



# AFRICA'S PROTECTED NATURAL ASSETS

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

GREEN VALUE  
NATURAL CAPITAL IN AFRICA

## Key Data and Facts

I

**Africa's prosperity and resilience depend on its vast natural health and properly functioning ecosystems. Conservation areas help to maintain these.**

- ▶ **More than 7000 conservation areas** in Africa provide diverse benefits that positively influence living conditions and development prospects far beyond their boundaries.
- ▶ About **30% of Africa's total population – more than 370 million people – live within 10 km of a conservation area** today. Their living conditions are closely interlinked with conservation areas.

II

**Africa's protected natural capital stocks are dwindling rapidly – and will likely continue to decrease if efforts are not intensified.**

- ▶ In 40 African countries **at least 1/4 of total national protected land area shows signs of degradation. If current trends continue, total degrading conservation land area will increase by more than 40% (195,000 km<sup>2</sup>) by 2030.**
- ▶ **6% of forest (83,500 km<sup>2</sup>) has been lost inside conservation areas** throughout Africa between 2000 and 2018, compared to **9% outside conservation areas**. Another **4% (55,000 km<sup>2</sup>) of forest land inside conservation areas** will be lost by 2030, if current trajectories continue.
- ▶ 325,000 km<sup>2</sup> of cropland – **8.5% of Africa's total cropland area – is located inside conservation area boundaries.**
- ▶ In West Africa alone, more than **24,000 km<sup>2</sup> of conservation area land** (2 – 5% of the total conservation area land in most countries and up to 9% in Guinea and Nigeria) has been converted into agricultural land (2000 – 2013). In the same period, more than **2,100 km<sup>2</sup> of protected wetlands have been lost** in West Africa.

### III

**Key economic sectors and policy areas in Africa depend on the ecosystem services provided by conservation areas.**

#### Water security:

- ▶ **40 out of the 50 largest reservoirs in Africa** receive their water partly from conservation areas.
- ▶ **14 % of Africa's total freshwater** volume originates from conservation areas.
- ▶ **Sediment yields** in South Africa's Kruger National Park are **six times lower** than yields in more degraded landscapes around the park.
- ▶ More than **40 springs around Bale Mountains National Park** in Ethiopia **provide yearround water for up to 12 million people** in Ethiopia, Northern Kenya and the Republic of Somalia

#### Agri-food systems:

- ▶ **28.5 % (more than 1 million km<sup>2</sup>) of Africa's total cropland area** is located inside conservation areas (8.5%) or within 10 km distance to them (20%) **and benefits from ecologically favorable conditions created by these areas.**
- ▶ In West Africa alone, **226 million agriculturalists** live and work within 20 km of a conservation area.
- ▶ In stabilizing the local **climate**, the Taï National Park in Cote d'Ivoire secures favourable farming conditions for about 176,000 farming households which harvest 40 % of the national cocoa production, worth 3 % of national GDP.

#### Fisheries:

- ▶ **Industrial fisheries in 5 of the 10 most important fishing nations in Africa**, which account for 46 % of total African landings, **prefer to fish within a 50 km range around marine conservation areas.**
- ▶ With **annual average harvests of approx. 3000t fish**, marine fisheries of the **Diawling National Park's** coastline (Mauritanian) are of national importance.
- ▶ Following the establishment of Al-Hoceima National Park in Morocco, local fish resources have recovered by up to 30%. This has resulted in **alleviating poverty by 30 % for 1200 artisanal fishers.**
- ▶ Around South Africa's Goukamma marine conservation area, **catch per unit of effort in the small-scale fisheries doubled within 10 years** of protection.

#### Hydropower:

- ▶ Conservation areas provide clean and **stable water for 8 large hydropower facilities** in East Africa with an overall capacity of more than 6GW electricity and safeguarding **up to 73 % of national electricity production.**
- ▶ While some **watersheds are largely covered by conservation areas**, e.g. 44 % of Cahora Bassa's watershed, **other watersheds lack protection** and risk serious implications, such as Gibe III's where only 15 % of its watershed are protected.
- ▶ **Watershed protection can reduce** the sediment related **costs of hydropower infrastructure by 70 – 85 %** in Nigeria

**Cities:**

- ▶ **At least 1240 African cities** and more than 340 million people benefit from various contributions of conservation areas to urban living.
- ▶ A **single tree** can provide the **cooling capacity of up to ten standard air conditioners**.
- ▶ **64% of the ground water in Abidjan**, Cote d'Ivoire, depends on **Banco National Park**.

**Tourism:**

- ▶ **African conservation areas attracted 70 million visitors** and spending in excess of US\$50 billion in 2015, supporting **8 – 10 million jobs** in conservation area management, tourism and supporting sectors.
- ▶ Improved ecological management and tourism investments in protected areas could yield **US\$ 2.3 billion in additional tourism spending per year and more than 370,000 additional jobs** throughout Africa **by 2030**. By 2050 it could result in additional tourism spending in the order of US\$26 billion and almost 4.1 million new jobs.

**Resilience to natural hazards and disasters:**

- ▶ **More than 11 million people** living in flood risk areas in Africa benefit from the coastal protection provided by conserved and non-conserved mangroves today. **Only 34% of these mangroves are protected**. Another 6 million people have lost such protection due to mangrove deforestation since 1996.
- ▶ Desertification and land degradation affect 45% of total land area in Africa, causing soil erosion, nutrient depletion and water insecurity. Evidence from biosphere reserves in Morocco and the Day Forest National Park in Djibouti show that **conservation areas are able to avoid the encroachment of deserts**.

**Global warming:**

- ▶ **African conservation areas lock away 60 Gt carbon, 14.9 Gt carbon in woody biomass and 46.1 Gt carbon in soils**. To put this in perspective, 0.8 – 0.9 GtC or about 8% of annual global anthropogenic emissions are released into the atmosphere as a result of global deforestation
- ▶ Conservation areas that contain intact natural ecosystems offer relatively higher levels of carbon storage. For example, **intact tropical forests** in Central Africa can store 200 tons of carbon per hectare or more, whereas severely degraded forests may store as little as 10% to 20% of this amount.
- ▶ Reducing ecosystem degradation would avoid social costs of climate damage of **up to US\$10.9 billion annually** until 2030.

**Public Health:**

- ▶ Conservation areas **lower the incidence and spread of Malaria and zoonotic diseases such as Ebola**.
- ▶ In Namibia, the **root of Devil's claw is harvested in the Bwabata National Park**. It is commercialized internationally for its anti-inflammatory and pain-relieving properties; total **national export earnings exceed US\$ 1 million annually**.

#### IV

#### **It pays off to step up efforts and increase investments in the consolidation and extension of conservation areas.**

In Ethiopia, each Birr invested in the management of the protected area system in 2015 is associated with roughly eight Birr of increased tourism spending. Investment return: 8:1. The Namibian protected area system has an **investment return ratio of 9:1**.

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