Integrating Natural Capital into Sustainable Development Decision-Making in Uganda

A project funded by the UK Government

Biodiversity and Tourism Accounts

Tom Gome & Hilda Arinaitwe

gemetom@gmail.com & hilda.arinaitwe@ubos.org

UNTWO Workshop for MST Pilots, 14 – 16 December, Madrid

Biodiversity and Tourism

• Tourism sector contributes 7.3% of GDP and employing 6% of labour force in Uganda (before Covid-19)

• Uganda Green Growth Development Strategy (UGGDS) targets the tourism and wildlife sector:
  • Increase the value of foreign tourism.
  • Create jobs and boost incomes
  • Protect natural capital

• Environmental-economic accounts are needed to provide key data and statistics for supporting green growth policy actions (UGGDS)

Lions in Kidepo Valley National Park (Photo: Rod Waddington via Flickr, CC BY-SA 2.0)
Key policy questions for the accounts (from stakeholder engagement)

• What are the trends in biodiversity that support tourism activities?
• What is the value of tourism expenditure (tourism earnings)?
• How can we make better use of wildlife resources to increase international tourism and foreign exchange earnings?
• How can we better manage biodiversity to support job creation and poverty alleviation (revenue sharing with communities) via the tourism industry?
• Can we make the case for further investment to unlock more opportunities for sustainable wildlife-based tourism?
Key Protected Areas

• These are the key Protected Areas that were identified for wildlife watching Tourism

• 12 Protected Areas are considered in the accounts.

• An integrated set of accounts on natural ecosystem extent, species and tourism activity have been compiled for each
Trends in biodiversity that support tourism activities from the accounts

• Majority of the 12 key protected areas remain natural ecosystems (generally around 98%, although Mount Elgon is 92.5%).

• Loss of Tropical High Forest (Well-Stocked) is noted for Mount Elgon and the Rwenzori Mountains National Parks

• Bwindi Impenetrable and Mgahinga Gorilla National Parks maintain important populations of gorillas.

• Murchison Falls, Queen Elizabeth and Kidepo Valley National Parks maintain important populations of lions

• Murchison Falls, Queen Elizabeth, Kibale and Kidepo Valley National Parks maintain important populations of elephants and buffalo

• Lake Mburo National Parks maintain important populations of buffalo
Trends in wildlife watching tourism

Increase of 54% between 2011 and 2019

Number of visitors to 12 Key Protected Areas
Trend in Expenditure Associated with Protected Area Visits (2012 to 2019)

2012 (USD 24.8 Million)
- Park Entrance: 10.8
- UWA Activities: 3.6
- Other Expenditure (International tourists): 10.4

2019 (USD 50.8 Million)
- Park Entrance: 7.0
- UWA Activities: 23.8
- Other Expenditure (International tourists): 20.0

Driven by increases in Non Resident Foreign Visitors
Integrating Poverty Data

- Poverty maps can be broadly aligned to the information from the biodiversity and tourism accounts.
- Support an integrated analysis on where tourism development may deliver policy alleviation.
- Darker red districts indicate higher poverty rates.
- Developing tourism in Kidepo Valley National Park could be a priority.
Policy Insights

• Investment in innovative tourism packages, access and tourist facilities should be promoted. Not only in the most popular parks but in less-visited destinations too (e.g., Kidepo National Park).

• Local communities must be involved in collaborations to start new businesses and create jobs in the tourism sector, to alleviate poverty.

• A strategy for the tourism sector to drive post COVID-19 economic recovery is urgently required. This should include investment in the wildlife watching tourism to drive growth in international tourism and associated export earning.

• Ecosystems and iconic species need to be protected and enhanced to ensure the wildlife watching tourism sub sector can support post COVID-19 economic recovery and UGGDS targets.
Integrating Natural Capital into Sustainable Development Decision-Making in Uganda

A project funded by the UK Government

Thank you for listening!