

Conservation and sustainable use of natural resources in Ethiopia

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

Context

Despite high economic growth, Ethiopia remains one of the poorest countries in the world. Unsustainable land use practices and a permanent increase in the demand for natural resources due to a rapidly growing population have been the main trigger for the degradation of landscapes, loss of biodiversity and impoverishment of the productive systems. Extreme weather conditions, like droughts and heavy rain, exacerbated by climate change, add to this already challenging situation putting life of the rural population at risk. The protected areas and natural forests, which cover around 15% of the country's area, are home to many endemic species in two biodiversity hotspots of global importance. They further provide a variety of ecosystem services such as water, fertile soil and pollination, as well as means to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Challenge

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

Another challenge is the growing demand for wood products, which is largely met through imports, which encourages illegal wood extraction from the natural forests. At the same time, the

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potential of timber production in forest plantations remains largely unused, which is caused by a lack of technical capacities and investment.

Our approach

The project is now in its third phase and focuses on consolidating, intensifying and institutionalizing the processes and achievements reached by the previous two phases, while strengthening partners' capacities at the local, regional and federal level. The institutions responsible for protected area and forest management are supported in capacity and skill development, as well as in improving their monitoring and knowledge management by using digital solutions.

As conservation of natural habitats and rehabilitation of degraded land can only be achieved in a collaborative effort of all relevant sectors and actors, the project brings together state institutions, private actors and communities around selected protected areas to cooperate in restoration and local economic development activities.



L. to r.: Woman from sericulture cooperative cleaning silk; Forest in Chebera Churchura National Park.



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

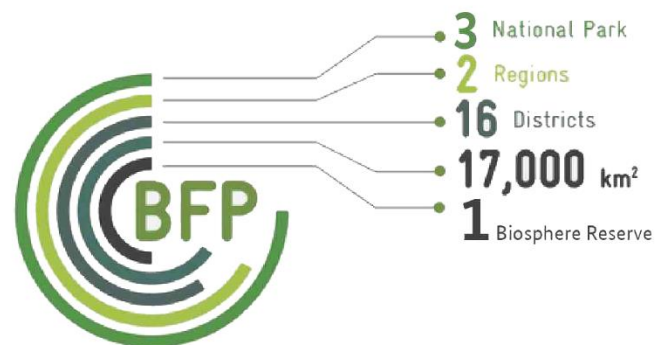
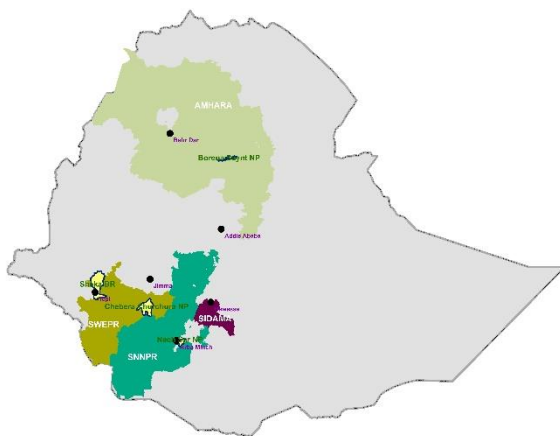
The valuation of **ecosystem services** in protected areas and the use of biodiversity for **benefit sharing** brings an economic perspective to conservation, which is needed to find suitable approaches for the sustainable financing of protected areas.

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

At the same time, capacities of **regional institutions** for the development of forests are increased while standardizing and upscaling approaches for sustainable forest management. The business and technical capacities of the timber and bamboo processing sectors are strengthened in cooperation with technical training centers, governmental and private enterprises.

Main achievements

- The organizational development process for the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA) has been approved.
- Instruments for the effective management of protected areas have been introduced such as the guidelines for the participatory planning of national park management, the digital tools for wildlife and ecosystem monitoring and the strategy for community partnership in conservation.
- Development and implementation of guidelines for forest management planning and a digital solution for forest inventory reducing the time for data collection by half.
- Climate resilient income generation activities and forest landscape restoration have been introduced around protected areas, which provides ecological as well as economic benefit to the communities.
- Establishment of a cross-sectoral coordination platform involving all relevant stakeholders around Nech Sar National Park to balance economic, ecological and social interests.



The project implements in and around four protected areas: Nech Sar National Park, Chebera Churchura National Park and Borena Saynt Worehimeno National Parks and Sheka Biosphere Reserve.

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