

# AFRICA'S PROTECTED NATURAL ASSETS

The importance of  
conservation areas for  
prosperous and resilient  
societies in Africa

Case study 5  
**DIAWLING  
NATIONAL PARK,  
MAURETANIA**



**GREEN VALUE**  
NATURAL CAPITAL IN AFRICA



## GREEN VALUE

NATURAL CAPITAL IN AFRICA

The Green Value Initiative is the umbrella program of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) on the value of nature in Africa. In providing multiple benefits such as clean air and water, productive soils, extreme weather and erosion protection, health benefits, and solutions to climate change, Africa's natural wealth is an important asset that contributes significantly to the continent's welfare and achievement of societal development goals. The Green Value Initiative supports its African partner countries and development institutions to integrate the value of these assets in decision-making. Its objective is to mainstream natural capital into policies and planning, financial markets and development finance, as well as measures of economic progress and national accounts (natural capital accounting). With that, the Green Value Initiative contributes to one of the key building blocks for transformative change towards nature-positive economies and development in Africa.

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## DIAWLING NATIONAL PARK, MAURITANIA

CASE STUDY

Using evidence from fisheries and other park benefits to position a RAMSAR site within a regional development context



**STATUS:** National park

**SIZE:** 15,500 ha

**ECOSYSTEMS:** Wetlands, and coastal and marine ecosystems

**KEY ECOSYSTEM SERVICES:** Sustainable grazing resources, habitat provision for inland and marine fisheries, water retention, diverse fibres and materials, horticulture, protection against desertification

**NEARBY POPULATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE:** 6,000 inhabitants live in remote villages in and around the park

**LAND-USE:** Sustainable fisheries and some agricultural land-uses are allowed

**CHALLENGES:** Resource exploitation, infrastructure development and rapid regional population increase

Diawling National Park conserves the Mauritanian part of the Senegal delta, covering 155 km<sup>2</sup> of (seasonal) wetlands, dunes and drylands. The RAMSAR site staff manage a complex hydrological regime in order to cope with the consequences of upstream dykes and dams along the Senegal river which have substantially changed the region's ecosystems over the past few decades. About 6,000 inhabitants (2013) live in small villages inside the park and its buffer zone. Their livelihoods are based mainly on fishing, livestock, horticulture and handicrafts from wild plant collection. In the nearby small town of N'Diago, a multi-purpose port has recently been constructed, which will be used by the navy as well as for offshore gas exploration activities and industrial fisheries. This is expected to lead to significant population increases in this remote region. Economic activities and environmental impacts in the park's periphery are likely to increase.

### APPROACH OF THE ASSESSMENT

In view of this situation, the park authorities expect risks to arise in relation to the delicate balance of ecological restoration and current largely sustainable natural resource use inside the park. Rather than arguing against the port and its probable side effects on regional ecosystems, the scoping process guided the study toward pursuing a positive, development-oriented narrative: What natural benefits does the



national park contribute to the region today? What are the likely prospects for 2030 in light of demographic growth and economic activity linked to the new port?

#### SOME KEY FINDINGS

- ◆ Fisheries:
  - ▶ Growing local demand and improved connectivity between the port/town of N'Diago and the capital Nouakchott are likely to increase local market prices and income. This in turn is likely to spur marine fishing efforts and attract non-local fishing boats. The benefits of increased income from fishing will only be sustainable if effective governance structures for managing the fisheries are developed.
  - ▶ The same applies to local inland fisheries inside the park and its buffer which currently produce about 150t/year.
- ◆ Horticulture (250+ households) and livestock (~100 households) inside the park will grow in importance: In 2030, the rotating production area (linked to the park's seasonal flood regime) will not need to have significantly expanded in size. But the larger regional demand for fresh produce will triple producer income and contribute to food security for 13,000+ inhabitants. The same applies to dairy production, which is prioritized in the national food security strategy.

So far, the number and size of threats to the park have appeared only to grow. The new evidence prompts different questions, such as: How can imminent regional development pressures be rendered sustainable? The natural capital assessment is thus able to position the park as a natural asset base in regional development and fisheries debates – in addition to, and in support of, its biodiversity objectives.

Source: Authors' analysis

Diauling National Park covers 155 km<sup>2</sup> of wetlands, dunes and drylands