

8. Conclusions

Online tool for assessing and monitoring protected areas in Africa

We have developed a continent wide and consistent methodology for assessing the value and pressures on protected areas across Africa. The assessment is based on quantifiable and objective accepted measures using the most up to date and accurate information for Africa. This information can be made available in several forms – web pages, PDF documents, tables and charts. The information on the website is updated every 10 days for environmental trend information, and as and when new species, protected area and funding data becomes available. This website could be a valuable tool for assisting and informing policy makers for biodiversity related policies and interventions.

Agreement with internationally recognised conservation priority assessments

Our classification of the 144 most important protected areas based on the two criteria of Biodiversity Value and Anthropogenic Pressures is in close agreement with broad scale conservation priority assessments by Conservation International, BirdLife International and the World Wildlife Fund. Specifically, 75% are in CI hotspots, 71% are in the WWF global 200 ecoregions, and 75% are also IBAs. It can be argued that our scheme benefits from a more objective and consistent assessment of anthropogenic threats than previous assessments.

EC assistance for biodiversity to protected areas

Our analysis of the EC funding to date shows that, across all ACP countries in Africa, the EC has a good record for targeting protected areas that have higher than average Biodiversity Value, but the record is quite poor if we factor in Anthropogenic Pressures as another criterion for targeting. In many cases this apparently poor targeting of funds may be explained by the fact that the EU has chosen not to fund a park which is already well funded by other donors.

The relationship between funding and Biodiversity Value also varies from country to country, with countries like Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire having excellent targeting both in terms of Value and Pressure, through to countries like Ethiopia where targeting is closely related to Value but not Pressure, and finally several other countries where there is no discernable link between funding and either Value or Pressure.

EC funded parks that overlap with several internationally recognised conservation priority assessments have higher Value and Pressure scores than those that do not.

Identifying protected areas for consideration for future assistance

We have created a tentative shortlist of 106 protected areas (out of the 741 protected areas in the study) in ACP countries in Africa that should be taken into consideration in future funding proposals. A very high percentage of these also overlap with broad scale internationally recognised conservation priority assessments (77 or 73% are also IBAs, 79 or 75% are in CI hotspots and 75 or 71% are in the WWF global 200 ecoregions), which again demonstrates that our methodology is identifying a plausible set of important protected areas. Furthermore, within these 'critical' protected areas, those that belong to more than

one conservation priority assessment have higher Value and higher Pressure scores, which suggests that the method can also be used to rank or prioritise 'critical' protected areas.

This shortlist is not exhaustive – there may well be other parks that should be considered that did not make the list due to other criteria (such as plant diversity) or gaps in our species data. These caveats also apply to the discussion on existing funding, where a protected area may have received funding for reasons that were not considered in our analysis. Similarly, a protected area may not have received funding because it is already well funded by another donor. However, this list is a valuable tool for stimulating debate, highlighting opportunities, assisting the decision making process and for providing us with valuable feedback so that we can improve and update our methods of analysis. Inclusion of information from other conservation priority assessments will also be useful in making decisions, as these are often based on field verified information.

Additionally, it is recognised that there are still gaps in the protected area network, meaning many areas of higher biodiversity value remain unprotected, and as such unrecognised by this analysis.

Identifying unfunded parks that overlap with several conservation priority assessments may be a good indicator for successful cooperation with other international agencies and hence a greater likelihood of sustainability and higher impact. Alternatively, critical parks that belong to few such initiatives can be considered 'gaps' in our collective knowledge which could also be targeted.

By providing specific and up to date information on protected areas that may be in need of further assistance we can identify critical gaps in the EC assistance to protected areas in Africa.