvement will continue after the project concludes.

d. Project management/structure.

- *Are the project management and structure appropriate to ensure the implementation of project document and plans?*

No. Greater autonomy needs to be given to the Project Manager to make critical decisions regarding the project. Additionally, an immediate increase in manpower is needed to ensure the project activities are carried out. Finally, greater accountability needs to be put in place so that future trainings/activities will only be held in the project targeted area.

- *Is the level of communication and cooperation between EECMY and ELFCN supporting the implementation of the project?*

Yes. Electronic communication (email, Skype, etc) is in place, and it seems to be an effective way for information to be shared.

- *Are the structures and routines of the EECMY Peace Office appropriate and an effective management of the project? Are the project given needed administrative and financially support?*

No. The Project Office is too far from the project area. The structures of signing out vehicles and travelling hundreds of kms just to get to the project area do not support effective management. Likewise, the unwieldy process of hiring project staff has led to poor results. The project has been a give a basic level of administrative and financial support, but slow bureaucratic processes (as noted with the vehicle purchase and staff hiring) have undercut the effectiveness of the project.

- *Pros and cons of the long distance management of the project? Recommendations.*

Pros: 1. It is far cheaper not to have an ELFCN representative living in Ethiopia.

2. The absence of a foreigner in the project area allows for the local people to take greater ownership in the peace process and feel a greater sense of responsibility for its outcome.

Cons: 1. It is difficult for ELFCN to observe and gauge the effectiveness of project activities. They must rely on written progress reports.

2. It is difficult for ELFCN to fully understand the complexities of problems encountered by the project staff, and therefore the ability of ELFCN to recommend the best course of corrective action is also limited.

3. When corrective action is necessary in the project (for example in the failed attempt to purchase of vehicle), electronic communication to the EECMY leadership does not carry the same weight as a personal appearance by an ELFCN representative. The church leadership may be left with the impression that they are the sole decision makers about what is best for the project without meaningful input by ELFCN.

Recommendation: An annual visit to the field by an ELFCN representative is essential to minimize these limitations.

e. Recommendations and lessons

- *What has the evaluation revealed as the highlights of the project?*
These are stated above.
- *What are the major challenges for the project the coming years?*
These are stated above.
- *What are the major lessons learnt from this project so far?*
These are stated below.
- *Recommendations for the coming years.*

These are stated below.

11. Recommendations

a. Additional manpower should be immediately engaged. Ideally, an assistant coordinator should be hired at the Nekempte Peace Office, and four part-time local coordinators should be hired (one at each Woreda).

b. A project vehicle should be purchased immediately by following the established purchasing procedures. Instead of a Toyota Landcruiser, the church should purchase a new Toyota Double Cab Hilux pickup truck from a reliable importer (such as the Moenco Company of Ethiopia). An estimated cost of this vehicle is 1,300,000 birr, and the project account currently has a balance of 2,635,811 birr.

c. The project vehicle should be stationed at the Nekempte Peace Office close to the project area where it could primarily be used to directly support the activities in the project area.

d. All future trainings and workshops should only be conducted in the project areas, despite the personal discomfort this might mean for the project staff.

e. The loss of the advance payment of 750,000 birr given to a local importer without a guarantee letter or any form of collateral is the responsibility of the church leadership Management Committee. Therefore the church should reimburse this money from its account to the project fund account.

f. The church should continue to pursue legal action to recoup its lost money.

g. The Peace Office should be given greater autonomy to spend the allocated budget without the cumbersome procedure of routing all project decisions through the Management Committee.

h. If possible, a Project Committee should be established to manage the decisions of the project. The result would be a streamlined, more responsive, and more accountable management structure.

i. Lists of attendees for any workshop, training or conference must be maintained by the project office until the conclusion of the project.

j. When trying to fill employment opportunities for the project, if competent internal applicants from the EECMY are not found, an invitation should be extended to external applicants so the project execution may be accomplished.

k. The project should be amended to focus on the strengths experienced so far.

1) Sport festivals should be increased to a frequency of two times per year.

2) Trainings and a drama should be held concurrently with the sports festival when a great number of people are present and receptive to information about conflict resolution, trauma healing, and curbing domestic violence and violence against women.

i. The project should include the support of a government sponsored peace conference between the Gumuz and Oromo people in the Yasow/Haro Limu area by providing training

on conflict resolution. This support should also encourage small group discussions among the leaders of the local peace committees.

j. The project staff should redouble their efforts to develop teaching materials and guidelines to be used in Peace Clubs at schools.

k. The project should sponsor one local meeting of peasant association peace committees in each Woreda each year to facilitate the sharing of information and experience.

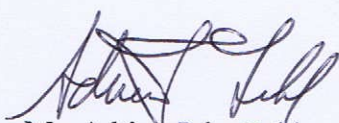
12. Conclusion

As stated above, we were very encouraged to find a prevailing attitude of peace among the Gumuz and Oromo people in the project areas at this time. How much credit for this result should be given to the Peace Project is difficult to determine. It is clear that the recent (2013) engagement by the project staff to the task at hand has at least supported the ongoing peace process. The 2013 Sport Festival achieved the exactly desired result: the targeted peoples from both communities were given a chance to mix, socialize, and create an atmosphere of understanding through sport activities. The anticipation by the local people for the upcoming Sports Festival is a testament to its effectiveness and power.

The engagement in the peace process by all of those interviewed and the receptivity of those same people for the continued involvement of the EECMY Peace Project in the peace process leads us to conclude that there is still a great opportunity for the Peace Project to positively affect the situation in the project areas.

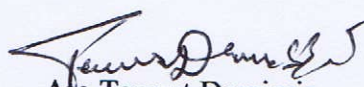
If the EECMY is willing to implement the changes listed above under “**Recommendations**” we conclude that the project should be allowed to continue and the goal and objectives of the project can still be met in the project timeframe.

If the EECMY, however, is unwilling to implement these changes immediately, we recommend that the project be discontinued.



Mr. Adrian John Fehl

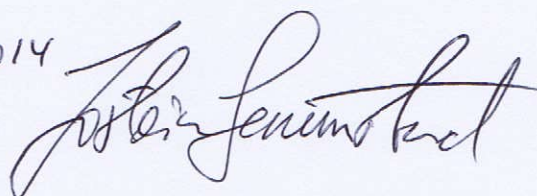
Evaluation Team Leader



Ato Tamrat Demissie

Evaluation Team Member

13/5-2014



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