

## **Wildlife Conservation in the Long Term – Uganda as a Case Study**

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This study considers the economic value of conservation to Uganda as a nation, on the basis that if too few benefits flow to the nation, and too many flow to the planet at large, conservation will represent a national dis-benefit and therefore be under permanent threat. The main potential cost to Uganda is seen as the agriculture foregone by setting land aside for National Parks and Game Reserves. Looking ahead 30 years (to 2025), it assumes a largely rural population, 2.6 time larger than at time of writing, when empty tracts of land, set aside for conservation, will potentially be a massive, underutilised resource.

The economic value of conservation was considered by examining the value of agriculture, using two potential scenarios, assuming that land would become the limiting resource as the population grows. The opportunity costs of conservation (versus agriculture) were quantified, considering the state of economics of agriculture in Uganda, and inferring the likely state in the future. This information was then incorporated into GIS to build a map of forecasted agricultural values throughout Uganda. This map was compared with maps of National Parks and Game Reserves to derive their agricultural value.

As tourism in Uganda was in it's infancy at time of writing, analogues from Kenya were used to assess potential values from wildlife and nature tourism (termed tourism herein). Many areas of high conservation value (forests and mountains) are also in areas of high agricultural potential and high population density, making conservation in Uganda difficult, with conversion to agriculture the main threat to the 17.5% of land that is protected.

The study concluded that tourism would offset some, but nowhere near all, the costs of foregone agriculture. This thesis argues that land availability is not yet a severe constraint and there may even be benefits from excluding people from National Parks. However, when land does become the limiting resource, the opportunity cost of conservation will amount to a deficit of \$250 to \$900 million per year.

As more economic benefits flow to the tourists and their nations of origin than to Uganda, more revenues need to be captured in-country in order to secure conservation in the long term. A number of ways to achieve this were discussed, concluding that there ultimately needs to be a distinctly more economic flavour to conservation.

*Summary written by Lucy Sangster*