

**State of Conservation Report
Sagarmatha National Park (Nepal) (N 120)**

Submitted to

World Heritage Center

**United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
(UNESCO)**

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Prepared and Submitted by

Government of Nepal

Ministry of Forests and Environment

Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation

Kathmandu, Nepal

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1. Executive Summary

Sagarmatha National Park (SNP), a world heritage property since 1979 is an example of superlative and exceptional natural beauty, which is embedded in the vivid mountains, glaciers, deep valleys and majestic peaks including the world's highest peak, Mt. Everest. The park is home to several endangered species of wildlife including snow leopard and red panda. The area contains the world's highest ecologically characteristic flora and fauna, intricately blended with the rich Sherpa culture. The intricate linkages of the Sherpa culture with the ecosystem are a major focus of the park and they form the basis for the sustainable conservation of the natural resources, which eventually contributes for the wellbeing of the local communities.

The World Heritage Committee in its 42nd session in the year 2018 has raised issues regarding the State of Conservation of Sagarmatha National Park as a world heritage property. In decision 42 COM 7B.70, the committee has requested the State Party to update and submit the relevant information to the World Heritage Centre as well as suggested the necessary actions to address the issues raised by the committee. In this context, this report is an update on the status of the UNESCO World Heritage Site, Sagarmatha National Park. Furthermore, this report underlines the view of the State Party to the issues raised by the World Heritage Committee. The report has been prepared using integrated approach; field observation and stakeholders' consultation.

The Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) in the center and Sagarmatha National Park in the site coordinated and closely monitored the Community Based Flood and Glacial Lake Outburst Risk Reduction project activities to ensure compliance with environmental measures. Environmental auditing was also conducted by independent consultants in order to ensure environmental compliances. Now, the project is phased out. The Management Plan of Sagarmatha National Park and its Buffer Zone (2016-2020) is in implementation. SNP has carried out a number of law enforcement activities in close collaboration with local communities and Nepali Army. Supreme Court has made final verdict with respect to the Kongde view resort and final verdict was submitted to the World Heritage Centre. Similarly, the Park authority has been mobilizing the Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee (SPCC) for waste and garbage management. 10,000 kg of garbage were collected from Everest region in 2018 and sent to Kathmandu for further disposal. Helicopters are used for rescue and relief works. Sagarmatha National Park and Buffer zone map was updated, it clearly shows the park zonation i.e. core area and buffer zone area. EIA report on Optical fiber project is submitted by DNPWC for review to World Heritage Centre. Till now, DNPWC has not given any permission to carry out the EIA for ropeway project. Local communities are not interested to

include the buffer zone of SNP to the buffer zone of the world heritage property. The expectations of local people for rapid development has highly increased. This situation has created a great challenge to balance development and conservation. Climate change would be the serious challenges for conserving OUV of SNP.

2. Introduction

Sagarmatha National Park (SNP) was designated as one of the pioneer protected areas of Nepal in 1976 with an area of 1,148 square kilometers. The highest peak of the World, Mt. Everest, is located inside the park core area of SNP. The park represents the high-altitude pristine ecosystems. Local communities, known as Sherpa ethnic groups, are native to the area and famous for their mountain climbing skills. An area of 275 square kilometers including the enclaved human settlements inside the park and the peripheral area of the park was declared as buffer zone in 2002. Due to having outstanding universal value, the park was enlisted as the UNESCO World Heritage site in 1979 as the first UNESCO natural world heritage site of Nepal. In addition, Gokyo Lake, situated inside the park, is enlisted in the Ramsar List in 2007 as a high-altitude wetland of global significance.

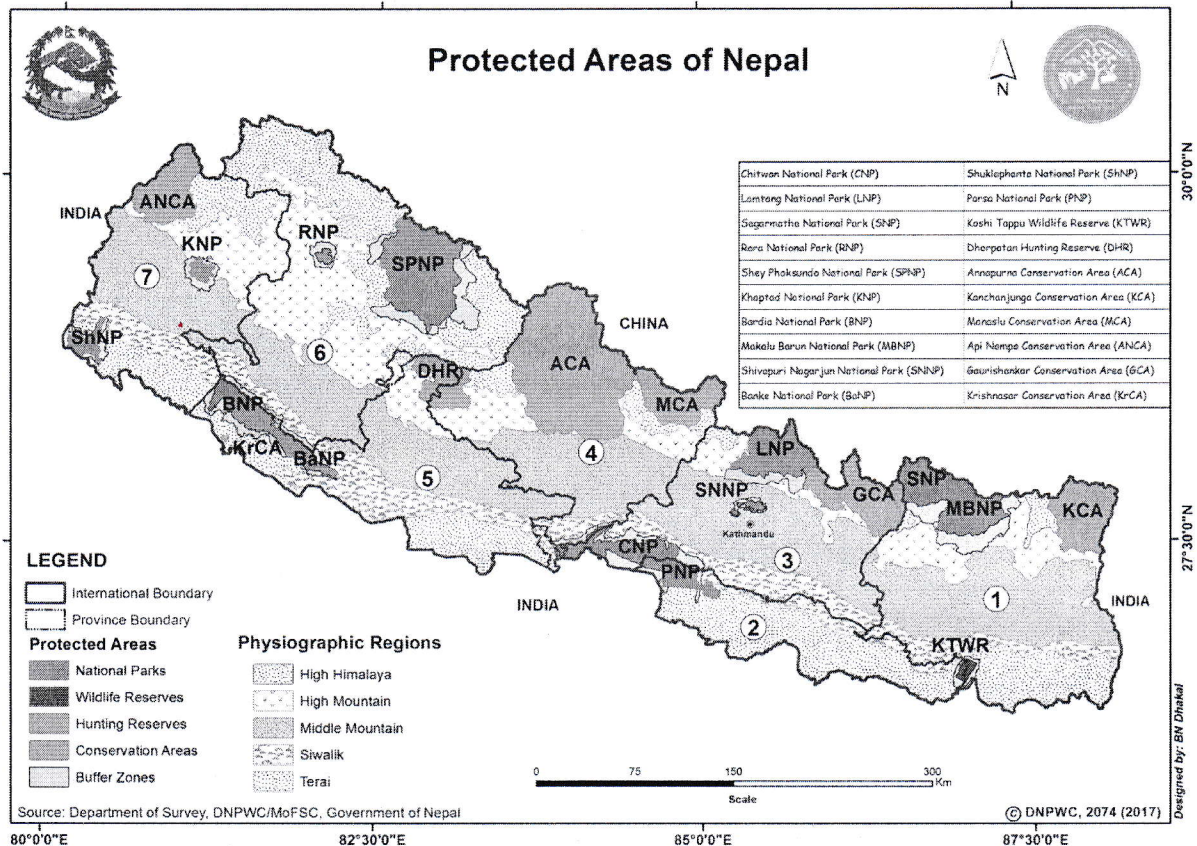


Figure-1: Location map of Sagarmatha National Park

SNP is one of the most suitable habitats for snow leopard, musk deer, red panda, Himalayan tahr and many globally significant high-altitude birds. This area also famous for nature-based tourism that generates huge amount of revenue every year, which not only benefits the local communities, but also contributes considerable amount of government revenue. Mountaineering and trekking are the major attractions for the visitors and mountaineers. Being a proximity to the Mt. Everest is a main reason of becoming its popularity.

In retrospect to the trend of tourist flow in SNP, 20 tourists visited Everest region in 1963, whereas the number of tourists increased to 3,500 in 1973. In 2000, the number of tourists to SNP peaked at 26,500. However, number of visitors dropped to 14,000 in 2002 due to political instability in the country. With improved political situation in 2004, the number of tourists increased to 21,000 and there were slightly more than 30,000 annual visitors before the 2015 earthquake. Due to the impact of the earthquake, the number of visitors again dropped to around 25,000 for that year. Afterwards, the number of visitors to SNP has increased and reached a record 56,303 and 58,030 tourist in the fiscal year 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 respectively.

3. Response to the Decision of the World Heritage Committee

3.1. Having examined Document WHC/18/42.COM/7B.Add,

Response: NA

3.2. Recalling Decision 40 COM 7B.89, adopted at its 40th session (Istanbul/UNESCO, 2016),

Response: NA

3.3. Welcomes the completion and on-going implementation of the 2016-2020 Management Plan for the property and its nationally designated buffer zone, and urges the State Party to pay particular attention to the recommendations of the 2016 Advisory mission, including but not limited to firewood collection, tourism management, management of solid and liquid waste, and unregulated and poorly controlled helicopter use resulting in noise pollution, Visual impacts and disturbance of wildlife;

Response: Management plan is a key guiding document to park management. Management Plan of Sagarmatha National Park and its Buffer Zone (2016-2020) is in implementation. The State Party always welcomes the suggestions from the World Heritage Center for the effective

implementation of the activities outlined by the approved management plan of SNP and its buffer zone.

Mostly, local communities use the LP gas for their cooking, and they use electricity for heating. Buffer zone management committee has totally banned for firewood collection in Namche area of SNP. The state party has carried out a number of law enforcement activities in close collaboration with local communities and Nepali Army. The Park authorities and community institutions have a strong understanding of regulating park activities and its management plan for effective conservation of the park resources. There is no reporting of any illegal activities in SNP.

The park authority has patronage the Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee (SPCC) of Namche for mobilizing for waste management all over the Khumbu region since more than decades. It is a local environmental institution and has been actively engaged in every type of waste management in Khumbu Pasang Lhamu Rural Municipality of Sagarmatha National Park and its Buffer Zone. In close coordination with SNP and local communities, SPCC manages garbage in major settlements, hotel areas and along trekking trails. This NGO with the permission from SNP, constructed some solid waste containers along the trekking routes such as Lukla to Namche, Namche to Tengboche and Namche to Thame. There were some of the exemplary achievements of garbage management in this region, eg. 10,000 kg of garbage were collected from Everest region in 2018 and brought to Kathmandu for further disposal. SNP has been providing technical, financial and legal assistance to SPCC as sought by them in order to effectively implement waste management activities in SNP and its buffer zone. SPCC has been doing its best and succeeding to manage all types of wastes and garbage of the Khumbu region. In this fiscal year, the state party has planned program to clean up the Everest base camp in coordination with Department of Environment, Nepali Army and other concerned agencies.

Helicopters are used for rescue and relief works. There are random checks of rescue operation at Lukla, Namche and Kathmandu regularly by SNP authorities in order to validate that the helicopter flights are a real rescue flight. DNPWC and SNP Authority conducted the meeting regularly for regulating the helicopter flights.

3.4 Welcoming the information that the Supreme Court has reached a verdict regarding the Kongde View Resort, requests the State Party to submit this verdict upon its completion to the World Heritage Centre;

Response: Supreme Court has made final verdict with respect to the Kongde view resort. Full text of final verdict is available to Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation

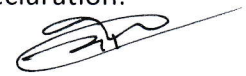
(DNPWC). Final verdict (in English translation) was submitted by DNPWC to World Heritage Centre on 1 September 2019.

3.5 Notes with appreciation the reported close coordination between the National Park authorities and the UNDP-funded "Community Based Flood and Glacial Lake Outburst Risk Reduction Project, and also requests the State Party to continue monitoring of compliance with environmental measures and to fully involve local communities to ensure respect of their cultural and spiritual values and practices throughout the project cycle;

Response: The Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation in the center and Sagarmatha National Park in the project site coordinated and closely monitored the project activities. Environmental auditing was also conducted by independent consultants in order to ensure environmental compliances. Now the project is phased out. SNP is regularly observed and monitored the environmental issues of the lake. All the projects documents are handed over to local community. Local communities are engaged in monitoring and early warning system to the downstream.

3.6 Also notes with appreciation the submission of an improved map displaying the property and its nationally designated buffer zone, as well as the proposal in the Management Plan to consider introducing zonation as a management instrument within the property, and further requests the State Party to develop such a zonation system, including as a means to ensure appropriate provisions for enclave villages located within the property;

Sagarmatha National Park Office has prepared the updated map of Sagarmatha National Park and its buffer zone (Fig-2). This map clearly reflects the park zonation i.e. core zone and buffer zone. Core area of SNP is 1148 km² and buffer zone 275 km². All the settlements inside the park are also considered as buffer zone, as per the Nepal gazette of buffer zone declaration.



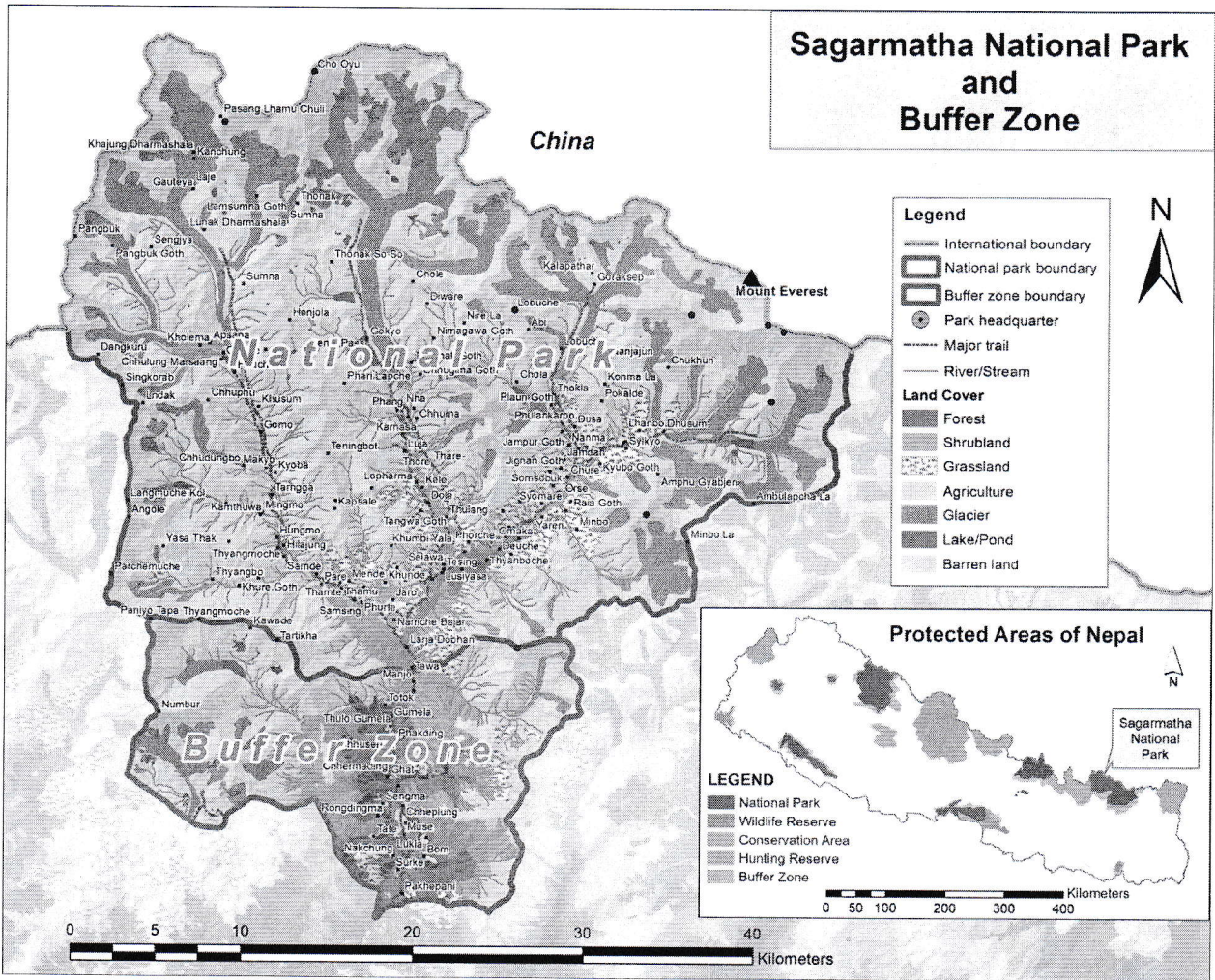


Figure-2: Zonation map of Sagarmatha National Park

3.7 Noting that consultations with local communities suggest no current support for the formalization of the nationally designated buffer zone to the national park as a buffer zone to the property, nevertheless reiterates its encouragement to the State Party to submit a minor boundary modification, consistent with the Operational Guidelines, to establish a buffer zone as such formalization will neither increase the size of the property nor impose any limitations on the local communities beyond the existing legal provisions at the national level;

Response: SNP has increased interaction with local government and buffer zone representatives and local communities in highlighting the importance of World Heritage Site and obligation to maintain the OUV of the property. Again, Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Authority, and National Park Authority conducted stakeholders' consultation meeting in order to know local people's opinion regarding declaration of the



Buffer Zone of SNP as the Buffer Zone of the World Heritage Property. However, the buffer zone management committee and elected local body of Khumbu Pasang Lhamu Rural Municipality and other communities did not support this proposal.

3.8 Requests furthermore the State Party to ensure that the Social and Environmental Impact Assessments for the proposed optical fibre and ropeway projects include a specific assessment of potential impacts on Outstanding Universal Value, in conformity with IUCN's World Heritage Advice Note on Environmental Assessment, and to submit the assessments to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN prior to making any decisions that would be difficult to reverse, in accordance with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines;

Response: Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report prepared by Everest Link Pvt. Ltd. for laying out optical fibre and wireless hybrid network in Khumbu Pasang Lhamu rural municipality was submitted by DNPWC for review to the World Heritage Centre on 9 May 2019. As letter dated 21 November 2019 was received letter from World Heritage Centre to DNPWC along with IUCN comments and recommendations. Based on the received letter, DNPWC has requested to Everest Link Pvt. Ltd. to incorporate comments and recommendations made by IUCN.

3.9 Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 December 2019, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 44th session in 2020.

Response: DNPWC has prepared State of Conservation Report of Sagarmatha National Park to submit it to the World Heritage Center by 1 December 2019. The report has been prepared using integrated approach, field observation and stakeholders' consultation.

4. Other Current Conservation Issues identified by the State Party which may have an Impact on the property's Outstanding Universal Value.

Climate change has been one of the most serious challenges for biodiversity conservation over the last decades. One of the most likely impacts of climate change is shift in spatial and temporal pattern in presence of vegetation and wildlife, and also availability of suitable habitats for terrestrial species. The main potential impact of climate change to SNP is related to glacial hazards such as avalanches, debris flow, glacial lake outburst flood, glacial fluctuations and glacial surge. If the appropriate measures are not taken to minimize the risk, the potential impact of climate change might have devastating loss to SNP and its Outstanding Universal Value. The ultimate impact of it is prevailed to the communities of the upstream and downstream, will have unreplacable loss to the nation.

5. In conformity with Paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines*, describe any potential major restorations, alterations and/or new construction(s) intended within the property, the buffer zone(s) and/or corridors or other areas, where such developments may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, including authenticity and integrity

Response: Due to the new political transformation (Federal, Provincial and Local) in Nepal, the expectations of people for rapid development and urbanization has highly increased. This situation has created a great challenge to have delicate balance between development and conservation.

