



Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Total Surface Area: 1 104 300 km²
Estimated Population in 2006: 79 289 000



Ethiopia is the tenth-largest and second most populous country in Africa. Most of the population occupies the plateau and central mountain range of the rugged Ethiopian Highlands, which are divided diagonally by the Great Rift Valley and surrounded to the east and west by lowland deserts. The highlands, which account for roughly half of the country's area (Woldeyes n.d.), are also the source of the Blue Nile, which originates in Lake Tana in the northwest and contributes two-thirds of the Nile River's water.

Important Environmental Issues

- Water Availability and Access to a Safe Source
- Livestock, Soil Erosion, and Land Degradation
- Threats to Biodiversity and Endemism



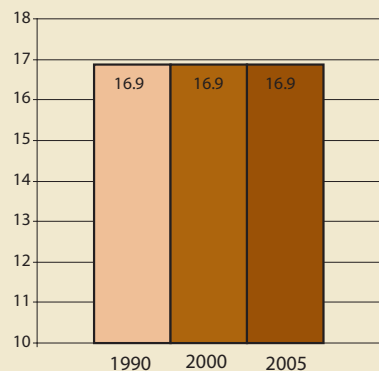
Progress Towards Environmental Sustainability

As defined by the United Nations Millennium Development Goal 7 Indicators

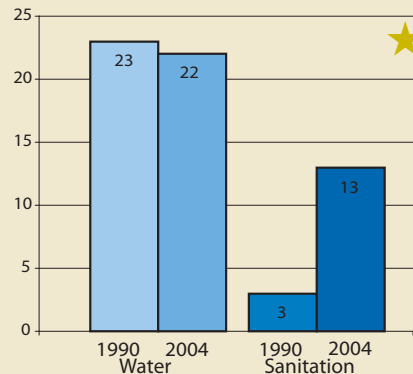
Availability of clean water and sanitation in Ethiopia is among the lowest in the world and, in the case of water, the situation is deteriorating. An estimated three-quarters of children's health problems and communicable diseases have an environmental cause. Ethiopia's land area under protection remains fairly constant. Nearly 70 per cent is arable yet only 11 per cent is under cultivation with permanent crops; almost 12 per cent is forested.

★ Indicates progress

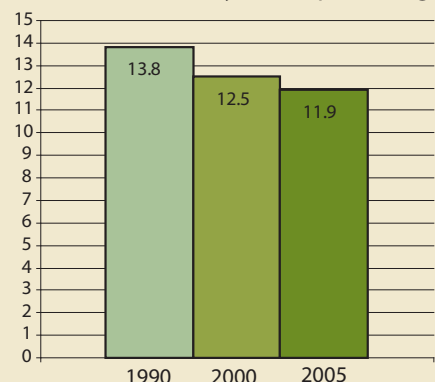
Protected area to total surface area, percentage



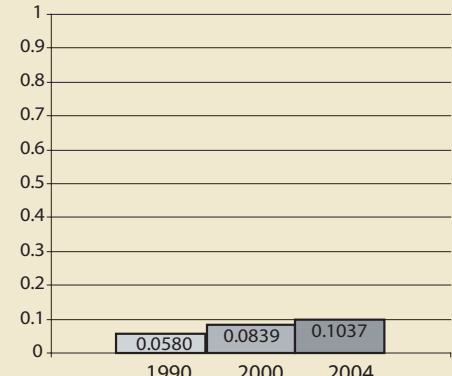
Proportion of total population using improved drinking water sources and sanitation facilities, percentage



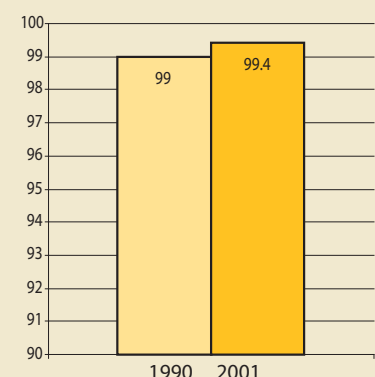
Land area covered by forest, percentage



Carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions, metric tonnes per capita



Slum population as percentage of urban



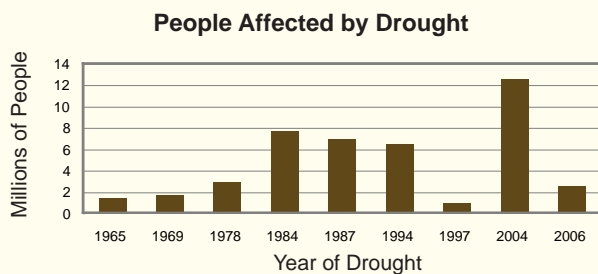
In 2005 scientists watched a 60 kilometre fissure develop in the Afar Desert of Ethiopia. The fissure created an eight metre wide rift at its centre which may be the beginning of a "future ocean."

Water Availability and Access to a Safe Source

Although surface water resources are relatively abundant, they are largely undeveloped and unevenly distributed. Approximately 70 per cent of runoff is obtained between June and August (FAO 2005), and recurring droughts and erratic

rainfall are frequently responsible for widespread food insecurity and significant loss of livestock and crops. During a severe drought in 2003, for example, over ten million people required food aid and the gross domestic product declined by 3.3 per cent (CIA 2007).

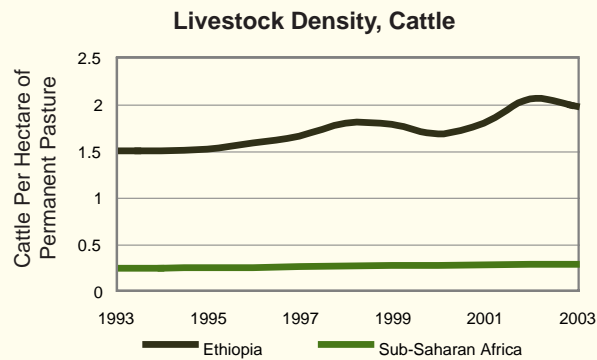
As a consequence of both natural and economic circumstances, only 22 per cent of the population has access to an improved water source, the lowest proportion in Africa (UN 2007). The situation is acute in both rural areas, where 84 per cent of the population resides (UNESA 2006), and in urban areas, where over 99 per cent of inhabitants are slum-dwellers (UN 2007).



Source: EM-DAT disaster database

Livestock, Soil Erosion, and Land Degradation

Desertification and soil erosion are widespread in Ethiopia, particularly in the highlands where the terrain is very steep, and where the majority of agricultural production occurs. Ethiopia has the seventh-largest cattle stock in the world (FAO 2007), and overgrazing coupled with heavy dependence on dung for fuel is a significant driver of land degradation. Other factors include deforestation and poor farming practices. Overall, 85 per cent of the land is classified as moderately to very severely degraded (FAO AGL 2003) and 70 per cent is affected by desertification (UNCCD 2002).



Source: Earth Trends (from FAOSTAT Resource STAT, Land data)



Ethiopia has the lowest access to an improved water source in Africa at

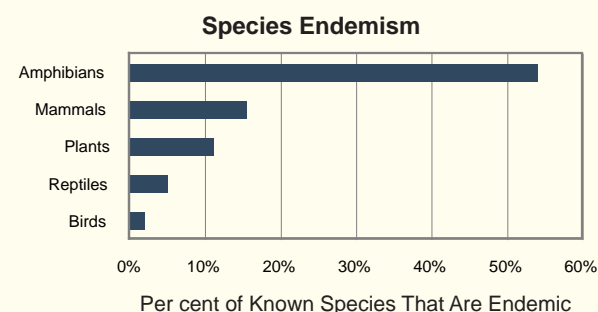
22%

Threats to Biodiversity and Endemism

Wide variation in climate and topography contribute to Ethiopia's rich biological resources—of approximately 7 900 identified plant and animal

species, over ten per cent are endemic. Threats to biodiversity include overexploitation, conversion of habitats for agriculture, and deforestation. It is estimated that forest cover now constitutes less than four per cent of the original forest extent (CBD 2005).

Ethiopia's Simien National Park was one of the first sites added to the UNESCO World Heritage list in 1978. Located in the north, the park contains spectacular landscapes of jagged mountain peaks and deep valleys, and it provides refuge for rare species such as the Simien fox and Walia ibex, a goat that is found only in this area.



Source: Earth Trends (from Ethiopia's Third National Report to the CBD)

