

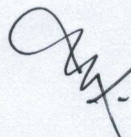


**State of Conservation Report
Sagarmatha National Park (Nepal) (N120)**

**Submitted to
World Heritage Center
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
(UNESCO)
Paris, France**

**Prepared and Submitted by
Government of Nepal
Ministry of Forest and Environment
Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation
Kathmandu, Nepal**

November, 2022


Director General



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

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 valley 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 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 at its extended 44th session-Fuzhou, China/online meeting, 2021 has raised issues regarding the State of Conservation of Sagarmatha National Park as a world heritage property. In decision 44 COM 7B.96, the committee has requested the state party to update and submit the relevant information to the World Heritage Center as well as suggest the State Party to take 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 State Party on 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 in the center and Sagarmatha National Park in the site closely monitor and regulate the tourism related activities. Establishment and operation of tourist information system in the park use for monitoring and tracking tourist activities inside the park. The Management Plan of Sagarmatha National Park and its Buffer zone is in renewal process which includes the Tourism chapter as an integrāl part of the plan. Similarly, the park authority has been mobilizing the Sagarmatha Pollution Control committee (SPCC) for waste and garbage management from the property. About 10,000 kg of garbage and waste was collected from disposal site of Everest region in 2022.

Nepali Army is responsible for overall patrolling of Park in consultation with Park management. Patrolling from Nepali Army and park administration is done regularly in core and buffer zone area, Park authority has carried out coordination and collaborations with other security agencies at regular basis for controlling illegal collection of firewood, poaching and trade of wildlife and its body parts. Similarly, formation and operation of district level Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB), meeting with Nepali Army and other security agencies is carried out at regular interval. Local communities are not interested to include the buffer zone of SNP to the world heritage property. The impact of climate change and climate change adaptation strategies is included in the revised management plan of SNP.

2. Introduction

Sagarmatha National Park (SNP) was designated as one of the pioneer protected areas of Nepal. It was established in 1976 with an area of 1,148 square kilometer. The highest peak of the World, Mt. Everest is located inside the park. 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 skill. An area of 275 square kilometers including the enclave human settlements inside the park and the peripherals 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. The climate data shows that there is high impacts of climate change in the Himalayas, thus climate change adaptation strategies has been included in the revised management plan of SNP.



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 is also famous for nature based tourism which generate huge amount of revenue every year, which not only benefit to local communities, but also contributes considerable amount of revenue for government. Mountaineering and trekking are the major tourist attractions for visitors and mountaineers.

In retrospect to the trend of tourist flow in SNP, 20 tourists visited Everest Region in 1963, whereas the number had increased to 3500 in 1973. In 2000, the number of tourist to SNP peaked at 26500. However the number had dropped to 14000 due to political instability in the country. With improved situation in 2004, the number increased to 21000 and there were slightly more than 30000 annual visitors before the 2015 earthquake. Due to the impact of earth quake, the number of visitors again dropped to around 25000 for 2015-2016 fiscal year . Afterward the number had increased and reached record of 56,303 And 58,018 in the fiscal year 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 respectively. However the number again dropped down to 4819 during COVID 19. Again the number of visitors has risen to 25521 in 2020-2021.

3. Response to the Decision of the World Heritage Committee

3.1. Having examined Document WHC/21/44.COM/7B,

Response: NA

3.2 Recalling Decisions 41 COM 7 and 42 COM 7B.70, adopted at its 41st -Krakow, 2017) and -Manama, 2018) sessions respectively,

Response: NA

3.3 Noting with concern the reported impacts of increasing visitors numbers on the property, welcomes the state party's intension to develop a Tourism Management Plan and request the State Party to;

- a) Undertake a visitor carrying capacity study to establishes an appropriate carrying capacity for the property, especially during peak season, and use the findings to inform the Tourism Management Plan,**
- b) Address how monitoring and regulation of tourism related helicopter traffic within the property and the nationally designated buffer zones of the park can be strengthened to reduce impacts,**
- c) Ensure that the Tourism Management Plan aligns with the 2016- 2020 Management Plan for the property and its next iteration;**

Response:

Department adopted new strategy aiming climate resilient & sustainable financing of protected area management. Management plan is the key guiding document for Park management. The State Party always welcomes the suggestions from World Heritage Center for the effective implementation of activities outlined by the approved management Plan of SNP and its Buffer Zone. Management Plan of SNP and its Buffer Zone is in revision Process. During the revision process intensive field study and deep consultation with stakeholders is carried out so that all the related subjects can be included in the Plan. Separate chapter for addressing the tourism related issues and threat are included in the Plan. SNP is implementing separate procedures for regulating hotel, lodge and tea shop and waste management inside the park.

First, park Initiated Visitors Tracking System to monitor and regulate the tourist in the area. Helicopters are used for rescue and relief works. Park in close co- ordination with stakeholders initiated a rescue operation at Lukla and Namche.



Regular meeting are conducted at center and field level with security agencies and Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal for managing the flights.

Sagarmatha National Park is the patronage of Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee (SPCC), Namche for managing waste management all over the Khumbu region since more than a decade. It is a local environmental conservation institution which has been actively engaged in every type of waste management in Khumbu Pasang Lahmu Rural Municipality of Sagarmatha national Park and its buffer zone. In close coordination with SNP and local communities, SPCC manages garbage from settlements, hotel area and along the trekking trails. From the permission of SNP this institution has constructed numbers of solid waste collection containers along the trekking routes. SNP has co-ordinated the SPCC to develop and implement an action Plan for waste management from Khumbu Region. Furthermore Nepal Army along with SPCC had made a great achievement of collecting and disposing garbage from Everest Region. About 10,000 kg of garbage was brought from disposal site in 2018 likewise another 10,000 kg were collected in 2022. SPCC has been doing its best and succeeding to manage all types waste and garbage from Khumbu region.

3.4 Also recalling its previous concern regarding the range of serious threats that the Kongde View Resort, located within the property, poses to its outstanding Universal Value (OUV) expresses concern over the Supreme Court ruling in favor of the resort and urges the State Party to develop a detailed environmental plan to mitigate the impacts of the resort, submit this plan to the World Heritage Center for review by IUCN, and take any necessary measures to monitor its implementation;

Response:

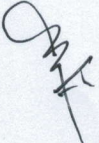
Supreme Court has made final verdict with respect to Kongde View Resort. Full text of final verdict has already been submitted to the World Heritage Center. SNP and Nepali Army regularly patrolled and monitored the area for controlling any types of adverse environmental impact from resort to the park. Recently Park administration has built check post nearby this resort which regularly monitor any illegal activities around. Management Plan will have chapter about the mitigation plan.

3.5 Also welcomes the State Party's decision to request a revision of the draft Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the optical fiber project based on the comments provided by IUCN, and also request the State Party to submit a revised EIA to the World Heritage Centre for further review by IUCN before making any decision that may be difficult to reverse, in accordance with paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines;

Response:

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the optical fiber project prepared by Everest Link Pvt.Ltd. for laying out optical fiber network in Khumbu Pashang Lahmu Rural Municipality was submitted by DNPWC for review to the World Heritage Center in 2019. A letter dated 21 November 2019 was received from World Heritage Center to DNPWC along with IUCN comments and recommendations. Based on the letter received, DNPWC has requested to Everest Link Pvt.Ltd. to incorporate comments and recommendations made by IUCN. The revised plan will be sent to the World Heritage Center and will approve after incorporating all the comments of WHC.

3.6 Emphasizing the distinction between a zonation scheme and a buffer zone, reiterates its request to the state party to develop a Zonation system, notably as a means of ensuring appropriate provisions for enclave villages located within the property;


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Response:

Sagarmatha National Park has clearly defined park zonation i.e. core zone and buffer zone. The core zone of park is 1148 square kilometer which is surrounded by buffer zone with an area of 275 square kilometer. All the settlements inside the park are also considered as buffer zone, as per Nepal gazette of buffer zone declaration.

3.7 Note with satisfaction that there are currently no reported cases of illegal collection of firewood from within the property and encourages the State Party to continue its monitoring efforts in that regard and to reflect this and associated interventions in the next iteration of the Management Plan, as appropriate;

Response:

Mostly, local communities of Khumbu Pashang Lamhu Rural Municipality uses LP gas for cooking and electricity for heating. Buffer Zone management committee has totally banned for firewood collection within the property. State Party has carried out a numbers of law enforcement activities in close collaboration with local communities and Nepali Army. Park authority and community institutions have a strong understanding for regulating park activities and its management plan for effective conservation of park resources. Several interventions are included in the revised Management Plan for reducing firewood collection and promotion of alternative energy.

3.8 Also note with concern the reported poaching of Himalayan musk deer within the property and further requests the State Party to review and strengthen measures to prevent any further poaching ;

Response:

District court Solukhumbu has made final verdict with respect to musk deer poacher according to national park and wildlife conservation act. During the lockdown period of COVID-19, patrolling and general surveillance activities from park authority and Nepali Army was limited to small area. The incidence of poaching of Himalayan musk deer from SNP area took place during that period. Now the patrolling, general surveillance, checking of visitors and similar types of activities have been conducted from park authority to control the poaching. Along SNP has conducted coordination meeting and regular collaboration with security personnel and agencies. Buffer zone management committee and other local level community institutions are also equally involved and engaged for controlling such type of activities in the park.

3.9 Appreciates the steps taken by the State Party to consult with local communities regarding the formalization of the nationally designated buffer zone of the National Park as a buffer zone of the property. And, also encourages the State Party to continue this dialogue with the aim of formalizing the buffer zone, with the support of local people and, in due time, to submit to the World Heritage Center a proposal for a minor boundary modification for review by the Committee, in line with Paragraph 164 of the Operational Guidelines;

Response:

SNP had made a number of interactions with the local government and buffer zone in highlighting the importance of World Heritage Site and obligation to maintain the OUV of the property. Similarly, SNP authority conducted meeting with relevant stakeholder in order to know local people's opinion regarding declaration of the buffer zone of SNP as the buffer zone of World Heritage Property. State Party entrusted that capacity building activities should be implemented on eternal basis for long-term sustainability of the park.


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3.10 Also notes with concern the increasing impacts of climate change on the OUV of the property and the wellbeing of local communities and requests furthermore the State Party to further monitor the impacts of climate change on the OUV of the property, to strengthen efforts towards building resilience at the property level, and to develop and implement a climate adaptation strategy, which should be integrated into the revised management plan;

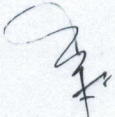
Response:

The impact of climate change is very severe in high mountain ecosystem and biodiversity. SNP is also making the strategies and has taken some initiatives to monitor impacts of climate change on biodiversity and local community; such as developing climate smart infrastructure, making climate friendly management plan of buffer zone user committee and community forest, conducting various types of awareness raising activities related to climate change.

3.11 Request moreover the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Center, by 1 December 2022, 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 46th session;

Response:

DNPWC has prepared the State of Conservation Report of Sagarmatha National Park to submit it to the World Heritage Center by 1 December 2022. The report has been prepared using integrated approaches i.e. desk study, field observation and stakeholder consultation.


Director General