

Wildlife Economies Decision and Investment Support Toolkit

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AFRICAN WILDLIFE FOUNDATION

ALU SCHOOL OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

CSF CONSERVATION STRATEGY FUND

About the African Wildlife Foundation

The African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), Africa's oldest and largest international conservation organisation, brings a uniquely African vision to conservation, one that places people at the centre of sustainable development and recognises wildlife and ecosystems as vital drivers of economic resilience, cultural heritage, and global environmental security. Through integrated approaches that combine science, policy, community engagement, business development, and on-the-ground implementation, AWF works across critical landscapes and transboundary ecosystems to advance conservation solutions that deliver lasting benefits for both people and nature. By bridging local action with continental policy leadership and investment partnerships, AWF continues to champion a future in which Africa's wildlife economies contribute meaningfully to biodiversity conservation, inclusive growth, and sustainable prosperity for generations to come.

About African Leadership University School of Wildlife Conservation

African Leadership University (ALU) is pioneering a fresh approach to higher education in the twenty-first century, offering accredited undergraduate, postgraduate and executive education programmes in a unique and imaginative way. By integrating students' learning with the real world, empowering students to take ownership of their own learning, equipping each student to think entrepreneurially, and employing the most engaging and inspiring teaching methods, ALU is pioneering a new take on higher education and leadership development. The School of Wildlife Conservation (SOWC) is the conservation initiative of the African Leadership Group. It was established in 2016 to promote conservation as an African growth sector by developing the next generation of entrepreneurial conservation leaders at all levels, through undergraduate, middle management, and executive programmes. In combining innovative research and leadership talent cultivation, SOWC encourages entrepreneurship within the wildlife economy and provides a platform for young entrepreneurs to incubate their innovative conservation business models. At a macro level, SOWC seeks to influence the sector's decision-makers to adopt sustainable business models and promote an entrepreneurial business-minded approach in African conservation.

About Conservation Strategy Fund

Conservation Strategy Fund (CSF) empowers people to build nature-positive economies. For more than 25 years, CSF has bridged the gap between environmental science and economic policy, ensuring that natural ecosystems are recognized as the backbone of resilient economies. Through their unique combination of rigorous economic analysis, strategic capacity development, and technological in-novation, CSF equips decision-makers worldwide with the practical tools needed to restore biodiver-sity, fortify climate resilience, and turn environmental protection into a primary driver of sustainable economic growth.

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Contact
African Wildlife Foundation
Email: info@awf.org
Website: www.awf.org

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Executive summary

Wildlife economies represent one of the most promising yet underutilised pathways for advancing sustainable development, biodiversity conservation and inclusive rural prosperity.

Across Africa and other biodiversity-rich regions, wildlife-based industries, including ecotourism, sustainable wildlife use, conservation enterprises and nature-based value chains, have the potential to generate employment, diversify national economies, strengthen climate resilience and deliver tangible benefits to local communities. Yet, despite growing global demand for nature-positive investments and wildlife-derived goods and services, many countries lack the integrated frameworks, investment readiness and institutional coordination necessary to unlock this potential at scale.

The Wildlife Economies Decision and Investment Support Toolkit addresses this critical gap by providing a comprehensive, practical and scalable framework for assessing, planning, financing and implementing wildlife economy strategies. It can be applied at national, subnational, landscape, protected area or site, community and, where relevant, transboundary scales. Designed for policymakers, development practitioners, investors, conservation organisations, community institutions, protected area and landscape authorities, businesses and researchers, the Toolkit enables evidence-based decision-making that aligns biodiversity conservation with sustainable economic transformation.

At its core, the Toolkit recognises that thriving wildlife economies depend on the integration of ecological integrity, enabling policy environments, inclusive governance systems, and sustainable financing mechanisms. By combining analytical tools, stakeholder engagement methodologies, investment diagnostics, and implementation guidance, the Toolkit supports countries and institutions in translating wildlife assets into long-term economic, social and conservation value.

The Toolkit is structured around two interconnected phases:

Phase I: Understanding wildlife economies
This phase establishes the foundational knowledge and enabling conditions required for informed planning and investment. It includes:

- Governance and stakeholder mapping;
- Wildlife asset and sub-sector assessments;
- Enabling environment and policy diagnostics;
- Market and value-chain analysis; and
- Financial and investor landscape assessments.

Together, these modules generate a comprehensive baseline understanding of governance, assets, activities, opportunities, constraints, risks and comparative advantages at the scale relevant to decision-making.



Phase II: Building wildlife economies
The second phase translates analysis into action by supporting:

- Wildlife economy strategies, roadmaps and investment blueprints at the relevant scale;
- Policy and institutional strengthening;
- Development of investment-ready project pipelines;
- Establishment or strengthening of wildlife economy reporting and investment platforms;
- Monitoring, reporting and evaluation systems; and
- Strategic communication, awareness, capability and market development initiatives.

The Toolkit's outputs are specifically designed to catalyse blended public-private finance, improve investment confidence, and support the creation of bankable, nature-positive enterprises that deliver measurable ecological and socio-economic outcomes.

Key deliverables include:

- Baseline Wildlife Economy Reports;
- Wildlife Economy Investment Index (WEII) diagnostics;
- Strategy roadmaps, investment prospectuses and financing blueprints;
- Integrated investment and reporting platforms at the relevant scale;
- Monitoring and evaluation frameworks; and
- Capacity-building and stakeholder engagement programmes.

Importantly, the Toolkit promotes an iterative and inclusive approach rather than a rigid sequence. Users can begin with the modules most relevant to their mandate, capacity, evidence, priorities and resources, undertake activities concurrently and revisit modules as conditions change. The Toolkit prioritises local ownership, equitable benefit-sharing, ecological integrity and long-term sustainability. It places Indigenous Peoples and local communities, local knowledge systems and multi-stakeholder partnerships at the centre of wildlife economy development while strengthening institutional capacity and policy coherence. By integrating ecological, economic and social intelligence into a unified decision-support framework, the Toolkit seeks to:

1. Mainstream biodiversity into national, subnational, landscape, protected area or site, community and regional development, economic and management planning.
2. Unlock new investment flows for nature-positive enterprises and biodiversity finance.
3. Expand equitable livelihood opportunities for Indigenous Peoples and local communities, women and youth; and
4. Strengthen long-term biodiversity conservation and ecosystem resilience.

In an era of accelerating biodiversity loss, climate vulnerability and growing demand for sustainable investment opportunities, this Toolkit provides governments and other stakeholders with a practical framework for transforming wildlife assets into engines of resilient, inclusive and nature-positive growth without eroding the natural capital on which that growth depends.

Decision and investment support tooklit for developing wildlife economies

Phase 1: Understanding the wildlife economy

Build the knowledge base - Assess status, opportunities, constraints and enablers

Foundation: Governance, Inclusivity, Collaboration

Module 1 Establishing the process framework

- Stakeholder mapping and engagement
- Establish governance structures (Steering Committee & TWG)
- Form and manage project team
- Ensure inclusivity, representation and political buy-in
- Agree on scope (national or landscape) and key strategic questions

Module 2 Assess the status & potential of wildlife economies

- Define assessment parameters
- Use ALU SOWC WEII Wildlife Status Sub-Index
- Assess wildlife assets, size, composition, status & trends
- Data collection, analysis & geospatial mapping
- Identify opportunities, constraints & data gaps
- Produce baseline wildlife economy report

Module 3 Assess the enabling environment

- Review policy, legal & institutional frameworks
- Assess governance structures & capacity
- Examine business environment
- Use ALU SOWC WEII Investment-Enabling Environment Sub-Index
- Identify partnerships, knowledge & capacity needs

Module 4 Assess financial & Investor landscape

- Map existing financial resources & flows
- Explore conservation finance opportunities (public, private, blended, innovative)
- Assess investor needs, risk appetite & gaps
- Identify funding shortfalls & priorities

Phase 2: Building the wildlife economy

Translate analysis into action - Plan, finance and implement for impact

Action: Strategy, Investment, Implementation, Impact

Module 5 Develop national strategy & investment blueprint

- Develop vision, goals & strategic objectives
- Identify priority opportunities &
- value propositions
- Establish policy & regulatory enablers
- Define governance, roles & coordination
- Mobilise resources and build capacity
- Develop investment blueprint & pipeline of opportunities

Module 6 Strengthen policy & institutional frameworks

- Integrate wildlife economy into national development plans
- Reform and align policies & regulations
- Strengthen institutions and enforcement
- Ensure equitable benefit sharing & community participation
- Establish adaptive management systems

Module 7 Develop national platform for reporting & investment

- Establish digital platform for data, reporting & transparency
- Track investments, projects & impacts
- Facilitate investor engagement & deal flow
- Enable evidence-based decision making

Module 8 Develop wildlife economy awareness & marketing

- Build awareness of wildlife economy value
- Promote sustainable products & destinations
- Engage media, communities & youth
- Market opportunities to investors & partners
- Celebrate success stories & impacts

Key outcomes

Evidence-based understanding
Comprehensive data and insights on the wildlife economy

Strategic roadmap & investment blueprint
Clear strategies and investment-ready opportunities

Enabling environment & strong institutions
Policies, governance and institutions that support sustainable growth

Increased investment & finance flows
Mobilised public, private and blended finance for wildlife economies

Inclusive livelihoods & community benefits
Expanded opportunities and equitable benefit sharing

Conservation impact & resilient ecosystems
Biodiversity conserved and ecosystems strengthened

Purpose

Transform wildlife assets into engines of resilient, inclusive and nature-positive growth for people and planet.

Introduction & context

Natural resources provide a wide array of benefits, from socio-cultural values to essential regulatory and provisioning ecosystem services, while also supporting key industries. However, the compounded threats of climate change, environmental degradation, and biodiversity loss severely undermine the resilience of ecosystems, economies, and human well-being (IPBES, 2019). Despite conservation efforts' contributions to local, national, and regional economies, they are often misconstrued as costs rather than essential investments (Dasgupta, 2021). This misperception arises from the inadequate measurement and quantification of conservation's value, leaving these contributions abstract and underappreciated. As ecological damage escalates in pace and scale, sectors focused on conservation and sustainable development face increasing strain (Asamoah et al., 2021).

A critical issue emerges when governments and communities fail to recognise the intrinsic value of ecosystems and conservation efforts. These disconnects, often rooted in siloed approaches to development and environmental agendas (Bass et al., 2023), lead to unplanned and unsustainable livelihood activities that exploit natural resources in unsustainable ways. This problem is particularly alarming in Africa, where 59% of the population resides in rural areas and depends heavily on natural resources for subsistence (Snyman et al., 2021). Moreover, non-governmental organisations have yet to demonstrate the interlinkages between development, environmental sustainability, and human well-being. For Africa to succeed in meeting Sustainable Development Goals (e.g., SDG 1, 2, 13, 14 & 15), governments must recognise the inherent value of nature and position it as a strategic asset that can drive multilateral agendas (African Development Bank, 2021). Investing in stewardship of natural assets and creating an enabling environment for sustainable, nature-based economic activities are vital steps towards this goal.

While awareness of nature's importance is increasing among policymakers, businesses, and the public, implementation remains insufficient. Global multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) are increasingly emphasising the integration of biodiversity across sectors and societies, alongside a push for enhanced funding for conservation and sustainable development (Convention on Biological Diversity, 2020). However, localisation, domestication, and implementation of these frameworks often lag due to widening financing gaps and systemic underinvestment in biodiversity conservation (BIOFIN, 2022).

In countries such as Botswana, Namibia, Madagascar, Mauritius, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, progress has been made in measuring and quantifying biodiversity's contributions to economies through approaches such as Natural Capital Accounting, which aligns with the System of National Accounts (SNA). The System of Environmental-Economic Accounts (SEEA) complements this by quantifying biodiversity's non-SNA contributions. Emerging frameworks such as True Cost Accounting integrate hidden costs and benefits of biodiversity into financial accounting for businesses. Initiatives like the Task Force on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD), the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS), and Natural Capital Alliance also work to mainstream biodiversity recognition in decision-making. However, these systems have yet to reach their full potential in informing policy, economic and development strategies.

In Africa, Botswana, Egypt, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia are leading in biodiversity finance supported under the United Nations (UN) Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN), which supports governments in quantifying biodiversity finance needs and devising financial solutions (UNDP, 2022). Despite these advances, resource generation from the sustainable use of nature remains underexplored, with governments often relying on fiscal allocations and external donor funding rather than unlocking the revenue potential of natural resources.

Global MEAs, such as the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), emphasise sustainable use of biodiversity. Organisations like the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) further promote sustainable trade in biodiversity-based products through initiatives such as BioTrade (UNCTAD, 2020), which fosters legal, sustainable trade that supports conservation and local economies. Despite these international regulatory efforts, biodiversity-based economic activities in many African countries remain marginal. Few nations have developed policies or instruments to catalyse growth in this sector through fiscal incentives, regulatory frameworks, trade policies, and infrastructure development (Snyman et al., 2021).

In Africa, sectors such as non-consumptive nature-based tourism (e.g., photographic, cultural), hunting tourism, fisheries, and forestry generate substantial revenue from wildlife resources (Goergen et al., 2024; Snyman et al., 2021). Other sources of income generation, such as harvesting non-timber forest products (NTFPs), wildlife ranching, research, wildlife filming, payments for ecosystem services, wildlife estates, and carbon credits, offer sustainable use and revenue generation potential (Ibid.). Yet, these revenue streams remain underdeveloped due to a lack of systematic policy frameworks for scaling up (Roe et al., 2019). This underdevelopment is compounded by a structural limitation of conventional economic accounting systems: GDP and national accounts, based on the System of National Accounts (SNA), are designed to capture formal market transactions, leaving the economic contributions of many wildlife-based activities structurally invisible. Subsistence harvesting, informal trade in NTFPs, and the flow of ecosystem services generate real economic value, in the form of food security, livelihoods, and avoided costs, but because these transactions are non-market, informal, or not disaggregated from broader sectors such as agriculture and forestry in national statistics, they do not appear

in headline economic data. As a result, beyond tourism, fisheries, and hunting, the economic contributions of wildlife-based activities often go unaccounted for (Snyman et al., 2021).

Before governments develop dedicated policies to support growth, investment, and sustainable development in the wildlife economy within national economic frameworks, they must first recognise its value as a vital, foundational sector that supports and enables many others. Such recognition would unlock biodiversity's full economic potential, drive conservation efforts and enhance livelihoods across Africa (IPBES, 2019). The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) provides a solid foundation for advancing wildlife economies, highlighting their role in achieving key biodiversity targets (e.g., Targets 3, 5, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 19 & 22) (CBD, 2022; Snyman & Tshitwamulomoni, 2025).

Overall, this Toolkit explains why wildlife economies are important pillars of resilient and sustainable development. Drawing extensively on African experience, it provides an overarching, evidence-based framework that can be adapted to different countries, governance systems and ecological contexts. **The Toolkit supports national and subnational policy, regional and transboundary cooperation, landscape and protected area management, community processes, enterprise development and site-level investment planning.**



Why recognition comes first

Wildlife economies as a foundation for people, nature and prosperity

Recognition

Governments formally acknowledge the economic and social value of wildlife, biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Enables

Wildlife economy priorities can be integrated into national policy, planning, budgeting and investment frameworks.

Delivers

Greater investment, stronger conservation outcomes and improved livelihoods across Africa.

A platform for wider economic development



Aligned with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

Conservation and sustainable use

Targets 3 5 9 10 11

Access, benefits and mainstreaming

Targets 13 14 15

Finance and inclusive participation

Targets 19 22

Wildlife economies • Biodiversity conservation • Sustainable livelihoods • Shared prosperity



Objectives of the Toolkit

This Toolkit is designed for policymakers, decision-makers and practitioners working in biodiversity conservation, economic planning and development, community development, finance, investment and natural resource management in Africa and other parts of the world. It is also relevant to entrepreneurs and businesses, community institutions and rights-holders, protected area and landscape authorities, civil-society organisations, researchers, investors and development partners. Drawing from practical experience in assessing and building wildlife economies, the Toolkit identifies best-practice principles that can be adapted across scales and governance contexts. The primary objectives of the Toolkit are illustrated on page 9.

While directly aimed at policy and decision-makers, this Toolkit also provides valuable insights for community representatives, civil society organisations, the private sector, consulting practitioners, academics, protected area and landscape managers, and government officials. It is not an exhaustive guide to every aspect of assessment and development. Instead, the Toolkit provides a flexible decision architecture that complements existing work on biodiversity and biodiversity finance, community-based natural resource management, conservation enterprise, business sustainability, natural resource economics, natural capital accounting and market-based approaches to conservation. Users should select, combine and revisit modules according to their mandate, scale, available data, capacity, priorities and resources.

In this spirit, the Toolkit should be viewed as the beginning of a productive and adaptive process rather than an end. Its practical guidance is intended to help stakeholders move from fragmented information and isolated initiatives towards coherent programmes of governance, assessment, reform, investment preparation, implementation and accountability.

THREE OBJECTIVES, ONE CONNECTED PURPOSE

THE WILDLIFE ECONOMY TOOLKIT'S OBJECTIVES WORK TOGETHER AS A REINFORCING AND ADAPTIVE CYCLE



Working across scales and contexts

- Inclusive participation and strong governance
- From local sites to landscapes, national and regional levels
- Wildlife, people and nature thrive together
- Sustainable livelihoods, investment and economic growth

Better evidence improves decisions. Consistent practice strengthens implementation and comparison. Shared learning improves future assessments, methods and investments.

Defining wildlife economies

The Wild Harvest Initiative defines the wild biodiversity economy as economic activities and supporting frameworks that generate measurable positive impacts on wildlife and on communities in and around wildlife areas (Conservation Visions, 2020). The term is often used synonymously with wildlife economy. **The Southern African Development Community defines a wildlife-based economy as** the part of the economy that uses marine and terrestrial wildlife as an economic asset to create value in ways that align with conservation objectives and support sustainable growth and development. **This Toolkit uses wildlife economy to include** commercial, public-interest and subsistence activities that depend on wild biodiversity and ecosystem services, provided they operate within ecological limits and deliver fair social value. Sustainable use may be consumptive or non-consumptive.

The wildlife economy includes photographic tourism, wildlife ranching, hunting (including fisheries) both tourism-related and subsistence, payments for ecosystem services, forest and indigenous plant products, and carbon markets (Snyman et al., 2021). Activities like nature photography, filmmaking, journalism, research, and consultancy also contribute significantly to this sector (African Wildlife Foundation, 2021). Consumptive uses involve harvesting indigenous resources such as medicinal plants, wildflowers, and wild fruits, cultivating native species, rangeland agriculture, and trade in harvested resources. Bioprospecting, an emerging component of the wildlife economy, involves systematically searching for valuable bioresources that can be developed into commercially viable products in industries such as pharmaceuticals, aquaculture, nutraceuticals, and cosmetics (UNCTAD, 2020).

> *Africa's abundant natural assets offer a unique competitive advantage and an opportunity to build robust wildlife economies.*

These economies can promote conservation as a growth engine, attract young African talent, boost private sector investment in wildlife resources and related businesses, and bolster community resilience by increasing the benefits they derive from the natural environment (Dasgupta, 2021). However, the potential of wildlife economies is constrained by a lack of evidence on the socio-economic benefits of pursuing wildlife economy development strategies. Despite the ongoing 'big data' revolution, inadequate tools and technical capacity limit the utility of the growing body of supporting data and stakeholder access to that data (Snyman et al., 2021). Under these limitations, African stakeholders, including protected area managers, local and national authorities, community leaders and the private sector, cannot fully appreciate the value of their natural assets and the potential benefits. Consequently, they struggle to design strategies or enterprises that engage them in developing sustainable wildlife economies (Roe et al., 2019).

While African decision-makers often intuitively understand the importance of wildlife and ecosystem services to human well-being, they lack data and analytical tools required for evidence-based policymaking (Turner et al., 2008). This lack of tools limits their ability to document programme impacts effectively, inform adaptive management, and communicate programme success (BIOFIN, 2022).

Where tools and technical capacity do exist, they are often siloed, precluding effective multi-stakeholder collaboration. Appropriate technologies would enable stakeholders to appreciate their natural assets fully and design data-driven, collaborative strategies to build wildlife economies that deliver socio-economic benefits while maintaining Africa's natural heritage (IPBES, 2019). **Monitoring and research to produce reliable, accessible data are fundamental to creating compelling cases for wildlife economies, ensuring informed development and economic decisions across the continent.**

Typology of wildlife economy activities

Anchored in the SADC requirement for the sustainable conservation and utilisation of indigenous biodiversity resources

Qualifying criterion (SADC)

Does the activity sustain the conservation and utilisation of indigenous biodiversity resources?

1
Core wildlife economy activities

Primary value depends on the sustainable use, management, or conservation of indigenous biodiversity.

- Ecotourism
- Hunting and fishing
- Non-timber forest products
- Wildlife ranching
- Ecosystem services / Nature credits
- Bioprospecting

2
Borderline / conditional activities

Included only where governance, stewardship, ecological safeguards, and benefit-sharing maintain or enhance the biodiversity asset base. May qualify under specific governance conditions.

- Community-managed fisheries
- rangeland agriculture
- Regenerative grazing linked to wildlife corridors
- Agroforestry using indigenous species
- Community conservancy enterprises

3
Definitionally excluded activities

Activities that systematically degrade the biodiversity asset base. These activities undermine the biodiversity asset base and do not meet the qualifying criterion.

- Industrial logging
- Hardrock mining
- Large-scale monoculture

Income generation alone is not sufficient; the defining test is whether the activity conserves and sustainably utilises indigenous biodiversity resources.

Source: Authors

Importance of assessing wildlife economies

Assessing the status of wildlife economies is crucial at national, subnational, landscape, protected area or site, community and transboundary scales. It helps stakeholders navigate tensions between short-term and long-term economic gains, national interests and local priorities, and economic opportunities and ecological limits. **A well-balanced wildlife economy strategy can support human-centred, nature-positive outcomes and sustainable growth.** The African Leadership University School of Wildlife Conservation (Snyman et al., 2021) emphasises that the wildlife economy uses ecosystem goods and services, including indigenous plants and animals in marine, freshwater and terrestrial systems, as economic assets aligned with conservation objectives. This approach fosters sustainable growth and promotes resilient, inclusive economic development.

Unlocking Africa's rich biodiversity resources to drive sustainable development necessitates meticulous research and documentation of their contributions to local, national, and regional economies and human well-being. For example, wildlife tourism alone contributes significantly to African economies, accounting for 8.5% of Kenya's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and creating over 1.1 million jobs across the continent (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2018). A comprehensive overview of biodiversity's value can be provided by assessing wildlife economies, underscoring its critical role in delivering substantial social, economic, and political benefits (Dasgupta, 2021). This understanding can inform development, economic planning, and investment promotion by local authorities and national governments. Additionally, communities, development partners, and the private sector can craft inclusive green growth strategies with actionable recommendations for policy formulation, barrier removal, and incentive implementation (OECD, 2019). These strategies ensure that wildlife economies thrive, benefiting both people and nature.

One advantage of readily accessible, organised data and synthesised information on wildlife economies is making informed decisions that optimise natural resources. Such data illuminate the nature, extent, and magnitude of wildlife economies, showing how they contribute to livelihoods and job creation locally, nationally, and regionally. Accurate and comprehensive data, rigorous analysis, and accessible reporting can identify trends, reveal economic opportunities, and guide investment across scales. Ecotourism, wildlife ranching, and sustainable harvesting of natural resources can be scaled up or down based on data-driven insights, ensuring that these activities provide optimal economic benefits while maintaining ecological balance (UNCTAD, 2020).

Moreover, **collecting and evaluating data on wildlife economies enhances transparency and fosters trust when findings are accessible and integrated into participatory decision-making.** When communities understand the economic benefits of sustainable wildlife use, they are more likely to engage in and support conservation (Ostrom, 1990; Agrawal, 2001; Synman et al., 2023). Robust data can help governments design policies that protect biodiversity while promoting appropriate growth and help investors identify opportunities with financial and environmental value (IUCN, 2021). For instance, Namibia's community-based conservancies, where financial and wildlife monitoring data are regularly reported to members through annual general meetings, generate significant income for rural communities, support more than 230,000 people and contribute N$7 million (estimated USD 430,000) annually to the national economy (NACSO, 2022; Goergen et al., 2024). In Cameroon, products such as bush mango, kola nuts, and honey are important rural income sources (Nkem et al., 2010), yet the scale of these value chains remains poorly documented, underscoring the need for a systematic assessment of the wildlife economy. Tanzania benefits from sustainably harvested medicinal plants and wild mushrooms, while non-timber forest products such as raffia palm and wild fruits are important to livelihoods in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Mugumaarhahama et al., 2023).

Ultimately, integrating comprehensive data with stakeholder engagement leads to a more resilient and sustainable economy, where wildlife conservation and economic development are not mutually exclusive but complementary goals.

Beyond establishing baselines, the value of wildlife economy assessment is most fully realised when embedded within a continuous monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework. One-time assessments capture a snapshot of a dynamic system; regular, structured data collection transforms that snapshot into a trend line, enabling governments, communities, and investors to track and respond to changes in wildlife asset condition and socio-economic performance and outcomes over time. This adaptive dimension is essential: wildlife economies operate within landscapes subject to ongoing pressures from climate change, population growth, and land-use change that can quickly render static assessments misleading. **Continuous M&E provides the feedback mechanism through which strategies can be tested and adjusted in response to real conditions on the ground, while building the longitudinal evidence base that strengthens investor confidence, justifies sustained fiscal allocations, and meets the impact reporting requirements that conservation finance instruments increasingly demand.** Without this ongoing monitoring function, even the most rigorous initial assessment risks becoming a document on a shelf rather than a living foundation for adaptive wildlife economy management.



Beyond commercial wildlife-based activities

The concept of a wildlife economy extends beyond commercial activities related to wildlife products or services. Wildlife economies encompass a broad spectrum of interactions with biodiversity, many of which are crucial for subsistence and the fulfilment of domestic needs. For example, wildlife-based food products significantly contribute to food security, nutrition, and livelihoods (Belant et al. 2024). People frequently forage for fruits, mushrooms, and other natural foods, often considering these resources freely available (Shackleton & Pandey, 2014). Millions of people also rely on harvesting meat, medicinal plants, timber, thatch grass, and other natural materials for domestic use (Wells, 2024). In this way, natural ecosystems provide essential goods and services, often at no direct cost, effectively subsidising human needs (Costanza et al., 2014). The financial burden would be substantial if these resources were to be purchased, including from often inaccessible urban markets (Naidoo et al. 2016). Therefore, assessing the actual value of these natural provisions is imperative, including what people would have to pay if nature did not provide them (Abd Elbasit et al., 2021).

In the developed world, replacement of naturally harvested food has been facilitated by significant increases in industrial production. However, this shift has, and can, in many countries incur catastrophic costs to the environment. As Africa's population grows and demand for food increases, providing high-quality nutrition will inevitably incur environmental damage and habitat loss. However, negative impacts can be minimised if people harvest food and other natural products sustainably through wildlife economies.

Therefore, understanding the complex socio-economic dynamics of the wildlife economy requires comprehensive assessments to quantify wild-harvested natural products and the economic value of these harvests. Such assessments will provide critical evidence to ensure that hunting, fishing, and gathering, even for subsistence, remain sustainable. This body of evidence will also enhance recognition of the importance of wild foods and support conservation measures for wild places from which these resources are harvested.

Incorporating subsistence use of natural resources into wildlife economy frameworks underscores the importance of sustainable practices and highlights the need for policies and strategies that support conservation and local communities' well-being. By acknowledging and valuing the full spectrum of wildlife utilisation, we can better appreciate biodiversity's integral role in supporting human life and livelihoods, thereby fostering a more sustainable future that is resilient to a changing climate.

Benefits of assessing wildlife economies

Understanding the full scope of wildlife economies offers numerous benefits beyond immediate economic or livelihood gains. **A comprehensive understanding promotes sustainable practices and conservation, which are essential for protecting the environment and building climate resilience at local, regional and global scales.** By assessing natural assets and their uses at the scale relevant to decisions, whether national, subnational, landscape, protected area or site, community or transboundary, stakeholders can make better land-use, management and investment choices that increase economic, social and cultural benefits while maintaining ecological integrity.

Assessing wildlife economies can generate a robust body of evidence that informs sustainable practices and serves as a foundation for developing investment blueprints and compelling funding opportunities. These assessments reveal critical insights into the types and quantities of goods derived from natural resources, their geographical distribution, the stakeholders involved in value chains, and the flow of economic value within these chains (IUCN, 2021). Assessments also identify barriers and gaps in current practices while highlighting opportunities to enhance product development and optimise value chains, which is critical to positioning Africa's wildlife sector as an essential asset with bankable investment opportunities and a strong return on investment.

For example, South Africa's Biodiversity Economy Investment Portal demonstrates practical application of such information. Centralising data and insights allow this portal to provide easy access for policymakers, prospective investors, and other stakeholders (Department of Environmental Affairs, 2018). The Portal demonstrates the potential of comprehensive assessments to streamline decision-making processes and facilitate targeted investments in biodiversity sectors. This approach promotes economic growth and ensures that investments align with conservation goals, fostering sustainable development (OECD, 2019).

> *Leveraging detailed assessments of wildlife economies enables stakeholders to effectively map strategies to maximise socio-economic benefits while safeguarding natural resources.*

These strategic exercises include developing policies supporting sustainable practices, identifying niche markets for biodiversity products and services, and enhancing stakeholder collaboration. Ultimately, these efforts contribute to building resilient economies that thrive on the sustainable use of biodiversity, ensuring long-term environmental and economic prosperity (UNEP, 2021).

Building on baseline assessments, regular, coordinated national data collection and reporting on the status of biodiversity and its utilisation enable better monitoring and management of natural resource use, while also supporting countries in meeting their reporting commitments to the CBD. Continuous data collection improves countries' ability to track trends, adjust policies, and create adaptive strategies in response to changes in environmental conditions, market dynamics, investment opportunities, and governance/policy context. Improved understanding of and support for the wildlife economy among high-level government officials, private-sector entities, and civil society are essential to driving integrated conservation and development efforts (UNCTAD, 2020).

When key players recognise the value of biodiversity and strategies to leverage it, they are more likely to enact policies and support and invest in initiatives that protect and sustain natural resources. Accessible wildlife economy information can facilitate the mainstreaming of biodiversity into spatial development and land-use plans, economic frameworks, and policy formulation. Furthermore, readily available wildlife economy data and insights can be used to advocate for improved fiscal resource allocation towards environment and climate ministries and agencies, ensuring that the environmental sector receives adequate resources to support conservation and sustainable development initiatives.

Decision and Investment Support Toolkit

Why a Decision and Investment Support Toolkit is needed

Building a thriving wildlife economy requires a structured and systematic approach that can be adapted to national, subnational, landscape, protected area or site, community and regional contexts. A Decision and Investment Support Toolkit is essential for guiding efforts, enabling data-driven decisions and fostering sustainable development. The complexity of wildlife economies requires a robust framework that integrates conservation, socio-economic development, rights, governance, enterprise and community participation.

A decision and investment support toolkit is essential for managing complex wildlife economies by integrating biological, ecological, economic and social data into a structured approach that enables holistic planning. Data-driven decision-making is foundational for effective wildlife economy management. Reliable and consistent data collection, ensured by such a tool using standardised protocols, provides a basis for informed analysis. This analysis leads to more precise and impactful conservation and development strategies, ensuring increased revenue and economic benefits for local, national and regional economies.

Standardised methodologies are essential for consistency and reliability in data collection, analysis, progress tracking, reporting and comparison across different countries and/or regions and time periods. By integrating best practices and scientific principles, the tool ensures that methodologies are robust and credible, enhancing the trustworthiness of research findings and contributing to a solid body of evidence that informs sustainable practices.

Modern visualisation tools transform complex data into clear and understandable formats. Interactive maps, dashboards, and infographics help communicate insights effectively to stakeholders, including policymakers, investors, community leaders, and the public. Visualisation tools make it easier to engage stakeholders by presenting data visually in a compelling way, fostering better understanding and support for wildlife economy initiatives.

Empowerment and capacity building are critical components of the Toolkit, which is a technical resource and platform for training and capacity building. The Toolkit seeks to equip national agency officers and other stakeholders with skills and knowledge to implement and sustain wildlife economy development initiatives.

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By empowering local and national agencies, including in wildlife management, rural development, tourism, environmental and land use planning, the Toolkit ensures that efforts to develop wildlife economies are sustainable and can be continued as integral components of sustainable development.

The Toolkit facilitates investment and policy development by generating blueprints. These blueprints reveal critical insights into the types and quantities of goods derived from natural resources, their geographical distribution, and the stakeholders involved in value chains. This information is vital for attracting investment and fostering sustainable socio-economic development. The Toolkit aids in developing policies that support sustainable practices, protect natural resources, and ensure the equitable sharing of biodiversity benefits, and in integrating wildlife economies into national development agendas.

A Decision and Investment Support Toolkit is therefore crucial for assessing and building sustainable wildlife economies. **It provides a structured but flexible framework for integrating ecological, economic, social and governance evidence, supporting informed decisions and empowering stakeholders with the knowledge needed to act.** By recognising and valuing the full spectrum of biodiversity's contributions, users can design more resilient, equitable and investable wildlife-economy programmes at scales relevant to them.



Toolkit structure

The Decision and Investment Support Toolkit is structured in two connected phases, each divided into modules for ease of navigation. The modules are not a mandatory sequence. They can be conducted concurrently or iteratively, and users may enter through the modules most relevant to their mandate, evidence, capacity, priorities and resources.

Phase 1 focuses on understanding a country, jurisdiction, landscape, protected area or site, community or transboundary wildlife economy through four interconnected modules. These modules establish the process framework, assess wildlife assets and opportunities, examine the enabling environment and analyse finance and investors. Each module identifies key considerations, methods, data and decision products that can be adapted to the scale and context.

Phase 2 shifts from assessment to action through four modules that support strategy and investment planning, policy and institutional reform, reporting and investment platforms, and awareness and capability development. The outputs should connect to the development plans, budgets, land-use systems, protected area or landscape management frameworks and investment processes that operate at the relevant scale.

Together, the phases form a cohesive and flexible approach that enables stakeholders to understand current conditions, set shared priorities, prepare responsible investments and track results, while aligning economic objectives with conservation, rights and equitable benefit-sharing.

Key components of wildlife economy assessments and development processes

Phase 1
Understanding the wildlife economy

- Module 1 Establish the process framework
- Module 2 Status & potential assessment
- Module 3 Enabling environment assessment
- Module 4 Financial & investor landscape assessment

Phase 2
Building wildlife economies

- Module 5 National strategy, action plan & investment blueprint
- Module 6 Policy & institutional framework strengthening
- Module 7 National platform for monitoring, reporting & investment
- Module 8 Developing wildlife economy awareness

Phase 1: Understanding the wildlife economy

Module 1: Establishing the process framework

This module establishes the process framework for a wildlife economy initiative. It can be applied at national, subnational, landscape, protected area or site, community and transboundary scales, enabling practitioners to define a legitimate, inclusive and manageable process suited to the decisions involved.

Scope and adaptability

While the module often focuses on national frameworks such as government leadership, cross-sector governance and policy alignment, it is designed to be flexible. Practitioners can tailor it to community conservancies, districts, transboundary ecosystems, protected areas, ecological corridors and other landscapes or sites. **Regardless of scale, stakeholders should agree the geographic and thematic scope, the strategic questions and the expected decision products before data collection and analysis begin.**

Project team setup and management

A multidisciplinary project team ensures effective process management across scales. At the national level, the team should include expertise in ecology, natural resource economics, finance, law, geospatial analysis, and enterprise and community engagement, with representation from relevant public institutions, academia, and civil society. At the landscape or site level, team composition should reflect local institutions, rights-holders, customary authorities, protected area or landscape managers, and local organisations, while retaining the technical expertise required for the task.

Stakeholder mapping and engagement

Stakeholder identification and engagement are fundamental at every scale. National mapping may include ministries, agencies, the private sector, conservation and community organisations and development partners. Landscape and site processes should include local government, protected area authorities, customary and community institutions, resource users, cooperatives, women and youth groups and local enterprises. **Engagement should be designed to influence decisions and build ownership, not merely to collect information.**

Establishing governance structures

The recommended national framework uses a high-level steering committee to provide leadership, legitimacy and alignment with strategic priorities. At the landscape, site, or community level, an equivalent multi-stakeholder body can connect local government, customary institutions, rights-holders, protected area or landscape authorities, researchers, civil society, and businesses. In every context, **governance arrangements should define roles, decision rights, accountability and links to relevant planning, budgeting and management systems.**

Forming a technical working group

The Technical Working Group (TWG), comprising experts and technocrats, provides technical guidance, quality assurance and methodological rigour. At national level, it may include representatives from government, academia, civil society, community organisations and key sector institutions. At landscape or site level, it should draw on local technical capacity, including extension officers, protected area staff, local researchers and community knowledge holders, with access to specialist support where needed.

Ensuring inclusivity and representation

Inclusivity must be a foundational principle at all scales. This involves public institutions beyond environment and wildlife, including finance, planning, trade, agriculture, infrastructure, tourism and local government, and ensures meaningful participation by Indigenous Peoples and local communities, customary leaders, women, youth, marginalised groups and local entrepreneurs. **Inclusive processes strengthen legitimacy, mainstream wildlife economy considerations and support equitable benefit-sharing.**

Conclusion

This module underscores the importance of scalable governance, rigorous stakeholder engagement, collaboration and multidisciplinary expertise. Its flexible application provides clarity, legitimacy, and practical foundations for developing the wildlife economy at the national, landscape, and site levels. **The success of a wildlife economy initiative depends on political and institutional support, local legitimacy, clear rights and responsibilities, and inclusive governance appropriate to the scale and context.**

Applying Module 1 in practice

- Agree the scale, boundaries, decisions and outputs before collecting data.
- Appoint a legitimate steering body, technical group and day-to-day lead.
- Map rights-holders and stakeholders, then define participation and decision rules.

Landscape and site use

- Build on existing protected area, local government, customary and community institutions, and connect outputs to management plans and budgets.

Key considerations

- Clarify rights and benefit-sharing, include women and youth, and match the process to available capacity and resources.

Module 2: Assess the status and potential of wildlife economies

Assessing the current state and potential of wildlife economies at national, subnational, landscape, protected area or site, community or transboundary level is crucial. The process identifies the economic and social contributions of biodiversity conservation and priority areas for responsible investment. **A thorough assessment explores key subsectors, evaluates current and future activities, measures economic, social and ecological performance, identifies stakeholders and partners and highlights data gaps.**

Baseline reports outline the main elements of a country's, jurisdiction's, landscape's or site's wildlife economy. They build the case for responsible use and stewardship of biodiversity and make nature's contribution to livelihoods, ecosystem integrity, enterprises and the wider economy more visible. **A credible baseline supports policy and management decisions, identifies investment opportunities and constraints, and helps businesses, communities, investors and public authorities manage risk and accountability.**

The critical outcome of this module is a shared understanding of the wildlife economy's size, composition, status, sustainability and potential at the relevant scale. Stakeholders should begin by agreeing definitions, boundaries, priority subsectors, indicators and assessment questions. Existing and emerging tools should then be selected according to the decisions the assessment needs to support.

The Wildlife Economy Investment Index[1] (WEII) is a sophisticated, data-driven tool designed to comprehensively evaluate and optimise wildlife economies. The Index offers a multidimensional analysis through two key sub-indices, drawing on 280 indicators from 34 datasets, making it a robust framework for assessing various facets of wildlife economies. Baseline national reports developed under the WEII have been produced for 54 African countries. These reports provide an in-depth evaluation of each country's wildlife economy, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement. By offering a broad yet detailed assessment, the reports capture the status of a country's wildlife economy and reveal its underlying dynamics. This dual focus enables stakeholders to identify opportunities for enhancing performance while addressing gaps that could hinder sustainable growth and investment.

Within this module, stakeholders can use the WEII Wildlife Status Sub-Index to analyse wildlife assets, size, composition and status at national or landscape scale. Its indicators include species richness, population dynamics, habitat integrity and management effectiveness. Site-level assessments should complement broader indicators with locally generated ecological, livelihood and governance data.

By integrating the WEII early in the assessment process, stakeholders can establish evaluation parameters and robust baselines for critical indicators. The WEII dashboard and national reports also enable comparisons among countries, regions, and Regional Economic Communities, supporting shared learning and best practices. Comparable indicators can track improvements over time, measure ecological, social, and economic impacts, and support adaptive management if data quality and scale limitations are clearly communicated.

In conjunction with the WEII, stakeholders can leverage additional tools and draw on the data and insights generated by these resources to enrich their analyses. The **Protected Area Management Effectiveness**[2] (PAME) and **Integrated Management Effectiveness Tool**[3] (IMET) methodologies provide valuable information on how effectively protected areas are managed and whether conservation objectives are being met. **The IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas** provides a complementary global certification standard that benchmarks whether protected and conserved areas achieve positive conservation outcomes through effective and equitable governance and management. It offers an independently verified quality standard that can strengthen investor and donor confidence in wildlife economy landscapes anchored by protected areas. Similarly, the **System of Environmental-Economic Accounting**[4] (SEEA) integrates environmental data with economic statistics, enabling a nuanced assessment of the interactions between the economy and the environment. Moreover, legal hubs for **Environmental Conservation and Sustainable Developmen**t offer information on legal resources, guidance, and services that support conservation efforts, biodiversity protection, and enforcement of environmental laws. The IUCN SULi **Five-Dimensional Sustainability Assessment Framework** (5DSAF) (IIED, IUCN SULi, TRAFFIC, Endangered Wildlife Trust & EPIC Biodiversity, 2025) is a self-assessment tool designed for operators and businesses involved in the use and trade of wild species. The Framework expands on the traditional triple bottom line of sustainability, ecological, social and economic, by adding human health and animal welfare as critical dimensions.

Geospatial analysis is integral to wildlife economy assessment, monitoring and strategy development. Spatial tools enable stakeholders to visualise assets, from species distributions and habitat condition to ecosystem service flows, land-use patterns

1. Wildlife Economy Investment Index: https://sowc.alueducation.com/weii/
2. Protected Area Management Effectiveness: https://www.protectedplanet.net/en/thematic-areas/protected-areas-management-effectiveness-pame?tab=Data
3. Integrated Management Effectiveness Tool: https://rris.biopama.org/node/18795
4. System of Environmental-Economic Accounting: https://seea.un.org/

and human-wildlife interaction zones, and to analyse how these relate to economic activities, infrastructure and competing land uses. **Combined with socio-economic and governance data, geospatial analysis provides the multidimensional view needed to identify change, pressures, opportunities and investment priorities at national, landscape and site levels.**

A growing range of continental and global geospatial datasets, including land cover and land-use change, vegetation condition, deforestation and degradation alerts, protected area coverage, species ranges, climate projections, demographics and infrastructure, now makes rapid and standardised assessment possible across scales. Platforms such as Google Earth Engine, ArcGIS Online and emerging GeoAI tools can process these datasets, while Natural Capital Accounting tools help quantify ecosystem service values for land-use planning and cost-benefit analysis.

To operationalise these capabilities, a **Wildlife Economy Geospatial Hub, or WE GeoHub**, could provide a shared decision-support service that integrates standardised and locally generated data to assess assets, monitor ecological and socio-economic change, compare development and investment scenarios and communicate findings through maps, dashboards and narrative products. It would support, but not replace, governance, financial due diligence or transaction support. At the landscape and site levels, it should combine field surveys, community mapping, and protected area monitoring with broader datasets so that analysis is both locally grounded and comparable.

Over time, the WE GeoHub could support continuous monitoring and evaluation by turning static spatial snapshots into trend information. Scenario analysis could model how restoration, habitat protection, protected area expansion or land-use change affects wildlife economy performance and WEII indicators, helping decision-makers identify cost-effective pathways and prioritise investments with strong ecological and socio-economic returns.

A WE GeoHub would lower technical barriers, but stakeholders would still need targeted training in data compilation, interpretation, application, security and management. Long-term value depends on clear data governance, sustained resourcing and full institutional ownership and custodianship.

Mobilising relevant information and data ideally targets and starts with entities mandated to oversee and manage wildlife resources, including environment ministries, wildlife agencies, and other related ministries with jurisdiction over areas such as tourism, forestry, and fisheries. However, other ministries and agencies also collect and are repositories of wildlife economy-relevant data. For instance, the finance and trade ministries can provide export data detailing the types of wildlife products, markets, volumes, revenues, and the players involved. Statistical agencies often collect critical socio-economic data that include or are relevant to wildlife economies. Local administrative authorities, the private sector, development actors, and research and academic institutions also often hold essential data.

Data mobilisation must be followed by analysis and synthesis that answer the agreed decision questions. Traditional reports remain useful, but spatially explicit and narrative formats such as StoryMaps can communicate complex relationships more effectively to broader audiences. The same evidence can be packaged for policymakers, investors, managers, and community stakeholders, supported by concise case studies that demonstrate economic, social, and conservation outcomes.

In many contexts, wildlife economy data are not consistently collected, standardised or easily accessible. Mobilisation therefore requires leadership, adequate time, finance, staff capacity, and clear institutional ownership. Public agencies should work with local authorities, communities and rights-holders, the private sector, academia, research organisations and civil society to create a shared evidence base rather than parallel systems.

Wildlife economy subsectors and focus areas

The use and trade of wildlife resources are as diverse as biodiversity itself, and activities vary across countries and landscapes. For assessment purposes, common subsectors include ecotourism and cultural tourism, regulated hunting and fishing, wildlife ranching, sustainable wild products and non-timber forest products, ecosystem and watershed services, carbon and biodiversity markets and bioprospecting. These categories are not exhaustive and should be adapted to local assets, markets, rights and ecological conditions.

Assessments should also identify activities that are illegal, unregulated or ecologically unsustainable, such as illegal fishing, destructive harvesting or other practices that degrade biodiversity. Such activities may generate income or employment but should not be presented as qualifying opportunities in the wildlife economy. Their scale and drivers should be analysed to enable stakeholders to develop lawful, sustainable and equitable alternatives.

The scope and depth of assessments for each prioritised subsector should be determined collaboratively by stakeholders, considering time and resource constraints. Ideally, each subsector will be represented by relevant agencies, subject matter experts, and critical stakeholders actively engaged in the corresponding wildlife economy activities. Various tools and methodologies continue to be developed to evaluate wildlife economy activities within each sub-sector. Stakeholders should select the most appropriate tools, aligning them with specific objectives of assessments and ensuring they capture complexities and nuances of the sector. Consistency in applying these tools over time will be critical for generating comprehensive, comparable data to support actionable recommendations.

Natural capital accounting

Natural Capital Accounting (NCA) is a **methodological framework for quantifying and integrating the value of biodiversity, ecosystems and wildlife resources into economic planning** and to compare scenarios for improving conservation and economic outcomes. By assessing the extent, condition, and service flows of natural assets, NCA reveals how wildlife-based enterprises, conservation, and natural resource management contribute to employment, income, food security, climate resilience, and public welfare. Tools such as ENCORE and spatially explicit models, such as the InVEST suite, can help stakeholders map ecosystem services, dependencies, impacts, and trade-offs, and support reporting aligned with standards such as SEEA and TNFD.

The World Bank's Wealth Accounting and the Valuation of Ecosystem Services (WAVES) programme has supported countries to institutionalise natural capital accounting through technical assistance, capacity development and integration with national accounts and policy. National accounts can inform resource allocation and risk management, while landscape and site applications can support ecosystem-service monitoring, restoration targets and project-level impact assessment. **Linking NCA with wildlife economy assessment helps translate natural assets into planning, management, investment and accountability decisions.**



Applying Module 2 in practice

- Define assessment questions, indicators and priority subsectors.
- Combine existing evidence, local knowledge, spatial analysis and targeted data collection.
- Validate findings and identify opportunities, risks, data gaps and distributional effects.

Landscape and site use

- Use local ecological, livelihood and market data, then link the baseline to management, project preparation and monitoring.

Key considerations

- Set ecological limits and safeguards, publish assumptions and update the baseline.

Case example: Zimbabwe's biodiversity economy assessment

Zimbabwe's assessment demonstrates how a comprehensive evidence base can support biodiversity-economy planning and investment. It brought together government, research, private-sector, and development-partner data to establish a national baseline for the sector's size, composition, contribution, and growth potential.

The assessment examined priority value chains, including wildlife tourism, wildlife ranching, sustainable wild products, ecosystem services and emerging nature-based enterprises. It considered economic performance, employment, conservation outcomes, and the enabling environment, while identifying barriers in data, finance, governance, and investment.

The process moved beyond description by identifying investment opportunities and policy, institutional and financing actions. Its findings provide a basis for strategy development, investment prioritisation, coordination and continued monitoring.

Key lessons for wildlife economy assessments

- Establish a credible baseline of economic, social and ecological value.
- Assess value chains consistently and identify opportunities and constraints.
- Create a shared evidence base across institutions and stakeholder groups.
- Use findings to define reforms, projects and investment priorities.
- Design the assessment as the start of an adaptive planning and monitoring process.

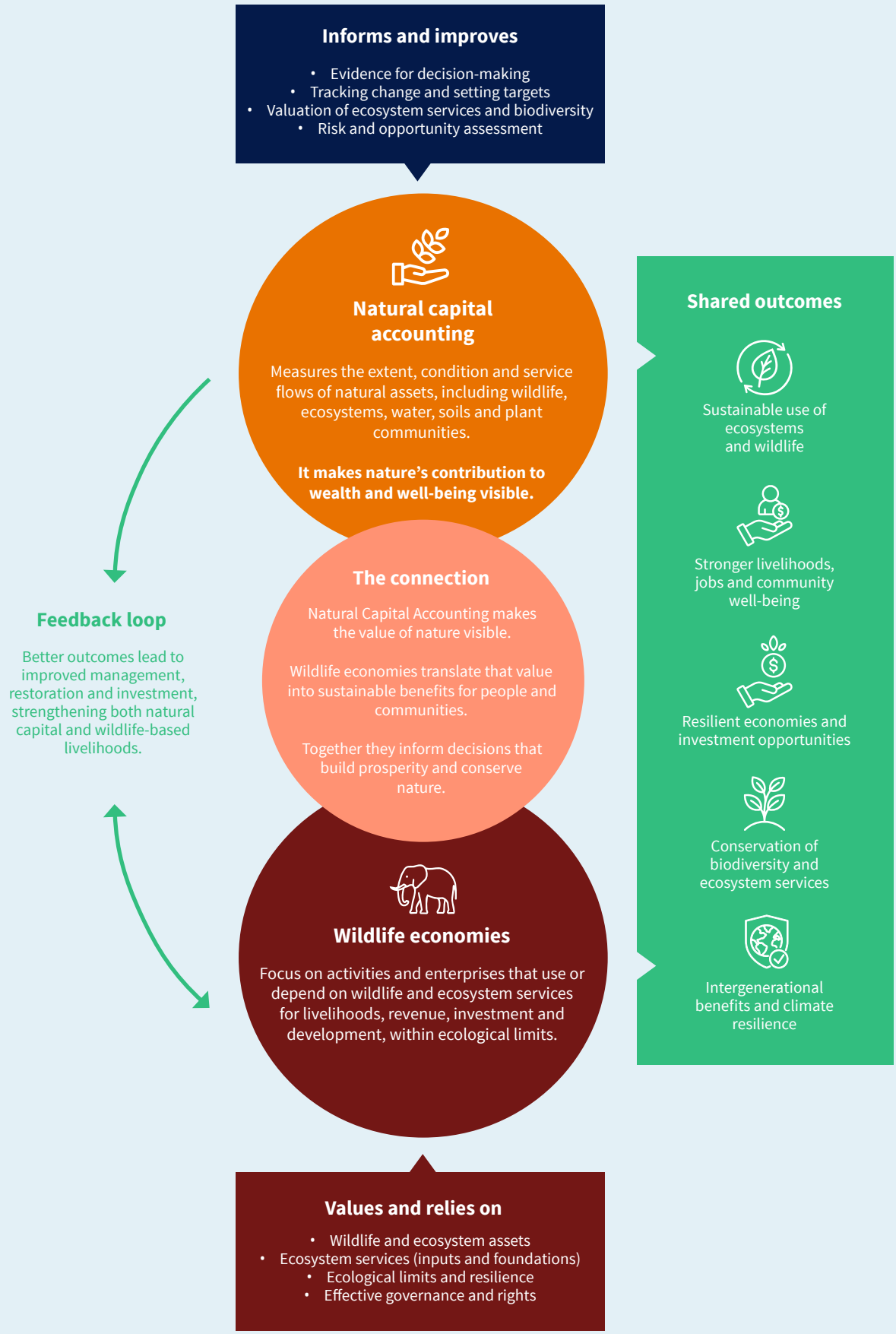
Common subsectors for assessment

- Ecotourism and cultural tourism.
- Regulated hunting and fishing.
- Wildlife ranching.
- Sustainable wild products and non-timber forest products.
- Ecosystem, watershed, carbon and biodiversity services.
- Bioprospecting and biodiversity-based products.

Adapt categories to local assets, markets, rights and ecological limits.

Wildlife economies and natural capital accounting

Two powerful approaches that work together for people, nature and prosperity



Module 3: Assess the enabling environment for wildlife economies

An enabling environment is critical to growing a wildlife economy because it creates the conditions for stakeholder participation, responsible enterprise and investment. It includes supportive policy, legal and regulatory frameworks, clear rights and institutional arrangements, a conducive business environment, strategic partnerships, transparent data systems and appropriate knowledge and capacity. **A strong enabling environment reduces risk, protects ecological and social value and helps prevent fragmented, inefficient or unsustainable action.**

A robust policy, legal and regulatory framework is the foundation of any thriving wildlife economy. Supportive policies provide clear guidelines and incentives for the sustainable use and conservation of wildlife resources. Legal and regulatory frameworks that protect biodiversity and ensure enforcement of conservation laws are crucial for maintaining ecological balance and attracting responsible investments.

Cohesive institutional arrangements are essential to effectively drive wildlife economies. **Strong institutions coordinate stakeholders, enforce rules and allocate resources.** The assessment should examine policies, laws, regulations, rights, mandates, institutional structures and enforcement, identify gaps and overlaps, and produce an actionable reform plan aligned with relevant conservation and development goals.
A business environment must encourage investment and innovation for wildlife economies to flourish. This includes streamlined regulatory processes, tax incentives, and support for eco-friendly businesses. Assessing business environments involves examining how easily enterprises can operate within the wildlife economy, the availability of financial services, and levels of government support for businesses that contribute to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. By identifying barriers to business operations and proposing feasible solutions, assessments can help create a more attractive and viable market for wildlife-based products and services.

A comprehensive enabling environment assessment should cover policy and law, institutions and rights, business conditions, partnerships, data transparency, knowledge and capacity. The WEII Investment-Enabling Environment Sub-Index provides a structured diagnostic but should be complemented by context-specific analysis and stakeholder evidence.

The WEII Investment-Enabling Environment Sub-Index (Adebambo & Snyman, 2026) provides stakeholders with a structured framework for evaluating the conditions that facilitate or hinder investment in wildlife economies. This Sub-index incorporates critical indicators such as ease of doing business, corruption levels, infrastructure availability and quality, regulatory frameworks, and safety and security conditions. By analysing these factors, stakeholders can identify the strengths and weaknesses of the investment climate within the wildlife economy sector.

In addition to describing current conditions, the Sub-Index can help identify priority areas for improvement. It should be used as a diagnostic to examine factors that affect investor confidence and operational feasibility, set realistic targets for reform and guide actions to strengthen institutions, governance and responsible private-sector participation. Findings should be tested with public agencies, rights-holders, communities, businesses and investors.

The complexity of wildlife conservation, along with development and economic agendas and needs and interests of various constituencies, necessitates strategic collaborations and partnerships among stakeholders to grow the wildlife economy. These partnerships, including government agencies, non-governmental organisations, the private sector, local communities, and international bodies, amplify resources, expertise, and impact, leading to more effective and sustainable outcomes. **An enabling environment assessment should map out existing and potential partnerships, evaluate their effectiveness, and suggest ways to foster new and stronger alliances.**

Accurate and transparent data collection and sharing are also critical elements for enabling the growth of wildlife economies. These practices are fundamental for informed decision-making and accountability. Reliable data on wildlife populations, socio-economic impacts, and conservation outcomes allow stakeholders to track progress, identify trends, and make evidence-based decisions. **An enabling environment assessment should scrutinise current data collection and dissemination practices and highlight areas for improvement.** Data transparency builds trust among stakeholders and attracts investments by providing a clear picture of the wildlife economy's potential and performance.

Building a thriving wildlife economy requires a knowledgeable and capable workforce. This includes conservation and wildlife-management specialists, as well as professionals in business, finance, law, data, and policymaking who understand how economic activity interacts with conservation goals. Capacity assessments should identify institutional and individual gaps and link training programmes to practical responsibilities and long-term local ownership.

Applying module 3 in practice

- Assess policy, law, rights, mandates, enforcement and institutional coordination.
- Examine business conditions, infrastructure, markets, skills and finance access.
- Use the WEII Investment-enabling Environment Sub-Index as a diagnostic and test findings with local evidence.
- Identify priority reforms, responsible institutions, resources and timelines.
- Embed ecological safeguards, transparent data and equitable participation.

Practical consideration: Inclusive rural development

Wildlife economies can create genuine participation and ownership for rural communities that live with, and steward, wildlife. This requires more than employment or benefit payments. Communities should be recognised as rights-holders, decision-makers, enterprise partners and investors in their natural assets.

Processes should address tenure and access rights, unequal market power, limited capacity and barriers to finance. Traditional and community governance institutions can provide legitimacy and mobilisation when they are inclusive, accountable and connected to formal public systems.

Key messages

- Clarify rights, responsibilities and benefit-sharing from the outset.
- Invest in community institutions, skills, enterprise support and market access.
- Ensure women, youth and marginalised groups influence decisions and share benefits.

Module 4: Assess financial and investor landscapes for wildlife economies

Investment is essential to stimulate the growth of wildlife economies. In many countries, limited understanding and project preparation mean that the sector's potential is not optimised. On the one hand, stakeholders may identify promising products, enterprises or services but struggle to access appropriate finance. On the other hand, finance may be available, but there is no credible pipeline of investment-ready projects. Countries, jurisdictions, landscapes and sites need to understand the financial and investor conditions relevant to them to address this mismatch.

BIOFIN defines biodiversity finance as raising and managing capital and using financial and economic incentives to support sustainable biodiversity management. A foundational step is to assess the public, private, community and development finance currently supporting wildlife economy outcomes. General conservation expenditure should be distinguished from finance that directly enables viable wildlife economy activities or safeguards the natural assets on which they depend.

The assessment will explore additional potential biodiversity finance opportunities for wildlife economies following this foundational work. This assessment must cover internal government sources, external public and multilateral development finance and private investment sources. This includes fiscal allocations, grants, loans, impact investments, and innovative financing mechanisms such as green bonds and conservation credits. Several countries in Africa, including Egypt, Rwanda, Botswana, Zambia, South Africa, Uganda, Seychelles, Mozambique, Malawi, Tanzania, Gabon, Niger and Madagascar have already conducted aspects of this work through UN BIOFIN.[5]

Recognising potential to tap into financing from other development sectors that intersect with wildlife economies is also essential. For example, funding for climate adaptation, sustainable agriculture, and ecotourism can be aligned with conservation efforts. This approach broadens the funding base and promotes integrated development strategies. Several tools generate relevant data and information, including **RIO Markers,** to help track biodiversity-related financial flows by categorising projects based on their conservation objectives, enhancing transparency in funding decisions. **Total Official Support for Sustainable Development** (TOSSD) provides a comprehensive view of all financial flows contributing to sustainable development, including biodiversity funding, allowing for better analysis of trends and gaps. The **Platform for Nature-based Investments** (PINE) mobilises private-sector investment in nature-based solutions, emphasising the creation of favourable investment climates and collaboration between the public and private sectors. These resources offer valuable insights into funding sources and opportunities, enabling stakeholders to align financial flows with biodiversity conservation goals.

Inherent to this task is a need to understand the perspective of investors who assess wildlife economy projects against many options in other asset classes and countries. In this context, **countries with readily available information on wildlife economies, conducive regulatory and business environments and credible project pipelines will attract more investment.** Understanding potential investors through an investor analysis is a critical component of the assessment. This involves

5. https://www.biofin.org/biofin-around-world

identifying investors, their investment needs, and their appetite for risk. **An investor analysis helps tailor financial products and investment pitches to match investor expectations, increasing the likelihood of securing investment.**

Evaluating risks associated with wildlife economies and investment environments is essential. This includes assessing political, economic, and environmental risks. By understanding these risks, strategies can be developed to mitigate them, making investments more attractive to potential investors.

This assessment is best undertaken at the subsector level identified in Module 2. For each subsector, users should estimate project preparation, capital, operating, infrastructure, capacity and conservation costs and compare these with expected revenues and wider benefits. At landscape and site level, financial analysis should connect to management plans, enterprise needs and ecological safeguards.

Next, a comprehensive gap analysis is necessary to identify current shortfalls in funding. This involves analysing deficiencies in existing funding mechanisms and understanding where additional resources are needed. A gap analysis pinpoints areas that require immediate attention and intervention.

The output should be a finance and investor strategy that identifies current resources and gaps, priority sources and instruments, investor requirements, partners, de-risking measures and project-preparation needs. It should directly inform the strategy and investment blueprint in Module 5, as well as the reporting and investment platform in Module 7.

Applying Module 4 in practice

- Map current public, private, community and development finance.
- Estimate financing needs and gaps by subsector and stage.
- Analyse investor mandates, risk appetite, returns and impact.
- Identify suitable instruments, partners and de-risking measures.
- Link finance analysis to project preparation and Module 5.



Phase 2: Growing the wildlife economy

Module 5: Develop a national strategy roadmap and investment blueprint

A comprehensive understanding of the nature, status, and scope of a wildlife economy provides the basis for a focused strategy at national, subnational, landscape, protected area or site, community, or transboundary scales. Without intentional policy, institutional and investment action, the potential of the wildlife economy is rarely optimised. **Evidence from Phase 1 should therefore be translated into a strategy, roadmap and investment blueprint that align economic development with conservation, rights and equitable benefits.** This translation is fundamentally a deliberative process: the multi-stakeholder governance structures established in Module 1 must convene to collectively interpret the evidence, identify where ecological and economic objectives align and where they compete, and negotiate priorities accordingly before strategic choices are made.

A critical output of this module is a wildlife economy strategy and implementation roadmap supported by an investment blueprint. Together, these should define the vision, objectives, policy and regulatory enablers, rights and safeguards, governance arrangements, priority value chains and projects, investor value propositions, responsibilities, resources, milestones and monitoring. The WE GeoHub can support spatial scenario analysis and package landscape and site opportunities into accessible maps and StoryMaps.

Building on the baseline and stakeholder participation from Phase 1, stakeholders should develop a clear and compelling vision that aligns with relevant national, subnational, landscape or site development and management goals. Long-term objectives should explain how wildlife economy development will contribute to conservation, livelihoods, resilience, jobs, public value and community benefits. A credible vision can mobilise government, communities, businesses, investors and development partners around shared outcomes.

A supportive policy and regulatory environment must underpin the strategic vision. Key components of the strategic vision include credible policy and regulatory enablers to enhance the sector's attractiveness. The vision must outline policy and regulatory improvements in critical areas, encompassing a robust legal and regulatory framework and clear property rights to incentivise conservation and sustainable use of wildlife resources. This encompasses comprehensive wildlife protection; permitting processes; economic incentives and funding mechanisms, such as tax breaks and grants; community engagement and benefit-sharing policies and implementation mechanisms; market development for sustainably sourced wildlife products; and research and data management policies.

Using data and insights from Modules 1 to 3, the strategy should define the institutional framework, governance structures and coordination mechanisms required for implementation. It should assign clear roles and responsibilities to the institutions and stakeholder groups best placed to deliver them and connect those roles to existing plans, budgets and management systems. Module 4 provides the basis for identifying the finance required to implement the strategy and roadmap. Resource mobilisation and allocation arrangements should be specified, along with capacity development actions for each responsible institution or stakeholder group. A monitoring, evaluation, and learning framework should track progress, impacts, distributional outcomes, and emerging risks, with regular reporting to stakeholders.

An investment blueprint should be developed alongside the strategy. It should provide investors, entrepreneurs, communities, public agencies and development partners with a clear understanding of priority opportunities, project concepts, sponsors, beneficiaries, financing needs, risks, safeguards, returns and conservation outcomes. The objective is to move from broad opportunity statements to a credible and sequenced project pipeline.

The blueprint should outline priority areas for investment and summarise the regulatory context and available incentives. It should also identify project preparation, infrastructure, skills, market access, enterprise support and partnerships needed to improve viability. Opportunities should be screened for ecological sustainability, rights, benefit-sharing, additionality and financial feasibility.

Engaging and collaborating with stakeholders is critical to building consensus and ensuring the strategy's success. Consultative workshops, technical sessions and forums should test priorities, resolve trade-offs and build ownership. Indigenous Peoples and local communities, women, youth, local enterprises and other rights-holders should have meaningful influence over decisions that affect their resources, livelihoods and benefits.

A strategy and investment blueprint create value only when they are implemented. **A clearly defined, time-bound roadmap should translate priorities into sequenced actions with responsible institutions, milestones, resources and indicators.** A lead institution or coordination mechanism should be formally mandated to align agencies and partners, support delivery, maintain the project pipeline, mobilise finance and track results. At landscape or site level, the roadmap should connect directly to management plans, local governance and operational budgets.

Applying module 5 in practice

- Agree a shared vision and measurable economic, social and ecological outcomes.
- Prioritise value chains, reforms, infrastructure and investments.
- Define rights, safeguards, roles, resources, milestones and accountability.
- Prepare an investment blueprint and sequenced project pipeline.
- Assign a lead institution, time-bound roadmap and monitoring framework.

Case example: South Africa's biodiversity economy strategy

South Africa's strategy demonstrates how biodiversity conservation can be translated into a coordinated economic development agenda. It positions biodiversity as a productive asset that can support inclusive growth, rural livelihoods, investment and employment while maintaining ecosystem integrity.

Developed through a government-led multi-stakeholder process, the strategy aligns with national priorities and identifies high-potential value chains such as wildlife, ecotourism and bioprospecting. Policy reform, institutional coordination, skills, enterprise support, markets and investment mobilisation form part of the enabling framework.

A notable feature is the emphasis on implementation planning and investment pipelines alongside the strategy. This gives investors and development partners clearer opportunities while keeping conservation, transformation, community participation and sustainable use central.

Key lessons for wildlife economy strategy development

- Link biodiversity conservation to economic development and jobs.
- Prioritise value chains using evidence, sustainability and market demand.
- Align policy, institutions, finance, skills and market development.
- Combine strategy with an investment blueprint and project pipeline.
- Build implementation, monitoring and community participation in from the outset.

Case example: SADC wildlife-based economy strategy framework

The Southern African Development Community framework shows how a regional strategy can connect wildlife conservation with inclusive development across multiple countries. Its vision is a strong wildlife-based economy that supports transformative growth, employment and equitable opportunities while conserving terrestrial and marine biodiversity.

Because ecosystems, value chains and markets cross borders, the framework promotes regional alignment of policy, legislation, institutions, standards and investment priorities, while allowing Member States and landscapes to adapt action to their circumstances. It supports cooperation on transboundary resources, trade, market access, knowledge and cross-border value chains.

The framework links competitive value chains with inclusive development, community participation, equitable benefit-sharing, sustainable use and resource rights. It emphasises local value addition, enterprise development, market access and investment mobilisation across tourism, fisheries, game ranching, natural products, forestry and bioprospecting.

Implementation depends on designated institutions and focal points, coordination between the SADC Secretariat and Member States, partnerships with communities, businesses, civil society and development partners, and clear monitoring, reporting and evaluation.

Key lessons for wildlife economy strategy development

- Establish a shared vision linking livelihoods, growth and conservation.
- Align policy, governance, rights, investment and markets.
- Prioritise value chains by advantage, sustainability and local benefit.
- Translate objectives into institutions, resources, actions and results.

Module 6: Inform policy, planning and institutional frameworks

This module provides considerations for using wildlife economy evidence and strategies to inform wider policy, planning, budgeting and management. **The objective is to integrate biodiversity safeguards and opportunities into sectors such as finance, planning, agriculture, mining, infrastructure, tourism, health, and education, and into landscape, protected area, and site management systems.**

Formulating new policies or updating existing ones may be necessary to support responsible growth of the wildlife economy. Regulatory frameworks and enforcement should protect wildlife and sustainable use, while appropriate incentives can support communities and businesses. Periodic evaluation should assess positive, negative and neutral economic, social and ecological impacts. Findings should inform adaptation and continuous improvement, and lessons should be shared across countries, jurisdictions and landscapes.

Integrating evidence from the wildlife economy across sectors contributes to a broader sustainable bioeconomy in which biodiversity is treated as a strategic asset rather than a constraint or an unlimited resource. This approach can unlock new economic opportunities and investment while maintaining ecological integrity and resilience to climate change and environmental degradation.

Wildlife economy assessments can align policy objectives across sectors. In agriculture, for example, evidence of biodiversity can support agroecology, diversification, sustainable intensification, and land management that reduce habitat destruction, maintain ecosystem services, and strengthen food security.

In health, data can demonstrate the importance of medicinal resources, clean water, air quality and nature-based solutions. In education, curricula can strengthen understanding of the links among conservation, livelihoods, human well-being, and sustainable development, and broaden career opportunities that combine conservation, entrepreneurship, economics, and development.

Wildlife economy data also provides a foundation for mainstreaming biodiversity safeguards into sector policies and operations from the outset. In agriculture, this may include crop diversification, agroforestry and integrated pest management. In mining and infrastructure, it may include avoidance, mitigation, restoration and benefit-sharing measures based on spatial evidence and clear ecological thresholds.

Strategic use of information on the wildlife economy can encourage collaboration among institutions that traditionally work in isolation. Environmental agencies, finance and planning ministries, local government, protected area and landscape authorities, community institutions and businesses can use a common evidence base to align land-use, management, market and investment decisions.

Evidence on the wildlife economy should inform national and subnational development plans, public budgets, local economic development, land-use decisions, protected area and landscape strategies, climate action, education, and investment promotion. **Linking biodiversity with poverty reduction, food security, resilience and sustainable growth makes its relevance clearer to decision-makers outside the conservation sector.**

The WE GeoHub can make ecosystem-service values, land-use trade-offs, WEII indicators, livelihood contributions and investment priorities accessible through audience-specific dashboards and maps. A shared platform can support cross-sector planning and periodic evaluation, identify underperformance and provide evidence for adaptive course correction.

In conclusion, using evidence from the wildlife economy across sectors provides a practical pathway for integrating biodiversity into economic decision-making. By informing policy, planning, management and investment, countries, jurisdictions and landscapes can build resilient and inclusive economies that benefit people while safeguarding natural assets.

Applying Module 6 in practice

- Translate wildlife economy evidence into policy, plans, budgets and management systems.
- Define sector-specific reforms, safeguards, incentives and responsibilities.
- Use a shared evidence base to coordinate institutions and resolve trade-offs.
- Track positive, negative and neutral impacts and adapt policy accordingly.
- Apply findings at national, subnational, landscape and site levels.

Module 7: Developing a national platform for wildlife economy reporting and investment

This module emphasises a platform that combines reporting, coordination, project support and investor engagement. At the national level, it may be a formal Wildlife Economy Reporting and Investment Platform. At the subnational, landscape, protected area, or site level, the same functions can be delivered through a proportionate platform linked to existing governance, planning, and management systems.

A reporting and investment platform can connect investors and partners with viable wildlife economy opportunities while

making financial, social and ecological performance visible. South Africa's Biodiversity Economy Investment Portal illustrates how a digital platform can consolidate sector information and investment opportunities. The appropriate platform model will depend on scale, market depth, institutional capacity and the needs of project sponsors, communities and rights-holders.

The platform should promote the portfolio of opportunities identified in Module 5 and support business models that combine economic development with biodiversity conservation and equitable local benefits. It can strengthen value chains by addressing project preparation, production, infrastructure, distribution, market access and competitiveness.

Investor-engagement services should begin with structured market sounding. Feedback from investors can refine project design, financial structures, risk-sharing and safeguards before opportunities are formally marketed. Regular engagement should be transparent and should not displace public-interest objectives or community rights.

Project developers and entrepreneurs often need support to present opportunities in forms that investors can assess. The platform should provide proportionate advisory and investor-readiness services, from community enterprises and micro and small businesses to larger ventures. Support may include standard templates, feasibility work, financial modelling, risk assessment, business planning, safeguards, impact measurement and communication of conservation and social value.

Platforms should conduct continuous monitoring and reporting on wildlife economy activities and performance. Reporting should cover financial returns and positive, negative or neutral ecological and social impacts. This supports accountability, adaptive management and investor confidence. WEII indicators may contribute to national or landscape reporting but should be complemented by project and site-level measures.

The WE GeoHub can provide spatial data, analysis, monitoring and communication services for the wider platform. Landscape-level StoryMaps and interactive portfolios can present assets, risks, projected returns, beneficiaries and conservation outcomes for specific opportunities. **Shared spatial evidence can improve investor discussions and support regular reporting against ecological and livelihood indicators.**

Over time, platforms may provide more frequent data on projects and outcomes, but timeliness should not come at the expense of quality, consent or data security. **A credible platform should improve transparency, coordination, project quality and access to appropriate finance while supporting long-term conservation and equitable benefits.**

APPLYING MODULE 7 IN PRACTICE

- Choose a platform model appropriate to national, landscape or site needs.
- Publish a credible portfolio and provide investor-engagement services.
- Support project preparation, enterprise capability and investor readiness.
- Report financial, social and ecological performance transparently.
- Link spatial data, project pipelines, safeguards and adaptive management.

Module 8: Developing wildlife economy awareness

This module focuses on the political support, public understanding, participation, skills and leadership needed to sustain wildlife economy processes. Although presented last, **communication and capability development are cross-cutting functions that should be integrated into every module and adapted to each stakeholder group and scale.**

A communication strategy should accompany wildlife economy assessment and development at national, subnational, landscape and site levels. It should identify audiences, objectives, messages, channels, languages, responsibilities and feedback mechanisms. Communication should support informed participation and decisions rather than simply promote the sector.

At each stage of this process, a multifaceted approach, including events, workshops, and targeted awareness campaigns, is essential for disseminating information and engaging different audiences. For example, countries like Mozambique, Kenya, South Africa and Zimbabwe have successfully organised events to explain the wildlife economy to different groups, fostering understanding and collaboration.

Evidence should be packaged in accessible formats for different audiences. Policymakers may need concise briefs and mapped priorities; investors may need spatial portfolios and project information; managers may need dashboards; and communities may need locally appropriate visual products and local-language materials. StoryMaps and other spatial products can repurpose the same underlying evidence without relying on a single format for every audience.

To raise awareness at a broader societal level, targeted communication materials should be designed for various stakeholders, including the media, change agents, civil society,

the private sector, and the public. These materials should highlight the importance of wildlife economies and their potential for promoting sustainable development and conservation. **Clearly articulating connections between wildlife economies and people's daily lives is essential, outlining how people use ecosystem goods and services in their daily activities.** For example, how are wildlife products contributing to household meals, incomes, livelihoods, and other necessities?

Awareness and advocacy campaigns are crucial for building public support. Educational programmes can strengthen understanding of the interdependence between conservation and economic development and connect economic principles with natural resource management and ecological thinking with finance and planning. These efforts should bridge gaps among conservationists, policymakers, communities and the business and investment sectors.

Engaging young people is essential to the long-term growth and sustainability of wildlife economies. Secondary, tertiary, and vocational programmes can build skills in entrepreneurship, sustainable use, wildlife management, data, finance, tourism, restoration, and value chain development. Hands-on learning should be linked to real opportunities and local needs.

Creating mentorship and internship opportunities and fostering partnerships with universities, research institutions, and private sector actors will further strengthen the talent pipeline. This will help ensure that young professionals entering the wildlife economy possess theoretical and practical knowledge, enabling them to contribute meaningfully to the sector's development.

Applying module 8 in practice

- Develop an audience-specific communication and capability strategy.
- Integrate awareness, participation and feedback throughout all modules.
- Use accessible formats, local languages and trusted messengers.
- Connect education, mentoring and training to practical roles and opportunities.
- Measure changes in understanding, participation, leadership and institutional performance.



Conclusion

> *In an era when economic growth, environmental stewardship and climate action are increasingly interconnected, wildlife economies present both a profound challenge and a transformative opportunity.*

This Toolkit highlights their potential to support sustainable development, biodiversity conservation, local livelihoods and wider economies. The Wildlife Economies Decision and Investment Support Toolkit provides a structured framework for addressing the complexity of these systems.

By providing a two-phase approach with eight interconnected modules and supporting tools, the Toolkit helps stakeholders understand and build wildlife economies. It facilitates informed decisions and aligns economic, environmental and social objectives. The modules can be selected, combined and revisited according to the country, jurisdiction, landscape, protected area or site, community or transboundary context.

Adopting the Toolkit should lead beyond standalone diagnostic reports to practical decisions, policy and institutional reform, management action, investment-ready projects, finance strategies and regular reporting. Successful application should improve ecological conditions or reduce pressure, strengthen local ownership and equitable benefits, increase project quality and access to appropriate finance and enhance public accountability.

As conditions change, continued learning and adaptation will be essential. By keeping the framework practical, place-based and evidence-led, stakeholders can build wildlife economies that contribute to resilient and inclusive prosperity without liquidating the natural assets on which future well-being depends.



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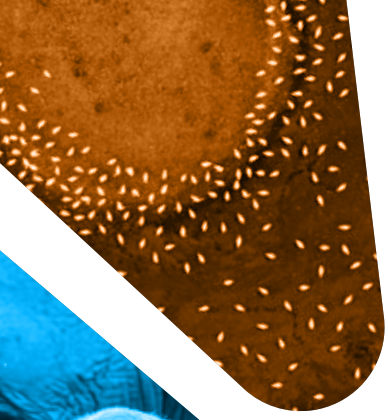
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