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Contribution of Local Community for Ecotourism Development in and around Abijata-Shalla Lakes National Park with Emphasis to Women's Role, Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted during the period of January-March 2013. The main objective of this study was to investigate the contribution of local community for ecotourism development. Three Kebeles (Daka Hora Kelo, Daka Delu Harengama and Gale fi Kelo) in and around ASLNP was selected purposively. Data was collected from 135 household respondents through semi-structured questionnaires, key informant interviews, FGDs and field observation. Descriptive statistical analysis such as mean, frequency and percentage was used. Lakes, hot spring, eco-friendly lodge, bird watching, taking photograph and bathing hot spring water were identified as ecotourism potential sites and activities in and around the park. Majority of respondents (61%) were mentioned lakes as the most potential sites. The local community was contributing to ecotourism development through respecting their culture, protecting nature and by involving in much tourism related activities. The study revealed the higher contribution of female for ecotourism development than male, due to wearing indigenous traditional dress, showing indigenous dances and songs, preparing local handicrafts. The higher respectation of culture by female was confirmed by majority of the respondents (76%). Regarding to nature, 48% of sample respondents reported the higher respectation of female to nature than male, whereas, 46% of respondents said male. Moreover, 84 and 79% of the respondents said that married people give more value for both nature and culture, respectively. Of the total respondents, 50% said illiterate have more respect to nature but the remaining said the literate ones. However, regarding to culture 70% of the respondents said that illiterate give more value than literate. Therefore, as ASLNP is an ideal place for ecotourism development and the local community participation in ecotourism development is good, the government and non-government organizations should give due emphasis for better ecotourism development in the area.

Key words: Arsi Negelle, Central Ethiopia Rift Valley, ecotourism development, gender

INTRODUCTION

Internationally, recording statistical data for tourism has been started since 1950 and the total tourist number in the world in that year was 25 million (UNWTO, 2001). From that time onwards, tourism is recognized as one of the world's huge industries that influence economic, cultural, social and environmental sections of human life. As a result, tourist number increased from time to time

in the world. For instance, in 2011, 983 million international tourists were recorded worldwide and they spent US\$ 1,050 billion in the world (UNWTO, 2012). Tourism contributes more than 10% of world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and creates about 8% of world's employment. Of all people employed in the tourism sector 60-70% were women (UNWTO, 2008). Women have been involved in ecotourism-related businesses built around preserving fragile environments such as lakes, rivers, forests, coastal zones. They have succeeded in creating responsible nature enterprises, teaching communities how they can sustainably utilize resources from fragile ecosystems (UNWTO, 2009).

Tourism is a large industry that supports and contributes to the economic development of many developing countries (Torres and Momsen, 2004). For many developing countries tourism is the main source of foreign exchange which exceeds 80% of their total income. Moreover, it has also a high contribution for the GDP, employment rates and in improving the socio-economic conditions of the countries (Weaver, 1998). In Africa, travel and tourism contributes directly and totally 3.8 and 9% of GDP in 2012, respectively, whereas, the direct and total contribution of employment is 3 and 7.1%, respectively (WTTC, 2013).

According to UNWTO (2012), in Ethiopia, 468 thousand international tourists were recorded in 2010 and they spent US\$ 33.3 million. Hence, travel and tourism is now becoming one of the major economic activities in Ethiopia. Thus, the contribution of tourism to GDP in 2012 was 5.1%, whereas, the total contribution of travel and tourism was 12.3% (WTTC, 2013). Moreover, in the same year 4.3 and 10.6% is the direct and the total contribution of job opportunity, respectively (WTTC, 2013).

Ethiopia has a great potential of tourism and ecotourism attractions, since it has a No. of endemic wildlife, national parks, wildlife reserves, sanctuaries and important bird areas (Meseret, 2010). However, most of the ecotourism attraction sites including the ASLNP are exposed to severe degradations, due to failure of creating alternative options like ecotourism and lack of local people involvement in the process of decision-making and park management activities (Scheyvens, 2000; Tucker, 2007). In addition to this local community contribution to ecotourism development is overlooked. Hence, understanding and documenting the contribution of local community for ecotourism development is an important guide for identifying the existing problems and developing possible solution for the sector. However, no systematic study has been done to investigate the contribution of local community for ecotourism development in and around ASLNP. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate the contribution of local community for ecotourism development in and around ASLNP.

METHODOLOGY

Description of the study area: Abijata Shalla Lake National Park which is part of the Ethiopian Great Rift Valley system is located at about 207 km south Addis Ababa as shown in Fig. 1 (Fekadu and Rezenom, 2002). It was established mainly for bird sanctuary in 1970 and the total surface area of the park is 887 km², of which the water body covered 482 km² (Hillman, 1993). The Park is bordered by three Woredas i.e., Arsi Negelle, Adami Tulu Jido Kombolcha and Shalla Woredas. Currently, the park is under the process of re-demarcation. Hence, the newly proposed boundaries reduced the previous surface area from each side of the bordering Woredas by 35.4, 56.1 and 5.97 km², respectively (Pers.comm. with park manager). The topography of the park is generally flat with elevation ranging about 1540-2075 m above sea level and latitudes of 7°22' 05"-7°42'47" N and longitudes 38°22'32'-38°04'36" E (Hillman, 1993).

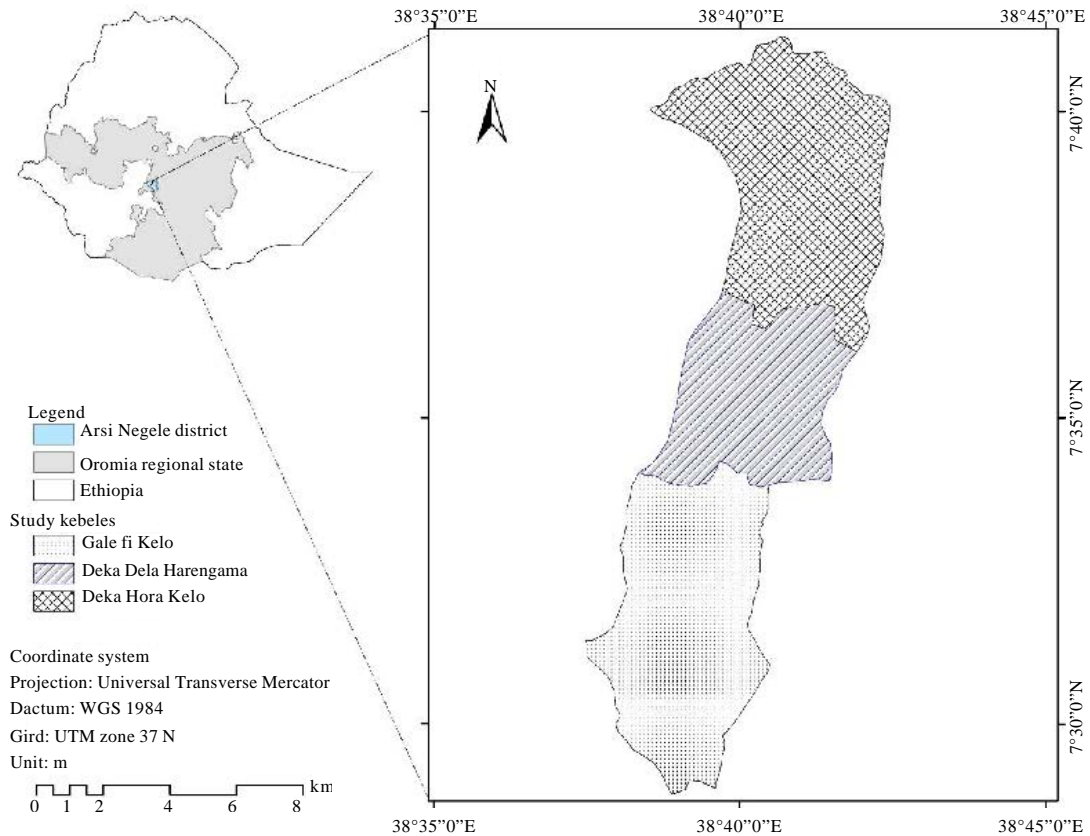


Fig. 1: Map of the study area and the selected sampling Kebeles

The area is characterized by a semi arid to sub-humid type of climate. The minimum and maximum annual temperature of the area is 13.5 and 26.6°C, respectively and the average mean annual temperature is 20.1°C with mean annual precipitation of 600 mm (Legesse *et al.*, 2003). The soil type is mainly sandy alluvium, of volcanic origin indicated by the soda ash and fine sandy/loam soils (Debushe and Itana, 2010).

Sampling strategy: Of the three Woredars, Arsi Negelle Woreda was purposively selected since it shares the largest part of the park, particularly the areas which are highly visited by tourists. From 20 Kebeles in the Woreda, three sampling Kebeles (Daka Hora Kelo, Daka Delu Harengama and Gale fi Kelo), were selected in consultation with experts of the Woreda culture and tourism office and staff workers of the park, based on the participation of the local community in ecotourism or tourism related activities, accessibility for field work and their closeness to the park headquarter which is the most destination of tourists. The total sample size of the household survey in the selected Kebeles was 135 which are 10% of the total households. Of the total sample size, the number of female and male house hold head and the number of respondents from each Kebele was selected through proportion method (Table 1). The respondents for interview were selected by simple random sampling through lottery method.

Data collection: Data collection was carried out for three months (January to March, 2013) at the selected sites. Both primary and secondary data was collected to address the objectives of the

Table 1: Kebeles with total household size and the respondents sample size

Kebeles	Household size		Respondents sample size	
	MHH	FHH	MHH	FHH
Daka Hora Kelo	513	107	51	11
Daka Delu Harengama	283	089	28	09
Gale fi Kelo	272	086	27	09
Total	1068	282	106	29
Grand total	1350		135 (10%)	

NB: Data source, Arsi Negelle Woreda, agriculture and rural development offices, MHH: Male household head, FHH: Female household head

study. Primary data was collected using four main techniques such as, semi structured questionnaires, FGD, key informants interview and researcher's field observations. Data from local community was collected by three enumerators, who were trained on how to collect relevant information, how to approach respondents and how to manage data. Then the questionnaire was pre-tested on 5% of the sample households and modified accordingly with enumerators based on the following suggestions.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was made to supplement the data collected by individual interview. It is advantageous in allowing for in depth discussion and to avoid exaggerated opinions. Six FGD (three for female and male groups) were conducted with local people having seven to ten members in one discussion.

Key informant interview was used to collect information from staff workers, tourists, female association on ecotourism activities and elders of local community about the contribution of local community's for ecotourism development.

Researcher's field observation was employed to gather more information that might not be accessed through interpersonal communication and to cross check the information obtained from the questionnaire survey. Observable facts were gathered and recorded both using digital camera and by taking note on a notebook. Secondary data was obtained from Woreda, Zone and Region Office of Culture and Tourism, reports, park staff documents, published and unpublished research works.

Data analysis: Data was managed and analyzed using Microsoft office excel 2003 and 2007 and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the mean value and percentage of respondents saying.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic characteristics: From the total 135 respondents, 78.5% were male and 21.5% were female and the minimum and maximum age of the sample households were 22 and 90 years, respectively (Table 2). Of the total household heads interviewed, majority of the respondents (43%) were under the age group of 37-51 years. From sampled respondents, 0.7 and 70.4%, were single and married, respectively (Table 2).

The study found that 56.3% of the respondents have 1-6 household size, whereas 43.7% have more than six household sizes. Educational background of the surveyed population shows that 52% of the total respondents were elementary and above elementary but the remaining 48% were

Table 2: Sample respondents' characteristics

Major categories	Total respondents	
	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	106	78.5
Female	29	21.5
Total	135	100.0
Age range		
22-36	46	34.1
37-51	58	43.0
52-66	23	17.0
67-81	7	5.2
82-96	1	0.7
Total	135	100.0
Marital status		
Single	1	0.7
Married	95	70.4
Divorced	12	8.9
Widowed	16	11.9
Polygamy	11	8.1
Total	135	100.0
Household size		
1-6	76	56.3
7-12	49	36.3
13-18	8	5.9
19-24	2	1.5
Total	135	100.0
Education		
Illiterate	65	48.0
Primary (1-8)	58	43.0
Secondary (9-12)	8	6.0
Diploma and above	4	3.0
Total	135	100.0
Religion		
Orthodox	7	5.0
Protestant	9	7.0
Islam	118	87.0
Others	1	0.7
Total	135	100.0
Native		
Yes	118	87.0
No	17	13.0
Total	135	100.0

illiterate (Table 2). Majority of the respondents were Islam religion followers (87%). However, only 9(7%), 7(5%) and 1(0.7%) were protestant, orthodox and no religion followers, respectively. From the total sample respondents, 87% were native to the area whereas, the rest 13% were not native.

In the selected Kebeles, 74% of the respondents use both livestock rearing and crop production as major source of income. However, 21% of the respondents were only depending on crop production. The remaining 4 and 1% of the respondents were both farmer and trader and

government employers, respectively. The study revealed that the minimum and maximum annual income of the sampled households was 1200 and 50,000 Birr, respectively and the main source of drinking water for 50% of respondents was pump water.

Potential ecotourism site and activities in and around the park: Tourist attraction in and around ASLNP can be divided into two major groups such as natural and man-made attractions.

Natural tourist attraction sites: The study found that lakes, Fike mountains, viewpoints, hot springs and Ostrich site as potential natural tourist attraction sites in and around the park. Besides, Pelican site and Lephis waterfall were identified as major natural attraction sites for tourists. Majority of the respondents (61%) reported, Lakes (Lake Shalla, Lake Abijata, Lake Chitu and Lake Langan) within their beaches as major tourist attraction sites, whereas, some respondents 15, 11 and 5% said that Fike mountain and viewpoint, hot springs and headquarter (Ostrich site) are the major sites for tourist attractions, respectively. In line to this study, Gobena (2008) reported, natural and cultural resources such as abundance and diversity of bird, scenic landscape, Ostrich farm, hot springs, cultural and historical attractions and some hotels or lodges at nearby areas as the main ecotourism potential in ASLNP.

Lake Abijata: Lake Abijata which is relatively shallow alkaline lake with an area of 176 km² and a maximum depth of 14 m is 6 km far from the head quarter (Tenalem, 2002). From field observation and focus group discussion, wetland birds particularly Greater Flamingos (*Phoenicogterus ruber*), Lesser Flamingos (*Phoenicogterus minor*) and Pelicans (*Pelicanus onocrotalus*) were found to be the main tourist attracting fauna in the lake. It is also a major feeding site for aquatic and terrestrial birds including the migratory once which could serve as tourist attraction (Fig. 2a). This finding was also highly confirmed by tourists who are considered as key informants.

Lake Shalla: Lake Shalla which is 9 km far from the head quarter has an area of 329 km² and it is the deepest lake in Ethiopia with a maximum depth of 266 m (Tenalem, 2002). Of the eight islands in the lake, four are breeding sites for wetland birds. The landscape of the lake, its hot springs, blue black color and interesting beach side were mentioned repeatedly by the sample respondents, FGD participants and key informants as the unique characteristic of the lake which attracts tourist (Fig. 2b).

Lake Chitu: Lake Chitu is a beautiful green water creator lake located at 1.5 km south of Lake Shalla and 82 km far from the head quarter. The lake is very small in size which is 0.8 km² (Nazareth Children Center and Integrated Development (NACID, 2001)) and it is believed that the lake was connected to Lake Shalla long time ago but due to the declination of the Lake Shalla water level, the lake is now completely separated. It is more alkaline which provides blue green and green algae hence, it is important feeding site for Flamingos. The lake has best site for bird watching especially Flamingoes, since more than thousands of Flamingos depend on it throughout the year (Fig. 2c). Therefore, these all features make it the important natural tourist attraction site.

Lake Langan: Lake Langan located to the eastern part of the ASLNP at 3 km, is one of the Central Rift Valley Lake. It is highly recreational site, because of its importance for swimming,

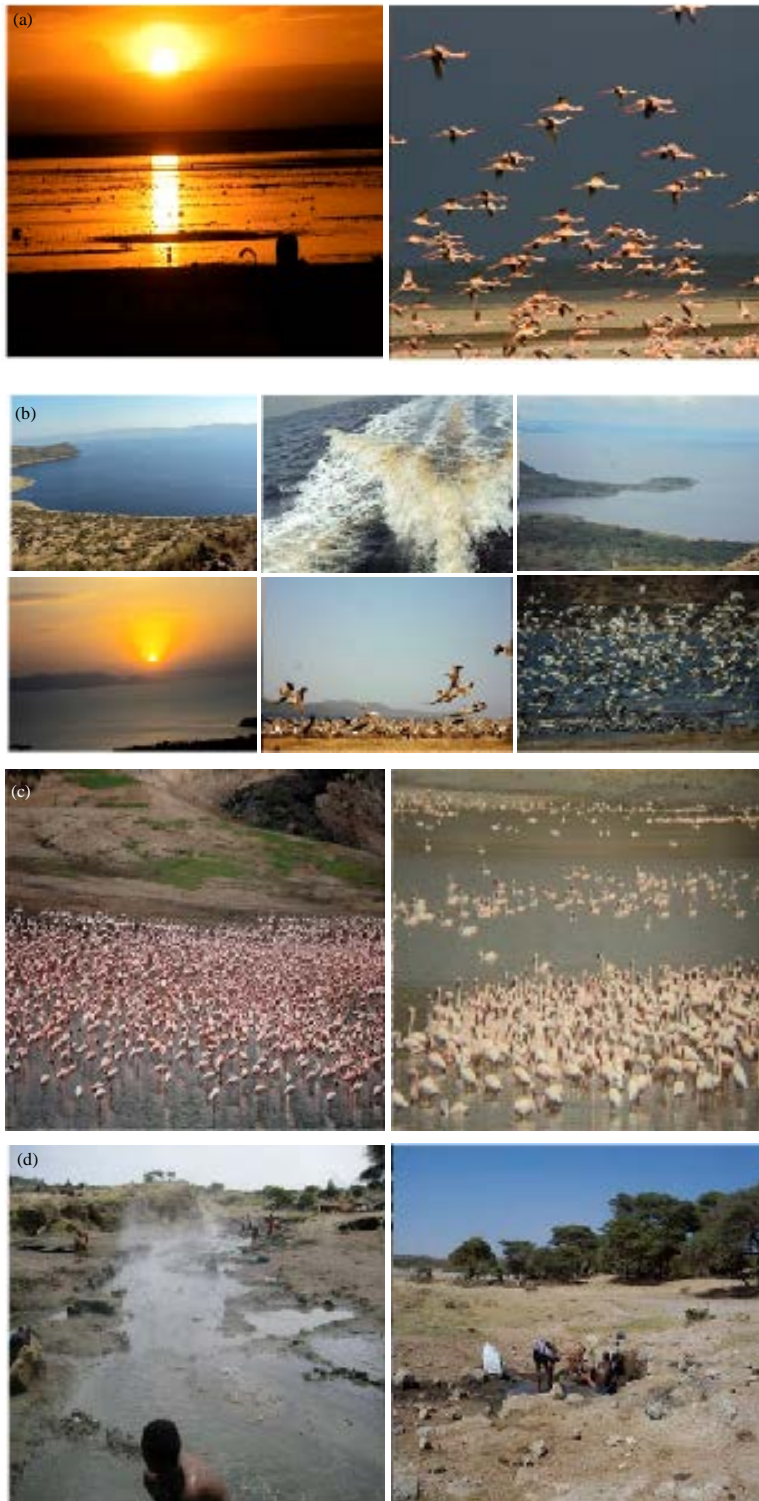


Fig. 2(a-d): Tourist attraction sites in (a) Lake Abijata, (b) Lake Shalla, (c) Lake Chitu and (d) Hot spring in Abijata Shalla Lakes National Park

enjoyable sandy beaches and its accessible location. The lake is most suited for swimming along with in opportunities for sun-bathing offered by the sandy beaches. The lake also creates the opportunities of observing the scenic beauty of both sunrise and sunset. This makes the lake an excellent spot for tourists. There are hotels and lodges along the shore of the lake which provides different services for tourist. In and around the lake, there are so many fauna species such as: Birds, Hippopotamus' (*Hippopotamus amphibius*) and others which make it more preferable by tourist.

Fike mountain: Fike mountain is 24 km far from headquarter and an exciting peak of the mountain reached to 2075 m.a.s.l and ease for hiking spectacular viewpoint. Mammals such as: Greater Kudus (*Tragelaphus strepsiceros*), Olive Baboons (*Papio anubis*) and Klipspringers (*Oreotragus oreotragus*) are some of the fauna which attract tourists in Fike mountain. Furthermore, it enables to clearly observe the three lakes: Abijata, Shalla and Langanu. Therefore, tourist love more this mountain, since they get an over view of these lakes and the interesting landscape of the park. In addition to this, there is also viewpoint inside the park that is 5 km far from headquarter. Like to Fike mountain, it helps tourist to easily observe Lake Abijata and Shalla and also sunset viewing. The viewpoint area also displays a diverse topography mainly consisting of mountain chains, lakes, farmland and settlement.

Hot spring: There are numerous hot springs in the park (Fig. 2d). These springs are found 10 km away from headquarter in the eastern shore of the Lake Shalla direction and along the shore of Lake Chitu. The springs are very hot with the boiling point of 97°C. Volcanic activity causes hot steam, mud and perennial hot springs which directly flow into Lake Shalla from a distance of 200-300 m (Tafesse, 2008). Local people used hot springs for therapeutic purposes. Therefore, both sample respondents and key informants confirmed, hot spring as important natural tourist attraction sites.

Headquarter: Headquarter is one of the tourist attraction sites due to the presence of Grant's Gazelles (*Gazella soemeringi*), Warthogs (*Phacochoerus africanus*), Ostriches and Bohor Reed back.

Lephis waterfall: Lephis waterfall which is the main tourist attraction site is located at about 240 km south-east of Addis Ababa and about 18 km east of Arsi Negelle. Around Lephis there are other streams such as Gadamsu, Huluqa and Ajoftu originated from the mountain chains of Munessa forestry and flow down westwards and eventually drain into Lake Langanu after all the way providing an enormous economic advantage to people living downstream.

Man-made tourist attraction sites: Ecotourism could help to conserve man made tourist attractions such as intangible attractions (religion, music, songs, language, festivals, funeral ceremonies, wedding ceremonies, political order and way of life of the entire population) and tangible attractions (eco-friendly lodges/businesses and enterprises, traditional housing style and handicraft shop).

Businesses and enterprises: There are so many hotels, resorts, lodges and eco-lodges in and around the park. Respondents revealed that most of the hotels and lodges are located along the

shore of Lake Langano. For instance, hotels like: Wabe Shebelle and Bekelle Molla (currently not functional) which are 2.8 and 3 km far from the park, respectively are found on the shore of Lake Langano. Bishan Gari, 20 km away from the park and Wenny are the eco-lodges in the study area. Sabana and Karkaro, 2.8 and 3 km far from park are beach resorts, respectively. The lodges in the study area are African vacation, 2.7 km far from the Addis Ababa to Hawassa main road.

These hotels, eco-lodges, resorts and lodges have their own recreational facilities including boats, accommodation services, restaurants and bars to tourists and also recreational activities such as swimming, horse riding and water sport. These areas are near to the park where most of the national and international tourists who visit ASLNP stay. Taking into account these services, almost all respondents as well as key informants especially international tourists recognize, hotels, eco-lodges, resorts and lodges as the most potential man made tourist attraction sites.

Besides, there are some handicraft shops owned by the women association (Table 3). In the handicraft shops, there are different equipment, which describe in-depth the culture of local people. Some of the handicrafts produced by women's are: Kori, Orefo, Elilmito, Taneto, Kel, Boraati, Boki, Horn spoon, Kolo, Soft holder, Horn cup, Tore, (Fig. 3). These locally made hand crafts are made up of different equipments which are locally available and they have also different functions (Table 4). Most of the handicraft shops are found near to the main entrance of the park and to some extent near to resorts, lodges and hotels for the reason that these areas are the main tourist destinations. Hence, all sample respondents (100%), key informant particularly international tourists and focus group discussion participants, replied the high contribution of the presence of

Table 3: Handicraft associations in Arsi Negelle Woreda

Associations	Year of foundation (E.C)	No. of members			Kebeles	Monthly deposit ------(ETB)-----	Capital
		Male	Female	Total			
Lephis handicraft	2002	2	6	8	Lephis	5	14,200
Gale and Kelo handicraft	2003	1	16	17	G/Kelo	5	7,820
Abdi Jalela handicraft	2003	-	41	41	D/D/Harengama	2	25,000
Iftu handicraft	2002	-	3	3	M/Kiltota	400	48,200
Wondo A/Jalela handicraft	2002	4	18	22	S/Rogicha	5	21,460
Total		7	84	91		417	116,680

Table 4: Locally made handicrafts and their uses

Equipments	Made up of	Functions
Kori	Wood, leather, beads, shells and grass	Used for holding porridge
Orefo	Grass	Used to single out better from milk
Elilmito	Leather, shells, gourd and grass	Used to bring milk and milk products to the family
Taneto	Leather and gourd	Used to drink milk
Gourd (Kel)	Gourd	Used for house decoration
Boraati	Wood and beads	Used as a pillow
Local house style	Limestone	Used for decoration
Borti	Wood	Used like a pillow
Boki	Gourd and beads	Used to bring the curdled milk to female, at the time of marriage
Soft holder	Grass, shells and beads	Used to hold soft
Horn spoon	Horn	Used for eating, stirring chechebesa, kochio
Kolo	Gourd and leather	Used to drink coffee
Key holder	Beads	Used to hold keys and also for house decoration
Tore	Metal	Used for hunting



Fig. 3(a-n): Continue

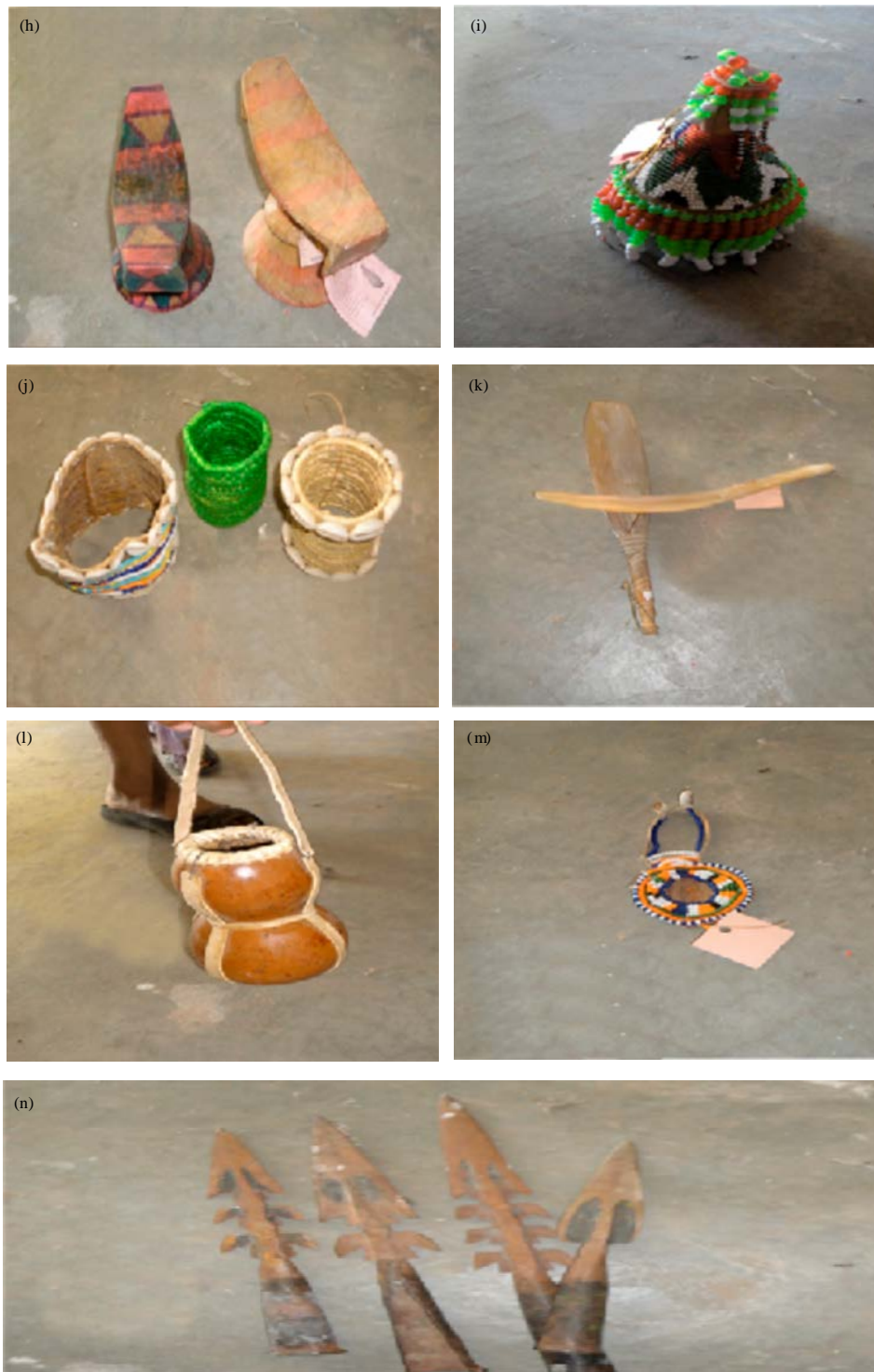


Fig. 3(a-n): Handicrafts made by local people (a) Kori, (b) Orefo, (c) Elilmito, (d) Taneto, (e) Kel, (f) Baraat, (g) Local house style, (h) Boraati, (i) Boki, (j) Soft holder, (k) Horn spoon, (l) Kolo, (m) Key holder and (n) Tore

handicraft shops in the area in making aware tourists about the culture of the local people. Therefore, from this perspective the role of the local people especially women for ecotourism development are invaluable. Similarly, Scheyvens (2000) reported the role of ecotourism in creating empowerment for women in many developing countries around the world and the important contribution of women for the development of ecotourism. Because eco-tourists not only visit the ecological sites but also buy local handicrafts as souvenirs for themselves or their loved ones and friends. In agreement to this study, Er *et al.* (2012) reported the role of ecotourism to increase the demand for local handicrafts. In addition, UNWTO (2010) reported, women make up a much higher proportion of own-account workers in tourism than in other sectors.

Potential ecotourism activities: The study found, bathing hot spring water, beach promenade, bird watching, conservation activities, guiding tourist, hiking, swimming, boat sailing, horse riding (Fig. 4) and taking photographs as potential ecotourism activities in and around the park. Of these activities, 46 and 36% of sample respondents were identified bird watching and taking photographs as the most popular activities, respectively. In line with this study, Kauffmann (2008) identified, bird-watching and landscapes aesthetics as the two most important activities in Ethiopia Central Rift Valley. Likewise, Mathieson and Wall (1993) reported that hunting of animals and more recently the viewing of and photographing of wildlife are important tourist activities.

Contribution of gender for ecotourism development: Successful ecotourism development requires coordinated approach among all stakeholders and most importantly, the active participation of local communities in making decision regarding the preservation of their culture and conserving natural resources. If local communities are attuned to their cultural heritage and the natural wealth of their surroundings, they are more likely to play an active part in the development program. Therefore, the contribution of gender for ecotourism development in this study was explored by considering the respective value given to culture and nature based on sex. Moreover, contribution of the local community to ecotourism development was studied based on the marital status and education level of the respondents. This method is similar to Slinger (2000), who reviewed a case, where an indigenous community in the Caribbean, worked successfully to develop ecotourism that links economic goals with natural resource protection and cultural preservation. Moreover, Hoyt (2005) an ecotourism visitor desires firsthand experience or contact with nature or culture or the motive to study, admire or enjoy nature or culture.

Culture value by sex: From the total of 135 respondents, 106 were male and 29 were female. Of the male and female respondents, 84 and 86% gave satisfactory value to culture, respectively. To supplement this idea sample respondents were asked about which sex gives more value to culture,



Fig. 4: Tradition of horse riding of the local community. (Arsi Negelle Woreda culture and tourism office document, 2013)

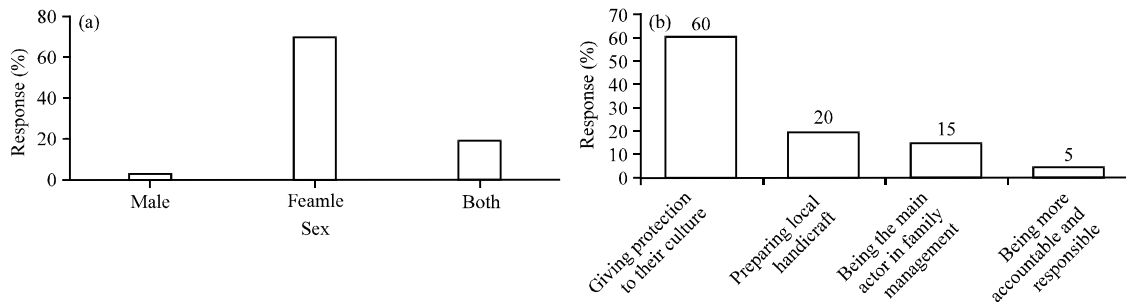


Fig. 5(a-b): (a) Cultural value based on sex and (b) Respondents reasons for the high contribution of females in respecting cultures



Fig. 6(a-d): Females wearing indigenous traditional dress and showing local song and dance. (Arsi Negelle Woreda culture and tourism office document, 2013)

hence, majority of the respondents (76%) said that female give more value to culture (Fig. 5a). Those respondents who said female were mentioned the following reasons: Giving more protecting to their culture, through preparing local handicrafts, being the main actor in family management (i.e., transferring culture to children) and being more accountable and responsible. From the above reasons, majority of respondents (60%), were identified, giving more respect to their culture by wearing indigenous traditional dress and showing indigenous dances and songs, as the major reason (Fig. 5b and 6). Therefore, females have more contribution than males

to ecotourism development in and around ASLNP through respecting culture. FGD and key informants were also witnessed the high contribution of females than males to ecotourism development.

Nowadays, many females promote the old cultural assets by participating and working in tourism related activities like making and selling local handicraft, dressing indigenous local dress, putting different jewelries in different parts of their bodies. In and around ASLNP, there are about five female associations and one private shop which involves in promoting their culture (Fig. 7). Thus, in the study area females start to recognize themselves as productive members of the society and this idea was supported by focus group discussion participants and key informants. Therefore, the contribution of females to ecotourism development through respecting culture was by far higher than males. Similarly, UNWTO (2007) reported the critical role of women in creating more opportunities for self employment and reflected in the theme of world tourism day 2007 as “Tourism Opens Doors for Women”. Besides, the national gender mainstreaming guidelines of Ethiopia (2010) also shows the more percentage of females than males in the ‘self-employed’ category (i.e., 42% female and 38.8% male). Elijah-Mensah (2010) also identified tourism as one industry which can provide self employment opportunities for women. Mason (2003) indicated that producing and selling local crafts to tourists played a significant role in creating jobs for many local people. Likewise, in Chile, ecotourism in rural areas plays a vital part in increasing job opportunities for women and young people (Phimmakong, 2011).

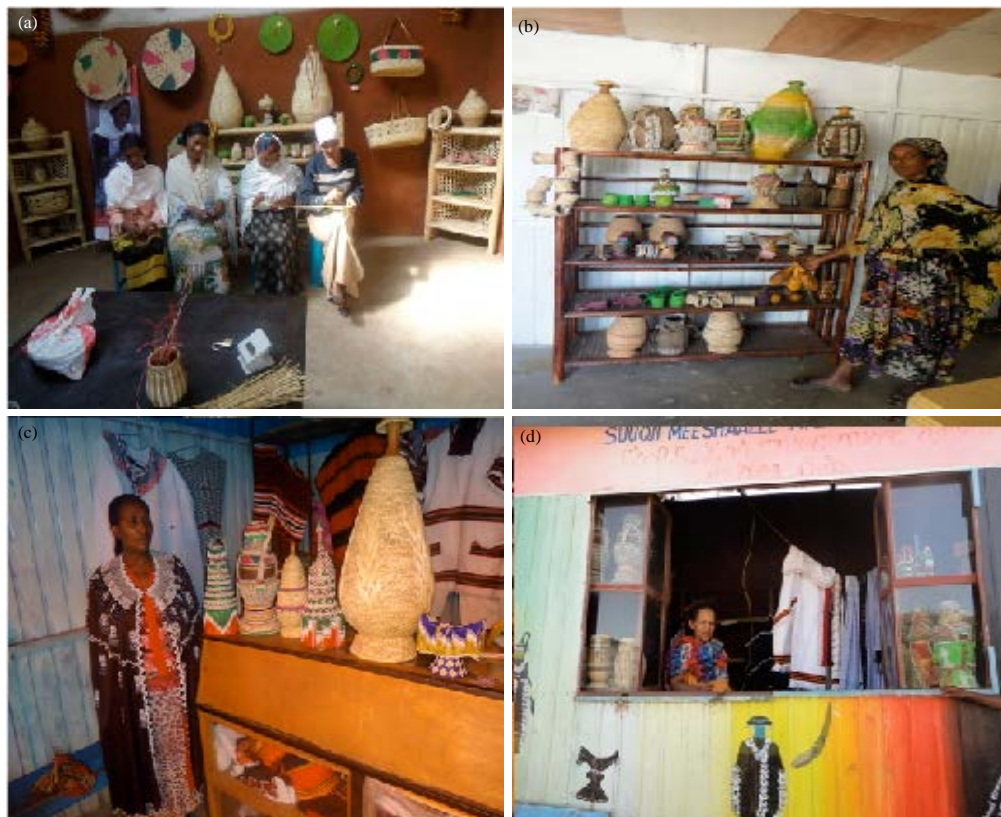


Fig. 7(a-d): Females association shops in and around ASLNP

Nature value by sex: From the total 106 male and 29 female respondents, 70% of male and 83% of female were give satisfactory value to nature. Sample respondents were also asked about which sex give more value for nature, hence, 48% reported that, females give more value to nature than males, whereas, 46% said male (Fig. 8). These sample respondents who said female raised several reasons such as: day to day activities of female is linked to nature (like fetching water, making handicraft and preparing food), behaviorally female love nature, culturally females do not cut live tree in Arsi Negelle Woreda. In line to this study, Deshingar (1994) and Etemaddar (2007), reported the responsibility of females in rural Asia and Africa for fetching of water, fodder and fuel wood. They are also involved in income-generating activities based upon the sale of forest products and crafts female respect the source of the resources in sustainable way. Moreover, Diamond and Orenstein (1990) and Mies and Shiva (1993), revealed the better understanding of females in the importance of environmental protection.

Besides to sex, the contribution of respondents were examined based on their marital status and education level. From the total respondents, 84 and 79% said that married people give more value for both nature and culture, respectively (Fig. 9). This was because the married ones have more experience and knowledge on the value of nature and culture and also they have more responsibility to conserve their culture and nature as well as to transfer their culture to their children. On the other hand, very few respondents, 7 and 5% said unmarried people give more values for nature and culture, respectively. Whereas, 16 and 9% of the respondents said that both married and unmarried people give equal value for culture and nature, respectively.

As it is clearly stated in Fig. 10, 50% of respondents pointed out the high respect of illiterate to nature and the remaining 50% said literate. But regarding to culture 70% of the respondents said that illiterate give more value than literate. The main reasons why illiterate give more value to culture than literate ones are (1) They are not affected by globalization, (2) They are very strong in religion and (3) Being more respectful to their culture.

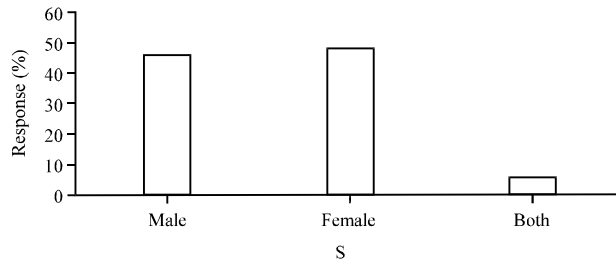


Fig. 8: Respondents response to nature based on sex



Fig. 9: Respondents value for nature and culture based on their marital status

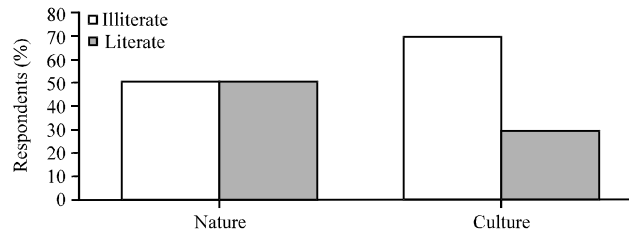


Fig. 10: Respondents value for nature and culture based on their education level

Walters *et al.* (1999) and Glendinning *et al.* (2001), revealed how level of education and literacy influence people's participation in community development projects. Authors found that, highly educated people are more aware of the benefits that can be gained from their participation than illiterate people. Lise (2005), who conducted a study on household participation in forest management and conservation in India, found that the literate villagers in three states including Bihar, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh were more likely to be involved in the forestry activities compared to the illiterate. Likewise, Abdulai and CroleRees (2001) study on farm and community development in southern Mali, found that the educated households were more likely to participate in the non-farm sector than the less educated.

CONCLUSION

The local community living in and around ASLNP was found to be involving in handicraft making and selling. The study revealed that, lakes, Fike mountains, viewpoints, hot spring, Ostrich site, Pelican site and Lephis waterfall are major natural tourist attractions sites. Likewise, under man-made, eco-friendly lodge, traditional housing style and handicraft materials were identified as a tourist attraction sites. In addition, bird watching, taking photographs, bathing hot spring water and beach promenade as well as conservation activities, guiding tourist, hiking, swimming, boating sailing and horse riding were the main potential ecotourism activities in and around the park.

The contribution of gender for ecotourism development in this study was explored by considering the respective value given to culture and nature. Hence, as compared to males, females give satisfactory value to culture and nature. Due to wearing indigenous traditional dress, showing indigenous dances and songs, preparing local handicrafts and transferring culture to children. Besides, in case of marital status, married people give more value for both culture and nature. Regarding to education level, half of the respondents said illiterate give more respect to nature, whereas, the remaining said literate. However, regarding to culture illiterate give more value than literate. Generally, based on the above criteria, in and around the park female contribute more for ecotourism development.

RECOMMENDATION

- Abijata Shalla Lakes National park is an ideal place for ecotourism development through having potential ecotourism sites and activities, however, the attraction sites and activities are not fully well protected. Therefore, the park management and Ethiopia Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA) should give due emphasis to protect them fully for better development of ecotourism in the area

- Support from government and non government organization to encourage the local community is poor. Hence, the government or any other stakeholder should actively participate to strengthen the local community participations in ecotourism development
- Awareness creation to the local community should be done by tourism experts or other stakeholder's to increase their future participation in ecotourism development
- Responsible government bodies like regional culture and tourism office should increase the promotional mechanism of the local community cultures, historical places, natural attraction sites and manmade activities to the world
- Local control is so important to the long term functionality of ecotourism development. Hence, the park management and EWCA should be willing to accept local community involvement in the management and marketing of protected areas

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