



# Uniting to Sustain Ethiopia's Tourism

*When spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion. —Ethiopian Proverb*

As a first step, in pursuit of a common vision for responsibly managing Ethiopia's natural resources for sustainable tourism and economic development, 100 tourism stakeholders collaborated for a three-day workshop from October 22-24, 2008. Held in Sodere, Ethiopia, this was the first time the innovative participatory Whole-System-in-the-Room (WSR) planning workshop was implemented for the tourism sector of Ethiopia.

Sponsored by USAID, Ethiopia's Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and the Ethiopian Sustainable Tourism Alliance (ESTA), the "Creating Structure for Sustainable and Responsible Tourism in Ethiopia Workshop" aligned the goals of nine diverse stakeholder groups and developed a common road map for action. These stakeholder groups consisted of: active citizens, development organizations, federal government, media, private sector, regional

government, tourism associations, training and transportation organizations.

Through intensive negotiations, the stakeholders determined ten areas of common ground for continued work and development. These include: conserving and managing the environment, ensuring community participation, strengthening promotion and marketing, coordinating stakeholder involvement and communication, implementing standards and measures, promoting capacity building, developing policy, strengthening infrastructure, developing new tourism products, and promoting health and culture.

An initial idea generated from the WSR was to establish community conservation in wildlife areas. Some parts of Ethiopia have similar wildlife diversity as the famous game-parks in South and East Africa. This venture would include developing community-based management plans for these protected areas.

As stakeholders continue to develop innovative business strategies while sharing a common vision, the tourism in Ethiopia will increase, jobs will be created, and the environment will be protected.

Change happens when multiple parts of a complex system move together in one direction. Ethiopia's tourism has begun this change process—change that will be environmentally and economically sustainable.

