



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

A CASE STUDY OF GICH COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE TO SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AT RESETTLED SITE OF DEBARK IN SEMIN MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK (SMNP) ETHIOPIA

Tourism

KEY WORDS: Livelihood, Unsustainable, Semin Mountain National Park, Local Community, Debark, resettlement.

Dr. Sanjay Joshi

Assistant Professor Department Of Tourism Management College Business and Economics University of Gondar

ABSTRACT

The study area being a resettled site for the people does not have adequate information to survive in such a different geographical conditions and lack of knowledge towards new form of businesses limit them to work out for the alternative sources of livelihood. These communities were previously depending upon agricultural for food, income and for their day today survival. The factors that were prevalent in a resettled site compelled the community to involve in unsustainable practices. So, the objective of the study is to look out for an alternative livelihood options for Gich local community of Semin Mountain National Parks (Newly resettled site of Debark). The study is descriptive in its nature and qualitative & quantitative research methodology was adopted. Data collection was done on the basis of personal interviews, through questionnaire survey and FGD's. Frequency, percentage, average mean, one way ANOVA, independent t-test, one sample test and paired co-relation were employed. Local communities those are settled near and around the park have best possible livelihood opportunities such as off farm activities (carpenter, masonry, house painting, timber house, mill, bakery etc.), small scale agro based practices like (poultry, livestock rearing, dairy, fruit orchards etc.), tourism product development (handy crafts, traditional coffee, local beer, honey beer, traditional restaurants, traditional music house or "Azmar", and tourism sector related employment (souvenir shops, chefs, tour guides, guards of hotel, cleaners, house keepers, porters and raw material suppliers to local restaurants). As stakeholders were not able to solve the resettlement issues of the residents, they were unable to have community associations, there were lacking electricity and transportation facilities in an around the site and that makes local inhabitants dissatisfied about their resettlement.

Introduction

The number of national parks and other protected areas in the world has gradually expanded since declared in legal basis. National parks currently serves as refuges for plants, animals, and other organism's species in the changing world landscape. National parks also serve as a center point for all nature conservation efforts throughout the world **Kuvan, etal (2010)**. According to **Sandwith, etal (2001)**, a protected area safeguard biological and cultural diversity, help to improve the livelihoods of local communities, provides homelands to many indigenous peoples and bring countless benefits to the society in general. Yet, the principles concerning national parks are beneficial to every country around the world but the circumstances of administrating and the factors that are induced by the human pressures makes it a difficult process to manage the national parks in every part of the world **(Stern, 2008)**. These problems prolonged the destruction of the national parks and its species over a decade in an around the world. The reality is true in the national parks which are found in many developing countries, particularly in Africa. Among the Sub-Sahara African countries, Ethiopia is the one which it belongs. Today, Ethiopia has more than 55 protected areas (including 21 national parks) to protect and conserve the natural eco-systems and wildlife heritage of the country conversely. However, since establishments of protected areas they are exposed to several pressures that threaten their existence and sustainability due to many anthropogenic effects. Whereas, poverty, population growth and livelihood issues were the root causes for the human pressures and threats in most of the national parks of Ethiopia. The Semin mountain national park is the one which is found in Amahara regional state and represents most bio-diversified natural area. The SMNP is of international significance and has been declared as one of the first sites in whole of the world a "World Heritage Site" by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in 1978. However, in 1996, the SMNP was inscribed on the list of world heritage that are on the edge of danger due to the evidence of recent deterioration of the population of Walia Ibex, due to agricultural encroachment in forest areas, loss of bio-diversity and impact of road developments. Since the establishment of Semin mountain as a national park has been intensively influenced by the inside settlers of Gich local community via agriculture practices, livestock grazing, fuel-wood, timber use, poaching and the construction of a new roads within the national park has led to a severe damage and decline to the natural resources. These practices had a negative impact on the national park by reducing the vegetation to grow in their primeval grandeur and show obvious loss of biomass and wildlife habitats **(Walia Ibex and**

Semin Fox) and it is the evidence of over-exploitation of the natural resources. Sometimes government and stake holders throughout the countries of the world have taken measures to relocate the original inhabitants by providing financial compensation to those who were being impacted due to the national parks re-composition and the development of eco-tourism activities. Even though, the relocation practices of the local community inhabitants through the provision of financial compensating them might have been formulated or completed but this does not bring sustainable livelihood opportunities for the resettled local community inhabitants. Re-settling practice of the local inhabitants from the national parks should be assured of their rehabilitation, conservation of bio-diversity and for the sustainable tourism development practices. Whereas, if livelihood options are being arranged for the local community inhabitants that will strengthen their ability to survive and improve their standard of living. But, if livelihood options are absent for the displaced local inhabitants that could diminish the situation for them and national parks could posture high conservation threats **(UNESCO, 2001)**. As it is known that local community inhabitants of Semin mountain national park are being relocated to the Debark town.

Thus, the study is being focused extensively to pinpoint the current situations of the re-settled local community inhabitants of Semin mountain national park, about their alternative livelihood options and also studies about the short and long-term action plans being taken for them to adopt in a new location of the Debark town.

Study Area & Methodology

Geographically, the Debark town is located between 39° 28' 08" and 38° 18' 12" longitudes and 12° 14' 22" and 12° 36' 32" latitude. The area receives sufficient rain varies from 1100 mm to 2400 mm with a mean annual value of 1800 mm. The mean monthly maximum and minimum temperature of the area is about 18°C and 6°C respectively.

In order to apprehend the research and its objectives, the study of descriptive nature was performed within the study area as researcher had a prior knowledge about the problems those are to be addressed in comprehensive manner. The study adopted both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Cross-sectional survey was performed to collect the data through key informant interviews, focus group discussion, document analysis and questionnaires. Qualitative approach was utilized to collect information through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis, whereas, questionnaires were used for

quantitative data. In this regard, five key informant interviews were selected from the sampled frame population of North Gondar Culture & Tourism office, Debarik Worda Tourism office; resettle local community representative, Debarik town Hotel Business and Gondar town Travel Agents. Two focus group discussions have been conducted at the new site of Gich. Whereas, quantitative data collected via structured and Semi-structured questionnaires. The questionnaire was pretested before disseminating the final questionnaires. The study used both probability and non-probability sampling design. Since inference has to be drawn, the study used purposive sampling technique for qualitative data collection .Whereas, simple random and purposive sampling technique has been used for quantitative data collection and proper sample site selection respectively. Qualitative data were analyzed critically and skeptically through narrative and document analysis strategy. Whereas, quantitative data were analyzed through the help of SPSS version 16.0. Hence, both inferential and descriptive statics were used i.e. frequency , percentage and average mean, one way ANOVA , independent t-test, one sample test and paired co-relation were employed.

Sample Size Determination

According to (Bill Godden, 2004 & Yamane, 1967:886), as cited in Israel G. (1992) in most descriptive statistics, dealing with probability used the following formula:

(Sample Size of the infinite population, where the population is greater than 50,000)

$$Z^2 \times p \times (1 - p) / e^2$$

$$SS = n = 1.96^2 \times (0.5) \times (1 - 0.5) = 196$$

(Sample size of finite population, where the population is less than 50,000).It can be calculated taking into account the sample frame of the study area i.e. 146 and could be preceded as follows:

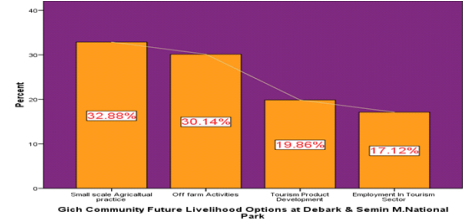
$$\frac{(1 + (SS (n) - 1)) (1 + (196 - 1))}{Pop} = (n) = \sim 146$$

Result

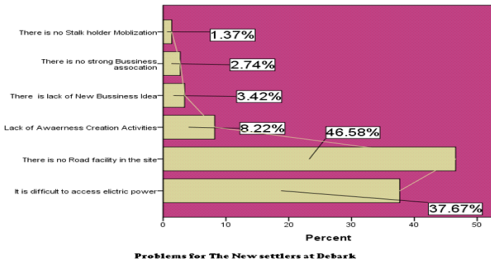
Mixed agricultural practices (livestock rearing and crop cultivation) were the major economic activities of people those were living in the SMNP (Gich Community). The livestock kept by the community in the previous site were cattle's, sheep, goats, horses, and mules. In order to inference about the study further Gich local community, North Gondar zone & Debarik district tourism experts, Semin mountain tour guides, Debarik town Hotel Business men and travel agents of Gondar were the subjects of the study. These were involved to make the detail analysis on livelihood options for Gich local community in the newly resettled site at the Debarik town. The respondents were 78% of Gich local community, 3% of North Gondar zone & of Debarik district tourism experts, 15% of Semin Mountain tour guides, 3% of Debarik town Hotel Business men and 1% of travel agent respondents were involved in questionnaire survey. Whereas, along with these respondents 89.70 % and 10.30 % were males and females respectively. In regards to the age composition of the respondents from the subjects of the study were 7.5% young, 3.4% adult, 60.3% were middle aged, 23.3% & 5.5 % were old and elderly people respectively.

In terms of educational level 64.38 were illiterate, 13% were educated till primary school level, and 3.42 % were of first class secondary school level, 3.22 % high school level, 3. 42 % certificate level, 2.74% and 4.79% were Diploma and Graduate level respectively.

Respondent's attitude towards future livelihood options at Debarik and SMNP



Source: Field Survey, 2016



Source: Field Survey, 2016

Table-1 Problems of New Settlement Site

Variables	M	St.d	t	Df	Sig(2 tailed)	M.D
Absence of electricity	1.9452	.22836	102.924	145	.000	1.94521
Absence of road facility	1.9315	.25346	92.080	145	.000	1.93151
Absence of awareness creation	1.8014	.40034	54.369	145	.000	1.80137
Community business idea lack	1.658	.4762	42.061	145	.000	1.6575
Lack of business Associations	1.9178	.27560	84.081	145	.000	1.91781
There is no stake holder Mobilization	1.7329	.44398	47.161	145	.000	1.73288

Sig=Significance level

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Background: Semin Mountains

The Semin mountains national park (SMNP) being inhabited for atleast 2000 years, the population pressure on natural resources has been mounted for over several decades and threatened the livelihood options of local inhabitants and the bio-diversity of the park . The issues of the people living inside the park dates back to the time of its creation. Gich local community used the park for livestock grazing; firewood consumption; poaching and deforestation practices were being carried out for creating farm lands. Such practices led to the decline of bio-diversity within the park and has hampered the ongoing efforts for the development and promotion of Eco-tourism. Along with this fact there were several other reports those were indicating about the pressure and threat to the ecological sustainability of the Semin Mountains and has triggered the warnings from UNESCO to debar it from the world heritage site list as well.

Bio-diversity of the park was the reason for attainment of its World heritage status but has been consequently declined and tourism activity deteriorated. Fortunately, resettlement of the Gich community to the new site was conducted in order to solve the issues of the people that were prevalent within the park, improving their way of life, enhancing conservation and creating livelihood opportunities for local communities in order to reduce pressure from within the park. Moreover, voluntary relocation of people from the park, new alignment of the road from Debarik to Chennek, extension of the Park in order to include Mesarerya, Lemalimo (if possible), Ras- Dashen Wildlife Reserves and effecting conservation within the extended (proposed) National Park; such

measures that were taken in Semin mountains national park; status of conservation of the bio-diversity has augmented, so as to restore the status of World Heritage site of the Park.

Re-settlement of Gich Community

In and around the SMNP, overgrazing, using land for farming and deforestation had resulted in serious degradation of natural resources from the entire part of the national park. Cultivation inside the park has also been a serious concern where such form of land use was incompatible with conservation objectives and eco-tourism development. Such reasons inclusive of growing interest for the development of eco-tourism at the site created a platform for relocation of Gich community to Debark town.

The study insured about the presence of Gich community inside the park is a threat for conservation of bio-diversity and eco-tourism development. This fact was strengthened, as local community of Gich had a negative impact on the park and on its bio-diversity due to de-forestation, over grazing, forest fire by locals and poaching of wildlife. However, the levels of impact were different based on respondent's perception. The mean value of respondents perception in de-forestation ($M = 1.7397$, $St.d = .64385$, $V=.415$) is higher than the mean value of overgrazing ($M=1.4795$, $St.d = .65621$, $V=.431$). But the mean value of impact level, based on perception of the respondents were less in forest fire ($M = 2.7397$, $St.d = .49903$, $V=.249$) and in poaching of wildlife ($M = 2.6027$, $St.d = .61565$, $V=.379$) in the park.

Thus, the outcome reflected the respondent's variability of perceptions; the prevalence is common in the highlands and in national parks of Ethiopia. Livestock grazing, de-forestation, wildlife conflicts with humans in an around the park has resulted in serious degradation of natural resources (Kefalew, 2015). The 'Pearson Chi Square' analysis shows that age, gender and attitude towards the impacts imposed by the community at Semin mountain national park and on its eco-tourism development programs have a statistical significance in community association ($\chi^2 = M = 34.405$, $F = 1.364$, $df = 146$, $p < 0.05$). So, as per the results, their understanding towards the influence in the national park was perceived equally. Even though, they knew the degree of their intervention in the national park ecosystem, in the beginning all the groups regardless of their gender perceived the condition of resettlement negatively. The situation in Semin mountains was further made evident through the interrogations with Ato Teshome Mullu, co-ordinator of project sponsored by Austria for its sustainable development and formerly serving as SMNP Manager, 2016.

"As Gich local community has a high degree of intervention in core zone, there are communities engaged in deforestation, overgrazing, cultivation and poaching of wildlife. Local communities inhabitants of in an around the SMNP of the Debark, Janamora and Aderkay Wordas are the ones with a minimum level of a negative impact on the park eco-system. To optimize the situation stakeholders started certain programmes to help communities for creating an alternative off-farm livelihood options. Among them were weaving (sheema), pottery, carpentry, masonry, bread making, tenting, cookery, tour guiding, scout, mule rent, handy craft selling and being local venders of eggs, hen, sheeps, vegetables. Where as, after a deal with Gich community they were evacuated to Debark as government provided compensation in cash of about 8,00,000-1.7million Ethiopian Birr and about 250 m² of land as per their wealth and size of the farm land they lost due to relocation. The facts being interrogated from different households within the park" (Interviewed, 2016).

Livelihood options prior to re-settlement of Gich Community

Most of the residents of villages in an adjacent to the Semin mountain national park dominantly used mixed agricultural practices such as crop cultivation but productivity is too less, only 28% of residents harvest enough food from their farm lands. Rearing of livestock is another optional source of livelihood to the local residents but has certain limitation due to scarcity of grazing

land due to protected area and only 18% of the land is left as zero level-grazing land within the study area (Evan Ludi, 2005).

Small proportions of the Gich community are engaged in tourism activity's (guiding, mule renting, handy crafts, porters). Thus, tourism is used as an alternative livelihood option for the Gich community. As per (Mulugata Astray, 2015), the important aspect of tourism in SMNP is its capacity to create large number of employment opportunities, especially in main camping sites and in the Debark town.

The mean value of the respondents also shows that out of the total respondent's majority of them scored agriculture was the dominant economic activity of the migrates of Gich community. The results were backed by the researchers who are dominantly living in the highlands of Ethiopia inextricably dependent on the natural resources of the park to sustain their livelihood needs and requirements. Thus, agriculture (crop cultivation & livestock rearing) being the main economic activity for the local communities.

Prospective Livelihood options for Gich Community

The resettled Gich communities previously were tend to depend almost entirely on their natural resource base for food and income. Overdependence was largely due to limited alternative options of livelihood that leads to unsustainable utilization of the resources. Even after formation of the national park, local community still depends on the natural resource base of the park. However, due to extensive efforts to relocate local community to Debark town by providing them incentives such as land and financial compensation of 8,00,000-1.7 million. In this regard, the local communities were shifted from the park but they do not have any knowledge to start a new business rather they depended on agricultural activity.

Thus, strive to amalgamate the local community to involve in alternative livelihood options of sustainable nature at Debark and Semin mountain national park will be a significant factor for the park as well as for the community. The study also revealed that local communities who are settled near and around the park are engaged in different livelihood options such as off farm activities (carpentry, masonry, house painting, timber house, mills, bakery etc.); agro based practices (poultry farming, beef farming, dairy farming, pig farming and fruit farming etc.); product development for tourism industry (handy crafts, coffee, local Beer, honey beer, traditional restaurants, traditional music house or "Azmar", and in tourism sector (souvenir shops, cooks, tour guides, hotels, housekeeping deptt in hotels, porters and raw material suppliers).

The mean value of the respondents also portrayed that, small scale agricultural practice (Max. $M = 2.2190$, $St.d 1.10291$, $Min.M .78174$, $St.d .78174$, $V=.058$), off farm activity (Max. $M=2.2385$, $St.d 1.13986$, $Min. M 2.0000$, $St.d.36515$, $V=.098$), tourism product development (Max. $M=2.2366$, $St.d 1.12887$, $Min. M 2.0000$, $St.d .53452$, $V=.093$), tourism sector employment (Max. $M= 2.2331$, $St,d 1.12739$, $Min.M 2.00$, $St.d. 40825$, $V =.082$) are the potential alternative livelihood options at Debark town and Semin mountains national park. The study further revealed that despite the respondents have different mind sets towards livelihood options. The result reflected that, statistically it is significant $t(145, (5.154, 42.773, 43.735, 46.045) = p < 0.01$). Therefore, the mean of respondent's perception is significantly different than the average population. The mean deviation also demonstrated that there is mean variation within the sample population over the mindset of livelihood options at debark town ($M.D=1.06164, 1.100959, 1.10274, 1.08904$). With this regard, the mean deviation result of the entire result shows that, the mean in between them are approached to equal.

Study further revealed the benefit of the villagers adjacent to the park and at Debark can take part in scouting, guiding, cooking, mule renting, horse renting and souvenir selling's (Mulugeta Astray, 2015). It is adding value to the local economy by selling locally made souvenirs and articles produced by the communities and are being sold to the tourists. The employment opportunities

that are being generated due to park for local communities are scouting, guiding, cooking, mule & horse renting, souvenir sales and other opportunities. Such employment opportunities provide strength to the local community's to strive and improve their lives. The results were also confirmed through FGDs conducted at debark town; "there are alternative business opportunities for local community; they have adapted well and practices small scale agricultural practices, off farm activities, existing & new tourism product development activities and engaged themselves in the tourism related sectors. While the new settlers at Debark are finding it hard to settle due to lack of facilities such as (electricity, road accessibility, tap water problem and lack of awareness, how to run a new business units) (FGD, 2016).

Local Community problems at Debark; The results shows that 37.67% of the community is having a difficulty to access electric power, 46.58% said that there is a lack of road facility, 8.22% said that there is no awareness about any activity to be engaged in any business, 3.8% told that majority of the people do not have any business awareness, 2.74% said that there were none of any organized business association that is good for the mobilization of the local community and 1.37% of them told that there is none of any mobilization activity from the stake holders .

Whether the site problems and satisfaction are co-related or not but the result confirmed that even though there is negative correlation, statistically it is significant $r (-183^*, 146)$, $p < 0.01$). The result also supported that the availability of basic facilities and satisfaction of the local communities have a direct co-relation for the eco-tourism development of the site. With the level of understanding, local communities should be aware of the problems of the site (Yemane, 2011). In order to make inferences whether the respondents have different understanding or not, towards the problems at the site. Thus, the result confirmed that, statistically it is significant $t (145, 5.154, 42.773, 43.735, 46.045)$ = $p < 0.01$). Therefore, the mean of respondent's perception is equal with average population. The mean deviation also confirmed that there is mean variation within the sample population over the understanding of problems those are at Debark town (M.D = 1.94521, 1.93151, 1.80137, 1.6575, 1.91781 & 1.73288). However, the mean deviation result over lack of electricity, road facility, awareness, business association has almost equal result, whereas absence of community awareness about business and stake holder mobilization are similarly approached compared to the other result.

The result also showed via FGD's of the local community that; "Off course there are number of problems of the majority of peoples and small number of people are only satisfied". Whereas, the majority who have an awareness towards eco-tourism significance are only satisfied. But the stake holders should start their process for organizing and mobilizing in order to curb the problems. (FGD, 2016).

Community Support for Eco-tourism Development; the outcome is summarized as, almost half of the respondents said that they strongly support an eco-tourism. Whereas half of the respondents said that they were dissatisfied. The one way analysis of variance result showed that there is a significant difference between their age or attitude towards the support of an eco-tourism development in Semin Mountains. Therefore, the result shows that it is of statistically significance between the age group, $F (6, 139) = 2.479$, $p < 0.05$). The post hoc analysis of Tukey of homogeneity confirmed that the average mean of respondents were Adult (M = 1.800, St.d = .44721) > Aged (M = 1.7500, St.d .46291) > Middle (M = 1.500, St.d. 67806) , > Elder (M = 1.1176 , St.d = .32703) > Young (M = 1.00 , St.d = .00)

The results demonstrated about the respondents of different age groups who have common understanding about eco-tourism significance and about its negative impacts over the agricultural dependence of the people. The independent sample 't test' to check the difference of genders and their attitude towards the benefits of tourism development and the results also revealed that, it is of statistical significance between the respondents, genders,

status and attitudes towards tourism significance ($t (144) = 2.239$, $p < 0.05$). The result moreover confirmed by the previous studies that gender difference has an effect on the attitude of the respondents (Akama et al, 1995). However, education and attitudes of the respondents towards eco-tourism development and its significance. The result shows that it has statistically significance of correlation $r (3.019, 145)$, $p < 0.01$, (M = .61644, St.d 2.46705). A detail interview was conducted with key informant from Debark culture & tourism office as follows:

"As we know, local communities who have awareness were in support to an eco-tourism development but for their own interest, they did not give their support because these people stands to fulfill their own interest rather than to have out come from the eco-tourism development. The main obstacle for them was the over dependency on agricultural activity, de-forestation for their purpose, poaching and killing of animals for the house hold consumption. However, either people have negative or positive perception towards an eco-tourism development, now after a great effort they were forced to resettle at Debark" (Interviewed, 2016).

The above view further demonstrated that tourism industry used local resources but with little economic benefits for the local people; consequent to this, the local community continues to distrust tourism activities and perceived eco-tourism as just one more proposal to eliminate control over their land and communities in future (UNEP, 2002). Nevertheless, eco-tourism is claimed to be socially inclusive and ensure genuine communities participation. It has evolved as a promise to empower the local people to get control over the economic and social benefits and asserted in providing all sorts of benefits to the local people (Duff, 2002). For many local poor, eco-tourism has reassured to reinforce land claims, acknowledge cultural identity, land ownership and regain their access right of the resources. As cited in Zeppel's work, for the local people, sustainable eco-tourism development is based on "conservation of resources and empowerment of local people through direct benefits and control over tourism activities" (Zeppel, 2006).

Conclusion

As the study assured that people who are not having adequate knowledge of living in newly resettled site and any knowledge or awareness towards new business operation often limit their access to use any alternative livelihood options. Mixed agricultural practice (livestock rearing and farming) were the major economic activities of people living in the SMNP (Gich Community). In and around the SMNP, overgrazing, using land for farming and de-forestation had resulted in serious degradation of natural resources of the entire part of the National Park. Cultivation inside the park has also been a serious concern where such form of land use is known to be in-compatible with conservation objectives and eco-tourism development. Because of this and the growing interest of the site for eco-tourism development creating the platform for the relocate of the Gich community at Debark town. Communities living near and around the SMNP of Debark , Janamora and Aderkay wordas with minimum level they have a negative influence over the national park eco system . Thus, strive to consolidate the local community involvement in alternative livelihood options at Debark and Semin Mountain National Park in a sustainable manner, as it is a significant element for either the national park conservation or for their life to be sustainable. The study also found that local communities who were settled near and around the park have best possible livelihood options i.e. off farm activities (carpenter, masonry , house painting, timber house , mill house, bakery etc), small scale agricultural practice (poultry farming, beef farming , dairy farming, pig farming, modernized cattle farming and fruit farming etc), tourism product development (handy crafts, coffee shops, local beer shops , honey beer , traditional restaurant, traditional music house or "Azmar", and tourism sector related employment (souvenir shop , cooker , tour guide, security of hotels, cleaner, bed making, porters, tourist food & raw material suppliers.

The study also revealed that there are no means for creating

awareness, mobilizing the resettled community, creating community association, lack of electricity and road facility around the site creates dissatisfaction among the resettled community. Although, majority of the resettled community are satisfied by the action, still the stakeholder's involvement needs remedial actions. Furthermore, the study confirmed that local community has positive attitude towards eco-tourism and towards benefits of eco-tourism development. However, it makes the way for the participating communities within the park, which should be planned as part of a broader strategy for an option for further economic development for the resettled communities.

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