

**Full Length Research Paper**

# Glimpse into Status of Tourism Activities in the 'Simien' Mountains National Park, Ethiopia

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**Article history**

Received: 27-02-2018

Revised: 05-03-2018

Accepted: 15-03-2018

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**Abstract**

The Simien Mountains National Park (SMNP) had contributed a lot to national as well as local economic development though there is no sufficient information on the current status of the park. In this the paper, attempt has been made to investigate the status of tourism activity in Simien Mountain National Park. A mixed design approach was utilized so as to dig out the perception of key informants, stakeholders, employees, local people and experts. Besides, document analysis was undertaken on annual reports of the park and the stakeholders. The collected data was coded, cleaned and analyzed by the help of available software. The result showed that the number of tourists has dramatically increased due to political stability, increased access to information technology, sound visa requirement, and feasible economic policy. Though the park has great contribution to national and local economy, it is not functioning at its fullest capacity owing to inaccessibility of transportation, poor quality of guides, sub-standard quality of hotels services, and low participation of the local people in the process of improving the parks situation and so on. Thus, the government is recommended to incentivize investment on hotels, all weather roads, transportation and infrastructure around the park area. It is imperative to raise awareness and participative roles of local people in the tourism activity. There are problems associated with pollution, over grazing, fire etc on the natural habitats of SMNP. Government and civic societies must be mobilized to conserve the natural habitat of the park area.

**Keywords:** Simien Mountains National Park, Status, Tourism, Trends

**Introduction**

With the change of government in 1991 the transitional government introduced various reforms in the tourism industry. Ethiopia is open for tourist from all parts of the world. This is because according to the new economic policy of the transitional government, tourism was given consideration. This policy also allowed participation of private investors in the sector by order No 17/1992, which allowed the establishment of autonomous regional tourism bureau (policy of decentralization), to develop regional tourism in their respect (MoTEC, 1999). Another development in the following year was proclamation No 14193 which defied the powers and duties of central government tourism bureau and establishment of regional tourism bureau. According to proclamation the power and duties of regional bureau are similar with central bureau, but they are limited to regional level, today there are ten regional bureaus in the country. All these were put under the culture, trade, transport etc. Ministry of Tourism and Cultur (MoTC), having regional structure changed, established new tourism policy. The policy which helped to classify and standardized the tourist facility and to give license to private investors, to provide tourism master plan for the tourism resources was not partly in place due to various reasons. Study had been undergone in the past years with the help of UNDP after revising the previous study; this study was able to produce broad development plans with short, medium, large term schedule in the plan were clearly pointed out potential market, establishing realistic strategies and program for implementation (TDE, 1999).

The proposal on the historical master plan are stated to support to tourism development like airport, road construction, hotel are open here to all who was to involve in tourism industry without restriction of private investors. In 2002, at the twilight of house of people representative election in Ethiopia, ETC was changed to Minster of culture and tourism. Even though, tourism has great contribution on a countries economy beginning from 1960, still now, qualified person is not involved in the section (TDE, 1999). In Ethiopia, the in-country tourist expenditure was studied by Mitchel *et al.*, (2009), to understand who is benefiting from the tourist spending. The result of this study indicated that the 'tourist dollar' spent in the country excluding visa fees, air transport tariffs and the like accounted for US\$187.8m per year (Mitchell *et al.*, 2009). Across all nodes of the value chain and all destinations, it is estimated that 16%, or US\$30.0m, of the in-country tourist expenditure accrued to resource poor communities. Food contributes 26%, or

US\$8.1m, of the total pro-poor benefits (Mitchell *et al*, 2009: 81), while handicraft sales are estimated to be US\$ 12.7 million per year, and 55% of these expenditures (US\$ 6.9 million) are considered to go to poor craftsmen, traders or raw material suppliers (International Trade Center - ITC, 2010).

One can understand that tourism is a well-studied sector. However, those studies are mainly in the Western context where the tourism sector is highly developed and too far from the Ethiopian context. Even the African literatures on tourism cannot be directly replicated to Ethiopia since Ethiopian tourism is yet at its nascent stage. The existing few published and unpublished studies in Ethiopia mainly focus on the historical development, the country's potential, human resource and policy related issues (Ayalew, 2009; Mulugeta, 2010). Currently, research works, particularly academic theses, on eco-tourism as means of ecological conservation, tourism in general as livelihood alternative and as sustainable development etc. are appearing (Chernet, 2008; Adem, 2008; Assegid, 2011; Sahle, 2011). These researchers have indicated the potential of the Country such as the landscape, flora and fauna; the historical legacies and the cultural endowments.

To recap, very few studies have been conducted on the contribution of tourism for community livelihood in Ethiopia though its role currently is significant. Most of the existing studies are unpublished and their major focus is on the meaning, types and potential of the country; legal support and human resource limitations. But, none of them has indicated the role that tourism has been playing for community livelihood and best experiences. Thus, this research aims to investigate the current status of tourism the Simien Mountain National Park (SMNP). It specifically investigates its contribution on community livelihood as a mainstay and as an alternative income generation strategy, its direct and indirect economic impacts in Ethiopia from the perspectives and experiences of local communities in and around Simien Mountain National Park.

## Research methodology

### *Study Area*

The Simien Mountain National Park (SMNP) is found in the northwest of Ethiopia, in Amhara Regional State, about 885 km from Addis Ababa and about 120 km from Gondar. It is located on Geographical coordinates about 13° 9' N and 38° 15' E with an area of about 232.5 km<sup>2</sup> adjacent to Mt RasDashen, the highest summit of the country and the fourth highest peak in Africa (IL of SMNP, 2006). It lies within the center of a triangle of important historical sites of the country, which regularly visited by a number of international tourists, namely Axum (stelae), Gondar (Fasil castles) and Lalibella (rock hewn Churches). In Simien, the town of Debarq is the starting point for all trekkers, because the main office of the park is found in Debarq. At the present tourist destination within the park and buffer zone are mainly located on the high land parts, Sankaber (including the beautiful Wazala valley Janibar waterfall and Aymetrye). Gich (the very spectacular and ranged mountains of Gdirgot, kedadit, seha valley, Imetgo); chennech (including site of Amharashema and Buahite Mountains and Messareria, campsite and the RasDejen Mountain are some of the most attractive scenery in the park.

### *Data Sources*

Data sources in this research are both primary and secondary. Among the primary sources the researcher used questionnaire and interview, and published & unpublished books, magazines and leaflets are the main secondary sources.

### *Data collection tools/ Instruments*

The researcher has used the following tools to collect data or information about the activities of tourism in SMNP. These include documents review, and questionnaires and Interview

### *Documents*

About 14 years documents have been reviewed in order to know the trends of tourists and its revenue for the government. And 7 years document about the arrival of tourists and its revenue for the local people has been reviewed. Besides to this type of tourists and different fees and number of endemic animals like Waliya Ibex and Red fox has been presented.

### *Questionnaire*

About 10 items /questions/ were prepared for foreign visitors in order to know the views of tourists toward SMNP & about 10 items /questions/ were also given to locally known peoples, who are participating in tourism activity and have been living a long period of time around the park. In order to collect the intended information the researcher used convenience sampling technique for foreign visitors. Within 10 sampling size of foreigners the researcher find the first 10 visitors randomly. And purposive sampling methods are used for 10 sampling sizes of locally known people.

### *Interview*

Interview was held with senior scouts, regional experts, tour and travel agencies, and head office of the park purposely.

### *Methods of data Analysis.*

After the information is collected using aforementioned instruments, it has been presented through tables and graphs. And each tables

and graphs were analyzed and there by conclusion drawn.

## Results and discussion

### *Government Support for SMN Park Management*

Being one of the national parks administered under EWCA, the SMNP is also enjoying the opportunities created in the recent past and special emphasis is being rendered to ensure the SMNP management competence in the conservation of this World Heritage Property. The staff and capacity of the SMNP has been considerably strengthened in recent years, as resources have been allocated from EWCA and other partner projects and capacity development initiatives have been implemented.

**Table 1:** Government Budget Allocation for the Park Management (2004/05 - 2012/13)

S.n.	Physical	Budget	S.n.	Physical Year	Budget
1	2004/05	566,079.00	6	2009/10	1,967,890
2	2005/06	629,115.45	7	2010/11	2,010,000
3	2006/07	950,296.00	8	2011/12	9,097,000
4	2007/08	1, 194, 222.00	9	2012/13	9,296,800
5	2008/09	1,356,745			

Source: EWCA Annual report (2004/05-2012/13)

At present, SMNP employs more than 90 staff (still to be increased in future) including 10 technical staff (e.g. chief park warden, Warden, Deputy warden, ecologist, senior and junior wildlife experts, senior tourism and community development officers) and 70 scouts. Most scouts are based in outpost camps, where they usually stay with their family, and change their outpost camp roughly every two years.

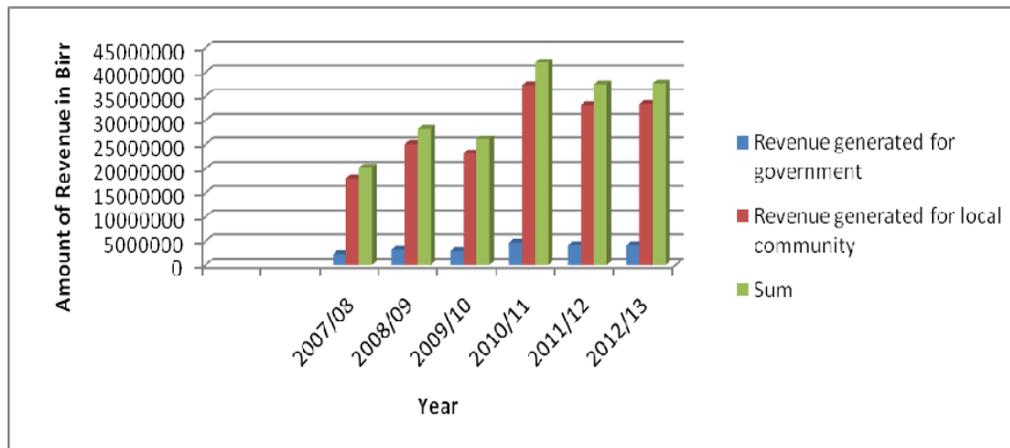
### *Temporal Trend of Tourist Flow to SMNP and Revenue Generate*

Simien Mountains National Park has great potential for tourism realization, but its potential is still not possible yet. Tourism in Simien Mountain is at its infant stage. It is because of the presence of long civil war, and then were no any conducive environment for tourism to grow and develop in the country during the past decades. The Simien Mountains National Park and its surrounding were barred from visitors by war between 1983 and 1991. However, according to table 1 the number of visitors was 58 in the year 1991/92 it has reached 330, in 1992/93. Later on the visitors' changes in percent 468% and in 2001/02 the total tourist arrival is 722, in the percentage change in actually 33%, this increase is due to alleviating of the country of tourist come its obvious a lot of money invest for the government.. Before 2002/03, there was no qualified man power in the past even now, in the tourism field. Even the revenue of the government was not recorded. If the large amount of even though recorded, the revenue of the park was not available still in the year 2004/05. After this year the data clearly shows tourism revenue for the government and its trend. From the year 2004/05 to the 2005/06 tourism arrival become lifting up highly by percentage change from 50% to 46 % this increasingly is not only depending on the Simien Mountain National Park, but also the generating countries situation also determine the decrease or increase rate of tourists by this year the revenue for the government was extended from 128000 ETB in 2004/05to 236193 ETB in the year 2006/07the percentage change in 21% (SMNP Report, 2016).

Even if tourism activity has increased from in the year 2007/08 to 2008/09, the tourism activities were decreased by increasing rate due to unrest from 2332 in 2008/09 to 1825 in the year 2009/10 by the number of tourists. Simultaneously the revenue for the government by the park office from tourism activity was affected highly. It was decreased from 236193 ETB to 209 579 ETB and the percent change is from 21% to -3% in the year 2007/08 to 2008/09 respectively (SMNP Report, 2010). After the civil unrest stopped, gradually the attitude of visit Ethiopia changed in to good trend. That is the trekking of tourist became increase in the year 2011/12, the total number of visitors were 2652 and the revenue for the government increased from 209579 ETB in the year 2010/11 to 302614 in the year 2012/13, the percentage change also increase from 3 to 46% respectively (ECWA, 2014).

In the year 2012/13 the number of tourists is 3495 when comparing with 2001/02 it increase by number of 843 and percentage change is 31%. Additionally, the amount of revenue for the government increased from 202614 ETB to 346771 ETB. The total change is 44157 ETB and percentage change is 14% (SMNP Report, 2013). Due to providing well service for tourist and improving infrastructure including road construction, though negative impact it has, and due to the country's being cleared from war, the number of tourist become highly increased at an increasing rate. By the year 2013/14 the number of tourist increased from 3495 in 2012/13 to 3769. It rises by 8%and total government revenue is increased from 346771 ETB to 359586 ETB and percentage change from 14% to 30% respectively. The numbers of tourists has reached 5074 in the year 2014/15 (MoTC , 2016).

The revenue for the government in this year was 61614293 ETB and the percentage grows to 71%. To sum, the total trekking in to Simien Mountain National Park from 2001/02 up to 2014/15 was 25723 and from these tourist arrivals the government had gained 273,101,893 ETB totally from the year 2005/06 up to 2014/15 (SMNP Report, 2016).



**Fig 1.** Trend of Revenue Generated from Simien Mountains National Park for both the government and the local community 2007/08- 2012/13)

Even though more to remain, current efforts to implement the revised park management plan; preserve the natural integrity and value of the parks which are challenged by human and livestock interferences are promising. Besides, the number of local beneficiaries from tourism has grown and this is considered as a model that has to be replicated in other protected areas of the country. 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. The other interesting aspect of tourism and travel to SMNP is the growth of private tourism investment most of them are in operation and some are under construction. Often its location advantage to the park gate, private investment in Debarq Town is on the rise.

The revenue generated for both the government and community shows the money which is collected with legal receipts in tourist information center such as entrance fee, local guide, cook, mule rent, the money that tourists spent in Debarq town and within the park for consumption, accommodation, souvenir and other miscellaneous expenditures part of this data is significantly increasing (SMNP, 2013; 2017). By looking the existing data indicated Figure 1, receipt from tourists at the park gate has increased. The revenue generated for both the government and the community in year 2007/08 was 20,234,960 ETB: but in the year 2012/13 has increased to 37,653,312 ETB (SMNP, 2013). From this tourism income, the revenue generated for the local community in the year 2007/08 was 17,966,590 ETB: but in the year 2012/13 has increased to 33,480,704 ETB (Graph 4). In the same taken, the revenue generated for government in the year 2007/08 was 2,268,370: but in the year 2012/13 has increased to 4,172,608 ETB (SMNP, 2014).

#### *Temporal Trend of Tourist Flow to SMNP and Local Revenue Generate*

According to figure 2 in 2007/08 there were 1289 tourists arrived or visit SMNP. From these tourists 230,000 ETB gained for the local community. In 2008/09 there is 1825 tourist arrives (visits) SMNP. This tourist number increase by 32%, from 9% in 2008/09 to 41% in 2013/14 and from this 241031 ETB contributes for local people revenue. The total change of revenue was 4%. This increasing rate shows that the tourist number become changed from year to year also the local people revenue from tourist on the way of increased, in the next year, 2008/09 the number of tourists also increased, 2652, from this number 335997 ETB gained to the local people. The revenue which gained in this year was increased by 35% from 4% in the year 2008/09, to 395 in the year 2009/10 (SMNP, 2008).

The number of park visitors and participation of local community in tourism activities have been growing significantly and these are believed to strengthen the linkage between conservation and tourism. Considering the last year performance, significance difference has been recorded both in tourist arrival and amount of revenue collected from the same (Fig. 2). In the year 2012/13 the number of tourists was 3495 (grow by 4% when comparing to in the year 2008/09 tourist's number, i.e. 41%) this trend is highly different in the revenue because comparing this from the previous year was the local revenue was lift up from 355997 to 395967 ETB and the change of revenue in percent was 17%. Even tourists arrival is many, the duration of stay of tourist was more or less small and the provision on at materials by local people, including tent and cook services time, is short. When the arrival of tourists compared in the year 2012/13 and 2013/14, it increased at decreasing rate (figure 2). The change in percent is from 31% to 7%. The revenue changes from 17% to 30% of increasing at increasing rate. In this occurrence from less tourist arrival getting much revenue is by extending the stay of tourists by themselves, because a person pays 20 ETB per day, rather than entrance fee (SMNP, 2013). In the year 2014/15, tourist arrival increased by increasing rate from the previous year by 1305. It shows the number of tourist changing in percentage of 34%. The local population revenue also automatically increase from 517847 ETB to 736567 ETB this number shows that revenue changing from 30% in the previous year to 42% in the year 2014/15. Regarding the year, of tourism in the above analysis

of seven years, the revenue of local people is increasing highly. This indicates it is very important aspect of local people for winning poverty (SMNP, 2014).

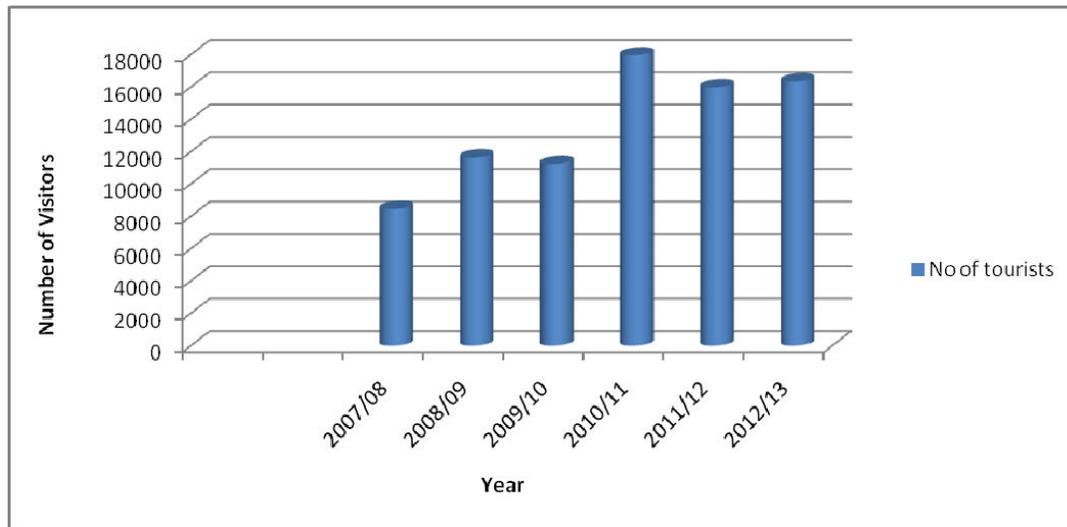


Fig 2. Visitor trend of Simien Mountains National Park (2007/08-2012/13) (Source: Data collected from park office (2007/08-2012/13)).

Types of tourists and fees

Revenue for the government received from SMNP is the contribution of tourists from both Ethiopian and non-Ethiopian citizens. In this seven year tourists flow in to Simien Mountains National Park and its revenue extended. The sum total of 17809 people arrived and the local people benefited 1477351 ETB totally. Simien Mountains National Park office is receiving much money from tourism activity. For this revenue Ethiopian visitors are assumed as one part of income source. In the year 2012/13 the total number of visitors was 3495. From this number of visitors the government had received 346771 ETB. Among this Ethiopian visitors were 211 and contributes 1100 ETB and 96 foreign citizens live in Ethiopia also contribute 7375 ETB. The rest of visitors were foreign visitors, non-Ethiopian counted 3188 had also paid 338296 ETB. When we see Ethiopian visitors partly, they have contributed 31% from the total revenue for the government that received from tourists. And the contribution of foreign citizens, live in Ethiopia, were 2.1% of the total revenue and the rest 97.6% were received from non-Ethiopian living foreign citizens. From the year 2012/13 the year 2013/14 the total number of visitors were relatively increased from 3495 to 3769. But Ethiopians were reducing their number from 211 to 157 and Ethiopian residence foreign citizens were increasing their number from 96 to 139. Due to this their price also increases from 7375 ETB to 8097 ETB. The foreign visitors, non-Ethiopia residence were also increase from 3188 to 3473. This means increases by 258.

From the year 2013/14 to the year 2014/15 the total number of visitors increased from 3769 to 5074. The factor to increase in the above explained the attraction of the park is transmitted by the visitor of previous. The total revenue also goes up from 359586 to 616142.93 (Table 1).

Table 2. Types of tourists and their contribution

Year	Total no. of tourists	Ethiopian tourist		Foreign citizens who live in Ethiopia		Non-resident foreign tourist	
		No. of visitors	Revenue in ETB	No. of visitors	Revenue by ETB	No. of visitors	Revenue by visitors
2012/13	3485	211	1100	96	7375	3188	338296
2013/14	3769	157	731	139	8097	3473	350758
2014/15	5074	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>12338</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>1831</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>15472</b>	<b>6661</b>	<b>689054</b>

(Source – SMNP, 2017).

Entrance fee that paid by tourist are the fundamental revenue for the governments though charging by park office. This fee is not only expected from the foreign citizens Ethiopian also required to pay fee when they want to visit the SMNP, whether sight-seeing or trekking. Ethiopians expected to pay three Ethiopian birr when they were adults and two Ethiopian birr when the visitor is child per head. Ethiopian residence foreign citizens also pay 30 Ethiopian birr for entrance fee of SMNP. If visitors are foreign citizens and

non-Ethiopian residence, charged 50 ETB for adult and 25 ETB for Childs for entrance fee (Table 2). The above entrance fee discrimination is occurred according to citizenship, Ethiopians are considered as the owner of the attractions since they are citizens of the country. And foreign citizens who live in Ethiopia charges less price than foreigners who doesn't live in Ethiopia because if a person lives in the country he/she considered as the member of the society of the country, though foreign citizens. Foreign citizens, non-residence were paid greater than both Ethiopians and Ethiopian residence foreigners, because they are not living in the country and they come for the purpose of visit only. So they pay more than the two groups of Tourists.

**Table 3.** Fee of tourist for entrance in SMNP

Nationalities	Age	
	Adult	Child
Ethiopians	3 ETB	2 ETB
Ethiopian Residence foreign	30 ETB	10 ETB
Non Ethiopian residence foreign	50 ETB	25 ETB

(Source- SMNP, 2014).

Through tourism world, accommodation is one of component of tourism activity. Wherever tourists pay for accommodation, unless, it seems to like visiting friends and relatives. Table 4 clearly places the lodge and additional payments per stay. In SMNP like entrance fee shown in table 4 the price charged by the park office depending on age and citizenship. Ethiopians whether live in the country or outside the country they are charged for lodge per night, per head. If Ethiopian citizens wanted to visit, pays two Ethiopian birr per head per day and one Ethiopian birr for child. Visitors of foreign citizens pay 20 ETB for adult hood and 5 ETB for child. If Visitors are foreign citizens but live in Ethiopia are required to pay 10 ETB & 5 ETB per head, per night for adult and child respectively. In terms of child payment for both Ethiopian residence and non-residence foreign citizens paid the same price charge for lodge per night.

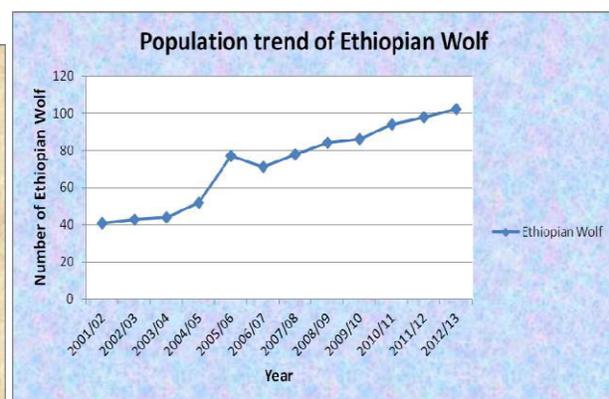
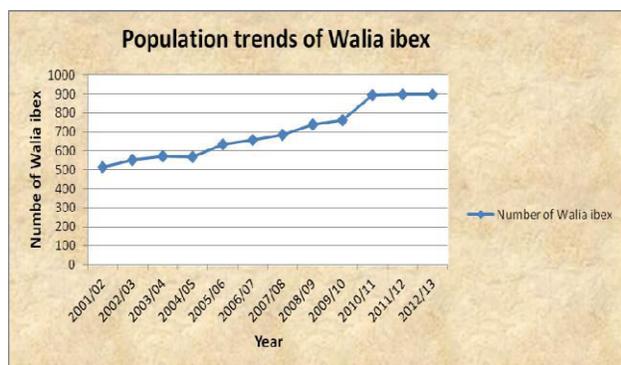
**Table 4.** Additional fees for lodge stay per day

Nationalities	Age	
	Adult	Child
Ethiopians	2 ETB	1 ETB
Residence foreign	10 ETB	5 ETB
Non Ethiopian residence foreign	20 ETB	5 ETB

(Source- SMNP, 2014).

*Population dynamics of Walia Ibex and Ethiopian wolf: As an example of Fauna dynamics in SMNP*

The number of Capra Walia Ibex in the year 2002 was 514 and in the year 2003, 574 and percentage change was 11.6% where as in the year 2004 the total number of Walia Ibex was 579 and the percentage change was 0.8%. In that year even though the total number increases, the changing percent was increased at decreasing rate. This increasing trend was the result of good consideration to preserve Walialbex. For this, if a person kills the Walialbex and other animals automatically would taken to prison, but by the year 2005 the number of Walia Ibex was reduced from 579 ( 2004) to 567.



**Fig 3:** Walia Ibex (left) and Ethiopian Wolf (Right) Population Trend, from 2001/02 to 2012/13 (Source: SMNP, 2015)

This is due to the Walia Ibex killing them by interring their horn to their anus as well as predators have big effect, like hyena and tiger. However the number of Walialbex was increased in the year 2006, they reach to their number 673, increase by 9.8% from the previous -2.0% It may the result of born new Childs (coifs) and by protection measurement (Figure 3a). As it is clearly shown on

Figure 3b, the number of Ethiopian Wolf (Red Fox) were small & endangered where comparing to the number of Walia Ibex in SMNP. The reason behind the reduction of Ethiopian Wolf is associated with the disease of dogs that can transmit to Ethiopian wolf. However, according to the statistics of the park in the year 2002 the total number of these endemic animals was 41 and 44 in the next year, 2003. In the year 2014 and 2015, its number was 53 and 71 respectively. It was increased due to good emphasis towards its conservation. Regarding on this the management of the park and people of tourism society had played a great role to conserve Ethiopian Wolf. However, in the year 2016 its number was reducing by 1%, it was 70 from 71 in the year 2017; it was reduced from 18% increase in the described year (SMNP, 2014).

#### *Impacts of Tourism Activities in SMNP*

The researcher tried to gather information from different sources like tracks & leaflets, which prepared by the parks office and Austrian development fund project for the park, to investigate different impacts on SMNP with respect to tourism activity.

#### Impacts of Tourism on Natural habitat:

- i) **Pollution:** In Simien Mountain one of the problems that are created by tourists are environmental pollution. These problems are associated with the litter, that thrown by tourists, such as tins, bottles and plastics are throwing to the bush by visitors. Vacuums also another problem when tourists do not use existing toilet facilities. They use outside the toilet. This problem make the environment smell bad. At composite, toilet exists but tourists and Muller do not use it.
- ii) **Impact on vegetation:** Tourists' activity in SMNP has negative impact on vegetation as a result of walking. In SMNP recreation impact on vegetation is not only trembling but also grazing by tourist pack animals and other impact is woods damage by consuming of mule men for cooking their food.
- iii) **Noise:** portable radio used by tourists, scouts and guides disturb animals. However, different animals have different tolerant behavior to interact with human e.g. Baboons are many in recreation area but Walia Ibex, Ethiopian wolf, klipspringer, never like to see persons. So tourists in the park are eager to near the animals that affecting animal recreation.

#### Socio Economic Impact of Tourism on SMNP:

As tourism activity, it has a negative impact on natural environment, in economy has positive impact. When tourists come to the national park, the local young people recognized the potential demand for souvenirs and began selling scarves and wool hat (qob). Some hotels and shops enjoy a good business from visitors.

#### *Employment of Local People*

The local community from the park hires horse and mules for traveling to the attraction of the park some families provided rooms and foods for tourist. Another benefit to the local people is training. Local people including guides in Simien have been trained in first aid, environmental English language, the cultural and historical background of the region and eco-tourism and aspects of regional development. However, there are also some negative impacts on local community. They stated that cultural loss the first challenge. Since the antiques are commercialized for tourists' interest, less attractive artificial products are developed. For example, the local people had clothing animal skins, made from sheep skins, but now it was replaced by clothes if so the attractiveness of culture became less in terms of viewing. The other challenge was local **conflicts**. The local society and the government officials clashed based on resettlement program of the government and/or resource competition.

#### *Other problems threat to the SMNP*

##### Emergence of new settlement

According to information reflect of SMNP, 2006 the road constructed from Debark to Jan Amora having two main negative impacts on SMNP. It is attraction of new road side settlement and changes wild life habitat. In the sub alpine zone people have already built new houses along the roadside example on the other hand, in the afro alpine zone wild life habitat are affected by new road construction.

##### Fire

Most of the time in SMNP occurring fire burning of environment for the purpose of agricultural practices of the society in order to prepare the cultivation land for the next cultivation season. On the other hand, revenge among individuals is also the cause to occur fire inside the park. If a person has conflict with scout he may provoke fire, this is common and most occur in south eastern part of the park. Consequently, these fires highly affected biodiversity, killing animals and indirectly by decreasing plan productive and change species quality.

##### Over grazing

Over grazing impact is most of the time being series at afro alpine zone. The afro alpine zone at Buahit Mountain and in the surrounding extensively over grazing by density over stocked animals especially during the early wet season when herd are kept away from the barley and wheat crops of Mesheha area.

Human pleasure through hunting and agriculture

Cultivation by the people inside the park is the main problem of the park because when farmers practice farming they damage much animals and plants by clearing farm land by fire. This problem observed especially at margin, in south east of the park and northern part of the park. Even though now reduce hunting without permission was dangers for endemic animal.

#### *Facilities of SMNP: As responded by Tourists*

Ten questions were prepared and distributed to ten visitors in different days. The items of the questionnaire and the response of the visitors in number and percent are recorded. As it is already stated, almost all the tourists have seen the park for the first time. From this it can be deduced that with the exception of these who come for special purpose may be for research – most tourists don't come more than once for a mere visit. On another issue, almost 80% of the local tourists has visited other national parks and it was made known, 70 % of them alleged that the general facilities of the park is medium as compared to other parks they had visited and two tourists have found the parks facilities high but one tourist has found the parks facilities poor and he/she suggested that to bring improvement on the poor facility of the park both the transport and living standards of the people in the park should be improved and almost the same suggestions have been given stating that measures such as transport access participation of the local people should be taken to solve the problem.

According to 70% of the respondents the responsibility to solve the problem facing the park is laid up on government, society, NGO's and UNESCO and one person said that is the government responsibility where as two of them said is the society responsibility. Therefore, as the response shows according to many tourists, responsibilities concerning on the park are not of individual matter all are responsible. There are different conditions which initiate tourists to come to the park but the most important one is according to seven tourists out of ten, the natural wonderers of the park and very few others are attracted by the flora and fauna of the park and unspoilt culture in and around the park. Moreover, remoteness and peacefulness of the park has little power to initiate tourists. And almost all tourists as it indicated under question eight believe that their coming to visit the park has a contribution to the national income and all visitors said that their contribution lies on park fee payment for scout and guide and hotel and transport services. And finally about 30% of tourists agree that government is the most beneficiary from the park and the rest of tourist stated that scouts, guides, and the local people also beneficiary from the park.

#### *Contribution of SMNP as responded by the local people*

A dozen issues were raised for some locally known people and employees under the office the park in different days. The locally known people who cater different services for tourists and employees under the office of the park claimed that the park had agricultural, scenic, tourism and other services. As we can understand tabulated data, all of the answered 'yes' is unanimously for the question whether the park has greater contribution to the national income and the greatest contribution comes from tourists. And as the response for question number three shows the highest contribution had come from tourists through park fee, payments for guide sing service and hotel and transport services. Therefore, from the case we can understand that the park had greater contribution to the national income and tourists are the main sources of contribution. As it is indicated under question number four different peoples have participated and are participating in different services of the 15 persons for whom the question was forwarded. One person has participated in transporting services, four persons (26.66%) in guiding services and again 26.66% of the respondents participating in the park office and two of them (13.33%) in scouting and others in preparation of food for tourists and hotel services and from the above participants eight persons (53.33%) have served from one to five years and six persons (40%) have served from six to ten years.

Most of the participants (60%) have got medium benefits from the job as they expected they have been serving in and others (four persons out of ten (26.66%)) have got low benefits. People gave unanimous answer that there are setbacks in and around the park and more than 50% of them believe that problem of transportation, quality of guides, quality of hotel services, low participation and lack of awareness of the local people are the common setbacks they have forwarded their own ideas as to what measures should be taken to improve the situation. Four of them (26.66%) believe that developing awareness of the local people is important and two of them (13.33%) suggest the training guides and scouts is important whereas the majority of them believe that all mentioned above are important once to solve the problem. And finally all of them think that the responsibility to solve the aforementioned problems is lied upon the shoulders of government, the civic society and non-governmental organizations.

#### *Presentation of Data from interview*

As per the interview conducted with the head of the park office, the contribution of the park towards the community is very high. According to the head, the park has a greater contribution to the national income, and the main sources of the contribution are foreign tourists. The number of tourists who come to the park fluctuates following different seasons. For example the number increase at the season from September up to January because as he said at this seasons the park looks attractive and the seasons (Sep-Jan) are the time of Ethiopian holidays for example 'Timket' and 'Meskel' were celebrating during this time, a great number of tourist flow to Ethiopia to see and enjoy with these holidays and this in turn gives them change to visit the park. When a tourist comes to visit the park, he pays 50 birr for park fee/entrance fee/ for 48 hours and 20 birr camp site fee for 48 hours. In addition he pays for hotel services, cookers, guides and coordinators etc. From the total amount of money which gained from tourists about 85% were goes to the regional government and 15% were for federal government. Apart from contribution to the national and regional government the park has great

contribution in giving job opportunities for the local people. According to the head, the park has given job opportunities for more than 200 scouts & militia men, 24 guides, 30 cooks and for more than 100 muleteers and 50 persons who are serving in the park office. The number of tourists is grammatically increasing from year to year and this is partially due to different improvement like security and information technology, government willingness to ease visa requirement, the government free market economic policy and the total amount of income that gained by the government and the local people has been grown up to more than a million birr per year. Therefore, the park is contributing a greater share to the national income on the one hand great many persons have got job opportunities on the other hand.

Even though the park has greater contribution to the national income to the local people, it is not working at its full potential. As it is evidenced by tourists, the local people and interview /the head of the park office/, there are different draw backs which pose threatening problems on the parks performance. Some of problems are inaccessibility of transportation, poor quality of guides, poor quality of hotel services, low participation of the local people in the process of improving the parks situation, lack of portable water and even local beggars by whom tourists are tired of. As the tourists, the local people and the head of the park office have suggested, training receptionist, guides, cooks, improving quality of hotels and roads, creating awareness to the local people improving the living standard of the local people, etc will improve the parks situation. And government, the local people, NGOs, and UNESCO are all responsible for the parks for the parks general improvement.

As the head of the park office said the park is being faced by different problems the park has different short comings. Among these the main one's are lack of skilled receptionist, poor quality of hotels, poor quality of the roads/transporting/, lack of cook more ever there are some peoples who pose different problems to foreign tourists by begging and thereby making them bored. According to the head, the above problems can be solved by training receptionist, cooks, guides building local reception rooms in and around the park by enhancing the quality of hotels and roads and developing the awareness of the local people not to cause any problem an tourists, and to solve the aforementioned and other problems the local development projects are expected to the fore fronts.

### Conclusion

In this the paper an attempt has been made to discuss the status of tourism activity in Simien Mountains National Park. As explained earlier though the existence of tourism activity in SMNP area so far had contributed to economic growth for the government as well as for the local economic development are not sufficient as an intended rate associating with many problems. The major problem is the awareness of the government and the society instead of providing service situation for tourists. The SMNP being endowed with beautiful and breath topographic scenery and endemic animals attractive a great many tourists from different corners of the world every year and both the government (the country in general) and the local people (in particular) are beneficiaries of the tourism. Apart from payment different services that have a great role for the national income tourists also a cause for changing a job opportunity for the local society i.e. about 400 local peoples have a chance to get works. The number of tourists dramatically increasing from year to year and this is particularly due to different improvements like security and information technology government willingness to ease visa requirement, the government free market economic policy, and the total amount of income that gained by the government and the local people has been grown up to more than million persons have got job opportunities on the other hand. Even though the park has great contribution to national income and to the local people, it is not working at its full potential. As it evidenced by tourists, the local people and the interview, there are different draw backs which pose threatening problems on the parks performance. Some of the problems are inaccessibility of transportation, lack o poor quality of guides, poor quality of hotels, and low participation of the local people in the process of improving the parks situation. As the tourists, the local people and the head of the park office have suggested training receptionist, guides cooks, improve quality of hotels etc. will improve the parks situation. The government the local society, NGO's and UNESCO are all responsible for the park's general improvement.

### Recommendations

Based on the major findings of the study, incentivizing sufficient tourism services was highly recommended. Hence, the government shall provide special mechanisms that encourage investment especially standardized hotels, asphalt transport and so on around the park area. The local societies around the park have no sufficient awareness about the importance of the park even though the revenue getting from tourism is very high. Therefore, awareness raising campaigns must be initiated in order to enhance participation of more local people in to tourism activity. There are problems associated with pollution, over grazing, and fire on the natural habitats of SMNP. Thus, the government, non-government organization and the local societies are recommended to mobilize resources and devise a sound strategy to conserve the natural habitat of the park area. Above all, due consideration should be given parks' stake holders to diminish the barriers of eco-tourism in the area.

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