# Report on activities of the Omotic Group
## (First phase of the NORHED Project – six months, January – June, 2014)

**Introduction**

The plan of action submitted earlier for the Omotic group had four components:
(a) Providing training workshop for local capacity building (Jinka and Arabminch),
(b) Participating on networking workshop,
(c) Conducting fieldwork on Hamar and Gamo languages, and
(d) Presenting a report on the workshop activities in Adama in July 2014 and a research paper in November 2014.

The following is a detailed report on each of the four major activities:

**(a) Training workshops for local capacity building**

Two training workshops were conducted by the Omotic group in Jinka, south Omo and in Araba Minch, Gamo Gofa.

**(i) Jinka, South Omo Zone**

The training workshop conducted in May 19-21, 2014, in Jinka town, South Omo Zone of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR). The training workshop was organized in order to build the capacity of elementary school teachers and education officials in the Department of Education of Debub Aari and Semien Aari woredas of the South Omo zone.  In both woredas, Aari is the language widely spoken and the local government has recently approved a newly designed orthography for the Aari language and a primer book with the aim of launching basic education in the mother tongue language.

Earlier, as part of the collaboration between the Academy of Ethiopian Languages and Cultures and the Culture and Tourism Bureau of the SNNPR, the orthography was designed by Moges Yigezu and series of workshops were conducted in the process of designing the orthography and getting it approved by the local authorities. In order to test the new orthography and the teaching material, the local authorities selected pilot schools and the first batch of teachers to be trained in the new writing system.

So the current intervention was in response to the need of the two woreda administrations and the objective was to build the capacity of elementary school teachers and facilitate the launching of the envisaged mother tongue education in the Aari language. Hence, the three-day intensive training was focused on discussions on mother tongue education in general and on how to read and write the new orthography of Aari and how to use the primer book prepared for grade 1 in particular.

The training was delivered by Binyam Sisay and Moges Yigezu to 32 trainees selected from the various primary schools and education departments. At the end of the training a certificate of attendance was awarded to the participants.

**(ii) Arab Minch, Gamo Gofa Zone**

A workshop was organized by Hirut Wolde-Mariam in Arbaminch that was held in May 23-30, 2014. Twenty persons participated in the workshop. The participants include members of the Zonal Education Office, teachers, and experts working in the Gamo-Gofa Cultural Center. In the workshop, the main objectives of the project and activities planned to be carried out in the project period have been clarified for participants. Discussions were held on various issues in order to create a common understanding on the matter. Also, concerns related to mother tongue education have been identified and discussed. At the end of the workshop different teams have been set up to collaborate with the researcher in different areas such as, preparation of grammar book, orthography, premier book etc. Contact persons who can communicate with the researcher have been identified for each team.

The Omotic group would like to thank the officials of both South Omo and Gamo Gafa zones for organizing and facilitating the training in a short time as well as for the enthusiasm and passion they have shown towards the training.

**(b) Participating on networking workshop**

For the networking workshop organized in Hawassa, from May 23 to 24, 2014, three participants from South Omo and one participant from Gamo Gofa were present and actively participated in the discussions. Besides, Moges Yigezu has presented a paper entitled 'Principles of orthographic design and challenges of mother tongue education' to the participants of the workshop. The other members of the Omotic group, Binyam Sisay and Hirut Woldemariam, have also actively participated in the workshop.

The workshop was well organized and the academic discussions held during the two days were enlightening and very stimulating. We think that the workshop was successful and has met its objectives. The Hawassa group deserves to be congratulated for organizing such a successful workshop against all odds.

**(c) Conducting fieldwork on Hamar and Gamo languages**

**(i) Field work on Hamar**

The field work on Hamar language was done for two weeks and the data collection was conducted in Wolayitta Soddo and Hawassa towns among the members of Hamar community. The fieldwork could not have been conducted in Hamar area partly due to logistics problems since public transportation was very difficult to find due to the rainy season.

During the two weeks fieldwork conducted by Binyam Sisay and Moges Yigezu the following data were collected transcribed and recorded from various Hamar speakers.

- Phonological and morphological data were recorded and transcribed: data on consonants and vowels, the syllable structure, gemination and pitch were recorded and transcribed for both articulatory and acoustic analyses; verb paradigms were also elicited

- Various types of speech corpora have been recorded (stories, descriptions, conversation, etc.); both audio and video data have been recorded simultaneously. Samples of the recording include:
    - The lion and the squirrel (8:07 minutes)

- The lion and the hyena (3:00 minutes)
- A husband and wife (10:32 minutes)
- The lion and other animals (3:05 minutes)
- Two friends (13:02)
- A man called Tire and the monsters (7:23 minutes)
- The development endeavors in Hamar - conversation between Ayika Bito and Fora Garsho (29:37)
- And others
- 5 hours recordings were planned for this trip but 6:30 hours of textual data were recorded by both researchers
- Of these 15 minutes recording were transcribed and translated
- Metadata used for recording audio and video data include:
  - Type of corpus
  - Duration
  - Name of informant
  - Age of informant
  - Gender of informant
  - Date of recordings
  - Place of recording
  - Other languages informants speak
  - Description about the text

Challenges encountered during the field work:

Among the challenges the group has faced include the remoteness of the area and the transportation problem and the timing of the fieldwork coincided with the hectic academic calendar, i.e. the end of the academic year where the researchers have multiple assignments and commitments to accomplish. Besides, during the recoding of corpus data handling both video and audio recordings simultaneously were a problem for a single researcher. Since the video had no camera stand, handling video camera, tape recorder and taking notes and managing the whole session at the same time found to be difficult for a researcher. This may have its own impact on quality of data to be collected.

**(ii) Field work on Gamo**

The field trip on Gamo was carried out in Arbaminch by Hirut Wolde-Mariam from July 28 – August 08, 2014. Informants who have a very good command of the language and the culture have been identified with the recommendation of the Educational Office of the zone.

During her stay in the fieldwork, the researcher has collected grammatical data and data for improvement of the Gamo orthography.

Recording of audio data was made in a Hotel in Arbaminch and in the Gamo Cultural Center. Before the recording sessions started, a preparatory session was held with consultants and the code of recording was discussed so that private and political issues would not be raised during the discussions. A total of about 2 hrs audio recording was made by the researcher. The topics of the corpus data include the following:

- The lazy boy
- Friendship of a donkey and a dog
- evilness pays back self
- The bird and the ape
- The meeting between rat and cat
- The will
- Lion and Gorilla-who gave birth?
- The sheep and the goat
- The creation of MOME mountain
- The name GAMO
- The lazy boy
- Why the bat live in the night
- Tiger and Fox
- A bird and an ape
- Sheep and goat

Data needed for improvement of Gamo Orthography:

Information on the problems of the Gamo orthography has been gathered from teachers who have been engaged with mother tongue education. From the interview, various elements of the current orthography that hold back mother tongue education and learning English as a second language have been identified. Currently, the researcher is working on a paper that addresses the various issues pertaining to the Gamo orthography. The paper aims to provide recommendations for the improvement of the orthography.

An agreement was made with the local authorities to hold on a seminar on the challenges and possible recommendations of the orthography of Gamo as part of an event that would be organized to celebrate "Cultural day" in the Gamo-Gofa Zone.

Some grammatical data has been also collected during the fieldwork. The data would be used to produce a grammar book of Gamo.

**(d) Presenting a report on the project activities**

A report was presented on the overall activities of the Omotic group by Moges Yigezu in July 25-27, 2014, at a research workshop conducted in Adama. The three researchers in the Omotic group have also actively participated in the workshop and provided feedback on the PhD concept papers presented by the PhD candidates supported by the NORHED project.

As agreed at the end of the research workshop in Adama, based on the field work conducted in June and July the three researchers will submit three papers for the November 2014 workshop.

**(e) Additional activities**

Two of the team members, Binyam Sisay and Moges Yigezu, have participated in a workshop organized by the Sociolinguistics group of the NORHED project in Hawassa in August 15-17? and gave training on "Language use in mass media in the Ethiopian context" for around 40 journalists.

**Appendixes:**

Sample pictures and other documents on the workshops conducted: