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Economic value of marine ecosystem services in Zanzibar: Implications for marine conservation and sustainable development

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Abstract

Marine ecosystem services are seriously undervalued, resulting in under-investment in conservation and lost opportunities for economic growth and poverty reduction. Economic valuation provides a powerful tool for sustainable development by showing how dependent the economy is on an ecosystem and what would be lost if the ecosystem is not protected. This paper estimates the value of marine ecosystem services in Zanzibar, links the values to the national income accounts, and quantifies how the benefits from each ecosystem service are distributed among five different stakeholder groups. Marine ecosystem services contribute 30% of GDP, yet the ecosystem is seriously degraded due to both human and natural causes. The paper explores the reasons for this, focusing on the distribution of benefits and the (dis)incentives this creates for conservation, especially among local communities that steward the marine ecosystem.