

INVESTING IN THE PLANET'S SAFETY NET

Biodiversity Finance
Stories from the Field



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Foreword



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Let us step back in time to more than 2000 years ago, when Chinese philosophical and historical texts contained sophisticated conceptions of nature and our place within it. Daoism, a school of philosophical thought popular to this day, focused on the relationships between the various natural elements rather than what makes or controls them, emphasizing the need to maintain balance with them. Meanwhile, yin (dark, cold, negative), yang (light, hot, positive) and the five elements (water, fire, wood, metal, and earth) are ancient concepts universally known. These elements have been used to describe the interactions between complex systems for generations and could be viewed as the early study of nature long before the word “biodiversity” even existed, let alone its scientific study.

Now let us leap across the Pacific Ocean to the Amazon, where indigenous tribes and local communities have long held a reciprocal relationship with the world, acting as allies to nature. The Yanomami tribe have a tradition which symbolises their understanding of humankind’s position within our natural ecosystems. Hunters will share their gatherings with the community, but they will never eat their own. Instead, they will accept a gift from another hunter. This simple yet powerful tradition is the story of how life on earth survives and thrives through reciprocation.

Stories like these are found in all corners of the world, demonstrating how our cultures have long valued the protection and preservation of nature, cherishing the fact that we are part of the natural world; both deeply reliant on it, and responsible for how we interact with it.

Yet, in recent years, something has changed.

Nearly 1 million species are currently at risk of extinction due to human activity. Ecosystems such as the Amazon rainforest, the world's coral reefs and the boreal forest biomes are all fast approaching the tipping point of irreversible change. And this is a disturbingly recent trend: the number of animals living on Earth has plunged by half since 1970.

Lessons learned over generations are being lost due to our insatiable appetite for growth at any cost. Biodiversity is severely declining due to conflicting private and public interests, incoherent policy and governance, and insufficient financing.

Having taken more and more from nature, we have neglected to give back to ensure it remains self-supporting, abundant and able to sustain humankind. The US\$ 143 billion spent on biodiversity per year is far below the US\$ 824 billion scientists estimate is required to adequately protect and restore it.

Quite simply, we are not meeting our obligations.

Ancient traditions show us the unbreakable links between people and nature. Chinese rulers and the Yanomami demonstrate how these bonds must be cherished – and that no one person or organization can act alone. It is the responsibility of everyone to come together to properly value nature.

How do we do this? Firstly, we must tackle the funding gap. Our profit from the natural world amounts to US\$ 125 trillion to US\$ 140 trillion a year, making the current US\$ 143 billion investment minuscule by comparison. Half the gap between that current investment and what is needed to make a difference could be closed by working smarter with existing funds, policies and investments and shifting the flow of money away from harmful behaviours and toward beneficial outcomes.

UNDP-BIOFIN is working globally with government ministries, civil societies, indigenous communities, the private sector, and other groups to secure a nature-positive future for all.

The following compendium of stories comes from the voices of our partners all of whom are champions for change in various fields. Mayors, community leaders, park directors, rangers, and government counterparts share how they have partnered with BIOFIN to help lead the world towards a more balanced, equitable future. They demonstrate the diverse range of players in biodiversity finance, and the huge range of finance solutions available.

Diversity is a strength inherent in both nature and our work.

Midori Paxton

Head, Ecosystems and Biodiversity, UNDP

Introduction

UNDP's Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN) was initiated in 2012 at COP 11 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), by UNDP and the European Commission in response to the urgent global need to divert more finance from all possible sources toward global and national biodiversity goals. Now present in more than 40 countries, UNDP-BIOFIN is working with governments, civil society, vulnerable communities, and the private sector to catalyse investments in nature. The following collection of stories is just a small sample of the variety of biodiversity solutions we are helping countries deliver.

How do we get to these solutions? BIOFIN's team of experts is working on the ground to develop Biodiversity Finance Plans – roadmaps towards a more sustainable future. The experts draw on qualitative and quantitative data, innovative methodologies, and input from a variety of sectors to create an agenda for action. To get there, countries follow a five-step approach known as the BIOFIN Methodology, which is explained in depth in the BIOFIN Workbook:



Step 1: Finance Policy and Institutional Review: Assess the policy, institutional, and economic context for biodiversity finance and map existing finance solutions.



Step 2: Biodiversity Expenditure Review: Measure and analyse current biodiversity expenditures from the public and private sectors, donors, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).



Step 3: Biodiversity Financial Review Assessment: Make a reliable estimate of the finances needed to achieve a country's biodiversity goals and compare this to current biodiversity expenditures and other resources available.



Step 4: Biodiversity Finance Plans: Develop a biodiversity finance plan that identifies and mobilizes the resources and policies required to implement the most suitable finance solutions.



Step 5: Implementation: Finance solutions are then delivered, reducing finance needs.

As you will see from the following stories, biodiversity finance solutions are incredibly varied, and we have compiled a list of more than 150 solutions available online at www.biofin.org.

Unlocking the financing potential of national parks in Botswana

© UNDP



By **Masego Malokwane**, PR officer from the Department of Wildlife & National Parks, Botswana

Botswana teems with abundant wildlife, which draws flocks of tourists. With nearly 40 per cent of our land devoted to national parks, biodiversity is a national treasure. Communities throughout the country rely on this rich natural source both for basic sustenance, such as clean water and for tourism, which is one of the most important contributors to the Botswana economy.

Yet we continue to undervalue our most important asset.

Park entry fees are one of the primary revenue-generating opportunities for conservation and for employing local communities. These fees were last reviewed more than 20 years ago, so one of Botswana's most valuable revenues is substantially lower than it could be. Fees have become unable to cover rising operating costs, amid recurrent budget cuts and unforeseen events such as COVID-19, which have severely strained government budgets.



© Dillon Groves

Changing fees has been significantly complicated by the fact that they are set by legislation, requiring a parliamentary process to change them and the establishment of new regulations to allow future revision.

Exploring ways to revise these fees is how our relationship with BIOFIN began. The task was two-fold: revising the current fees, and improving the legislative process for any future fee adjustments.

We adopted a consultative approach. We developed a business case detailing the need for review, which was approved by the government. A benchmarking exercise based on the amount, type and frequency of fees charged in nine other countries in the region was then conducted. We also consulted stakeholders on fee-setting criteria, structures, amounts, and notice periods.

“ I travelled across the country viewing its incredible natural resources and meeting the many park workers and local communities who could benefit from increased resources. I saw first-hand how delicate the balance between people and nature is. While reviewing park fees may seem minor, small actions can accumulate to make a big difference. ”

Once the consultation period ended, a new fee proposal was developed, and a feedback process actioned to document stakeholder responses and guide future reviews.

The increase came into effect across nearly all National Parks and Game Reserves on 1 April 2022. The fees for Botswanan citizens rose by much less than the increase for non-citizens.

This work, completed with the support of BIOFIN, will allow the government to continue improvement of its service delivery to the public and maintain high-quality standards. The collected fees contribute to Botswana's development of health services, education, and income support. The next step will be to analyse how this new revenue can be utilized to help protect and restore nature throughout the country.

A total of 109 different fee types were changed. Visitor entrance fees for non-residents rose by 125% to USD 21. Botswana resident entrance fees rose to USD\$ 2.30 for Category A parks.

This finance solution is expected to increase revenues by at least USD\$ 1 million a year.

Regulations have also been updated to encourage more frequent fee revisions.

Guatemala:

Rejuvenating the oceans, for people and planet



With **Marvin Zamora**, community leader, and **Omar Peralta**,
Municipal Environmental Management Unit of the Municipality
of Taxisco, Guatemala



Left: Marvin Zamora (community leader); Right: Omar Peralta (head of the UGAM) © Omar Peralta



I was born a fisherman. Our village culture is fishing. But we have seen a decline in fish population due to pollution and climate change.

Marvin Zamora



Marvin Zamora was born in the village El Garitón, near an estuary that also runs along seven other neighbouring villages. Fishing, characterized by traditional techniques, is the mainstay of the local economy, primarily for self-consumption and local sales.

“ Villages living around the estuary have suffered economically because they cannot catch enough fish to sell and feed their families. In some cases they have had to leave to work far away. ”



Fish hatchery project in El Garitón village © Omar Peralta

Community Councils for Urban and Rural Development (*Consejos Comunitarios de Desarrollo Urbano y Rural*, or COCODE), a local group representing El Garitón and its seven neighbours, identified a reduction in the population of mollusc, crustacean and fish species in the estuary due to the effects of climate change and pollution. The loss of traditional fishing techniques has made it more difficult for families to provide for themselves.

“ The Municipality of Taxisco supports the fish hatchery project because it is beneficial to both fishermen and nature. ”
Omar Peralta

Omar Peralta, head of the municipal environmental management unit (*unidad de gestión ambiental municipal*, or UGAM) that is being supported by BIOFIN, works with COCODE's Marvin Zamora in the fish and mollusc nursery project, which sees juveniles returned to the estuary to increase populations. The community is also being assisted with the construction of aquaculture pools to produce these species, thus contributing to food security and income generation while reducing the pressure on the estuary's wildlife populations.

“As a municipality we work for the welfare of the population. The fish and mollusc hatchery improves food security, economic development and the sustainability of marine species and birds that live and feed in the estuary.

Omar Peralta



Fisherman from El Garitón village © Omar Peralta

This is just one example of UNDP-BIOFIN's work to increase public investments in biodiversity working with Guatemala's municipalities. They assisted five coastal areas in increasing their budget allocation, with a total of US\$ 818,682 invested in biodiversity management and conservation thus far.

BIOFIN has also supported efforts to include biodiversity considerations in central and municipal operational and strategic planning. This will ensure that changes in authorities – particularly frequent at the local level – do not result in neglect of conservation management.

“As a municipality we believe that environmental programmes should be part of government planning,” Zamora said. “Technical work groups should be organized and commissions created to monitor CODEDE's programmes so they can continue under different governments.

“As a community leader, I believe there must be both a willingness to serve and honesty,” Zamora continued. “We also need more people to work with us, since other villages ask how they can access these projects. For that, we must have a good relationship with the municipality so it can provide inputs and technical support so that we fishermen can strengthen knowledge and improve our practices to care for the natural environment.

The limitations of the municipalities notwithstanding, efforts to raise awareness and provide training have strengthened local governments, which have become more willing to develop investment for sustainable biodiversity management by allocating resources under budgets and taking action at the municipal planning level.

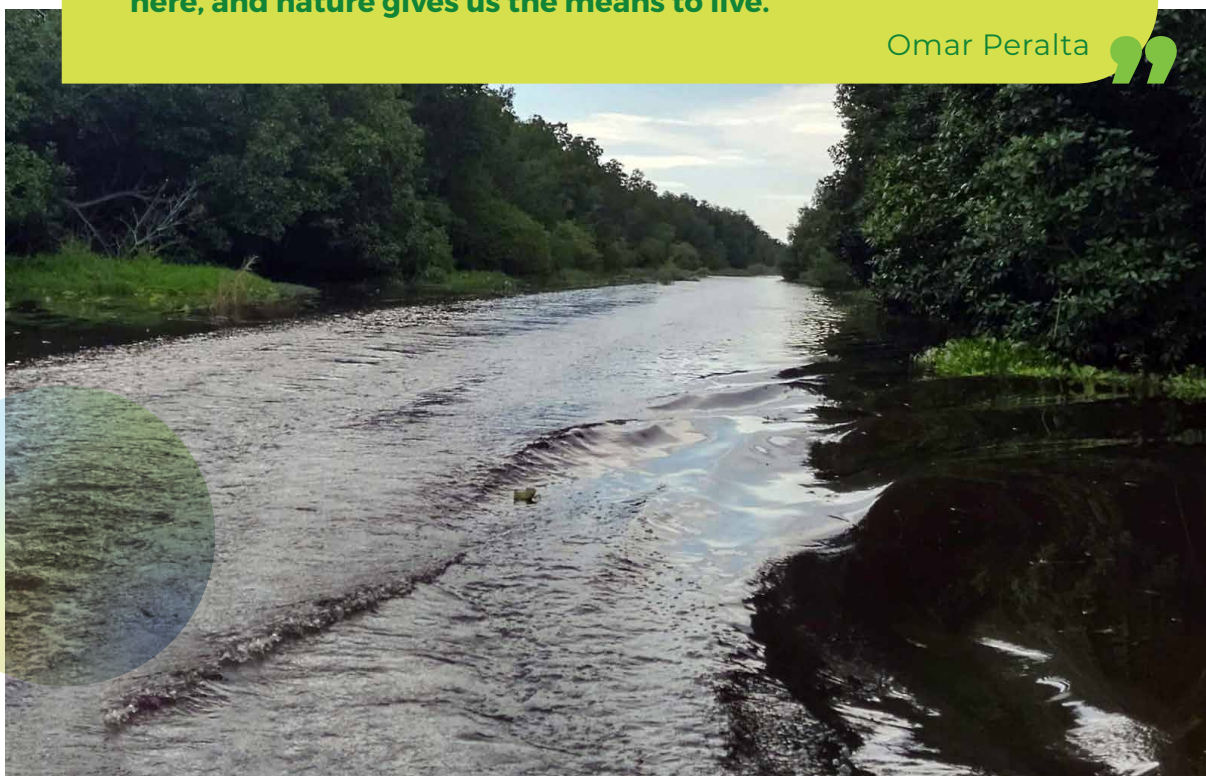
As mentioned, this is critical when municipal authorities change frequently, resulting in shifting investment priorities.

Biodiversity is the basis of community livelihoods and quality of life, particularly for the most vulnerable. Failure to recognise its economic value often means that decision-makers allocate inadequate budgets for its safeguarding.

I share how my actions have helped the estuary with villagers and COCODES,” said Peralta.

“We must take care of the environment because we were born here, and nature gives us the means to live.”

Omar Peralta



Estuary © Omar Peralta

Mexico:

Jalisco is betting on biodiversity

© Alejandra Blanco



By **Alejandra Blanco**, former Director of the Environmental Fund, State of Jalisco, Mexico



Biodiversity offers enormous value to the economy and society of the Mexican state of Jalisco. The state is one of the most populous and economically thriving states in Mexico, and one of the most bio-diverse with 4 million hectares of forests covering over 50 percent of the state. The health of our biodiversity, the economy and the citizens go hand in hand.



Cattle ranchers are diversifying their means of living by conserving the forest and producing honey © Alejandra Blanco

The state has also developed new conservation schemes, such as the biocultural landscape, which have led to a boost in nature-derived entrepreneurship. Other programmes, such as the ecosystem services programme fund, also serve as a catalyst for conservation. Both these schemes are legislated under the State Law of Ecological Balance and Environmental Protection and are a clear result of the movement to safeguard our natural capital.



© Alejandra Blanco

Jalisco has seized opportunities to handle budgetary challenges caused by the pandemic. Despite designated biodiversity and forestry funds, financing gaps continue to hinder the creation of new, innovative financial solutions. The four specialized public funds (agricultural, environment, entrepreneurship, and forestry) were working in isolation, duplicating activities and missing opportunities to create state-wide projects. Also, the funds' focus on development of productive sectors, sustainable use of resources, and economic development of micro and small businesses, meant the potential for mainstreaming biodiversity was present but untapped. The Ministry of Finance was not aware of the funds' potential to channel additional resources for environmental initiatives. The state has a clear long-term plan to link its biodiversity strategy with sectoral policies.

Other areas being prioritized to achieve the state's goals are: the REDD+ state strategy; the protected areas programme; the sustainable forestry development programme; the fire management programme; the comprehensive waste management programme; and the climate change strategy.



© Alejandra Blanco

BIOFIN helped map all available financial mechanisms in the state, and began implementing biodiversity finance solutions. One solution was to link the main public funds and create overarching common objectives, indicators and goals aligned to the SDGs.

Thanks to this work, the four funds are now well aligned. Each programme complements the others, financing activities related to each specific area while working towards the same common goal. An excellent example of this new alignment was the programme for conversion to sustainable livestock, which saw: the Agriculture Fund financing protein banks; the Forestry Fund financing tree nurseries; and the Environmental Fund financing implementation of new sustainable practices.

Other examples of convergence include: the Entrepreneurship Fund providing livestock producers with access to credits; financial cooperatives and micro-finance organisations developing initiatives to access credit; the Agriculture Fund financing subsidies related to sustainable activities; the forage management programme; and the Environmental Fund assisting with forestry carbon bonds.

Another strategy planned in partnership with UNDP is the ongoing establishment of a Green Investment Office in the Ministry of Finance to create investment strategies to achieve state priorities and mechanisms to align budgets. The new office will propose the most efficient financial instrument to channel resources such as public-private partnerships, matching funds, issuance of thematic bonds, hybrid and fiscal mechanisms, tax offsets and sustainable practice incentives which will all ensure biodiversity positive impacts.

This alignment and mobilization strategy will be particularly relevant since Jalisco is an active member of Regions4 and the Advisory Committee on Subnational Governments and Biodiversity, a CBD official structure.

-Alejandra Blanco, Jalisco's Former Environmental Fund Director

This focus on environmental investments will translate into clear benefits for the population such as green infrastructure in cities, reduction in pollution, more and better environmental services, and quality of life improvements.

BIOFIN also helped structure and align ministry budgets by detailing current biodiversity investment amounts and the areas in which they are invested.

Results include the Entrepreneurship Fund's green finance program, which provides credits for green small and medium-sized enterprises, and the budgetary alignment of environmental areas within the Gender Equality and Social Assistance ministries.

In Jalisco, environmental governance and community work is not as established as in other states, such as Oaxaca or Yucatán, making the achievement of biodiversity entrepreneurship goals more complicated. Despite this, the launch of a blended bioeconomy finance pilot will benefit at least 30 local entrepreneurs and provide access to non-refundable and debt finance



© Alejandra Blanco

from three different sources – a huge outcome for both the state and UNDP-BIOFIN. In San Sebastián del Oeste a group created by women produces diverse products based on native and creole maize. Some of the products they offer are tortillas for tacos, pipián (a sauce traditionally made with squash seeds), totopos and ponteduro (a snack made from toasted maize and other seeds). Their business already has the infrastructure and equipment necessary to start commercializing beyond their local markets. However, they currently lack the means to access bigger markets such as major tourist destination Puerto Vallarta.

In conclusion, biodiversity priorities are now being addressed through resource mobilization and budgetary efficiency which have reduced the biodiversity finance gap in Jalisco. The state will continue to work closely with international organizations like BIOFIN, ministries and community groups to close the gap further and continue to be a flagship state for the fulfilment of Mexico's international biodiversity commitments.



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Philippines:

Together for Tamaraws

crowdfunding campaign helped rangers get through the pandemic

© UNDP/kim Lim



By **Eduardo Bata**, Team leader and ranger,
Tamaraw Conservation Program, Department of
Environment and Natural Resources, Philippines

I am Eduardo Bata, a 57-year-old resident of San Jose in Occidental Mindoro (the western half of the Philippines island of Mindoro). My relatives, friends and colleagues call me Ed. I am truly proud of the 36 years I have dedicated to being a ranger for the Tamaraw Conservation Program operated by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Tamaraws, also known as Mindoro dwarf buffalo, are a source of huge pride for us as they are found only on our island.

The rangers are tasked with regularly patrolling Mt. Iglit Baco Natural Park, Mt. Calavite Wildlife Sanctuary and the Aruyan-Malati Tamaraw Reservation to protect the critically endangered tamaraws, of which only around 480 remain. Our “office” is the huge land area we patrol where the remaining tamaraws live. A patrol shift lasts 22 consecutive days so we are away from home for nearly a month at a time. It’s never easy to be away from the family. Cocoy, a fellow ranger, once told us his very young daughter hardly recognised him when he returned home! He was laughing but we could see the tears and hear his voice trembling.

Being a tamaraw ranger is quite dangerous but fulfilling. We can come face-to-face with the armed poachers and tamaraw hunters who we must challenge. We hike for miles through muddy, slippery, rocky mountain trails wearing often old, worn patrol gear. We and the park wardens also serve as tour guides for park visitors, so we have strong knowledge of the trails and the park’s flora and fauna. We also conduct dialogues with the indigenous Mangyan community so that they can work with us to protect the tamaraws. Several wardens and rangers are from the Mangyan tribe, who are highly respected for their knowledge of the mountains and have long co-existed with the tamaraw.



© UNDP/Edgar Alan Zeta

We must protect the tamaraws from poaching and hunting. They should be left in peace to reproduce and grow their population. We do not want the children of our children to no longer be able to see wild tamaraws because we failed to protect the animals.

Tamaraws previously roamed the entire island of Mindoro in their hundreds of thousands. Now they are confined to the highlands due to rampant poaching, habitat degradation and changing land use. Only around 500 of this unique species remain. Captive breeding to revive the population has resulted in only a single offspring. Its survival is therefore massively dependent on the wild population, which was threatened once more by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic affected all of us including me, my family and my co-workers. Wide-ranging community lockdowns prevented us from leaving the house. A nationwide closure of the parks meant no tourists and zero livelihood for communities like us that depend on tourism for extra income. Government budgets redirected funds to COVID-19 programmes, which also affected our office. The wardens had no tourists to guide and some of my fellow rangers were removed from duty. As elsewhere in the world, this was an opportune time for poachers and hunters and there was a large increase in poaching during this period, perhaps due to hunger as many lacked food due to reduced incomes. We therefore continued to patrol despite the order to stay home, and intensified our patrols to ensure that the tamaraws were protected. We were very careful to avoid exposing the park's indigenous peoples to the virus.

BIOFIN's 2020 Together for Tamaraws crowdfunding campaign was a huge help for me and my family. It is so heart-warming to know that Filipinos and global citizens alike, of various age groups, incomes, and interests have supported us - no matter how large or small the individual amount. The funds raised helped us get through lockdown and continue our jobs as guardians of the tamaraws. Proceeds provided us with much needed patrol equipment, uniforms, field allowances and groceries for our 22-day shifts. Even before the pandemic, BIOFIN was helping us raise awareness of the importance of protecting tamaraws in both Mindoro and nationally.

There has been a slow but steady increase in the wild tamaraw population, which brings me joy and honour. It validates our work as rangers even if this means we are dodging bullets and away from our families for long periods. I sincerely hope that the tamaraws can continue to thrive on Mindoro.

Let us not give up even in the face of difficult challenges, but rather see them as opportunities to improve ourselves and our jobs. In end, if we work in partnership with nature, we will succeed.

The Together for Tamaraws campaign was active from July to December 2020 to address the temporary setback of park closure and lack of employment due to COVID-19 restrictions. A total of 24 rangers and 35 wardens, most of whom belong to the indigenous Mangyan tribe, are the primary beneficiaries of the campaign. Food packs can be provided for as little as US\$ 1 per day, while US\$ 2 can support field allowance. The campaign raised more than US\$ 32,000, surpassing the original target of US\$ 22,980, and captured the interest of many Filipinos, including abroad, in the plight of the tamaraw rangers.



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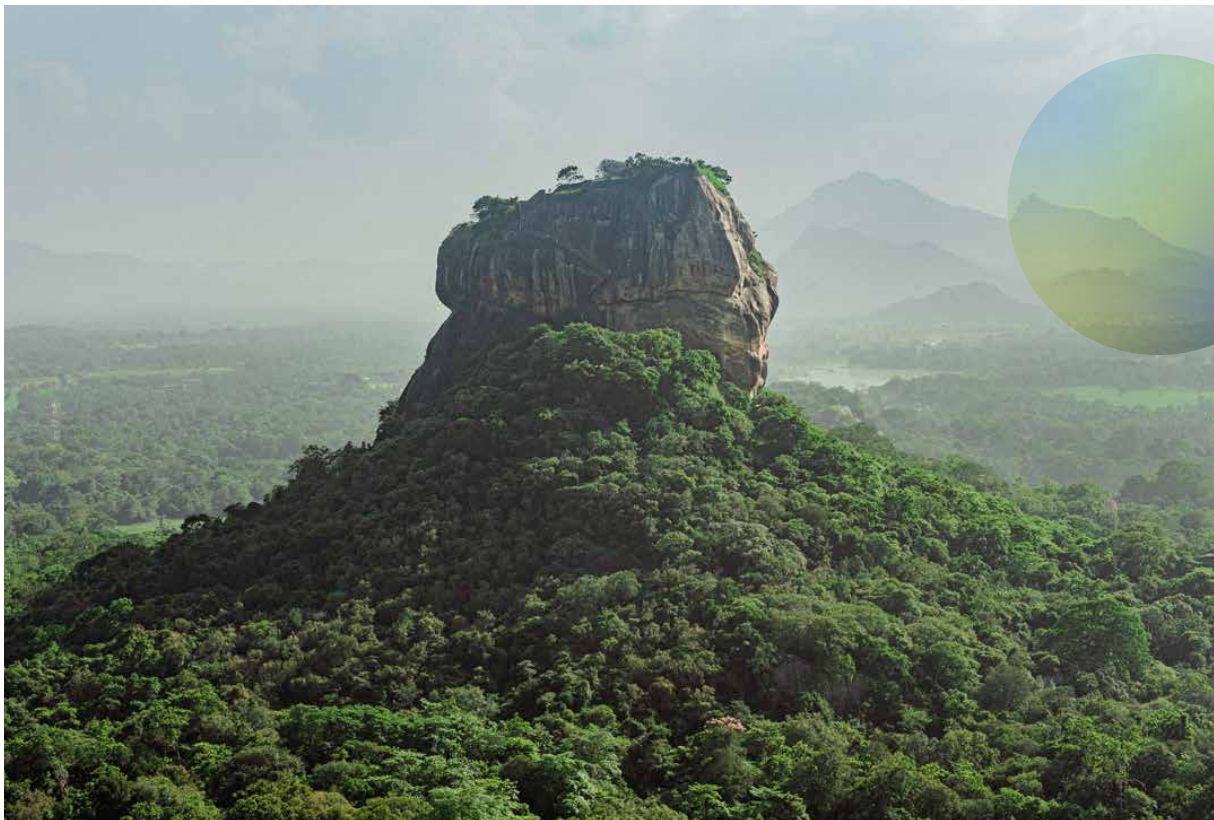
National sustainable tourism certification scheme to boost Sri Lanka's tourism

© UNDP



By **Mr. P. U. Ratnayake** – Director, DT & CR,
Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority

Sri Lanka is a truly unique tourism experience. It is an island full of treasures, from the cool hill country in Nuwara Eliya and the wild jungles of Yala and Sinharaja, to the spectacular views in forest reserves such as Knuckles, and the stunning blue seas and sandy beaches down south. Protecting these natural treasures and our country's biodiversity is a national priority. Sustainable tourism certification is paramount in our efforts to conserve natural resources while enabling our citizens to benefit from them.



Sigiriya Rock, Sri Lanka © Brian Kyed

Early 2019, BIOFIN and the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) signed a promising agreement to establish a National Sustainable Tourism Certification Scheme, actioning a key component of the Sri Lanka Tourism Strategic Plan 2017-2020. I was director general of SLTDA on initiation of the project; myself and my staff had strong motivation to get the scheme off the ground.

Sustainable accommodation certification scheme

To ensure technical compliance with internationally recognised certification schemes and gain international recognition for our scheme we signed a memorandum of understanding with the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC). On adapting their guidelines for the scheme, we decided to target the accommodation sector in the pilot project.

It was a challenging start. As Sri Lanka did not have any trained auditors for the GSTC certification process, my team worked with BIOFIN so GSTC trainers could conduct a training programme for around officers from: provincial councils; the Ministry of Tourism; the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau; the University of Colombo; the Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management; and SLTDA itself. The end of the four-day course saw successful completion by 42 officers which was a great achievement.

While gearing up to finish the pilot in 2019, tragedy and horror struck with the Colombo Easter Bombings which saw the country gripped by terror. The ensuing curfews and safety issues made completing the pilot extremely challenging.

Nevertheless, we at SLTDA were not disheartened and my team completed the Accommodation Certification Scheme in August 2019. Receiving this sustainability certification was a significant achievement for the accommodation sector as it enhances the reputation of certified hotels and attracts visitors, particularly those who want to travel sustainably.

Sustainable destination management certification scheme

Completion of the Accommodation Certification Scheme saw us face other challenges including a change of government, which slowed progress, and then the COVID-19 pandemic, which essentially stopped tourism in most of the country. It was a difficult period but we did not give up. Fortunately we had, prior to the 2019 government change, already obtained proposals from each province to kickstart phase 2 of the pilot: the sustainable destination certification scheme in partnership with BIOFIN. As coordination with the provinces had been established, in 2020 SLTDA allocated LKR 12 million (US\$ 33,000) to move ahead with the scheme.

After a meeting that identified key stakeholders, we conducted stakeholder workshops and gave each province six months to make progress. We asked the following questions: What surrounding attractions could develop a destination? What is the available and required infrastructure? What are the existing and required visitor facilities? And what are the opportunities for organizing tourism activities in collaboration with surrounding communities to keep tourists in the area longer?

The scheme provided many opportunities for the state to contribute and facilitate sustainable tourism. For example: funding was obtained from the Road Development Authority to support road network infrastructure in areas such as Ratnapura; the Australian government volunteered funding from its overseas development budget for a project based in the Eastern Province; and the Sri Lankan Fisheries Department committed to establishing Visitor Centres for fishery communities.

Through commitments such as these, various stakeholders mobilized approximately LKR 214 million (US\$ 1.1 million) for selected destinations to: improve tourism infrastructure; accelerate post-pandemic recovery of the tourism sector; and enhance the business environment for local service providers. Key stakeholders continue to fund and promote sustainable destination management, creating a notable snowball effect. This was a major achievement of which we are very proud.

The certification scheme, when implemented, is a clear win for biodiversity conservation and sustainable tourism as it introduces sustainable norms and a metric that can be applied across the tourism industry. As our experience here in Sri Lanka has shown, hard work and commitment can continue to achieve positive results around the world.

Managing communal land as a resource in South Africa



© UNDP

By **Mafela Simon**, Secretary of Tshivhula Communal Property Association, South Africa

We, the Tshivhula people, are the direct descendants of the great Mapungubwe kingdom, founded more than 1,000 years ago. My ancestors hunted these lands, gathered the mopani worms, and picked wild berries.

Nature, or 'mupo' as we call it, was – and still is – central to our community. After the evil of apartheid forced many of us to leave our original homelands, we have since settled on restituted land in Limpopo province near the trans-frontier national park system that straddles South Africa, Botswana, and Zimbabwe. To date, more than 20,000 hectares, owned by a Communal Property Association, has been restored to the people of Tshivhula.



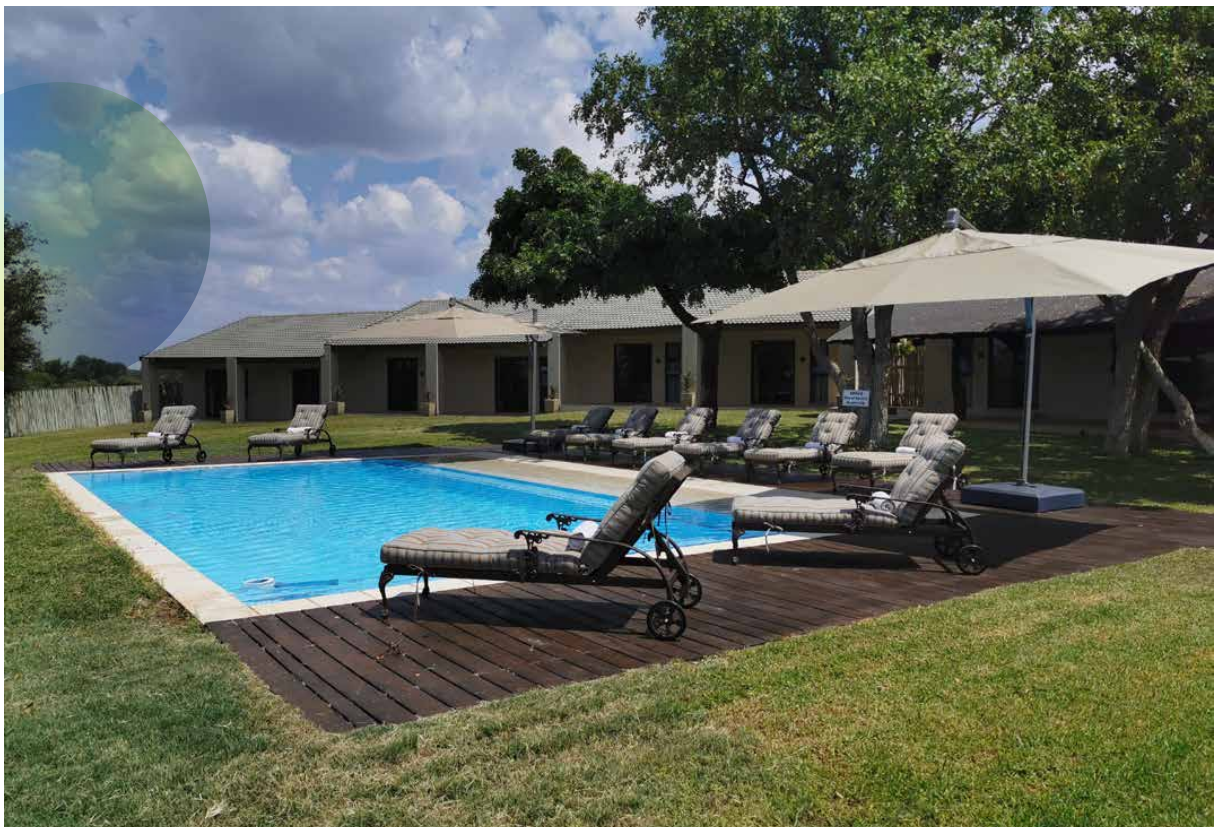
© Andrew Liu

Voluntary associations like ours on communal lands can make important contributions to nature conservation. Perpetuating stewardship in South Africa is a key priority of the government and has communal economic benefits as well as positive environmental impacts.

These lands are our life and our wealth. We have tilled and kept herds. Our medicines are the shrubs, roots and wild animals that live here. Certain plants and animals were protected by our customary and cultural laws, depending on their value to the community. The loss of the land also took away our most important teacher of the value of nature. One cannot perceive the value of something one has never seen. Those who do not benefit from the land cannot protect it.

We have four farms located 7 kilometres south-west of Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The farms are primarily utilized for game farming and eco-tourism, with many elephants, lions, leopards, elands, kudu, gemsbok, water bucks, and so on. We have three lodges and a bush camp and we currently employ 14 permanent staff and 10 temporary workers.

Managing this area has dealt us many challenges. A lack of funding, constant damage to property from free-roaming elephants, regular theft, and high electricity costs, were just some we have faced over the years. But, thanks to support from UNDP-BIOFIN, we have discovered opportunities to unlock the finances that can help protect and restore our parks.



© Tshivhula Communal Property Association

Through the UNDP-BIOFIN programme, we have become one of 10 stewardship sites that received the expertise of a transaction advisor for the development of templates that help us make our business case.

UNDP-BIOFIN improved our businesses case and offered deep analysis of our existing enterprises. It made us understand the need to scale up the tourism products we currently offer and provide for infrastructure improvements which have attracted more potential investors. In October 2022 our community will even attend a session at South African entrepreneur hub The Lion's Den where we will present our business case to multiple new potential investors

We will also be showcased on the Biodiversity Investment Portal, which is a BIOFIN-supported programme implemented by the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries.

“ I am optimistic our natural economy will continue to thrive under BIOFIN’s guidance. I hope we can thrive alongside nature and be a positive example to others around the world. ”

Costa Rica:

The hope we have for Mother Earth

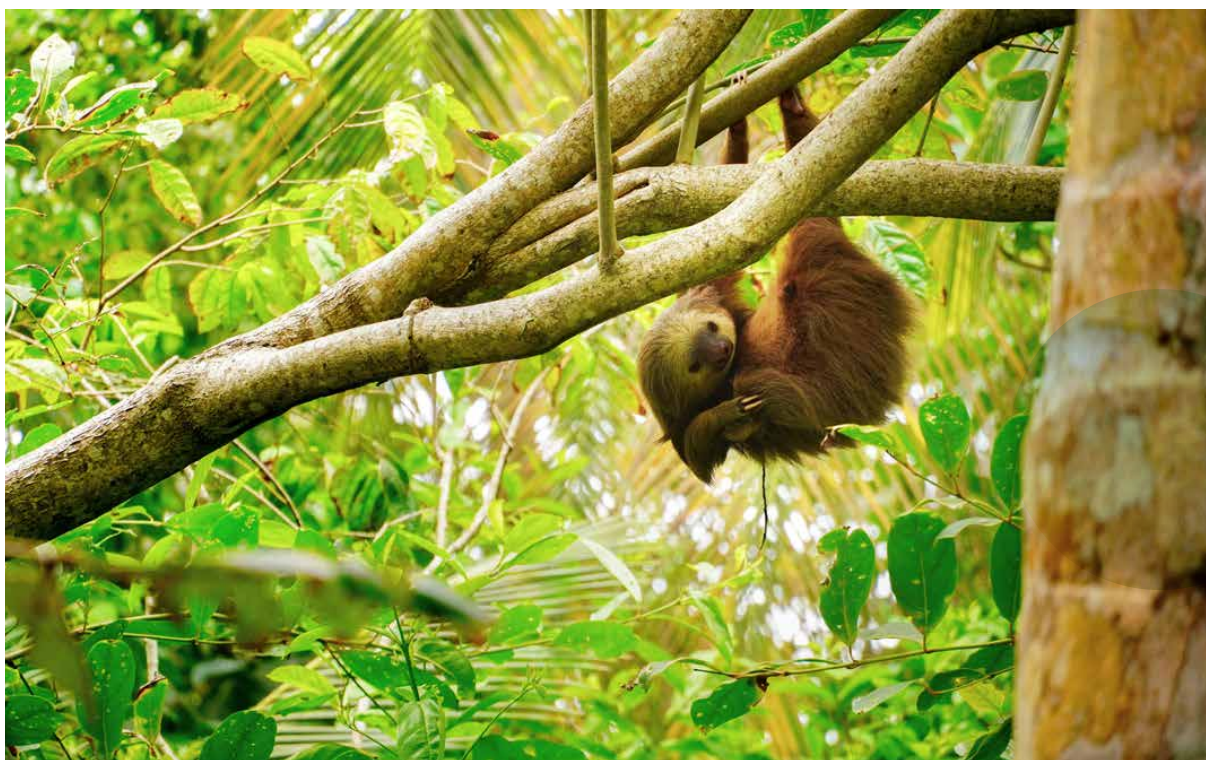
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By **José Alberto Ortiz**, Community Leader of Salitre de Buenos Aires in Puntarenas, Costa Rica

My name is José Alberto Ortiz and I belong to the indigenous community of Salitre de Buenos Aires in Puntarenas on Costa Rica's Pacific coast. We have mountains, waterfalls and a unique culture, language and history. We must take advantage of our amazing natural resources via sustainable tourism.

Responsible tourism should value and cherish these resources. For us, sustainable tourism is more than just witnessing. It is about giving our visitors an education in the ancient lessons that Sibú, our God, has taught us.



© Adrian Valverde

We treasure our natural resources, not because of conservation's current topicality but because this is how we live and survive. There is much talk about humanity's responsibility for the preservation of the world's forests but, for my community, this has been both obvious and a necessity for thousands of years. Forests under our care have remained green and abundant, providing for each successive generation.

The word 'development' can be an equivocal one for indigenous peoples. Is development destroying nature for other activities? Or is it safeguarding what we have thus guaranteeing our natural resources for our children? Is development preserving life? Or is it taking it away?

We may not know exactly what development consists of, but we do know that Sibú entrusted us to take care of Mother Earth. Our people's ancient traditional stories honour Her and Her preservation and always speak of respect for nature. After all, She takes care of us and we take care of Her.

New projects should be initiated after consultation with indigenous peoples, which UNDP-BIOFIN did when it approached us to discuss the development of tourism projects. The launch of the Raíces Incubation Programme has been a valuable experience and, after much hard work, has begun to deliver for communities through, for example, enabling the creation of small tourism enterprises. The participation of women and young people, who dream of preserving our culture while improving their quality of life, was of fundamental importance to its success.

Tourism should value biodiversity and our ancient cultural, ancestral links with nature. So, for me, it is important to share our perspective with our visitors who have completely different attitudes and backgrounds. This is the hope of Mother Earth, and the hope of humanity.

Raíces is the first incubation programme in Costa Rica, supported by UNDP-BIOFIN, focused on supporting sustainable tourism ventures in indigenous territories. New projects are being initiated after consultation with indigenous peoples in alliance with the Development Bank System to provide funding that helps communities develop new tourism business ideas that include nature and our cosmovision at their heart.

Fourteen new small tourism enterprises are currently being incubated, through innovation methodologies, identifying investment needs, and receiving seed funding of around US\$ 10,000 each from the Development Banking System.

More information: www.raicescr.com

Unlocking the potential of Tarbagatai National Park, Kazakhstan

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By Alibek Tokymbayev, Director of the Tarbagatai National Park, Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan has immense natural beauty and it has been a great honour working in a sector that contributes to its protection. I have been working in forestry for more than 35 years and have managed the Targabatai State National Park since its foundation in 2018. This stunning park sits in the east of the country, close to the borders of China and Mongolia.

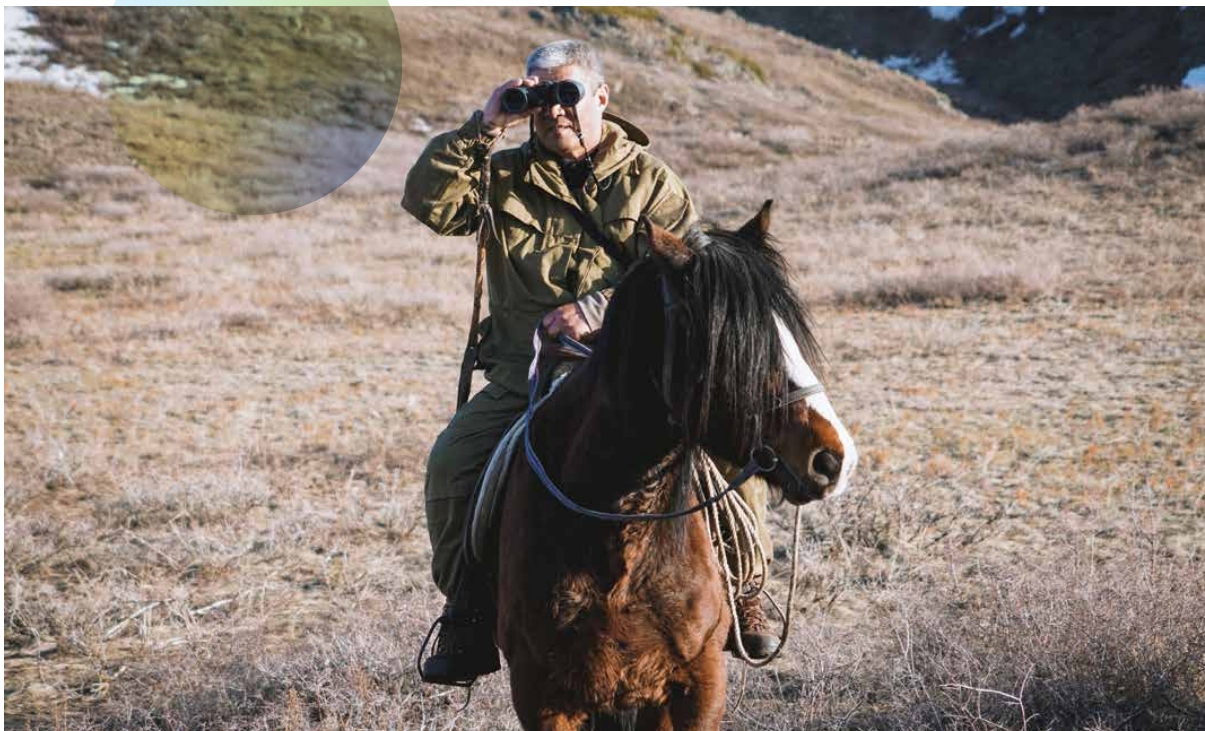
National parks and protected areas are critically important to all countries as they support our natural, ecological and cultural values. Humanity relies on nature and protected areas exist to safeguard us. They suck carbon out of the atmosphere, help harvest foods, generate funds for tourism, and support local communities to name just a few examples of their benefits.

Targabatai Park's wonderful scenery includes: the green peaks of the Saur-Tarbagatai range; the deserted stone mountains of Karabas; the yellow sandy hills of Arkaly; the blue Urdzhar and Katynsu rivers; and the golden environs of the Emel River. Snow leopards, argali (mountain sheep) and brown bears roam these lands. But like many parks across the world, Targabatai finds it difficult to garner the funds it requires for its protection.

The COVID-19 pandemic reduced national budgets which deleteriously impacted park financing. Without adequate financing we cannot hire and properly train staff to help contain forest fires, let alone buy the materials needed to fight them. The park covers nearly 1,500 km² and we do not have the funds to station rangers in remote areas to detect and manage fires in good time. With forest fires increasing due to climate change this is an enormous challenge worldwide.

But there are solutions on the horizon thanks to our recent work with UNDP-BIOFIN. A management plan for protected areas is currently being developed for Targabatai National Park, making this is an exciting year for us.

In Kazakhstan, protected areas operate under a five-year management plan. In 2005 the first plans were developed and, by 2015, Kazakhstan had accumulated considerable experience in



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internationally recognised approaches. However, new approaches to planning and analysis are required, which is being accomplished through a new BIOFIN-supported Methodological Guide for developing a new management plan.

It differs from the previous document in its use of an adaptive management approach where the main planning objectives are the natural resources that are of huge importance to biodiversity conservation (animal and plant species and essential wild areas such as forests and lakes). This approach combines planning the activities of natural territories with the budget planning process, justifying in detail the money allocated from the state budget. Under the new Management Plan of Tarbagatai Park, we plan to increase funding for 2023-2027 up to US\$ 3.5 million, which is 52% more than the current budget.

The management plan will allow us to estimate the required funding, determine the deficit, and take measures to mobilize resources by, for example, developing ecotourism. This will create new jobs and provide new opportunities for local communities.

The effective planning of protected area finances will strengthen measures to preserve endangered plant and animal species, such as the Sievers apple tree, and ecosystems such as alpine meadows.



I am optimistic that the new management plan will help solve our beautiful park's financing problems.



Fighting wildlife trafficking and rehabilitating species in Indonesia

© Desy Satya Chandradewi



By **Desy Satya Chandradewi**, Policy Analyst
at Directorate Biodiversity Conservation,
Species and Genetic, Ministry of Environment
and Forestry, Republic of Indonesia

The illegal trade of wildlife – both plants and animals – is estimated to globally generate US\$ 7 billion to US\$ 23 billion per year for organized crime networks. The widespread decline in wildlife populations and habitat destruction this has caused has led to calls for innovative solutions to mitigate the tremendous harm caused. Indonesia, one of the most biodiverse regions on the planet, is inevitably a prime target for these criminals; but the government is leading the way in sustainable solutions.

In the Maluku region of eastern Indonesia, the Maluku conservation authority uncovered multiple cases of illegal wildlife trading in 2018-2019. These heart-breaking stories included



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the seizure of 1,825 tails belonging to various parrot species and the trading of 284 other species including crested black macaque, crocodiles, monitor lizards and turtles.

This illegal trade is difficult to combat. Limited resources, capacity, and equipment are a challenge to law enforcement in an archipelago consisting of thousands of small islands, and only a small number of animal trafficking cases were successfully prosecuted in the same period.

Ensuring the survivors of trafficking are cared for is also hugely challenging. Limited facilities, human resources, and infrastructure are overwhelmed when confiscated animals number in the tens of thousands. The high treatment costs and mortality rates mean that many saved animals never make it safely through treatment to be released back into the wild.

But a solution is at hand. In 2018 concern at the current situation prompted the creation of the new Maluku Conservation Centre (MCC) using a ground-breaking Green Sukuk grant. (*Sukuk* is a sharia-compliant bond-like instruments used in Islamic finance.)

In early 2018 the Government of Indonesia issued its first Islamic 'green' sovereign bond, known as Green Sukuk, which was listed on the Singapore Stock Exchange and NASDAQ Dubai. It attracted US\$ 1.25 billion in investment and set the funding criteria for eligible green projects with BIOFIN playing a key role in development of the framework and its implementation. Accessing the Green Sukuk for conservation is a tremendous example of how the government's proactive approach to biodiversity finance can curb illegal wildlife trade and help nature flourish.

With the support of UNDP-BIOFIN, we identified potential biodiversity projects and recognised the importance of facilities like the MCC to the return of confiscated animals to their natural habitat, notably in its Maluku location, where the wildlife trade in parrots, cockatoos and lorikeets was booming. Of the total sukuk offering, US\$ 2.6 million was allocated for the MCC, which functions as a community information centre and an interim facility to care for trafficked wildlife before its release into the wild.

This will be a major boon to the protection of bird species, assist the rehabilitation of trafficked birds and, where possible, facilitate their return to the wild. The MCC will also play a key role in educating local authorities and communities to help combat illegal trading and improve public awareness of wildlife conservation.

“In only a few years, the MCC has helped transform an outright trafficking problem into a much more welcome long-term issue of how to care for so many saved animals. BIOFIN has played a very active role and I hope our project will be a model for many other countries.”

Better together in Koh Tao, Thailand

© UNDP Thailand



By **Watcharin Fasiriphorn**, Mayor of Koh Tao sub-district Municipality Office, Koh Pha-ngan District, Surat Thani province, Thailand

I first came here in 1987 as a public health officer for the Koh Tao Island community health post, treating patients and caring for the people here. It was not my intention to stay here for the rest of my life, I just wanted to take advantage of the serenity here to study for my exams. But, time passed and my love for the island grew, and I ended up making this beautiful island my home.

There have been many changes on the island in this time. Today, tourism is the leading business driver and that has greatly changed the lives of the rural communities here. It's amazing to think that when I arrived here, there wasn't a single motorbike on the island, we used horses to move things around. I remember on several occasions where I rode a horse to visit patients. That was the story behind the title "doctor." I have become 'Khunmor (Doctor) Koh Tao'. I have been here a long time until I quit and shifted to a business in tourism as well.



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The nature on the island is very rich, but of course, having hosted so many visitors over the years environmental degradation does become a problem. Compared to the last 30 years, I think the losses and damages account for less than 10 percent of the natural habitat. The more people visit the island and the more they touch it, the greater the damages occur. However, there are some rehabilitation efforts and regulations on how to use resources, which allow for easier control and improvements. As such, Koh Tao does well on the ecotourism front. Compared to other provinces, Koh Tao scores among the country's top, having ranked TripAdvisor's pick for the world's top island in 2015 and is noted as being one of, if not the, best diving site in Thailand.

COVID-19 was difficult for the island, but I always try to look at both sides of the same coin. Many people still see it as a crisis, but there can also be opportunities to do things in a better way.

Indeed, COVID-19 has damaged our economy. Our island was locked down, and we earned no income. But we united and pushed through. That is because our natural resources provide food security for us. We do not need to buy a lot of food. The fact that we can find food by ourselves reduces some pressure.

When COVID-19 happened, people stopped coming to Koh Tao. Once people stopped coming, nature could recover. We had the time and space to take care of the nature around us more and protect it more. Now, in the following years when more tourists visit, we will be equipped with new ways to protect and take care of our nature, especially the corals. Today, the corals have become much prettier due to the smaller number of visitors, less pressure on nature, and less resources consumed. That was the good thing about COVID-19.



Mayor Watcharin Fasiriphorn, centre © UNDP Thailand

But of course, the economic impact was very difficult at times. There are several vulnerable groups who greatly struggled. The drivers of the long-tailed tourist boats lost their one source of income, visitors wishing to travel around the ocean. Many women who worked in service jobs, in restaurants for example, were also greatly affected. Same with the fisherfolk. They did not know whom to catch fish for, as they could not sell it. But, thanks to our work with Raks Thai Foundation and UNDP-BIOFIN, there were some great solutions.

For the long-tailed boats, a crowdfunding campaign with the support of BIOFIN, Raks Thai and Krungthai Bank stepped in to help deliver a basic income to the boat drivers under a cash-for-work programme. Each boat driver is paid an equivalent of US\$ 100 per month for three months in exchange for collecting marine debris. So much debris washes up on our shores from the mainland and elsewhere. There is even garbage from Indonesia, judging from the labels.

Until 2019, before COVID-19 came in 2020, we used our resources superfluously, causing a lot of damage to our natural resources and environment. Corals were broken, and villagers encroached on the forest and built houses, things like that. We have to rethink and redirect these activities that are harmful to biodiversity.

While much of the focus was on an inclusive approach to collaborating with the community to develop a more sustainable, nature-positive economy, we also want tourists to become part of the conservation efforts. With 300,000 – 500,000 tourists coming annually, there is a huge potential to have them engage in supporting the island. That is why, with support from BIOFIN and Raks Thai, we introduced a tourist-user charge. Every visitor will now pay 20 Baht, just more than US\$ 0.50, when they visit the island. We started collecting in April 2022 and already we have generated around US\$ 80,000. If tourism reverts to pre-pandemic levels, the tourism fees may yield around US\$ 300,000 every year. There will be enough to help fund environmental management both on land and underwater for Koh Tao without sacrificing other social services. It is a small investment for visitors but will be a huge benefit to the island in the long term: If we do not take care of our home and let it be ruined, who will want to visit us?

I hope you can see how, out of the difficulties of COVID-19 pandemic, the island of Koh Tao has grown stronger. It has given us time to build back better, to see with our own eyes how, given some space, nature can flourish. It is also a demonstration of how communities, tourists, businesses, and local government units can unite and effect real change. We must all join hands for a greener, more sustainable future for all.

India:

For action on biodiversity, we must know what to spend and where



An interview with **V.B. Mathur**, India's official delegate to the fourth Nairobi negotiating session of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity

By **Flavia Lopes**, IndiaSpend

Why is financing biodiversity conservation important for developing countries?

What can you do without finance in your personal life, in your professional life, in running a school, college, hospital, etc.? You need money to develop capacity for action and to run programmes.

In conservation science we often say there is no free lunch. Investment in biodiversity is needed, not just for India, but for the entire planet. India is not special. All countries in the global south are asking for support in strengthening their unique biodiversity.

What have been the biggest hurdles in getting the finance that developing countries need to implement this framework?

Getting money is not easy. Nobody will share it easily. To achieve funding, you must have a noteworthy project and be able to effectively communicate your plans for it.

The first dollar is the most difficult because potential funders want to know who you are. Why do you require funding? What will happen to our money? Will it be wasted?

So the question is, what are our requirements? We must know what we need. Every country, including India, must prepare a Biodiversity Finance Plan. In recent years we became part of BIOFIN, a global initiative led by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). I have been working in partnership with Ministry officials, UNDP, the National Biodiversity Authority, and the Wildlife Institute of India to calculate the investment required.

Secondly, you must know how much money you have and need. This is the biggest challenge for the global community. National Biodiversity Financial Plans have simply not been prepared.

Following up on that, what are the different figures India has come up with?

Using the BIOFIN methodology, we calculated that US\$ 16.5 billion was required to secure biodiversity in a five-year period (2017-22). The actual figure allocated was US\$ 10 billion, resulting in a US\$ 6.5 billion gap. These are not final or exact numbers, but they show that current allocations are inadequate and confirm that resource mobilization is important.

I will give you an example to illustrate how mobilization can work. We know that agriculture and biodiversity are deeply connected. Agriculture has an impact on forests and vice versa. We also know that organic farming uses fewer fertilizers and does not adversely affect soil fertility. So, organic farming helps the environment and productivity.

With one of our BIOFIN activities, we asked the Ministry of Agriculture if it had any organic farming programmes. They confirmed they do operate some but not currently on a large scale. I want organic farming to be practised in many districts across India. The Environment Ministry does not need more funds to do this. Neither does the Agriculture Ministry. So we asked them, if they are conducting pilot schemes, in, say, six states: Can you do them in 10? And the person responsible for these schemes said yes, this was possible.



© Sam Power

No additional funding has been required and an existing programme has been scaled up. When we explain the importance of organic farming schemes over other projects, resources can be reallocated to it. That is one way mobilization can work, it is not always about finding more resources but also about re-aligning what we already have.

We also need to look at innovative solutions. This is where the finance expert and the conservation expert have to come to each other. It is not just a simple exchange of funds that is going to help conservation. You need to look at all these issues, and therefore some things are better done if there is innovation. So that is the fourth thing linked to resource mobilization.

The co-chair of the CBD Nairobi working group negotiation, Francis Ogwal, recently said there should be a “landscape approach” to biodiversity finance, which would see it as part of the other two pillars of the Rio Convention (climate change and desertification). How effective would this be? And is financing for combatting climate change currently prioritized over biodiversity?

What is the scientific evidence telling us? We need to look at three things: biodiversity, land and climate. Convergence of these three is needed. And that is what Francis Ogwal is saying: You cannot just say I will solve the climate crisis but I am not concerned with biodiversity. This attitude leads to operating in silos, which is not a viable option.

So effective change on the ground will happen when the desertification, climate change and biodiversity people start talking to each other, because we need projects that tackle all three. We need funds, we need better coordination, we need better conversation and often projects should be operated jointly. Only then can transformative change happen on the ground.

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<https://www.indiaspend.com/indiaspend-interviews/india-needed-165-billion-for-biodiversity-conservation-between-2017-2022-all-we-had-was-10-billion-824502>

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