

MELCA (Movement for Ecological
Learning and Community Action)
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Strategic Document
2009 - 2012

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Acronyms

ABN	African Biodiversity Network
AGRA	Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
GMO	Genetically Modified Organism
IGA	Income Generating Activities
MELCA	Movement for Ecological Learning and Community Action
PFM	Participatory Forest Management
SHEFA	Sheka Forest Alliance
SNNPR	Southern Nations Nationalities Peoples Region

Executive summary

MELCA (Movement for Ecological Learning and Community Action) marked its 4th year as an organization in 2008. Since its creation human induced climate change has become ever more visible as severe weather (floods and drought) wreak havoc on people and nature both in Ethiopia and globally.¹ The speed in which the environment is deteriorating has brought growing awareness and interest in the protection of bio-diversity and the traditional knowledge systems that protect it.

The context has brought added urgency to our work whose vision is to see empowered communities conserve their bio-cultural diversity and strengthen their livelihoods for a healthy ecosystem and society. This work is in three forest areas, namely Sheka, Bale and Menagesha Suba and with the forest communities that live there. Current population, economic and climatic trends as well as erosion of sustainable cultural practices especially threaten these forests.

This strategy is for the period 2009-12. The plan is to build on our successes and work with:

- Young people and elders to develop the knowledge of young people about the biocultural diversity and support them to create a movement that advocates for its conservation.
- Local communities and officials to develop the use of eco-mapping as a tool for natural resource planning and decision-making.
- Forest based communities to protect and rehabilitate their forests and strengthen their livelihoods and adapt to climate change.
- Decision-makers to understand the merits and demerits of GMOs, AGRA, Agrofuels and other issues that relate to economic growth and its affects on eco-systems
- Staff to develop an information system that meets MELCA's internal and external communication and decision-making needs.

¹ Discussion paper Climate Change and Human Vulnerability, Thow and Blois, March 2008.

1. The External Context

The forces that threaten biological and cultural diversity have the same origin: commercialization and commoditization of nature, deforestation, urbanization, migration, modern agriculture, food and clothing habits, globalization and domination by powerful organizations. Modern scientific and economic systems generally assume universal applicability of theories and technologies and work towards normalization and standardization of approaches for production and commercialization, and massification of consumption of food, clothing and other consumer goods. They tend to use generic policies of management of natural resources, rural agricultural and urban development, irrespective of the diversities in geographies and cultures. The initiatives to be taken to limit further reduction of biological and that of cultural diversity cannot be separated.

The advent of the 2007 food crisis soon followed by the global financial crisis has made the world more unpredictable and complex. Food prices in Ethiopia have continued to rise during this period and reports that the quality and quantity of food people are eating is decreasing continue to be heard. Particularly rising food prices have increased the depth and spread of poverty with reports heard of increasing numbers of people eating only one meal a day. In such a context the pressure to produce more food mounts often at the expense of the environment.

Recent trends in agricultural investment are on industrial forms of agriculture that threaten subsistence agriculture and the environment. The concern to increase food production has witnessed growing pressure from scientists to use genetically modified organisms (GMO) and the development of AGRA (Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa). In addition, the use of more land for agrofuels is destroying forests, depleting soils, displacing local communities, increasing the rush for land grabbing, polluting water bodies and exacerbating climate change.

The effects of human induced climate change are evident across Ethiopia. They are visibly seen in the on-going degradation of land, soil, forest and water resources. The Ethiopian government has long recognized the importance of the environment and signed most of the international environmental protocols (The

Convention on Biological Diversity, the Cartagena protocol, etc.). The Ethiopian constitution and other Ethiopian laws strongly advocate for the conservation of both biodiversity and culture. The problem is, knowledge about these laws is so low both among the Ethiopian public and the implementers that there are various instances of abuse of power and neglect of community rights. For example, since the Environmental Impact Assessment Proclamation № 299 of 2002 was adopted by the House of Peoples' Representatives, some efforts have been made to implement the law by the EPA and the relevant regional environmental organs, which were themselves established by Proclamation № 295 of 2002. In spite of these efforts, EIA in Ethiopia has until now remained weak. (Overview of EIA: Gaps and Challenges)

2. MELCA's strategy for 2009-12

The changes in the external context demanded that MELCA review its achievements and challenges to date and identify where to focus its efforts to influence decisions and practices on core issues of concern for protecting the well-being of people and nature in Ethiopia over the next few years.

This strategy development process started in February 2009 with staff reviewing their work individually and identifying their successes, strengths, constraints and vision for the future. All staff across MELCA then participated in a strategic planning workshop in DebreZeit in March. This included a re-visioning exercise and agreement on the outcomes they want to achieve over the 2009-2012 period. The vision, outcomes and their rationale were discussed at a meeting with some members of MELCA, including the board chairman, Dr. Melaku Werede and Chair of the General Assembly, Dr. Tewelde Berehan Gebre Egziabher, and some donors of MELCA. They provided constructive ideas for better articulating the outcomes and the activities for MELCA to focus on. These ideas are incorporated into this strategy.

This strategy is a guide to facilitate common action by all those working in MELCA as well as for those who work with MELCA. It is not a blueprint. It aims to build on the successes of MELCA to date and provide direction for actions that

will help to promote bio-cultural diversity and strengthen the livelihoods of people in the locations where we work while influencing government policies that will help build a healthy environment and society.

3. MELCA's Vision, Mission, and Values

Vision

To see empowered communities conserve their bio-cultural diversity and strengthen their livelihoods for a healthy ecosystem and society.

Mission

To work for the revival and enhancement of bio-cultural diversity and realization of sustainable livelihoods in Ethiopia through Research, Environmental Education, Participatory Mapping, Endogenous Development and Conservation of Ecosystems.

Values

- 1) Commitment:** Belief in our values, live for them and contribute to achieve goals.
 - 2) Honesty:** with ourselves, each other and everyone we contact with.
 - 3) Solidarity:** MELCA will stand in solidarity with those working for conservation of Nature, small-scale farmers, rural communities, indigenous peoples, etc.
 - 4) Transparency and accountability:** Responsible to ensure transparency and accountability as underlying principles of MELCA.
 - 5) Diversity:** We respect the diversity of life, people, their culture and ideas.
 - 6) Excellence:** we work to the maximum of our ability and skills to produce quality output.
 - 7) Equal opportunities:** in terms of gender, physical problems and ethnicity inclusion both within the organization and within the organizations work.
- MELCA defines Bio-cultural diversity and Endogenous Development as follows:

Bio-cultural diversity

MELCA defines bio-cultural diversity as the variety and distribution of biological and cultural phenomena. In addition to the biological elements, it includes phenomena such as worldviews, knowledge, values, religion, social and economic organization, languages, food production, health systems, art and artefacts. It suggests a process of mutual reinforcement between cultural and biological diversity and the importance of resilient and sustainable human-environment relationships.'

Endogenous Development

Endogenous means 'growing from within'. Endogenous development is, therefore, development based on people's own resources, strategies and initiatives. The available resources and solutions developed at the grassroots include material, socio-cultural and spiritual dimensions. It is local people with their own resources, values, knowledge and organisations who drive local development. Support to endogenous development aims at strengthening the resource base of the local population, enhancing their ability to integrate selected external elements into local practices and to broaden the options available to the people, without romanticising their local views and practices.

Everywhere in the world, communities are changing fast in response to economic and cultural changes that may have a local or a global origin. This process is generally accompanied by increasing domination of mainstream or modern knowledge systems and technologies. The prevailing education and research systems are based on mainstream knowledge and its underlying values. Development cooperation is often part of this process, as many development interventions favor external, modern technology. At the same time, and often unconsciously, these interventions promote western culture and values. While this has led to definite improvements, such as improved communication and increased world food production in certain areas, these developments have often marginalised the social cohesion, and the knowledge and values of communities they were supposed to serve.

4. MELCA's Current Status and Achievements

MELCA was established and registered as an Ethiopian Non-Governmental Organization in 2004 with a certificate number 1918. Since then we have focused our work in three forest areas of Ethiopia. The areas are the Sheka forest, the Bale Mountains and the Sebeta Suba Forest. Each of the areas is briefly described in boxes below.

Our successes include the following.

MELCA:

- has improved the awareness of both the local government and about 30,000 community members in Sheka on rights related to both culture and environment. We have also improved the capacity of government bodies, including Regional and Federal parliaments, on issues related to environmental and cultural rights. We have also managed to facilitate the registration of two clan leaders associations in Masha. This has helped community empowerment. The associations are negotiating with the local government for a section of the forest to be given to them to be managed as a Community Conserved Area.

The Sheka Forest

The Sheka zone is located in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS) in south-western Ethiopia. It covers about 2,175.25 km², out of which 47% is covered by forest, including bamboo. The altitudinal range of the areas in the zone falls between 900-2700 metres above sea level, and it receives high amounts of rainfall, with an average between 1800-2200 mm/year.

The Sheka forest is Ethiopia's last remaining forest. Increases in population, expansion of agricultural land, on-going large scale economic growth and development notions introduced from outside are causing the slow degradation of the forest and the declining of biocultural diversity. A baseline study in 2006 by an interdisciplinary team found that threats to the survival of Sheka forest have increased at an alarming rate. These changes are also threatening the livelihoods and culture of the people who live in the forest and depend on forest resources for their survival.

- has hosted the Sheka Forest Alliance (SheFA) and spearheaded its advocacy work. The SheFA is a grouping of 14 NGOs working on environment and human rights issues. We have produced strategies including the one for improving the EIA process in Ethiopia.

- has a website and has published various documents including seven books. The publications are used for education and advocacy purposes.
- The staffs of MELCA have increased to 17. We have a management system with financial, administrative and other documents in place. In this way, we can say that we have laid a base for institutionalization. We also have full capacity in terms of office materials. We have also managed to raise funding for our activities from various sources.
- has managed to improve the livelihood of youth and some member of marginalized communities in Suba, Bale and Sheka. For example, youth trained in entrepreneurship have become major suppliers in fuel wood saving stoves in Goba town, Bale.
- has managed to create a powerful program called SEGNI by combining experiential learning methodologies from South Africa, Botswana and Ethiopia. Since its beginning, 1,232 youths from 25 schools and universities in Bale and 30 schools in Suba, have participated. Those who have passed through this process have shown marked improvement in their behaviour towards the environment and have already taken self initiated activities including the

Bale Mountains

The Bale Mountains National Park is located 400 km southeast of Addis Ababa in Oromia National Regional State in South-eastern Ethiopia. It belongs to the Bale-Arsi massif, which forms the western section of the south-eastern Ethiopian highlands. The Bale Mountains National Park is the most important conservation area in Ethiopia (FDRE, 2005). It is the world's largest Afroalpine area and encompasses the second largest moist tropical forest in Ethiopia. The Bale Mountains are a centre of endemism, and are the most important area for a number of threatened Ethiopian endemics in all taxa.

The Bale Mountains are also a "Water tower", being the origin of major rivers of regional importance and has dry season water-holding capacity in its swamps and lakes. This hydrological system is of critical importance to some 12 million downstream users. Bale is also very important from other social and cultural aspects, with local communities partially or totally dependant on many of its natural resources such as grass, non-timber forest products and fuel wood. With its scenery, biological and cultural attractions, the Bale Mountains have great potential for tourism although this is currently largely untapped.

Menagesha Suba

Menagesha Suba could be called the 'oldest protected area in Africa': it was designated as a 'crown forest' by Emperor Zera Yacob (1434-1468), and is one of the best remaining examples of dry Afro-montane forest. The area is located on the slopes of Mount Wechecha in Oromia Regional State. It is an extinct volcano with 30 different species of mammals of which two, Yemenelik Dikkula (Menelik's Bushbuck) and Yenech Igir Ayit (White-footed Rat), are endemic, 180 bird species of which four species are endemic and many plant varieties. However despite its protected status the forest and its rich biodiversity are threatened due to growing settlement, livestock grazing, absence of forest land use policy and unclear ownership rights. Wood cutting for livelihood purposes is deforesting the area rapidly and shrinking the habitats of wildlife. Flow of water from small rivers and streams has decreased affecting the small-scale agricultural livelihood options of the local people.

planting of thousands of tree seedlings. Schools have organized cultural biodiversity celebrations in Suba and Bale.

- has started eco-cultural mapping and has already mapped the Masha Wereda. It is planning to map the whole of Sheka by 2009. We have already introduced the first PARTICIPATORY 3 Dimensional Model in Ethiopia in Bale. We are planning to spread the use of this model in other parts of Ethiopia.
- has started the biggest tree nursery in Bale and have already raised more than 500,000 thousand tree seedlings. Areas were rehabilitated with planting and soil and water conservation activities with the active participation of local communities.
- has managed to create a working relationship with government from local to the Federal level.
- is a member of strong networks both nationally and internationally in particular the African Biodiversity Network. Some of our programs are becoming examples to others.

5. Strategic Priorities for 2009-2012

MELCA plans to achieve six strategic priorities by 2012. These priorities are closely interrelated. This section describes the current situation, relates to each strategic priority, outlines the type of activities that MELCA will carry out to achieve the planned outcome and the indicators it will use to assess progress in relation to the outcome. Detailed annual plans in relationship to each outcome will be developed each year and are available upon request from MELCA.

5.1. Creating a youth movement through SEGNI (Seed) Program

The SEGNI program started in 2005 at Bale Mountains National Park. Since its inception, 1,232 youths from 25 different schools, universities and youth groups in Bale and 30 schools and youth groups in Suba have participated in the program. A maximum of 24 people, primarily youths, will be selected and mobilized from schools and youth groups around the rural and urban communities. They will be taken through an experiential learning process

(learning through participating and experiencing) for 5 days, with elders facilitating the learning.

Upon return to their schools they establish a SEGNI club. Clubs do a range of activities including cleaning the surrounding environment, planting seedlings, engaging with elders and speaking to their peers about the environment and the importance of listening to elders about ways to sustain the natural resource base (see box for details of the SEGNI program).

The greatest successes of the program are that there are 43 SEGNI clubs where students are active. Fourteen of these clubs are raising tree seedlings at their schools. Twenty eight clubs have started to plant indigenous trees. At woreda or town level SEGNI councils are formed. At present there are four councils that have members elected from each school. The council is composed of student. The council will mobilize youth to do active conservation work through rehabilitating degraded areas and educating their peers and their community.

SEGNI is an innovative approach to experiential learning about the environment and culture. The program takes youth and decision-makers into the wilderness, "on trail", to experience and learn about nature from traditional elders about traditional knowledge of biodiversity and conversation and to foster leadership. Through SEGNI program, MELCA seeks to create a sense of responsibility in youth towards environment and to their cultural legacy through approaches developed and tested over the past seven years both in South Africa and Ethiopia.

A maximum of 24 people, primarily youths, will be selected and mobilized from schools and youth groups around the rural and urban communities. They will be taken through an experiential learning process (learning through participating and experiencing) for 5 days, with elders facilitating the learning. The Ethiopian approach is called "discovering your cultural biodiversity." The process creates an environment where the youth learn from their communities about their traditional ecological knowledge. They document the results of their interaction with communities in writings, songs, art and drama. They also collect plants, animal materials, local food items, seeds, cultural artifacts, etc. Each year the youth come together to celebrate their work. This approach will be used as a follow up of the leadership building process called SEGNI and for ensuring the sustainability of the approach.

The programs objectives are to:

- To motivate youth to become eco-advocates through providing them a real opportunity to experience nature, culture and explore themselves.
- Influence the formal education system towards experiential student centred action learning and teaching which incorporates traditional ecological knowledge.
- Provide a deep experience of nature for decision makers and the media to encourage them to become active supporters of conservation.

Local government and school officials and local people are supportive of the work, which brings elders and youths together to conserve the natural resource base. Building on our successes to date, MELCA will focus on the activities outlined below. MELCA also plans to try and link this youth movement to other environmental youth movements in Ethiopia. Such collaborative efforts to promote environmental education and eco-system protection are more likely to affect change.

Activities planned during this strategy period are to:

- Continue to support the efforts of SEGNI clubs in 43 schools in Bale and Suba
- Develop the skills of members of these clubs to do and use eco-mapping (see objective 5.2)
- Start to establish the SEGNI program in an additional 16 schools in 2009.
- Depending on the success of these schools, to continue to expand the number of schools engaged in the program over the remaining years of the strategy.
- Establish and strengthen SEGNI councils
- Support CB Celebrations in Bale and Suba
- Continue to support all schools to raise seedlings and plantings
- With input from students, develop a bi-annual newsletter and ensure its distribution to promote links between clubs.
- Complete research that documents the development and successful eco-actions of clubs and how they are doing in linking together.
- Complete research and documentation to capture and communicate the traditional knowledge of elders about the eco-system and its conservation.

The expected **outcome** from this work is that by 2012 a proactive youth movement is started which promotes bio-cultural diversity and rehabilitates degraded areas.

The indicators to verify the success of this outcome are:

- Number of youth clubs established by their own initiative.
- Number of self initiated activities by clubs.
- Number of areas rehabilitated by the SEGNI clubs.
- Number of SEGNI councils operating.

5.2. Eco- Mapping for decision-making

At the moment government decisions about the use of natural resources are often made on the basis of little knowledge about the local context and or with lack of shared understanding with local communities about natural resource use and its relationship to local community cultural norms.

To promote a common understanding of natural resource availability, how these resources are currently used, by whom and for what purpose, MELCA began working with communities and local officials in Sheka to create eco-maps of the Sheka Zone. The maps are going to be used as a basis for developing a Participatory Management plan. The plan will hopefully used to guide decision related to land allocation and other development options.

In 2009 MELCA began working with communities in Bale to produce participatory three Dimensional Model (P3DM). The physical 3-dimensional representation of space offers users a so-called bird's eye view and a common perspective from which to acquire a holistic view of the landscape where landmarks and salient features are visible to every- one. The method is especially effective in portraying relatively extensive and remote areas, overcoming logistical and practical constraints to public participation in land/resource use planning and management. Manufacturing a relief model has positive effects in stimulating community cohesion because it gathers people to share information and concerns and frequently reinforces community self-actualisation through

the revival of local knowledge. Old people share history with young people, passing on legends and religious beliefs, and knowledge of sacred rites and places so essential to conserving tradition.

Using these maps communities and local officials will be encouraged to discuss the maps and reach a common understanding of the natural resources in their locations and how they are used. Based on this knowledge communities and officials will be supported to dialogue and reach informed decisions on the use of natural resource and on culture.

Activities planned during this strategy period are to

- Produce P3DM in Suba and Sheka to promote dialogue between local officials and communities
- Produce Eco-maps in Sheka
- Support follow up workshops with P3DMs to encourage discussion and decision-making between local government officials and community members on natural resources use and culture
- Gather information and document bio-cultural practices so that this is used for integration in to curriculum and informing decisions.
- Using the maps facilitates agreement of a Natural Resource Management Plan by each community in all of the project areas.

The expected **outcome** from this work is that by 2012 participatory eco-mapping processes enable local government officials, communities and youths to reach informed decisions on natural resource use and culture.

The indicators to verify the success of this outcome are:

- Number and types of decisions made using NRM plans.
- Number and actual use of maps for research and education purposes.

5.3. Forest Conservation and climate adaptation

As noted earlier, natural resource degradation is increasing at an alarming rate across Ethiopia causing climate change effects to be felt more acutely. Population

increase, expansion of agricultural land into forest areas and unchecked investment in forest areas are some of the causes of the destruction of Ethiopia's forests.

MELCA has focused its bio-cultural diversity efforts within three forest areas of Ethiopia – Sheka in SNNPR, Bale and Suba located in Oromiya Region. Work is with local communities and includes the activities described under 5.1 and 2. In addition work to conserve forests includes the establishment of a nursery site in Bale at Dinsho Wereda where 500,000 seedlings are planted. Mainly local communities do tree planting. They take the responsibility of maintaining the seedlings. MELCA has begun development of a Participatory Forest Management (PFM) process under the framework of integrating Population and Health with Environment (PHE).

Communities who live in forest areas depend on the natural resource base for their livelihoods. They use the forest as fuel, construction and medicine. Some of these livelihood practices have destructive impacts on forests and exacerbate climate change. In addition encroachment on forests is occurring as coffee plantations are expanded and more areas put under agricultural production.

Activities planned during this strategy period are to

- 3.5 ha tree plantation in schools and community plot of land.
- Start the PFM investigation stage in 2 kebeles of Dinsho Woreda in 2009 and implement the agreed approach with communities in 2009.
- Community consultation on rehabilitation with 500 people both in Bale and Suba Sebeta.
- Care for 5,000 planted tree seedlings by school communities and local communities in Bale and Suba Sebeta.
- Begin the integration of population, health and environment in Bale with one Kebele and extend this in to other project areas.
- Tree plantation on 5ha of land in schools and community plot of land In Bale and Suba Sebeta.

- Community consultation on rehabilitation with 900 people in Bale and Suba Sebeta.
- Care for 50,000 seedlings and plantation of 100,000 seedlings by communities in Bale and Suba.
- Care for 150,000 seedling and planting 100,000 tree seedling
- Care for 250,000 seedlings and plantation of 50,000 tree seedlings in Bale by local communities.

The expected **outcome** from this work is that by 2012 communities maintain and increase forest areas where MELCA works with them.

The indicators to verify the success of this outcome are:

- Number of communities engaged in forest conservation activities.
- Number of seedlings that are planted that survive.

5.4. Improving Livelihood of Communities

In 2006 MELCA began training 40 youths from Menagesha Suba and Berfeta youth groups on Entrepreneurship to build the capacity of youth in income generation and provided them with some money to start their business on sheep fattening and establishing tree nursery site. In addition in 2008 we began supporting 30 Menja community members to establish home gardens in Sheka. MELCA is training local communities in forest friendly livelihood activities including bee keeping, fuel saving stoves, poultry, ecological agriculture and growing other non timber forest products.

Activities planned during this strategy period are to

- Train the local communities on bee keeping, animal husbandry, home gardening, poultry, and tree nursery site management in all project areas.
- Provide trained people financial support for starting small scale livelihood activities.

- Monitor activities to verify what is working and what is not and identify improvements needed to ensure livelihood activities enable participants to have an income while conserving the forest.
- Organize bee keepers into associations and support their organizational development.

The expected **outcome** from this work is that by 2012 communities the income of communities will improve and there is reduced impact on forests within communities where IGA's are supported.

The indicators to verify the success of this outcome are:

- Number of trained individuals involved in Income Generating Activities (IGA)
- Number of IGA's generating income that also conserves forests.

5.5. Influencing Policy -makers

Over the last decade financial investment by the government to promote economic growth has continued to be a primary objective. This has increased the demand for land and other natural resources. While an environmental impact assessment law was passed by Parliament in 2002, its implementation has not followed. In addition, while other environmental policies and legislation have been passed over the last decade their enforcement has not followed.

Since 2005 MELCA has continued to educate itself and others on the legislation, proclamations and environmental policies of the Ethiopian government. For instance in 2005 interdisciplinary research was conducted in on land use change, laws related to culture and environment, anthropological study of the effect of investment on culture and forest valuation, and this research has informed the program of work in Sheka and is being used by the academia and civil society. In 2008, research on the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Policy was completed by two skilled researchers. Their findings were published in

“Overview of Environmental Impact Assessment: Gaps and Challenges” which was distributed to Parliamentarians, Environmental Protection Authority, Regional Environmental offices, university students, Environmental NGOs and individuals. It is used by MELCA to advocate with government for greater enforcement of EIA policy. Rapid Assessment of Biofuel Development was done in 2008 and is being used to inform policy and action related to land allocation for agrofuel development. We have also done research on how land is allocated in Ethiopia and the final result will be used to inform decision related to land allocation in Ethiopia.

MELCA is a member and co-founder of a coalition of 14 NGO’s called Sheka Forest Alliance. We plan with this coalition advocacy strategies and other forest related actions. We are part of the African Biodiversity Network (ABN) and other networks in Ethiopia such as the Green Forum. We share common objectives with these networks of working to conserve the eco-system and strengthen the livelihoods of the people who depend on it and plan to continue to be an active member in networks that share our values and objectives.

Over this strategy period, we will continue to monitor critical issues that are likely to affect policies on development and environment. There is an enormous pressure on Ethiopia to accept GMOs and be part of the AGRA initiative. Research will be done on the likely impact of pursuing different policy options in relation to the environment and development. The research will be documented and findings shared both with policy-makers, SEGNI youth clubs, elders and the networks we are a part of.

Activities planned during this strategy period are to

- Facilitate workshops for decision-makers each year, which inform their policy decisions on issues such as EIA, GMO’s, Agrofuels, AGRA, etc.
- Monitor and document developments on such issues.
- Prepare policy briefings and communication materials for decision makers and school youths on these critical issues.
- Lobby decision makers and parliamentarians.

- Coordinate the efforts of the SHeFA.
- Complete research and document the findings in reports for policy makers.
- Participate and contribute to the work of like minded networks.

The expected **outcome** from this work is that by 2012 debates among government decision-makers about the merits and demerits of GMOs, Agrofuels, AGRA, EIA and other issues related to environment and development increase.

The indicators to verify the success of this outcome are:

- Number of times parliamentarians raise these issues with relevant government bodies.
- Change in the number of EIA reports that the EPA review.

5.6. Strengthening MELCA's Information systems

At present MELCA has a website, experience of publishing books, DVDs and brochures to communicate our work. An annual plan and report have been done since 2006. Staff meetings are held weekly in all project locations including Addis Ababa to review what happened the previous week and discuss what is planned for the week ahead. This works well for internal communication purposes. We have recently hired an information and publication officer. This person with the MELCA administrator will take responsibility for building on the existing information system to strengthen it.

As we grow we recognize that we need to strengthen the way we report, particularly on our successes and the challenges faced in strengthening cultural biodiversity in the project areas where we work in. Improvements in the way we plan, monitor and evaluation also need to be developed so that we are not trying to do too much and over extend ourselves. We know that as an organization we need to learn what is working well and what is not and use this learning to make improvements to our work.

Activities planned during this strategy period are to

- Train at least 6 staff in report and proposal writing
- Train at least 6 staff in fund raising
- Update the MELCA website, brochures and other materials to reflect the content of this strategic plan and to communicate the work we do.
- Organize and produce a SEGNI newsletter or something similar that will promote development of the SEGNI Youth Movement to distribute by 2010
- Define and implement plan to capture and share the traditional knowledge of elders more widely.
- Publish and disseminate at least one research information piece for use by both local people and officials.
- Identify and implement appropriate ways to report back to communities on progress annually.
- Reflect annually on what works and what does not and make improvements in the program accordingly and document these reflections.
- Establish simple tables to monitor and record completion of activities.

The expected **outcome** from this work is that by 2012 MELCA will have an information system functioning that meets its communication and decision-making needs.

The indicators to verify the success of this outcome are:

- Number of staff that are able to write reports and proposals that meet MELCA's needs
- MELCA publishes a book, policy briefs and or documentary items annually.
- Staffs are satisfied with the information system and say it meets their needs.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

The strategy defines specific objectives, activities and the expected outcomes to be achieved over the next few years. Processes that are simple to carry out will

be used to collect information on what is done and how well it works. This will include an annual review and reflection session by MELCA staff in March each year. The reflection will be on the following questions: what was planned, what was done, what is working well, what improvements are needed, and what difference (the immediate impacts) activities are making in relationship to the outcomes planned. The learning from these internal reviews will be used to improve and adapt MELCA's activities so they are effective. In addition simple monitoring tables will be used to track completion of activities and the number of people involved in each.

In 2012 a participatory evaluation will be carried out with an insider-outsider team to assess progress in relationship to each of the expected outcomes. This will include discussions with participants in the various programs to understand what difference these programs are making for them and the improvements they want to see in future MELCA programs. The success indicators defined under each of these outcomes will be used to verify the level of progress towards achievement of the outcomes.

7. Major Assumptions and Risks

Our assumptions are that the Ethiopian government will continue to be concerned about the affects of development on the environment and society and welcome debate about policy options.

The other assumption is that local government will continue to work with us support our work.