

# Bale Eco-Region Sustainable Management Programme (BERSMP) of FARM-Africa, SOS Sahel Ethiopia and Oromia State Forest Enterprises Supervising Agency



The Bale Eco-Region Sustainable Management Programme (BERSMP) has been operating in the Bale Massif since the end of 2006 and aims to bring local communities into a central role in sustainable natural resources management supported by government services, across the whole Bale Massif.

The programme is supported by the Irish, Netherlands and Norwegian embassies.

# **Bale Sports Fishing and Tourist Village Enterprise**



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# 1. Background

My first visit to Ethiopia in January 2007 was to establish the presence of a breeding population of Rainbow and Brown trout, mainly in the Shaya river system Bale Mountains Eco Region (BMER) and surrounding rivers and tributaries. The Brown trout, and especially the Rainbow trout, populations are found throughout all main river systems surveyed (see previous report). The rivers are currently very healthy and capable enough to sustain populations for many years to come, but only IF appropriate management and conservation practices are put into motion. There is serious soil erosion problems in this region of Ethiopia due to rapid deforestation in the highland regions - erosion will inevitably get worse, creating a real threat to the livelihoods of the indigenous people, the potential of developing the sports fishery, agriculture and tourism in general. If the deforestation is not stopped or controlled there is no possible way the BMER can be a viable sports fishing/tourist area in the future due to the river systems being destroyed by siltation and the frequency of serious flooding increasing.

My second visit to the region BMER in August 2007 was to explore and develop a plan to look at the potential of creating a sports fishing village and a self funding ecotourism operation, that could provide finance into a community development fund to support literacy/numeracy/health programme.

# 2. A Way Forward

There is enormous potential to develop a WORLD CLASS sports fishery/ecotourism operation along the Shaya and surrounding woreda's, but only IF the development is seen as long term and broken down into a 10 year phased programme. Developing the area too quickly may would create many issues that would prove disastrous to the local community e.g. community fatigue, raising unrealistic expectations, cultural shock etc. This should be treated as a long term project, giving the community time to adjust and culturally adapt to having such a potentially large operation on their doorstep.

Ecotourism is already happening; therefore the sooner the local community can embrace the development, the sooner they can be responsible for their own development and thus wean them away from a reliance on aid.

There are 4 points initially to keep in mind whilst looking at the overall project aims and objectives:

- Awareness – making sure all communities in the area are aware and content with the development of the project and how the project is going to continue to involve them. The community is already tired of aid agencies over promising and under delivering.
- Organisation – the project needs to be well organised from the beginning to ensure solid foundations are built and the correct roles and responsibilities are allocated to the correct individuals i.e. you do not allocate the role of stacking the top shelf to the shortest individual! We need the right people for the appropriate tasks.
- Leadership Development – Core individuals involved in the programme will need leadership & coaching training. They will be acting as the movers and

shakers within their community; therefore they must understand the basic principles of leadership.

- Self finance – An understanding that the project is to be self-financed right from the start is essential: aid may be used in the beginning to help set up the projects but eventually the project must be self financing. An economic cycle must be created to wean the communities away from aid to achieve a truly sustainable project.

Awareness raising for the project has already begun within the river management group, and roles and responsibilities within the group now need to be identified. Through allocating roles and responsibilities, organisation within the Sports Fishing Enterprise will start to evolve. As the organisational structure develops, leaders within the community need to be identified and trained to add momentum to the project. And finally for the project to be successful in the future it **MUST** be self financing.

The success of The Sports Fishing Enterprise is dependent on one particular issue: the creation of a legal constitution to empower the local community to control issues such as illegal fishing and exploitation by tour operators.

All involved must be aware of the 7 following steps to keep the project on track:

1. Recognition of a dynamic group to move the project forward
2. They must be aware that the project has to be self financed. The project must be able to survive on its own capital and not to rely on aid agency support.
3. They must have access to literacy and numeracy courses (the only way out of poverty is education).
4. Various other training courses for the groups to be able to deal with and understand western tourists e.g. hospitality, customer care, catering etc.
5. The availability and accessibility of information.
6. Empowerment, the stakeholders must be able to legally enforce issues such as illegal fishing – **THERE MUST BE A LEGAL CONSTITUTION**, giving the local people rights to protect their own area, **THIS CANNOT BE A TOKEN GESTURE AGREEMENT**.
7. An institution-building approach that will survive for many years into the future.

### **3. Scope of the Study**

The scope of the initial study was to identify an appropriate area to develop a pilot project for a Sports Fishery development, and to also to identify a River Management Group and find out if they had training potential, while introducing them to basic river/fishery management techniques and theories. The group identified were dynamic and forward thinking and understood the issues much more than I expected. They were grasping and understanding the issues and the need for conserving the area within our first conversations, and some of their recommendations towards preserving the area are questions sometimes conservationists have taken years to resolve!

Without doubt Solomon's land identified in Fig 2 (GIS MAP) is the perfect area to begin operations and create a tourist village. **Fig 1, shows** there is so much more

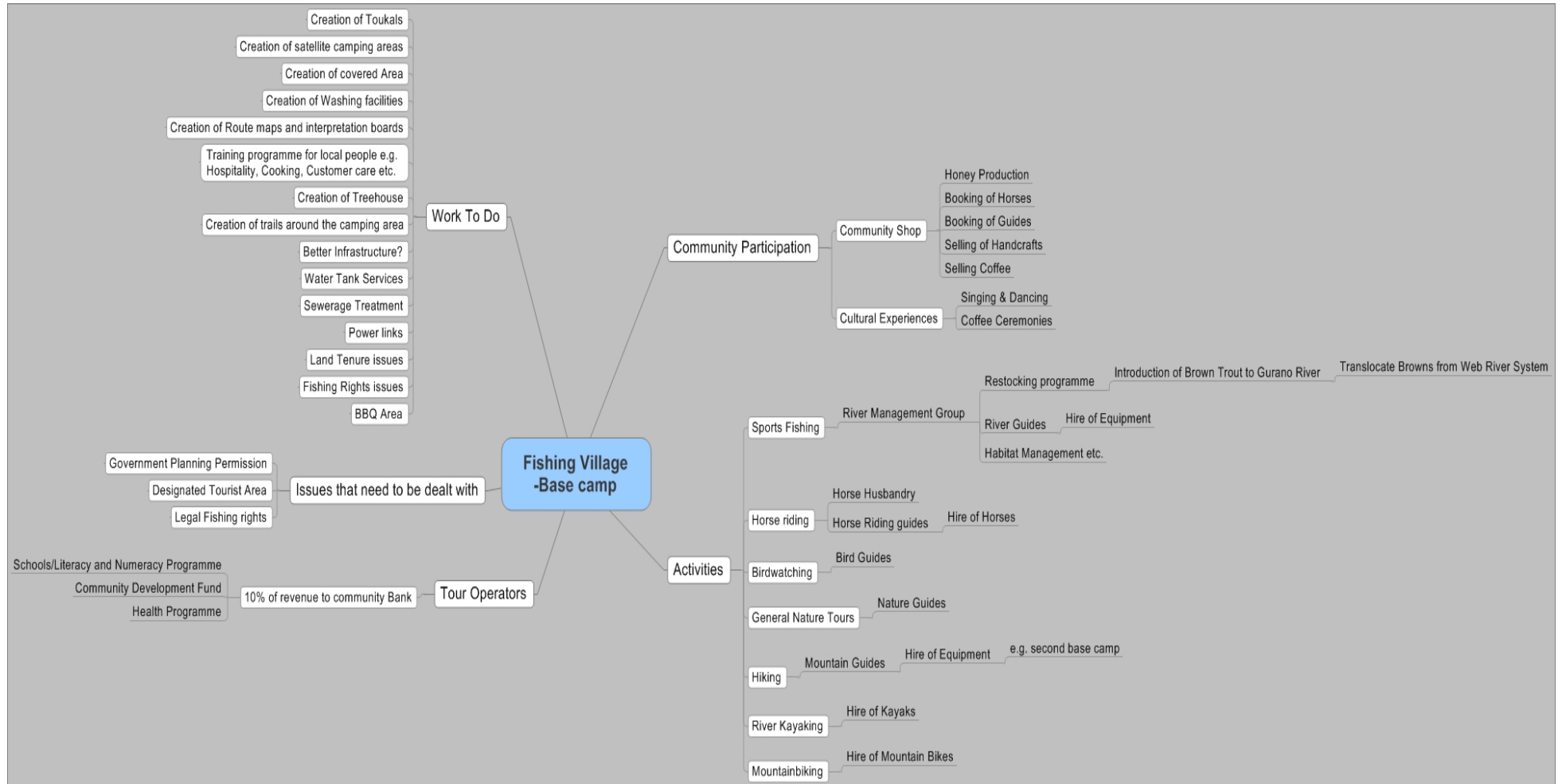
future potential in the area beyond the development of a sports fishing base. The land is approximately 2 hectares and is ideally located to build an ecocamp to provide three different levels of accommodation for tourists. The land could provide toubkals, camping and a covered area for tourists to sleep, whilst a network of paths leading away from the camp could lead to the touristy activities.

If you analyse **Fig 1**, from the fishing village base you can provide a lot more than just a sports fishing experience. From the base, horse trekking, mountain walking, nature trails etc can be provided, which can maintain a further steady source of income for the communities involved. It is basically a brainstorming aid to understand what potential activities. Right at the centre of **Fig 1** you can see the fishing village with should be the centre for tourist operations. There are five aspects that will need to be thought of in more detail when looking at the development:

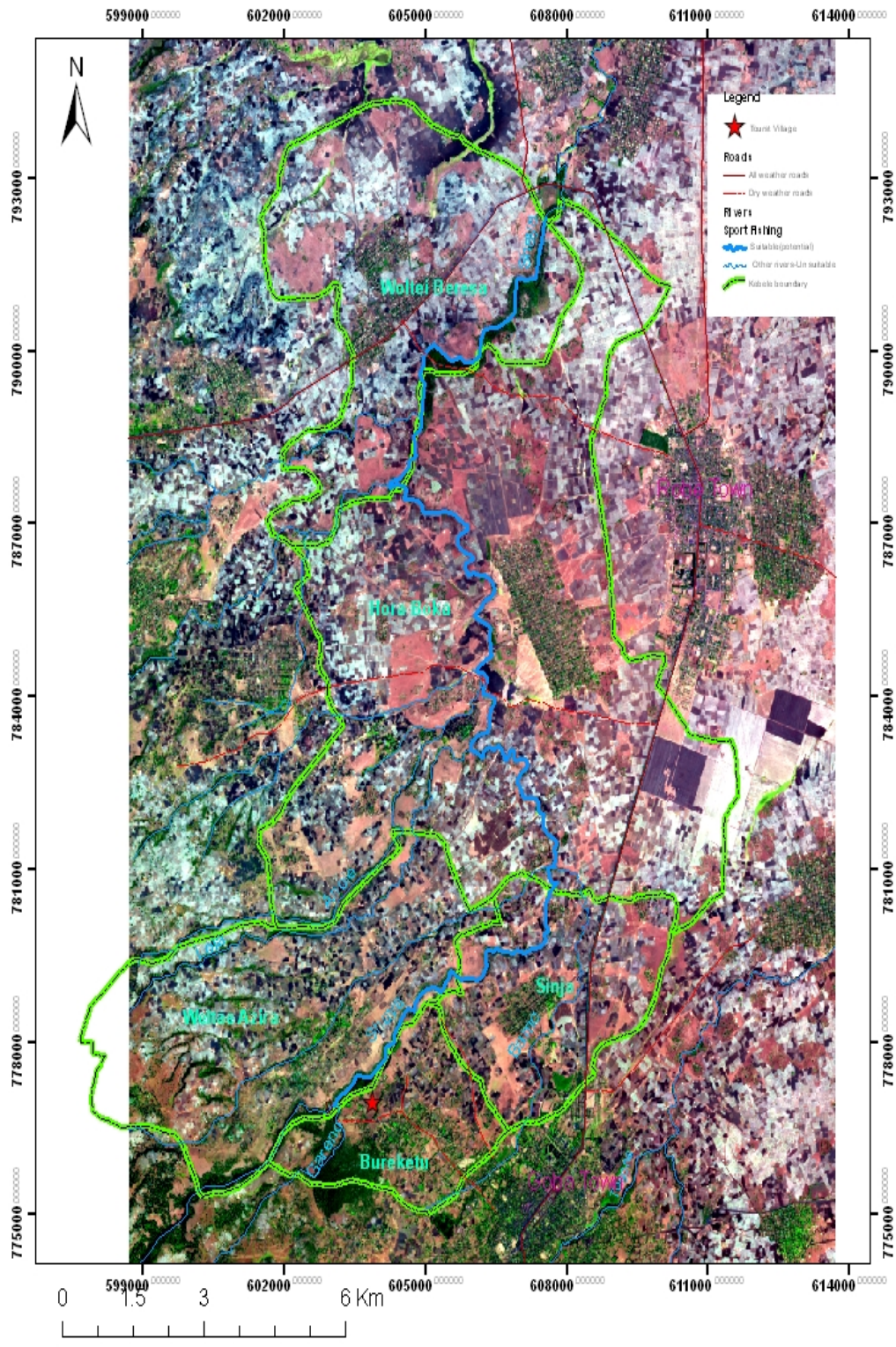
1. Community participation
2. Work to do
3. Activities
4. Issues to be dealt with.
5. Tour operators.

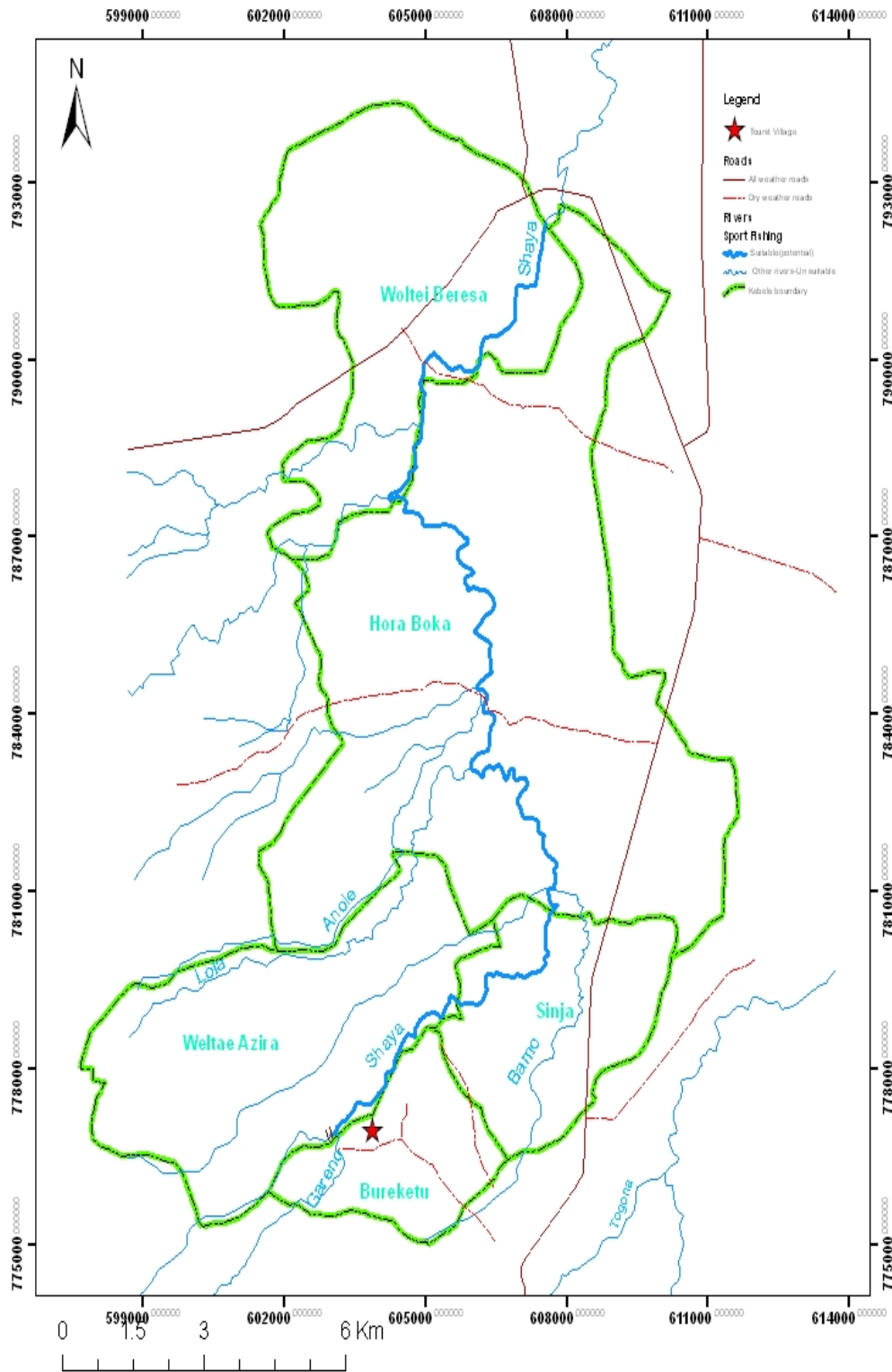
All aspect will need to be planned carefully and all legal requirements in place before the project begins.

Fig 1: Mind Map of Fishing Village



#### 4. GIS maps of pilot sports fishery Location including involved Woredas





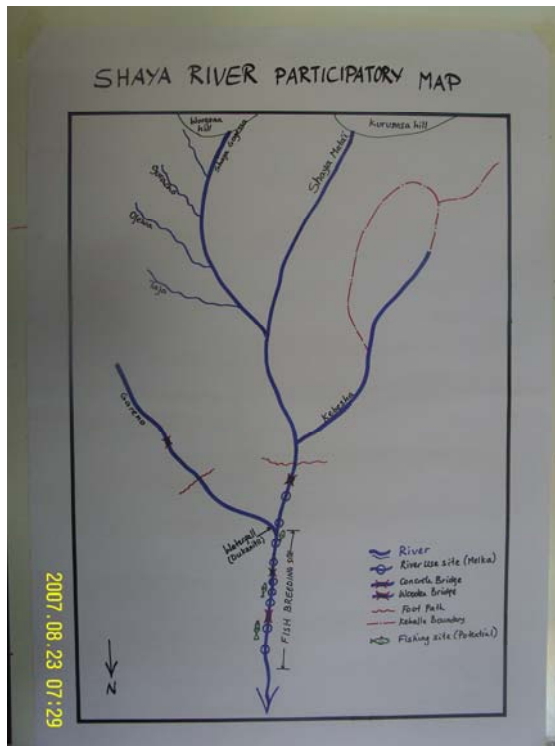
## 4. Training Days

Prior to identifying the River Management Group before I had arrived on my second visit, a series of workshops were ran to engage the community through Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) techniques to map out river corridors (See Pic 1&2) to find out their geography of the river system and where the fish lie or get caught predominantly within the river system.

**Pic 1: PRA River Mapping Exercise**



**Pic 2: River Map**



The groups questioned had exceptional knowledge of the area and where the most productive areas for fishing were.

# The Training day programme – River Management Group

## Day 1

### Introductions

1. Why are you here? Fishing guides etc.
2. What do they want from the project?
3. What are river managers?

The plan: - Management group

- Tourist Village
  - Income into villages
  - The Journey – Should be treated as a long process not a quick fix, Sustainability etc.
5. What is Sports Fishing?
  6. Rainbow and Brown trout - Life Cycles
    - Habitat & How they Feed
    - Spawning
    - Protection of spawning areas
  7. Fly Fishing & Sports Fishing Equipment.
  8. What is river management?
  9. What kind of activities will you be doing?



## Day 2

1. River Seasonality.
2. Cattle drinking areas and their identification
3. Washing areas and their identification
4. Fencing off areas:
  - Tributaries
    - Natural Regeneration
    - Agricultural Practices
    - Eucalyptus
    - Riparian Rights
5. Developing a river management plan

- Protection
  - Development
  - Utilization
  - Monitoring
6. Rules and Regulations
- What will they be?
  - How will you enforce them?



## Day 3

### A Practical River Walk

1. Managing the River for the future
2. Identifying areas for conservation
3. How to guide sports fishermen – their wants and needs.



### ***Conclusions from training days***

The “identified” river management group seemed to show exceptional knowledge and aptitude to be “the river managers of the future”. From my own and other’s experience, poor participation in projects is an inherent problem in Ethiopia. One of the main reasons are project and aid agency fatigue, being over promised and under delivered to and also quite possibly the financial amount of aid Ethiopia have received over the years creating a kind of dole dependant culture. However, this particular

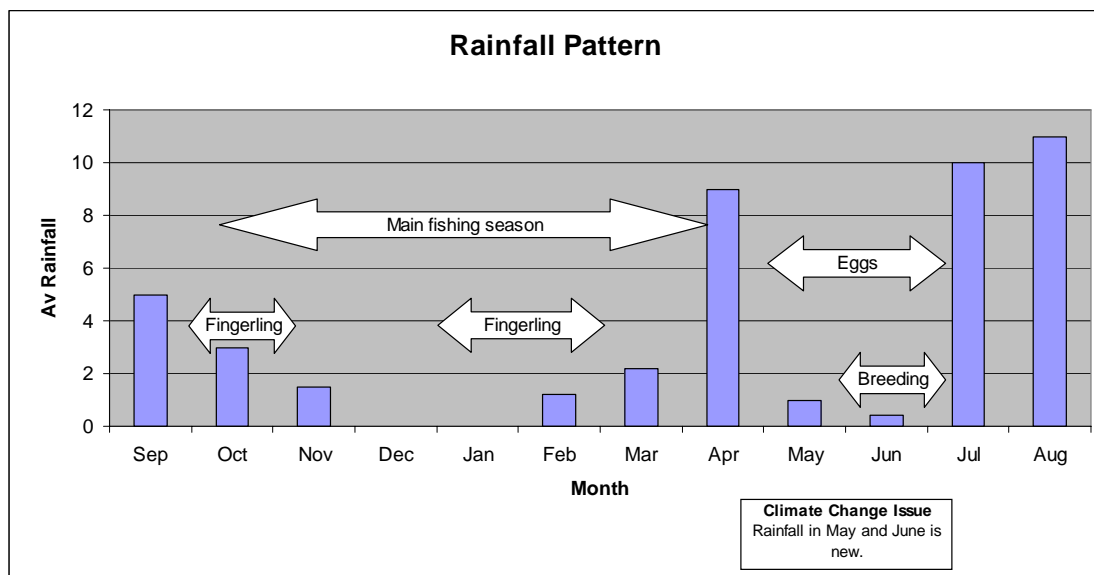
community did not show this attitude, just an enthusiasm to move forward and realise the project.

**It is essential that the Sports Fishing Enterprise is moved forward and becomes a success, a comment that was regularly heard was they were “fed up of being promised so much by aid agencies and nothing actually ever materialises”.**

## 7. River Seasonality

Through initial discussion during the training days, the group grasped the fundamentals of when the best time to fish is. The group also understood when the fish breed and spawn, and when the best time is to capture the fish (to either translocate them within the river system or translocate for basic homestead fish farming (see Fig2).

**Fig 2: River seasonality**



## 8. Basic Business & River Management Planning

There are many issues to be dealt with to make this project a success, I believe that the development of a robust legal constitution between the local people and the government, so as to give the community the power and the rights to be responsible for the river and the tourist movement within the project area, is crucial to the success of the project. The reason for this is that the area will lose its exclusivity to tourists and potentially without the community being in charge all kinds of global operators will move in without giving positive financial contributions locally.

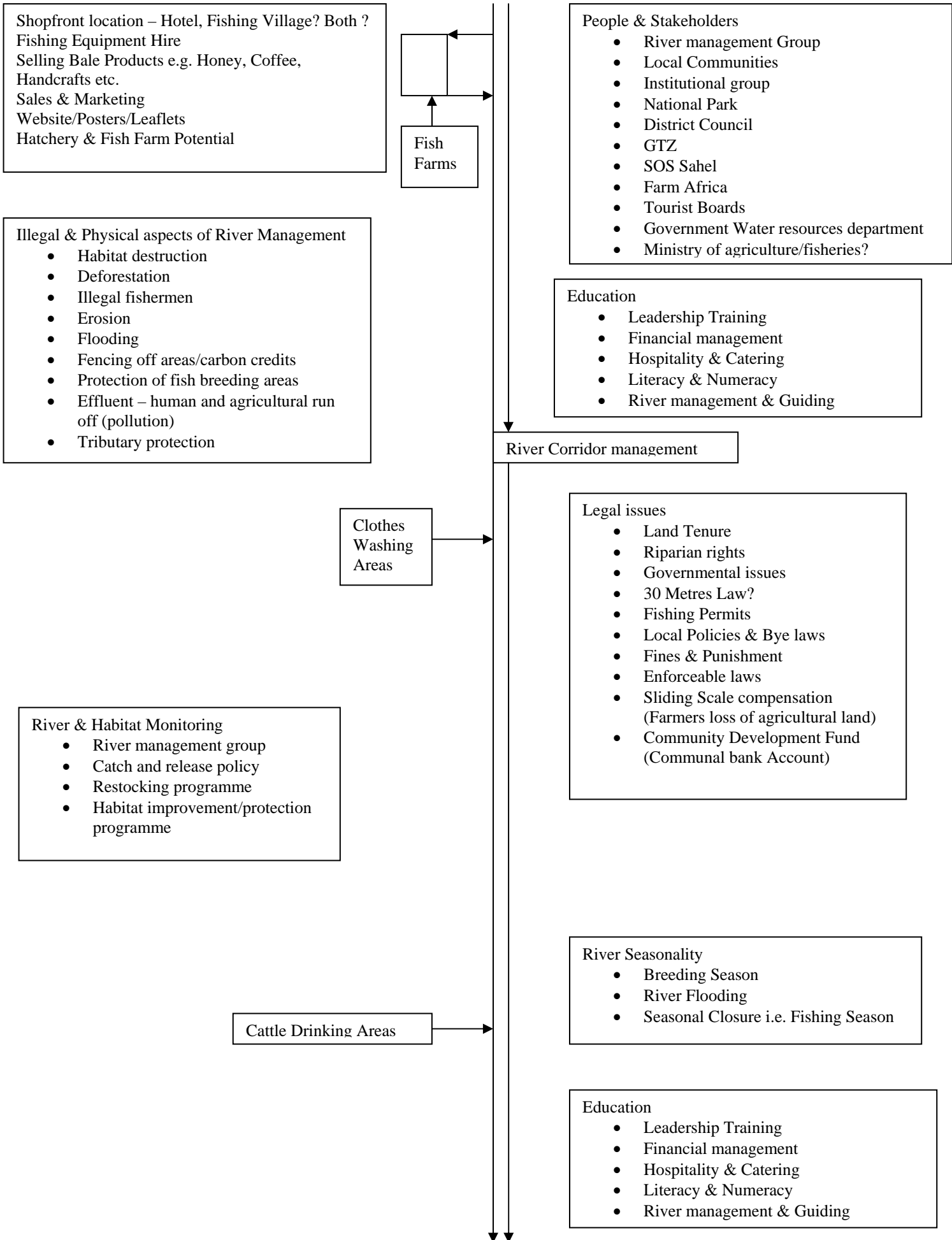
Working with Tour operators can be very difficult especially when you are going to erode their profit margins, therefore giving the spin that in the current global environment that the tour operators who are willing to use the area are involved in a responsible tourism project can add great benefits to their company and product. The

BMER partnership i.e. SoS Sahel *et al* need to be able to discuss and promote the idea with the tour operators that utilise the area and broker the deal. The deal being that the tour operators recognise and understand that if they are to utilise this area they MUST contribute 10 percent of the overall cost of the programme into a Community Development Fund (CDF) which will support and finance projects, such as the building of schools, better health facilities for the area etc. A service level agreement will have to be drawn up with the tour operators to agree to this. If they are not willing to sign up to the agreement, they are simply not allowed to enter the area. This in the future will promote exclusivity and the sustainability. This MUST happen.

The development of the area must also be a phased process and the prioritisation of tasks is essential towards the success of the project.

Where the sports fishing is concerned Brown trout need to be translocated from the Webb river system to the Shaya to begin the development of the exclusive fishery. A premium can be sought for a Brown trout fishery and it would take approximately 5-10 years to realise the potential and for the Browns to breed successfully in the river. This MUST happen.

# River Management Plan



## Tour Operators

Somehow an agreement will have to be struck between the tour operators that use the tourist area that 10 % is paid directly into the Community Development Fund there will have to be a service level agreement between the tour operators and the community, this will have to be a legal document.

## 9. Basic Fishing Village Business Plan

Set up costs for the village have been estimated at c.200,000 birr, this needs to be discussed with Salomon.

### On the assumption that the tourist season would last around 3 months per annum

50 pax staying 3 nights in the toukals @ a charge of 150birr/night = 22,500birr

20 pax staying 3 nights in covered area @ a charge of 75birr/night = 4,500birr

30 pax staying 3 nights in their own tents @ a charge of 40birr/night = 3,600birr

Total anticipated revenue from 1year tourist season = 30,600birr

Total after 4 years operation = **122,400birr**

Basically, Solomon will act as an accommodation provider - the community will make their money by being employed at the site, providing guides, horses etc. refer to **Fig 1.**

Solomon can earn 10,000 birr/hectare for eucalyptus tree planting every 4 years, his initial reaction was sceptical because he didn't want to lose any finance from his tree planting, which is understandable. When he then realised the fishing village would be a much more profitable enterprise he was fine. (4 years being the growth cycle of the eucalyptus tree to a marketable size). Therefore from a 2 hectare site he can earn gross **20,000** birr in 4 years. In 4 years with the tourist village he can gross a minimum of **122,400birr**.

Solomon can earn 30,600 birr per annum from a 2 hectare camping site, which is equivalent to **122,400** birr i.e. compared to **20,000** birr the Eucalyptus tree planting.

Note: Salomon will have to work out how much staff will be on this site during the tourist season—estimated staff costs are 20% of total revenue = **24,480birr** (over 4years)

This is a very pessimistic assumption considering that most tourists would stay on average more than 3 nights.

All activities outside of the sports fishing hub industry will be open to all—The sports fishing must remain in the hands of one tour operator and one tour operator only to control and promote exclusivity for future generations.

It would take roughly between 3-4 years for the investor to realise his initial 200,000 birr investment.

## 10. Conclusions

There is a real potential of turning the Shaya into a world class fishery, but there are also many other spin offs the area could also rely on, such as hiking, nature tours, kayaking, hire of equipment etc. The promotion of a real eco-touristic area controlled and led by the community is very possible if attention flows in the right direction. The problem with aid in the past is that it's been a financial dead end, for this project to be successful an economic circle must be created so the community can start becoming more self reliant, this - in time - will give the community more confidence to be in control of their own destiny.

This is not an academic document but a functional plan to take and drive the business forward.



