

Policy Brief

Achieving 30x30 under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

Executive Summary

In June 2024, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Regional Resource Hub launched the Second Edition of the State of Protected and Conserved Areas Report¹, providing an update on progress towards achieving the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) Target 3 across 26 countries in the Eastern and Southern African region. The report concludes that to meet Target 3, countries in the region must address several critical elements: improving governance, expanding inclusive conservation practices, diversifying sustainable financing, and integrating climate resilience. These recommendations provide a framework for enhancing biodiversity conservation in Eastern and Southern Africa. Countries are encouraged to develop their own roadmaps based on these recommendations, prioritising political will, resource allocation, sustainable finance development and regional cooperation. Addressing the identified gaps and leveraging innovative approaches at scale will be crucial for achieving more effective and sustainable biodiversity conservation. Aligning efforts with regional policies such as the Kigali Call to Action, as well as strategic frameworks like the African Union’s Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, the Southern Africa Development Community’s Regional Biodiversity Strategy and the East African Community’s Wildlife Conservation Strategy, will further strengthen these initiatives and harmonize conservation efforts across member states.

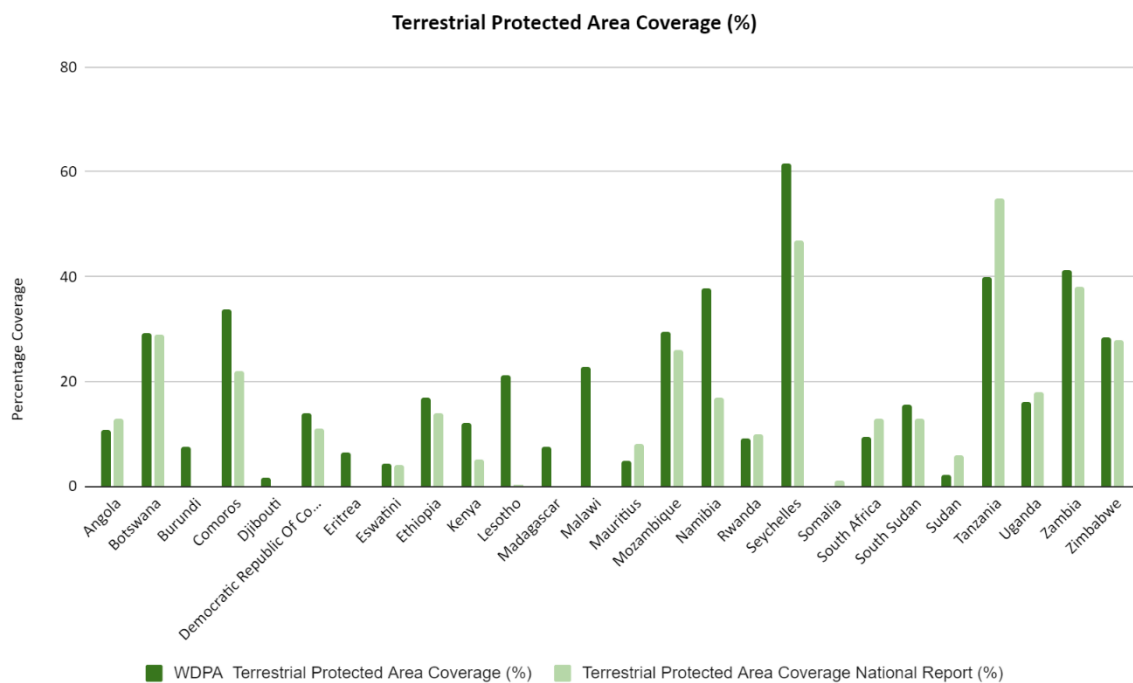
Current Context

The GBF Target 3, also referred to as the 30x30 Target, requires that signatory countries “ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30% of terrestrial, inland waters and marine and coastal areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and

¹ IUCN (2024), The State of Protected and Conserved Areas Report: Second Edition, Report Series No.1. Gland Switzerland. <https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/51517>

services, are effectively conserved and managed through ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, recognizing indigenous and traditional territories, where applicable, and integrated into wider landscapes, seascapes and the ocean, while ensuring that any sustainable use, where appropriate in such areas, is fully consistent with conservation outcomes recognizing and respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, including over their traditional territories”.

As a region, Eastern and Southern Africa currently has 17.24% of the terrestrial area protected in 5,544 protected and conserved areas. At least three countries in the region have exceeded the 30% coverage target for terrestrial protection at national level, according to their national reports. Nonetheless, there is a high variability in the region with 38% of countries remaining below 10% on terrestrial coverage on the World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA), although this figure can go as high as 61% based on national statistics.



As for the marine and coastal protected areas, the coverage is currently at 8.50% of the marine area protected in 446 coastal and marine protected and conserved areas covering 720,861 km². Figure below shows only Seychelles has national coverage that exceeds the 30% coverage, according to the WDPA.

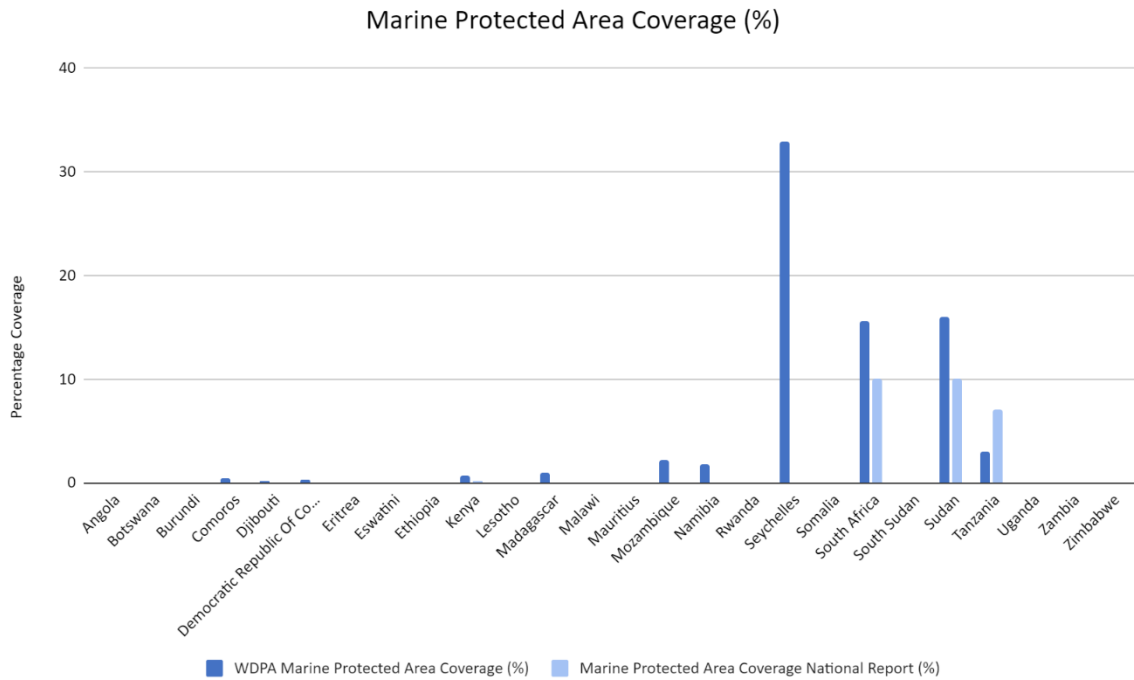


Fig 2: Coastal and marine protected and conserved areas in Eastern and Southern Africa

The statistics differ between those reported by countries in their national reports and those in the Protected Planet databases due to differences in the methodologies and datasets used to assess protected and conserved area coverage, and differences in the base maps used to measure terrestrial and marine areas of a country or territory.

Safeguarding biodiversity effectively to maintain relevant ecosystem functions and species includes a robust and well-managed system of protected and conserved areas that provide core conservation areas. These areas are essential for preserving biodiversity, maintaining natural processes, and providing habitats for numerous species. Additionally, protected and conserved areas offer vital livelihood benefits, including clean drinking water and food security, and hold cultural, spiritual, and socio-economic significance. However, these natural assets need to be sufficiently financed with stable, secure and long-term financial flows to provide these cross-cutting benefits. Biodiversity loss threatens ecosystem services, food security, climate resilience, and the assets that underpin sectors directly contributing more than 50% of GDP. While some countries in the region have made notable progress, others face challenges in

achieving set ecological targets in protected area coverage, effectiveness and connectivity. Variability in connectivity further affects the movement and survival of many terrestrial species. The lack of adequate and sustainable financial resources is also an ‘Achilles heel’ to achieving these goals.

The governance responsibility of protected areas often lies solely with the state/governments. This often results in insufficient fiscal allocation, human resources and other resources for protected area management. Additionally, the centralised governance of protected areas has often resulted in limited inclusivity, with insufficient involvement of other key stakeholders such as Indigenous peoples, local communities, and the private sector. While there have been efforts to create more inclusive governance through public-private partnerships and collaboration with tourism operators, these initiatives remain fragmented and insufficient at both policy and operational levels. The lack of diverse governance actors hinders the effectiveness and sustainability of conservation efforts, as it fails to fully leverage the knowledge, resources, and vested interests of all relevant stakeholders, ultimately compromising the long-term protection and management of these vital areas.

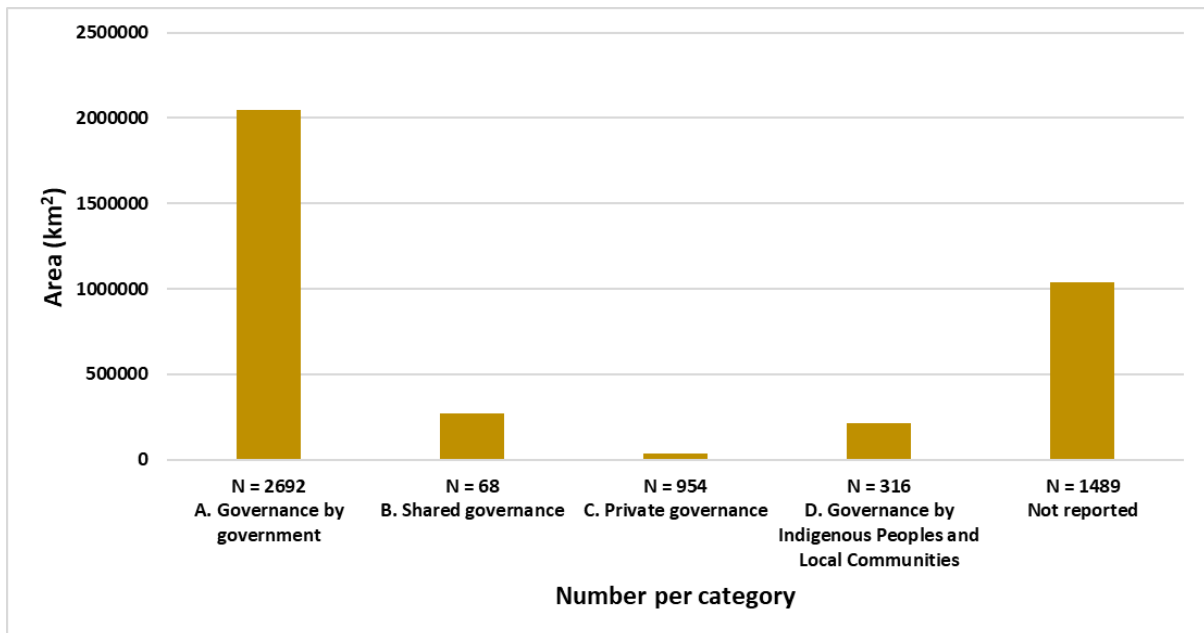


Fig 3: IUCN governance type categories of protected areas in Eastern and Southern Africa

Methodology

The findings summarized in this brief from the SOPACA 2 report were obtained through a collaborative effort with country governments, facilitated by their appointed BIOPAMA focal points. These focal points coordinated with relevant institutions and departments within their respective countries to gather and provide the necessary data and information. This data was regularly submitted to the Regional Resource Hub as part of ongoing updates to the Regional Reference Information System. The requested information included details legal and policy frameworks, financing for protected and conserved areas, and national statistics on assessments (PAGE and PAME). To gather this information, the BIOPAMA team developed a questionnaire, which was distributed to all participating countries. The responses formed the basis for the report's content and contributed additional insights into the regional analysis, helping to shape the recommendations presented in this brief.

Summary Findings

Policy harmonization and cross-sectoral planning

One of the most significant challenges faced by countries across the region is the **fragmented distribution of mandates among various ministries**, particularly those responsible for tourism, forestry, wildlife, agriculture, finance and coastal and marine resources. This fragmentation extends to the management of land use rights and land titles, which are often governed by distinct legal frameworks that do not align with conservation goals. The management of protected areas is often divided among multiple government bodies and underpinned by different legislative Acts, leading to inefficiencies, coordination difficulties, and a lack of cohesive action, contributing to the inability to generate, manage, deploy and align financial resources. This dispersion of responsibilities results in fragmented decision-making processes, where overlapping or conflicting priorities among different sectors hinder the development of integrated and effective conservation strategies and efficient use of financial resources.

The lack of harmonization in policies, mandates, and land tenure systems not only creates administrative bottlenecks but also impedes the ability to respond swiftly and effectively to conservation needs. Additionally, this harms the release of finances for adequate management of these areas and the ability to design new sustainable finance solutions for the benefit of

conservation areas and their beneficiaries. For instance, outdated laws and policies that fail to address contemporary environmental challenges, including land use conflicts, remain in force in some countries. Additionally, the introduction of new legislation sometimes contradicts or overlaps with existing laws. This creates confusion, legal ambiguities, and often leaves the conservation framework in disarray. It should also be noted that strong, integrated policy and legislative frameworks are a key building block to developing effective finance solutions. The absence of regular legislative reviews exacerbates these issues, as the legal frameworks in place are not sufficiently updated to reflect evolving environmental concerns or to accommodate the rapid changes in biodiversity management needs.

These inconsistencies within the legal and policy frameworks also lead to significant gaps in enforcement mechanisms. The outdated or conflicting laws create a lack of clarity on jurisdiction and accountability, which hampers the effective enforcement of conservation measures. Moreover, the inadequate alignment of policies often results in insufficient funding, inefficient resource allocation, and unnecessary hurdles for new finance mechanisms for protected areas, further weakening the region's ability to manage and conserve its biodiversity. Land tenure issues further complicate conservation efforts, limit sustainable economic growth, and fail to provide a concrete asset base for local stakeholders, as unclear or disputed land titles can lead to conflicts between conservation objectives and local land use practices.

Integrating climate resilience into conservation planning is another critical area that requires urgent attention. As climate change increasingly impacts ecosystems, protected and conserved areas must be managed in a way that enhances their resilience to changing environmental conditions. This includes the need for policies that incorporate climate adaptation strategies into conservation efforts, ensuring that protected areas are not only conserved for their current value but are also equipped to withstand future climate-related challenges. Climate resilience should be a core consideration in the planning and management of protected areas, influencing decisions on everything from species protection to land use and resource allocation.

To overcome these challenges, it is essential to strengthen and effectively implement policies related to law enforcement, land tenure, sustainable finance development, and funding and resource allocation while ensuring that climate resilience is integrated into all aspects of conservation planning. **Harmonizing mandates across different sectors, integrating land use and land title considerations, and involving all relevant stakeholders in the planning**

and execution of conservation strategies are crucial steps toward achieving sustainable management of protected areas. A more integrated approach, coupled with regular policy reviews, updates, and the incorporation of climate resilience measures, would create a more coherent and efficient conservation framework. This framework would be better equipped to address contemporary challenges, adapt to future environmental changes, maximise financial resources and ensure the long-term preservation of the region's biodiversity.

Equitable governance and inclusive conservation

Governance structures in the region need to be strengthened to ensure that decision-making processes are inclusive and equitable. Governments should prioritize fostering partnerships with Indigenous peoples, local communities, and the private sector to enhance the governance of protected and conserved areas. Systematic assessments and the prioritization of key actions are essential to guide effective management.

Inclusive conservation practices are vital for achieving successful biodiversity outcomes.

Incorporating Indigenous knowledge and ensuring the active participation of indigenous people and local communities in decision-making can significantly improve conservation efforts. Legislative frameworks should support community-led conservation initiatives and the integration of Other Effective Area-based Conservation Mechanisms (OECMs). The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights² has also emphasized the importance of recognizing community land rights and ensuring the participation of Indigenous peoples in conservation initiatives.

Sustainable Financing

Sustainable finance underpins the long-term management effectiveness of protected and conserved areas. To successfully implement Target 3 of the KMGBF, it is essential to ensure stable, secure and long-term sources of finance from a diversified range of financial sources, tools, instruments, and mechanisms. This involves four key tenets, the generation, management, and deployment of financial resources and the alignment of incentives as encompassed in Targets 18 and 19 of the KMGBF. By sustainably financing these areas they are secured as the

² Working Group on Indigenous Populations/Communities and Minorities in Africa (2022), *73rd Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights*. <https://achpr.au.int/en/intersession-activity-reports/working-group-indigenous-populations-communities-minorities-africa>

underlying natural assets needed for sustainable economic growth across a multitude of sectors vital to emerging economies. They are also enhanced in their ability to provide economic opportunities for local stakeholders.

However, it is not simply the increase of finance available that is required but ensuring that the finance is targeted at conservation needs and supports social imperatives. To develop sustainable finance solutions that are tailored to the unique needs of Eastern and Southern Africa, several enablers are needed including collaboration across sectors, clear methodologies to identify, design and amplify finance solutions, and the inclusion of local decision-makers. It should also be noted that sustainable finance solutions need to be used to augment existing and traditional sources of funding that protected and conserved areas have been historically reliant on such as donations, grants, and development assistance. They need to also come alongside income sources for conservation areas such as tourism and add to, but not replace, public spending by governments.

Securing consistent and adequate financial resources through government budget allocations and integrating biodiversity conservation and related activities into national and local budgets provide a stable financial base for these efforts and remain the mandate of governments. Advocating for biodiversity-related expenses to be included cross-sectorally in public-sector investment plans can further ensure dedicated financing. Governments also need to fulfil financial reporting requirements linked to Targets 18 and 19 of the KMGBF.

In addition to government support, leveraging international aid and grants is crucial and remains catalytic for the activation of new and innovative finance solutions and to address immediate and short-term funding needs. Eastern and Southern Africa can benefit from financial resources provided by international organizations, such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the World Bank, and various conservation-focused NGOs. Establishing partnerships with these international entities can facilitate access to funding and technical support. Developing local capacities to apply for and manage (international) grants, especially for community-managed areas, will enhance the region's ability to secure and utilize these resources effectively. However, these sources of funding cannot be solely relied upon nor can they be used in isolation as they do not solely fill the financial gaps that currently exist. Critically, the activities implemented by these partners must be guided by overall Integrated Development Plans or similar landscape guidance to ensure cohesive and cost-effective actions and complementarity

to government investments. They also need to be strategically utilised to activate the incubation and implementation of finance solutions that can provide tailor-made finance solutions that support long-term sustainable finance.

Public-private partnerships (PPPs) offer another promising avenue for financing biodiversity conservation. Engaging the private sector through collaborative projects can bring in additional funding and innovative approaches to conservation, importantly building new finance solutions that access sources of finance previously unavailable to conservation efforts. Clear frameworks for these partnerships should outline the roles and contributions of both public and private entities. It is also imperative to note that role of the private sector is two-fold: financing green (supporting the increase of finance for conservation) as well as greening finance (removing financial practices that are harmful to nature and increasing the nature finance gap).

Enabling policies and an innovative policy framework are crucial to unlocking additional financing options, including through the wildlife or biodiversity economy. Policies that support the development and implementation of innovative financing mechanisms can help diversify and enhance financial sources. Mechanisms such as impact bonds and biodiversity credits, where finance is linked to specific conservation outcomes, and blended finance models, combining concessional funding with private investment, can attract additional capital, are some examples of the growing world of finance for nature. Such policies not only facilitate the flow of new financial resources but also encourage private sector participation and innovation in biodiversity conservation.

Ensuring Financial Transparency and Accountability

Effective financial management is crucial to ensure that funds are used efficiently and transparently. Strengthening financial management systems within institutions responsible for biodiversity conservation will enhance accountability. Implementing robust budgeting, reporting, and auditing practices will ensure that resources are allocated appropriately and used effectively. Regular financial audits and performance reviews will help track the impact of funding and identify areas for improvement.

Engaging stakeholders in financial oversight is also important. Involving civil society organizations, community groups, and other stakeholders in monitoring financial flows can provide additional layers of accountability. Creating platforms for public dialogue and feedback

on financial management will ensure that resources are used transparently and ethically. Mechanisms for addressing grievances and concerns will help maintain trust and effectiveness in the use of funds.

Leveraging Technology

Advanced technologies such as satellite monitoring, drones, and data analytics can significantly enhance the monitoring and enforcement of protected areas. These tools provide real-time data on wildlife movements, ecosystem health, and illegal activities, supporting more effective conservation strategies. Initiatives like the Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) Patrol Software for protected areas adapted in countries like Kenya, Tanzania and Seychelles leverage technology to track and protect elephant populations across multiple countries.

Conclusion

Achieving the ambitious 30x30 Target under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework presents both a challenge and an opportunity for Eastern and Southern Africa. The region's diverse landscapes and rich biodiversity are invaluable assets, but they are also under significant pressure from various socio-economic and environmental factors. To safeguard these natural resources, a multi-faceted approach is essential—one that balances conservation with sustainable development, integrates climate resilience, and fosters inclusive governance. The journey towards 30x30 will require a paradigm shift in how conservation is perceived and practised. **It is not merely about expanding protected areas but ensuring that these areas are effectively managed, equitably governed, and financially sustainable.** To meet this challenge, we need to:

- **Empower local communities and Indigenous peoples** through inclusive governance frameworks that incorporate traditional knowledge and community-led conservation.
- **Unlock sustainable financing** by innovating beyond traditional sources, including impact bonds and biodiversity credits, and ensuring transparent financial mechanisms.
- **Align policies and integrate climate resilience**, updating fragmented legal frameworks and **coordinating regional collaboration** across SADC and EAC to manage transboundary ecosystems.

The path ahead is undoubtedly complex, but with the right strategies, political will, and regional solidarity, Eastern and Southern Africa has the potential to emerge as a leader in global biodiversity conservation. The choices made today will shape the future of the region's biodiversity, and with it, the well-being of the millions who depend on these ecosystems for their livelihoods, culture, and survival.