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SPOTLIGHTING THE PLIGHT OF AFRICA'S ELEPHANTS



NEWS

Ethiopia: EBI steps up measures to combat poaching

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By Gethun Legesse, The Ethiopian Herald

ADDIS ABABA: Ethiopian Biodiversity Institute (EBI) has formulated a wildlife protection project setting up a task force project to end ivory



poaching and trafficking. It as well would introduce much stronger custodial sentences, if criminals are caught with Illegal Wildlife Trade.

Kumera Wakjira, Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority General Director, said that the project is aimed at combatting wildlife crime.

Kumera added that the project has set up an Environmental Crime Unit and regional task forces to combat wildlife crime. Both of these have a particular focus on stopping ivory poaching and trafficking.

As to him, the institute has five project sites which contain most of Ethiopia's elephants. "Through improving management, strengthening law enforcement, and engaging with the local communities at these sites it is hoped the elephant populations will be better protected."

He added that the project is funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) through the UNDP and implemented by Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA) and the Ethiopian Biodiversity Institute (EBI). The total budget of the project for the five sites over five years is just over six million USD.

"The main threat is poaching and habitat destruction. In order to combat both of these threats we need strong law enforcement and the support of the local communities surrounding the project sites," he noted.

Jenny Cousins, Manager of Wildlife Conservation Authority of East African Region, said, "Tens of thousands of elephants are killed every year for their tusks. By working in collaboration with local communities, governments and other NGOs, we're helping to find solutions that work for everyone, ensuring that the benefits of conserving elephants reach those who are impacted by the costs."

As to Jenny, around 90 percent of African elephants have been wiped out in the past century – mainly due to the ivory trade. Elephant poaching, even though it's illegal, has been getting dramatically worse in parts of Africa in the last 10 years – mostly because of growing demand for ivory in China and the Far East. Around 20,000 African elephants are being killed every year for their ivory – that's around 55 every day.

She added that monitoring herds and training community rangers and protecting habitat helps protect wildlife. It is important to take train the local communities to reduce human-elephant conflict.

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