

Conservation and sustainable use of natural resources in Ethiopia

Biodiversity and Forestry Programme (BFP): Protecting nature to protect people

Context

Despite high economic growth, Ethiopia remains one of the most impoverished countries in the world. Unsustainable land use practices and a permanent increase in the demand for natural resources due to a rapidly growing population have been the main triggers for the degradation of landscapes, loss of biodiversity and impoverishment of the productive systems. The already challenging situation rural populations are facing is further compounded by extreme weather events caused by climate change, such as droughts and heavy rains, which pose a risk to their lives. The protected areas and natural forests, which cover around 15% of the country's area, are home to many endemic species in two biodiversity hotspots of global importance. They further provide a variety of ecosystem services such as water, fertile soil and pollination, as well as means to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Challenge

The awareness of this interdependence between conservation of ecosystems and resilient livelihoods is limited resulting in protected areas often being perceived as obstacles to development. Large funding gaps in administrative structures hinder the efficient management of protected areas and forests. Besides awareness raising, mechanisms are needed to systematically involve the local population in decision-making processes for the conservation and appropriate use of natural resources. In this context, special consideration must be paid to women, given their strong reliance on natural resources to provide for their families. However, due to traditional gender roles, they are often excluded from participating in these processes.

The growing demand for wood products poses another challenge as it promotes illegal extraction of wood from natural forests. At the same time, the potential of timber production in forest plantations remains unused, which is caused by a lack of technical capacities and investment.

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Commissioned by	Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ)
Project region	Amhara, SNNPR, SWEPR
Lead executing agency	Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority & Amhara Forest Enterprise
Duration	BFP I 2015 – 2019 BFP II 2019 – 2021 BFP III 2021 – 2024

Our approach

Now in its third phase, the project aims to consolidate, intensify and institutionalise the processes and achievements reached by the previous two phases, while strengthening partners' capacities at the local, regional and federal level. The institutions responsible for protected area and forest management are supported in capacity and skill development, as well as in improving their monitoring and knowledge management by using digital solutions.

As conservation of natural habitats and rehabilitation of degraded land can only be achieved in a collaborative effort of all relevant domains and actors, the project brings together state institutions,



L. to r.: Nech Sar National Park; A women cooperative working on their coffee plantation in Sheka Biosphere Reserve



Daniel Schreiber
Project Manager
daniel.schreiber@giz.de

L. to r.: A women cooperative producing silk in Nech Sar National Park; Chebera Churchura National Park

private actors and communities around selected protected areas to collaborate in restoration and local economic development activities.

Following a landscape approach, the social, economic and ecological dimensions are considered to balance respective interests.

The valuation of ecosystem services in protected areas and the use of biodiversity for benefit sharing brings an economic perspective to conservation, which is needed to find suitable approaches for the long-term financing of protected areas.

At the local level, a higher and systematic involvement of the local population in decision-making processes related to the access and use of natural resources ensures that their interests are considered. Smallholder families living adjacent to the protected areas are supported by establishing climate-resilient and legal income alternatives. One example is the establishment of sericulture cooperatives with women who used to illegally extract wood from the national park. The establishments are then supported in having long-lasting and sustainable income source, by collaborating and connecting with the private sector.

At the same time, capacities of regional institutions for the development of forests are increased while standardizing and upscaling approaches for effective and environment-conscious forest management. The business and technical capacities of the timber and bamboo processing industries are strengthened in cooperation with technical training centres, and governmental as well as private enterprises. Various digital tools and e-learning platforms have been developed for improved and scalable protected area and forestry management, to increase the capacity of partners and relevant stakeholders.

Main achievements

- An organizational development process for the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA) has been approved and is ongoing.
- Instruments for the effective management of protected areas have been introduced such as the guidelines for the participatory planning of national park management, the digital tools for wildlife and ecosystem monitoring and the strategy for community partnership in conservation. E-learning courses on protected area management and forestry are being developed.
- Development and implementation of guidelines for forest management planning and a digital solution for forest inventory, which reduces the time for data collection, has been conducted.
- Climate-resilient income generation activities and forest landscape restoration have been introduced around protected areas, which provides ecological as well as economic benefit to neighbouring communities. To ensure the durability and sustainability of income generation activities, connections with the private sector are established resulting in long-lasting financial opportunities.
- A multi-stakeholder coordination platform has been established, involving all relevant stakeholders around various protected areas to balance economic, ecological and social interests.
- To raise awareness on the importance and criticality of ecosystems and their services in Ethiopia, plantation and rehabilitation trainings and -initiatives for local communities, awareness campaigns and the establishment of environmental clubs at schools have been organized.

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Hisham Complex (3rd floor), Kazanchis Area,
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
daniel.schreiber@giz.de
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Text Luise-Katharina Richter/ Etsub Zeleke
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