

# Contemporary Management Issues and Opportunities for Eco-tourism Development: The Case of Alemsaga Priority State Forest, South Gondar Ethiopia

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to assess the challenges and opportunities for community based tourism development in Alemsaga Priority State Forest South Gondar zone. The study was descriptive design and employed both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Questionnaires, key informants interviews, focus group discussion, observations and review of secondary sources were the main data gathering tools. Frequency, percentage, standard deviation and mean were used. The study also portrayed that inadequate budget, very low promotion, lack of basic infrastructure; resources destructions and lack participation were the challenges for ecotourism development. The study proved increasing demand for ecotourism sites, site locations, expansion of academic institutions, suitable environment condition of forest and its vicinity, up grading and development of new infrastructure development strategies, policies of the government and abundances of diversified cultural tourism resources around the Forest are an opportunities for community based tourism development. To assure this concerning bodies should be make every effort to development ecotourism scheme.

**Keywords:** Alemsaga forest; Challenges; Community-based ecotourism; Opportunities

## INTRODUCTION

Ecotourism is responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment sustains the well-being of the local people and involves interpretation and education [1,2]. Also defined Ecotourism is travels to fragile, pristine, and usually protected areas that strive to be low impact and (usually) small scale [3]. It helps educate the traveler; provides funds for conservation; directly benefits the economic development and political empowerment of local communities; and fosters respect for different cultures and for human rights. Alike ecotourism, the term community based tourism development still, there is no acceptable universal definition; the following definitions are some of widely accepted once. Community based tourism development is a form of ecotourism where the local community has substantial control over, and involvement on, its development and management, and a major proportion of the benefits remain within the community. It fosters sustainable use of land and natural resources [4]. Community-based ecotourism refers more specifically to tourism activities or enterprises that involve local communities [1].

Policies and legislations also is support and create favorable

conditions for the development community based tourism development. For instance general the agreement among UN member countries for "Promotion of ecotourism for poverty eradication and environment protection" [5]. 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 and has been enacting policies, implementing rules, regulations and laws, promoting marketing and facilitating the expansion of infrastructures and services [2].

The increasing of tourism demand both international and domestic with security and political stability, special attention of international organizations and none governmental organizations, the government policy; accessibility, corporation and globalization; policy of Government is an opportunity for eco-tourism development [6]. In addition to increasing demand for ecotourism, global economy is opportunities for community based tourism development. Over the last ten years, signaling a shift in tourist preferences from traditional popular destinations in Europe to nature destinations located mainly in the developing world [5]. Moreover, the collaboration of local community with different

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Received: October 23, 2019; Accepted: December 10, 2019; Published: December 17, 2019

Citation: Nega DD, Weldesenbet EG, Workie A, Damtie M (2019) Contemporary Management Issues and Opportunities for Eco-tourism Development: The Case of Alemsaga Priority State Forest, South Gondar Ethiopia. J Tourism Hospit 8:419. doi: 10.35248/2167-0269.19.8.419

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stakeholders has enhancing the success of promoting ecotourism industry [7]. The active involvement of local communities in ecotourism development projects is very essential for its sustainability [8].

In Ethiopia, tourist products are poorly maintained; access to tourist products are difficult and can be inappropriately expensive; and there is a lack of marketing to attract tourists to the country, and a lack of marketing of tourist attractions once tourists are in the country [9]. According to Meniga M and Ousman J stated that the critical factors have been noted as constraints for the development community based tourism development such as, lack of inherent tourism potential, lack of knowledge and awareness, lack of technical know-how and weak promotional activity, lack of tourism infrastructure facilities and lack of tourist investment [8]. Challenges of community based tourism development such as, little stakeholders' collaboration, lack of basic infrastructural development such as road, electricity, telecommunications, accommodation facilities, and lack of commercial viability for their product in term of value and price, weak marketing capability, lack of intergovernmental suitable policy framework, inadequate knowledge about tourism service skill, managing and implementing at local level [10,11].

Moreover, even though the tourism development policy of Ethiopia that enacted in 2009 aimed to develop the existing and new tourism attractions and products all over the country (Ministry of culture and tourism 2009), the researchers mostly concentrated in the popular national Parks that are easily accessible Parks and well-known [11]. The remaining parks are not yet studied in relation to their potentiality; their challenges and what will be operated in the future for ecotourism development [7].

The other challenges for community-based ecotourism are destruction of tourism resources. Due to population pressure, (expansion of Agricultural land, overgrazing, timber cutting for construction and fuel many protected areas are threatened [12]. According to Asfaw the forest cover of Ethiopia declined from 47% to only 3% for the past few decades due to increasing population and anthropogenic effect [13].

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to Alemayehu D, community based tourism can bring numerous socioeconomic benefits to a country or a locality, in terms of generating foreign exchange, creating local employment, stimulating national and local economies [14]. As described the benefit of community based tourism as a potential source of economic development and poverty alleviation, particularly in marginal rural areas with limited agricultural potential [15]. It has major positive economic impacts at tourists' destination through different activity like boatman, tour guide, rickshaw puller, eco cottage owner, cultural actors, handicraft producer, tea stall or small grocery shop owner, photographer, small and medium entrepreneurs [16]. The benefits of ecotourism include educative and interpretive components that increase awareness of the environment and encourage sustainability. These operations aim to minimize environmental impacts through careful design, planning and management techniques, and to benefit local communities [17]. The potentials of community based eco-tourism development in protected areas (national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, game reserves, eco-parks) cover more than 12% of the world's land area. These protected areas are on the front line in the campaign

to conserve biodiversity, as well as to promote ecotourism on the planet earth [18].

Protected areas are the focus for the maintenance of biological diversity and contribute for economic developments of Ethiopia [18]. It is endowed with impressive high mountains, rivers, and lakes. Ethiopia's mountains are almost untouched by climbers; Ethiopia's lakes have many varied features of great interest to tourists; birds, wildlife, colorful ethnic groups, historical churches and monasteries, extraordinary geological features, amazing caves, local arts and artifacts, and widespread flora and fauna has high potential for the development of community based eco-tourism in the country [16]. In addition to these, there are impressive features of high diversity of Forests are the other potentials what makes Ethiopia to attract tourists.

The availability of human resources, advancement of technology, tourism demonstrates a rapid growth; market and globalization are potentials for community-based tourism [19].

## Statement of the problem

Community based tourism development is most of the times aimed to realize the betterment of livelihoods for the people suffered from different problems caused by food shortage, population pressure, marginality and decline in productivity of land [20]. Community based tourism development recognizes the significance of social, environmental and economic impacts of tourism development and it primarily focuses on tourism's benefits to the local communities [4]. However, the contribution of community based tourism to conservation and local economic development is limited by factors such as, the small areas and few people involved, limited earnings, weak linkages between biodiversity gains and commercial success, and the competitive and specialized nature of the tourism industry [21]. Community based tourism development require a long-term effort on capacity building and following up on monitoring and evaluation, as well as sustaining marketing, to ensure that the community based tourism development moves forward [20].

Ethiopia is a country, which is endowed with the vast array of ecotourism resources including cultural, historical, and archaeological and natural resources that are ideal for the development of sustainable ecotourism venture. However, the abundant resources are not yet fully utilized and the tourism industry is still at its infancy [22].

Alemsaga Forest is one of 17 nationally identified as priorities State Forest that should be conserved for their biodiversity and ecological benefits is found in the Amhara regional state [23]. It has diversified topographic features, diverse flora, variety of fauna and appropriate environments, both built environment (churches, monasteries, palaces, historical site and precious heritages in the different monasteries and churches, such as parchments books, drums and crosses, which are made from Gold and silver.) and intangible cultural resources (religious and cultural festivals and special attractions) [24].

Due to the basic problems, still there is no community based tourism development in Alemsaga Forest. The problem has exposed the rural people who are living in buffer zone of the forest to food insecurity, unemployment, over dependency on natural resources and so many inter linked problems and persistent challenges. This in turn has put further pressure on an already fragile ecosystem through unsustainable human activities and non-proactive

resource management [24]. In order to alleviate these situations, community based tourism development should be developed in the Alemsaga Forest. Since it helps to improve the livelihood of local communities and create options to utilize its abundances resources sustainably.

### Objectives

To identify the current issues for community based ecotourism development in the Alemsaga priority State Forest.

To indicate the opportunities that can use for future development of CBET in the Alemsaga priority State Forest.

### Description of the study area

Alem saga Forest is found in the western edge of Farta district of the Qoley-Dengors kebele and north ester edge Fogera district of the Alemsaga kebele, South Gondar Zone, Amhara Region, Ethiopia. It located at  $11^{\circ}54'-11^{\circ}56'$  &  $037^{\circ}55'-037^{\circ}57'E$  [24]. Its covered about 814 hectare (Figure 1).

### Topography

A topographic feature of Alemsaga Forest is dominated by plain interrupted by some hills (viewpoints), rivers, streams and gorges. The elevation range between 2180- 2470 meters above sea level [24].

### Rainfall and Temperature

The area received a maximum amount of rainfall from June up to mid of September and the lowest rainfall occurs during October, November, December, January and February, March, April and May. The average rainfall amount is 1300 mm and the mean annual average temperature of ranges from  $15-30^{\circ}C$  [24].

### Flora

According to Masresha the forest has 124 vascular plant species representing 112 genera and 65 families are identified [21]. The species were composed of 42% trees, 29% shrubs 29% herbs.

## METHODS AND MATERIALS

### Research design and approaches

In order to gain the advantages of both and to offset the discrepancies of each, the study will apply both quantitative and qualitative (mixed) approaches to gather information through different data instruments. According to Creswell (2014), mixed approach is a research approach involving collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, integrating the two forms of data and using distinct designs that may involve philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks. Further, he explained that the core assumption of this form of inquiry is that the combinations of quantitative and qualitative approaches provide a more complete understanding of a research problem than using either approach alone. Kothari (2004) explained that quantitative approach is the generation of data through rigorous quantitative analysis in formal and rigid fashion using statistical tools. Hence, this study will employ cross-sectional descriptive research design. Descriptive design is chosen to identify and describe the significant existing situations and events. According to Singh (2007), cross sectional studies show a snap shot of the existing situation about variables of interest in a sample and are assessed only once to determine the relationship between variables in the study.

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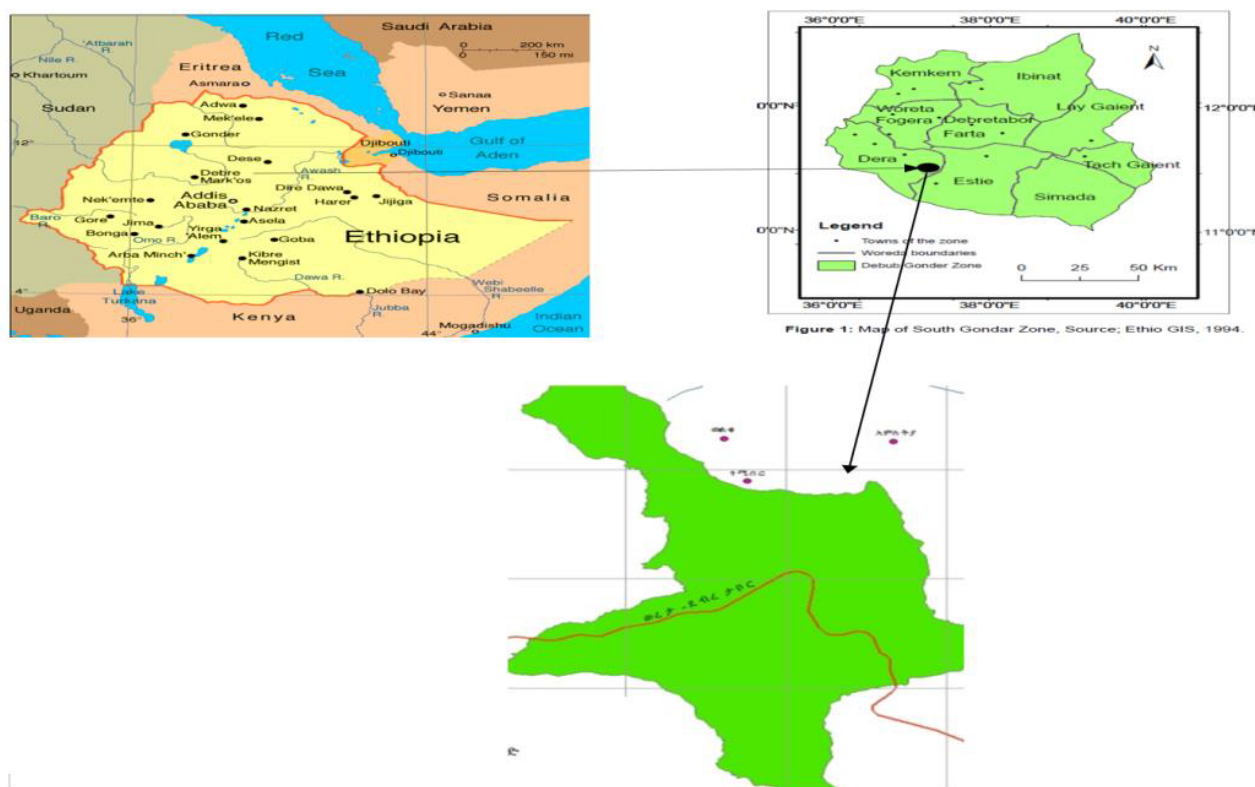


Figure 1: Map of the study area, source, ORDA, 2013.

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The population of the study were all experts culture and tourism experts at regional, zonal and woreda level, environmental conservation experts, natural and animal resources experts at zonal and woreda, Amhara regional culture and tourism. Forest guards, Churches and local community administrations leaders of vicinity of the study area were target population of this study. Depending on the sources and techniques ones willing to use in gathering data for a given research, primary and secondary data were the major sources of data. Primary data were obtained from questionnaires, interviews, checklist, field observation and focus group discussion while, secondary data were obtained from books, research articles and official documents.

For the purpose of this study, interview was conducted with culture and tourism office head, culture and tourism bureau heads, two from key local expert, one from south Gondar coordinator, one from Farta Agriculture and rural development head, one from Farta environmental conservations and land administration head, one from south Gondar culture and tourism and three from local community representatives.

### Data instruments

Questionnaire consists of both open and closed ended questions were used obtaining information from experts. The questionnaire has covered general background of the respondents, potentials, challenges and opportunities for community based tourism development in the Alesaga priority State Forest. Closed ended questions were prepared in two types. Such as three point rating and five likert scale (1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly

agree) options. Finally, total 105 experts' survey questionnaires were collected from all experts working in Farta woreda and south Gondar zone (culture and tourism, natural resources, environmental conservations and animal resources), culture and tourism bureau in the study site.

Three focus group discussions were held with natural and animal resources coordinators, manager, environmental conservations and land diminution coordinate, Churches and local community administrations leaders and forest guards. The issues discussed focus on the current challenges of the Forest and the challenges for the future developing community based tourism development and the favorable conditions for develop community based tourism development in the Forest.

Observation is the main instrument of data collection, which is used during forest visitation to observe environmental condition of the forest, potentials of tourism resources, management of Forest related activities, and life style of the local people, etc. The researchers were takes photos through camera Both published and unpublished sources were investigated thoroughly especially books, research reports, journal articles and official documents The researcher was employed both census and purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is used for the identification of respondents to the qualitative interview and as its major concern is to the relevance the focus of the study rather than representativeness of the populations. Therefore, in sample size selection, the major consideration were on the quality of respondents and the potentials knowing how to provide reach relevant information's which is vital for the desired goal and, for the analysis and interpretations of finding.

With regard to the questionnaire, for the purpose of this study from all expert working in Farta woreda and south Gondar zone (culture and tourism, natural resources, environmental conservations and animal resources), Amhara regional culture and tourism bureau were collected.

### Data analysis

Collected data was systematical organized, verified, described, analyzed and interpreted by using both quantitative and qualitative approach. Qualitative data was analyzed using triangulated and substantiates the study while quantitative data were analyzed through the help of SPSS version 22. Thus, findings of the study are presented in the form of descriptive statistical method such as frequency, percentage, standard deviation and mean.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Demographic characteristics of respondents

A total 105 experts' survey questionnaires were collected from all experts working in Farta woreda and south Gondar zone (culture and tourism, natural resources, environmental conservations and animal resources), Amhara region culture and tourism bureau and experts. The clear picture of the respondents' characteristics is depicted as follow (Table 1).

As we clearly see on the table woreda experts (culture and tourism, natural resources, environmental conservations and animal resource, 8.6%, 4.8%, 6.7%, and 13.2 respectively) zone experts (culture and tourism 14.3%, natural resources 7.6%, environmental conservations 8.6% and animal resource 15.2%), Amhara regional



culture and tourism Bureau experts 18.1% and ORDA experts 2.9% experts compositions were data collected (Table 2).

As we clearly see on the table described that, work experience of respondents, of the respondents 14.3% has between less than 5-year experiences, 52.4% has in between 5-10 year of experience, 14.3% in between 11-15 year and the rest 19% of has an experience more than 15 year. The percentage value shows that, the majority of the respondents have more than five years of relevant experience in the office. This is important to obtain data with regard to issues that required more clarification.

### Challenges for developing community based tourism development in Alesmsaga priority state forest

Community based tourism development as an option of improving the livelihood of local communities and for better utilize of resources, but it is found at its infant stage in the parts of Ethiopia. Although Alesmsaga priority State Forest has a diverse array of unique plant and animal species, beauty of the scenery, tangible and intangible cultural heritages potentials for community based tourism development. However, these resources are not yet unknown by stakeholders. Due to this the resources faced in different challenges. In fact, a particular destination whether it is fragile or potential, has its own challenges. Similarly, Alesmsaga priority state forest has its own challenges. Therefore, this study using challenges an assessment tools to identified challenges for the future community based tourism development in Alesmsaga Priority State Forest.

**Table 1:** Experts' compositions based on their working organization.

Experts	Frequency	Percentage
Farta Woreda Culture and Tourism Office experts	9	8.6
Farta Woreda Environmental conservation experts	5	4.8
Farta Woreda Natural resources experts	7	6.7
Farta Woreda Animal resource experts	14	13.2
South Gondar Zone Culture and Tourism experts	15	14.3
South Gondar Zone Natural resources experts	8	7.6
South Gondar Zone Animal resource experts	16	15.2
South Gondar Zone Environmental conservation experts	9	8.6
ARNS Culture and Tourism Bureau experts	19	18.1
ORDA experts	3	2.9
Total	105	100

**Table 2:** Work experience of respondents.

	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 5 years	15	14.3
05-Oct	55	52.4
Nov-15	15	14.3
More than 15	20	19
Total	105	100

**Table 3:** Mean Value of Promotion Challenges.

Attribute	N	Min.	Max	Mean	Std.
Unknown about the of Forest resources by stakeholder and visitors	105	1	5	4.16	1.287
No promotion work has been done to publicize Forest like Radio, television, newspaper, poster, journals, website and others.	105	1	5	4.52	1.057
Grand mean and standard deviation				4.34	1.172

### Promotion challenges

Promotion of tourism resource is an important approach for many developing countries to influence tourists' destination preference [27]. Study done confirmed by Singh K, that effective promotion can motivate tourist visit to a particular destination even if there is infrastructural problem. Depending on the above reflection, the study used promotion activity assessment tools, the result of the analysis treated by mean value as follows (Table 3).

As it is clearly indicated in table the mean value ( $M = 4.16$ ,  $Std. = 1.287$ ) unknown about the of Forest resources by stakeholder and ( $M = 4.52$ ,  $Std. = 1.057$ ) no publicized on promotion tools like Radio, television, newspaper, poster, journals, website and others. Therefore, based on the mean value the researcher concludes that high promotion challenges in Alesmsaga priority State Forest.

The result of from interviews from governmental body (at regional, Zonal and Woreda level) also proved that very low promotion activities of existing resource endowments and publicize by promotion tools like radio, television, newspaper, poster, journals, website and others. As the result abundant of resources is the unknown by stakeholder especially its potentials in ecotourism development. Consequently, the ecosystem of Alesmsaga priority State Forest has been threatened because of illegal activities of local communities like clearing of forest for construction and fuel wood, expansion of agricultural farming land, and hunting of wild animals.

Respondents were asked to confirm the main cause of low promotion activities of the study area of tourism resources said that "because of lack of attention from governmental and none governmental bodies from the top federal level to Woreda lack of promotion the existing resource endowments and publicize by international and national communication tools. Even though government communication affairs of Farta woreda as prepare annual brusher in ever year, without publicize the Forest."

By Secondary data resources reviews of the researcher also confirmed that due to excluded in the historic route map, the study area is unknown by tour operators and travel agents who clearly refer their clients to intensive promotion efforts of the northern tourism destinations like Gondar, Lalibela and Bahirdar.

In line with this studied the case of Sheko District potentials of tourism resources finding similar with the finding of Alesmsaga Priority State Forest [28]. Finding Sheko District that weakness in advertising and promoting its potential attractions, which result in not visiting by both domestic and foreign tourists and the status the potentials, is unknown.

### Participation challenges

Natural resources management, as a logical component of community development, requires effective participation of the various stakeholders. Every country (especially the less developed ones) should set up clear guidelines to achieve effective participation

of those stakeholders and to achieve the desired ecotourism goals. Thus, to identify the stakeholder related challenges, the study used an assessment tool, which can describe their participation and the felling of ownership of stakeholders. The result of the analysis is treated by mean value as follows (Table 4).

As it is clearly indicated in table totals Grand mean (M =4.855) shows that all of the respondents strongly agreed. Therefore Alesaga priority State Forest has very high of stakeholder participations and ownership senses challenges.

The qualitative data analyzed from interviews and FGDs also showed that stakeholder participation is very weak at any stage of Forest management decision, it is a big challenge for create in involving of stakeholders. Even those who have been “involved” did not participate in a true participatory sense because typically they have not ownership senses to the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of activities rather they participated in the activity of creating major environmental degradation causes. The situation leads worse the problem and it could be affect the development of ecotourism in the Forest.

Some researchers have studied stakeholder participation of natural resources conservations and community based tourism development; their finding showed that, stakeholder participation a major hindrance to community based tourism development and natural resources conservations. According to Petros, Abie and Esubalew case study in Dinsho District Ethiopia confirmed that inadequate communities’ participation to execute management programs contributes for biological resource threats. Furthermore, studied in Awash national park proved that most of the local community have no awareness about either ecotourism or community-based tourism, and they did not participate at any stage in park management decisions [29].

**Degradations of natural resources by human cause factor**

Ethiopia forest coverage has undergone substantial changes over time due to a number of factors. Forest coverage is affected. The current rate of deforestation is estimated to be 0.8% per year [23].

The case of Alesaga forest, even though natural resources in has great potentials for the development of tourism in general and community based tourism development in particular, most of natural resources are highly exposed to human cause factor

challenges. Therefore, the results revealed that using the human cause factor challenges tools evaluated the challenges of human cause factor on natural resources of Forest destructions are as follows (Table 5).

Thus, the mean score shows that except free grazing (M=4.45, Std. =1.08) agree, the rest showed that strongly agreed. Therefore researcher concluding based on totals Grand mean score (M=4.560) there are very highly natural resources destruction by human cause factor challenges in Alesaga priority State Forest.

Triangulated interview results also assured that destruction natural resources by human cause factor, in the last two decades, the habitat of wild life; the environmental landscape and pattern of vegetation in Forest has undergone changes. Besides, the researcher that assured by field observation and FGDs in one way or another, the root causes of the challenges the Forest encountered today are manmade.

According to the experiences indifferent protected areas of Ethiopia beyond the predation of human induced pressures the case of natural resources destructions. For instance, the result Choke Mountain shows as expansion of farming land, illegal community settlement, overgrazing, demanding of fuel woods, and increasing poaching and encroaching were the challenges for community based tourism development.

The recent studied by ORDA, participatory forest resources reported proved that rural people who are living in buffer zone of the forest to food insecurity, unemployment, over dependency on natural resources and so many inter linked problems and persistent challenges [24]. This in turn has put further pressure on an already fragile ecosystem through conflict of interest over resource utilization, poaching of wild animals, expansion of agricultural farming land and clearing of forest for construction and fuel wood.

**Conflict of interest over resource utilization**

Conflict of interest among different community who live around valuable ecotourism resources were one of the frequently stated constraints for community based Ecotourism development. In the case of Alesaga Forest, According to key informant interview from local community leader the question of over resource utilization and ownership showed increment between the

**Table 4:** Mean Value of Participation Challenges.

Attribute	N	Min.	Max	Mean	Std.
Low levels of participations towards conservation of wild animals and plants.	105	2	5	4.82.	568
Stake holder did not participate in a true participatory ownership senses	105	1	5	4.89	487
Grand mean and standard deviation				4.855	5275

Note: N. Number of total Respondents, Std.: Standard Deviation, Max. : Maximum and Min.: Minimum, M: Mean Source: Author Survey, 2019.

**Table 5:** Mean Value of Human Cause Factor Challenges.

Human induced pressures	N	Min	Max.	Mean	Std.
Conflict of interest over resource utilization and ownership	105	3	5	4.56	587
There is high rate of free grazing in the Forest	105	1	5	4.45	1.083
There is killing wild animals by local community	105	1	5	4.6	839
Expansion of farming activity towards the forest	105	2	5	4.56	619
Clearing of forest wood for deferent purposes	105	3	5	4.65	537
Grand mean and standard deviation/ Mean Average				4.56	733

Note: SD standard deviation, Max.: Maximum and Min.: Minimum, M: Mean, Source Author survey, 2019.

church which founding the in the forest and surrounding areas with the government. Besides this there is also conflict between communities who living in adjacent of the Forest Farta and Fogera woreda community

The qualitative data analyzed from FGDs pointed out that Alesaga Forest are no clear boundary demarcation. Due to this gap, there is a high conflict between communities living in Farta and Fogera over the utilization of grazing and farming land along their demarcation of the woreda. There is also conflict over resource utilization and boundary between the church communities and the government, particularly inside the Forest churches. Besides the conflict, church communities and the government, the Forest guard and the local community also a common conflict occurrence in Alesaga state Forest.

The previous study proved that because of the conflict of interest over resource utilization in the area, there is expanding illegal activity of the Forest Such strong confrontation between the conflicting parties may lead to the destruction of resources due to the case of improperly managed [24].

### Free grazing in the forest

Free grazing by livestock has been fundamental challenges of the forest. Most of the rural communities in the study area lead subsistent way of life because they are following traditional farming system along with traditional ways of eager of sheep, goat, horse, and cattle, which are leads to the destruction of fauna and flora resources. The study conducted by ORDA, confirmed that, because of the increasing number of cattle near Forest there is high free grazing which are leads to the destruction of fauna and flora. This is the cause of less attractive to tourists. Free grazing to the forest not only deterioration in plant species but also affects heavily the natural sources of food for wild animals, which is one of potentials ecotourism development [24].

The previously similar study in other site show that, the local communities are highly dependent on exploitation of natural resources of their economic activity; use the park resources in different ways as a grazing land, land for cultivation and source of forage for their livestock are the main cause of natural resources degradation [13].

### Killing wild animals by local community

The other challenge that the locals community were affected natural resources of the study area is destructions of wild animals. Key informant interview from Farta agriculture and rural development office head proved that an increment of hunting of wild animals in the Forest from time to time. Illegal shooting of wildlife occurs and large predators such as; lion, hyena and leopard are often shot by locals as these animals are considered to be a threat to livestock. Competition from grazing for large flock of domestic animals like cattle, goats and sheep also forced wild mammalians either to migrate or to conflict with domestic animals. Besides these the other cause of poaching wild animal is the existence of a main road within the Forest. Even though the road passes through the center of the Forest from Bahirdar and Gondar to Debre Tabor and Woldya or vice versa as a potential of accessibility the road has it Owen negative impact on the biodiversity, in this cause each weak cars and other related factor kill at least one animal (Figure 2).

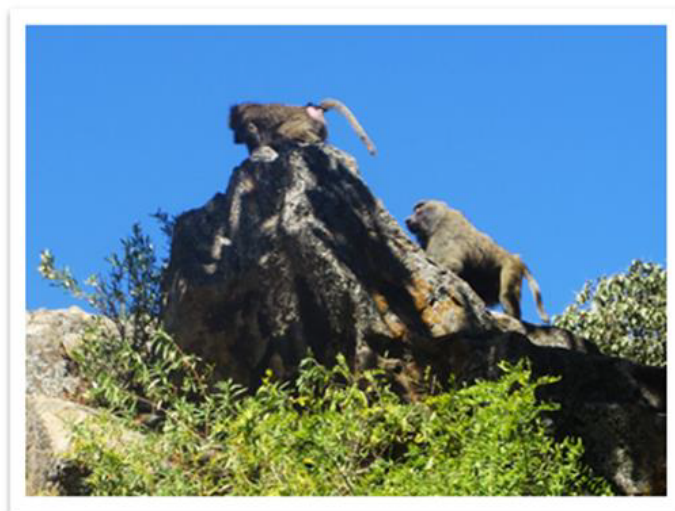


Figure 2: Alem Saga Baboon.



Figure 3: Farming is extremely expanded through the local community around the forest area.

### Expansion of farming activity towards the forest

Based on the data analyzed from FGDs in the past one decade, it was free grazing in the Forest, which in turn becomes a major cause for loss of wildlife either in death or in migration. The main cause of expansion of farming activity towards the Forest were due high growth of population, consequently there high number of landless people who living the surrounding of the areas and absences other live hood options of the local community

According to study done by ORDA, confirmed that farming activity towards the forest is becoming the most significant challenge for biodiversity conservation of the study area The potentials of natural resources are endangered due to agriculture expansion by cutting most indigenous flora (Figure 3) [24].

### Clearing of forest for construction and fuel wood

Clearing of forest for construction and fuel wood has caused a serious of problem in Alesaga Forest for many years. Due to the high demand of fuel and construction wood in the local community of daily utilization and consumption, the natural resource of the



area is highly changing more rapidly at present than any time in human history. During FGDs, the respondents confirm that the high dependency of the local peoples on forest for the source of energy, construction material and economic benefit are aggravating deforestation activities in the Forest.

According to ORDA, studied confirm that, because of high demand fuel and construction wood of the local community, deforestation is increasingly time to times (Table 6).

### Financial challenges

As it is clearly indicated in table, lack of budget for management and infrastructure development (M=4.34, SD. =.1.108) and no allocated budget for practical works in the site like tourism resource mapping and inventory, promotion and research (M=4.430, SD=1.108). Thus, the mean score of the respondents showed that all respondents strongly agreed. There the researcher concluded that is very high financial challenge in Alemsaga priority State Forest.

Triangulated interview and FGDs result also confirmed that incapability of Finance are one of the fundamental elements of constraint of natural resources conservation in Alemsaga Priority State Forest. The Forest has bestowed with natural resources this resources are now degrading because of incapability of financial allocation. Beside nature resources, the tangible and intangible cultural heritages are integral elements to develop community-based ecotourism in Alemsaga Forest and its environs. Nonetheless, in all possible sites, due to financial challenges, there is poor conservation habit to protect and double the values of the cultural resources. This problem is serious not only in many of churches and monasteries but also the fragile natural resources conservation works. Even if the government allocation budget for Forest guards of salary, there is no sufficient, due to this the Forest keep only ten

guards by insufficient materials, which covers an area of 548hectars.

Some researchers have studied finical challenges for community based tourism development and their finding show that financial constrain is one of fundamental challenge for community based tourism development and Conservation biodiversity. The finding on Alatish national park is similar to the finding of Alemsaga Priority State Forest. Findings showed that lack of adequate financial resources for wild life conservation and park management such activities is one of the most profound difficulties facing park managers [30].

### Alemsaga priority state forest and its opportunities for community based tourism

To allow effective mobilizations of many resource for development, analyzing the opportunities are essential. It helps to overcome weakness and to use strengths by taking the advantage of opportunities (Table 7).

As it is clearly indicated in table totals grand mean (M. =4.34) showed that high many indicators of opportunities for community based tourism development. The presence of these opportunities in Alemsaga Forest is important to promote resource conservation, improve tourism facilities, and thereby contribute for the successful development of CBET in this area. At Alatish national park for community based challenges and opportunities confirmed that the presence of variety fauna and flora, striking topographic features, rivers as well as its vicinity cultural attractions and ethnic groups, the area of potential significances in terms of biodiversity conservation (ecological), tourism and recreations, scientific research and education, social and economic values favor community based ecotourism [30].

Therefore by considering above mean score value and deflection

Table 6: The Mean Value of Financial Challenge.

Financial challenges	N	Min.	Max	Mean	Std.D.
Lack of budget for conservation and infrastructure development	105	4	5	4.34	1.108
There is financial incapacity to undertake practical job in the site like tourism resource mapping and inventory, promotion and research	105	3	5	4.3	1.109
Grand mean and standard deviation				4.32	1.1085

Note: N. Number of total Respondents, Std. standard deviation, Max.: Maximum and Min.: Minimum, M: Mean Source: Author Survey, 2019.

Table 7: The mean value of opportunities for community based tourism development.

Opportunities Community Based Ecotourism Development	N	Min.	Max	Mean	Std.
Enabling policy environments, like conservation and tourism policy	105	2	5	4.21	0.94
Global increasing demand for ecotourism	105	2	5	4.19	0.74
The Potential Benefit of Ecotourism for Economical, Environmental conservation and Cultural integrity	105	3	5	4.3	0.57
The site is found within the proximity of the capital city of Amhara and other honey pot attractions, such as Lalibela and Gondar	105	1	5	4.54	0.84
Expansion academic institutions	105	2	5	4.15	1.01
The growth attention of governmental and none governmental (NGO) conservation projects to the forest	105	2	5	4.47	0.65
The existence of good and aesthetic environment condition of the Forest for Eco Tourists	105	2	5	4.52	0.7
Upgrading and development of new of infrastructure development strategies and polices of the government.	105	1	5	4.53	0.84
Abundance of cultural tourism resources around the Forest	105	2	5	4.57	0.69
Grand mean and standard deviation				4.34	0.78

Note: N. Number of total Respondents, Std. standard deviation, Max.: Maximum and Min.: Minimum, M: Mean Source: Author Survey, 2019.



point into the account, the opportunities of the study area are discussed as follows.

### Potential benefit of ecotourism for economical, environmental conservation and cultural integrity

Tourism can provide work opportunities; support the establishment of small, medium and large enterprises; lead to skills development in tourism and support services; contribute to rural development; improve infrastructure; and ultimately contribute to the government's coffers [9]. Furthermore, community based tourism development serves as a tool for conservation and, at the same time, a tool for improving the quality of life. It also serves as a tool to bring the community together to consult, discuss and work together in solving community problems, provides opportunity for exchange of knowledge and culture between tourists and the community and helps to provide supplementary income for individual members of the community and for community development. It 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.

Even though, the development of ecotourism has not been encouraged before in the Alesmsaga Priority State Forest, ecotourism provide as an option of improving the livelihood of local communities and for better utilize of resources in the other destination creates a support for this new form of tourism run well in the Alesmsaga Priority State Forest.

### Location of the site

Location is pivotal to the sustainability of community based tourism development ventures, as it needs to be accessible to the tourists, preferably in the vicinity or en-route to destinations, which appeal to the same niche market. In the case of Alesmsaga Priority State Forest has good opportunities for develop community based ecotourism, due to it is being easily accessible the honey pot attractions, such as the historic route in northern Ethiopia which includes Lalibela, Bahirdar and Gondar. The site also proximity to south Gondar capital city, Debre Tabor and Awuramba community specials tourist attraction and can be easily accessed by car or on pack animals (the researcher personal observation, 2019) [31].

### Expansion of academic institutions

An Expansion of academic institutions have a positive impact on tourism development in terms of producing skilled manpower, such as supply of tourism consultant professionals, give specific skills training facilities and promote tourism resources but, the acute shortage trained institutions, which has the negative impact on the development of the sector (an interview with zone culture and tourism head, 2019).

Current due to federal government of Ethiopia has given high attention for the expansion of the institute of higher education, and it reached in to fourteen one-government universities throughout the country and 9 universities are found in the Amhara region. These institutions are centers of excellence for developing new technologies, and generate information to enhancement livelihood of community. As carrying such aim in Alesmsaga Priority State Forest, Debre Tabor University has been started Alesmsaga Forest research center. The forest also getting high attention ecotourism

researchers, ministry of forestry and the directorate of national parks (An interview with ORDA office head, 2019), Therefore, as the context of the country in general, in Alesmsaga Priority State Forest particular, the ecotourism professional like experts, guide are well available and can manipulate the ecotourism industry as well.

### The Growth Attention of Governmental and (NGO) on conservation projects to the forest

Alesmsaga Priority State Forest has growth attention to support from governmental and NGO conservation projects in protect the biological and physical resources of the area to realize the objective of sustainability. For instance, ORDA undertake an important conservations activity in the Forest such as; develop non-temper production enterprises and drafted plan to develop ecotourism enterprises development associations. In addition to, the above mentioned, there is also work on the awareness creation, delivering short-term training on conservation and sustainable utilizing of the Forest. Academic institutions also work together on conservations of natural resources such as Debre Tabor University and Polytechnic College play key roles in different aspects of natural resources management in the study area. These could be encouraged to develop community-based ecotourism.

### Existence of good and aesthetic environment condition

Hospitable climatic condition of a specific tourist site is fundamental for tourism activity. Regarding, Alesmsaga Priority State Forest as per observations, FGD, interviews and questionnaires were concerned the Alesmsaga Priority State Forest and its environs have very blessed favorable climate with breathtaking walkways and camping ground. There is beautiful landscape with natural and cultural tourism resources. Therefore, eco tourists are attracted to Forest destinations for many reasons, including the hospitable climate, clean air, unique landscapes and wildlife, scenic beauty, local culture, history and heritage. According to the climatic condition of Alesmsaga Priority State Forest, it has woyina dega climatic zone. Therefore, the forest measures mean annual average temperature of ranges from 15-30 0c, and average rainfall range 1300 mm). So the climatic condition of Alesmsaga Priority State Forest is an excellent for eco tourist and these elements can give high opportunity to Alesmsaga Priority State Forest for eco-tourism development (Figure 4) [12].



Figure 4: Aesthetic values of Alem Saga Forest.

## Up grading infrastructural development strategies and polices of the government

Regarding with infrastructure development in Alemsaga Forest, even though, lack of infrastructural development in Alemsaga Priority State Forest, the two nearby towns Woreta and Debre Tabor are expanded a number of standards, recently a number of tourist standard hotels has been built in town Debre Tabor (personal observation).

In addition in the town there are a number of tourist standard accommodation centre, internet café, Bars, Restaurants, Communication, Banking services and postal services well available fully, these services and other support facilities creates an opportunity for the development of community based tourism development Alemsaga Forest Eco tourism (personal observations).

To these government attentions for infrastructure development a number of authors, including has cited the Ethiopia government gives attention to explanations tourism infrastructure like accommodation establishment, road and transportation, destination facilities and services in the part of country. National programs on infrastructural development are implementing resulting in a constantly growing asphalt-road network.

## CONCLUSION

Community based tourism development is unquestionably a vital aspect to consider for the Alemsaga priority State Forest so as to multifaceted contributions to overcome degradations of resources in the forest and to improve the live hood of the people living around the forest. This would be through the conservation of the biological, physical and cultural environments.

The study proved that there are many challenges on the forest that can affect the development of community-based tourism in the study area. Promotion challenges, stake holder participations challenges ( low levels of stake holder participations towards conservation of biodiversity and lack of true participatory senses ownership),human caused factors (conflict of interest over resource utilization, poaching and encroaching of wild animals, expansion of farming land to the Forest, overgrazing and high demand of construction and fuel wood) and incapability of financial were mentioned. At the same time, the study also proved that persistent challenges of community based tourism development related with infrastructure developments (clean water, health center, electricity supply, accommodation, postal, bank and internet).

On the other hand, there were some opportunities identified in this study. Good government policy, an increasing demand for ecotourism, cultural integrity, the locations of site, expansion of academic institutions, growth attention of governmental to the forest, existence of good and aesthetic environment values of forest and its vicinity, upgrading and development of new of infrastructure development strategies and polices of the government and abundances diversified cultural tourism resources around the Forest were create a better chance for community based tourism in Alemsaga forest.

To sum up, Alemsaga priority State Forest has enormous potential and it could be one of the top community based ecotourism destinations in the Amhara region if the infrastructural, promotion, human cause factor, participation and financial constraints are resolved appropriately.

## RECOMMENDATION

Based on the major findings of the study and conclusions drawn with respect to challenges and opportunities for developing community-based ecotourism in the Alemsaga Priority State Forest, the following valuable recommendation is forwarded.

In order to develop community based tourism development in Alemsaga Priority State Forest, tourism potentials should be identified, documented and mapped as well as promoted and publicized so as to create much needed enhanced well exploited by tourists and a variety of stakeholders.

For reduction of fuel wood consumptions timer for collection and food items preparations at household level, it is providing alternative sources of energy like biogas, solar, wind, hydroelectric power to community the vicinity of Alemsaga Priority State Forest. Kassegn Birhanu, in his study in 2013. Opportunities and Challenges for Wildlife Conservation and Ecotourism Development of Alatish National Park; Northwest Ethiopia ensured such critical issues on ecotourism sites.

Promotion of the tourism resources are an important instrument for the development of community based tourism development. So, the government, the private sector and NGOs should be promoted the resources though magazine or news prepare, advertisements or through catalogs, brochures, folders, CD-ROMs, televisions internet etc.

Community based tourism development has multifaceted contributions therefore concerning bodies, should be make every effort to development ecotourism scheme to overcome degradations of resources in the forest and to improve the live hood of the people living around the forest

Location of the study area make an appropriate site for tourism development, so the regional government of culture and tourism and other concerned body should be, formulating tourism development packages and the area should also be included in the north historic route map. Besides this, travel agents and tour operators should take the responsibility in promoting the forest.

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