The Role of National Park Development in ‘Recovery from Disaster’
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1. Introduction

- The ‘National Park’ of Semienawi & Debubawi Bahri Green Belt Area (Eritrea), found in Great E. African Rift Valley, has an area of 129,000 ha (40,000 ha enclosed)
- The term ‘National Park’ needs international criteria
- The ‘Author’ had participated in study tour and proposal (1999) of the National Park Green Belt Area, and endeavors to explore its gaps
- The paper discusses the role of sustainable national park development, as an intervention for ‘recovery from disaster’

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2. The Rationale for National Park

• A century ago, 30% of Eritrean land was covered by forests, 11% in 1952, 5% in 1960, & 1% or less in 1995

• Sahara Desert is pushing southward, and is expanding

• Climate change and habitat loss are becoming threats to wildlife

• It is home to some of the last highly diverse range of globally unique remnant tropical coniferous and broad-leafed forests and mammal and bird species

• Thus, this alarming trend has to be reversed or at least checked
3. National Park Defined

- **National parks**: ‘large natural or near natural areas set aside to protect large-scale ecological processes, along with the complement of species & ecosystems characteristic of the area, which also provide a foundation for environmentally & culturally compatible, spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational....opportunities’ (IUCN, 2002)

- **Criteria**: must be designated, legally declared, enclosed, have own park mgn’t/rangers, adequate budget, sufficient staff, etc
4. Purpose of the Research

• As a learning process: personal interest to identify the gaps of the Eritrean National Park & contribute towards its appropriate dev’t

• Study global Protected Areas (national parks) & ecotourism dev’t and their relevance to Eritrea
5. Findings at Global level

- National parks need to have International criteria
- Need regular training, education & awareness-raising
- Need research and dissemination of findings
- Need sustainable BD (indigenous & global species)
- Ecotourism is essential for sustainable national park
- Hot springs are useful for therapeutic recreation, ecotourism and national park dev’t
- Need of innovative park mgn’t for sound ecotourism & communities’ socio-economic benefits
6. Findings at Local Level

• National Forestry and Wildlife Authority put in place
• BD conservation, a Gov’t priority area since independence
• Nurseries of indigenous & exotic species established
• Modern poultry and bee-keeping introduced
• Plant quarantine proclamation in place
• Law on environment issued
• Tradition of soil & water conservation practices
• Coffee & citrus fruits plantations
• Banning cutting of trees & killing of wild animals need to be supplemented with alternative energy sources for cooking & construction
• ‘National park’, short of international criteria, a critical factor
• The Green Belt is suitable for ecotourism
  - Two rainy seasons- evergreen
  - Spectacular land scenery with diverse flora & fauna
  - ‘Outstanding spot for bird-watching’
  - Impressive weather, with low-lying summer fogs
  - Availability of hot springs for therapeutic recreation & ecotourism
  - Historic Monastery of Debre-Bizen (1361)
7. Conclusion and Recommendations

**Conclusion:** The Green Belt Area National park dev’t critically needs relevant policies, legal declaration, designation & demarcation, own park mgn’t & rangers, adequate budget, etc.

**Recommendations** include:

- Competent & innovative park mgn’t
- Continuous training, education & awareness-raising
- National park & ecotourism need to address the livelihood (improvement) of the local communities
- Need harmonious co-existence of BD conservation & ecotourism development
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