

Tafesse Kefyalew Estifanos, 2008. Integrated Assessment of ecosystem services and stakeholder analysis of Abijata-Shalla Lakes National Park, Ethiopia, MSc thesis Environmental Science, Wageningen University

This study focuses specifically on the ecosystem services provided by the National Park Abijata-Shalla to the local population. The aim of this thesis is to assess the use and importance of the Abijata-Shalla Lakes National Park (ASLNP) by analyzing the ecosystem functions and services, and investigating the stakeholders' interaction in the use of the Park by performing an integrated environment assessment. In the study different methods have been used to realize this objective, ranging from field observations, household surveys, tourist surveys and participatory approaches, interviews with key stakeholders. In total 164 households and 46 tourists were interviewed. The surveyed households were both from inside and outside the NP, allowing to gain understanding of how the local population adjacent to the NP depends on the Park's resources.

The study classifies the NP in eleven so-called landscape units which provide different services to stakeholders. Not surprisingly, food production is the major service provided by the Park. More than 90% of the households inside or living on the border of the NP has arable land inside the Park boundaries. The same percentage of households living on the border of the Park produces charcoal from woody resources. The percentage of households living in the Park depending on charcoal production is smaller, i.e. 77% of the interviewed, which may be related to the fact that the population living on the Park border is closer to the main road from Addis to Awassa and outside the sight of the Park management. In addition, people living inside the Park may have been reluctant to tell the truth in the interviews knowing that charcoal production is illegal. Also sand winning is an illegal activity which is practiced at wide scale (almost 50% of the Park inhabitants are involved) and contribute to the income of the local population. Wood resources are not only used for fuel but also for construction, furniture and agricultural tools; similar dependency scores have been recorded for these services provided by the woody resources of the Park. Only 31% of the interviewed people use the wetland shores of Abijata for grazing their livestock suggesting that most of the animals grazing along the shores are from further away. The interviewed population living just outside the Park boundaries depend much less

on the services provided by the Park, but still 73% of the interviewed use fresh water and 37% of the interviewed fuel wood from the Park. Even 17% of the interviewed people living outside the Park borders cultivate arable plots in the Park. These numbers indicate the pressure on the Park's resources and provide an underpinning of what we can observe. These numbers also indicate the dependency of the local population on the Park's resources, not only of inhabitants of the Park but also of the population living in its vicinity.

Although the number of tourists visiting the Park more than doubled and associated returns of the Park almost tripled over the last seven years, it is still very small in absolute terms and certainly not sufficient to cover large scale investments to improve Park management. The study recognizes the potential of the NP for eco-tourism development but it also shows that there are no joined efforts to exploit this. Prerequisite is that the local population shares in the benefits derived from (eco) tourism. In general, any management plan for the NP should pay attention to the interests of the inhabitants of the Park and people living in the vicinity as they depend on its resources. In this respect it is worth to increase conservation awareness and ownership of the local population as they are rapidly degrading their own resource base. Local and national Government could contribute to this by improving the socio-economic conditions of the local population, i.e. better water supply, health centers, and alternative means of income.