

## U.S Gov't Supports Ethiopian Sustainable Tourism Alliance To Develop National Geographic MapGuide

Written by EED Admin

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With the support from the U.S government, the Ethiopian Sustainable Tourism Alliance (ESTA) launched the development of a National Geographic MapGuide with a half day workshop.

The MapGuide will promote the natural, cultural and historic resources of Ethiopia's Central and Southern Rift Valleys, as part of ESTA's efforts to empower communities to earn income from tourism in order to mitigate natural resource degradation associated with unsustainable agricultural practices and deforestation, according to a statement the US Embassy sent to WIC today.

The project began with a start-up workshop, led by Jim Dion, Director of National Geographic's MapGuide initiative, which allowed key tourism stakeholders in Ethiopia to help determine the significant sites, themes and overall content of the MapGuide, it said.

"This MapGuide will be the second produced by National Geographic for Africa, representing an important partnership between National Geographic, ESTA, the Horn of Africa-Regional Environmental Center (HoA-REC), and the Ethiopian Ministry of Culture and Tourism," the statement said.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Deputy Mission Director, Jason Fraser opened the workshop for representatives of large tour operators, hotel and lodge owners and non-governmental and donor organizations providing support to develop Ethiopia's

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tourism sector, it added.

“By supporting ESTA and its promotion of eco-tourism, USAID is helping Ethiopians conserve the ecosystems that provide for their water, food, shelter and livelihoods,” Fraser said.

Representatives from the Ethiopian Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Oromia Bureau of Culture and Tourism, and Ethiopian Airlines also participated in the half day workshop, the statement noted.

The US government provided over 5.5 million USD to ESTA through USAID and the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) to support biodiversity conservation and economic development through sustainable tourism products, services and other opportunities, while mainstreaming HIV/AIDS prevention and awareness along the tourism value chain, it was noted.