Nature’s Investment Bank: marine protected areas and poverty reduction

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Methodologies

Site selection
- 4 sites were selected where local experts believed the MPA had contributed to poverty reduction. “Positive deviance” approach

Triangulated data
- Focus group discussions and key informant interviews
- Comparison with nearby control sites without a marine protected area
- Local perceptions of changes over time

Poverty Focal Areas
- Opportunities, Empowerment and Security
Summary of findings

The 4 marine protected areas clearly helped reduce poverty.

The poverty reduction came from:
• Increased fish catches
• New jobs
• Better local governance
• Benefits to health
• Benefits to women
Summary of findings

Navakavu, Fiji
• Fish catches increased dramatically and incomes doubled
• Women were the primary beneficiaries

Arnavons, Solomon Islands
• Better local governance resulted in greater government support for fisheries and basic health care
• New jobs in seaweed farming and in the MPA
• Better health due to a more diversified diet and the use of the MPA boat as an ambulance
Summary of findings

Bunaken, Indonesia
• ~1,000 new jobs in tourism and incomes double the average income of fishers
• MPA fishers spend half as much time to catch same amount of fish as non-MPA fishers

Apo Island, Philippines
• Greater fish catches
• New jobs in tourism (many of them for women) boosted local incomes
• Better health from a full-time midwife and more frequent doctors’ visits
Success factors

- Local management or co-management of marine resources
- Outside organization to catalyze the marine protected area
- New income activities to ensure the local communities benefited tangibly in the short term
Recommendations

**Invest in new MPAs.** Like a school or a health clinic, there are modest short-term costs but big long-term gains.

**Empower local communities.** Co-management and community management of local marine resources lowers costs and improves outcomes.

**Think small but integrated.** A network of smaller marine protected areas that are ecologically connected and co-managed by local communities has significant coastal poverty reduction potential.
Food for thought…

• 35 countries
• 39 million citizens
• 40 million visitors
• Each island with unique biodiversity – some found nowhere else
• The sea provides food and sustains livelihoods
• Threats abound – invasive species, coastal development, climate change
“The marine protected area is like a bank to the people,” Fijian community leader. Opening more branches of the “bank” in developing countries can contribute to coastal poverty reduction.

www.nature.org/mpapovertystudy