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The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority



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Date

To: UNESCO World Heritage Center
7, Place de Fontenoty
75352 Paris 07 SP,
France

Subject: Submission of Annual State of Conservation Report World Heritage Property Simien Mountains National Park (N9)

It is recalled that the UNESCO World Heritage Committee at its 42nd session had made decisions and recommendations on the management of Simien Mountains National Park, world heritage property and requested the state party to submit an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of its recommendations for consideration at its 43rd session in 2019.

On behalf of and by representing the state party, the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA) would like to express its appreciation and great thanks to UNESCO World Heritage Committee (WHC) for valuable supports, feedback and follow up on the matters pertaining of the conservation of the property. We have seen thoroughly the decisions and recommendations made by UNESCO-world Heritage center at the 42nd sessions, Bahrain 2018.

Accordingly, attached here is the annual state of conservation report of the world Heritage property Simien Mountains National Park (N9) of Ethiopia and implementations of recommendations.

With Best Regard,


Kumara Wakjira
Director General



Cc

- Environment, Forest and climate Change Commission
Addis Ababa
- Amhara National Regional State President office
Bahirdar
- Embassy of Ethiopia to France (H.E Ambassador)
Permanent Delegate of Ethiopia to UNESCO
UNESCO HOUSE, Paris
- National Commission of Ethiopia to UNESCO
UNESCO Office in Addis Ababa
- International Union for Conservation of Nature
IUCN
- Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage
Addis Ababa
- Protected Areas Development and Protection Directorate
EWCA

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Ethiopian Government
State Party Report on the Conservation of the
World Natural Heritage Site, Simien Mountains
National Park (Ethiopia)

PROPERTY ID N9



Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA)

IN RESPONSE TO
WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE DECISION 42 COM 7B.91
FOR SUBMISSION BY February, 2019
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report on the state of conservation of the Simien Mountains National Park World Heritage Park responds to the World Heritage Committee's decision 42 COM 7B.91 that was taken at the 42nd session of the Committee in Bahrain in July 2018.

The Ethiopian government is fully committed to protecting the Outstanding Universal Value of the Park. All of the recommendations of the 2017 Reactive Monitoring Mission and requests of the World Heritage Committee are being implemented and considered in the plan of the national Park and our development partners working in Simien Mountains National Park.

On April 27th 2018, German Financial Cooperation through KfW signed an agreement with the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia for a project titled the "Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity in Ethiopia" for EUR 20 million (No.: 2014 67 133). Subsequently, the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA) and the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) signed a co-financing and advisory contract on the same date, formalizing the terms of the work to be undertaken by AWF as the implementing partner for this project in the Simien Mountains National Park (SMNP).

In 2018, jointly EWCA and AWF have initiated the process to revise and develop the General Management Plan (GMP) of SMNP for 2020-2030. A site core planning team composing senior experts drawn from federal, region, the park office and AWF has been established to work as technical team in the revision and development of the SMNP-GMP. Accordingly, the SCPT has conducted the required resources assessment and situation analysis and presented the result on the stakeholders' engagement workshop to refine the GMP shared Vision and management objectives (programs).

In November EWCA and AWF completed a series of community consultations in all five woredas (districts) neighboring SMNP (Adarkay, Bayeda, Debark, Janamora, and Telemet). These community consultations represented the foundation for engaging the local population as part of the GMP process. Building on these consultations, EWCA and AWF initiated the Grazing Pressure Reduction Strategy, holding meetings in 25 villages (kebeles) in Debark, Janamora and Bayeda woredas. These meetings were attended by 283 people, emphasized the rights and responsibilities of the park and the neighboring community, the extent of the buffer zone and areas within the park that communities can "cut and carry" forage for their livestock in order to reduce grazing pressure and erosion within SMNP.

In order to establish a baseline, EWCA and AWF completed a socioeconomic survey of the communities living around the park. This survey encompassed all 42 kebeles in the five woredas surrounding SMNP and completed 443 household surveys (402 Household and 42 Kebele survey).

Despite holding four meetings at regional and local levels, efforts to implement social and housing support and initiate livelihood activities to the Gich community has been hampered by discord within the community and a series of impossible demands from certain quarters of the Gich households.

INTRODUCTION

At its last meeting, the World Heritage Committee Decisions of 42 COM 7B.91, applauds the State Party for organizing a major event to mark the removal of the site from the List of World Heritage in Danger and the 50th anniversary of Simien Mountains National Park. Thereby demonstrating its strong political commitment to conserving the Park, and requests the State Party to continue its efforts and attain the suggested recommendations to maintain the outstanding universal value (OUV) of the Park.

Therefore, this is a progress report in accordance with Decision **421COM 7B.91** of the World Heritage Committee requesting the State Party to work on various states of conservation aspects of the Park in question and to report on the implementation of the recommendations, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 43rd session in 2019.

I. RESPONSE TO THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE'S DECISION 42COM 7B.91

Generally, the State Party together with its conservation partners has achieved the following progressive measures:

1.1. Donors and Partners

Decision 42 COM 7B.91 Paragraph 4 : Appreciates the renewed interest on the part of donors and non-governmental partners to support the Park and its surroundings, and encourages the State Party to share the related Project documents and operational plans with the World Heritage Centre;

As noted in the previous state reports the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) has entered in to long-term co-management agreement with the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA) for the conservation and management of the Simien Mountains National Park (SMNP). AWF was selected as the implementing partner of the German Development bank (KfW) funded project in SMNP. The implementation of KfW project started at the end of April 2018. The implementation of the project will continue in the SMNP and surrounding areas for the coming four consecutive years with total budget of € 4 million. In the first year, the focus of the project

has been to improve the management of the Park, to update and review the General Management Plan (GMP) for the Park, implementing the grazing pressure reduction strategy, strengthening law enforcement activities and implementation of livelihood restoration strategy for Gich relocated community settled in Debarak.

The process of updating and reviewing the GMP for the Park is in collaboration with EWCA. The process is fully participatory and allows active consultation of the community representatives, public and private organisations during in the entire process. The three-day stakeholder’s workshop has conducted in Debarak from 14th to 16th December 2018. A total of 130 stakeholders; including university staff; officials from relevant government departments at the national, regional and local levels; nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), community associations and private business representatives and community representatives attended the workshop. The workshop participants developed and endorsed the vision statement for the GMP *“By 2030, in partnership with communities and other stakeholders, ensure that the unique biodiversity, culture, and landscape of the Simien Mountains National Park are conserved, maintaining the critical ecosystem services as a driver for sustainable economic development to the benefit of all”*.



Figure 1:- Participants of stakeholders in the SMNP- GMP development process

Additionally, the Austria Development Cooperation (ADC) has allocated € 3 million to support the management and conservation of SMNP. The purpose of this project will be the protection, sustainable use, management, conservation, and restoration of the Park and surrounding areas.

The intended project will be designed to *contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable development through conservation and sustainable use of the SMNP natural resources and promotion of alternative livelihood opportunities through an integrated regional development approach and private sector involvement*. The project will have three years' life span. Currently, a consultant commissioned by ADC in collaboration with EWCA is conducting preliminary assessment to develop possible implementation modalities /road map/ for the new project in SMNP.

An NGO, Children in the Cloud, has supported students of the local communities around the Park and provide educational materials which worth approximately € 1,500 (ETB 50,000). The materials include exercise books, pencils, paper, and chalk. This organization has also allocated € 120,000 (ETB 3.8 million) for the construction two-block school in Sona Kebele, Janamora district neighboring the Park. Another NGO, Simien Mountains Mobile Medical Service (SMMMS) provides medical support, materials and training on first aid for to than 2,500 community members living around the Park. University of Michigan's Simien Mountains Gelada Research Project and AWF provided financial support to rehabilitate the springs that provide drinking water a Gich and Sankabar campsites.



Figure 2: Saddle supplied by SMMMS to transport patients to nearby towns for medical treatment

The Park office in collaboration with African Wildlife Foundation and other non-governmental organizations has established a nursery site and raised more than 8,000 indigenous seedlings to be planted in the degraded areas of the Park.

The current synergy with conservation partners and stakeholders as well as the donor's attention in supporting the Park is promising. Besides, the ADC financial support commitment will be vital for the conservation and management of the Park and believed to create alternative livelihood options for the surrounding community.

1.2. Park Management and Local Community

1.2.1. General Management Plan(GMP) development

Decision 42 COM 7B.91 Paragraph 5 : Welcomes the follow-up to previous Committee decisions and to the 2017 mission recommendations, and also requests the State Party to implement the outstanding decisions' and recommendations, in particular to:

- a) Finalize the new General Management Plan (GMP), to be applied to the enlarged national Park and its buffer zone, and to submit it to the World Heritage Centre for review,
- b) Give management priority to realistic, fundable and socially acceptable responses to overgrazing, the promotion of alternative livelihoods and enhanced tourism management, and integrate related objectives and plans as part of the GMP,
- e) Agree upon clear, systematic and long-term monitoring protocols for the populations of Walia ibex, Ethiopian wolf and gelada as soon as possible and integrate them in the GMP,
- d) Strengthen the participation of local communities in the management and governance of the Park;

As per the 2017, IUCN reactive monitoring mission recommendation the revision of the existing SMNP-GMP has been started and it is underdevelopment since November 2018. The life span of the existing GMP of the Park ended in this year (2019) and its revision and development of the new GMP will also consider the newly included wildlife habitats land of the Park.

Accordingly a site Core Planning Team (SCPT) and Technical Working Groups (TWG) have been established comprising of senior officers from the EWCA, Amhara National Regional State Environment, Forest and Wildlife Authority, AWF, and SMNP staff. The objectives of SCPT and TWG are to conduct resource assessment and collect the required primary and secondary

information and develop the GMP document based on the guideline of IUCN protected areas management planning process. The development of the GMP will be highly participatory and all relevant stakeholders of SMNP will be part of the whole process.

Resources assessments, review of the existing GMP, and additional primary and secondary information collection have been made by both SCPT and TWG. Situation analysis have been conducted based on the four sustainability component framework namely Nature/Environment, Social, Economic, and Governance dynamics influencing the Park management internally and externally. Following, it was organized stakeholders' engagement workshop in Debarq with the collaboration of AWF and the Park office. In the stakeholders' engagement workshop, the result of the situation analysis has been presented to the stakeholders to help them understand the current situation of the Park and to develop the shared vision and management objectives of the new SMNP-GMP. In the workshop, the stakeholders were able to drive and adopt the shared vision and six possible management objectives (programs) and prioritized. These will be the foundation for the 10 years SMNP- GMP (2010-2030).





Figure 3: GMP meeting participants (Photo: AWF)

As per the schedule outlined the SCPT and TWG will continue working as a team to unpack each management objectives (programs) to drive the possible operational goals and management actions based on SMART indicators. The team will develop the monitoring and evaluation program and business plan of the GMP, which will be integral parts of the document and then compiling the draft document. The whole process of developing the GMP of SMNP will conclude after the planed stakeholders' validation workshop at the end of April 2019.

1.2.2. **Grazing Pressure Reduction Strategy (GPRS) Implementation**

Overgrazing resulted in a deterioration of the quality of the grazing lands with an increase of unpalatable grasses and herbs. In the sub afro-alpine areas, overgrazing prevented regeneration of shrubs and trees. Ultimately, soil productivity declined and erosion intensified when vegetation cover was lost. Immediate implementation of the grazing pressure reduction strategy was required in order to reverse the existing situation.

EWCA and AWF in collaboration with the local community and other stakeholders held community meetings in 25 villages (kebeles) in Debark, Janamora and Bayeda woredas as part of the GPRS implementation. These meetings were attended by 283 people and emphasized the

rights and responsibilities of the Park and the neighboring community, the extent of the buffer zone and areas within the Park that communities can “cut and carry” forage for their livestock in order to reduce grazing pressure and erosion within SMNP. This process aimed to reduce grazing pressure in the Park through the formation of no grazing zones, sustainable resource use zones, intensive awareness raising village conferences with the Park neighboring community. Significant amount of amount of Park area is restricted from free grazing. These meetings raised awareness about the Park’s importance and threats to its survival amongst the local community.

Recent assessments and field visits conducted to evaluate and monitor the implementation of the grazing pressure reduction strategy showed progressive measures have been achieved so far but more remains to be done in the near future. As part of this effort, communication with rangers and Park officers on site showed resource protection and law enforcement is improving. Major portions of land inside the Park have been set aside as no grazing zones in major parts of Limalimo, Buyit Ras, Michibign, Sankabar, Set Derek, Chennek, Siliki, Mesarerya, Kidus Yared, Gich plateau and Ras-Dashen. The vegetation recovery in the aforementioned areas is promising and wildlife species like *Walia ibex*, Ethiopian wolf and other antelopes have started expanding their habitat.



Figure 4: *Walia ibex* at recovering sites of Buwahit (photo AWF)

As part of the GPRS implementation, community meetings were organized by AWF in collaboration with the Park office this year to raise awareness. The village-level community sensitization meetings were held in 26 Kebeles of three Woredas namely Debark, Janamora and Beyeda reaching 3,000 community participants.



Fig. 5: GPRS implementation awareness raising meetings at village level (photo AWF)

Generally, the implementation of the grazing plan in the Park and surrounding areas has continued with the full participation of the local communities and stakeholders. Awareness rising on the value of the Park and implementation of the grazing plan is being continued to the local community. This year it was possible to protect 824 hectare of new area free from grazing (2 percent of the Park area). Since the implementation of the GPRS in 2015, 85 percent area of the Park free from livestock grazing. Currently, the vegetation recovery in these areas has become

more visible and the endemic wildlife species like Walia ibex, Ethiopian wolf and Gelada monkeys have been observed in those areas, expanding their home range.

The revision of the existing GPRS was planned as per the recommendations and various reactive missions conducted before. Moreover, parallel to the implementation of the grazing priorities should be given to other planned activities specifically the revision and update of the general management plan for the Park and implementation of Gich community livelihood restoration project.

1.2.3. Tourism in SMNP

The number of SMNP visitors and participation and collaboration of local community in tourism activities has been growing significantly. Significance difference has been recorded in tourist arrival and amount of revenue collected to the park from the tourism activities.

In 2018, there were the 23,087 visitors to the Park, an increase of 10,374 from 2017. Visitor numbers have steadily increased for the last consecutive years. Besides, the number of local beneficiaries from tourism has grown every year. Improvements in management capacity of the park and involvement of development partners including the private investors in the tourism sector mainly account for the significant rise of tourist flow and amount of income both for the government and the local community (Figure 6).

Whilst this is extremely positive for the Park and tourism in Ethiopia as a whole, there are issues with respect to disposing of rubbish and effective waste management as well as limiting damage by tourists to the natural habitat.

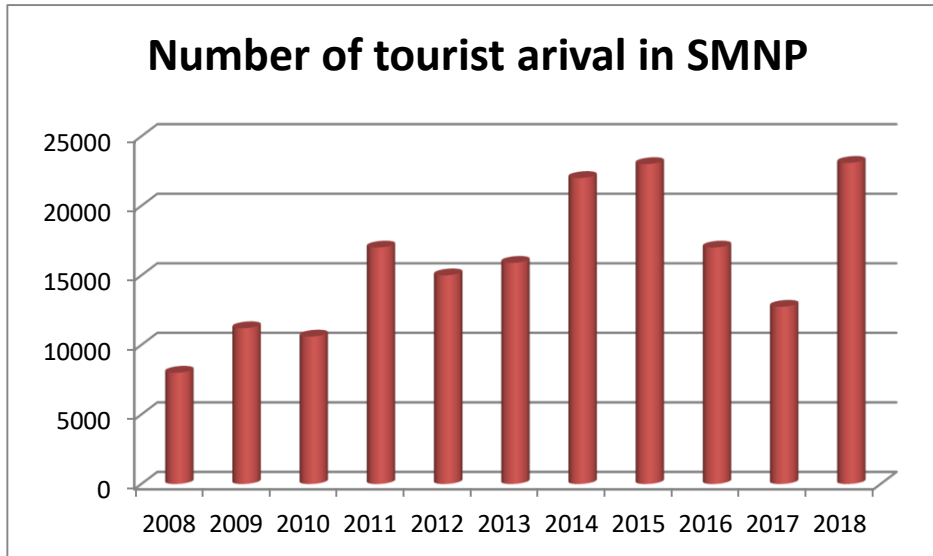


Figure 6: Number of tourist arrival in SMNP (Park office)

1.2.4. Local Community Participation and Livelihood Restoration

In depth consultations, participation, collaboration and then partnership with local community surrounding the SMNP are key principles to ensure effective management of the Park. Consultation with local community representatives and leaders and community members in all activities of the Park will be continued. With regard to participation and decision making on the management of the Park the local government at all levels have their own role over the Park management. A task force has been established chaired by Zonal Administrator where the Park warden is secretary with a responsibility of evaluating, monitoring and following up the implementation of conservation projects and activities inside and outside the Park.

Local communities living around the Park has become highly dependent on the Park resources. Livelihood improvement of local communities will be given more emphasis in the newly developed general management plan of the Park. Besides, the existing KfW funded project and the upcoming Austrian Development Cooperation funded project will mainly focus on improving the livelihood of the Park neighboring communities with more emphasis given to avoid project overlapping..

1.2.5. Gich Relocated Community and Livelihood Restoration

Decision 42 COM 7B.91 Paragraph 6 : Also welcomes the ongoing support to the livelihoods and well-being of the relocated Gich community with funding from the German Government, and further requests the State Party to continue these efforts in application of the highest standards, especially in support of vulnerable households and individuals;

The required agreement between EWCA and AWF was signed at the end of April 2018. Following the KfW funded project inception workshop carried out in August 2018. The Gich community livelihood restoration plan which is part of the project was also launched on August 2018 during the inception workshop. However, its implementation has been delayed due to various internal reasons. Currently, constructions of sheds are completed and purchasing the required materials is on progress. Provision of social and housing support for highly vulnerable households is not yet started as there are some grievances among the community members. Effort is underway to amicably solve all the grievances stimulated by the community in the implementation of the Gich Community livelihood restoration plan.

1.2.6. Nomination Dossier

Decision 42 COM 7B.91 Paragraph 7 : Reiterates its longstanding request to the State Party to finalize and submit a proposal for a Significant Boundary Modification for the entire Simien Mountains National Park and its buffer zone, as legally defined today, and requests furthermore the State Party to simultaneously formalize the buffer zone and harmonize they currently differing names of the National Park and the Park, and also encourages them State Party to request technical advice from the World Heritage Centre and IUCN as needed;

As noted in the last report, a draft nomination dossier has already been produced by the State Party with the financial support of UNESCO. There are a number of activities required to finalize the nomination dossier. We have developed a proposal to submit to UNESCO to get financial support for finalizing the nomination dossier. Given the availability of the financial support the state party will use the finance to recruits high caliber international consultant and

undertake 3-4 important meetings with local communities and local leaders, to develop some required map for the dossier.

1.2.7. Updating the Progress of Road Re-alignment

Decision 42 COM 7B.91 Paragraph 8 : Noting that the alternative road aiming at reducing disturbance of the existing main road in important afro-alpine habitats has been almost completed, urges the State Party to complete this overdue project, and to submit the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the part of the new road crossing the National Park to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN, as per Decision 41 COM 7A.13;

Decision 42 COM 7B.91 Paragraph 8 : Appreciates them State Party's commitment to re-align the power transmission line, which currently affects the Park's exceptional natural beauty and conditions of integrity, upon completion of the alternative road;

The construction of the re-aligned road is still on going. The delayed construction of the road project is due to various reasons including capacity limitation of the local contracting companies as well as the difficult and rugged topography of the area. Follow up has continued from the EWCA side to get the road completed as soon as possible. Currently, most part of the roads has been completed and covered by tarmac and three major bridges are under construction, which will connect the eastern with western part outside the Park. According to the Ethiopian Road Authority (ERA) the whole project is expected to be completed by 2020. The Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority has officially requested the Ethiopian Roads Authority to provide EIA document and we hope getting the document soon as per the request.

The required assessment and realignment of the associated electric line that crosses inside the Park is supported by action plan and ready for negotiation with the Ethiopian Electric power corporation and other concerned government institutions. Upon the completion of the new road, the realignment of the power line will be our immediate task. An assessment to identify activities and estimate the required financial cost to realign the electric poles and lines will be the priority tasks that need to be considered before the completion of the road construction.

1.2.8. Eco-Lodge development in SMNP

Decision 42 COM 7B.91 Paragraph 8 : Also noting that four new lodges are being considered along the border of the Simien Mountains National Park, requests moreover the State Party to ensure that all new lodge developments are located outside the boundary of them national Park and to submit the EIAs for many new lodge projects to the World Heritage Centre for review, as per Decision 41 COM; 7A.13, as soon as they become available;

As we noted in the previous state party reports four new sites have been selected along the border of the Park for the development of environmentally friendly eco-lodges. However, none of the projects/ company has started construction of the lodges in the Park due to various reasons, which should be settled in advance from both the government and the private investor sides. Only one of the companies called Jacaranda has submitted the required environmental impact assessment document which was in turn submitted to UNESCO but still the land has not been transferred to the company and is still on process.

2. OTHER ACTIVITIES

Representatives of KfW attended a successful project inception meeting held in Debarq on August 18th 2018, bringing together almost 100 representatives from national and local government, local community, NGOs, and associations working in or around SMNP to present the project objectives and allow questions and answers from the participants.

Likewise, prior to this stakeholder workshop community consultative meetings have conducted in the five Woredas adjoining the SMNP from 5th - 12th November 2018. A total of 260 participants including Elders and religious people, men, women, Youth and Kebele administrative officials, police and justice were participated.

In order to establish a baseline, AWF and EWCA completed a socioeconomic survey of the communities living around the Park in November 2018. This survey encompassed all 42 kebeles in the five woredas surrounding SMNP and completed 443 household surveys (402 Household and 42 Kebele survey). These data are being analyzed to provide an understanding of the communities' living standards around the park so that the impact of the project and management of the park can be measured over time.