



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 km²) by 2030.**
- ▶ **6% of forest (83,500 km²) has been lost inside conservation areas** throughout Africa between 2000 and 2018, compared to **9% outside conservation areas**. Another **4% (55,000 km²) of forest land inside conservation areas** will be lost by 2030, if current trajectories continue.
- ▶ 325,000 km² of cropland – **8.5% of Africa's total cropland area – is located inside conservation area boundaries.**
- ▶ In West Africa alone, more than **24,000 km² 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 km² 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 km²) 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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