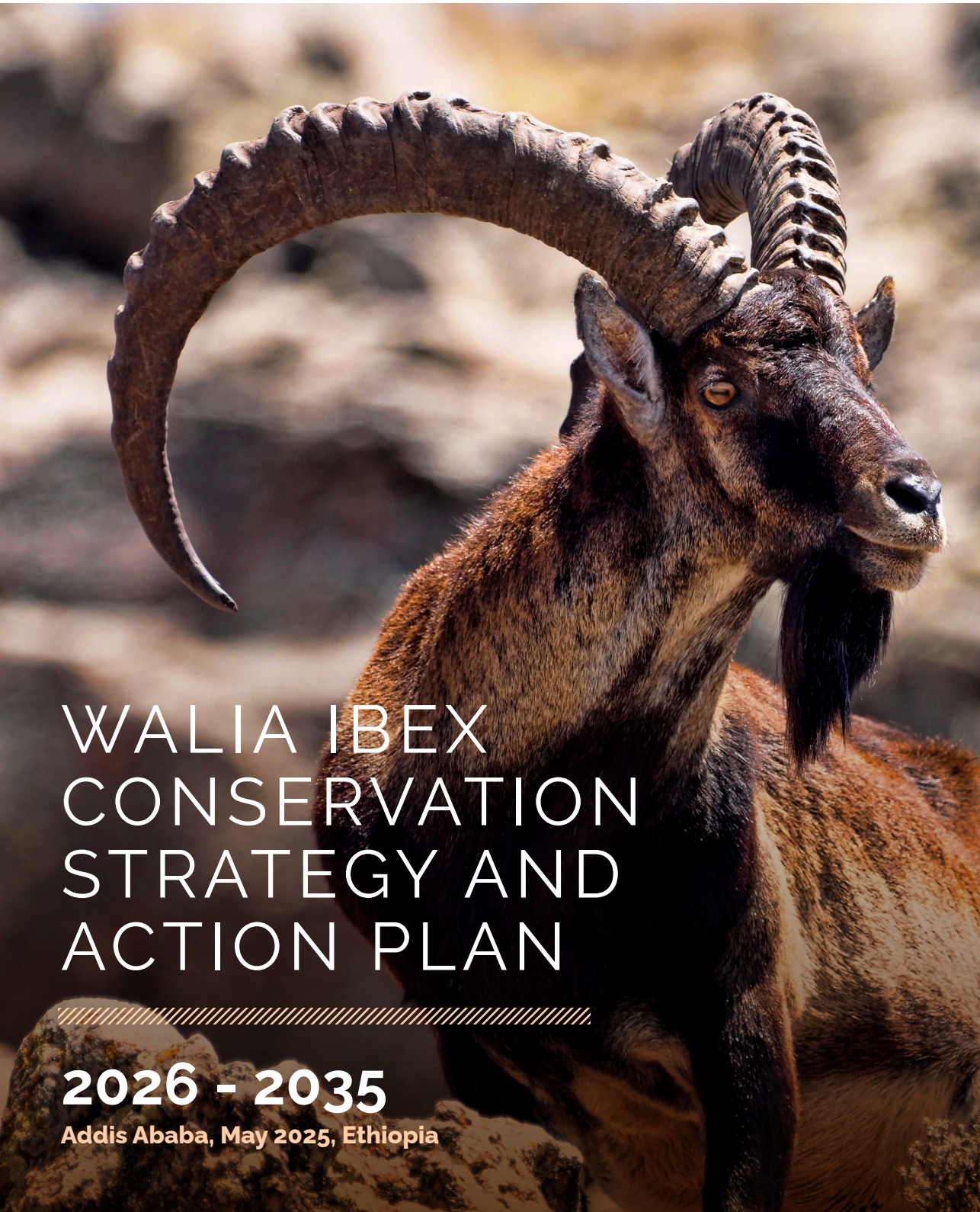

# WALIA IBEX CONSERVATION STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

## 2026 - 2035

**Addis Ababa, May 2025, Ethiopia**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**This Walia ibex National Conservation Action Plan is the result of an extensive literature review and legal consultation process among specialists, including a Consultative Stakeholders Workshop conducted from 7-8 February 2025 at Gondar. One of the most important actions proposed is gathering of relevant knowledge from participants, so that this Action Plan can be more focused on the most important direct conservation issues of Walia ibex.**

The general objective of the Plan is to protect keep all the existing Walia ibex populations from risk of extinction, so that the existing genetic diversity of the species should be maintained and the number of Walia ibex will be increased. The Action Plan presents a framework for the management and conservation of Walia ibex habitats and its population by designing appropriate management strategies that ensure the survival of the Walia ibex. This Action Plan, therefore, identifies gaps in our knowledge, which need to be filled to achieve an optimal management of the species. The major focus of this Action Plan is gathering relevant knowledge from different stakeholders to address urgent conservation challenges. It outlines key strategic objectives and actions necessary for the species' survival.

Walia ibex (Capra walie), an iconic and endemic species of Ethiopia faces multiple threats that jeopardize its survival. Developing a comprehensive and effective Action Plan is crucial to ensuring the long-term viability of this species. Several factors necessitate the development of this Action Plan: The Walia ibex is a flagship species of Ethiopia's Afroalpine ecosystem, playing a vital role in maintaining ecological balance. Preserving this species contributes to the overall conservation of its unique habitat.

This Action Plan prioritizes scientific research to inform evidence-based conservation strategies. The survival of the Walia ibex is closely tied to local communities that share its habitat.

The main threats of Walia ibex are human related; as a result the Walia ibex population is subjected to extreme fluctuation and now it is vulnerable to extinction as a result of it's requirement for specialized habitats and low reproductive rate. The expansion of agriculture and livestock grazing into Afroalpine ecosystem contribute for the reduction of Walia ibex's habitat in Simien Mountain National Park. Despite legal protections, Walia ibex remains at risk from illegal hunting (poaching), often driven by demand for meat and body parts. Weak enforcement of wildlife protection laws exacerbates this issue. Competition with livestock for grazing resources often leads to tensions between conservation authorities and local communities. Some communities perceive Walia ibex conservation as a restriction on land use, leading to resistance toward conservation efforts.

To address these challenges, the Action Plan will focus on: Strengthening protected area management and law enforcement, enhancing community-based conservation initiatives and eco-tourism benefits. Also, conducting scientific research to minimize knowledge gaps and promoting sustainable land-use practices to balance conservation and development; whilst developing climate adaptation strategies for habitat resilience.

This Action Plan aim to secure a thriving Walia ibex population, ensuring its survival for future generations while benefiting local communities in particular and the nation at large.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**The compilation of the Walia Ibex National Conservation Action Plan 2026-2030 was a collaborative effort, spearheaded by the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA) and the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) and input from other local and international experts and organisations. All guidance, contribution and support are acknowledged and highly appreciated. During the development of this Action Plan, rigorous local, regional, and international consultations with stakeholders and partners of Walia ibex and SMNP conservation and management were conducted. The key stakeholders' consultative workshop has been conducted. EWCA and AWF are grateful to all stakeholders for their input towards the development of this Action Plan. Special thanks go to the SMNP, AWF staff and to those who supported the drafting and editing of this Action Plan.**

# ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS

**ASL (asl) =** Above See Level

**AWF =** African Wildlife Foundation

**CBD =** Convention on Biological Diversity

**CITES =** Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

**EBI =** Ethiopian Biodiversity Institute

**EWCA =** Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority

**FDRE =** Federal Democratic Republics of Ethiopia

**GBF =** Global Biodiversity Framework

**IUCN =** International Union for the Conservation of Natural

**NCAP =** National Conservation Action Plan

**MoU =** Memorandum of Understanding

**NGO =** None Governmental Organisation

**PPR =** Peste des Petits Ruminants

**RP =** Rinder Pest

**SMNP =** Simien Mountains National Park

**TLU =** Tropical livestock Unit

**UNEP =** United Nations Environment Programme

**UNESCO =** United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation

**WCTWG =** Walia Conservation Technical Working Group

**WHS =** World Heritage Site

**National Walia Ibex Conservation Action Plan Inception Workshop Participants**

7 – 8 February, 2025, Gondar

**HER EXCELLENCY**
**MRS. SELAMAWIT KASSA**

TOURISM MINISTER

# PREFACE

**The Walia Ibex is an iconic and endangered species found only in the Simien Mountains of northern Ethiopia, represents both a symbol of Ethiopia's unique biodiversity and a critical component of the highland ecosystem. Once on the brink of extinction, the Walia Ibex remains under considerable threat from habitat loss, human-wildlife conflict, climate change, and limited conservation capacity. It is within this context that the Walia Ibex Conservation Action Plan has been developed.**

This Action Plan outlines a strategic and collaborative framework to guide conservation efforts over the coming decade. Grounded in science and enriched by local knowledge, the plan brings together government institutions, conservation partners, researchers, and local communities in a unified commitment to ensure the survival of this remarkable species. The development of this plan reflects our collective recognition that the conservation of the Walia ibex is not only a matter of preserving a single species but also of safeguarding the ecological integrity and natural heritage of the Simien Mountains.

On behalf of the Ministry of tourism, I extend my gratitude to all those who have contributed their expertise, time, and passion to the preparation of this Action Plan. Your dedication is instrumental in paving the way toward a future where the Walia Ibex can thrive in the wild.

Together, let us reaffirm our commitment to conserving this national treasure for generations to come.

# FOREWORD

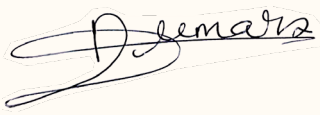
**Ethiopia is blessed with a wealth of biodiversity, including numerous endemic species found nowhere else in the world. Among these, the Walia ibex (Capra walie), stands as a national treasure an iconic & flagship species that symbolizes Ethiopia's rich natural heritage. Found exclusively in the rugged landscapes of the Simien Mountains National Park this magnificent species faces growing conservation challenges, including habitat loss, climate change, and human-wildlife conflict.**

Recognizing the urgency of protecting Walia ibex, this Walia National Conservation Action Plan has been developed to serve as a strategic roadmap to provide a comprehensive framework to enhance habitat protection. The plan looks to strengthen law enforcement, promote community-based conservation, and advance scientific monitoring of the species. Developing science-based Conservation Action Plan will guide government, policy makers, NGOs, communities, educators, land use planners and researchers alike to effectively contribute to a comprehensive conservation goal for Walia ibex conservation in Ethiopia. Having been drawn up after a well-attended participatory inception workshop, this strategy reflects the consensus of all major stakeholders on the priority activities needed for conservation of this critically important species, and we would like to thank our partner, the African Wildlife Foundation for support and guidance during the process. With the endorsement and implementation of this strategy, Ethiopia is once again demonstrating its commitment towards conservation, not just for Walia ibex, but also for biodiversity at a larger scale.

On behalf of the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority I extend my deepest appreciation to all stakeholders involved in crafting this plan and to the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) all support in this regard. I urge all policymakers, conservationists, researchers, and local communities to work together in implementing this strategy to secure a future where the Walia ibex continues to thrive in its natural habitat.

**HIS EXCELLENCY ATO KUMERA WAKJIRA**

DIRECTOR GENERAL, ETHIOPIA WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AUTHORITY



# 1. INTRODUCTION

**Species conservation is a critical endeavour aimed at preserving the Earth's biodiversity, which is essential for the health of our planet and the well-being of all its inhabitants. A Species Conservation Action Plan serves as a strategic framework to guide efforts in protecting and restoring threatened species and their habitats. This plan involves a systematic approach encompassing assessment, planning, and action. Initially, it requires a thorough evaluation of the species' conservation status, identifying critical threats such as habitat destruction, poaching, and disease. Subsequently, it entails the development of targeted strategies to mitigate these threats, which may include habitat restoration, legal protections, and community engagement. Finally, the plan emphasizes implementing these strategies through coordinated actions among stakeholders, continuous monitoring, and adaptive management to ensure effectiveness.**

The Walia ibex (Capra walie), is an endangered wild goat species endemic to Ethiopia, serving as a flagship species for the country and highlights the commitment to conservation. As a flagship species, it plays a crucial role in both ecological conservation and raising awareness for broader environmental efforts. Conservation efforts for Walia ibex benefit other species sharing the same habitat, such as the Ethiopian wolf, gelada, and various other mammals and different bird species. As a rare and charismatic species, Walia ibex attracts tourists, generating revenue that funds conservation programs and supports local communities. Conservation efforts for Walia ibex encourage scientific research on endangered species and ecosystem dynamics. Conservation programs centred on Walia ibex engage local communities in sustainable land-use practices, reducing human-wildlife conflicts. Walia ibex plays a pivotal role in the conservation of the Simien Mountains ecosystem by acting as an ecological stabilizer, attracting conservation funding, and promoting tourism. Thus, protecting this species ensures the preservation of an entire network of flora and fauna in one of Africa's most remarkable biodiversity hotspots.

The success of this action plan hinges on collaborative efforts among governments, non-governmental organizations, scientists, academia, local communities, and the private sector. In essence, a Species Conservation Action Plan is a dynamic and integrative roadmap designed to halt and reverse biodiversity loss, ensuring the survival of species and the preservation of the ecosystems upon which we all depend.

## 1.1 ECOLOGY AND BEHAVIOUR OF WALIA IBEX

**Species conservation is a critical endeavour aimed at preserving the Earth's biodiversity, which is essential for the health of our planet and the well-being of all its inhabitants. A Species Conservation Action Plan serves as a strategic framework to guide efforts in protecting and restoring threatened species and their habitats. This plan involves a systematic approach encompassing assessment, planning, and action. Initially, it requires a thorough evaluation of the species' conservation status, identifying critical threats such as habitat destruction, poaching, and disease. Subsequently, it entails the development of targeted strategies to mitigate these threats, which may include habitat restoration, legal protections, and community engagement. Finally, the plan emphasizes implementing these strategies through coordinated actions among stakeholders, continuous monitoring, and adaptive management to ensure effectiveness.**

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Walia ibex is one of the rare and even-toed ruminants belonging to:

| | |
|---|---|
| **KINGDOM:** ..... | *Animalia* |
| **PHYLUM:** ..... | *Chordata* |
| **SUBPHYLUM:** ..... | *Vertebrata* |
| **CLASS:** ..... | *Mammalia* |
| **ORDER:** ..... | Artiodactyla |
| **FAMILY:** ..... | Bovidae |
| **SUB FAMILY:** ..... | Caprinae |
| **GENUS:** ..... | Capra |
| **SPECIES:** ..... | Capra walie |

The genus Capra includes several forms of wild goats (bezoars, turs, markhors, and ibex). Although all the genus Capra s can interbreed in captivity, their systematics remains unclear. Based on morphological characteristics, some authors considered Walia ibex to be a subspecies of Capra ibex and/or Capra nubiana while others consider it to be a separate species, which is currently accepted. Molecular studies using mitochondrial and nuclear DNA and ecological niche modelling analysis revealed that the two species are different (Gebremedhin et al., 2009) Recent analysis of the phylogeny of Walia ibex using mitochondrial and nuclear DNA reveals that the it forms a single clad with that of Nubian ibex, and that the later is paraphyletic. The study also showed that Walia ibex potentially has been isolated from Nubian ibex for up to 0.8 million years, which is about the same distance between Alpine ibex and Spanish ibex (Shackleton, 1997). Ecological niche modelling analysis also showed that Walia ibex and Nubian ibex have different bioclimatic niches (Gebremedhin et, al., 2009). The combination of ecological modelling and phylogeny suggests Walia ibex to be considered as an independent unit for conservation.

Distribution of Caprinae has been influenced mainly by rapid environmental changes caused as a result of glaciation (Geist, 1971). During the last glaciation period, ibexes moved towards the mountainous regions. The emergence of vegetation belts at higher altitudes during the deglaciation period gradually isolated individual Caprinae from each other (Nievergelt, 1981). The population of wild Caprinae is vulnerable to extinction due to its requirements of specialised habitats, genetic isolation and low reproductive rate (Shackleton, 1997). However, adaptations of ibexes for generalized feeding behaviour and modifications in their anatomy and physiology enable them to survive under extreme climatic conditions and on difficult terrains (Kingdon, 1997).

The genus Capra is naturally distributed throughout the Palearctic and north-eastern Africa. Walia ibex a member of the sub-family Caprinae is the only representative species of the Palearctic Ibexes in Ethiopia. The species is endemic to Simien and was described as a critically endangered species (IUCN 1994). They are confined to small mountain ranges in northern Ethiopia. Ever since Rűppell set foot in Simien in the early 1830's, and described and reported the Walia ibex for the scientific communities of the world, the species has remained known for its elegance and uniqueness at local, national and international levels.

Males and females in Walia ibex have black and white markings on their legs and a grey-white underside. In older males there is a black stripe on the back. The dorsal side is brown, and in old males, it is relatively darker (Nievergelt, 1981). Usually, females are lighter in colour and inconspicuous (Dunbar, 1978; Last, 1982). Moreover, males develop both a black chest and beard, which are used to distinguish them from females (Dunbar and Dunbar, 1981). Males of 4 - 7 years old have a small black beard, and matured males of > 7 years old, have a longer beard and darker chest. Beards are not found in females and young males (Nievergelt, 1981).

Walia ibex is a crepuscular mammal living in a herd of 5-10 individuals, however; males are more solitary than females outside of the breeding seasons. Males compete for females by ramming their horns with amazing force. The gestation period is about 150 - 165 days and females give birth to one, sometimes two kids per birth. They reach sexual maturity at one year of age. In contrast to other ibex species Walia Ibex seems to breed throughout the year, although peak sexual activity is observed from March to June. This may be possible because of the lack of temperature seasonality in the tropical Simien Mountains, producing no environmental costs to individuals that breed year-round. The average life expectancy for Walia ibex is up to 15 years (Nievergelt, 1981).

Walia Ibex is most active in the morning and evening and will rests during the day in on rock ledges to avoid the midday heat. Males live in bachelor groups and females live in groups with their offspring. They often stand on their hind legs to get to young shoots of giant heath (Gebremedhin et al., 2009).

Walia ibex often faces multiple threats. Their conservation assessment and planning are, therefore complex, and require multiple approaches, including studies on demography, population genetics and ecological modelling. Unfortunately, this information is often hard to collect, and most studies focus only on a limited array of aspects.

## 1.2 HABITAT PREFERENCE OF WALIA IBEX

**Walia ibex (Capra waliae) is a species of conservation concern and one of the Palearctic ibex species in Ethiopia (Nievergelt, 1981; Last, 1982). The distribution of Caprinae has been influenced mainly by rapid environmental changes caused by glaciation (Geist, 1971). SMNP is the southern limit of the natural range of Ibexes in the world and the only place where Walia ibex occurs (Nievergelt, 1981; Gebremedhin et al., 2009). Walia ibex lives at higher altitudes and is adapted to high altitude vegetation particularly in the SMNP. Thus, it lives in areas with different habitats compared to other ibex species occurring in the other regions of the world (Nievergelt, 1981; Fiorenza, 1983; Yalden & Largen, 1992).**

The local legend tells the Walia arrived in the Simien Mountains carrying the praying books of Kidus Yared, who is the famous saint reputed for creating the Ethiopian Orthodox Church notes (Pers. com. with the local community and park staff, Nievergelt 1981). Walia ibex's home range inside the SMNP ranges in the west from Buiytras and Adarmaz to the southeastern part of Sebatminch i.e. Kossoch and Zakilita areas, covering an area less than 100km2. This area is located in 3 Woredas of the North Gondar

Zone of Amhara Regional State namely Janamora, Debark, and Adarkay. The area is characterized by huge gorges and valleys, both of which carve out steep and ragged cliffs, with the Walia ibex inhabiting the high cliffs that rise above 2900m to 4400m asl. The vegetation is a mixture of afro-alpine woods, heath, and high montane vegetation of festuca grassland as well as heathlands of Erica arboria and with giant lobelia, and mosses.

Identification of suitable habitats is an essential step to ensure sustainable conservation of species such as Walia ibex (Calgary, 2003). Ibexes, in general, prefer areas with steep slopes and cliffs and avoid grasslands and flat hillsides (Feng et al., 2007). Behavioural responses are key to understanding animal–habitat interactions; the way individuals obtain food, seek shelter, escape from predators, find mates, and care for the young can provide clues to the effect of disturbances (Hickman et al., 1993).

Walia ibex is an outstanding rock climber on steep cliffs, and it prefers to live in mountainous areas and areas with low vegetation cover (Yalden & Largen, 1992; Hurni & Ludi, 2000).

Habitat preference models for a species can be used effectively in their conservation and management (Krausman & Morrison, 2003; Doswald et al., 2007). Such models provide information to determine the species' ecological niche through the relationship between observed species locations and habitat variables that restrict or drive their distribution (Hirzel & Le Lay, 2008). Factors such as competition, predation, human disturbances and the type of habitat patches can affect the species' habitat preference. Habitat loss is a critical threat to most endangered species and the problem becomes significant in the SMNP where Walia ibex occurs.

## 1.3 THREATS TO THE SURVIVAL OF WALIA IBEX IN THE SIMIEN MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK.

**Walia ibex (Capra walie) is the most southerly distributed taxon of its genus, confined to a small area (95km2) in the SMNP. The species occupies a narrow habitat niche and is vulnerable to human disruptions such as habitat loss, poaching, settlement, disease and competition from livestock (Nievergelt, 1981).**

Despite the existence of national and regional legislation, the remoteness of the area coupled with the existence of people living within and outside of the park before its establishment as a conservation area makes legislation difficult to enforce. The increase in human population coupled with soil degradation through the cultivation of higher and steeper slope of land with time making the ecosystem extremely degraded. The high numbers of cattle and other domestic animals have an extremely devastating effect on the afro-alpine grassland ecosystem.

Human related activities are the main threats to the conservation of protected areas in most parts of the world (Blom et al., 2004). Simien Mountains National Park with its fragile ecosystem has faced problems, which are deeply rooted due to the presence of local residences and their related activities. The main problem Walia ibex in SMNP is habitat destruction by the local people affecting the survival of the species (Hurni and Ludi, 2000; Schwartz, 2009). Human-related activities have a profound impact on the survival of wildlife species leading to local extinction.

Intensive anthropogenic activities mostly caused as a result of farming, livestock grazing, fuel wood collection and timber extraction in the park have been the main problems and contributed to the decline of wildlife in general and Walia ibex in particular. The area has been affected by immigrants in the last decades (Hurni et al., 1987). Villages are increasing in number and the pressure through settlement and cultivation is still becoming a severe conservation problem (UNEP, 2011). Local people kill Walia ibex for its meat, skin and horns (Nievergelt, 1981; Debonnet et al., 2006; Schwartz, 2009), and disturb the animal in its previous key habitats around Silki, Kidus Yared and Ras Dejen areas. Consequently, they are locally extinct in all these localities.

A study conducted by the Park and AWF in 2024 indicated that poaching has contributed the highest percentage, of the decline of the Walia ibex population in the park in recent years. Poaching is done mainly for food and traditional medicine using firearms and snares. The finding of the above study showed that, poachers target both sexes but they mostly preferred the males due to high amount of meat for food and huge horns for medicinal purposes. Furthermore, the park's annual reports indicated a decline in patrolling efforts as a result of COVID-19 in 2020 and the civil war in Northern Ethiopia during 2020/2022, both contributed for the increasing of illegal activities in the Park.

The settlements in the Simien Mountains are concentrated in small villages and mountain communities on the different volcanic plateaus. The settlements reach up to an altitude of 3,800 meters and the steepness of the slope terrain, including altitudes up to 3,900 m, is used as farmland (barley and wheat). The farming system is subsistence. The subsistence farming system concentrates on a mixed cultivation of cereals and pulses, as well as keeping livestock, with highly adapted traditional technology (Endalkachew, 2011).

Currently a total of 270 households reside in the park (See Appendix II) and this raise serious park management issues like; gathering resources can disrupt local ecosystems, deforestation and soil erosion may increase, increased risk of human-wildlife conflict (e.g., crop raiding, livestock predation) and air and water quality may decline due to domestic or agricultural activity. People may unintentionally bring plants or animals that harm native species. Together with this a number of Churched (see Appendix III) and sacred sites exist in the park. Which attract outsiders and Sick people for "Tebel" Holy water in total all this add

up to increased number of people roaming in the wildlife habitat.

The effects of livestock grazing on different ecosystems have been well-documented Livestock grazing has a complex effect on the biotic and abiotic components, High grazing pressure by herbivore livestock usually causes the decline of wildlife habitat quality (Alemu and Tesfaye, 2015; Abebe et. el, 2024). A study conducted in the SMNP in 2015 indicated that, there were an estimated 269,935 head of livestock grazing in the SMNP.

An estimated 1.3 TLU's per hectare occurred in SMNP, almost three times higher than the recommended 0.5 TLU's per hectare for highland ecosystems (Kinahan, and Laurenson, 2015). Overgrazing can lead to the loss of native vegetation, soil compaction, and erosion. This can alter the structure and composition of plant communities, reducing biodiversity. Trampling by livestock can compact soil, reducing water infiltration and increasing runoff. Bare, compacted soil is more prone to erosion, especially on slopes. Grazing can give invasive plant species a competitive edge, especially if native plants are selectively grazed. Livestock can also spread seeds of invasive species. Grazing may compete with wild herbivores for food and manure runoff can contaminate water sources with nutrients, pathogens, and could create a suitable condition for disease transmission to wildlife populations.

The distribution of Walia ibex in the SMNP has shifted towards the east since the 1970s, and intensified use of the park for livestock grazing has contributed significantly to such changes in Walia ibex distribution (Hurni & Ludi, 2000). Low efficiency of wildlife habitat protection is the main

conservation problem in the park (Wakjira, 2003; Ludi, 2005). Thus, Walia ibex prefers areas with little **or no disturbances and occupies the most remote and inaccessible habitats (Hurni & Ludi, 2000). Simien Mountains National Park is heavily affected by livestock grazing, fuel wood collection and timber cutting, and crop cultivation (Hurni & Ludi, 2000; Ludi, 2005. Masresha, 2019).**

Since Walia ibex is survives in one area and no specimens are in captivity for captive breeding purposes anywhere in the world, this species is extremely vulnerable to diseases and other threats in wild conditions. There is a risk of disease transmission from livestock (e.g., foot and mouth disease (FMD), peste de petit ruminants (PPR), contagious caprinae pleuropneumonia (CCCP), and skin diseases like sarcoptic mange. Livestock diseases may decimate the population in a matter of few days and could rapidly drive the Walia ibex to extinction.

Peste des petits ruminants (PPR) is an acute, contagious, and frequently fatal disease of sheep and goats, caused by a morbilli virus related to the viruses that cause Rinderpest in cattle (RP), human measles, and canine distemper. The disease is characterised by fever, ocular and nasal discharges, oral erosions, bronchopneumonia and diarrhoea. Its introduction into Ethiopia in the early 1990s was marked by occurrence of a major epidemic, which took several years to extend across the country. In some areas periodic epidemics still occur. In other areas where the disease has been experienced over a number of years (it is endemic) the disease may be less obvious when it occurs because of the immune status of flocks from exposure to wild virus or vaccination. Clinical identification can be difficult in endemic areas. Some wild artiodactyl species are also susceptible to PPR disease but there is no evidence to suggest that disease is maintained in these populations without concurrent infections in local sheep or goats.

Sarcoptic mange in goats is a highly contagious skin condition caused by the mite Sarcoptes scabieicaprae. Intense itching, crusting, and hair loss characterize the disease.  Crusty lesions that start on the head and neck, and can spread to the rest of the body. Sarcoptic mange is transmitted by direct contact with an infected animal. The mite can also survive for a variable time off the host, so environmental transmission is possible. Since an extensive grazing is taking place in the Walia habitat by domestic stocks the risk of transmission to the Walia ibex population is high.

The issue of climate change is increasingly becoming important in wildlife management, as recurrent droughts are becoming a greater concern in the north and south-eastern parts of the country. Reduced rainfall has resulted in considerable impacts on wildlife, livestock and humans. Drought can result in reduced vegetation quantity and quality, resulting in wildlife migrating, adapting forage preferences or dying from starvation.

## 1.4 POPULATION STATUS AND DISTRIBUTION OF WALIA IBEX

The Walia ibex numbered 150 - 300 individuals between 1966 - 1969, increase slowly until 1983 when there were possibly more than 500 individuals, and then decreasing again during the period of civil unrest during the early 1990s (Nievergelt, 2012). During the civil unrest the area was a strategic military site as result more Walia ibex were killed by the armed forces and community without any control, which caused a drastic, declined in population. In 1996 the population was estimated at 200 - 250 individuals but it subsequently increased reaching about 500 individuals in 2004 (Geberemedhin and Grubb, 2008). This increase in population was as result of conservation effort of the government after the end of the civil unrest. In addition, to the inclusion of Limalimo' and Mesareria wildlife reserves into SMNP, the population size of Walia ibex increased to 623 individuals (Debonnet et al., 2006). Walia ibex counts have been done at least twice a year in recent times. The population size has increased slightly, estimated to be 745 individuals during the 2009 count (Falch and Keiner, 2000).

In 2012, according to SMNP Park's count, the population of Walia ibex was estimated between 800 - 850 individuals. Nevertheless, the validity of this number is yet to be confirmed applying rigorous scientific research.

| Census year | Ibexes counted | Trend (r in %) |
|---|---|---|
| **Desalegn Ejigu 2009-2011** | 752 | Taken as a baseline |
| **AWF-SMNP 2019- Dry** | 619 | -28.44 |
| **AWF-SMNP 2019- Wet** | 645 | 4.20 |
| **AWF-SMNP2020- Wet** | 691 | 7.13 |
| **AWF-SMNP 2021- Dry** | 601 | -13.02 |
| **AWF-SMNP 2022- Wet** | 361 | -39.93 |
| **Re-assessment 2023** | 319 | -11.63 (-46.92 from 2021 dry season census) |
| **This survey (Dry, 2024)** | 306C | -4.08 |

***Table 1.*** *Population status of Walia ibex (Source: Park Record and AWF, Census result 2024)*

However, recent counts indicated a gradual decrease. Nevertheless, a radical decline in population size occurred since 1996 in which only about 200 individuals of Walia Ibexes were counted in the Park (Ejigu, et. al., 2018). Moreover, poaching from the local people and habitat destruction had driven the remaining Walia ibex population to shift to the east and south-western part of the Park (Shackleton, 1997; Nievergelt, 1998). As a result, in 1996, SMNP was inscribed on the list of World Heritage Sites in danger (Falch and Keiner, 2000).

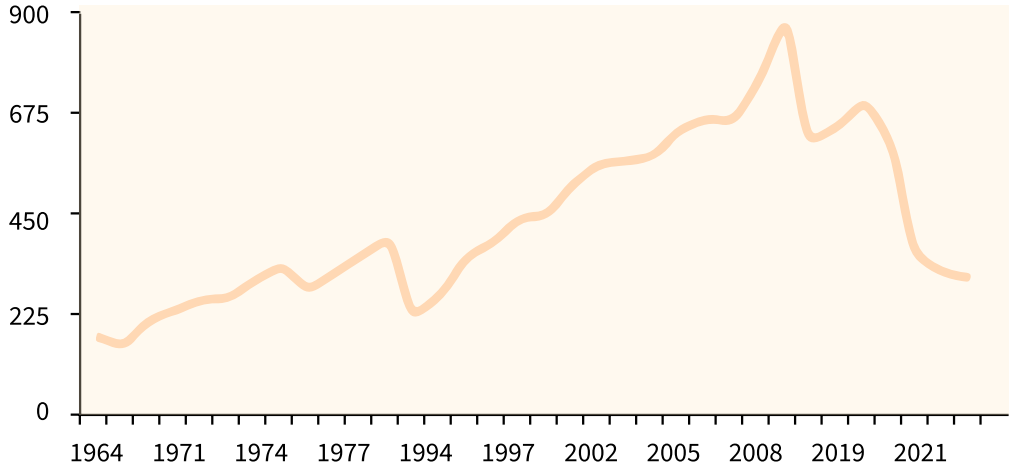


***Figure 1.*** *Population trend of Walia ibex from 1964 – 2024 Source: Alemayehu, (2012) & Park & AWF Records, (2024)*

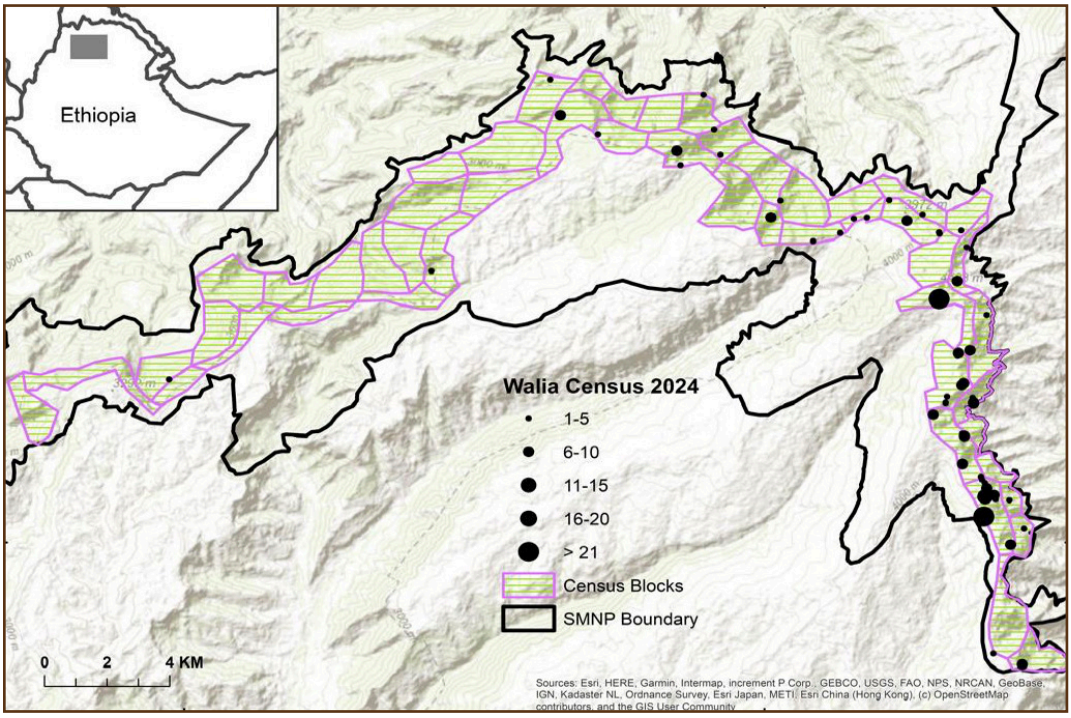


***Figure 2.*** *Recent Walia ibex distribution showing population shift to Southeast of the park (Source: Park & AWF Records, (2024).*

It is important to monitor population trends of a species in order to establish the population is stable, declining or increasing over time (Blom et al., 2004), and detecting population changes is of high priority in order to take appropriate conservation measures (Nievergelt, 1981). Nevertheless, additional work is required to ensure the sustainable conservation of Walia ibex by involving the local community in particular and other concerned stakeholders at large.

# 2. POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE CONSERVATION OF WALIA IBEX

## 2.1. THE CONSTITUTION OF THE FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) Constitution of FDRE, 1995 states that; Government and all Ethiopian citizens shall have the duty to protect the country's natural endowment, historical sites and objects. Government shall have the duty, to the extent of its resources permit, to support the development of the arts, science and technology.

**It also states that:**

*"The State shall ensure that ecological balance is maintained and, by ensuring the conservation and development of natural resources, particularly land, water, forest, and wildlife, it shall guarantee their utilization for the benefit of the working people. The state shall ensure that human settlement patterns correspond to the distribution of natural resources in order to create favourable conditions for development. Article 10/1" (Constitution of FDRE, 1995). The Constitution also states "Ethiopians have the duty to protect and conserve nature and natural resources, especially to develop forest and to protect and care for soil and water resources. Article 55/3."*

**(Constitution of FDRE, 1995). Article 92/1-13 of the Constitution of FDRE, (1995) on the Environmental Objectives states that:**

- Government shall endeavour to ensure that all Ethiopians live in a clean and healthy environment.
- The design and implementation of programmes and projects of development shall not damage or destroy the environment.
- People have the right to full consultation and to the expression of views in the planning and implementations of environmental policies and projects that affect them directly.
- Government and citizens shall have the duty to protect the environment.

## 2.2. ETHIOPIA'S 10 YEARS DEVELOPMENT PLAN: A PATHWAY TO PROSPERITY 2010 -2020

According to the Ethiopia's 10 Years Development Plan the main focus area of the environment and climate change is ensuring sustainable development by developing, enriching, maintaining and protecting the country's natural environment, forests, wildlife and other biodiversity resources, and also through ensuring sustainable utilization as well as maintenance of healthy ecosystem interactions.

The principal objectives of the environment and climate change plan are to identify invasive foreign species and, through research, substantially mitigate the damage they cause; collect and preserve biodiversity and genetic resources; reduce the amount of sectorial greenhouse gas emissions; and strengthen the development and protection of forests, the ecosystem as well as the wildlife.

The following targets have been laid out to achieve the objectives of the plan in the areas of environment and climate change for the coming ten years (2020/21- 2029/30):

## 2.3 THE WILDLIFE DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND STRATEGY

The Ethiopian government formulated a wildlife development and protection policy and strategy in tune with the objective reality of the country, and the existing international natural resources development and protection principles (FDRE Wildlife Policy, 2005). The objective of the policy is to arrest the decline of wild animal populations and to enable the country to realise the maximum benefit from the sub-sector. Thereby, creating a conducive environment whereby the country's wildlife and their habitats are protected and developed in a sustainable manner, and to enable the sector to play an important role in the economic development of the country.

Accordingly, it has become essential to produce viable policy and strategy to protect and properly develop the country's wildlife resources for posterity, support the country's economy though the revenue generated from wildlife conservation and avert the looming danger on the nation's wildlife resources, by establishing a participatory and sustainable wildlife development, and put into effect the international wildlife conventions and agreements.

The EFDR Wildlife Policy and Strategy (2005) for the conservation of endemic threatened wildlife give special attention to the protection and conservation of threatened and endemic species. The specific strategies highlighted are:

- **In situ conservation of threatened and endemic species will be undertaken by conducting relevant studies on the taxonomy, biology, population status and distribution of wildlife species.**
- **Studies will also be made to identify the root causes of population decline of the country's endemic wildlife and appropriate measures will be taken to address the problems.**
- **Facilitating favourable conditions to translocate threatened wildlife to protected areas or to facilities where ex-situ conservation may take place.**

## 2.4 ETHIOPIAN WILDLIFE PROCLAMATION

Under the proclamation No. 575/2008 of the People's Representatives Council to provide for the establishment of the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority, it states: "Ethiopia possesses diverse, rare and endemic species of wildlife which are of great value to tourism, education and science; it is necessary to undertake appropriate conservation and development of wildlife for its sustainable use; by halting the ever growing wildlife threatening conditions and enable the country to obtain economic and social benefits from its wildlife resource, it has become necessary to strengthen the sub-sector in accordance with the current global development utilization and conservation standard." Following this, under Article 24 of the Council of Ministers Regulations No.163/2008, which provisioned for wildlife development, conservation and utilisation, no person is allowed to hunt species listed in Table 10 of the regulations, including Walia ibex, except with a special hunting license acquired in accordance with Article 22 of the regulations. The same regulation also prohibit unlawful possession of wildlife and wildlife products:

This Regulation of the Council of Ministers designates the Simien Mountains National Park in the Amhara Regional State and provides with respect to its administration and boundaries. The Ethiopian Wildlife Development and Conservation Authority shall develop, administer and protect the Park from illegal acts through the Park's office. An advisory committee is established. This committee shall, among other things, advise the office of the Park (also on enhancement of community participation) and prepare annual plans for the Park. In addition to the prohibited activities provided for under Article 5(1) of the Wildlife Development, Conservation and Utilization Council of Ministers Regulation No. 163/2008, it shall also be prohibited to:

1. *Enter the park holding poisonous substances;*
2. *Arbitrarily dispose of trash in the park;*
3. *Erect buildings or other constructions, and;*
4. *Entering the park with domestic animal, a snare or a hunting weapon.*

The Authority may, in consultation with the local administrations adjoining the Park, determine the rate of fine to be imposed for the transgression of domestic animals into the Park, by taking into account the financial capacity of the local communities. Also Article 353 sub-article 3 of the criminal code states that killing of endemic species of the country might cause imprisonment of the criminal up to 12 years.

# 2.5 INTERNATIONAL LAWS AND TREATIES

### 2.5.1 CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (CBD)

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is an international treaty adopted at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. It aims to conserve biodiversity, ensure the sustainable use of natural resources, and promote the fair sharing of benefits derived from genetic resources.

This convention obliges member states to establish a system of protected areas; develop guidelines for the selection, establishment, and management of protected areas; promote the protection of ecosystems, natural habitats, and the maintenance of viable populations of species in natural surroundings; and promote the integration of sustainable utilisation of natural resources in national strategies. Ethiopia became a signatory to the convention in 1993.

The main objectives of the CBD are:

- *Conservation of Biological Diversity: Protect ecosystems, species, and genetic diversity.*

- *Sustainable Use of Biodiversity: Promote responsible resource use that does not lead to long-term depletion.*

Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits: Ensure that benefits from genetic resources (such as medicinal plants) are shared fairly, especially with indigenous communities.

The CBD works alongside other agreements to protect rare and endangered species from exploitation. Establishing national parks and supporting conservation breeding, habitat restoration, and reintroduction programs. Encouraging biotechnological research to preserve rare species. Recognizing the role of indigenous and local communities in conservation efforts.

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to guide global efforts for biodiversity conservation after 2020 has passed the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) issued an international strategy and adopted the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15) in December 2022 in Montreal, Canada under the name Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)

**Key Aspects of the Post-2020 GBF:**

Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) aims to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 and ensure ecosystem restoration by 2050

**Long-term Goals (for 2050):**

- Ecosystems Integrity: Maintain, enhance, and restore biodiversity.
- Sustainable Use: Ensure biodiversity is used sustainably.
- Benefit Sharing: Fair and equitable sharing of genetic resources.
- Financial & Implementation Support: Increase funding and capacity-building efforts.

**Action-oriented Targets (for 2030):**

- Protecting 30% of the planet ("30x30" Target): Protect at least 30% of the world's land and oceans by 2030.
- Restoring 30% of degraded ecosystems.

### 2.5.2 UNSCO WORLD HERITAGE CONVENTION

The World Heritage Convention (WHC), formally known as the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, is an international treaty adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1972. It aims to identify, protect, and preserve cultural and natural heritage sites around the world that are of outstanding value to humanity.

Key Objectives of the Convention are: Preservation of Heritage: Ensure the protection of cultural and natural heritage deemed of global significance for future generations; International Cooperation: Encourage international collaboration to safeguard heritage sites, and Financial Support: Provide funding and technical assistance to countries in need for the conservation of these sites.

The Simien Mountains National Park was inscribed as the world heritage site (WHS) in 1978. But, as the protection and the future of the park resource become in great danger it was listed as World Heritage Site in Endangered for 21 years from 1996 to 2017. With a concerted effort of the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority and the Regional Conservation Bureaux after meeting the benchmarks set by IUCN mission the property was removed from the world heritage endangered list in 2018.

### 2.5.3 CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA (CITES)

This convention of 1973 obliges member states to regulate international trade in endangered species of fauna and flora through international cooperation. EWCA is the responsible management authority of CITES in Ethiopia. The Walia ibex is listed in CITES Appendix II, meaning that international trade in the species is regulated to endure it doesn't endanger its survival in the wild.

### 2.5.4 IUCN ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

The Walia ibex is currently classified, as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List; the IUCN Red List of threatened species is the world's most comprehensive information source on the global extinction risk status of animal and plant species.

Currently, the Walia ibex is assessed as Vulnerable (VU) under criterion D due to its small population size, which currently is substantially smaller than 1,000 but is now greater than 250 mature individuals. Weakening of current protection could again cause an influx of people, habitat destruction, and poaching (Ejigu, 2020).

**1965 – Unknown (N/A)**

**1986 – Endangered (E)**

**1988 – Endangered (E)**

**1994 – Endangered (E)**

**1996 - Critically Endangered (CR)**

**2008 – Endangered (EN)**

**2020 – Vulnerable (VU)**

Since no captive population is kept nowhere in the world, the IUCN recommends capturing a few individuals to form the nucleus of a captive breeding group.

# 3. VISION AND GOALS

## 3.1 METHODOLOGY

The main threat of  Walia ibex is human encroachment, habitat loss, livestock grazing and poaching. The population has been fluctuating in the past.  However, currently it is highly decreasing as a result of those negative impacts. The Action Plan for Walia Ibex is aiming at addressing these challenges for sustainable conservation and management of the species in its natural range. It emphasizes the need to develop and implement appropriate strategies to tackle the impacts of the threats on Walia and its habitats.

The Action Plan calls upon conservation agencies and other stakeholders to implement national conservation initiatives and call up on stakeholders' participation by organising a consultative workshop to get the needed information to fill the gap. It identifies existing management problems to be critical in minimizing the negative impacts on Walia ibex population and habitat. Lastly, the Action Plan further emphasizes the need to conduct further research on Walia ecology and population dynamics within its ranges in Ethiopia, as well as ecological needs of Walia within the park and dispersal areas for effective management of the species.

**Vision:** The vision sets out a common understanding between stakeholders and managers on the Walia ibex conservation towards which, all management action focus.

**What:** The action plan establishes clear management objectives that are agreed by both stakeholders and managers and that, if achieved, will ensure the sustainable conservation of Walia ibex in the country will be fulfilled.

**How:** The plan provides a rationale and clear, unambiguous guidance on the implementation of the specific management actions that managers will need to implement over the timeframe of the action plan in order to achieve the objectives.

**When and Who:** The plan provides a series of detailed action plan designed to turn the management of the species into participatory, time bound and realistic activities on the ground. The action plan breaks down the implementation of each action into a series of discrete activities, and set out the timeframe for the implementation of each activity and who is responsible for its completion.

**Results:** The Action Plan provides a framework for monitoring both the impacts (positive and negative) resulting from action plan implementation, and includes “milestones” for measuring action plan implementation.

## 3.2 VISION

Secure viable Walia ibex population and double its present population by 2035 through the preservation and restoration of its habitat and halting threats and maintaining the ecological integrity through the participation and collaboration of all stakeholders.

## 3.3 GOAL

The existing Walia ibex populations remain safe and secured, with the existing genetic diversity maintained, and their number significantly increased and ensuring the long-term survival and recovery in its natural habitat

# 4. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Existing Walia ibex population and potential Afroalpine habitats protected from degradation, and restored by strengthening law enforcement.

Undertake effective scientific researches and ecological monitoring for better understanding of the Walia ibex ecology to ensure its long-term survival of the species.

Throughout the Walia ibex range improve co-existence with local communities and implement effective disease management.

Strengthen stakeholders' collaboration and participation to enhance Walia ibex conservation.

Improve and implement effective public awareness and advocacy for Walia ibex conservation and the general biodiversity therein.

Develop a mechanism for the development eco-tourism there by develop a fair share benefits across communities.

Explore the feasibility of semi-in situ Conservation Programme of Walia ibex within its historical range.

Establish a sustainable financial mechanism for Walia ibex conservation.

Establish a Walia ibex Conservation & Management Technical Working Group (WCTWG) for follow-ups and technical assistant.

***Vision: Secure viable Walia ibex population and double its present population by 2035 through the preservation and restoration of its habitat and maintaining the ecological integrity through the participation and collaboration of communities and stakeholders***

| Strategic Objective | Actions | Actors | Timeframe | Key performance indicator |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1. Existing Walia ibex population and potential Afroalpine habitats protected from degradation, and restored by strengthening law enforcement.** | 4.1.1 Increase the number of patrol units and outposts found in the park by locating new outposts in a suitable area for Walia protection and other park activities. | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs & Regional & local Authorities | 1- 5 years | - Increases number of Patrol unit<br><br>- Increased number of outpost |
| | 4.1.2 Increase effective daily patrol coverage in Walia ranges | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs & Regional & local Authorities | 1- 5 years | - Area coverage by Km2 |
| | 4.1.3 Equip law enforcement department and rangers with the appropriate and necessary logistics and technologies (vehicle, EarthRanger, SMART, Drone, GPS, communication equipment). | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs & Regional & local Authorities | 1- 5 years | - Area coverage by Km2 |

| Strategic Objective | Actions | Actors | Timeframe | Key performance indicator |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 4.1.4 Establish and undertake anti-poaching intelligence system together with community partners. | EWCA, SMNP, Regional & local Authorities | 2 – 3 years | - Number of intelligence team established |
| | 4.1.5. Establish environmental ad-hoc Walia ibex-related crime investigation unit | EWCA, SMNP, Regional & local Authorities | 1- 3 years | - Walia crime investigation conducted |
| | 4.1.6 Conduct law enforcement awareness creation programmes to the Woreda and Regional law enforcement bodies like police and local militia | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs & Regional & local Authorities | 1 - 2 years | - Number of judiciaries addressed |
| | 4.1.7 provide regular rangers on rangers-based monitoring training like the use of SMART, EarthRanger, Camera trap and prepare rangers based monitoring plan and familiarize ranges with their operation. | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs & Regional & local Authorities | 1 - 2 years | - Number of rangers trained |

| Strategic Objective | Actions | Actors | Timeframe | Key performance indicator |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 4.1.8 Enhance cooperation between local communities and regional and local law enforcement bodies to tackle illegal trade on Walia ibex body parts and their products and raise awareness to the general public in relation to penalties of wildlife crime. | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, Regional & local Authorities, local Community | 2-3 years | - Information and cooperation effort provided |
| | 4.1.9 Start negotiation with the church leaders how to decrease impact in side the park. | EWCA, SMNP, Regional & local Authorities, local Community and the Synod | 1-3 years | - Number of negotiations and rate of decrease on impact in side the park. |
| | 4.1.10 Establish a taskforce to reduce impact with the regional and Woreda Synod on how to reduce impact churches in the park. | EWCA, SMNP, Regional & local Authorities, local Community and the Synod | 2-5 years | - Multi taxed taskforce formed activity enhanced |
| | 4.1.11 Assess efficacy of judiciary and law enforcement authorities and collate information regarding gaps in the enforcement of conservation law and policy for further improvement. | EWCA, SMNP, Regional & local Authorities, local Community and the Synod | 2-5 years | - Multi taxed taskforce formed activity enhanced |

| Strategic Objective | Actions | Actors | Timeframe | Key performance indicator |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2. Undertake effective scientific researches and ecological monitoring for better understanding of the Walia ibex ecology to ensure its long-term survival. of the species.** | 4.2.1. Implement scientific and advanced ecological monitoring systems supported by modern technology for effective & regular Walia ibex monitoring | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, Universities | 1-2 years | - Number of Scientific research and ecological monitoring system |
| | 4.2.2 Develop regular ecological monitoring protocol and identify key areas of Walia ibex habitat for intensive applied research. | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, Universities | 1 year | - Ecological monitoring protocol produced |
| | 4.2.3. Provide regular capacity building trainings for park experts on various research & monitoring methodologies | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, Universities | 1- 3 Years | - Number of Capacity building training provided to park staff |
| | 4.2.4 Gather, interpret and disseminate information on disease hotspots that threaten the survival of Walia ibex populations. | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, Universities | 2- 5 Years | - Number of information disseminated and vaccination conducted |

| Strategic Objective | Actions | Actors | Timeframe | Key performance indicator |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 4.2.5. Organize a regular reporting mechanism on the result of Walia ibex monitoring & research findings to Stakeholders on regular bases. | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, Universities | 1-5 years | - Monitoring and research findings communicated widely |
| | 4.2.6. Develop database, and data collection protocols, to Collect all data on Walia ibex 's census, monitoring findings and research out puts | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, Universities | 2-3 years | - Data collection protocol established and data base on Walia ibex exist. |
| | 4.2.7. Conduct vaccination campaign of shoats around the Walia ibex habitat to prevent transmission of disease like PPR, FMD. | EWCA, SMNP, Regional & local Authorities, local Community and the Synod | 2-5 years | - Multi taxed taskforce formed activity enhanced |
| | 4.1.11 Assess efficacy of judiciary and law enforcement authorities and collate information regarding gaps in the enforcement of conservation law and policy for further improvement. | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, Universities, Regional & | 1-4 years | - 70% of domestic animals living around the park are vaccinated form all diseases that threaten the survival of Walia ibex. |

| Strategic Objective | Actions | Actors | Timeframe | Key performance indicator |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 4.2.8 Assess impacts of climate change on Walia ibex survival and Prepare site-specific climate change mitigation strategy in Walia ibex range | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, Regional & local Authorities & Universities | 1-3 years | - Assessment report available on the impact of climate change |
| | 4.2.9. Scaling up best practices of available scientific and indigenous knowledge to mitigate impacts of climate change | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, Regional & local Authorities, Universities & local Community | 2-5 years | - Climate change impact mitigating mechanisms implemented. |
| **3. Throughout the Walia ibex range improve coexistence with local communities.** | 4.3.1 Provide capacity building trainings for community stakeholders on conservation compatible rural development projects. | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, Regional & local Authorities | 1-3 years | - Number of capacity building training provided to community stakeholders |
| | 4.3.2 Develop conservation compatible alternative livelihood strategies for local communities around the park like beekeeping, poultry, animal fattening, | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, Regional & local Authorities | 1-8 years | - Number of conservation compatible livelihood projects initiated |
| | 4.3.3 work towards ensuring equitable benefit sharing mechanisms among the local communities living closer to Walia habitats | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, Regional Authorities & community partners | 1-3 years | - Number benefit sharing mechanism established |

| Strategic Objective | Actions | Actors | Timeframe | Key performance indicator |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 4.3.4. Develop community bye law to protect Walia ibex using the communities' cultural norms. | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, Regional Authorities & community partners | 1-3 years | - Community bye laws developed and implemented |
| **4. Strengthen all stakeholders' collaboration and participation to enhance Walia ibex conservation.** | 4.4.1 Build the capacity of the decision makers at the national, regional, and local levels for conservation of Walia ibex and its habitat. | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, Regional & local Authorities & Universities | 2-5 year | - Capacity building training at all level provided |
| | 4.4.2 Establish buffer zones around the park area through promoting community participation and partnership | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, Regional & local Authorities & local communities | 2-4 years | - Effective buffer Zone established for Walia protection |
| | 4.4.3. Strength the park and Kebele advisory committee for successful park & community collaborative operations | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, Regional & local Authorities & local communities | 1-2 years | - Number of Kebele- Park advisory group established and the number of meeting held |
| | 4.4.4. Establish strong Walia conservation advisory committee at local, Woreda, Zonal, Regional, and Federal levels | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, Regional & local Authorities & local communities | 1-3 years | - Number of Advisory Committee at all level |

| Strategic Objective | Actions | Actors | Timeframe | Key performance indicator |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 4.4.5. Conduct a community scouts election (Walia Ambassadors) and conduct training at each Kebele bordering the park and assign community scouts with the park rangers for patrol and monitoring activity. | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, Regional & local Authorities & local communities | 2-4 years | - Number of community scouts elected and training provided |
| | 4.4.6 Develop MoU with each kebele/community groups to regularly evaluate community collaboration. | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, Regional & local Authorities & local communities | 1-3 years | - Number of MoU developed at each Kebele for evaluation of effective collaboration |
| | 4.4.7. Develop a mechanism that communities have the means to provide swift and effective action in the aftermath of Walia ibex killing | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, Regional & local Authorities & local communities | 2-4 years | - Evaluate the mechanism develop for effective response from communities living around |
| | 4.4.8 Provide training for park staff and local communities on fire detection and reporting mechanism also, Provide park staff and community the necessary fire fighting equipment. | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, Regional & local Authorities & local communities | 1-3 years | - number of training for fire detection and reporting mechanism |

| Strategic Objective | Actions | Actors | Timeframe | Key performance indicator |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **5. Improve and implement effective public awareness and advocacy for Walia ibex conservation and the general biodiversity therein.** | 4.5.1. Increase the use of Mainstream media, Radio and TV (e.g. Amhara Media Network, Ethiopia Radio, FM Radios TV, etc.) to promote Walia ibex as the flagship species for the conservation of Afroalpine habitat. | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, Regional Authorities, universities & National, Regional and private media outlets | 1-7 years | - Number of media communication information provided |
| | 4.5.2. Increase the use of posters, leaflets, video, pictures, and music and theatre groups through education and awareness programs. | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, Regional Authorities, universities & Education Bureaux | 2-5 years | _Number times type of posters, leaflets, video, pictures, and music prepared and disseminated to the general public. |
| | 4.5.3. Establish a national Walia ibex day and events to increase awareness of the conservation of Walia ibex. | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, Regional Authorities, Universities, Education Bureaux and Media outlets | 1-2 years | -Number of Wali's Day prepared awareness provided. |
| | 4.5.4. Increase attendance at public events to raise awareness for Walia ibex conservation | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs | 1 – 5 years | - Number of public events attended and information on Walia disseminated |
| | 4.5.5. Develop extra curricular school nature/ environment clubs in schools around the park and in the region. | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, Regional & local Authorities, Universities, Education Bureaux | 2-5 years | - Number of Nature Clubs established |

| Strategic Objective | Actions | Actors | Timeframe | Key performance indicator |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 4.5.6 Continue to participate in a wide range of meetings and stakeholder interest groups to disseminate information about Walia conservation. | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs | 1-5 years | - Meeting attended and information disseminated to interested groups. |
| **4.6. Develop a mechanism for the development eco-tourism there by developing a fair share of benefits across communities.** | 4.6.1 Promote ecotourism activities that promote Walia ibex conservation and benefit communities and other stakeholders, e.g. community campsites and lodges, community crafts curio shops etc., in side the Park and surrounding areas | EWCA, SMNP, Regional & local Authorities, local Community, Tourism Bureaux, and Tour operators | 2-5 years | Number of eco-tourism related developed in side and out side the park. |
| | 4.6.2 Make the case, nationally and internationally, for the development ecotourism in the park and the region at large. | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, Regional & local Authorities, Universities, Media outlets and Tourism Bureaux | 1-5 years | - Number of efforts and actions done for the development of eco tourism Regional and Nationally |
| | 4.6.3 Strengthen the already existing tourist associations, e.g. guide, porter, cook associations, and provide interpretation skill training and respect to the byelaws as well as fair share of benefits from tourism. | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, Regional & local Authorities, Universities, Media outlets and Tourism Bureaux | 1-5 years | - Number of efforts and actions done for the development of eco tourism Regional and Nationally |

| Strategic Objective | Actions | Actors | Timeframe | Key performance indicator |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **4.7 Establish semi-insitu conservation programme of Walia ibex within its historical range.** | 4.7.1 Engage partner organisations in establishing semi-insitu conservation and reintroduction plans in suitable habitat | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, & IUCN | 4 - 5 years | - Contacted number of partner organisation to establish semi-insitu conservation initiatives |
| | 4.7.2 Identify source populations of Walia ibex for semi-insitu breeding programme | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, and Universities | 4 - 5 years | - Source of Walia population identified for semi insitu conservation |
| | 4.7.3. Carry out semen and ovaries collection from the Walia ibex and keeping them in at the Gene Bank for later artificial reproduction science | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, EBI and Universities | 4 - 5 years | - Number of semen and ovaries collection and deposited at Gen Bank |
| | 4.7.4 Ensure Semi-insitu breeding and reintroduction follow IUCN reintroduction guidelines | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, & IUCN | 4 - 5 years | - Success rate of semi-insitu breeding and reintroduction conducted |
| | 4.7.5. Monitor reintroduction success and individual animals for at least five years post release | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, & IUCN | 4 - 5 years | - Number of Monitoring conducted after Reintroduction |

| Strategic Objective | Actions | Actors | Timeframe | Key performance indicator |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **4.8. Establish & mobilize a sustainable financial mechanism for Walia ibex conservation.** | 4.8.1. Establish Walia ibex conservation trust fund | EWCA, SMNP &Partner NGOs, | 2 - 5 years | - Conservation trust fund established |
| | 4.8.2 Develop project proposal in collaboration with stakeholder to raise awareness on rural development projects and fund raising. | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, Regional and local governments, Universities | 2 - 5 years | - Various rural development project proposal developed and sent to potential supports |
| | 4.8.3. Establish bond/credit mechanism for the conservation of Walia ibex | EWCA, SMNP &Partner NGOs, and Financial Institutions | 3 - 7 years | - Bond/ Credit purchased as a source of sustainable financing |
| | 4.8.4. Establish Friends of Walia ibex conservation Regional and Nation movement | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, Regional and local governments, | 2 - 5 years | - Friend of Walia association established at all level |
| | 4.8.5. Work with companies/ corporations to contribute to the conservation of Walia ibex in their social corporate responsibility endeavours | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, & Companies/ Corporations | 2 - 5 years | - Number ocmpanies showed support based on their corporate social responsibility |
| | 4.8.6 Engage tourists and tour operators who are willing to provide support in the form of corporate social responsibility practices that benefit Walia ibex conservation. | EWCA, SMNP, Media outlets, Tourism Bureaux & Tour operators | 1 – 5 years | - tourists and tour operators engaged in providing support |

| Strategic Objective | Actions | Actors | Timeframe | Key performance indicator |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **4.9. Establish a Walia ibex Conservation & Management Technical Working Group (WCTWG) for follow-ups and technical assistant from interested Walia conservation groups and stakeholders.** | 4.9.1 Prepare annual performance monitoring plan incorporating members from All conservation organisations, and community representatives | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, Regional & local Authorities, | 1 - 5 years | - Contacted number of partner organisation to establish semi-insitu conservation initiatives |
| | 4.9.2 Compile and share data and information on Conservation and management issues and their implications to conservation partners through WCTWG. | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, Regional & local Authorities, Local Communities & Universities | 1-3 years | - Each year data and information on Conservation and management issues prepared and communicate |
| | 4.9.3 Develop an online database where information and reports (compiled biannually) by WCTWG and uploaded and analysed at a central point, e.g. EWCA Headquarters. | EWCA, SMNP, Partner NGOs, Regional & local Authorities, Local Communities & Universities | 1-2 years | - Monitor the effectiveness of online database base analysed for effectiveness. |

# 5. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WALIA IBEX CONSERVATION ACTION PLAN

**The implementation of the Walia ibex Conservation Action Plan requires a multi-stakeholder approach, integrating scientific research, habitat protection, law enforcement, and community participation.**

**Enforce existing wildlife protection laws to prevent poaching and habitat destruction. Increase patrols and surveillance in the Simien Mountains National Park, the primary habitat of the Walia ibex. Strengthen penalties for illegal activities, including hunting and habitat encroachment. Implementation of reclamation programmes to restore degraded habitat areas. Also preventing poaching and overgrazing by domestic livestock to reduce competition for food and habitat. Establish buffer zones and corridors to ensure genetic flow between populations.**

Promote alternative livelihood programs such as eco-tourism, sustainable agriculture, agro-forestry and beekeeping to reduce local dependence on natural resources. Involve local communities in conservation efforts through education, awareness, and benefit-sharing mechanisms. Support participatory planning to balance conservation with human needs.

Conduct regular population surveys to assess the status of the Walia ibex and monitor trends. Study genetic diversity to prevent inbreeding and loss of genetic viability. Implement disease-monitoring programs to mitigate potential threats from livestock.

Promote climate-smart conservation actions and assess climate-related risks by

developing adaptive management strategies towards the survival of the species are very important. Strengthen partnerships between government agencies, conservation organizations, and research institutions. Integrate the conservation plan into national and regional biodiversity strategies. Secure long-term funding and resources through grants, donations, trust fund, corporate and government support.

Establish clear indicators to measure progress and success. Conduct periodic reviews of the action plan and adapt strategies as needed. Publish findings and share best practices for wider conservation impact.

By implementing these actions, the Walia Ibex Conservation Action Plan aims to secure a thriving population of this endangered species while promoting ecological balance and community well-being in the Simien Mountains ecosystem.

The Walia ibex Conservation Action Plan 2026-2035 is only a tool and the implementations of actions on the ground are key to achieving the objectives. Therefore, there is need for a structure/governance to oversee this implementation and to monitor progress. Once the Action Plan is completed and approved by the EWCA management, it will be officially launched in the presence of stakeholders who will be invited to support its implementation. A Walia ibex Working Group, whose main responsibility will be to oversee the implementation of the Action Plan, will be established. The committee will comprise individuals from EWCA (Chair), AWF, GEF, KFW, EWNHS, the Ethiopian Institute of Biodiversity (EIB), and Universities working in the area. The Terms of Reference for the Walia ibex Technical Working Group are reflected in Appendix IV. It

is expected that the Technical Working Group will develop an annual work schedule to implement this Action Plan.

The establishment and progress of Walia Ambassadors, elders, religious leaders, the private sector, youth, and women's groups is vital and helps to strengthen community involvement and solicit support whenever needed, spreading the gospel of Walia Conservation in the Simien Mountains.

# 6. CONCLUSION

**The successful implementation of this Walia ibex Conservation Action Plan is crucial for ensuring the survival and long-term sustainability of the target species and its habitat. Through collaborative efforts involving government agencies, conservation organizations, local communities, and other stakeholders, we can address the key threats and challenges identified in this plan.**

Continuous monitoring, adaptive management, and capacity building will be essential in achieving the outlined objectives. Additionally, fostering public awareness and engagement will help create a sense of shared responsibility in conservation efforts.

While challenges may arise, this action plan provides a clear roadmap for guiding conservation initiatives. By remaining committed, resourceful, and adaptive, we can make a meaningful impact in protecting our country's Iconic and Flagship species the Walia ibex and contributing to broader biodiversity conservation goals in Ethiopia.

Hope this plan serve as a foundation for long-term conservation success, inspiring that future of biodiversity conservation and continue to benefit the nation for thriving and balanced ecosystem

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# 8.APPENDICES

## APPENDIX I

**Terms of Reference for the Walia Conservation Technical Working Group .**
**The draft Terms of Reference for the Ethiopian Walia Technical Working Group are as follows:**

- Review the Walia ibex Conservation Action Plan on a regular basis.
- Guide the implementation of this Walia ibex Conservation Action Plan.
- Review recent developments that pertain to Walia ibex conservation in Ethiopia.
- Set annual activity plans based on the National Walia ibex Action Plan for Walia conservation and review accordingly.
- Set up a framework to assess the effectiveness of conservation actions, including indicators for population trends, habitat quality, and community engagement.
- Schedule regular reviews and updates to the action plan based on monitoring results.
- Provide a detailed budget covering all aspects of the action plan.
- Identify potential funding sources, including government allocations, international grants, and private sector partnerships.
- Ensure alignment with national wildlife conservation laws and international agreements.
- Advocate for policy reforms if necessary to enhance conservation efforts.
- Identify potential risks to the success of the action plan, such as political instability, funding shortages, or climatic events.
- Develop mitigation strategies to address these risks.

## APPENDIX II

**Current Estimates of Households Residing in the SMNP (Source: Park office)**

| No. | Village Name | Kebele and Woreda | No. HHs | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Limalimo Abo | Debir /Debark | 27 | |
| 2. | Kebero | Miligbsa/Debark | 22 | |
| 3. | Michibegne | Adisgie/Debark | 33 | |
| 4. | Lay Debir/ Isilam Debir | Adebabaytsion/ Debark | 88 | |
| 5. | Mukewuha | Arginjona/Debark | 38 | |
| 6. | Kidane Bado | | 22 | |
| 7. | Tikur Gedel | | 23 | |
| 8. | Getabit | | 17 | |
| 9. | Tiya | Agedamiya/ Adiarkay | No data | |
| 10. | Daliaya | | No data | |
| 11. | Daliaya | Gich | 243 | Resettled in recent years |
| | Total Estimated | | 270 | |

## APPENDIX III

**Newly Constructed and Old Churches in and around SMNP (Source: Park office)**

| No. | List of Churches | Location | Status of the churches | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Arsiema Monastery | Limalimo/ Debark | New /2011 E.C Inside the park | • Used for Holy water<br>• A lot of houses are constructed<br>• Clearance of the forest is high for fuel wood and construction<br>• More than 100 Permanent and non-permanent religious followers (Hermits) in the area |

| No. | List of Churches | Location | Status of the churches | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Zebena Area | Zebena/ Debark | Inside the park New/2017 E.C | • Use of Holy water<br>• For any religious purpose |
| | Abasadukamba Monastery | Miligbsa / Debark | Inside the park, Old | |
| | Cheneek Medhanialem | Argin jona/ Debark | Inside the park, Old | • They used for Holy water<br>• Clearance of forests are high for fuel wood and construction<br>• More than 100 Permanent and non-permanent religious followers (Hermits) in the area<br>• Used of cliffs which is a Walia habitat. |
| | Abasadukaba Monastery | Atigba/ Janamora | Inside the park, Old | • They used the Walia habitat cliffs for their own purpose<br>• Used for Holy water |
| | Mateba Aregewen | Matiba/ Beyeda | New Buffer zone | • Highly influence Ethiopian wolf habitat |
| | Medhanialem | Abarie / Beyeda | New Buffer zone | • Highly influence Ethiopian wolf habitat |
| | Kiduse Yaride Monastry | Tiguna/ Beyeda | Old Buffer zone | • Highly influence Ethiopian wolf habitat |

## APPENDIX VI

**Walia Ibex Conservation Action Plan Consultation Workshop Participants; 7 – 8 February 2025, Gondar.**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Abebaw Abayneh | EFPA, ANRS, Bahir Dar |
| 2. | Abrham Mariye | EFPA, ANRS, Bahir Dar |
| 3. | Alebel Alemu | SMNP |
| 4. | Amanuel Ashgre | SMNP |
| 5. | Amdemariam Nigusse | EWCA |
| 6. | Aschalew Molla | N/ Gondar Culture & Tourism |
| 7. | Assrat Kassa | SMNP |
| 8. | Awoke Negash | Debark, Tourism |
| 9. | Ayalew Kassa | Debark Administration |
| 10. | Bayabil Mulatu | EWCA |
| 11. | Belayneh Abebe | AWF, Office SMNP |
| 12. | Belege Abebaw | Debark |
| 13. | Bewketu Alebachew | Debark, Tourism |
| 14. | Beza Dejen | Media, Reporter |
| 15. | Bezawork Afework (Dr) | Addis Ababa University |
| 16. | Bimirew Kassa | N/Gondar Zonal Administration |
| 17. | Brain May | AWF, Ethiopia office |
| 18. | Daniel Worku | EWCA |
| 19. | Deree Deksios | EWCA |
| 20. | Dereje Admassu | N/Gondar Environment |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 21. | Dessalegen Ejigu | Bahir Dar University |
| 22. | Desta Bedaso | EWCA |
| 23. | Desta Wanjero | EWCA |
| 24. | Efrem Wondie | SMNP |
| 25. | Endalkachew Siraw | SMNP |
| 26. | Fekade Regassa | EWCA |
| 27. | Fentaye Tillahun | N/Gondar Communication |
| 28. | Fiseha Kassaye | SMNP |
| 29. | Gashaw Gurimu (Dr) | Debark, University |
| 30. | Gebreael Asfaw | EWCA |
| 31. | Getachew Aseffa | (EWCP) Ethiopian Wolf Conservation |
| 32. | Gethanu Tassew | University of Gondar |
| 33. | Getinet Akalu | Debark, Tourism |
| 34. | Girma Eshete | Dinknesh Ethiopia |
| 35. | Habte Jebessa (Dr) | Addis Ababa University |
| 36. | Hanna Ayenew | Debark, Justice Office |
| 37. | Henok Seyum | ECJTA |
| 38. | Kassahun Nigusu | Debark, Tourism |
| 39. | Leykun Abune | EWCA former DG |
| 40. | Liule Birhan | N/Gondar Zonal Administration |
| 41. | Maru Biyadigilegne | SMNP Warden |
| 42. | Mekbebe Eshetu (Dr) | Wildlife Think-Tank |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 43 | Mekuria Zewde | University of Gondar |
| 44. | Mekwanint Kefle | EWCA |
| 45. | Mesfin Kenubih | AWF, Office SMNP |
| 46. | Mezgebe Sieum | EWCA |
| 47. | Misgana Amanu | EWCA |
| 48. | Mitiku G/micaeal | EWCA |
| 49. | Molla Andarge | SMNP Ranger |
| 50. | Mule Chekol | AWF |
| 51. | Nakachew Birelew | EWCA |
| 52. | Nigist Birhanu | SMNP |
| 53. | Peter Keilbruder | GITEC-IGIP GmbH, KFW |
| 54. | Philip Muruthi (Dr) | AWF, African Regional Office, Nairobi |
| 55. | Shegaw Tesema | Janamora Administration |
| 56. | Sisay Solomon | SMNP |
| 57. | Solomon Mekoninn | EWCA |
| 58. | Tadesse Yigzaw | SMNP |
| 59. | Temesgen Yadeta | EWCA |
| 60. | Tesfu | EBI |
| 61. | Tibebu Yelemfirhat | AWF, Ethiopia office |
| 62. | Tilahun Teklu | EWCA |
| 63. | Tilahun Endale | AWF, Office SMNP |
| 64. | Tilaye G/egziabeher | Debark |
| 65. | Yayehi Fantiye | Media, Reporter |
| 66. | Yirdaw Sisay | N/Gondar Communication |
| 67. | Zelealem Tefera (Dr) | Consultant |