



Ethiopian Communities Mobilize to Support Conservation and Economic Development



The Ethiopia Sustainable Tourism Project (ESTA) is mobilizing local communities to enhance conservation and promote economic development throughout the Central and Southern Rift Valley, the Bale Mountains and Awash National Park.

In February 2010 Community Committees were established in three Community Conservation Areas (CCAs). The major functions of the CCA management committees are to present a cohesive voice for their respective area, as well as steward future community participation and action planning including the demarcation of the CCA and the development of bylaws and enforcement.

Nine member committees were elected from the cross section of each community incorporating youth groups, village elders, Fishery groups, crafts associations, women's groups, and Peasant association leaders. Each committee is comprised of community members who have experience coordinating community development and have a good reputation and are trusted by the community. These 9 member committees serve as the main voice of the community and facilitate information sharing between the community, local government and the ESTA project. The committees will also monitor project activities and serve as advisors for the project.



The establishment of the CCA management committees will lead to the collective prioritization of community natural resource management, biodiversity needs, and identification and understanding of needed financial and human resources to carry out community action plans. This in turn will strengthen the long term institutional capacity of the community to continue their long term self management, while supporting biodiversity conservation and creating alternative livelihoods through eco-tourism.

Following the establishment of the CCA management committees, ESTA organized an experience sharing visit for the members of the three CCA management committees in the central rift valley (Lake Ziway, Lepis and East Langano) to a successful ecotourism project- the Adaba-Dodolla forest dwellers association. During the trip the visitors exchanged ideas with the host community on the concept of community conservation, methods of conservation, and community tourism which contributed to raising awareness among the members of the committee and also encouraged most of them to organize themselves to conserve their natural resources and develop tourism as a means of improving their livelihoods.

Community mobilization is the critical first step in the ESTA project and will ensure that communities have a strong voice advancing their common vision, throughout the project and beyond. ESTA is a USAID-funded project.