



# Livelihood Dynamics, the COVID-19 outbreak, and coping mechanisms

A case study of tour guides in Ethiopia

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Master thesis International Development Studies

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## Abstract

Tourism is one of the hardest hit sectors following the COVID-19 pandemic. Tour guides have become one of the vulnerable labourers instantly following the collapse of tourism due to the pandemic. This qualitative study aims to examine the impact of the COVID-19 induced crisis on the tourism sector in Ethiopia. Special attention is given to tour guides in Ethiopia experiencing economic collapse during the COVID-19 outbreak. Through interviews with local and national tour guides this study examined the coping strategies that these individuals undertake. Primary data has been collected through online interviews with both local and national tour guides located in Ethiopia. Next to interviews, the data has been complemented with secondary data including policy documents, news articles and previous relevant research. Even though they might lack a certain capital, they use the assets that are available to them to reach their goals. Therefore, this crisis has a varied impact on different individuals. Overall, the study shows that their resilience depends on the ongoing adjustment they make to changes in relation to their assets. Their flexibility, access and use of these assets increase their resilience and improves their coping capacities. The study suggests that key strategies for tour guides to improve their livelihoods is to assure that they have other options, promote diversification strategies or enhance their possibilities in access to financial resources.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Capital, Ethiopia, Tour guides, Coping strategies, Livelihood approach, Tourism, Flexible labour, Resilience

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## List of abbreviations

AU	African Union
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
ETO	Ethiopian Tourism Organisation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
MERS	Middle East Respiratory Syndrome
MoCT	Ministry of Culture and Tourism
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SLF	Sustainable Livelihood Framework
STMP	Sustainable Tourism Master Plan
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organisation
WHO	World Health Organisation
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council

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Femke I. Jansen



## Introduction

*Now what COVID is telling me... Is that you shouldn't have only one job... you cannot survive in a pandemic, you know?*

*-Tariku (32 years old)<sup>1</sup>*

Tourism is undisputedly one of the hardest hit sectors following the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, millions of jobs within this sector are at risk (United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO] 2020b). To stop further spread of the virus most countries closed their borders and limited their air transportation. Travel restrictions were imposed in almost all destinations by January 2020 and international travel came to a complete standstill (UNWTO 2020a, 3). The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) estimated that international tourist arrivals would drop by 20 percent to 30 percent in 2020. When we put this in perspective the 2009 global economic crisis led to a decline of 4 percent in international tourist arrivals and, the SARS outbreak in 2003 led to a decrease of just 0.4 percent (UNWTO 2020b). The tourism and travel sector together account for one in 10 jobs in the world, that is 319 million people, and generates 10,4 percent of the world's gross domestic product (GDP) (African Union [AU] 2020, 8). African countries are extremely exposed to external shocks. These shocks pose a major challenge to local tourism in developing countries (Dahles & Susilowati 2015, 34). In Africa, the tourism sectors represent more than 8 percent of GDP in 20 of the 55 states (African Union 2020, 15).

Ethiopia is home to nine UNESCO world heritage sites and the tourism sector has been steadily growing. The number of international visitors grew between 2007 and 2017 with 10 percent (Job Creation Commission Ethiopia 2020, 42) and the sector represent 9.4 percent of the total economy (World Travel and Tourism Council [WTTC] 2019). Additionally, the Ethiopian government encourages tourism development with the aim to contribute to socio-economic development and poverty alleviation (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa [UNECA] 2015, 20). This link between tourism and development has been encouraged in many parts of the world as a means of stimulating development However, the tourism industry is vulnerable to external shocks (Baker & Coulter 2007, 249). What happens when all this travel stops?

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<sup>1</sup> Tariku. (13 September, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen [online interview]

Tourist guides, often self-employed, are among the most severely impacted professions due to the pandemic and measures taken for the tourism industry mostly overlook tour guides as part of the sector (Grančay 2020, 2-6). This study explores how the tour guides in Ethiopia cope to the COVID-19 pandemic. This will be done because most of the analysis on tourism and resilience has not focused on the individual scale of tourists, community members or entrepreneurs (Hall et al. 2018, 55). Additionally, limited research has been done on health and epidemic related crises in Africa (Novelli et al. 2018, 84). Furthermore, during crises the impacts are strongly felt by small-scale businesses and self-employed people who make a living in the hospitality sector (Dahles & Susilowati 2015, 35). Less research has paid attention to the effects of a crisis on small tourism business and self-employed individuals in developing countries, who compromise a large part of the tourism industry (Dahles & Susilowati 2015, 35).

In this research, coping strategies of tour guides will be studied by taking the livelihood framework and the concept of resilience as starting point. What strategies do people use in response to crises? Which capital assets do people draw upon to absorb shocks? How resilient are they? Examining the ways in which tour guides cope with this crisis gives insights into how people deal with global challenges and how they can be better prepared for the future. To examine this topic, the following research question is formulated:

**How does the ongoing COVID-19 crisis affect the livelihoods of tour guides and their chances to cope with this crisis?**

To answer this question the research focuses on the consequences for the tourism sector and then zooms in on the effect of the pandemic on tour guides and the ways in which they cope. The objective of this study is to explore the livelihood strategies, barriers and limits faced by individuals and households. This thesis is meant to add knowledge on the challenges faced by tour guides in Ethiopia and examine which assets and strategies they use to deal with changing circumstances. Of course, the COVID-19 pandemic is not the only crisis that people may face, it is therefore important to keep in mind that there may be regional, local or personal crises that affect the way that people can and will cope. At the time of writing about this pandemic, many things remain uncertain about the effects and outcomes for people.

The structure of this thesis is as follows. The first chapter gives an overview of the literature with a discussion on earlier crises in tourism, the lessons learned and the main theoretical

concept: the livelihoods framework and a discussion on resilience and adaptive capacity. The second chapter will discuss the methodology used in this research. Furthermore, there will be a reflection on the pursued research and more details on how access to participants was gained, the methods used and the process of analysis. This is followed by the third chapter which will discuss the context and includes an introduction to the tour guides interviewed. Chapter four examines the effects of COVID-19 for Ethiopia and the consequences for tour guides. This is followed by Chapter five which analyses the experiences and coping strategies of tour guides in this crisis. Chapter six will cover the implication for resilience. The final chapter of this thesis will give a summary of the findings and present the conclusion.

## Chapter 1: Literature review & Theoretical Framework

In this research a livelihood perspective is applied to explore the livelihood strategies and resilience of tour guides in Ethiopia in the face of a global pandemic. This chapter sets out an examination of the theoretical embedding of the research by exploring the literature and evidence from former studies on tourism and development, earlier crisis events in tourism, the current COVID-19 crisis, the livelihood approach, resilience, and flexible and mobile labour in the tourism industry.

### 1.1 Tourism and Development

Tourism is considered as a driver of development. Since the 1950s international tourism has shown consistent growth. 2018 has been the 9<sup>th</sup> consecutive year of sustained growth in tourism (UNWTO 2019, 3). International tourist arrivals increased by 4 percent in 2019, reaching 1.5 billion, which is about 54 million more than in 2018. Similarly, worldwide tourism receipts grew from US\$ 1,340 billion in 2017 (UNWTO 2018, 4), to US\$ 1,454 billion in 2018 (UNWTO, 2020c). Making the tourism sector one of the world's largest economic sectors. However, the contributions of tourism to economic development has been debated since the 1960s (UNWTO & ILO 2013, 1), tourism has the potential to contribute to development. The potential contributions of the tourism sector are linked to foreign exchange earnings, government revenues and to the linkages the sector has to other economic sectors as construction, handcrafts, and agriculture. It is estimated that around 40 percent of all international tourist arrivals go to less economically developed countries, it is therefore a significant foreign exchange earner for these countries (Spenceley & Meyer 2012, 299). The tourism sector is a labour intensive one, it generates employment and income opportunities for many poor and vulnerable groups (women and low-skilled workers). Therefore, tourism has been recognized as taking a leading role in poverty reduction (UNWTO 2013, 1). It has been assumed that the economic benefits of tourism will eventually 'trickle down' to local communities (Shen et al. 2008, 21).

However, the sector is made up of mainly small and medium-sized enterprises that function on tight margins. This makes them vulnerable in case of a fall in demand. It is therefore important that a crisis should be prevented or that the situation is managed as soon as possible to restore market confidence (Sausmarez 2013, 793). According to Telfer & Sharpley (2016, 4) there is, what they call, a "tourism development dilemma". Meaning that tourism is on the one hand an attractive way in stimulating social and economic development in destination areas and countries. On the other hand, development often fails to materialize,

benefits mostly local elites or development is realized at the economic, social or environmental cost of local communities.

For tourism to be successful there needs to be a stable political environment as well as a safe social environment, as perceived risk to personal safety discourages most tourists (Sausmarez 2013, 792). However, the tourism industry is highly vulnerable to external shocks, such as natural disasters, economic recession, internal conflicts, and terrorist attacks. This presents a challenge for tourism development. Several studies have therefore raised the question whether tourism indeed offers a sustainable livelihood (Dahles & Susilowati 2015, 36).

### 1.1.1 Flexibility in the tourism labour market

A large part of the workforce in the developing world is self-employed. In recent decades, this number has only increased. In lower-income countries the informal sector employs 70 percent of the labour force, and in some countries this rate is over 90 percent. People working in the informal sector often lack benefits such as unemployment insurance, health insurance, and paid leave. Self-employed depend on daily work to cover their basic household necessities, if they cannot work, their family's subsistence is placed at risk (Loayza 2020, 3).

The tourism industry is a labour-intensive sector and jobs within this sector often require little or no prior knowledge or skills (Robinson et al. 2019, 4). Also, Riley (2004, 137) states that most jobs in tourism involve skills and knowledge that can be easily obtained by short periods of schooling or by experience. The tourism sector includes, on the one hand, a small group of permanent workers who are well educated and skilled and hold managerial positions. On the other hand, most low-skilled individuals who work according to fluctuating demand patterns such as seasonal or part-time personnel (Zampoukos & Ioannides 2011, 32).

Working in tourism shows great flexibility and mobility (Chen & Chang 2020, 815). According to Meged (2017, 376) the working lives of tour guides exists out of five types of flexibilization strategies on the labour market: numerical flexibility, externalization, wage flexibility, temporal flexibility and functional flexibility. The work of tourism employees requires them to transform and improvise during their interaction with tourists. For tour guides this is especially apparent because they spend most of their time traveling with and entertaining their guests. They often work on a flexible basis and must fulfil several duties to satisfy the tourist needs. Chen & Chang (2020, 816) argue that the boundary of work and leisure for tour guides is increasingly blurred. This can be attributed to the modern world, which is characterized by growing uncertainty, diversification, and fluidity. De Beer et al.

(2013, 99) underline that the seasonal variations impact the work opportunities for guides, it shows the precarious nature and temporary patterns of the work. A way to reduce this uncertainty is to secure work from more than one tour enterprise.

In other words, tourism can contribute to economic growth and development. Additionally, working in tourism requires flexibility, which can make people vulnerable but can also be part of the attractiveness of the sector. The tourism sector is also highly vulnerable to shocks. Some of these shocks will be discussed in the following section to see previous consequences of crises in the tourism industry.

## 1.2 Earlier Crisis events in tourism: lessons learned

The global tourism industry has faced an increasing and diverse range of shocks. Several authors have raised concerns about the vulnerability of the tourism industry to threats (Biggs et al. 2012, 645). Law and Prideaux (2005,1) state that a crisis that affects tourism will be followed by a decline in visitors' arrivals, followed by a fall in employment, a decline in business turnover and profits, falling government revenue, and (in case of a long-lasting crisis) an ending of further investment.

Examples of shocks that have affected tourism in recent years include: terrorism (September 11, 2001, Bali bombings in 2002 and 2005, Kenya mall attack 2013, and Paris terrorist attacks in 2015), disease pandemics (Foot and Mouth disease 2001, SARS 2002-3, Avian influenza [H5N1] 2003-6), civil unrests (Israel, Turkey, Egypt, Greece), earthquakes and tsunamis (Japan 2011, Christchurch 2011), hurricanes and cyclones (Hurricane Katrina 2005), wildfires/bushfires, volcanic eruptions (ash cloud eruption in Iceland 2011), and a global financial crisis (2008-2010). Each of these shocks has caused instability to the tourist industry, and the impacts are most significantly felt at the local region or tourism destination level (Gurtner 2016, 12). The impact of several different crises is also reflected in Figure 1, which portrays the impact of major crises on global tourism. According to the UNWTO (2020d) the sector has often shown the capacity to bounce back and grow faster in comparison to other sectors. None of the crises displayed in Figure 1. have led to a long-term decline in tourism demand, this also suggests that the tourism sector is resilient to external shocks.

It is argued that crises on a global scale are more damaging to tourism than a local or regional crisis (Law & Prideaux 2005, 3). Recent crises and disasters affecting the tourism industry have been studied, however few have analysed the health-related crises in developing countries (Novelli et al. 2018, 76). Crises in the past show similar patterns that are

comparable to the current COVID-19 crisis, but on a smaller scale. Also, the current pandemic shows a combination of both a: “[...] *natural disaster, a socio-political crisis, an economic crisis and a tourism demand crisis*” (Zenker & Kock 2020, 2). Therefore, this chapter will discuss several of these crises and see what the effects were on the tourism sector and how it was dealt with.

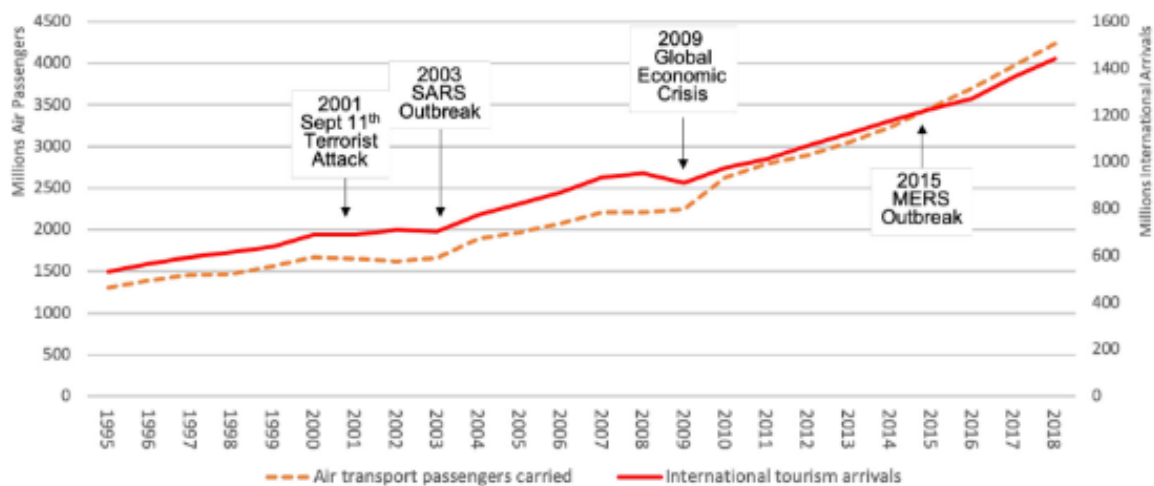


Figure 1. Impact of major crisis events on global tourism. (Gössling et al. 2021, 4)

### 1.2.1 Economic Events

#### *The financial crisis*

Insights of the financial crisis of 2008-2010 are of relevance since this crisis influenced the sector at a global level. Between 1995 and 2007 international tourism grew significantly and gained particular importance among low-income countries (UNWTO 2013, 15). Although the economic crisis caused a decline in demand for tourism exports, this differed across income groups and regions. In 2009 all regions experienced a downward trend of international tourism, only on the African continent growth rate remained positive (UNWTO 2013, 38). With regards to income groups, low-income countries in comparison to high-income countries, have been considerably less affected and recovered faster than the rest of the world (UNWTO 2013, 31).

The drop in international tourism demand left a significant burden on the livelihoods of poor and vulnerable people worldwide, especially in developing economies. In the same report, the UNWTO (2013) examines two case studies and the impact of the crisis on the tourism sector in both the Maldives and Tanzania. The outcomes and impacts on these two countries were quite different. The case study on the Maldives demonstrates that the economic crisis contributed significantly to the deterioration of people’s livelihoods. For the



Maldives, the tourism sector is the most important economic sector and contributes around 28 percent of the GDP and 60 percent of all export earnings. A large number of the island's population became more vulnerable to poverty. Additionally, 19 percent of the Maldivian belong to poor and vulnerable groups and had limited capacities and assets to deal with the crisis (UNWTO 2013, 59-60). However, the case study in Tanzania shows that tour operators were not negatively affected by the crisis and could even increase their package prices. The unskilled labour force has been impacted negatively, as were small stall owners who faced a decrease in revenues because of the crisis. One of the responses of the Tanzanian government has been the intensification of marketing, which might have helped to reduce some of the negative effects (UNWTO 2013, 127-128).

Faster than expected, the tourism sector rebounded and fully compensated for the losses in 2010, with a growth rate of 7 percent in international tourist arrivals. The UNWTO (2013, 6) argues that this confirms the sector's resilience in the medium- and long-term run. It also shows that the sector is a key driver of growth and needed for employment when the economic setting changes. The economic crisis has impacted the tourism industry differently, also the impact on poor and vulnerable groups working in the sector was diverse (UNWTO 2013, 167). The crisis had a severe impact on these poor groups and put into question the capacities of these people to sustain their standard of living. Issues that they had to deal with are unemployment, loss of income, increasing food prices and high costs of care for dependent household members. The economic crisis affected poor and vulnerable groups more than national economies and private business corporations (UNWTO 2013, 167). Countries that had a diversified mixture of sources markets were less affected by the decrease in international tourist arrivals (UNWTO 2013, 15)

Heltberg et al. (2013) examined local responses of 17 countries to the financial crisis. They show that the crisis resulted in severe hardships and that the main safety nets for most people were relatives, friends, and mutual solidarity groups. They conclude that formal safety nets were inadequate for a global shock like the financial crisis. In these 17 countries people often tried to find new livelihoods options by moving to other sectors, localities and occupations. These attempts were often unsuccessful, partially due to competition. However, there were also cases where people adapted their business strategies and creative diversification which helped them cope through hard times (Heltberg et al. 2013, 716-717).

### 1.2.2. Health-related crises and the hospitality industry

During the last 15 years several health-related crises have threatened local communities and damaged the tourism sector (Novelli et al. 2018, 77). Past health crises like SARS and Ebola show evidence of how global health emergencies can wield negative and sometimes long-lasting impacts on tourist demand (Andreini & Mangiò 2020, 42). Gössling et al. (2021, 3) argue that the main reasons for a growing pandemic threat is: a rapidly growing and mobile world population; urbanizing trends and a higher concentration of people; industrialised food production in the global value chains; increased consumption of higher-order foods such as meat; and the growth of global transport networks that act as vector in the spread of pathogens.

The recovery from a health crisis is between the 12 and 34 months. On average it takes destinations about 22 months to recover from a health crisis. This is slightly shorter than from natural disasters or political turmoil but longer than events such as terrorism and oil spills. However, it should be noted that these recovery times differ per case. For example, 35 months after the outbreak of Ebola in Sierra Leone, international arrivals to the country remained 50 percent below the pre-epidemic visitors' peak (Khalilzadeh 2020, 2). The following paragraphs will zoom in on several of these health-related crises and the consequences for the tourism sector.

#### *Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome*

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) is a type of atypical pneumonia caused by a coronavirus, which was first discovered in the southern Chinese province of Guangdong in late 2002 (Henderson 2003, 68). Worldwide SARS claimed around 800 lives and a vaccine was only developed once the disease started to disappear (Huang et al. 2020, 2). The outbreak of SARS in 2003 negatively affected the Asian tourism industry and caused panic worldwide (Mao et al. 2010, 856). It is estimated that up to three million people working the industry lost their jobs in China, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Vietnam. Additionally, it is estimated that these countries lost US\$20 billion in GDP (Novelli et al. 2018, 77) Even in countries that were almost or totally not affected, tourist arrivals dropped by 70 percent or more (McKercher & Chon 2004, 716).

The response of the Chinese government was to close schools, businesses and tourist attractions, and cancel or postpone events. These measures were effective in limiting the spread of the virus. However, they considerably affected social and economic development (Zeng et al. 2005, 308). The measures taken, led to a fear of infection and the quarantine

measures imposed led many people to cancel or change their travel plans (Mao et al. 2010, 856). The “general travel advisory” of the World Health Organization (WHO) triggered a chain reaction of responses. More than 110 countries placed travel restriction on Chinese tourists at the peak of the outbreak (McKercher & Chon 2004, 717). Additionally, the SARS outbreak coincided with the tourism high season, and so significant losses were felt in tourism businesses (Zeng et al. 2005, 314). Zeng et al. (2005, 315) examined 71 household in China and find that SARS caused a decline of 37.19 percent of annual income in 2002 for households directly involved in tourism. Especially in rural areas where local household were dependent on employment in tourism related businesses, the effects were vast (Zeng et al. 2005, 319). Before the SARS outbreak in 2002, tourism accounted 5.4 percent of the GDP of China, around \$67 billion. After the pandemic it is estimated that the country experienced a reduction of \$17 billion in tourism revenue (Huang et al. 2020, 2).

In Singapore, also affected by the SARS outbreak, the concern of many tourism businesses was survival. The focus in the past had not been on domestic tourism. However, during the pandemic it was welcomed as a new opportunity by the Singapore Tourism Board, which targeted the locals with a variety of campaigns. The recovery of Singapore as a tourist destination depended on the one hand on the progress of the virus, and on the other hand on precautions taken, product innovations and marketing plans. To inform and reassure the travel industry and consumers, a push marketing campaign was launched. A range of measure were taken to minimize the threat of SARS and several hotels and attractions were identified as “SARS safe”. One major barrier to a return of normality was that Singapore was on the list of SARS-affected countries by the WHO. Additionally, there was the possibility of a second wave and the fate of Singapore’s rehabilitation was linked to that of the region (Henderson 2003, 4).

Even though the initial drastic drop in tourist arrivals to China, the destination managed to rebound quickly (Zeng et al. 2005, 318). One of the lessons that Zeng et al. (2005, 320) find is that tourism-based economies suffered severely due to the SARS pandemic. They suggest that when new tourism areas are developed, tourism should not be the only pillar component but should also include other sectors. In that way local households can participate in tourism and find other economic opportunities to spread to risk.

### *The Ebola outbreak*

The outbreak of Ebola in West Africa from 2013 to 2016 is another more recent health-related crisis. The outbreak was not the first incidence since its discovery in 1976, but it was

the deadliest one. The virus damaged the continents tourism industry and national authorities responded differently (Novelli et al. 2018, 80-81). According to a report of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (2015, ix) the Ebola outbreak in the affected countries threatened, next to the economic effects, also the social fabric that glue societies together. Trust between the government and the people, and between communities had deteriorated. Many had less to eat and the outbreak eroded age-long communal behaviour, which included attendance at ceremonies and less caregiving to family and members of the community (UNDG 2015, iv). Interestingly the report warns that the global community is not prepared for another pandemic like Ebola, they state: “[..] *the next outbreak should not take the world by surprise*” (UNDG 2015, vi). The Ebola virus disease outbreak also affected the political infrastructure in several West-African countries. In Sierra Leone there were transport limitations, restrictions of movement and constraints regarding people’s right of assembly. The government faced criticism after the government stopped spending money on services not directly linked to battling Ebola virus disease.

In Liberia, the political infrastructure was also affected. The President declared a state of emergency and introduced astonishing measures. The outbreak of Ebola worsened the lack of trust that many Liberians already had in their government. Elections were constantly postponed and due to several years of civil war, there was already a deep mistrust in the government and its institutions. This was also the case in Guinea where elections were postponed as well. There were concerns among citizens that another delay would increase tensions between the government and opposition parties (Qureshi 2016, 188-189).

Although the outbreak was limited to West Africa, many African economies were hurt. Especially the tourist industry, travellers reconsidered their trips even to destinations as far as Kenya and South Africa (Baker 2015, 9). The fear and stigmatization had an impact on the whole continent (Novelli et al. 2018, 82), since Africa is often perceived as a single destination (Mizrachi & Fuchs 2016, 2).

### *The swine flu pandemic*

The swine flu (H1N1) pandemic was first detected in Mexico in 2009. It is estimated that the number of deaths due to the virus range between 150.000-575.000 worldwide. Similar measures were taken during this pandemic and the SARS outbreak. Travel was restricted and Mexico went into lockdown. H1N1 occurred during the global financial crisis, making it even more challenging because the tourism sector was Mexico’s largest service industry and made-up 8 percent of the country’s total GDP. As a result, the country lost about \$665 million in

tourism receipts. The effect of H1N1 proved to be far more devastating compared to SARS' impact on China because of the Mexican reliance on the hospitality and tourism industry. Not only Mexico suffered major losses. The United States of America lost around \$250 million, Canada \$31 million and the United Kingdom around \$20 million (Huang et al. 2020, 2).

Next to the lockdown, Mexico implemented tax cuts for businesses and invested in marketing and advertising to promote over 100 popular destinations within the country to attract tourists again and inject cash into the economy. The lockdown was an effort to prevent further damage and the negative economic effects were short-lived (Huang et al. 2020, 2). Also, Rassy & Smith (2013, 831) state that the shocks were relatively easy to absorb by the tourism sector and the losses experienced were highly influenced by the local and international risk perception. Towards the end of 2009, the number of arrivals, revenue and hotel occupation had recovered in most destinations.

#### *Middle East Respiratory Syndrome*

Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) is a respiratory disease caused by a coronavirus. The MERS outbreak in South Korea in 2015 resulted in 186 hospitalizations, 38 deaths and around 16,000 people quarantined (Joo et al. 2019, 100). There were concerns that MERS would spread and quarantine measures were taken, and travel advisories were made (Huang et al. 2020, 3). The MERS outbreak in South Korea resulted in a reduction of 2 million tourists and lost \$2.6 billion in revenue. However, the MERS outbreak did not make an evident impact on Korea's annual GDP growth in 2015. Annual GDP even grew 5 percent relative to the year before, the reason being that the South Korea is not a heavily tourism-dependent region (Joo et al. 2019, 107).

#### *Conclusion*

What the above crises have in common is the repercussions taken in the event of a shock mirror that of previous pandemics and other crises. However, what makes the COVID-19 pandemic different is the scale and probably the time for the hospitality industry to recover. As shown above, earlier crises create direct and indirect losses for tourism, however they also may have positive effects. Zeng et al. (2005, 307) argue that even though the Asian financial crisis resulted in job losses and a diminished value of many tourism businesses, it also demonstrated the resilience of the tourism sector. The crisis uncovered problems in planning, management, marketing and financial practices. Another interesting point is that the outbreak of a disease in one region can have negative impacts for an entire continent, like the case of Ebola. Additionally, the outbreak of a disease and the measures taken to stop the spread can

also lead to political instability of a country. In general, the influence of these crises is often temporary and tourism rebounds relatively quickly.

### 1.3 COVID-19, tourism, and policy responses

#### 1.3.1 COVID-19 and responses

The coronavirus was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, a Chinese city. Since the emergence of the virus in early 2020, the rapid-spreading virus has caused global disruption. On March 11, 2020, the WHO declared COVID-19 as a global pandemic after the virus had spread across 114 countries (WHO 2020a). As of August 16, 2020 more than 21,294,845 confirmed cases and 761,779 deaths were registered (WHO 2020b). Numerous communities and countries have been facing lockdowns of differing lengths and economic outcomes of the pandemic have been devastating (Ioannides & Gyimóthy 2020, 625).

In response to the pandemic many countries have taken bold quarantine and lockdown measures of differing lengths to curb the virus. Measures included travel bans and restrictions, and social distance enforcement. To alleviate the impact of the measures, many countries have passed policies to avoid job losses. Measures as social distancing can be effective in slowing the spread of the virus but come with a significant economic cost. The economic concern in lower- and middle-income countries is different than that of high-income countries since people are either self-employed or are active in the informal sector with limited savings and access to safety nets (Barnet-Howell & Mobarak 2020). Loayza (2020, 3) state the pandemic will especially hurt low- and middle-income countries since they often lack the resources and capacity to deal with a large systemic shock. Grančay (2020) assesses the situation of tour guides around the world and the measures that governments have taken to reduce the negative impacts of the pandemic. Most of the countries in the world, particularly countries in Africa, South America and the Pacific, took no measures to support entrepreneurs that were hit by the COVID-19 crisis (Grančay 2020, 3). The most used measure was giving direct financial help, which was often connected to a certain condition such as a decrease in income. However, this measure was mostly adopted by countries in the European Union, United States of America, Canada and several countries in Asia. This shows that tour guides are often overlooked as part of the tourism industry. Governments mostly direct their attention to hotels, restaurants and travel agencies (Grančay 2020, 6).

### 1.3.2 COVID-19, tourism, and the future of travel

The global pandemic has shocked the entire global tourism industry. Our highly mobilized world has come to a halt and businesses of all sizes have been directly or indirectly faced the consequences of the pandemic (Ioannides & Gyimóthy 2020, 2). By the end of April 2020, all countries in the world had imposed some kind of travel restrictions (UNWTO 2020a). The rapid emergence and spread of the virus made it difficult to comprehend the scope of what was happening. This uncertainty can also be seen by the estimates made by the UNWTO. In a press release on March 6, 2020 the UNWTO (2020e) estimated that the pandemic would lead international tourist arrivals to decline 1-3 percent compared to 2019. On March 26, 3 weeks later, they stated that international arrivals could decline by 20-30 percent (see Figure 2.) (UNWTO 2020f). However, international arrivals declined 65 percent in January to June 2020, with arrivals in June down by 93 percent (UNWTO 2020g, 3). It might take 2½ to 4 years for international tourist arrivals to return to the levels of 2019 (UNWTO 2020g, 5). As a result, millions of individuals in the hospitality sector have lost their jobs, and have fallen into poverty, whereas others experience high levels of job insecurity and psychological risks (Bajrami et al. 2020, 1).

2020 forecast - international tourist arrivals, world (millions)

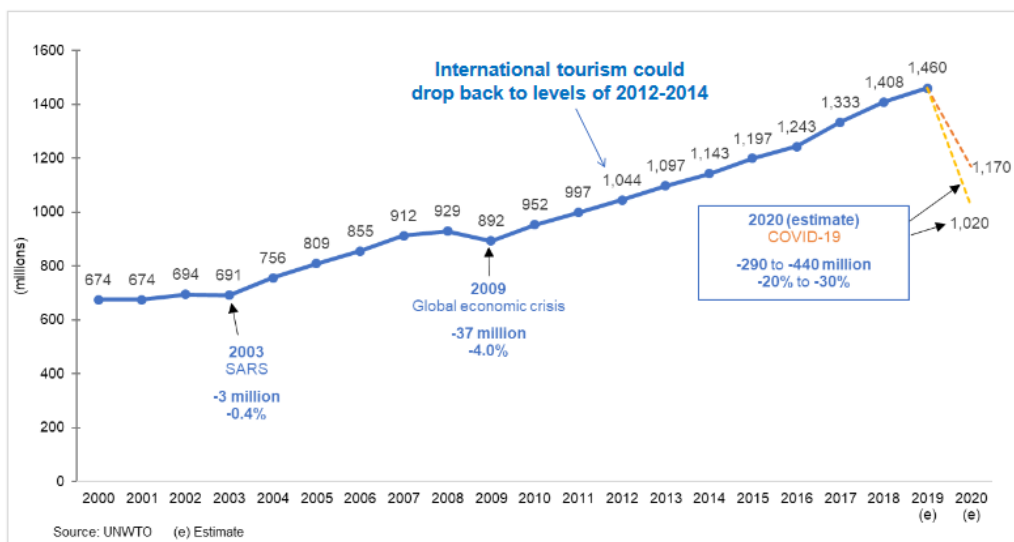


Figure 2. 2020 Forecast - International Tourist arrivals (UNWTO 2020e)



International tourist arrivals: Future scenarios (millions)

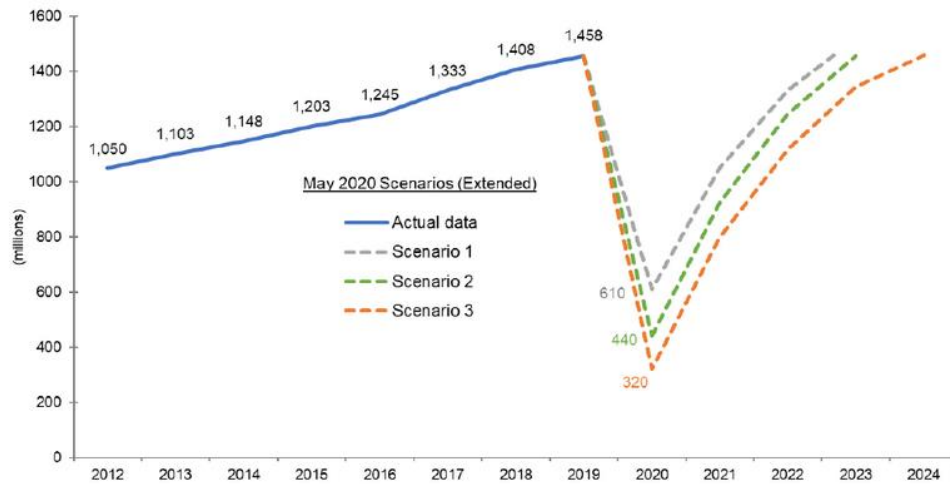


Figure 3. International tourist arrivals: Future scenarios (UNWTO 2020g, 11)

What will travel be like after the pandemic? Ioannides & Gyimóthy (2020, 4) contemplate if the crisis will radically transform global travel patterns. They question if in a post-COVID-19 era the mobility of tourists will be transformed not only on short-term but also in the long-run. Will people travel more locally instead of going on long-haul flights? Also, Wen et al. (2020, 9) state that COVID-19 will have far-reaching impacts on tourists' consumption behaviour, depending on people's cultural backgrounds. There will be a growing popularity of independent travel, luxury trips and health and wellness tourism. Tourists may take fewer trips but may spend longer at a certain destination. Slow tourism may therefore become more accepted, meaning an increasing focus on local populations, longer lengths of stay and more fulfilling experiences. The travel quality is prioritized over the number of trips (Wen et al. 2020, 9).

Even though there is an increasing impetus for individuals to change their travel behaviour, the transformation of the tourism system is extremely complex. There is on the one hand research that highlights the need for biodiversity conservation and climate change imperatives. On the other hand, there are strong business and political voices that want to open as soon as possible, so that the economy can return to "normal". They argue that affected businesses should receive financial support from the government without having to meet any sustainability or climate change measures (Hall et al. 2020, 584). Hall et al. (2020, 585) state that if governments bailouts do not come with environmental requirements it becomes unlikely that more sustainable forms of tourism will arise. Also, Ioannides & Gyimóthy (2020, 629) state that bailing out large-scale travel and tourism players, such as

airlines, multinational hotel chains and tour operators, might prevail existing power asymmetries in the sector. They question what will happen to the millions of low paid workers who depend on international visitors.

The resilience of tourism will depend on media coverage on the impacts of COVID-19 and government actions to boost the economy. Additionally, the revival of the tourism system is highly dependent on the enforcement of non-pharmaceutical interventions, such as quarantine and border control, since these measures restrict mobility (Hall et al. 2020, 585).

The recovery in most destinations will start with a focus on domestic tourism to encourage travellers to travel locally and regionally to boost the economy and reduce leakages from the national economy. The recovery of international tourism will be more complicated and depend on the development of a vaccine, anxiety among travellers and at-risk market segments, for example senior tourists. Therefore, Hall et al. (2020, 588) expect that it will become a requirement to have a medical certificate, clearances, and vaccination for entering a country. Additionally, there may be restrictions on eco-tourism and travel to isolated communities who may not have the health facilities to cope with an outbreak.

As said earlier, the overall recovery will mainly depend on the interplay of economic and health interventions. An individual country cannot restore international aviation and other transport services when other countries remain closed. Once the pandemic fades, the world will be poorer and more divided. This will not be convenient for the tourism industry, especially not for a coordinated and strategic endeavour towards sustainability. Furthermore, governments will want to start tourism as soon as they can to reduce unemployment. A focus on domestic tourism will have positive implications for sustainable tourism trajectories, since it leads to lower emissions, place-based economic development, and tourism practices (Hall et al. 2020, 589). Hall et al. (2020, 589) however believe that this focus on domestic tourism is likely to be temporary.

The changes that will come because of COVID-19 will be uneven in space and time. Some destinations will reconsider their tourism industry and will focus on domestic tourism and more sustainable forms of tourism. This, however, will not happen without governmental interventions. For other destinations, the focus will be business-as-usual (Hall et al. 2020, 591).

#### 1.4 Livelihoods Framework & Coping Strategies

A livelihood broadly refers to a means of making a living, and includes the capabilities, assets and activities required to do so (Zoomers & Otsuki 2017, 169). Livelihoods are

strategies households engage with to meet their basic needs within the restraints imposed by access to capital and contextual factors. The study on livelihood strategies became popular in the 1980s by the work of Robert Chambers and Gordan Conway (1992). Studies on livelihoods mainly focused on the lives of the rural poor. The concept was developed to understand the complex way in which people make a living and understand the motives and consequences of adopting a particular livelihood strategy (Le Dé et al. 2018, 1205). Le Dé et al. (2018, 1205) define a livelihood as: *“people’s resources and capacities to meet basic needs and sustain them durably, including in the face of stresses (e.g., seasonality, environmental degradation) and shocks (e.g., disasters related to natural hazards, economic crises)”*. The assets available to households, communities, and societal levels function as a source of capital to keep, accumulate, exchange or deplete, and put to work with the aim to earn an income or for other benefits (Rakodi 1999, 316). These capital assets used by households consist out of five types (see Box 1).

Households seek to mobilise resources and opportunities and combine these into a livelihood strategy which can be a mix of labour market involvement, savings, borrowing and investing, productive and reproductive activities, income, labour and asset pooling, and social networking (Rakodi & Lloyd-Jones 2002, 7). Figure 4. shows Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) including the five key elements: the vulnerability context, capitals assets, transforming structures and processes, livelihood strategies and livelihood outcomes. This framework is developed to improve our understanding of livelihoods.

### Box 1.

#### THE CAPITAL ASSETS

- **Human capital:** The skills, knowledge and ability to labour and good health which determine the returns from their labour.
- **Physical capital:** Comprises the equipment, infrastructure, and other productive resources owned by individuals, the business sector, or the country itself.
- **Financial capital:** The financial resources that are available to people, such as savings, credit, remittances, loan access and pensions.
- **Natural capital:** The natural resource stocks from which resource flows and services are derived, which are useful for livelihoods. This includes: land, water and wildlife.
- **Social capital:** the social resources such as networks, membership of groups, relationships of trust and reciprocity which people rely on in the pursuit of their livelihoods (DFID 2001).

The livelihood approach takes an actor-oriented approach. It puts emphasis on inequalities and the allocation of assets and power. Rather than seeing people as victims, people play an active role in achieving their livelihoods through continuously exploiting opportunities (De Haan & Zoomers 2005, 38). Additionally, it is not just the number of assets that people have that enable sustainable livelihood strategies. It is also the quality and stability of assets that influence people's ability to "switch" between assets which result in the livelihood outcomes (Parizeau 2015, 169). Assets are not just resources that individuals use in gaining a livelihood but are what gives people the capability to be and to act (Bebbington 1999, 2022).

De Haan & Zoomers (2005, 33-45) argue that access and the role of transforming structures are key, but these have not been sufficiently examined. Access is a key element in the SLF which heavily depends on the performance of social relations. Therefore, they argue that there should be more emphasis on the role of power relations. Also, Sakdapolrak (2013, 20-21) states that structural constraints, which limit people's choices, are downplayed.

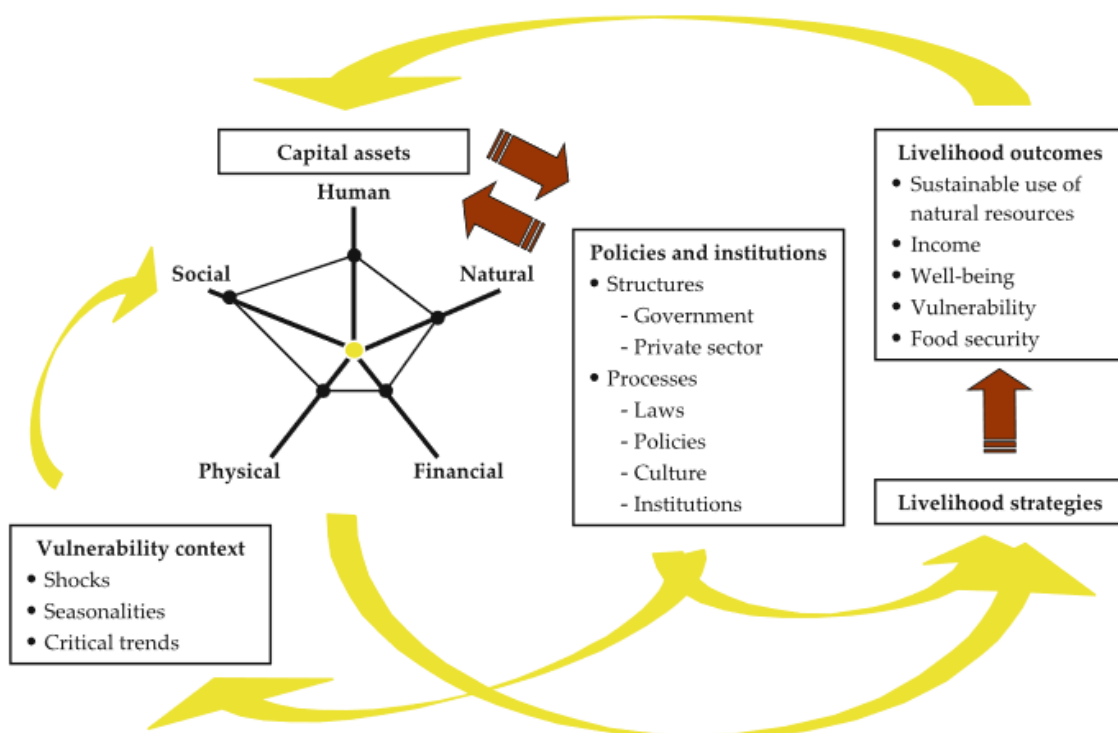


Figure 4. The sustainable livelihoods framework (Serrat 2017, 22)

The livelihood approach has often been adopted for disaster risk reduction because it provides a useful guideline for understanding survival strategies that households and individuals adopt during a crisis. Disasters worsen people's everyday hardships, most of the livelihood strategies to overcome disasters are related to resources and assets that are ingrained in people's everyday life. The ability of people to face and recover from a disaster

also relies on people's capacity to access and use resources that are external to local communities (Le Dé et al. 2018, 1205).

Whereas the livelihood approach was initially developed to study rural poverty, it has also been applied to urban livelihoods. Several studies have shown that not only rural people use diversification as a way of survival but also urban dwellers (Ellis 1998, 3). It can be questioned if the livelihood approach is only applicable for studying poor people and the way they cope with changing situations.

Households respond to risk in diverse ways (Dercon 2002, 142). The coping strategies households and individuals undertake in response to a crisis rely on several aspects. Skoufias (2003, 1088) argues that it is common that poorer households are less equipped to deal with shocks. Informal insurance arrangements have their limitations, especially when a shock affects all members. Secondly, Dercon (2002, 143) states that an important aspect is the frequencies and intensity of shocks and the persistence of their impact. Coping becomes more difficult if shocks persist.

The above has shown that individuals use several assets to cope with a crisis or shock. People use their assets, which encompasses both material and social assets. This thesis will not look at whether livelihoods are sustainable in terms of the outcomes of livelihood strategies. I aim to position the question of how tour guides respond to the global crisis as an issue of livelihood coping.

### 1.5 Livelihoods and resilience in times of crisis

A few studies have tried to link livelihood approaches and resilience (Prado et al 2015, 30). The Institute of Development Studies (1998) understands resilience as a key component of a sustainable livelihood and defines it as the ability of livelihood to cope with and recover from stresses and shocks. This definition implies both the ability to cope, through temporary adjustments in response to change, and adaptive capacity, through long-term shifts in livelihood strategies (Scoones 1998, 6).

The resilience concept has gained popularity in several research disciplines such as ecology, disaster research, climate change adaptations, and social protection as well as other fields in which shocks, risk, and vulnerability are examined (Thulstrup 2015, 353). The concept has its roots in ecological sciences. Holling (1973) defined resilience as the ability of a system to maintain and adapt its essential structure and function in the face of disturbance while maintaining its identity. In the literature there is however little agreement upon a single definition of resilience and the variety of definitions in the literature highlights the diversity

of applications in particular contexts. Often mentioned in definitions of resilience are phrases such as: ‘capacity to recover’ and ‘a degree of preparedness’ (Béné et al. 2012, 10).

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) defines resilience as: “*the ability of a system and its component parts to anticipate, absorb, accommodate, or recover from the effects of a hazardous event in a timely and efficient manner, including through ensuring the preservation, restoration, or improvement of its essential basic structures and functions*” (IPCC 2012, 5). Also specialised agencies and programmes of the United Nations have started using and defining resilience. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO 2021) perceives resilience as: “*the ability to prevent disasters and crises as well as to anticipate, absorb, accommodate or recover from them in a timely, efficient and sustainable manner. This includes protecting, restoring and improving livelihoods systems in the face of threats that impact agriculture, nutrition, food security and safety*”. The current trend in resilience thinking is that resilience is viewed as an ability, which recognises that systems and processes are not static but instead are constantly changing and evolving, rather than perceiving it as an outcome that can be measured and monitored (Béné et al. 2012, 11). Several scholars currently define the concepts as the capacity of a system to absorb a disturbance without losing its basic structure and functions and the capacity for self-organisation and learning (Nelson, Adger, & Brown, 2007, 396; Thulstrup 2015, 353).

Using the concept of resilience offers a way to examine how communities and households react to change and how they can build capacity to adapt to change and shocks (Thulstrup 2015, 353).

In this study resilience is understood as the level of access to capital (financial, natural, physical, social, and human) that can be used to respond and adapt to change and which structural constraints they face. Adaptive capacity is understood as the ability to diversify or change livelihood strategies, by mobilising and using different capitals, with the goal to absorb stresses and shocks. Thulstrup (2015) incorporates resilience and adaptive capacity in the SLF, see Figure 5. Livelihood resilience is determined by people’s access to resources and will determine if individuals, households, and communities are able to absorb shocks. Having access to several capitals can increase people’s ability to influence and interact with structures and processes. In turn, these structures and processes can enable or constrain access to assets and form long-term livelihoods strategies that are taken. This can also go the other way, where the pursued livelihood strategies may influence processes, such as government policy. Next, adaptive capacity is formed through these long-term livelihood

strategies. If the adaptive capacity is high, then there are good opportunities for increasing livelihood outcomes (Thulstrup 2015, 353).

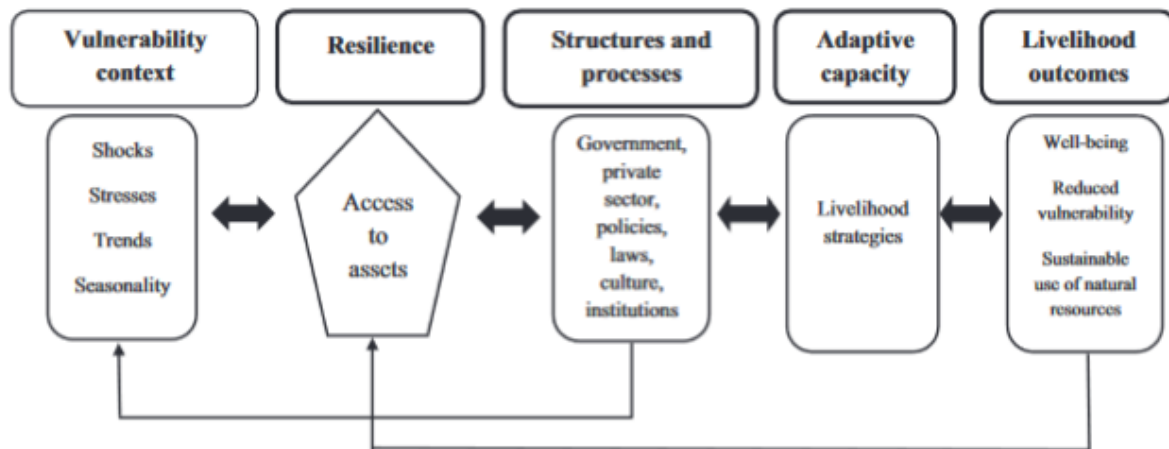


Figure 5. Incorporation of resilience and adaptive capacity in the sustainable livelihood approach. (Thulstrup 2015, 354).

### *Resilience, crisis and tourism studies*

Several studies in tourism have applied the concept of resilience. For example, Biggs et al. (2012) examine the resilience of reef tourism enterprises in Thailand to disasters. They find that informal enterprises display higher levels of resilience than formal enterprises. Informal enterprises could depend more on support from friends, family and their community during a crisis. Formal enterprises had lower levels of social capital but were more likely to move abroad, meaning they are not as tied to a location in comparison with informal enterprises. The importance of social capital is also underlined in a study on the resilience of tourism destinations in China (Guo et al. 2018, 982). Residents with a good social network might feel better positioned to perceive risk, reorganise, learn and plan, and cope with the crisis and changes. Linking social capital, which is how people are vertically networked with associations, institutional power and authorities, was of most significance (Guo et al. 2018, 982).

Biggs et al (2012, 650) find that access to finances was more difficult for informal enterprises because they often have little collateral to offer. However, formal enterprises had higher ongoing monthly expenses, whereas informal enterprises had lower requirements for a continuous income flow (Biggs et al. 2012, 658). Formal businesses had greater capacity to promote their business on a global stage, whereas informal enterprises relied on customers who are already at the destination. Therefore, formal enterprises had an additional source of



resilience (Biggs et al. 2012, 659).

Another study by Dahles & Susilowati (2015) that looked at the resilience of small-scale tourism businesses showed they were resilient in three different ways: survival, adaptation, and innovation. The most common was survival, which meant waiting for the pre-crisis situation to return. Few changed their ways drastically and ventured into a new start-up. This included looking at new strategies that focused on domestic tourism while others took on a job in another industry. These businesses showed considerable adaptive capacity since they became less vulnerable and dependent on one market. Resilience was strongest among those who saw the crisis as a change for new opportunities. They conclude that the tourism businesses formed an essential part of local livelihoods. The embeddedness of the business meant that they were able to expand and diversify within the sector in times of growth and were able to downsize and diversify across different sectors in times of crisis. Therefore, the local embeddedness of the tourism businesses is crucial (Dahles & Susilowati 2015,48).

The overarching objective of this study is to examine the livelihood strategies, barriers and limits faced by tour guides by using the livelihood approach and examine their ability to cope with change. The livelihood framework helps to explore and analyse which capitals are used to cope with crisis. The following chapter will discuss the methodology.

## Chapter 2: Methodology

A qualitative research approach was adopted, which is an appropriate means of understanding individual perceptions. This chapter will cover the research questions, methods used, sampling strategy, reflection on the methods used, research positionality and limitations of the overall research.

### 2.1 Research questions

This research focuses on the effects of the COVID-19 crisis and explores how tour guides cope with the COVID-19 outbreak. Aim of the study is to understand their stories. What capitals do they have and use in times of crisis? What obstacles do they face? And what implications does this have for their resilience?

This research will examine the experiences of Ethiopian tour guides. To examine this topic the study will strive to answer the following main question:

**How does the ongoing COVID-19 crisis affect the livelihoods of tour guides and their chances to cope with this crisis?**

The following sub-questions were formed to answer the main research question:

- How do tour guides perceive the effects of the pandemic?
- Which capitals are of importance for tour guides during the crisis?
- How do different institutions respond to the crisis?
- What are the implications of the institutional response?
- How do the coping strategies of tour guides relate to resilience?

### 2.2 Population

The focus in this research is on tour guides. The reason behind this choice is that they play a vital role in the tourism industry. They play numerous roles such as a mediator, interpreter, translator, culture broker, leader, teacher, host conduit and ambassador. They are vital for the tourism process and on the tourist experience (Ababneh 2017, 203). However, as Grančay (2020) argued tour guides are often overlooked in the current measures that governments take to reduce the negative impacts of the pandemic.

Additionally, this population was chosen since many tour guides have access to the Internet. The initial focus of the research was to focus on a broader group of people, this focus was changed because I had to return home due to the outbreak of COVID-19. Since guides are often overlooked and not everyone has access to the Internet the shift was made to

tour guides, access to Internet is important to them to for example keep in touch with tourists.

It is good to be aware that there is not just one type of tour guide. There are national tour guides, local guides, city guides, tour leaders and people who combine it with other jobs.

## 2.3 Methods and access to the field

### 2.3.1 Conducting research in times of a pandemic

The initial plan for the research was to conduct four months of fieldwork in Tigray, the northernmost region in Ethiopia. The research design included on-site ethnographic methods such as participant observation, unstructured and semi-structured interviews conducted among different stakeholders involved in tourism around the Gheralta Rock hewn church in Tigray. However, due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 I had to return to the Netherlands after six weeks. The first few weeks of the research in Mekelle, the capital city of the Tigray region, were mostly about networking and adjusting the research proposal. Upon return changes had to be made to the research plan in order to collect data from a distance. The research plan was adjusted, and the focus was turned to the COVID-19 pandemic and the impacts on tour guides.

On the website of the Ethiopian Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MoCT) there was a list of national tour guides in Ethiopia which included email addresses as well. I have continued to collect data by sending an email (see appendix B) to the first 90 addresses, asking if they would be willing to cooperate in an interview. Several of the mail addresses were not working and others did not reply. Fortunately, several guides replied, and interviews were conducted via video or voice calls. Next to the national tour guides, interviews with local guides were also carried out. Access to this group of guides was achieved through snowballing.

### 2.3.2 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary data collection method. An interview guide (see appendix C) was used as a guideline during the interviews. This interview guide was created by formulating questions about topics that come forward in the SLF. Interviews took place via WhatsApp and Zoom. Several of the interviews took place without video due to poor network connections. These interviews elicited information on socio-economic characteristics, livelihoods, tourism related activities, changes to livelihood activities due to the pandemic, attitudes towards tourism, issues and concerns, and aspirations for the future. A total of 23 interviews were conducted and most participants were male. Before starting the interview, verbal informed consent was obtained from all participants. All interviews were

recorded with permission and transcribed in the days after the interview took place. Most interviews took around 45 minutes. After the interview I kept in touch with several of the participants and sometimes received an update on how they were doing. Furthermore, pseudonyms were used to ensure anonymity of participants.

### 2.3.3 Secondary data collection

The beginning of the research was focused on collecting secondary data to examine the research topic, available literature, and gaps in particular. An image of the tourism sector was formed before the field research. To look at the current COVID-19 crisis and the impact on tour guides from a different perspective next to the primary data, secondary data was examined. The examination of different sources included: academic literature, government documents and policy papers.

## 2.4 Data analysis

Primary data acquired from participants through interviews were coded using NVivo software and then compared. Major themes were identified and categorized according to the elements of the SLF. The results from the interviews were cross-checked with information from secondary sources.

Boeije (2010) states that there are three stages of coding that should be addressed. First, open coding, this is the process where all data is divided into fragments. These fragments are then compared and grouped into categories with the same topic. Next is axial coding, this stage consists of coding around several single categories. The main purpose of this type of coding is to determine which elements in the research are dominant and which are less dominant. The last step is selective coding, this means looking for connections between the categories to find patterns in what is happening in the field. The main aim of this step is to highlight themes and issues that have come up repeatedly during the interviews, and what the main message is that participants have tried to bring across. Additionally, it is useful to gain understanding of how these issues are related and how they are shaped by the participants perspective (Boeije 2010).

## 2.5 Reflections on the research and positionality

As to every other research, there are some limitations to this research as well. It should be noted that the data used in this study was based on telephone interviews, as COVID-19-induced social distancing and lockdown did not allow for face-to-face interviews. Using virtual methods, I felt that there was more distance between the participants and researcher.

During face-to-face interviews there is more small talk and it is easier to build rapport, also people might open more than when conducting an online interview. Additionally, I believe that during face-to-face interviews there are many nonverbal aspects that can give the interviewer additional information which does not come forward during a voice call.

Secondly, a drawback is that it was not possible to interview a wider range of tour guides, since not all guides have access to good internet connectivity. To acquire a more complete image and understanding, these tour guides should also be included. Also, there were a few guides that responded to my mail but needed money to conduct the interview. Therefore, the guides interviewed may not give a representative image of the experience of tour guides because these were not included. During several interviews' connectivity problems arose, which made it sometimes difficult to communicate or hear what a participant says.

Thirdly, the attitudes that people have towards an 'outsider' or a potential tourist might have influenced interview outcomes. People working in the tourism industry can also see me as a potential client. Saying something negative about tourism in Ethiopia could give the destination a bad image. Therefore, participants might have been more careful when speaking to me. In that sense my background affected the outcomes of this research as well. In the same line there were sometimes expectations that I would promote Ethiopia as a tourist destination in my thesis.

Furthermore, the research was conducted while the tourism industry in the entire world was still facing a tough crisis caused by the pandemic. Many of the countries where most tourists to Ethiopia come from were still in lockdown and tour guides were not able to carry out their job. Additionally, interviews took place from May to October 2020, the situation in the first interviews was different than in later interviews. In May there seemed to be more restrictions in the country than in later interviews. It is difficult to foresee the situation in the near or distant future. Post-crisis responses are therefore not included.

Lastly, during the time of this research the political and security situation in the country is unstable. It is possible that participants may not feel comfortable talking about certain issues over the phone. Moreover, most participants in this study are male, there was only one female participant. It can also be the case that male participants were reluctant to share their challenges and struggles due to gender dynamics (e.g., female interviewer).

## Chapter 3: Setting the context

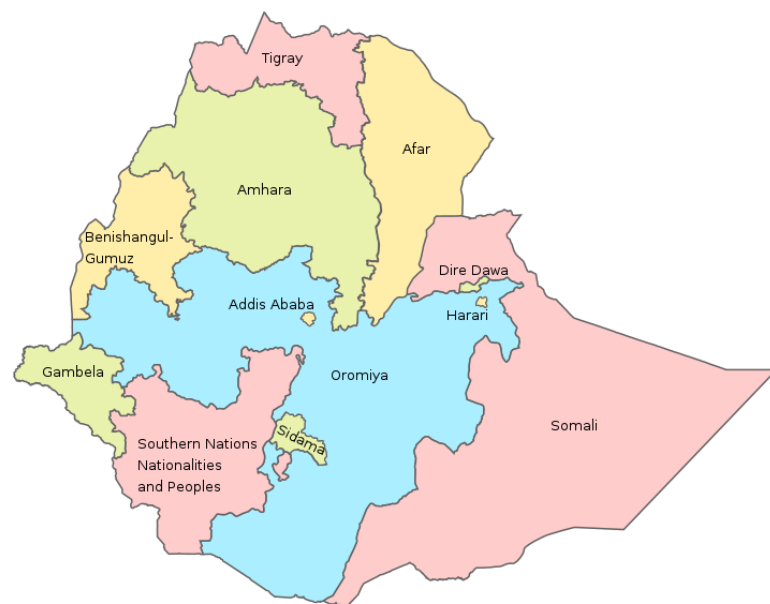
The purpose of this chapter is to explore and examine the context of Ethiopia. First, there will be some general information on Ethiopia. The following section will further delve into the significance of tourism for Ethiopia and how tourism has developed over the years. The final part will deal with the tour guiding standard and introduce the tour guides.

### 3.1 Ethiopia: a snapshot

Ethiopia is a landlocked country located in the Horn of Africa (see Map 1). It is the second most populous country in Africa, with a population of 112 million inhabitants in 2019 (The World Bank 2019). The country is divided into ten regional states based on ethnicity (CIA 2020) (see Map 2). In general, human development trends in Ethiopia have shown improvement in recent years. The Human Development Index (HDI) increased from 0.283 by the year 2000 to 0.448 in 2015 (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] 2018, 22). Despite showing rapid economic growth, Ethiopia remains one of the poorest countries in the world. The Ethiopian state is heavily involved in the economy, and key sectors are state-owned. More than 80 percent of the population lives in rural areas, which also accounts for the largest share of employment (Intelligence Agency 2020). Young people dominate the population, more than 70 percent of Ethiopian are under the age of 30 (UNDP 2018, 7). Additionally, unemployment is higher in Ethiopia in comparison to other African economies. Unemployment is especially



Map 1. Location of Ethiopia. Reprinted from Wikimedia Commons website, by Gagiiboli, 2014, retrieved from [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Localisation\\_Ethiopia.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Localisation_Ethiopia.png). Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 Generic license.



Map 2. Regions of Ethiopia. Reprinted from Wikimedia Commons website, by Jfblanc, 2020, retrieved from [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Regions\\_of\\_Ethiopia\\_EN.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Regions_of_Ethiopia_EN.svg). Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 Generic license.

high in urban areas and under women and youth (UNDP 2018, 70). Among young people in urban areas in Ethiopia unemployment is a middle-class phenomenon among relatively well-educated job seekers (Serneels 2007, 181).

### 3.1.1 Social support mechanisms in Ethiopia

Households in Ethiopia have low saving power, only 23 percent of the population saves for the future (Lakew & Azadi 2020, 7). Lakew & Azadi (2020, 7) state that this failure to save, affects people's ability to deal with crises. Family networks are of great importance within Ethiopian society. Relatives help each other during times of sickness, famine, and war (Abebe & Aase 2007, 2059). In the absence of essential social assistance schemes, many people have no choice but to rely on family ties in difficult times. The Amharic proverb '*ke eruq zemed yeqirb gorebet*', meaning 'an intimate neighbour is better than a distant relative' shows the importance of neighbours and friends (Kassa 2017, 173). Also, Devereux & Teshome (2013, 73) state that Ethiopia is well-known for its strong traditional support system which functions as a first line of defence against shocks and vulnerabilities. This system starts from the extended family, which is there to protect the young, old, disabled, and ill members of society. Next, there are also community-based systems for instance *idir* (burial societies) and *iqub* (informal savings schemes) these systems provide its members with semi-formal insurance against unexpected stresses and help communities to deal with economic and social problems.

Even though the significance that social networks play, there are only few studies on social networks in Ethiopia (Kebede & Butterfield 2009, 358). Abbay et al. (2019, 3) noted that next to economic reasons, participation in social networks was also motivated by the desire to achieve higher status. They show in their study in rural areas in Tigray, Ethiopia that people believed active participation in social networks opened the way for them to be positively perceived by others and it built their esteem, this in turn can lead to economic benefits.

### 3.2 Tourism's significance for Ethiopia

Even though Ethiopia might not be a famous tourist destination, the country possesses a plethora of tourist attractions. Robinson & Jonker (2016, 4) state that although there are plenty of touristic destinations in the country, the tourism infrastructure is at its infancy. The tourist destinations are poorly maintained, access to destinations can be difficult and inappropriately expensive. Additionally, there is a lack of marketing to attract tourists to the country and a lack of marketing of tourist destinations once tourists are in the country.



As most destinations in sub-Saharan Africa, Ethiopia is highly dependent on long-haul travellers (Rogerson & Baum 2020, 8). The pandemic exposes the fragility of the globalized tourism industry and Africa (Rogerson & Baum 2020, 11). Africa’s high dependence on global visitation and global capital has resulted in major challenges for the continent. In 2018 Ethiopia’s travel and tourism economy grew by 48.6 percent, the largest of any country in the world. Additionally, the sector now represents 9.4 percent of the total economy (WTTC 2019, 11), whereas in 2016 tourism accounted for less than 2 percent of GDP (Ali 2016, 7). In 2017, the travel and tourism sector directly supported 604,000 jobs, which is 2.4 percent of total employment (Altes 2018, 14). Figure 6. shows the number of international arrivals to Ethiopia in comparison to other East-African countries. Ethiopia shows a stable increase of tourist arrivals over the years. In 2016 there was a slowdown in visitor arrivals, which can be explained due to unrest that arose in the Oromia region at the end of 2016 (Altes 2018 12). In November 2016 anti-government protests took place that led the government to declare a six-month state of emergency. This was problematic for the tourism sector since many international operators cancelled their trips to the country. However, some tour and travel companies found that their businesses were not affected by the political unrest. Also, the government advocated that the state of emergency created a favourable environment for tourists to travel within the country, and they stated that tourism

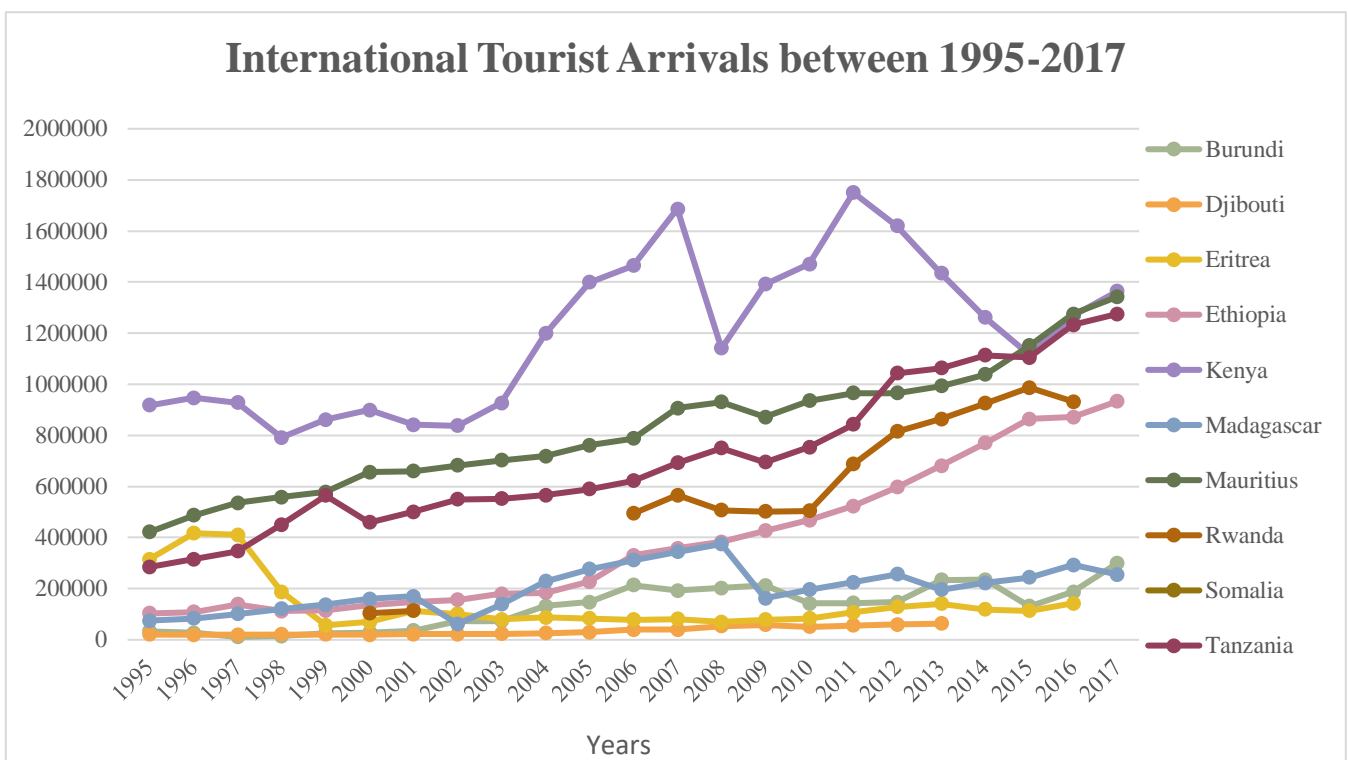


Figure 6. International Tourist Arrivals (The World Bank 2018)

had not been adversely affected due to the political crisis. Along the same line the Ethiopian Tourism Organisation (ETO) stated that as a result of the state of emergency tourists could travel either independently or in groups to every part of the country and rejected the claim that tourist arrivals decreased due to the state of emergence (Kebede 2018, 2-3).

The country recovered, travel bans were lifted, and the number of arrivals has increased again. Official statistics measured 325.000 international arrivals to Ethiopia in 2016 (Altes 2018, 18). This number is challenged, and it is argued that the country received fewer tourists. Altes (2018, 18) argues that the statistics are skewed since many business travellers use a tourist visa. Additionally, there is a high number of transit passengers, a large diaspora that travel with foreign passports, and the fact there is a large community of expatriates. Therefore, it is argued that the number of actual holiday trips is more likely to be under 100.000 per year (Altes 2018, 18).

A challenge for the Ethiopian tourism industry is seasonality (see Figure 7). The high season for leisure tourism is between mid-September and March. The highest number of arrivals are recorded in December and January, during this period many Ethiopians celebrate Ethiopian Christmas and *Timkat*<sup>2</sup>. The low season starts around April and runs until September, mainly because this is the rainy season (Altes 2018, 13). Holiday and leisure are the main motivations for international visitors traveling to Ethiopia, in 2016 this accounted for 37.4 percent of the tourists. The next motivation, 29.4 percent, are transit passengers that spend a few hours in the capital or at the airport while waiting for a connecting flight. Another motivation is travelling for business and conferences, this accounts for 17.7 percent. For 7 percent of the people the motivation was to visit friends and family (Altes 2018, 14).

**Seasonality of international tourist arrivals to Ethiopia – ALL trips**

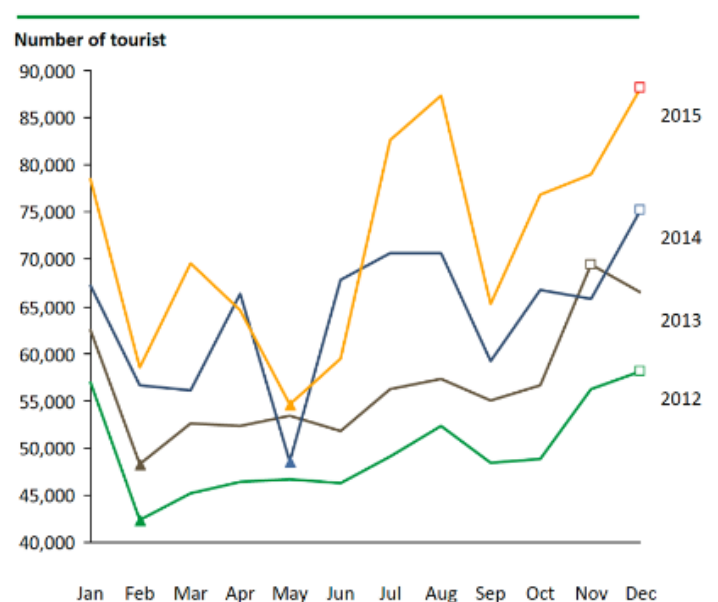


Figure 7. Seasonality of international tourist arrivals to Ethiopia (Altes 2018, 13)

<sup>2</sup> Timkat is an Orthodox Christian celebration of the Ethiopian Epiphany.

### 3.3 Development of Tourism in Ethiopia

Since the 1960s Ethiopia has increasingly promoted tourism. Under the Imperial government, three five-year development plans were implemented. The second and third plan stated that tourism was a focal point for creating a modern economy. It also led to the establishment of the ETO in 1964, marking the beginning of state-led tourism development (Degarege & Lovelock 2019, 148-149). In the 1960s the first tourist slogan was created titled “Ethiopia: Land of 13 Months of Sunshine” (Misiker 2018, 34), see also Figure 8. Under the military government, known as the Derg regime, emphasis was given to domestic tourism under the motto “know your country”. They additionally took steps to preserve national and cultural resources. However, there was a decline in international tourism because of famine, political instability, and the limited movement that tourists had (Degarege & Lovelock 2019, 150).

After the downfall of the *Derg* regime in 1991, Ethiopia shifted towards a free-market economic policy under the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front. Several reforms were implemented including the establishment of the MoCT in 2005. Despite the cultural and natural resources the country has to offer, the contribution of tourism to Ethiopia’s economy is still low (Degarege & Lovelock 2019, 150). The promotion and marketing of the country is argued to be the weakest areas of tourism development (Ali 2016, 2). Geremew (2019, 2) states that Ethiopia’s tourism landscape presents “*paradoxes and ambiguities*”. The country has plentiful tourism resources but fails to use these resources to attract tourists. The MoCT is responsible for developing and promoting the country (Ali 2016, 4).

In 2015 the government implemented the Sustainable Tourism Master Plan (STMP). This plan outlines a national framework for sustainable tourism development which

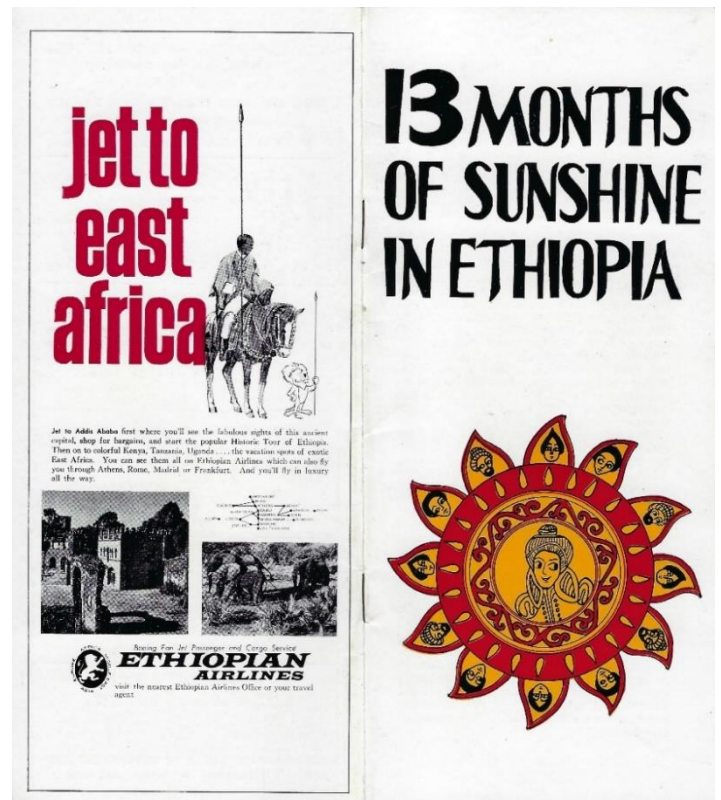


Figure 8. Brochure cover from the 1960s (Ethiopian Tourist Organization, n.d.)

contributes to socio-economic development and poverty alleviation (UNECA 2015, 20). The vision of the master plan is that: “*Ethiopia will become one of the top five tourist destinations in Africa by 2025*” (UNECA 2015, 100). The mission of the STMP is to develop the tourism sector by maximizing its contribution to the country’s economic development, while preserving culture and natural heritage, providing hospitality, excellent value for money and provide memorable, authentic experiences to every visitor (UNECA 2015, 19). The strategies and actions are founded upon three fundamental principles: sustainability, integrated destination development and prioritization of destinations. The aim of this plan is that the country will rise as a competitive and sustainable destination (UNECA 2015, 104-105).

In 2016 the tourism slogan of “*13 Months of Sunshine*” was changed to: “*Ethiopia: Land of Origins*” (see Figure 9.). This motto implies that the country is the origin of many things.

The MoCT stated that it would earn 23 billion USD by 2030 and increase the number of visitors by 7.4 million per year. This would be achieved by a ten-year tourism master plan, which includes modernizing existing destinations as well as developing new ones (Ethiopian Press Agency 2020).

### 3.4 Tour guiding standards in Ethiopia

Even though academic research on tourism in Ethiopia is limited (Robinson & Jonker 2016, 5), there has been some research done on the quality and regulations of tour guiding in the country. To work as a tour guide a license is required. National tour guides are certified by MoCT and work for incoming operators (Altes 2018, 56). There are regulations specifying the training requirements to receive a local or profession guiding certificate. However, these standards are not enforced or regulated on the ground by governmental organisations Tsegaw & Teressa 2017, 7).

In addition, there are tour guide associations set up in many destinations, which establish their own codes of operating, it is argued that in practice this does not work (Tsegaw & Teressa 2017, 7). These associations generate job opportunities for the local youth however their service and communications skills are lacking. Furthermore, the associations have been a source of harassment and conflict with the arriving tour operators



Figure 9. New tourism logo. Reprinted from *Ethiosports* website, 2016, retrieved from <https://www.ethiosports.com/2016/07/15/ethiopia-launches-land-of-origins-tourism-brand/>.

and tourists (Altes 2018, 56-57).

Several authors argue that the quality of tour guiding is low and that there is a lack of standardisation. Tsegaw & Teressa (2017, 7) state that there is a lack of professional and local tour guiding quality assurance and regulatory mechanisms and standards. Even though there are government regulations which specify requirements to receive a local or professional guide certificate, the standards are not enforced or regulated on the ground. Likewise, Abiew et al. (2020, 108) find in their study among tour guides in the Amhara region that there are poor criteria for tour guide recruitment. Furthermore, they argue that there is an absence of trainings, an absence of monitoring and evaluation on the performance of tour guides. Tsegaw & Teressa (2017, 7) conclude that there is a lack of: training and education, involvement of professionals, interest of tour guides to upgrade themselves, weak monitoring by the government, lack of licensing and certification procedure, little concern from the authorities, and a lack of private tourism organisation providing accreditations. Other challenges are the money-oriented approach of guides, unhealthy competition between tour guides, lack of an organized tour guides associations, fake guides, conflict between local guides and external national guides, and an involvement of non-professionals (Tsegaw & Teressa 2017, 7). These issues are not limited to one destination. Misiker (2018, 42), finds that there is no standardisation in history telling and in the amount of payment for tour guides in and around the Fasil castle in Gondar. There are no standardized amount of payment and German-speaking guides charge higher prices than those who speak English. Additionally, the relationship between guides is shallow, they criticize each other rather than that they learn together.

A study on local tour guiding quality in Southern Ethiopia finds that the seasonality of the tourism industry in Ethiopia is a serious concern to tour guides and leads to low and unstable incomes. Most local tour guides express their concerns about low payments, heavy reliance on tips and lack of job security in comparison to national guides (Tsegaw & Teressa 2017, 4).

### 3.5 Introducing the tour guides

*“Tour guides they are the very important. The Prime Minister doesn't meet all the tourists coming to Ethiopia, the guide is the ambassador. They*

*receive tourists from the airport and after a month we send them back. We play the core part.”<sup>3</sup>*

As Gebre states, the tour guiding profession is an important occupation because of its huge impacts on the path of a tourist’s trip and the consequence of this result may be positive or negative which is related to the performance of the tour guide.

There is a large diversity among tour guides in Ethiopia (e.g., age, experience, training and education, and language skills). In the Ethiopian tourism industry, there are two types of licensed tour guides: national and local tour guides. In addition, there are tour operators who also do tour guiding and finally there are illegal guides.

National guides in Ethiopia are officially registered and accredited by the MoCT. The national group of registered tourist guides secures employment in different ways and takes the role of a tour leader, meaning that they accompany tourists throughout the journey. They either work as an independent contractor or work together with tour operators who contact them for their services. They are active on a freelance basis and hired by travel agencies from tour to tour. Most guides work without a monthly salary but generate income by daily work. These guides often set up their own business after some time (Altes 2018, 56).

The second group are the local guides. These guides usually work at one destination and wait for their turn. Local guides are registered at a regional tourism bureau. When tourists arrive via a travel company, a national guide will accompany them and at each destination a local guide is needed to offer guidance and interpretation. Additionally, there are associations of local guides set up at most destinations which offer job opportunities for the local youth (Altes 2018, 56). Tilahun, a 36-years old national guide, explained that local guides may not work for two or three days because they must wait for their turn because others go first. Additionally, national tour guides are paid better, and the job is more secure since there are a lot of local tour guides at one destination waiting for their chance. Also, the per diem a day is higher for the national guides than for local guides.<sup>4</sup> At times local guides might function as national guides by gaining their own tourists and organise tours.

In short, what most guides have in common is that they work on a freelance basis. Furthermore, tour guides often work without a fixed monthly salary but generate income by working on a daily basis. In general, they have low job security and are unemployed without the request for their services from travel agencies or when there are no tourists coming to a

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<sup>3</sup> Gebre. (May 22, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

<sup>4</sup> Tilahun. (June 1, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

certain destination. Tour guides therefore have several employers with whom they pursue relations.

Most guides spoken to in this research have finished secondary school and additionally have an educational background in tourism. Few learned by experience (or studied tourism later) and others started working as a tour guide after having studied tourism related studies, for example a Diploma in tour guiding, a Bachelor in Tourism Management or a Master in Tourism and Heritage Management. Additionally, many guides interviewed are in their 20s or 30s and are head of a single-person household, only 6 are married.

A key component as a tour guide is to be able to communicate with visitors. However, it is argued that few guides in Ethiopia speak English well, even less speak good German, French, Italian or Spanish (Altes 2018, 27). Most of the guides in this research spoke one foreign language, English. There were a few that spoke a second foreign language such as: German, French, Italian or Spanish. The ones that did speak a second language were mostly national guides since this is also a requirement before becoming a national guide.

The years of experience of participants in the study ranged between 6 and 18 years. Two guides started informal guiding as a child and later turned this into a professional career. Three guides used to be a teacher before they started guiding and two guides are working as a teacher.

The role that tour guides have is not limited to facilitating international and domestic tourists during their travels. They are also expected to present positive images of Ethiopia. Marketing is an important aspect of having a business and doing the tour guides. This is done to increase the sales of their products. However, some guides indicated that promotion can be costly. During the research, some realized the importance of promotion, but they could not afford to pay for the costs of for example a website. Instead, they turned to cheaper ways of promoting their business. The idea behind most promotions were efforts of networking. Most participants relied on the word of mouth as a prime medium for promotion. From their experiences, if tourists were satisfied with their services, they would recommend them to fellow tourists, family, and friends. In addition, some tour guides also printed business cards, which they distributed among tourists. Networks played an essential role in their promotion. Most guides maintained good relations with intermediaries, such as other tour guides and tour agencies. Besides these direct and personal marketing strategies, the internet had become another alternative for them to promote themselves, by posting images and videos of



destinations in Ethiopia. Some had their own website and others made sure that they were visible on websites such as: Facebook, Instagram, TourHQ and TripAdvisor.

### ***Motivations for working in the tourism sector***

Before starting their current job, many had no other working experience, were employed as a teacher, were introduced to the sector by a friend or started in this industry because of their interest in culture and history. Several tour guides also stated that their motivation to start as a guide was that they wanted to show the diversity of their country to other people. Most participants emphasized the richness of the country, the number of sites and the different types of destinations such as historical, natural, fauna and nature. Another reason mentioned was that the job allowed them an opportunity to become more connected to the world and learn from other cultures. Gebre, a tour guide and tour operator, started in tourism because it is a good way to get connections in different parts of the world, he said: *“As a tour guide the world will come to you”*<sup>5</sup>.

Additionally, several guides argued that through meeting tourists they learn and discuss politics, culture and economics from the guests that visit the country. Haile explained:

*“Living in the Western life, in the capitalist life you work very hard and also the social life...*

*Most people tell me that they have money, but they don't have social life, they don't have enough time to visit families and friends. What I learned is that everywhere... life is the same.*

*There is happiness, there is also sadness.”*<sup>6</sup>

Another important reason that attracted people to start working as a tour guide was that it offers a lot of free time and requires flexibility. For Haile, a 36-year-old guide who works in Northern Ethiopia, this was the reason he started working as a guide, he mentioned that he enjoyed the fact that he does not have any boss. Girma explained it in the following way:

*“When you are employed in other sectors like in a governmental job, you are busy all the time, you need to be punctual and you work every day. But being a guide, since it is seasonal work, you work very hard starting from September to January or February and after that the tourist numbers get*

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<sup>5</sup> Gebre. (May 22, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

<sup>6</sup> Haile. (August 31, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

*less and then you have time to rest and also you can have the time to go somewhere else to relax or to learn or even to do something extra”<sup>7</sup>.*

This section gave an overview of the tour guiding profession in Ethiopia. What this shows is that there are several challenges and differences between tour guides. The reasons for working as a guide is mostly about the flexible nature of the job, the interest in culture and history, and meeting different people.

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<sup>7</sup> Girma. (August 19, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

## Chapter 4: COVID-19 and its effects on Ethiopia

The effects of Covid-19 on livelihoods cannot be fully assessed without considering the vulnerability context under which livelihood activities are performed, therefore the first part will discuss this. The section that follows will give an overview of the responses and impacts of the crisis for Ethiopia.

### 4.1 Sources of vulnerability

The vulnerability context are the shocks and stresses (trends, situation, and seasonality). These shocks are exogenous factors that affect livelihoods and assets both directly and indirectly. In the case of Ethiopia, there are more shocks that influence people's life. The arrival of COVID-19 also coincided with the arrival of swarms of locusts in East-Africa.

#### 4.1.1 Past crises

As we have seen in the literature review (Chapter 1), past health and economic crises can have major consequences for the tourism industry. However, among the tour guides in this study there was no consensus that international and regional incidents have had a direct impact on guides in Ethiopia. Even though the numbers (see Figure 6) suggest that the number of tourists was lower in 2016, most guides argued that the effect was limited. In response to how they dealt with earlier crises, Aseffa responded:

*“I don't remember... I mean in my experience of 8 years we didn't have such challenge. For our association or for the tourism stakeholders, this is for the first time since we have such big problem.”<sup>8</sup>*

Whereas Aseffa did not recall other crises in the past, other tour guides responded with the examples of the Ebola outbreak and civil unrest in Ethiopia. According to most guides this had limited impact because the Ebola outbreak was in West Africa and there were no confirmed cases in Ethiopia. Some of the guides did experience some struggles while being on the road with tourists during civil unrest in the country. They solved this by going to different destinations where it was peaceful. Others stated that tourists were not the target of the protesting groups and therefore they could continue their tours. However, this is more difficult for local guides since they work mostly turn by turn at one destination and are more restricted to this place. National guides have more mobility and flexibility to change the schedule and direction of a tour.

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<sup>8</sup> Aseffa. (June 10, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

#### 4.1.2 Seasonality

As Altes (2018, 13) argued, seasonality is a challenge for the Ethiopian tourism sector. The peak guiding season occurs during September up to January. The rest of the year is perceived as low season or off season. Some regions do receive some tourists during this period. Seasonality is therefore, to a certain extent, predictable for the tourism sector. A large proportion of tour guides are financially dependent on this job, and for many tour guides, this job is their sole source of income.

Of the 23 guides that were interviewed for this research, 8 stated that they have a side-job or do a different job in the low season. Fekadu used to work as a driver in the transportation sector, Kidane as an artist, Bekele works as a lecturer at a university, Esaias as a broker and mentor, Abel does translation and interpretation, Girma works as a carpenter and rents some property and Aman works at an office for tour operators. Others use this period to travel themselves, in Ethiopia but also abroad. Alemayehu, a 28-year-old local guide, explained what he does in the low season:

*“[in the low season] I’m traveling outside from [a city in the South]. I like to stay in Addis to enjoy my time with friends. In the off season I want to enjoy and spend my money by traveling in Ethiopia”*<sup>9</sup>

Next to traveling a trend seems to be to upgrade their own knowledge, come up with new ideas and look for new destinations. Several guides said that they tried to learn more about Ethiopia and tourism by taking courses or by studying themselves. Others, like Tadesse, use the money that they make in the high season, to get through the low season.

*“In the high season we work, and we are saving some small money that helps us for the low season”*<sup>10</sup>

#### 4.1.3 Rising political tensions

Several guides expressed their concerns about the political situation in the country. Yusuf (2020) stated in May 2020 that the measures used to tackle the virus could have profound implications for the country’s stability. In June 2020, famous Oromo singer, Hachalu Hundessa was killed in Addis Ababa. His song *Maalan Jira* (meaning: ‘Do I exist?’), became an anthem during protests in late 2015. His songs captured the struggles and frustration of the Oromo people (Abebe 2020, 7). His death led to protests in several towns across the country.

<sup>9</sup> Alemayehu. (September 6, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

<sup>10</sup> Tadesse. (August 25, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

Additionally, the internet was shut down for two weeks, the longest the country has experienced since Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed came to power in April 2018 (Internet cut in Ethiopia 2020). Yusuf (2020, 4) argues that COVID-19 may provoke different forms of conflict. The economic consequences of the pandemic may lead to short term unrest but also lays seeds for future social disorder.

The federal government postponed the elections because of COVID-19. The parliament approved an extra year in office for the Prime Minister, once it is determined that the coronavirus is no longer a threat, elections will be held (Endeshaw 2020). However, in Tigray, in the northern part of the country, the regional government decided to continue the elections in their region. As a result, the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front, and the Federal government each declared the other illegitimate. Tensions escalated in the weeks following the elections and in early November 2020 fighting started.

Several tour guides living in the northern region of Tigray indicated, before fighting started, that they were more concerned about the political situation than COVID-19. Many of the tourist destinations and routes are located in the northern regions, it therefore likely has an impact on the entire tourism sector in the country. Yemane, a local tour guide living in the north, explained in August 2020:

*"I'm concerned about the political situation. You know why? If we have peace... we can protect ourselves from COVID. Look we Ethiopians we are so poor, we are a development country. COVID plus a bad political situation... you know we will suffer big problems"*<sup>11</sup>

Yemane is more concerned about the political situation because it will also influence the way they can protect themselves from COVID.

When asked the question if they are more concerned about COVID-19 or the unrest in the country, Bekele replied: *"The political will be worse, the worst is yet to come"*. Tariku answered: *"It is both [COVID-19 and politics]. Both of them are a virus for our sector"*. Other guides stated that the political situation was not their main concern. Abel explained:

*"Everybody wants restoration and peace and stability. So, we can feed our families, whether you are in the North, South, East and West, everybody is facing the same dilemma: how am I going to feed my family?"*<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Yemane. (August 25, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

<sup>12</sup> Abel. (May 23, 2020) Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

Past crises and the seasonality show the vulnerability of the sector and the work they do.

## 4.2 Responses to COVID-19

Thus far, Ethiopia has managed to keep the COVID-19 infection rates relatively low (De Brauw et al. 2020, 5). As of January 5, 2021, there are 125,919 confirmed cases and 1,950 deaths (Worldometers 2020). Most of the positive tests have been in the capital. The first measures that were taken in Ethiopia to limit the spread of the virus, were declared on 16 March 2020, three days after the first found case of COVID-19. Schools were closed and public gatherings and sport activities were banned. Travelers coming into the country were put into a 14-day mandatory quarantine, bars were closed, and travel through land borders was not allowed. Also, people are recommended social distancing (Abate et al. 2020, 5). On April 8<sup>th</sup> a five- month state of emergency was declared in the country (UNICEF 2020, 2). Since then, land borders were closed, except for cargo. It has become compulsory to wear a face mask in public spaces. Furthermore, the government prohibited employers from laying off their workers and landlords from removing their tenants or increasing the rents during the state of emergency (Abate et al. 2020, 6-7).

There are regional differences in the measures that are taken. The Amhara region has lifted the limitation of movements, whereas the Oromia region lifted the limits on public transportation movements. The Tigray region remains the only one that has decided to introduce a 14-day mandatory quarantine for all travellers arriving from outside (UNICEF 2020, 2).

### 4.2.1 Measures taken in the tourism industry in Ethiopia

As noted earlier, the tourism sector is one of the most affected sectors by the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of international tourist arrivals to Africa has drastically declined (see Figure. 10). To reduce the effect of the pandemic on the tourism sector, the Ethiopian government and other stakeholders have taken various measures. One of the measures is that the government decided to give a 3.3 billion Birr<sup>13</sup> bailout to hotels and tour operators as a bailout, so they can cover salary and operational expenses. However, it is reported that around 1.300 hotels and 500 tour operators have requested 6.6 billion Birr in bailout (Fikade 2020).

Secondly, the focus will be put on domestic tourism to boost tourism revenues (Tilahun 2020). Thirdly, the country is also planning to develop new tourist sites (Ashebir

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<sup>13</sup> The Ethiopian Birr is the official currency of Ethiopia

2020). In the next ten years the country is planning to develop a total of 59 new tourism destinations for local and international tourists (Tilahun 2020).

In October 2020, it was announced that the tourism sector will fully reopen because longer closure would further distress tourism and affect the national economy. The sector is opened based on the National Travelers Safety Protocol which is developed to contain the spread of COVID-19 and to protect tourists (Ethiopia to Fully Reopen 2020). The country also obtained a Safe Travel Stamp from the WTTC (Dibaba 2021).

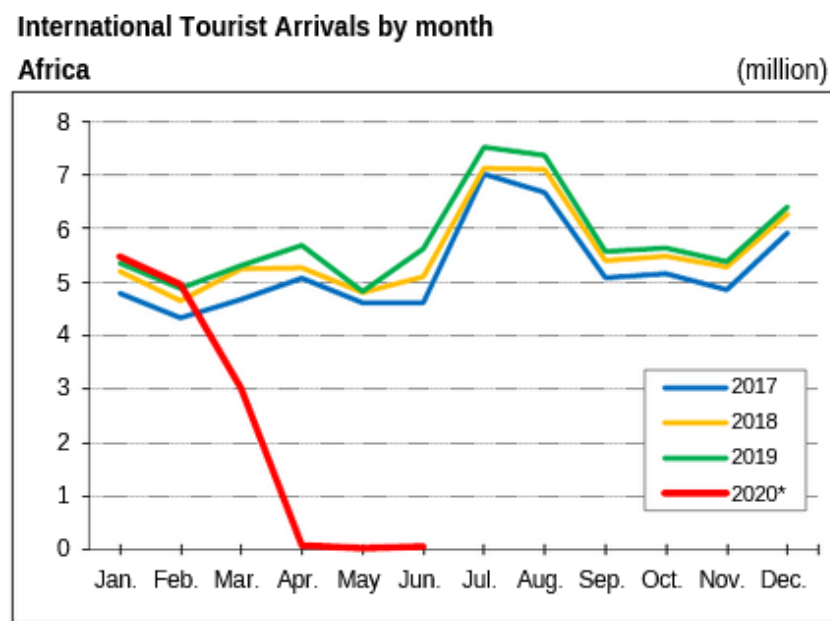


Figure 10. International Tourist Arrivals by month - Africa (UNWTO 2020g, Annex 5)

#### 4.2.2 Impacts of the pandemic

A survey done in Ethiopia during the COVID-19 pandemic found that incomes of households were hit hard (Wieser et al 2020, 1). 55 percent of the respondents in the survey indicated that their incomes were reduced or had totally disappeared. Additionally, they find that there is little difference in the reduced income among the poor and the rich. 20 percent of the poorest are 53 percent more likely to see a reduction in their incomes, compared to 47 percent of the richest 20 percent. However, the rich portion of the households are more likely to go through a total loss of income (Wieser et al. 2020, 5). Of the respondents, 13 percent had lost their job since the outbreak, of which 18 percent of them in urban areas and 10 percent in rural areas. The industries most affected in terms of job losses are the hospitality (38 percent), construction (33 percent), and wholesale and retail (31 percent) (Wieser et al. 2020, 6).

Followed by the loss of income is an increase in unemployment levels. The



unemployment rate in Ethiopia is around 18 percent and in the age group of 15-24 this number is 26.7 percent (Tesso 2020, 27). However, according to several economists in the country the actual unemployment rate is said to be higher than 40 percent (Tesso 2020, 27). Due to the outbreak of COVID-19 millions of Ethiopians have lost their job. Especially jobs within the service sector have been affected such as: hotels, restaurants, tourism, transport (Tesso 2020, 27).

Looking at the received assistance from the government, NGOs or religious institutions 8 percent of the households have received assistance, of which 10 percent of rural and 3 percent of urban households (Wieser et al. 2020, 1). Assessing how the suffered households cope with less or no income, the study shows that more than half had not applied a coping strategy to compensate for the loss of income. The strategy that most households applied to cope is to rely on savings, this strategy is applied more in urban areas (34 percent) compared to rural areas (11 percent). This strategy is followed by reducing food consumption and reducing non-food consumption (Wieser et al. 2020, 5).

A phone survey done under households in Addis Ababa found that the COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected most households. 67 percent reported that their incomes were lower or much lower than usual. Additionally, 75 percent of households reported to have used their savings. Coping mechanisms that were used were the reduction of non-food consumption (72 percent) and reducing food consumption (55 percent). Poorer households were more likely to change these patterns than richer households (Abate et al. 2020, 14-15). The overall food security of residents in Addis Ababa is not alarming, but this might be because people are using their savings. Abate et al. (2020, 19) expects an increase in food insecurity in the coming months.

The above discussion gives an overview of the more general impact of the COVID-19 outbreak so far. What the consequences are for tour guides, will be discussed in the following part.

### 4.3 The effects of COVID-19 on tour guides' livelihoods

This section will investigate the direct effects of the current COVID-19 pandemic on the livelihoods of tour guides.

#### 4.3.1 COVID-19 and tourism in Ethiopia

*“Before COVID, the tourism industry was booming, and the number of visitors was improving. Also, there are new tourist destinations created,*

*different types of new tourist destinations were developed, and also local communities are involved. After COVID it is like...there is no tourism at all. There is a 100 per cent decrease after COVID”<sup>14</sup>*

This pandemic is different from previous crises that they have faced. In the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, from January to March 2020, Ethiopia received 118.947 international arrivals compared to the 184.433 tourists in the same period in 2019, indicating a 65.485 decline in tourist arrivals (Desta 2020). At the start of the pandemic most guides were bound to their homes. In later interviews several guides indicated that people are not strictly following restriction anymore. This can also have to do with the fact that the number of positive COVID-19 cases in Ethiopia stayed relatively low. This is in line with findings from a survey done among households in Ethiopia which found that towards the end of 2020 fewer people are practicing preventative measures. Additionally, fewer people are worried about falling ill from COVID-19 or that the pandemic negatively affect finances (Ambel et al. 2020).

*“The restrictions are not very tight. We are living, as usual, like before COVID. You can see a lot of people gathering together in the market because two days ago we celebrated our new years and I have seen thousands of people gathering together in the market, buying food, buying sheep and stuff like that. So, life is... For me it is just like before COVID.”<sup>15</sup>*

Another reason mentioned for not following measures closely is that the urgency is decreasing because people need to work to survive. They would rather risk getting the virus than staying at home all the time. Haile stated the following:

*“Just two weeks or three weeks we were worried. We were wearing the mask and using hand sanitizer but after that we left it. No corona. [...] There is corona... you know the government tries to teach, they announce... with cars but people seem to be relaxed. Especially with businesses it is better that you do the business and die, than staying at home where there is no subsidy. You know people here... live a poor life”<sup>16</sup>*

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<sup>14</sup> Bekele. (August 5, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

<sup>15</sup> Tariku. (September 19, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

<sup>16</sup> Haile. (August 31, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

The fear of being infected with COVID was not a big concern, the concern had to do more with the economic impact and the fact that tourists are not coming. The significance of mobility for tourism and tour guides will be discussed in the next section.

#### 4.3.2 (Im)mobility, uncertainty, and stress

*“It was just incredible to be back after one year of silence”*<sup>17</sup>, writes Aregawi in an online post together with a photograph of himself and several tourists. After a long time, he has finally been on tour again. Whereas the lives of tour guides previously involved a lot around mobility, the pandemic put them in a completely different situation. A common response to the question on what they were doing now was: *“Nothing, just waiting for the good days until the tourists are back again.”*<sup>18</sup>. Bandak & Janeja (2018, 16) argue that: *“waiting is not to be found merely in the absence of action but in an uncertain terrain where what is hoped for may or may not occur”*. Responses to the absence of action range from hope, enthusiasm and urgency to boredom, paralysis and inactivity. Being in a situation of waiting leads to diverse responses and often leads to existential questions and doubts (Bandak & Janeja 2018, 16). In the high season, tour guides are offered with sufficient work opportunities and some even have little spare time. This is in contrast with less work during the low season. Whereas mobility is important for tour guides, immobility is not a large part of their everyday experience. However, the immobile world now also plays a big part in their lives. This immobility is illustrated by the current unemployment of tour guides because of the COVID-19 crisis. Mobility gives them a sense of security and hope as they are able to generate income, which is crucial for their future aspiration. Immobility exemplifies the opposite.

I contacted Tilahun, a national guide living in Addis Ababa, a few times after the initial interview. He started to organize one-day trekking tours in the past months. He has a social media group with around 300 members where he shares his tours. When I contacted him again in November 2020, he replied that he is on a trip with tourists in the Southern part of the country. *“I’m healed after being psychologically sick for 4-8 months”*<sup>19</sup>, he writes. He continues that he felt like he was in prison the past few months because he had to stay at home most of the time, his job is a lifestyle for him. The case of Tilahun exemplifies the significance of mobility in the lives of tour guides.

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<sup>17</sup> Aregawi. (February 10, 2021) [personal communications]

<sup>18</sup> Kibrom. (October 5, 2020). [personal communications]

<sup>19</sup> Tilahun (November 4, 2020). [personal communications]

*“Now it is beyond everybody, you know. Nobody can help it because it is incapable of peoples doing”<sup>20</sup>*

Also, feelings of uncertainty were a common theme among participants. Long term unemployment may lead to restlessness and feelings of uncertainties about the future (Chen & Chang 2020). It can affect people’s personal life, career path and future. The quote of Fekadu exemplifies the uncertainty and limited influences people have on the situation. Janeja & Bandak (2018, 20) argue that situations of waiting can lead to doubts and existential questions. Not being able to work and staying at home most of the time, brought about stress and uncertainty for most guides. Most stress was about not having an income, not being able to pay certain bills but also concerns about their future. Tariku tried to avoid his landlord by leaving early in the morning and coming back late because he had not paid the rent for the past two months<sup>21</sup>.

In the first few months of the pandemic most of the guides stayed at home. Yemane explained that he was using social media a lot and *“everyone was talking about COVID-19 and this disturbed my mind and I had stress”<sup>22</sup>*. He resolved this stressful period for himself by spending less time on social media and he started to read more books and watch movies. Tilahun stated:

*“I’m using my savings, that was one of the stress that I had, because every day you wake up, you think of the rent. We were working. When you generate income... whatever you spend, you will not feel stressed about it because something is coming. But at this time, it is only spending... it is only spending and everyday there are bills for electricity, for water, for the house rent, for your daily consumption. And you feel... you feel like... so insecure”<sup>23</sup>*.

These future concerns also became apparent in the interview with Tsion, the only woman interviewed. She felt like her future plans had been cancelled. Her plan was to finish her studies, then get married and continue her work as a tour guide. In the past she got comments as to why she was not married yet, she did not mind these questions then because she had work and studied. She explains: *“Now when I’m staying alone, they ask me: ‘Why are you staying alone? There is no school, no work’. And then I don’t want to talk with any people.”<sup>24</sup>*

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<sup>20</sup> Fekadu. (June 1, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen [online interview]

<sup>21</sup> Tariku. (September 19, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

<sup>22</sup> Yemane. (August 25, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

<sup>23</sup> Tilahun. (June 1, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

<sup>24</sup> Tsion. (July 27, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen [online interview]

She later adds: “*Normally, I cannot listen to them, but now a little bit*”<sup>25</sup>. She was now doubting to get married before she finished her studies.

However, coping with uncertainty is not completely a new phenomenon for most guides, although national tour guides often indicated that they were also active during the low season. Even though this current crisis is not the same, guides have dealt with seasonality and crisis before, as came forward in the previous sections. Asking support from friends and/or family has been something that they also did before. However, being unemployed for long periods may lead to restlessness and thoughts of uncertainties about the future. To deal with the uncertainty of the situation, Haile tried to continue his normal routine during the crisis. He explained:

*“I go to the [tourist destination] in the office hours as if I have a job. You go there as if you have a job... then we chat with friends, we mock, we make fun, we share stories and everything like that so... that is how I spend my time.”*<sup>26</sup>

Mobility is a “*highly differentiated activity where many different people move in many different ways*” (Adey 2006, 83). Acknowledgement of these differences have emerged in the ‘politics of mobility’. Massey (1993, 62) has highlighted how mobility is full of power-geometries, meaning that “*some people are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movements, others don’t; some are more on the receiving-end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it*”. A difference between local and national guides was observed when it came to mobility during the crisis. The first individuals who talked about traveling again were national guides. Several had made trips to or from the capital. Bekele travelled to the capital to help his family and search for a different job, Tilahun went on several hikes and tours, Esaias was chosen by the tour guide association to travel to a tourist destination for the reopening of tourism, Fekadu travelled back and forth between his mother and the capital city, and Abel went on a trip to the North for the filming of a tv documentary. Local guides on the other hand were more bound to the city where they live and do the guiding. Although most guides seemed to be waiting *for* tourism to start again, the mobility of national guides can indicate towards having more power and agency due to for example having the knowledge to work in other sectors.

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<sup>25</sup> Tsion. (July 27, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen [online interview]

<sup>26</sup> Haile. (August 31, 2020) Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

## Chapter 5: Dealing with “*the biggest low season that we have experienced in our life*”

### 5.1 Coping strategies of tour guides

While acknowledging the constraints that the COVID-19 crisis poses, it should be noted that guides did not remain passive victims. In fact, many guides demonstrated creativity in tackling and circumventing the challenges they face. The crisis forces people to find new ways to survive. In this section I will further embark on a nuanced analysis of the coping strategies guides used to bypass these challenges. Table 1. outlines some common strategies that were taken among guides. The strategies to cope with the crisis identified among guides are categorized based on the categorization by Rakodi (1999). The remainder of this chapter will further go into these coping strategies.

Table 1. Identified coping strategies

<b>Coping strategies</b>	<b>Strategies identified among tour guides in Ethiopia</b>
Strategies to increase resources, by intensifying the use of natural, physical or human capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Diversification of economic activities, such as starting a new business, looking for another job for additional income</li> <li>- Use of social media for reaching out to customers</li> <li>- (Temporary) Relocating to another house or back home due to a loss of income</li> <li>- Studying</li> </ul>
Strategies involving drawing on stocks of social capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Borrowing</li> <li>- Seeking charity</li> <li>- Receive help from friends and relatives</li> </ul>
Strategies to mitigate or limit a decline in consumption, many involving running down stocks of human,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reducing or eliminating consumption items such as new clothes or ‘luxury’ food and drinks</li> <li>- Reducing the number of (cooked) meals per day and purchasing poorer quality or less food</li> <li>- Buying cheaper and second-hand clothes</li> <li>- Distress sales of assets e.g., land, livestock</li> </ul>

physical, social and natural capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reducing social life, including visits to rural homes by urban households</li> <li>- Using past financial savings</li> <li>- Halt schooling</li> <li>- Limit use of public transport</li> </ul>
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### 5.1.1 Living on savings

The main strategy that participants use is relying on savings. Many of the tour guides depend on savings accumulated before the COVID-19 outbreak and use this as a buffer. It is likely that for some these savings will not last throughout the pandemic. This can have implications for unexpected shocks in the future (think of for example health-related issues). Haile stated:

*“For the past 7 months we are now... just using... the money from our savings and we are finishing it you know.”<sup>27</sup>*

Depletion of their own savings and other assets can compromise future earning potential and ability to cope with future shocks. Without sufficient savings it was more difficult to cope with the crisis independently.

### 5.1.2 Finding alternative income strategies

Another coping strategy is diversification. All participants have been affected by a loss of income however the extent to which people have been affected differs. Yonas explains what has changed for him:

*“Before the pandemic I can help my father, my mother, I can cover my expenses easily, I can pay easily for my living room... I can do some things for myself, I can change my clothes... I can fulfill my entire desire also you know. When I get a break... I go some place to entertain myself...”<sup>28</sup>*

Now Yonas takes on whatever job is available. Only a small number of guides had multiple sources of income before the outbreak of the pandemic. These jobs range from salaried jobs, part-time work, renting property, among others. A few guides stated that they could also rely on the salary of their partner. However, having multiple sources of income is not always a guarantee for revenue. Tour guide Girma also works as a carpenter and explained that:

<sup>27</sup> Haile. (August 31, 2020) Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

<sup>28</sup> Yonas. (October 21, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]



*“Nowadays people are not moving. There is no capital, so people are not interested to build a house. So, it is not only tourism it is all sectors... I mean all work is closed. There is no movement at all so in this case I don't have anything to do.”<sup>29</sup>*

Due to the pandemic people were not investing their money, making it difficult for Girma to generate income.

A popular strategy used by participants to gain some income during the crisis is finding alternative forms of employment. However, jobs redundancies were frequent and finding a job turned out to be difficult. Several guides were thinking of moving into a different sector. Tariku had applied for manufacturing jobs at 16 different companies but had not received any positive responses. It did not seem to matter if the work level or revenue was lower than that of tour guiding. Waiting was not an option, as Yonas mentioned: *“Rather than sitting in my room and waiting for some help, I prefer to work”<sup>30</sup>*. Yonas, a local guide who studied engineering, had started washing cars and doing some work as a broker. Additionally, it was emphasized by several guides that there were not many job opportunities because of the high unemployment rate in Ethiopia.

Only a small number of guides managed to diversify their livelihood strategies beyond tourism, such as Haile who started working in construction. After 7 months of looking for other jobs and internships, Aman started a clothing shop together with one of his friends<sup>31</sup>. Tsegaye had the opportunity to get a loan and bought a motorbike. With the motorbike he was able to transport people from village to village and make some money. Unfortunately, he got into an accident in July 2020 and after recovering from his injury he was unable to fully repair his motorbike because he did not have the financial capital to do so. He did go to Addis Ababa to renew his driving license in the hope that he could get a job as a driver. Gebre, owner of a tour company, tried to rent out his cars to generate some income. Both Tsegaye and Gebre were able to diversify their income through the physical capital available to them. Tilahun started to organize more trekking tours not far out of the city for domestic tourists. He did this by advertising tours on a social media platform where he has around 300 followers<sup>32</sup>. Abel had previous experience working with documentary makers. He

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<sup>29</sup> Girma. (August 19, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

<sup>30</sup> Yonas. (October 21, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

<sup>31</sup> Aman. (November 26, 2020). [Personal communications]

<sup>32</sup> Tilahun. (October 20, 2020). [Personal communications]

explains in October 2020 that he is on a road trip with a research team to several destinations in Ethiopia to film for a documentary. He works as a fixer, translator and logistician during the trip. Esaias started giving earning some money by giving virtual tours via Zoom, where he shares his screen and shows videos, photos and explains the touristic destination during the call. However, he realised that this was a temporary way of making money and he kept looking for other jobs. Even though tour guides were able to generate some income most of the work mentioned is flexible and temporary. It appears that it was easier for national tour guides to find alternative sources of income.

Many of those who are not looking for another form of employment (yet), are waiting and hoping for tourism to start again. For example, Kidane did not seem to be concerned and said:

*“I can change the profession. I can work somewhere because I can do a lot of things. I can work in interior design, I can work in graphic design”<sup>33</sup>.*

The above shows that tour guides are used to deal with fluctuations in job opportunities. Some already have another job or try to find another form of employment using skills that they obtained earlier (e.g., construction work and owning a driving license) however this proved to be difficult. Additionally, they showed creativity in finding other forms of employment.

### 5.1.3 On the move

Migration is a key livelihood strategy. We have seen in previous sections that the mobility of tour guides is limited by the global pandemic, it also came forward that mobility is used as a coping strategy. With the emergence of the livelihood concept, migration has been increasingly recognized as one of the main strategies that households undertake to diversify, secure and, possibly, improve their livelihoods (De Haas 2010, 244). In other words, mobility is largely driven by livelihood-related needs (Afifi et al. 2016, 266). Migration research has shown that disasters can be a cause of out-migration. However, others have found that an aggregate shock can increase the motivation for labour migration due to a loss of income opportunities at the local level, while there are at the same time increasing financial barriers due to a loss of household assets that are needed to finance migration (Gröger & Zylberberg 2016, 126).

Internal migration in Ethiopia is a common phenomenon, mainly in the form of rural-

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<sup>33</sup> Kidane. (June 12, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

urban migration flows (Fransen & Kuschminder 2009, 15). Migration within and from Ethiopian is motivated by shifts in political, economic and cultural make-up of society (Schewel & Bahir 2019, 36).

For tour guides there are several motivations to move or stay. A small group of guides in this research moved to a different place. Both Tariku and Tsion moved to a cheaper residence. Tsion used to live close to a big road but decided to rent a cheaper room further away from the road. Tariku already moved to a cheaper apartment in January 2020, after tour operators told him that they received many cancellations, and that the virus was spreading. He moved from downtown to an apartment located 10 km further away.

One guide moved back in with his parents, although several guides explained that they have friends who moved back with their family. Moving back in with their family they do not have to worry about food and rental expenses. Aman explained that he used to be self-sufficient, but he moved back with his parents as a way of saving money. He stated that he is not that much affected by the crisis because he can rely on his parents. He explains:

*“I’m living with my parents... So, we share everything. This is Ethiopian culture. We help each other, we support each other.”<sup>34</sup>*

For Aman, this was a useful coping strategy because he did not have to spend the money he saved and he was, after 7 months, able to use his deposited money to start a clothing shop.

In the case of Fekadu (see also Box 2.) migration involved moving back and forward to the capital in search of a job. First, he moved back to the city where his mother lived but later, he stated that he had to move back to the capital. In the city, he argued, he had more chances of finding an alternative job. Whereas Fekadu moved to the city in search of income, Bekele moved to several cities in search for another job. Due to the political situation in Tigray, he did not want to stay there. What this shows is that mobility is a mechanism for survival when other opportunities are not locally available. These guides were able to move to other areas to improve their livelihoods or reduce costs.

Additionally, it could be argued that the place of residence could be of influence. Since most tourists enter Ethiopia via the capital Addis Ababa, most of the national guides live here. It could be argued that they have an advantage since they will be the first to have access to incoming tourists via their own network or via tour operators. Whereas local guides are more dependent on tourists coming to a destination or their own network of tourists.

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<sup>34</sup> Aman. (May 30, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

Box 2. Portrait Fekadu *“I don't know what we will do. It is quite frustrating”*

I interview Fekadu in June 2020. During interview he is sitting in front of a large poster with an image of a saint, a mesh curtain hangs over the poster. Fekadu wears a black T-shirt and a large wooden cross hangs around his neck.

He started informally guiding tourists at the age of 10 and since 2014 he is a national guide. He was born in the Addis Ababa but grew up in several cities across the country. At time of the interview, he rents a room that he shares with a roommate. Since the pandemic, he has been part of a charity group in his neighbourhood. They help people who are afraid to go outside and those who cannot afford to buy daily foods. He does not generate any income and survives through his savings. In the low season, he used to work as a driver in the transport sector until the high season would start again. However, there is no other job opportunity for him now. *“I'm searching for jobs because I am surviving through my savings and when I finish that I don't know what will happen so... before that happen, I'm trying to figure out what to do”*.

Even though he believes it will take at least a year or longer before things will be normal again, he says that he wants to work as a tour guide for the rest of his life. However, *“If it stays like this, I will try to find a different job”*.

A few months a later, I contact Fekadu again. He moved back to a city in the Tigray region, where his mother lives, to help her and due to rising ethnic tensions after the elections were postponed. In October we have contact again and he explains that he stills helps his mother at home and volunteers at a charity group. There is no job opportunity for him, and he feels it is his responsibility to take care of his mother and little brother, since his father passed away during the *Derg* regime. They lean on Fekadu's savings. He wants to move back to Addis Ababa soon because he believes there is a higher chance of finding a job. He writes: *“I have to go to Addis and find any job. Otherwise, I can't take care of my family”*.

Towards the end of October, he has moved back to Addis Ababa and is checking vacancy boards in hope that he will find a job. A few days later conflict starts in Tigray, and he cannot contact his family.

#### 5.1.4 The informal safety net of tour guides during COVID-19

Social networks are one of the key components of tour guides' ability to cope. Although tour guides tried their best to earn additional income, they did not always have enough to cover their expenses. Lakew & Azadi (2020, 7) find that 41 percent of the Ethiopian population claim that family or friends are their main sources of funding during a crisis. Social capital comprises the social resources upon which people draw on in the pursuit of their livelihood objectives. In the livelihood literature, the ability to exercise social agency is often given considerable emphasis. Social networks play a vital role in coping with economic uncertainty and also through offering gifts and words of motivation to each other. Additionally, networks are something that we, as people, continuously invest in (Steinbrink & Niedenföhr 2020, 73).

Steinbrink & Niedenführ (2020, 73) argue that: “*the utilization of social resources as a coping and livelihood strategy is of existential importance, social networking is synonymous with creating a means of subsistence*”. Bebbington (1999) stated that social networks bring along an inherent capacity to gain access to resources, and therefore to produce livelihood security and wellbeing. Furthermore, Poon (1990, 116) argues that in the tourism industry access to networks is crucial for small tourism firms in their struggle for survival. This was also visible among the tour guides. The network guides have influenced the way that they could cope with this period. Despite corona measures, investing in social networks continued. Due to the corona restrictions, it became more difficult for individuals to gather, also because some people did not have money and did therefore not go out to meet.

### ***Family and friends***

The most important network that guides sought support from are their family, friends, and/or colleagues. As a means of gaining access to or saving financial capital, most guides had sought help from their family to get them past this difficult period. Examples included moving back in with their family, eating at home or getting financial capital to pay for their rent. Tsegaye got a goat from his family, which he was able to sell to have some money to repair his motorbike, which was damaged in an accident. This network of friends and family also help guides with finding another job.

### ***Associations***

A second network that they draw upon are associations. It was recognised by participants that being a member of a tour guide association has some advantages as well. Through this network of people several local guides were able to get some money that was saved in their association. Additionally, Aregawi explained that savings were shared among members in the association and that this was normal to do. He added:

*“If there is a tour guide, a member of our association which has a lower amount of income than me, I have to share this money because we know this problem will resolve after some time, so we have to help each other”<sup>35</sup>.*

In a study among unemployed urban youth in Ethiopia, Mains (2013, 339) found that young men were embedded in complex webs of reciprocity. Mains (2013) gives the example of khat

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<sup>35</sup> Aregawi. (October 5, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

chewing<sup>36</sup>, which is an occasion for bonding among friends. The sharing of khat can be seen as a display of affection but also it provides time to talk, share ideas, and think through problems. Sharing is not a new phenomenon but something that is also expected or done out of solidarity. It is not only sharing money among members of a tour association but also learning from each other. The National Tour Operators Association had organized several short courses for tour operators, tour guides and drivers, about for example wildlife and church paintings.

As mentioned earlier, Misiker (2018, 42) argued that the relationship between guides in Gondar, Ethiopia seemed superficial, and guides seem to criticise each other rather than learning together. Hearing the stories of guides during this crisis this did not come forward. Friends and colleagues were also an important source for support. Both in helping with some money but also by discussing issues with each other. It came forward through the interviews that guides often discussed with each other on how to continue and prepare for the future. Tariku explained that:

*“Almost everyday when we meet... we are just talking about COVID, talking about job cutting, talking about the countries economy and the future. We are eagerly waiting when the government will reopen our market again<sup>37</sup>”.*

These conversations are also important to keep the positive spirit alive. Abel explained that he is part of a Facebook group where they post images of tourist destinations to encourage each other to stay positive. Additionally, the group collected money for those who are less fortunate than them. Helping each other was also seen as something that should be done. They also motivate each other are in Facebook groups where messages with photographs or videos are posted with comments such as: *“Tourists are coming. Keep the energy”<sup>38</sup>*

### ***The formation of a national tour guide association***

As most local tour guides are part of a guide associations, there was no association solely for national guides. During the interviews it was mentioned that national guides were trying to establish a national tour guide association. Aman mentioned that there were earlier attempts

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<sup>36</sup> A popular herbal stimulant

<sup>37</sup> Tariku. (September 13, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

<sup>38</sup> Esaias. (January 1, 2021). [Personal communications]

to set up a national association but “*unfortunately there was an argument between guides*”<sup>39</sup>. Eyob explained that they started the association to be legal and to make claims to the government, because now they did not have the power to do that. Guides united under one umbrella organisation and the association was officially launched in October 2020, called the Ethiopian Tourist Guides Professional Association. The crisis resulted in the formation of this association with the aim to gain more recognition and influence and expand access to core institutions. This network of guides resulted in collective action and in a way will provide protection because they now have a louder voice. Also, the association gives lectures and trainings to its members.

### ***Contact with tourists***

Several tour guides also use social media to keep in touch with each other but also with tourists to develop and maintain their customer base. Guides were still looking to increase their own clientele or keep in touch with tourists. Guides who had access to the internet worked on their website or posted photographs on their Instagram, own website and/or Facebook page. However, for most guides mouth-to-mouth promotion and reviews tourists left online were the main way they attracted tourists.

Keeping in touch with tourists is something that several guides did. Tsegaye appealed to his network of tourists for help after the accident he got with his motorbike. One person sent him money for the hospital bill, but others did not reply. Next to Tsegaye none of the guides had received any help from tourists but kept in touch and asked questions about when and if they were planning to come to Ethiopia.

### ***Private partnership***

Gebre had a partner organisation abroad, together with his colleagues he set up a funding page to collect money for the local community who now received no income from tourism. Additionally, they created awareness and distributed COVID-19 relief material among the local community. This partner organisation also helps with promoting his tours on the European market. Also, Esaias sought new partnerships and started working together with a booking platform that will promote his tours. In exchange the booking platform will receive some commission from him.

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<sup>39</sup> Aman. (May 30, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

### *Social capital as burden*

Research on social capital has often identified social capital with only positive outcomes. However, social capital can also be a burden at times. Investing in social capital is not costless and therefore unbalanced or over-investment in social capital can transform a possibly useful asset into a constraint or even a liability. Rather than helping, it may hinder people's ability to pursue their interest (Portes & Sensenbrenner 1993, 1338). It is argued that men in Ethiopia are expected to cover the principal household consumption and in social interaction are expected to pay (Hailesellasi et al. 2013, 4). Therefore, men would have less savings than women. However, self-employed households save more than employed and retired households (Hailesellasi et al. 2013, 35). Some guides preferred to seek help from friends instead of family because it is expected, and they believe it is their responsibility to help their family. For Haile, the reason was that he does not want to ask his parents for money, he explained:

*“My mother is asking me to ask her anything that I lack, but I don't want to give up... I'm almost 37 now and I don't want to... borrow money from my parents. I never have... I never did, so I don't want to do it. I act as if... I have money”<sup>40</sup>.*

Haile felt that he could not ask his family for help because he was already 37 years old and did not want his parents, especially his mother, to worry about him. He therefore asked friends for help.

In short, having certain connections and networks influence the extent to which tour guides cope with this period. Social capital seems to be an important source for tour guides on which they can rely in time of crisis. They try to improve their relations and contact other tour guides and tourists to create a social security mechanism to bear shocks and insecurities that is needed in the flexible and sometimes uncertain nature of the work. Not only for credit but also to encourage one another and motivate each other. Thus, strong social networks were being used to extract money and gain support from others.

#### 5.1.5 Importance of human capital

Another coping strategy is related to human capital. In the livelihood framework, human capital is seen as all skills, knowledge, and the ability to labour and good health that enable

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<sup>40</sup> Haile (August 31, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]



people to engage in certain livelihood strategies (DFID 2001). As we have seen earlier, several tour guides tried to diversify their income with varying success. Human capital seems to play a role here. Most guides have an educational background in tourism. Those who did not, stated that they might change back to earlier occupations such as teaching. Kidane explains it the following way:

*“Guides can go out to near towns. Most of them graduated from other things... They graduated from the English department, from the history department, something like that. So, they can work in other places, most of them.”<sup>41</sup>*

Experience and skills are other aspects of human capital. Prior experience in a different sector or taking on a job where no prior experience is needed, made it easier for some tour guides to find a different job and therefore diversify their income. For example, there are guides that started to help their family on the land or started washing cars.

Therefore, education and experience are important aspects to cope with the loss of income in the tourism industry. Experience and education seem to be factors that can make it easier to diversify their income.

Retraining efforts were also considered as a strategy to improve their competencies or for finding a new job. Even though many guides stated that they were waiting or doing nothing, many started reading more, attended meetings, or started a course. They do this either through self-study or attending physical classes. Most guides stated that they want to improve their knowledge for the time when tourists will come again or to be more qualified for a different job. For example, Aman did a course on photography and photoshop, Tilahun a course on videography, whilst Aregawi tried to learn more about bird watching so that they could give a more specialised tour. Many indicated that they study books on the history of Ethiopia. Retraining efforts also include improving their language skills. They understood that acquiring an additional foreign language was important for their future if they wanted to guide more tourists and for local guides to become a national guide.

Furthermore, some of the national tour guides attended lectures or field trips to increase their knowledge. These lectures are shared in their network through the new association, via Facebook or shared through friends and colleagues.

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<sup>41</sup> Kidane (June 12, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

Human capital was therefore an important factor for tour guides, both in finding another job or improving their knowledge for the future.

#### 5.1.6 Constraining and enabling structures and processes - “*Nobody is taking care of us*”

*One morning in June 2020, I contact Tilahun. The network is poor, and we decide try again later that evening. Unfortunately, the network is not good enough. The next morning, it seems to work. Tilahun is sitting outside, and I can hear a lot of noise surrounding him. He will call back in 15 minutes to search for a quiet place. 10 minutes later he has moved inside and explains that the church is campaigning to collect money for all those who are experiencing difficulties due to the pandemic. He explains: “The church was speaking with loudspeakers and they were saying that a lot of people are out of a job in Ethiopia, they cannot work. So, they were asking people to donate anything so that they can help the people.”<sup>42</sup>*

Churches offer a safety net for some, either spiritually, emotionally, or financially. As argued earlier people are not just dependent on their access to capitals or on the vulnerability context. The strategies that people undertake are also influenced by the structures and processes surrounding them. But in what other ways do certain processes and institutions form an opportunity or barrier to achieve a certain livelihood?

#### **Government**

The COVID-19 crisis left many with limited savings and a reduced capacity for recovery. Hotels and tour operators in Ethiopia can access bank loans with a low interest. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, the Ethiopian government decided on a bailout of 3.3 billion Birr to hotels and tour operators as a bailout. However, tour guides are not receiving any financial help. This has left local guides and their families in a “*dire situation*” (Bekele 2020). Only a few guides interviewed in this research were able to receive a loan. Gebre, a national tour guide and tour company owner, applied for a loan to pay for the salaries of his employees. Tilahun, a national guide, had shortly before the pandemic outbreak bought a bus with a loan. To open up one’s own travel agency you need to own a bus or 4x4 car. As mentioned earlier, the crisis gave him a lot of stress because he was not able to pay back the loan in the last few months. He had therefore asked the bank for extending his payment.

Only one local guide received a loan during the crisis so far. Tsegaye, a local guide in the South, decided to buy a motorbike so that he could transport passengers between villages, since the tour guiding work had stopped. He, however, had some initial capital that gave him the chance to apply for a loan. Both Tsegaye and Tilahun had some initial capital before they

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<sup>42</sup> Tilahun – notes by researcher

were able to get a loan. Tsegaye emphasised that most of his friends do not have savings that they can put in the bank to be able to receive credit. Several participants expressed that it was difficult to gain access to capital and loans. Esaias explained that: *“If you have a collateral, they may give you some money as a loan but most of us don't have collateral.”*<sup>43</sup>

Overall, there seemed to be a feeling of neglect. Guides feel that they are one of the main actors in the industry, but they are not receiving any help from the government or other institutions. Esaias felt that no one is paying attention to tour guides during these difficult times. He talked to the Ethiopian Tourism and Culture Office and explained that most guides do not have savings they can fall back on. The response that he got was that they know, but they decided on helping tour operators. He added:

*“For us nobody has checked on us, you know, nobody. So as far as I know we are like around 400 or more licensed tour guides around the country and nobody, no one, is checking on us at this time. Even the tour operators they don't check on us. We are the main actor of the industry, you know. But nobody is taking care of us.”*<sup>44</sup>

Also, Aregawi, a local guide in the North, believed that guides should get some support and that the regional office was not functioning properly. He said that the regional office should understand their request to get a loan, but that the regional office is not presenting their ideas correctly to the federal government. There were more guides that expressed that they had contacted their regional tourism bureau, but they found out that the office did not have the right knowledge to help them. *“They [the regional tourism bureau] are not doing their job, I can say that”*<sup>45</sup>, Aregawi said. Also, Haile expressed his discontent:

*“There is a lot of money in the bank... but because of the bureaucracy and ignorance we are suffering.”*<sup>46</sup>

This indicates towards a lack of financial capital, as well difficulty in gaining access towards financial services and information. Even though there is discontent about the fact that they could not access loans, there was also an understanding that it is not possible for the

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<sup>43</sup> Esaias. (May 22, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

<sup>44</sup> Esaias. (May 22, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

<sup>45</sup> Aregawi. (October 5, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

<sup>46</sup> Haile. (August 31, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

government to help everyone. I asked Abel if he agreed with the fact that tour operators and hotels can be eligible for a loan and tour guides not. He responded:

*“I know Ethiopia is not a rich nation and I know the government they can be lenient to the tour companies that we work for, with their taxes or their bank loans but that is as far they can go, you know. So, I try not to be selfish. I try to have some empathy and put myself in the government shoes: What could the government do for me? There is nothing they can do. You know we have 100 million people and 60 percent of the young people are unemployed. Unemployment is nothing new, we just... We just swallow”<sup>47</sup>*

What this shows is that he agrees it is unfair but also puts it in perspective and rationalises the situation.

### ***Local tour guide associations***

Most local guides are part of a local guide association. Part of the money that local guides make goes to the association. The association then pays tax to the government. The rest of the money is for example used for trainings, to improve the local destinations or to start a business. For example, in the association of Girma, more than 100 members bought a car together. Due to the pandemic several of the association distributed the deposited money among the guides. Other guides said that their association had no or only a limited amount of capital available. Bedulu explained: *“We had some deposit money, but we already shared it with each other in May. It was just a small amount, it was not much”<sup>48</sup>*.

Additionally, several local guides had heard via the local guide associations of a way to get a loan or some capital from the government to start a business. Many of them mentioned that they formed small groups with other tour guides and wrote a business proposal that was submitted to the regional tourism bureau. The ideas included: starting a bakery, car washing or setting up a laundry service. However, none of the tour guides in this research had received any response from their regional tourism bureau, and several months had already passed.

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<sup>47</sup> Abel. (May 23, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

<sup>48</sup> Bedulu. (September 5, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

### *Societal norms*

Another issue linked to the processes and institutions that guides deal with societal norms. There are certain expectations that they should provide for their relatives and friends. Helping others was sometimes expected from them. Many of the guides indicated that they financially support others. This was mostly done among their family, friends or people in their community. Sharing with their network was also seen as something obvious. Aregawi explained:

*“In Ethiopia we have a collective lifestyle, it is not like the individual European style. Our lifestyle, by itself, we help each other, not only financially but also in other ways”*.<sup>49</sup>

Aregawi, for example, helps his mother by helping her with tasks in and around the house. Tariku said that since his father passed away and he is the one responsible for his younger brothers and sisters. Giving money was like an obligation that was expected of him. Also, Tilahun explained that he and his siblings support their parents because their pension is not sufficient. However, due to the current situation their help has lowered. This was also for case by more guides. Most guides said that they help family, friends or give to charity in the high season when they make more money.

Several tour guides wanted to receive a loan or financial support to overcome this period or start another business. The initial capital or collateral needed to get a loan shows the uneven access to financial capital. Access to institutions that could help guides, was particularly limited and hardly existing, which made it difficult to undertake a certain strategy.

### 5.2 Future prospects

*“Now with air travel safety and with social distancing it is very pessimistic now. Very pessimistic. Number one, the people who travel might not have the same means that they used to, you know. Already, you know, there is a fear of traveling to Africa because of Ebola, now you have COVID-19. So, it doesn't look good at all. It does not look good at all. Everybody is thinking that we will go back to normal, but I don't think so. If it does hallelujah... but you know, and I know that it is not realistic.”*<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Aregawi. (October 5, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

<sup>50</sup> Abel. (May 23, 2020) Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

Most people, including Abel, realized that the number of visitors will not return to pre-COVID levels until at least 2021. Even though it might take a while before tourism would restart again, many wanted to keep working in tourism. A big dream of many local guides is to have their own tour company and become a national guide. Having an own business is perceived as a good way to support oneself and to escape being dependent on a boss. When asked what their dreams for the future are, a common response was that they wanted to continue and grow further in the tourism industry, despite the risk of working in this sector. Aregawi, Alemayehu and Tariku said that they had learned from the COVID-19 crisis to not just rely on only the tour guiding work. In the future they want to have a job next to the tour guiding.

However, uncertainty about the future was a common feeling among participants. Would they be able to work again soon? How long will their savings last? Is tourism going to start again? Will tourists travel again? When will travel restrictions be lifted? When will there be a vaccine? This sentiment is demonstrated in the following quote:

*“I have no idea what is going to happen, but I am afraid you know. I am afraid for myself, for my friends and for most of the people in the tourism”<sup>51</sup>*

Esaias expressed his concern about his own future but also that of his colleagues and friends who work in the tourism industry. Even though most saw that the situation will not soon improve, they still emphasised and had hope that tourism would return, and they could continue in the tourism industry as a tour guide or tour operator. Their hopes mostly relied on events they had no influence on such as the distribution of a vaccine, and when international tourism would increase again. Since international tourism worldwide is in such a bad state when I conducted the interviews, it is not surprising that most did not look far ahead but lived day-to-day.

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<sup>51</sup> Esaias. (May 22, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

## Chapter 6: Implications for resilience

The current global pandemic exemplifies how the boundaries between domestic matters and global affairs have become increasingly blurred. This means that distant events or decisions can have very significant effects elsewhere. This chapter aims to connect the insights which have been obtained and link the stories of tour guides to resilience. Tour guides managed to access various forms of livelihoods assets and find their own ways to survive. The livelihood trajectories of tour guides are not straightforward paths, but they are rather diverse and dynamic among different tour guides with similar characteristics. What do these strategies imply about the resilience of tour guides?

Following Thulstrup (2015), resilience is understood as the level of access to capitals (financial, natural, physical, social, and human) that can be used to respond and adapt to change. Adaptive capacity is understood as the ability to diversify or change livelihood strategies, by mobilising and using different capitals, with the goal to absorb stresses and shocks. Livelihood resilience is determined by people's access to resources and will determine if individuals, households, and communities are able to absorb shocks. It was found that tour guides managed to access various forms of livelihood assets. Three types of livelihood assets came forward as most important for tour guides coping strategies: financial, social, human capital.

The first capital that is of relevance is financial capital. They managed to secure financial capital mainly from their savings and by changing their way of spending to save money. Using savings as the main coping strategy is also what Wieser et al. (2020, 5) find in their study on the impacts of COVID-19 on households in Ethiopia. Without sufficient savings it was more difficult to cope with the crisis independently.

The second important capital is their social network. During these challenging times, most guides could rely on friends and family for help. This is in line with what earlier research, which found that 41% of the Ethiopian population claims that family or friends are the primary source of funding in a crisis (Lakew & Azadi 2020, 7). Also, Biggs et al. (2012) stated that social capital is important for the resilience of tourism enterprises. It was not only by lending each other money but tour guides also indicated that they shared their knowledge. Another important development was the formation of an association for national guides. This collective action indicates that national guides are looking for new strategies to deal with their changing livelihood. National guides united to strengthen their bargaining power, expand access to core institutions and exchange information. Furthermore, many tour guides

tried to keep in touch with tourists and even strengthen their clientele base to prepare for better times.

Thirdly, human capital was an important element that tour guides invested in, such as learning another language and taking a photography course. This might not have a direct effect, but it does make them more able to be competitive with other guides once more tourists will travel again. It is not unusual for tour guides that have some small side-jobs next to the tour guiding business. High unemployment rates (Tesso 2020, 27), which have further increased due to the pandemic, makes that there is lots of competition on the job market. The guides that did have or found another job, already had experience in a different sector or did not have an educational background in only tourism, this was mainly the case for national tour guides. They diversified into jobs outside the tourism sector or considered to do so. Nevertheless, most guides resorted to temporary low skilled jobs or relied on help from others. This is in line with what Ambel et al. (2020) observe in their study among the impact of COVID-19 on households in Ethiopia. They find that employment levels recovered quickly but households now had more unstable jobs than before.

Migration has been recognised as an important strategy that households undertake to diversify, secure and improve their livelihoods (De Haas 2010, 244). National guides are oftentimes located in the capital city because of the market opportunities that cities have to offer. It was felt that moving to the city would increase the possibility of finding another job. Local guides seem to be more bound to the city where they live and do the guiding work. Whereas national guides displayed more mobility by traveling to several locations for work or to visit family.

Lastly, livelihood opportunities are also influenced by policies, institutions and processes. A barrier that several guides indicated was that to get a loan from the bank they need initial capital or collateral to get a loan which most guides do not have. This shows the uneven access to financial capital. Via the local guide associations, several local guides had heard of a way to get a loan or some capital from the government to start a business. However, after all these months they had not received any information from their regional tourism bureau. The lack of institutional support and access to this information formed a barrier in diversifying their livelihoods.

Looking at the findings shows that for most guides it is not easy to deal with this new situation. Even though tour guides in general are used to some fluctuations and uncertainty in their work, this situation is complicated. They try to resist and withstand the challenges, cope



and even sometimes adapt by using assets that are available to them. They prepare for the future by improving their human capital. Additionally, they can rely on their social networks and help each other. Tour guides seem to dispose of a relatively strong base of social resources. Thus, social capital comprises an important asset that increases resilience and improves their coping capacities. Diversifying into other sectors and jobs now proved to be difficult, although they are flexible in doing other temporary or small jobs and cutting expenses. Tour guiding is not the only thing in their lives. They often switch to other activities, for example having an additional income or local guides who take on the role of a tour leader. Since we do not know how long this situation will continue, there was and still is a lot of uncertainty. Additional shocks, such as the current political situation, combined with the COVID-19 crisis makes it unclear how long it will take for tourism to recover again.

### ***Further Research***

The research aimed to examine the coping strategies of tour guides in Ethiopia. The strategies tour guides have so far taken to cope with this situation have mostly to do with short-term coping strategies, whereas adaptation takes time. The interviews took place in the first 6 months of the pandemic via video and audio calls. Since it is likely that this crisis will continue for some time, it would be insightful for further research to examine how they are dealing with the situation a year later. Additionally, it would be insightful to examine how they are recovering or what temporal and long-term changes they have made.

Participants in this research came from various locations in Ethiopia. For further research it would also be valuable to include the narratives of more stakeholders involved in tourism sector, such as local governments, institutions, associations and private sector organisations at a certain destination. This could lead to a better understanding as to why there might be differences between locations, the ability of tour guides to cope and look more at the power dynamics at place.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

*“Let's say tourism shuts down forever, I'm going to find another job, like... Even though my degree is in tourism... I can work as a different worker, like I can even wash a car again. I'm not afraid.”*

– Esaias (27 years old)<sup>52</sup>

This quote from Esaias summarises the general opinion among participants. Participants tend to look at the positive side and look for alternative income strategies. By analysing the effects and coping strategies of local and national tour guides in Ethiopia, using the SLF, this thesis gives insights what assets and livelihood coping strategies individuals use in times of a pandemic, to better understand how people deal with global challenges. By using the SLF the research has taken an actor-oriented approach which is a valuable tool to identify the matter of concern for the tour guides regarding their sources of livelihoods and the barriers they face in this crisis.

Past crises have shown the capacity of the tourism sector to bounce back and grow faster in the aftermath of crisis and disasters when compared to other sectors (UNWTO 2020d). This research has shown that although the changes due to the pandemic have been sudden and unexpected, in many cases tour guides were able to cope and survive. Using their capital assets, this research has shown that while they might lack a certain capital, they may use other assets to achieve their goals. This explains the varied impact that this crisis has on different individuals.

The research shows that there are both negative and positive sides of working in the tourism industry. Being self-employed is, on the one hand, part of a certain lifestyle that allows free time and independence. On the other hand, it highlights how uncertain working in tourism can be. The study reveals that the resilience of tour guides lies in the ongoing adjustments they make to changes in relation to their assets. Their resilience lies in their ability to be flexible and find alternative sources of income.

This research is useful because it shows how self-employed individuals cope with crisis and what obstacles they face. This can be used to fill gaps in the literature on health-

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<sup>52</sup> Esaias. (May 22, 2020). Interview by F.I. Jansen. [online interview]

related crises and the consequence for tourism, as well as how self-employed people make a living in the tourism sector.

A major challenge for the future of Ethiopian tourism is the perceived insecurity and instability of the country. It depends on how Ethiopia deals with current crises and promote their country as a safe destination. The ways in which this is done will also have consequences for both the local and national tour guides active in Ethiopia. Most guides wanted to continue in the tourism industry but were now more aware of the importance of having additional income. Since the research took place in the first few months of the pandemic and livelihoods are not static, it might become more difficult for tour guides to survive since most are depleting their savings. While some shocks, such as the COVID-19 crisis, cannot be avoided, the scope of other crises can be reduced. Changes could be made to training and knowledge, access to credit for start-ups, as well as capacity building of local institutions, which can make it easier for tour guides to diversify their income.

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## Chapter 9: Appendices

### Appendix A: List of participants

Table with information about the interviewed tour guides

	Participant*	Gender	Age	Occupation	Years of experience	Date of interview
1	Gebre	Male	-	National tour guide and tour operator	18	22-05-2020
2	Esaias	Male	27	National tour guide	6	22-05-2020
3	Abel	Male	59	National tour guide	15	23-05-2020
4	Eyob	Male	37	National tour guide	10	23-05-2020
5	Aman	Male	27	National tour guide	6	30-05-2020
6	Fekadu	Male	25	National tour guide	6	01-06-2020
7	Tilahun	Male	36	National tour guide and (start-up) tour operator	12	01-06-2020
8	Aseffa	Male	28	Local guide	8	10-06-2020
9	Kidane	Male	36	Local guide and tour company owner	7	12-06-2020
10	Tsion	Female	23	Local guide	4	27-07-2020
11	Habtom	Male	23	Local guide	1	29-07-2020
12	Bekele	Male	33	National tour guide	6	07-08-2020
13	Girma	Male	33	Local guide	8	19-08-2020
14	Yemane	Male	30	Local guide	8	25-08-2020
15	Tadesse	Male	27	Local guide	6	25-08-2020
16	Haile	Male	36	Local guide	10	31-08-2020
17	Mebratu	Male	29	Local guide	3	04-09-2020
18	Alemayehu	Male	28	Local guide	5,5	06-09-2020
19	Tsegaye	Male	28	Local guide	-	08-09-2020
20	Bedulu	Male	28	Local guide	5	05-09-2020
21	Tariku	Male	32	Local guide	7	13-09-2020
22	Aregawi	Male	31	Local guide	6	05-10-2020
23	Yonas	Male	26	Local guide	6	21-10-2020

\*Pseudonyms were used to ensure anonymity of participants

## Appendix B: Invitation email

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Femke Jansen and I am conducting research for my master's Programme in International Development Studies at the University of Utrecht in The Netherlands. I was doing research on tourism in Mekelle, Ethiopia. Unfortunately, I had to return home early because of the Corona virus. I will now continue my research from here in The Netherlands. I am interested in the stories of people working in the tourism sector and how they (you) deal with the current crisis. I found your email address on the website of the Ministry of Tourism, where there is a list of licensed tour guides.

I would like to conduct an interview via Skype (or another online way). The interview will take around 30 minutes. Also, it will be recorded but not be shared with anyone, and any identifiers (like your name) will be made anonymous.

I am curious to hear your stories and your experiences, and it would really help me with my study! If you are interested, please let me know by sending a reply to this email, and we can set up a meeting. Also, if you have any questions let me know.

Hope to hear from you soon! Ameseginalehu!

Kind regards,

Femke Jansen

Master student International Development Studies

Utrecht University

f.i.jansen@students.uu.nl

## Appendix C: Interview guide - Tour guides

### Introduction

- Introduction researcher
- Aim of the research
- Explain that the research will be published online
- Ask for informed consent
- Is okay to record the interview?
- Do you have any question before we start?

### Opening questions

- Can you tell me something about yourself?
  - o Age
  - o Place of residence
  - o Education
  - o Household composition
  - o Financially support others
  - o Job(s)
  - o Self-employed or employed?

### Tourism job

- How long have you been a tour guide? / Working in the tourism industry?
- Why did you decide to start working in the tourism sector? (motivation)
- Can you tell me about the activities that you undertake as a tour guide or tour operator? Probe: *how do people find you or how do you find tourists? Do you only guide or also organize tours?*
- What do you do to promote yourself? Probe: *Promotion, keep in touch with tourists, business cards, social media, working for a company*
- In what areas do you operate as a tour guide? Probe: *One location, or through the whole region/country?*
- Where do these tourists come from? Probe: *Target audience - Focus on international or domestic tourism?*
- What are the challenges of working as a guide?

### Livelihood Strategies

- What other activities apart from the tourism business are you engaged in, which supports your livelihood?
- What earlier crises/difficulties has you/your business faced in the past? How did you deal with that?
- How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected your life? Probe: *In what way? Can you tell me more about that?*
- In your opinion what are the major differences now compared to before the crisis? Probe: *what were the major challenges before the crisis? What are the major challenges now? And why?*

- Are your current income generating/livelihood activities similar to those before the corona crisis?
  - o If yes, which ones
  - o If no, why aren't you engaged in similar livelihood activities? What has changed? *Probe: Saving, Loans,*
- What did you do with the decreased income? *Probe: change consumption (less expensive foods), sells things,*
- How do you keep your business up in these times? *Do you keep in touch with tourists? Networks*

### **Vulnerability context -Tourism and shocks**

- What do you consider a challenge to your daily life? What is one of the challenges that you face in your daily life? *Probe: Paying your bills, running out of money, loans, employees, family*
- How did you deal with earlier crises that affected the tourism industry? *Probe: Political issues, civil unrest, SARS, Ebola*
- How did you overcome those mentioned challenges? *Probe: Adaptation strategies – Social network – informal/formal safety nets – outside help – job diversification - loans – microfinance*
- Do you discuss these issues with friends or colleagues? And what do you talk about then?
- Does tourism seasonality impact your life? *(Less income, food, more quietness) How do you deal with seasonality?*

### **Policies, Institutions and Processes**

- Is there any help from institutions? *Probe: Like the Tourist guide Association. Loans from banks, microfinance institutions, NGOs, community support, government, local authority*
- How is the government helping the tourism industry?
- How is the government dealing with the pandemic? What should be the role of the government be? Government assistance? Information
- How is the government helping the tourism industry?
- Are there other networks that help you? *Family, friends, community*

### **Livelihood outcomes - Future**

- Do you have any concerns for the future? How do you see the future? *Probe: Future of tourism. Challenges - Look for other job?*
- Are you confident that tourism to Ethiopia will start again soon? *Probe: Why?*
- Will you make any changes to your business? *Probe: Focus more on domestic tourism, promotion online, join a company*

### **Closing Questions**

- Is there anything you would like to add which was not discussed?

Thank you for your time and participation in the interview!

