

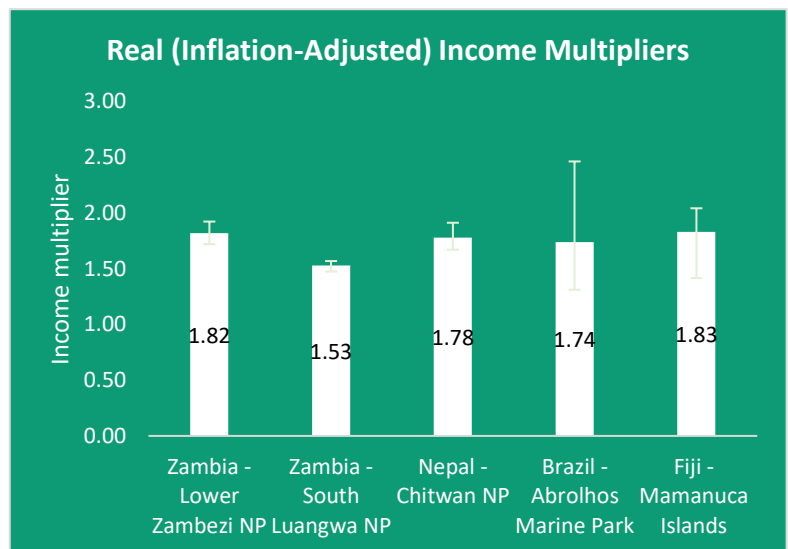
Promoting Inclusive and Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas to Support the Achievement of the 30 x 30 Biodiversity Target

Protected areas are essential for conserving biodiversity. Recognizing that, the post-2020 global biodiversity framework being negotiated by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity proposes a target to expand coverage of protected and other conservation areas¹ to at least 30 percent of the planet by 2030 – the 30 x 30 biodiversity target – and to improve their connectivity and effectiveness. Enormous efforts from all countries and the global community will be needed to reach this target and others to achieve the vision of “[Living in harmony with nature](#)” by 2050.

Putting 30 percent of their terrestrial and marine areas under protection will require countries to undertake effective landscape use and planning that considers the trade-offs and synergies of conservation and development. Given the pressing goals of poverty reduction and development, which have been compounded by the need to recover from the economic fallout of the pandemic, countries may be approaching this target with hesitation.

But efforts to establish well-managed systems of protected and conservation areas can benefit countries. With the right policies and programs in place, these natural assets can be engines of growth.

A new World Bank study² in five protected areas in Brazil, Fiji, Nepal, and Zambia highlights that protected areas are good not just for biodiversity conservation but also for economic development. Tourists visiting protected areas stimulate local demand for goods and services, both directly and indirectly. Their expenditures generate positive income multipliers for households in the local economy – much of which ends up in the hands of poorer residents who need it the most. In each of the five protected areas and national parks studied, the income multiplier is greater than one, indicating that each additional dollar spent by a tourist increases local incomes by more than a dollar.



Source: World Bank.

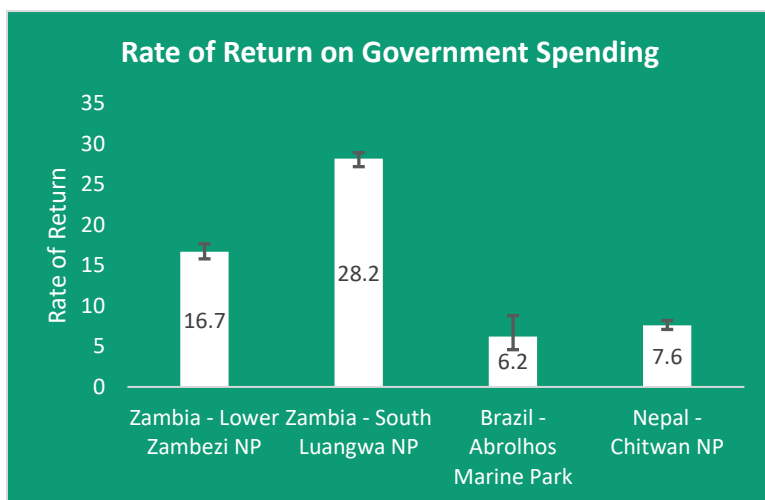
Tourism in protected areas also generates jobs. The share of jobs supported by tourism in the local economies is significant. In Zambia, tourism in protected areas generated jobs for 14 percent and 30 percent of the total working age populations around the Lower Zambezi and South Luangwa National Parks, respectively. In Nepal, tourism to Chitwan National Park generated jobs equivalent to three percent of the total working age population. Tourism in the Mamanuca islands in Fiji

¹ Target 2 refers to both protected areas and other conservation areas (outside of protected areas) that can achieve conservation outcomes. Specifically, the target proposes, “By 2030, protect and conserve through well connected and effective system of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures at least 30 per cent of the planet with the focus on areas particularly important for biodiversity.”

² World Bank. 2021. *Banking on Protected Areas: Promoting Sustainable Protected Area Tourism to Benefit Local Economies*. World Bank: Washington, DC.

supports the employment of 13 percent of the local population on the islands and along the coasts. The fact that the Mamanuca islands are community-managed protected areas that have not yet been formally designated by the government shows that well-managed natural assets more broadly, even outside of protected areas, can anchor tourism and economic activity.

However, policies and programs need to be in place to create the right conditions for sustainable and inclusive tourism in protected areas that generates positive development impacts. The World Bank study emphasizes three main priorities: protecting the natural assets, growing and diversifying tourism businesses (including tourism recovery following COVID-19), and sharing the benefits with local communities.



Countries should invest in protected areas to harness these economic benefits.

None of this is possible without sufficient funding for proper management of protected areas. The proposed Target 18 calls for an increase in financial resources to implement the post-2020 framework. While much of this financing will likely come from governments themselves, the good news is that investing in protected areas is not at odds with development and can in fact pay off. Every dollar spent by government agencies in two protected areas in Zambia – Lower Zambezi and South Luangwa – generates \$16.70 and

Source: World Bank.

\$28.20 in total economic impact through tourism, respectively. A challenge may be mobilizing the upfront financial resources to bring more protected areas under effective management. For this, using scarce public finance efficiently, redirecting resources away from harmful activities, and harnessing private finance and innovative funding mechanisms like payment for ecosystem services and conservation trust funds will be important. Governments’ actions show commitment to conservation and are typically followed by private and donor financing. This may include emerging opportunities to work with private partners to collaboratively manage protected areas to deliver viable economic benefits.

Comprehensive economic assessments can inform inclusive and sustainable planning.

To ensure that protected areas continue to contribute to development, comprehensive economic assessments of tourism should be institutionalized. By regularly measuring visitor park numbers and tourist spending, and surveying local households and businesses, policymakers can quantify the direct and indirect impacts of tourism in protected areas to local economies. These data can inform policies to improve tourism, refine business models, and make the sector more inclusive and sustainable. Assessments can also help identify those protected areas that are generating high returns on government investments, which is critical as not all protected areas may be suitable for tourism activities.

As the details of the new global framework are worked out, let’s keep in mind that countries’ efforts to meet the new targets can pay off, to the benefit of both nature and people.