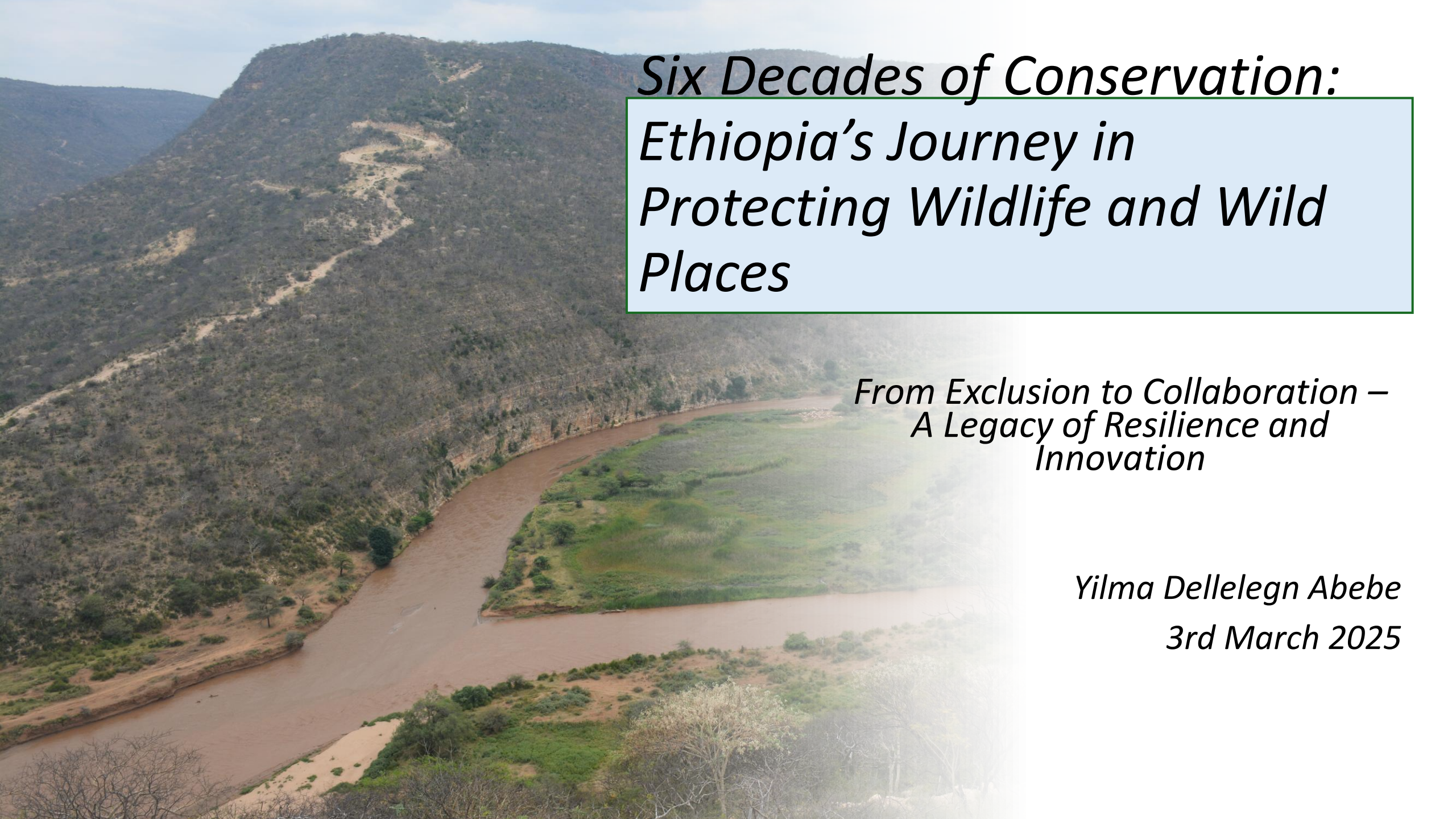


The background image is a landscape photograph showing a wide, muddy-brown river flowing through a valley. The river is flanked by green grassy banks and some sparse trees. In the background, there are rolling hills and mountains covered in dry, scrubby vegetation under a clear sky.

Six Decades of Conservation: Ethiopia's Journey in Protecting Wildlife and Wild Places

*From Exclusion to Collaboration –
A Legacy of Resilience and
Innovation*

*Yilma Dellelegn Abebe
3rd March 2025*



Introduction

Ethiopia's wildlife conservation journey spans centuries, blending ancient traditions with modern science. Over the past 60 years, the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA) has evolved to meet global and local challenges.

Historical Timeline

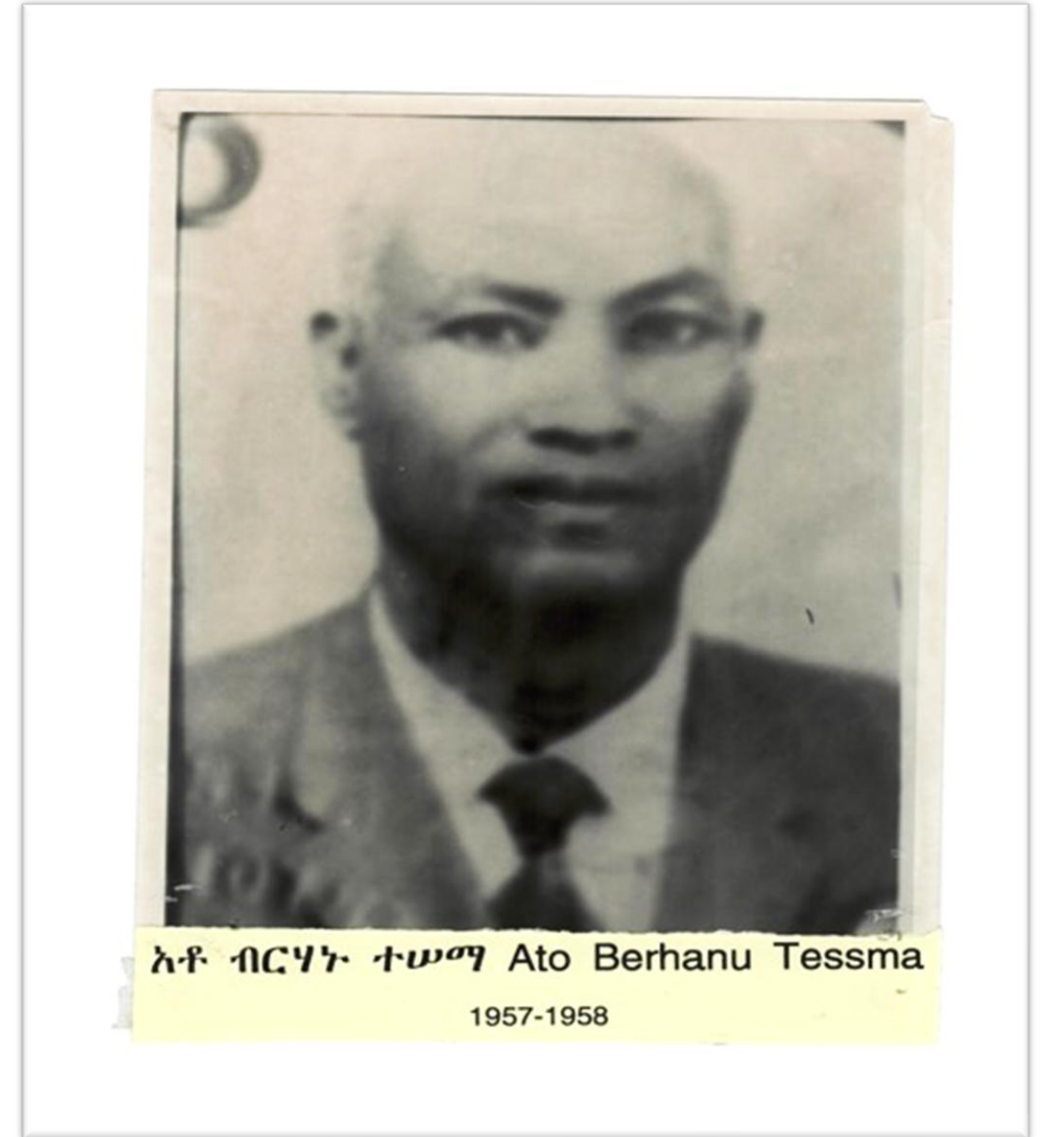
Pre-1960s:

1434–1468:
Indigenous
conservation
under Emperor
Zera Yacob

1908: Emperor
Menelik II bans
hunting of
young
elephants

H.E.
 Akalework
 Historical Timeline –
 Formation of EWCO
 UNESCO's
 assistance
 at the Paris
 Conference
 to assess
 1961–1962
 Ethiopian
 wildlife surveyed
 Ethiopian
 wildlife
 areas and

Ato
 Berhanu
 Tessema
 appointed
 head of
 EWCO – The
 First
 Director
 Oct.–Nov.
 General
 1964



Historical Timeline – Late 1960's and 1970's

and I. R. Grimwood drafted the 1965–1968 Wildlife

Major John Blower assigned as EWCO's

1966: First national parks (Awash, Simien Mountain

1970 – EWCO was established as a semi-autonomous



Historical Timeline



Derg Era (1974–1991):

State-led, socialist policies;
forced resettlement and

restricted access.
Organization – Centralized,
under the FWCDA – semi-

autonomous, Fortress
approach to conservation –

Fines and fences.
Protected areas expanded but
faced local resistance and
conflict.

Historical Timeline

Post-1991 (FDRE Era):

1991

EWCA establishes

Wildlife Development,

Conservation, and

Utilization Proclamation.

2008

Inclusive and
participatory

2008

- Decentralized Federal system
- Shift to participatory

አቶ ታደሰ ገ/ጊዮርጊስ Ato Tadesse G/Michale

1/1/83-9/4/85

ማርቆስ ወ/ሰላሴ G/Markos W/Selassie

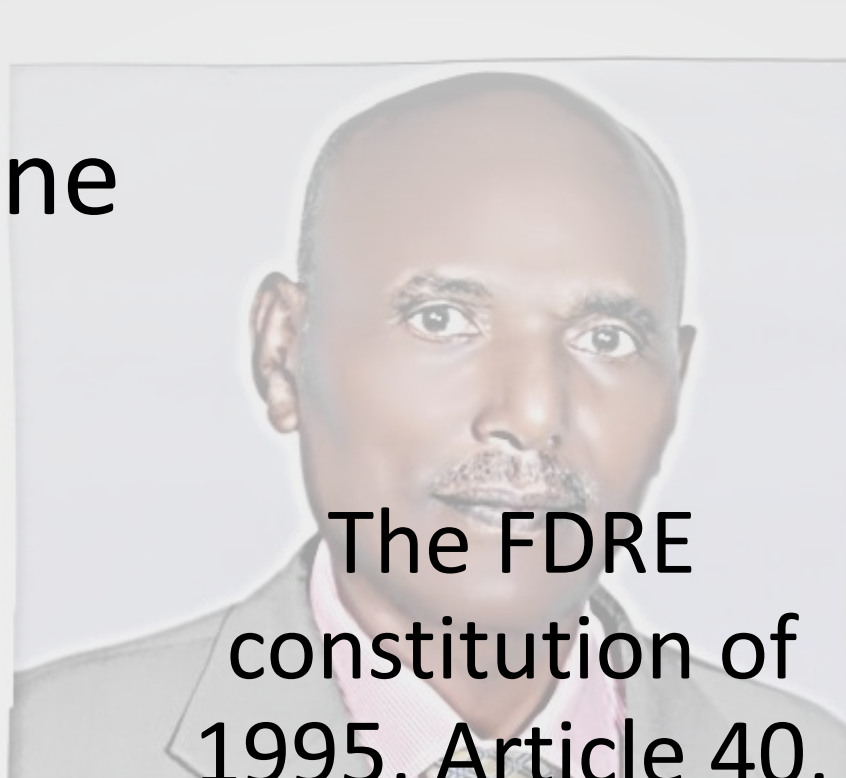
1988/1989

Historical Timeline

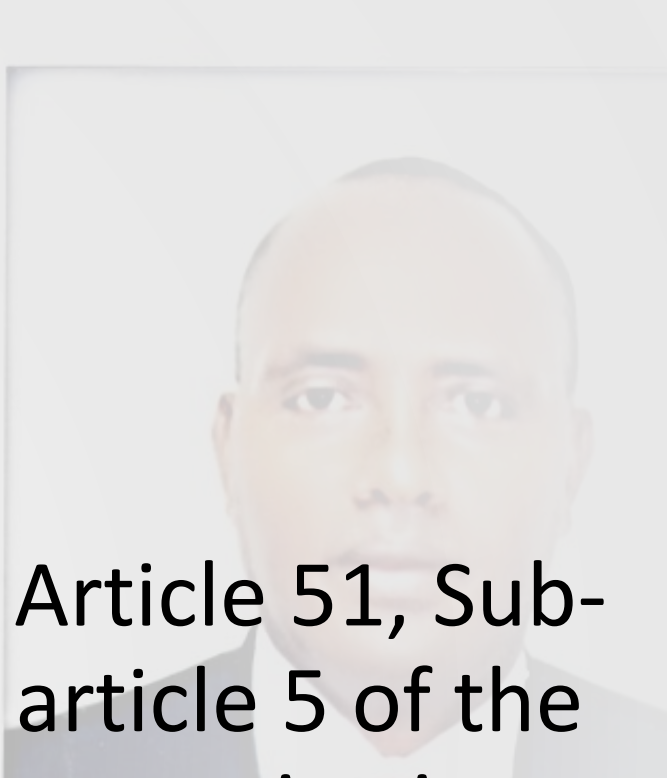


Organizational
set up:

Ethiopian
Wildlife
Conservation
Authority
Authority
(EWCA),
autonomous



The FDRE
constitution of
1995, Article 40,
Sub-article 3
assigns the right
to ownership of
all natural
resources to the
state and the



Article 51, Sub-
article 5 of the
constitution
vests the power
to enact laws for
the utilization
and
conservation of
land and natural

Historical Timeline

Inclusive/participatory conservation: an approach that accommodates and balances different visions for protected area management.

Ato Ewinetu Bilata

2005-2006

Has the potential to integrate multiple visions for growth, development.



አቶ ዳውድ ሙሉኤ Ato Dawud Mulu

2006-2009

This has led to improvements and empowered the community's participation for wildlife conservation.

Institutional Shifts & Mandates - EWCO to EWCA:

1965–1991: Centralized control, limited local engagement.

Post-1991: Decentralized governance, regional partnerships.

General Managers of EWCO/EWCA and Tenure

		Tenure	
	EWCO/EWCO General Managers	EC	GC
1	Ato Berhanu Tessema	1957–1958	1964–1966
2	Major Gizaw G/Giorgis	1958–1961	1965–1969
3	General Mebratu Fissiha	1961–1964	1968–1972
4	Ato Teshome Ashine	1964–1982	1971–1990
5	Ato Tadesse G/Michael	1982–1985	1989–1993
6	Ato Leykun Abunie	1985–1988	1992–1996
7	Ato G/Markos W/Selassie	1988–1989	1995–1997
8	Ato Tesfaye Hundessa	1989–1995	1996–2003
9	Ato Tadesse Hailu	1995–2001	2002–2009
10	Dr Kifle Argaw	2001–2005	2008–2013
11	Ato Ewnetu Bilata	2005–2006	2012–2014
12	Ato Dawd Mume	2006–2009	2013–2017
13	Ato Kumara Waqjira	2009 to present	2017 - present

Key Mandates - Ensure that wildlife is integrated in lives, livelihoods and heritage of Ethiopia

Directly manages 11 national parks and 2 wildlife sanctuaries. Combat poaching, manage human-wildlife conflict, and promote community-based conservation and sustainable tourism. Working closely with local community to achieve conservation goals



ayneh Abebe

Paradigm Shifts

Exclusion → Participation

- **Past:** "People-out" approach (e.g., Semien Mountains evictions in 1978).
- **Present:** Co-management (e.g., Guassa-Menz Community Conservation Area).





Paradigm Shifts

State Control → Community Empowerment

- **Examples:**
- Senkele Wildlife Sanctuary: Revival of Swayne's hartebeest via *Gada* system.
- Bale Mountains: Community rangers and eco-lodges.

Contributions

Biodiversity Protection:

- **Endemics:** Ethiopian wolf, Walia ibex, Mountain nyala.
- **Land coverage:** PA's are roughly estimated to cover 14% of the total land area in the country.



Contributions

Research & Innovation:

- **Key Studies:** Population monitoring of key species including Ibexes, Ethiopian Wolves, Elephants
- **Global Partnerships:** Collaboration with IUCN, UNESCO, Frankfurt Zoological Society, and African Wildlife Foundation.
- SMART mobile technology



Contributions

Economic Impact:

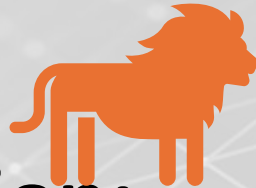
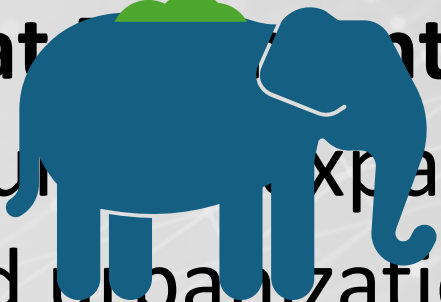
- Revenue from tourism from PAs in 2015 was estimated to be \$25.2mill/yr.



Challenges - Ecological



Habitat Fragmentation:
Agricultural expansion
and urbanization.



Illegal Trade: Poaching for
ivory, skins, and rare



Human-Wildlife Conflict:
Crop raiding, livestock
predation.



Climate Change:
Threatens Afro-alpine

Challenges _ Institutional



Institutional

Instability: Mandate-
power, governance,
structure, poorly



Budget constraint



The Future – A call to action

Strategic Priorities:

1. **Strengthen Legal Frameworks:** Enforce ABS agreements (e.g., Nagoya Protocol).
2. **Amplify Community Leadership:** Expand benefit-sharing models (e.g., revenue from eco-tourism).
3. **Leverage Technology:** Drones, AI for anti-poaching and habitat monitoring.
4. **Global Solidarity:**
Partner with IUCN, IFAW, CITES, and African Wildlife Foundation.



“Ethiopia’s wildlife is not just our heritage—it is the world’s. Let us build a future where conservation is woven into the fabric of development, and every Ethiopian becomes a guardian of our natural legacy.”

*In the end, we will conserve only
what we love, we will love only
what we understand, and we will
understand only what we are
taught.” –*

Baba Dioum

Thank you for your time

