

# Report on the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on Education for Sustainable Development, ESD Ethiopia *Partnership for Environmental Literacy and Sustainable Schools and Communities*

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Stakeholders comprising of government, religious leaders, traditional Abba Gada leaders, media honoured the 7<sup>th</sup> ESD Annual Conference

## 1. Introduction

The 7th Annual Conference was organized in partnership with the Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology (EGST), Network of Southern Ethiopia Colleges of Education (CE) and Network of Theological Institutions (TIs) on Education for Sustainable Development and hosted by the Dilla College of Education at the Delight Hotel from May 24-25, 2024

## 2. Goal and Objectives

**The overall goal** of the conference fits within the framework of global and national SDG/ESD 2030 and African Agenda 2063 which aims to build a more just and sustainable world through strengthening ESD and contributing to the achievement of the 17 SDGs. The **intermediate** aim is to support the integration of ESD in SDG policies and practices of higher educational institutions.

### Specific objectives:

1. to report back on the progress of individual colleges as network members, the two networks, and partnership with EGST and other stakeholders in government, CSO, and the private sector,
2. to plan for a continuous engagement as individual institutions and members of the networks,
3. to learn and share experiences and best practices between and among the members and networks and build capacity of the members.

4. to deliberate on issues of emerging common ESD issues as necessary.

### **3. Major Activities:**

#### **1.1. Opening Prayer for Creation Care and Peace**

Abba Gadda leaders (traditional chiefs) from the Gedeo people have honoured our meeting and blessed us in their local language. They have also showed us the sacred forest of the Gedeo people preserved for centuries and recorded as world heritage site by UNESCO. According to Gedeo culture any meeting and deliberation as a rule needs to be blessed by the Abba Gada leaders.

Following them three Religious Leaders from the Gedeo Zonal Administration branch of the Interreligious Council of Ethiopia have prayed for peace and creation care. They provided benediction based on their doctrines from the Gedeo Ethiopian Orthodox Tehwido Church, the Muslim Supreme Court and Evangelical Churches. The ESD Annual Conference has included local community chiefs, religious leaders, government officials, media and other partners as key stakeholders on ESD.

#### **3.1. Welcome Addresses**

The two Chairs of the respective networks of Colleges of Education and Theological Institutions and host college Dean have officially welcomed the participants. Chair of the Colleges of Education Dr Nigatu Tausha welcomed and thanked the conference participants and urged them for an active participation and contribution. Reverend Abraham Tulla, Chair of the Theological Institutions Network has extended his gratitude for the organizers and participants for honouring the annual conference. The host college Dean Mr Terefe Shonto received the guests by presenting a colourful neck scarp to the participants and reminded the conference participants to seize the opportunity and interact with the Gedeo people and visit the beautiful, sacred forests preserved for centuries.

#### **3.2. Keynote Addresses**

High level speakers representing different organizations from the government, colleges and two UNESCO chairs have addressed the conference participants.

Leaders from the Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology (EGST), Gedeo Zone Education Office, Southern Ethiopian Regional Natural Resource and Environmental Bureau, Video Messages from York University, Canada and Leuphana University Luneburg, Germany have extended their key note addresses.

Representing EGST, Mr Addise Amado, delegate of Rev. Dr Misgana Mathewos has outlined the focus of the 2024 annual conference and its unique expectations mainly approval of the network guideline and professional development training.

Mr Zemach Takle, Head of the Gedeo Zone Education Office has addressed the conference by affirming his commitment to the realization of the Education for Sustainable Development in the whole school system. Mr Tesemma Negussie Head of the Southern Ethiopian Regional Natural Resource and Environmental Bureau has appreciated the objectives of the annual conference and pledged his support for the network and its operations.

Prof. Charles Hopkins, UNESCO Co-Chair for Reorienting Education for Sustainable Development in his video message has congratulated the networks on conducting the 7<sup>th</sup> annual conference and highlighted the key enabler role of ESD.

Prof. Daniel Fischer, UNESCO Chair in Higher Education for Sustainable Development in his audio-visual message has recalled his memories of the establishment of the network in 2015 and appreciated the perseverance of the networks, the member colleges and the participants despite all odds.

### 3.3. Field Visit and Tree Planting

The participants made a field visit assisted by the host College in the compound of Dilla College of Education. This included the Zero Plan for Gender Equality, art gallery and educational materials production workshops which was culminated with a tree planting at the College compound.



(Above) Zero plan center where gender equality, care and support is provided for female students like in a home setting. This large salon creates a conducive atmosphere for students who need a home, family context.



Participants pause for photo after tree planting inside Dilla College of Teachers Education

This was followed by a visit to the sacred forest site recognized and certified as UNESCO World Heritage site. The site was preserved by the Gedeo people according to their commitment for trees, coffee and Enset/Banana type plant. The participants appreciated the green vegetation cover, the old trees fallen due to age, the echo of the river, the sound of the birds and the peoples' commitment for maintaining nature.





*Participants actively engaged in observing the sacred forest and its beautiful landscape refreshing mind, body and spirit. The scene reminds visitor to give special attention for creation care*

#### **.4. Progress reports**

Progress reports are accountability mechanisms for members to present their annual operational achievements, success stories and challenges. Most of the reports were presented in written format and power point styles.

Reports from Colleges of Education (CE) and Theological Institutions (TIs) with question-and-answer session and discussions

Arbaminch CE presented on change stories from green campus initiatives and tree planting, income generating activities from facilities and services such as sales proceeds from banana plantation in the amount of 15,000 birr per month and 2 million per year as part of self-supporting scheme. Leadership and staff commitment for scale up of green efforts and best practices was commendable. They have also offered community services through local school innovation, sport services such as campus stadium services. Climate change manifested in the form of floods and student budget constraints were reported as key challenges of the school.

Bonga CE has reported achievements in environmental clubs and campus beautification, campus greening, developing seedlings and tree nurseries, promoting modern and traditional bee keeping

and honey production efforts. They further engaged on coffee production, banana plantation, sheep and oxen fattening/piloting, fish breeding, community services, campus cleaning and waste recycling by mobilizing scout members and student participation. Research and local government partnership and stakeholder mobilization was also mentioned as positive developments.

Dilla CE reported progress in awareness creation and training for catchment communities and schools, solid and liquid waste management efforts, school clubs strengthening, community mobilization and partnership practices for campus beautification and community greening campaigns.

Old trees replacement, club strengthening, motivating stakeholders, training, experience sharing, catchment community engagement events were listed as future focus areas.

Untimely rain, flood and student stipend shortages were reported as key challenge areas.

Hawassa CE presented detail report on training and capacity building, research and publications through annual research symposium , ESD media coverage , award and recognition, website redesign for promotion, community engagement through school building, preschool support, public health support, campus greening and sanitation improvement. They have also reported their engagement in national tree planting events, student accommodation furnishing, greening curriculum, and sharing of lessons for further networking, seeking funding opportunities and mobilizing resources.

Challenges mentioned by Hawassa CE include lack of clear direction in education policy, lack of staff commitment, and budget constraints.

Hosanna CE likewise reported its achievements in campus greening, fruit and vegetable farm development such as potato, banana, corn and wheat fields. Environment club members strengthening, community services by providing green space for café, wedding, graduation and sports events have contributed for fundraising and self-supporting schemes. Six hectare of land was reported for selected seed production which earned 1.5 million birr annual income for the college. Laboratory furnishing and environment friendly management of waste recycling mainly

bottles and paper recycling was reported for contributing to environmental safety and sanitation improvements.



*Deans and ESD Focal Staff of Colleges of Education*

After the five CE reports were discussed four theological institutions presented their reports. Tabore Theological College as a religious college reported its focus on holistic environmental services and students' practical work as well as eight weeks student services on campus and in the community. Hosanna Theological Seminary in its ESD implementation efforts highlighted how the past annual conferences had helped them to transform their curriculum and campus norms. Workshops and trainings on ESD, environmental club formation,, curriculum and courses redesign on ESD focus such as Environmental Sustainability and Development course was mentioned as the result of the network learnings.

Improved hygiene and sanitation services, tree planting, production of crops, apple fruits, bee keeping for honey production and other efforts. They have reported a plan to plant 3000 trees by strengthening the clubs. Shortage of budget and lack of commitment by some staff members were reported as challenges that might hinder the progress.

Hosanna Ethiopian Kale Heywet Ministerial Training College (EKMTC) has reported ESD activities mainly curriculum and course redesign on ESD and offered to students. The assignment of a development manager for the college, apple production and sales, gardening and vegetables production, wheat, potato, avocado and maize production were done for income generating and teaching purposes. Campus development, dairy farm and oxen fattening, tree planting were mentioned as future additions to their progress. The college's community services

include water supply for the neighborhood and other outreach service. Budget and manpower shortage were mentioned as challenges to the college.

Dilla Ethiopian Kale Heywet Ministerial Training College (EKMTC) has reported the overhaul provided for existing and new tree plants such as avocado plants, vegetables, coffee farm and Enset plants, honey production from the 30 bee hives with other income which has been earned an annual sum of 400 thousand birr for the college. Students field work, teaching ecological management courses, developing tree nurseries, and community services such as furnishing houses of widows was reported. Campaign for community services, additional tree planting, partnering and networking, research, poultry farm business plan were scheduled by the college for the future.



*Leaders of the Theological Institutions*

Reports from all college indicated an institutional breakthrough on education for sustainable development through campus greening, community services, environmental club strengthening and stakeholder mobilization. The production and sales of fruits, vegetables and cereals as well as livestock, poultry and bee keeping efforts for income generation, food security and teaching purposes for the students and communities demonstrates the capacity of the colleges in contributing to sustainable development goals.

The network and member colleges' efforts thus demonstrated higher educational transformation competencies for delivering ESD as enabler of all SDGs.



It is also a showcase of the best practices in South-North partnership where Leuphana University Luneburg in Germany in the beginning in 2015 has contributed by partnering with EGST for establishing the networks and enabling them to reach into this stage for almost a decade. Prof. Daniel Fischer has recalled that as a landmark despite the challenges of bringing diverse institutions and leaders together for a common goal on ESD

The joining of York University in 2017 has further inspired and strengthened the network advancement through opening doors for the networks to join international platforms. Prof. Charles in his message to the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference remarked that the efforts of the ESD in Ethiopia by mobilizing stakeholders as an exemplary platform to be celebrated.

The unique added value of this network in bringing both the religious and secular colleges for learning and sharing of experiences on ESD further contributes to interdisciplinary engagement and partnerships on all SDGs and Goal 17 in particular



*Professor Daniel Fischer addressing the conference via video message from Germany*



*Prof. Charles Hopkin Addressed the Conference in a prerecorded video message. He is UNESCO Chair in Reorienting Education towards Sustainability with Prof. Katrin Kohl, the Executive Coordinator*

## **.5. Training on Professional Development Programme (PDP)**

Professional Development Programme (PDP) as one of the key activities of the conference was highly regarded by the member colleges and the participants. The 2024 training theme focused on ‘*Professions and Professionalism: Harnessing the Power of the Two Classic Professions: Teaching and Theology for Regaining and Maintaining Ecological Balance.*’

The training was facilitated by Prof. Aklilu Dalelo from AAU and EGST/MADevS Programme Leader for Development Studies. In his lecture to the conference participants Prof. Aklilu focused on the roles of Classic Professions mainly the Teaching and Theology occupations as foundations to all expertise. He further related this to ecological and biological holocaust, biotech, InfoTech, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the ethical principle of ESD in relation to the World Faiths Development Dialogue, social action and evangelism activities.



The Triggers of Regret (foreign influences on education of Ethiopia), the worry/concern (not learning how to learn as dangerous attitude), the confusion/ reductionist conception of education quality, and shallowness (lack of integrating indigenous knowledge, religion, and science) were highlighted in the presentation. In his elaboration on *The Plights Of Professions And Professionalism In Ethiopia: Implications For Nation Building He Highlighted How Ethiopian* he highlighted how students choose their fields of learning, an area that requires change for the future professions and professionalism in Ethiopia, the role of the Teaching Profession in ensuring Quality of Education in Ethiopia. After

discussing different models of education theories, he called for a *Holistic Education: Searching for a balance between analysis and synthesis* that helps to correct the Factory model in teaching.

The second professional development training theme focused on Indigenous Practices in the Face of Climate Change: the case of Enset Farming by Dr Tadesse Kiphe from Dilla University. He presented his research experience on Enset as one of the crops not well recognized in Ethiopia but popular in Southern part mainly in Gedeo, Sidama, Woliyta, Hadiyya, Kambatta, Guragie. He alerted participants by explaining the attributes of Enset for food value as recognized in 1988 by Food and Agriculture Organization/FAO. He further pointed out that mixed farming of coffee and Enset has brought a result for climate change resilience in Ethiopia where his forthcoming book on Enset plant as climate resilient crop contributes to Ethiopia's green economy. He ultimately cautioned that undermining indigenous knowledge as backward knowledge is a misconception to be avoided.



*Presentation on enset as a food security crop by using indigenous knowledge*

Mr Tesfaye Bedecha from Gedeo Zone Culture and Tourism Office presented the motto of Gedeo people which embraced trees-coffee-Enset as life sustaining combinations for economic, social and environmental advancement. He emphasized that care for creation among the Gedeo people is a time-tested practice that is recognized globally by UNSECO where its sacred forest were in world record. The professional development session was followed by a discussion on the draft network guideline (vision, mission, goals, scope of engagement/activities, partnership, promotion, budget, sustainability).



*Presentation on Gedeo culture and indigenous knowledge*

### **3.6. Key Undertakings and 2025 Annual Conference Plan (Dates, Venue, Host, Program Content, Budget)**

At the conclusion of the 7<sup>th</sup> annual conference, the network participants discussed on network administrative issues mainly on the guideline and the 8<sup>th</sup> conference planning. Accordingly, the following resolutions were made.

We, members of the Colleges of Education and Theological Institutions meeting at Delight Hotel in Dilla hosted by the Dilla College of Education and organized by the Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology (EGST), Network of Colleges of Education (CE) and Network of Theological Institutions (TIs) in Southern Ethiopia have deliberated for two days on various ESD issues and passed the following decisions.

1. We have convened the 7<sup>th</sup> annual conference on ESD focusing on achievements of 2024, discussed on 2025 action plan, completed field visit at the Dilla CE and Gedeo UNESCO world heritage sites, attended the annual professional development training, have deliberated on network guidelines and passed decisions that govern our common goals, objectives, priority activities and future concerns.
2. We endorsed the 11 page guideline and put our respective college signatures for the implementation of the same effective as of May 25, 2024. Original copies of the guideline are officially submitted to the two networks and EGST and we decided copies to be circulated for the member colleges.

We have approved the following colleges to lead our respective networks for three consecutive years as of May 25, 2024 and ends 2027 with another election term.

### 2.1. For Network of Colleges of Education:

| Name of the College             | Roles      | Remark           |
|---------------------------------|------------|------------------|
| 1. Hawassa College Education    | Chair      | Dr Nigatu Tausha |
| 2. Arbaminch College Education  | Vice Chair | Mr Yarcho Yaya   |
| 3. Bonga College of Education   | Secretary  | Mr Anteneh Ayele |
| 4. Dilla College Education      | Member     |                  |
| 5. Hosanna College of Education | Member     |                  |



*Signing on the Network Guideline by members*

### 2.2. Theological Institutions :

| Name of the College             | Roles      | Remark                                 |
|---------------------------------|------------|--|
| 1. Tabore Evangelical College   | Chair      | Principal to be briefed about the role |
| 2. Hosanna EKMTTC               | Vice Chair | Mr Amanuel Sebros                      |
| 3. Hosanna Theological Seminary | Secretary  | Rev. Beyene Chakiso                    |
| 4. Dilla EKMTTC                 | Member     |  |



*Handover of the guideline to the two network Chairs*

3. We have agreed EGST to serve as Coordinating Secretary institution together with the Executive Committee members as indicated in the network organizational structure.
4. We have decided Hosanna EKMTTC (TIs vice Chair) and Hosanna Theological Seminary (TIs Network Secretary) to jointly host the 8<sup>th</sup> annual conference on ESD in Hosanna, the Regional Capital of Central Ethiopia. Dates will be from July 18-19, 2025 excluding travel dates from the respective locations.
5. We have approved the Executive Committee comprising of the two network chairs, the host theological institutions and EGST to jointly plan, organize and implement the 8<sup>th</sup> annual conference in consultation with member colleges.
6. We have agreed to make documentation and knowledge management of the conference to be shared in ESD Network platforms mainly telegram channel and members are guided to upload network related information and data.
7. The conference was closed by final remarks of the two network chairs on May 25, 2024.

Done in Dilla, Ethiopia

May 25, 2025

