Ecotourism as a viable strategy for livelihood diversification and sustainable natural resource management in Ethiopia (from eco-development paradigm point of view)

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Natural resources in developing countries are under great threat partly due to lack of alternatives and partly due to the type of livelihood of the people. By diversifying the livelihood of the people (mainly towards ecofriendly type), it is possible to minimize the pressure on natural resources. In line with this idea, ecotourism as an economic activity enables both to diversify livelihood and to sustainably manage natural resources. A desk review, based on theoretical and empirical evidences, was carried out to analyses how ecotourism development helps to diversify livelihood and manage natural resources. Ecotourism is credited with promoting the conservation of natural resources and diversification of livelihood; contributes to economic development and management of resources by generating revenues; provides local employment opportunities and develops sense of ownership on resources. Its multiplier effect is high due to the strong forward and backward linkages with different economic activities. Since it is managed at locality level, the extent of leakage is low as compared with mass tourism. In general, ecotourism provides local economic benefits while also maintaining ecological integrity through low-impact, non-consumptive use of local resources. Ethiopia has a huge potential for the development of ecotourism though the sector is in its infancy stage. Concerned bodies should strive to promote the development of the sector considering its all-round contribution.

Key words: Ecotourism, livelihood diversification, sustainable natural resource management.

INTRODUCTION

The process of development takes place in the environment, using resources, generating waste and causing other impacts; and the environment is the natural resource base that continues to provide human beings a wide range of livelihood assets and benefits (Dessalegn, 2001; Barrow, 2005).

Environmental resources are the foundation of social and economic development as they are the sources of goods and services needed for poverty reduction and economic growth. Their mismanagement coupled with their underutilization has so far reduced their contribution to Ethiopia’s overall development (MoFED, 2006).

In Ethiopia, overgrazing and the expansion of farming into unsuitable land caused by increasing population without increasing economic productivity are leaving the land bare: due to increasing human and livestock population pressure on arable land and forest resources, in large areas of the country, particularly on the northern and central highlands, have been exposed to loss of fertility, degradation and ecological imbalances (MoFED, 2006). According to EPA (2000), in order to ensure that future developments in Ethiopia are sustainable it is essential to integrate environmental concerns into development activities so that the inclusion of the principles of sustainable development into development endeavors is very essential.

In doing so, ecotourism can play a central role in conservation and rural development (Nelson, 2004) which is typically an eco-development approach in natural resource management. Eco-development appeared in the early 1980s (Glaeser, 1984 as cited in Barrow, 2005) and emphasized the need to restructure society and economics to ensure that development worked with, rather than against, nature.

According to, Colby (1991), the relationship between society and nature in eco-development paradigm results a ‘positive sum game’ or win-win outcome by reorganizing human activities so as to be synergetic with
ecosystem processes and services. Therefore, as far as natural resource management if concerned, eco development paradigm differ from frontier economics paradigm which believes that an increase in economic growth and technological innovation can reduce resource depletion, pollution, and environmental degradation to acceptable levels (Miller,1989); the deep ecology paradigm which advocates a harmony between humans and nature and it opposes the use of technology. Deep ecologists see technological fixes as usually leading to larger, costly, more intractable problems, rather than progresses (Colby, 1991) and the environmental protection paradigm which is inherently defensive or counteractive in practice and it has also been described as the ‘business-as-usual plus a treatment plant approach.’ It focuses on setting the limits, and in some cases, cleaning up after limits are exceeded. But they are not responsible for planning development activities in ways that do not pollute or damage necessary ecological functions (Colby, 1991).

The objective of this paper is, therefore, to investigate the contribution of ecotourism for livelihood diversification and sustainable natural resource management from eco-development paradigm point of view. Specifically, it tries to:

- Address the essence of ecotourism and how it differ from other forms of tourism types
- Asses the contribution of ecotourism in diversifying livelihood
- Investigate the importance of ecotourism program for sustainable natural resource management
- Explore the ecotourism potentials of Ethiopia.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

The paper has been done based on desk review. In doing so, different theoretical and empirical evidences regarding the contribution of ecotourism for livelihood diversification and sustainable natural resource management were explored. In addition the experiences of different countries and the ecotourism potentials of Ethiopia have been examined.

Definition of concepts

This section tries to define key concepts like tourism, ecotourism and community based ecotourism. It also addresses how ecotourism differ from mass tourism.

Tourism: tourism as an economic activity is hard to define but easy to recognize (Schaller 1998) so that different scholars explain it in different ways. The most widely accepted definition is the one given by Hayward (2000:56) who defined tourism as “the temporary, short term movement of people to destinations outside the place where they normally live and work and the activities they take part in during their stay at these destinations.” It is the person’s subjective motive (Schaller, 1998) that makes him/her a tourist or not and the traveler’s intention to return home afterwards (Hayward, 2000).

Sustainable Tourism: sustainable tourism embraces all segments of the tourism industry with guidelines and criteria that seek to reduce environmental impacts and to improve the contribution of tourism to sustainable development and environmental conservation. According to World Tourism Organization (WTO), sustainable tourism leads to the management of resources in such a way that economic, social, environmental and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled. It is in short a tourism activity that meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future (Baker, 2008).

Ecotourism: ecotourism is a relatively new idea and has emerged in the late 1980s that has dramatically captured the attention of many people from a variety of backgrounds (Koeman, 1998). It is seen by many conservation groups as a means to ensure ecologically sustainable development (Tisdell, 1997). International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) defined it as:

“…environmentally responsible travel to natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature that promote conservation, have a low visitor impact and provide for beneficially active socioeconomic involvement of local people” (Ngece, 2002:1).

Ecotourism differs from nature based tourism in that nature based tourism is just travel to natural places, but ecotourism provides local benefits: environmentally, culturally and economically. For instance, while a nature based tourist may just go bird watching, an ecotourist goes bird watching with local guide, and stays in a locally operated eco lodge, and contribute to the local economy. Ecotourism is therefore, a type of tourism that focuses on local cultures, wilderness, and adventures; a travel to destinations where the scenery, flora, fauna and cultural heritage are the primary attractions. The ecotourist visits relatively undeveloped areas in the spirit of appreciation, participation and sensitivity; practice a non-consumptive use of wildlife and natural resources and contributes to the visited area thorough labor or financial means aimed at directly benefiting the conservation of the site and the economic well-being of the local residents (Koeman, 1998; Kiss, 2004; Baker, 2008).

Some elements that distinguish ecotourism from traditional tourism include: a genuine respect and knowledge on the part of the traveler, minimal impact on the local environment and culture, the conservation of biological diversity, the education of all participants, small scale, supply driven development, and the involvement of local people throughout the development process (Kiss,
Catering to ecotourism involves building the needed infrastructure (like transportation, lodging, food, and services) to accommodate tourists. Ecotourists are less concerned than mass-tourists about large, fancy hotels and paved roads rather a clean and healthy atmosphere. Low-impact housing such as small lodges, bed and breakfast inns, or rooms in village homes is usually preferred by ecotourists. These lodges also are beginning to use renewable resources, such as solar energy; to help avoid the drawbacks of modern development which would deplete the very resources that ecotourism has set out to protect (IES, 2006 and Baker, 2008).

According to Lowmen (2004:2), ecotourism follows two important principles of sustainability namely, promoting conservation of the natural ecosystems and supporting the local economies known as the pillars of ecotourism. The major characteristics of ecotourism as illustrated by Neto (2002), Lowmen (2004), Kiss (2004), IES (2006) and Baker (2008) include:

- Involves travel to natural destinations
- Minimize the negative impacts of mass tourism
- Builds environmental awareness and respects local culture
- Provides direct financial benefits for conservation and empowerment for local people
- Brings economic benefits to local communities and directs revenues to local people living adjacent to protected areas
- Employ locally and give money back to the community
- Local participation in decision making
- Emphasizes the need for planning and sustainable growth of the tourism industry, and seeks to ensure that tourism development does not exceed the social and environmental carrying capacity
- Increasingly relies on infrastructure that has been developed sensitively in harmony with the environment

Community Based Ecotourism: Community-based ecotourism (CBE), according to the international ecotourism society (IES) (2006:1), is “a form of ecotourism where the local community has substantial control over, and involvement in, its development and management, and a major proportion of the benefits remain within the community. It fosters sustainable use of land and natural resources.”

In general, CBE is a kind of tourism that is managed by the community for the tourist destinations. With general tourism, tourist visits are often marketed and organized by private travel companies and government protected areas and the bulk of the profits go to the private companies and government enterprises. In contrast, CBE is managed and run by the community itself, management decisions are made by local people and profits directly go to the community (Koeman, 1998; Kiss, 2004).

**SIGNIFICANCE OF ECOTOURISM - WHY ECOTOURISM?**

Ecotourism, a recent but widely hailed tourism alternative (Schaller, 1998), has high potential to be an instrument for rural economic development and resource conservation. Figure 1 illustrates the role ecotourism plays in economic development and natural resource management.

**Economic benefits**

Ecotourism can contribute to economic development and the conservation of protected areas by generating revenues that can be used to sustainably manage protected areas, and by providing local employment and a sense of community ownership. To be successful, ecotourism should promote conservation of natural resources and also provide financial gains for the host country and the local people. However, without careful planning and management that balances ecological, social, and economic objectives, ecotourism can easily cause environmental damage.

- The economic benefits of ecotourism as identified by different scholars (Anderson, 1996; Koeman, 1998; Dasenbrook, 2002; Ngece, 2002; Lowmen, 2004; Weggoro, 2008) include;
  - Employment opportunities: - it brought employment opportunities to often previously disadvantaged people and a significant amount of the industry remains in the form of small scale projects that can be funded by locals. Since the sector is labor intensive, its expansion generates more employment opportunities at semi-skilled, technical and managerial level than an equivalent expansion in other sectors of the economy.
  - Creating new jobs: - tourist expenditures on lodging, transportation, food, guides and souvenirs are important sources of income for local communities by providing supplemental income to rural farmers, women and young people.
  - Diversifying regional economies: - it is a relatively decentralized industry that is highly capable of diversifying regional economies of less developed countries which are dependent of primary activities.
  - Catalyst for development: - tourism activities act as catalyst for the development of other sectors of the economy, that is, it provides strong forward and backward linkages so that induced macro/micro economic incentives as well as motivations for development in the region. Ecotourism stimulates profitable domestic industries like hotels and other lodging facilities, restaurants and other food services, transportation systems, handicrafts, guide services etc. Ecotourism plays a great role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). (See Annex 1 for the contribution of ecotourism in achieving the MDGs).
Minimize leakage: - being locally owned and operated, ecotourism projects are not caught up in the need to conform to corporate western multinational tourism concerns, and therefore can have a much higher input of local products, materials and labor. This means greater multiplier effects in the local economy and also reduces import leakages and the remittances from expatriate labor which results from large-scale, foreign owned operations.

GDP: - ecotourism contribute a great deal of gross domestic product for developing countries.

Foreign Exchange earnings: - while ecotourism is sensitive to the level of economic activity in the tourist generating countries, it provides higher earning for developing countries than those from primary products.

Development of infrastructure: - the benefits accruing from investment in infrastructure and super structure as air ports, hotels and restaurants, road networks, communications, power and water supply as well as other related public utilities are widely shared with other sectors of the economy, resulting in to greater economic efficiency.

Transfer of income: - tourism is an excellent means for transferring income from wealthy nations and persons to the poorer sections of society. Ecotourism is especially effective in this transfer since travelers often venture in to remote, economically disadvantaged regions.

Environmental benefits

Ecotourism, if properly managed and applied, can also benefit the environment in the following ways (Anderson, 1996; Ngece, 2002; Dasenbrock, 2002; Kiss, 2004 and Weggoro, 2008).

- Ecotourism is relatively less-pollutant industry, which can enhance the conservation and promotion of natural and cultural heritages.
- Ecotourism will foster responsible tourist behavior, conservation of important wild life habitats and ecosystem.
- It is best alternative activity to environmentally damaging activities like farming, logging and mining. Although ecotourism may not be able to preserve these untouched areas as they would if human contact were prohibited, it can help to protect them from the dangers of destructive agricultural practice, mining and industrialization. “The flora and fauna may be bothered [due to ecotourism development], but at least it will not be destroyed” (Dasenbrock, 2002:12).
- Encourages individual conservation efforts- informed tour guides and educational pamphlets can motivate tourists to become environmentalists, thereby promoting conservation efforts.
- Encourages small scale infrastructure construction: - the infrastructure demands of ecotourism industry primarily include the construction of small scale hotels and transport systems, there by maintaining a healthy balance between expanding tourism industry and protecting natural resources.
- Encourages productive use of lands which are marginal for agriculture, enabling large tracts to remain covered in natural vegetation.
- Demonstrates the importance of natural and cultural resources to a community’s economic and social well-being and can help to preserve them.

Social benefits

Ecotourism development, in addition to economic and
environmental benefits, might contribute socially by enhancing local community esteem and provides the opportunity for greater understanding and communication among people of diverse background. Ecotourism helps for political empowerment of local communities and fosters respect for different cultures (helps to develop tolerance). It is also an important vehicle for promoting cultural exchanges (Agrusa and Guidry, 1999; Nepal, 2002 and Weggoro, 2008).

NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF ECOTOURISM

Negative impacts from ecotourism occur when the level of visitor use is greater than the environment's ability to cope with this use within the acceptable limits of change. Uncontrolled tourism poses potential threats to many natural areas around the world. It can put enormous pressure on an area and lead to impacts such as soil erosion, increased pollution, discharges into the water, natural habitat loss, increased pressure on endangered species and heightened vulnerability to forest fires (Anderson, 1996; Veneeva, 2007 and Anstrand, 2006).

Economic impacts of ecotourism

Different studies (Anderson, 1996; Dasenbrock, 2002 and Neto, 2002) stressed that ecotourism, if not carefully monitored and managed, may result in the following economic impacts.

- **Leakage**: though the major target of ecotourism is to generate domestic employment and economic opportunities for local communities, profits can leak out of the regions (locals) in to the hands of elites and wealthier nations. Many developing nations do not have the resources to construct the infrastructure necessary for ecotourism development, which leads them to turn to foreign corporations and international donors. The widespread involvement of foreign investors can lead to a leakage problem in which the profits earned by the tourism sector donot stay in the country.

- **Exploitation of local workforce**: the resident population may exclude from the development process and relegate to minimum wage support jobs.

- **Instability**: Tourism is highly vulnerable to international shocks like natural disasters, wars, sudden changes in consumer tastes, sharp economic downturns and terrorist attacks.

Environmental impacts of ecotourism

According to Anderson (1996), Holloway (1999) and Neto (2002), poorly managed ecotourism results in the following negative environmental issues.

- The technological complexity of the present century has led to various forms of pollution which are both initiated and compounded by tourism development in general and by travel in particular. Any large-scale tourism movement increases air pollution, contribute to unacceptable levels of noise in rural surroundings and disposal of waste into waterbodies.

- Although ecotourism is intended for small groups, even a modest increase in population puts extra pressure on the local environment and necessitates the development of additional infrastructure and amenities. The construction of water treatment plants, sanitation facilities, and lodges come with the exploitation of non-renewable energy sources and the utilization of already limited local resources.

- Its consumption of virgin territories like deforestation, disruption of ecological life systems and various forms of pollution, all of which contribute to environmental degradation.

- When the overwhelming majority of profits are put into the pockets of investors instead of reinvestment in to local economy or environmental protection, it causes the resentment by local people results in environmental degradation.

- Loss of biodiversity: when land and resources are strained by excessive use, and when impacts on vegetation, wildlife, mountain marina and coastal environments and water resources exceed the carrying capacity, it can cause loss of biodiversity. This loss of biodiversity in fact means loss of tourism potential.

- The presence of affluent ecotourists encourage the development of destructive markets in wildlife souvenirs contributing to illegal harvesting and poaching from the environment.

- Introduction of exotic species: tourists and suppliers may unconsciously bring in species that are not native to the local environment and that can cause enormous disruption and even destruction of ecosystems.

Socio – cultural impacts of ecotourism

The common sociocultural effects of ecotourism (Schaller, 1998; Holloway, 1999 and Neto, 2002) include:

- **Displacement of local people from their land**: eventhough ecotourism often claims that it preserves and enhances local cultures, evidences shows that with the establishment of protected areas, local people have illegally lost their homes and most often with no or little compensation. Pushing people on to marginal lands does little to enhance livelihoods even when a proportion of ecotourism profits are directed back in to the community.

- **Land use conflict**: ecotourism often causes conflict and changes in land use rights and fails to deliver promises of community level benefits.

- **Cultural change**: indigenous cultural change may
result from contact between tourists and locals, which is usually closer and more prolonged than in mass tourism. Problems arising when indigenous villagers adopt city or western ways, include acculturation, locals may begin “manufacturing” culture solely for tourists’ consumption.

- Tourism has contributed to an increase in crime, thefts, muggings and expansion of HIV/AIDS.
- Locals may come to experience increasing dissatisfaction with their own standards of living or/and way of life and seek to imitate the tourists.
- Job opportunities and higher salaries attract workers from agricultural and rural communities who freed the restriction of their family and the familiarity of their home environment, may abandon their traditional values. Leading to an increase in the breakdown of marriage and in divorce.

**MECHANISMS TO MINIMIZE THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF ECOTOURISM**

Natural resource depletion and environmental degradation associated with ecotourism activities are some times serious problems in tourism-rich regions (Neto, 2002).

Controlling ecotourism within the limit of the carrying capacity of the environment can be accomplished through sound management techniques or the use of economic instruments like user charges (or entrance fees), various kinds of taxes and imposing a limit on the number of visitors or tradable permits (Anderson, 1996).

According to Tisdell (1997), in order to minimize the side effects of ecotourism, government intervention at different levels is needed in the following ways.

- Limiting the number of tourists and tourist operators based on the carrying capacity of the area,
- Improving the patterns or logistics of tourism movements to reduce environmental damage or adverse effects,
- Providing appropriate environmental education to tourist operators and tourists. Whether it is through tour operators, lodges, national parks, private reserves, or different types of ecotourism related activities, education can make a difference. Education is one of the most crucial elements of ecotourism because it can change the way people (both locals and tourists) think about the environment,
- Introducing technological improvements to reduce environmental damage,
- Imposing restrictions on buildings,
- Due attention should be given for the involvement of local communities in ecotourism projects so as they can develop a sense of ownership with the project. Local participation serves as an early warning system that helps managers to avoid or plan for decisions that might otherwise cause conflict with the local population.

**COMMUNITY BASED ECOTOURISM AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

Developing a national ecotourism strategy needs collaborative arrangements between governments at all levels, parks, NGOs, tour operators and local communities (Koeman, 1998).

Boo (1990) as cited by Koeman (1998) stressed that ecotourism to be a tool for conservation and local economic development should bring the local people in to the planning and development of the industry.

One of the essential elements of ecotourism is the encouragement of active participation of local population in the conservation process and careful consideration should also be made to the distribution of benefits of ecotourism amongst locals.

The local population must be convinced that the forest resource is more valuable as a tourist location than as land used for growing crops, raising cattle or for logging (Anderson, 1996; Agrusa and Guidry, 1999).

Hardyment (2003) and Agrusa & Guidry (1999) on their part pointed out that ecotourism should minimize negative impacts on the host community otherwise the local population may come to dislike the presence of tourism and this could undermine its long term prospects.

Conflicts, unauthorized farming and logging and the inability to successfully manage and police parks have shown that the needs of local populations must be taken in to consideration in order to protect natural resources.

Ecotourism is mostly found in designated protected areas or national parks which may have been imposed upon the indigenous population and without economic benefits; the host community will have little reason to view the intrusion of tourists positively and will have little incentive to protect the environment upon which ecotourism depends.

Generally, the degree of control the local population has over ecotourism in their locality is perceived as being a significant element of sustainability. Including a participation program in the design stage of a project provides the opportunity for the local community to become aware about the purpose and benefits of the project, thereby, increasing support for the effort. Training local people to manage their own projects can avoid misunderstanding and possible hostility (Hardyment, 2003). After the mid-1980s several USAID missions have initiated community based ecotourism and natural resource management programs with the prime intention of rural empowerment, local governance and resource conservation (Natsios, 2006). Barkin (1996:21) highly emphasizes the importance of local community participation in ecotourism development as:

... unless ecotourism actively incorporates the local society in to service planning and provision, and includes programs to meet the fundamental needs for income and employment for all people in the locality, the special
quality of the site and its flora and fauna may be irreparably damaged.

A good example for this is the widespread resentment amongst the Maasai nomadic pastoralists over the inadequate compensation paid to them for their displacement from traditional grazing lands with the establishment of national park that results in killing of wildlife in the parks as a protest (Barkin, 1996:23).

Therefore, the active involvement of local communities in ecotourism development projects is very essential for its sustainability. Local communities do have several rooms of participation in ecotourism schemes.

**ECOTOURISM, ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Ecotourism in recent times is increasingly utilized for its multipurpose of economic development (poverty reduction), livelihood diversification, sustainable natural resource management and local governance (Barkin, 1996). It helps to protect and enhance the natural resources that most of the world’s poor look for their livelihoods (Natsios, 2006) mainly for farming, grazing and fuel. Many of the world’s poor depend directly on the environment through agriculture, forestry or fisheries for their livelihoods (Natsios, 2006) that has a great role for land degradation (Demele, 2001).

In order to overcome such environmental issues, ecotourism serves as a powerful incentive to protect natural resources (Barkin, 1996) because the basic rationale behind ecotourism is to preserve natural resources while profiting from them (Dasenbrock, 2002 and Hardyment, 2003) through enhancing the special qualities of the site with its flora and fauna, while allowing local inhabitants and future visitors to continue to enjoy these qualities (Barkin, 1996). Haroon (2002:19) has explained the relationship between ecotourism and sustainable development as:

> Ecotourism promote sustainable development by establishing a durable productive base that allows inhabitants and service providers to enjoy rising standards of living because it aims to ensure ecologically, economically and culturally friendly tourism. Sustainable tourism can be achieved when activities are controlled by the local community in which tourism activities are being generated. In short sustainable development, sound environmental management and ecotourism are closely linked.

According to Tisdell (1997:7-10), the sustainability of ecotourism depends on the following factors:

- The extent to which it is consistent with conserving its resource base,
- The social acceptability- local communities, in some case, are hostile to ecotourism development because they believe it is a threat to their life style and livelihood,
- Political sustainability - in the absence of adequate lobby groups in favor of conservation, areas suitable for ecotourism may be used for economic activities incompatible with the development of ecotourism.

**ECOTOURISM AS A VIABLE STRATEGY FOR LIVELIHOOD DIVERSIFICATION AND SUSTAINABLE NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: CASE STUDIES**

Ecotourism plays a great role in natural resource management by generating income for the local communities and diversifying their livelihoods (Kiss, 2004). CBE projects typically claim success in motivating local communities to reduce their exploitation of wild plant and animal species, to help control poaching by outsiders, or to set aside part of their farm or grazing land as conservation areas. Ngece (2002:4) also underlined its importance as:

> "community-based ecotourism if well-established can play a reasonable role in community development and bringing people closer to conservation."

Conservation organizations fund CBE as a means of reducing local threats to biodiversity, such as expanding agriculture, unsustainable harvesting of wild plants and animals, and killing wildlife that threatens peoples' crops, their livestock or themselves (Kiss, 2004). The following practical case studies portray how CBE development can play a great role in livelihood diversification and sustainable natural resource management.

**Budongo Forest Reserve in Uganda**: The Budongo forest reserve, in Northern western Uganda, was gazetted as a central forest reserve in 1932. But the deep forest was encroached by local people for gathering food, building materials, fire wood, craft materials and agricultural land. In 1995, the Budongo forest ecotourism project was organized with the aim of promoting forest conservation by integrating conservation with community development, and to achieve active involvement of the local communities in the management of the forest. The project enables the women to work as guides, facilitators, caretakers and produce handcrafts for sale. Men do similar tasks and additionally work as trail cutters. Farmers’ groups in the area are diversifying into vegetable growing and beekeeping, with training provided by the project. The vegetables are being eaten in farmers' homes, and sold to the hotels, lodges and tourism developments connected to the forest, that enables the farmers to have additional source of income.
The attitude of the local communities to the forest began to change actively participate in the conservation process (Langoya and Long, 1997).

**Ghana:** Before the introduction of the ecotourism project in Tafi Atome village in the Volta region of Ghana in 2004, forest land was cleared for farm use, forest material was extracted, economically viable trees were sold for profit, and monkey were killed. The development of ecotourism project enables local communities to have incentives for the conservation of the forest resources (Edleman, 2006).

**Zambia (Kasanka National Park):** Kasanka National Park in the Central province of Zambia was suffering from heavy poaching in the mid-1980s. A British expatriate, David Lloyd, teamed up with a local landholder and gained official permission to rehabilitate the park through CBE. They established a non-profit limited liability company, Kasanka Trust Limited, which manages the park under a 10-year agreement with the Zambia Wildlife Authority. Tourist camps, roads and bridges have been constructed and local community development and education projects undertaken. The Trust is largely responsible for conservation management of the park area, including anti-poaching patrols and enforcement. Around 100 local residents are employed in park management and tourism; different tourism related job opportunities have been developed for the locals. As a result wildlife populations have been restored successfully (Buckely, 2003).

**Zimbabwe:** Before the development of CBE on Sunungukai, 120km north-east of Harare, the rural villagers from Kapandoro, Hodzi, Munando, Chidiramumba and Mapini were highly exploited the lush green mountains covered with trees and grass which is a home of different fauna and flora species. This led to a serious degradation of the natural environment that was aggravated by inadequate farming land, shortage of grazing land and fuel wood. But after 1993, community based management of natural resources through ecotourism venture was introduced by the CAMPFIRE association with the intention of providing compensation and substitution can lead to change of attitude and practice of resource management by local communities. The community formed the Sunungukai Management Association with the intention of providing compensation and substitution can lead to change of attitude and practice of resource management by local communities. The community formed the Sunungukai Management (Odero and Huchu, 1998).

**Latin America:** The Toledo Ecotourism Association, in the Maya and Garifuna communities of Toledo district in Belize, Central America, has benefited the local communities and in turn assist in environmental conservation (Ngece, 2002:3 and Lowmen, 2004:3). In Brazil, since 1997, the local communities of the extractive reserves of the Pardas Negras and Curralinho, in western Amazon have been developing ecotourism as an income generating activity and means of guaranteeing the environmental sustainability and conservation of the forest (Dori and Rosendo, 2003).

**Asian Pacific Regions:** According to the International Ecotourism Society (IES) (2006:2-3), ecotourism development in Asian pacific region has played great

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**Table 1. Forms of community involvement in ecotourism development.**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of enterprise</th>
<th>Nature of local involvement</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private business run by outsider</td>
<td>Employment, Supply goods and services</td>
<td>Kitchen staff in a lodge, Sale of goods, building materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enterprise or informal sector operation run by local entrepreneur</td>
<td>Enterprise ownership, Self employment, Supply of goods and services</td>
<td>Crafts sales, food kiosk, campsite, home stays, Guiding services, sale of fuel-wood, food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community enterprise</td>
<td>Collective ownership, Supply of goods and services, Employment or contributed labor</td>
<td>Community campsite, Craft center, Cultural center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint venture between community and private operator</td>
<td>Contractual commitments, Shares in revenue, Lease/investment of resources, Participation in decision-making</td>
<td>Revenue sharing from lodge to local community on agreed terms, Community leases land/resources/concession to lodge, Community holds equity in lodge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism planning body</td>
<td>Consultation, Representation, Participation</td>
<td>Local consultation in regional tourism planning, Community representatives on tourism board and in planning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Baker (2008:332)
contributions for conservation. For instance, the village of Batu Putih in Sabah, Malaysia, had for long experienced tremendous loss of biodiversity due to logging. But after the establishment of the model ecological Sustainable Community Ecotourism, villagers have become beneficiaries so that a forest rehabilitation program has been started (Ngece, 2002).

Similarly, poaching and unabated habitat loss due to fragmentation, degradation and conversion of park lands to farming had intensified long-term threats to biodiversity conservation in and around the Royal Chitwan national Park in Nepal. The Chitwan river line forest contains the world’s largest concentration of the Bengal tigers (Panthera tigris) and one-horned rhinoceros (Rhinoceros unicornis). The extensive loss of habitat was associated with high demand of trees for fire wood and fodder. In order to overcome the problem, CBE project was developed in 1994. After three years, the forest resources have been improved, Tiger and rhinoceros poaching reduced by three fold and the revenue earned from the project has assisted local people to improve their standard of living (Ngece, 2002).

Turkey: Forest villagers in Turkey, due to their limited land resources as well as lack of alternative sources of income, had been heavily dependent on utilizations from the forest areas. They apply intensive pressures on the forests by the destruction of forests to gain new arable lands, illegal tree cuttings and using the forest as illegal pastures for animal breeding. CBE has been launched under the Ministry of Forestry to overcome the problem.

The project provides incentive credit facilities and technical support services to expand various income-creating activities like breeding, poultry, beekeeping, fishing, carpet weaving, medical and aromatic plant cultures etc. Gradually, the pressure on the forest resources decreased and local communities has participated in conservation processes (Kahvaci et al, ND).

Makalu-Barun National Park, Nepal: The Makalu-Barun conservation project which supports thriving populations of indicator species, such as musk deer and Himalayan tahr is intended to promote local community development initiatives to increase and diversify local incomes without increasing environmental pressures on the core conservation area.

These initiatives include the production of textiles, paper and other artifacts from local resources, as well as direct involvement in tourism as in more heavily visited regions. Total revenues to local communities, through payment for porters, lodging, food and supplies and handicrafts and souvenirs, are hence over ten times the fees paid to the park. Most importantly, villages that were previously opposed to the establishment of the park started to be included within the project area. Local villages have arrested a poacher and turned him in to authorities along with his gun and snares. Villagers have also confiscated and reported illegally harvested lokta bark used to manufacture handmade Nepali paper. In the more heavily visited areas of Nepal, trekking tourism has provided substantial incomes for local people, who have gradually moved from employees to owners of trekking tourism operations. Sherpa people formerly employed as porters, guides and cooks now own trekking agencies, lodges, restaurants and a helicopter airline (Buckley, 2003).

Adaba-Dodola, Oromia; Ethiopia: - Adaba-Dodola community based ecotourism development project was initiated in 1995 to develop a replicable model for the conservation and sustainable use of natural forests in Ethiopia with an objective of creating non-wood forest income through eco-tourism and wildlife utilisation. The German Agency of Technical Cooperation (GTZ-now GIZ) provides advisory services and equipment to the project on behalf of the Federal Republic of Germany.

The forest priority area of Adaba-Dodola is located on the northern slopes of the Bale Mountains and its size was decreased by 3% per year due to unregulated access by wood collectors and livestock herds. Although the area is among the forest priority areas of the country, overexploitation of timber and firewood as well as increasing demand of farmland and overgrazing endanger the survival of the forest. The forest was ruthlessly cleared during the fall down of the Derg government when there was no guard looking for the forest. The area was highly encroached by the surrounding communities and it was on the verge of total degradation when project was started.

With an objective of alternative source of income, five ecotourism lodges which are managed by local communities were established. The project is involved in activities which generates income through eco-tourism management. Towards to the fulfillment this, it has constructed lodges and trekking routes. It also provides camping sites, horses, tents, guides and others. These services are addressed to tourists who are interested in site seeing, mountain trekking, hunting and looking traditional way of life. Due to the project, the proportion of the natural regeneration has been getting highest and the locals are starting to manage the resource properly (Sisay, 2004).

**ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN ETHIOPIA**

Ethiopia possesses numerous tourist attractions varied in type and appealing to a wide range of interest. The attractions include historical, cultural, archaeological, anthropological, scenic, climatic, therapeutic, flora and fauna resources. Such a unique combination of attractions within a single country has no match on the African continent, or rarely anywhere else (Martin, 2008).

Ten heritages of Ethiopia have been registered as world heritage sites by United Nations Economic and Social Council Organization (UNESCO), namely Simien
Mountain National Park (1978), Rock-hewn Churches of Lalibela (1978), Fassil Ghebbi (1979), Lower Valley of the Omo (1980), Axum (1980), Tiya (1980), Lower valley of the Awash (1980) and the fortified Historical town of Harar Jugol in 2006 (Berhanu 2003); and recently, the cultural landscape of Konso and Meskel festival (the finding of the true cross) have been included as a world heritage by UNESCO. In addition to the world heritage, Ethiopia is extraordinarily rich with varied type of tourist attractions (Ethiopian Tourism Commission 1995; Berhanu 2003 and Briggs, 2003) which gives the country a great potential for cultural and educational tourism like photo safaris, hunting safaris, bird watching, water sports, desert trekking, mountain camping, ecotourism, health tourism and conference tourism (Berhanu 2003 and Martin 2008).

Henze (2007:3) has pointed out the ecotourism potential of Ethiopia as:

*Ethiopia's mountains are almost untouched by climbers; Ethiopia's lakes have many varied features of great interest to tourists; birds, wildlife, vegetation, colorful ethnic groups, historical churches and monasteries, unusual geological features, caves, local arts and artifacts of the country are among the major ecotourism resources.*

According to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MoCT) of Ethiopia, the country is endowed with the vast array tourism resources, in the form of cultural, historical, archaeological and natural resources which is great potential for the development of sustainable ecotourism. Some of these resources includes, among others, exotic Ethiopian mountains which are best places for individual trekkers, hiking parties and for professional climbers; Ethiopia’s lakes have varied features of great interests to ecotourists like birds, wildlife, vegetation, colorful ethnic groups, historic churches and monasteries, unusual geologic features and much more; extensive and nice looking Ethiopia’s national parks are spectacular places for ecotourists to watch the real African big wild life and enjoy the breathtaking surrounding landscapes; the underground caverns and rock arts are places to admire the works of nature, rock paintings and carvings of people and animals; battle sites and places of significant political events like Boru Meda, Entoto, and Ankober are most interesting sites for history loving ecotourists; the diverse cultures of the people are places of interesting attractions for culture oriented ecotourists; the north central highland and rift valley lakes regions are best places for bird watcher ecotourists; rock hewn churches and monasteries are best destinations for religion loving ecotourists; and the Afar areas, Danakil depression areas and lower Awash as well as Omo valley areas are places of spectacular natural scene and activities for archaeologists, geologists and nature loving ecotourists (http://www.tourismethiopia). The Ethiopian government, in its plan for accelerated and sustainable development to end poverty (MoFED, 2006) and in the growth and transformation plan (MoFED, 2012), have identified tourism as one of the key sectors of economic growth and more emphasis is given its contribution as sources of jobs, incomes, and economic growth for citizens and role of tourism for sustainable resource management is not stressed. Though the country has huge ecotourism potential, most tourism resources are under threat.

According to Walta information center (WIC, 2012), people and livestock are affecting wildlife by encroaching illegally in some protected areas of Ethiopia for search of meat, land, grass, wood and other resources. Encroachment from the surrounding communities is currently among the major problems of parks like Semina national park, Awash National park, Bale mountain National Park, Borena-Saynt national park and Nech-sar national park.

Asebe (2012) also added that, park management for long period of time in Ethiopia was typically state-centered, top-down, exclusionary and coercive against local people which relies on “fences and fines” and considered local people as hostile to park resources. Locals living adjacent to protected areas were forced to displace without their consent which was one of the major reasons for mass destruction of parks after the collapse of the Derg regime.

This implies that, for sustainable resource management, there should be incentive for the local communities and ecotourism benefits the local community so as develop sense of ownership. In line with this concept, one of the objectives of the tourism policy of Ethiopia is to create extensive employment opportunities for communities at tourist destinations and to ensure community benefits through a wider distribution of income, and to enhance community participation in decision making on development (MoCT, 2009).

Ecotourism is still in its infancy in Ethiopia, but it holds significant potential for growth. The country’s biodiversity is quite unique compared to neighboring countries, some of which are famous safari destinations. Ethiopia’s protected area, which includes national parks, game reserves, wildlife sanctuaries and controlled hunting grounds, covers about 14% of the country. The protected areas offer ecotourism and leisure activities such as wildlife viewing, trekking, mountaineering and bird watching (Henze 2007 and Martin 2008).

There are some promising community based ecotourism initiatives like Adaba -Dodola, which is financially and technically supported by the German Agency of Technical Cooperation or GTZ (now GIZ) on the northern slopes of the Bali Mountains in Oromia National Regional State (Sisay, 2004) and Semien Mountain (a pilot ecotourism project on SMNP) (BoFED, 2009:226). The Ecotourism Association of Ethiopia, which was founded in 2003 by committed organizations of the private sector, is basically formed to promote the
principles ecotourism and eco-efficient initiatives in order to address the challenges faced by the tourism sector (EAE, 2008).

SUMMARY AND THE WAY FORWARD

Ecotourism can be used as a way to promote community-based natural resources management and livelihood diversification. It can help fuel economic development and conserve protected areas by creating local jobs, providing a sense of community ownership, and bringing in revenue that can be used to manage protected areas in a sustainable way. If local communities directly benefit from the use of their land, water, forests and other natural resources, they can be expected to support and participate in efforts to conserve and sustain them.

Thus ecotourism projects should aim to integrate socioeconomic benefits to communities and landowners; sustainably manage the environment; raise awareness of and support for conservation (people will conserve resources when they have an incentive to do so and/or when attractive economic alternatives to resource exploitation exist); increase a community’s capacity to conserve and manage natural resources outside protected areas and diversify the livelihood of rural communities.

The underlined assumption beyond ecotourism is that, when tourism has been an economically viable alternative, people have largely abandoned environmentally destructive practices.

Ethiopia’s Ecotourism potential is huge and unmatched but the sector is in its infancy stage. Most of the national parks and protected areas of the country are under pressure from the surrounding communities in search of cultivable land, grazing land, or wood for different purposes. By promoting ecotourism in such areas, it is possible to benefit the locales, diversify their source of livelihoods and manage the resources in a sustainable manner. Concerned bodies, considering its multifaceted contributions, should make every effort to develop ecotourism schemes so as to overcome degradation of protected areas and to improve the livelihood of people living around such areas.

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### Annex I. Contribution of Eco/tourism in achieving the MDGs

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<th>Goal</th>
<th>Contribution of eco/tourism</th>
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| 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger | - stimulates economic growth both at the national and local levels and promotes the growth of the agricultural, industrial and service sectors;  
- Provides a wide range of employment opportunities easily accessible by the poor.  
- International and domestic tourism spreads development to poor regions and remote rural areas of a country that may not have benefited from other types of economic development;  
- The development of tourism infrastructure can benefit the livelihood of the poor through improvement in tourism-linked service sectors, including transport and communications, water supply, energy and health services |
| 2. Achieve universal primary education | - The construction of roads and tracks to remote areas for tourists also improves access for school-age children and for teachers; tourism can help local resource mobilization, part of which can be spent on improvement of education facilities. |
| 3. Promote gender equality and empower women | - The industry employs a high proportion of women and creates micro enterprise opportunities for them. It promotes women’s mobility and provides opportunities for social networking. |
| 4. Reduce child mortality  
5. Improve maternal health  
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases | - The construction of roads and tracks to remote areas for tourists also improves access to health services;  
- Revenues accruing to national and local governments through taxes on the tourism industry can be used to improve health services and nutrition for young children and their mothers;  
- Raises awareness about HIV/AIDS issues and supports HIV/AIDS-prevention campaigns |
| 7. Ensure environmental sustainability | - can generate financial resources for conservation of the natural environment;  
- Raises awareness about environmental conservation and promotes waste management, recycling and biodiversity conservation; |
| 8. Develop a global partnership for development | - contributes to the socio-economic development of least developed countries, landlocked countries and island developing countries through foreign exchange earnings and the creation of job opportunities;  
- Stimulates internal and external trade and strengthens supply chains;  
- Promotes the integration of isolated economies with regional and global flows of trade and investment;  
- Provides opportunities for bilateral, multilateral and sub-regional cooperation among countries; |

Source: UNESCO (2007:9-10)