

Praise the Environmental Hero

MELCA's Bale Project has been awarded by his Excellency Girma W/Giorgis the FDRE President for its remarkable achievements in the conservation and rehabilitation of degraded areas around Bale Mountains National Park. This has happened on the National Green Award Program which was held on July 21st, 2009 at the Hilton Hotel.

Before being an awardee on the National level, the project has been awarded as an outstanding winner from the Oromiya Regional State. The project is awarded mainly by its SEGNI program and tree planting activities. In 2005 MELCA has introduced its innovative way of linking elders and youth as a way of contributing to the intergenerational transfer of traditional ecological knowledge, reducing the degradation of the environment and culture, and protecting the few



remaining wilderness areas through a program called SEGNI (Seed). The SEGNI program takes youth into the wilderness, "on trail", to experience nature, learn about traditional knowledge of biodiversity and conservation, and promote leadership. The wilderness trails provided by the program involve five-night wilderness treks in national parks and forests under the tutelage of elders. The main objective of the program is to provide a genuine experience on nature and culture for children and youth who will be the future agents in environmental thinking and action. So far more than 30 courses, or trails, have been conducted, involving over 735 students and teachers from elementary schools, colleges and universities. Local decision makers have also participated in the trails. 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 planting of thousands of tree seedlings.

In addition to the SEGNI program, the project is honoured by its wide range of tree planting activities and rehabilitation of degraded areas. In the last couple of years, MELCA has established a big nursery site on 11,205.75m² plot of land and raised more than 500,000 indigenous tree seedlings including *Juniper* (*Juniperus procera*) and *Hagenia* (*Hagenia abyssinica*). These tree seedlings were distributed for local communities and planted around



degraded plot of land with the active participation of local communities. The survival rate of the planted trees are more than 75%. Due the above mentioned performances and other activities, MELCA's Bale Project has become the winner of the 2009 Green Award in the NGO Category. The National Green Award Program is organized by a local Forum for Environment.