

Project title: BirdLife project on the conservation of Migratory Soaring Birds funded by GEF through UNDP

Focal Areas:

Important flyways for the migration of soaring birds in Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia & Sudan in Africa and Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine Authority, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Yemen in the Middle East.

Amount of Financing:

A total of \$10,243,243 and 15,377,232 of GEF-funds and co-financing respectively in two-5 year tranches

Project Status: The project commenced on January 1, 2009 after a long gestation process that goes back in early 2000.

Project description:

BLI implements this entire Migratory Soaring Birds (MSBs) project funded by GEF through UNDP. The project contributes to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in 53,700 km² of production landscapes along the Rift valley/Red Sea flyways. The project also pilots a new, innovative and cost-effective UNDP-GEF approach, termed "double-mainstreaming", that seeks to integrate flyway issues into existing or planned national or donor-funded development projects or "vehicles" of reform or change management in the key sectors through the provision of technical tools, content, services and support.

Overall Goal:

To ensure that globally threatened and significant populations of soaring birds that migrate along the rift Valley/Red sea flyways are effectively maintained.

Objective:

To effectively mainstream the conservation management objectives and actions for MSBs into the Hunting, energy, agriculture, waste management and tourism sectors along the Rift Valley/Red Sea flyway, making this a safer route for soaring birds by:

- (1) increasing awareness and promoting ownership of MSBs;
- (2) building capacity of key stakeholders to effect double mainstreaming; and
- (3) incorporating MSB issues into targeted sectoral programmes to demonstrate the actual delivery of the double mainstreaming approach.

Rationale:

The Rift Valley/Red Sea flyway is the second most important flyway for migratory soaring birds (MSBs) in the world and the most important route of the Africa - Eurasia flyway system.

Over 1.2 million birds of prey and 300,000 storks migrate along this corridor between their breeding grounds in Europe and West Asia and wintering areas in Africa each year. In total, 37 species of soaring birds, 5 of which are globally threatened, regularly use the flyway.

While these birds are relatively well conserved in Europe and valued in east and Southern Africa as part of the game park experience, they receive practically no conservation attention during their migration.

Yet, this is where the MSBs are the most physiologically stressed and in some species 50-100% of their global or regional population pass along the route and through flyway "bottlenecks" in the space of just a few weeks. As a result, MSBs are at their most vulnerable during the migration along the Rift Valley/Red Sea flyway.

These large, highly visible and slow-moving birds are susceptible to localized threats during migration, such as hunting and collision with wind turbines, which could have severe impacts on global populations.

The difficulty in predicting where MSBs will come down (which is dictated by local weather conditions) makes it unfeasible to improve the safety of the flyway simply through the protection of key sites.

Therefore, the project aims at mainstreaming MSB considerations into the productive sectors along the flyways that pose the greatest risk to the safe migration of soaring birds.



Main activities include:

- **Raise awareness of the flyway and alter social and cultural behaviours among target groups that threaten MSBs in the key sectors, decision-makers and the general public by:**
 - Establishing and promoting the concept of MSB flyway
 - Establishing the “regional flyway facility” (RFF) to promote mainstreaming of MSB considerations
 - Designing and carrying out targeted awareness campaigns on MSB flyway issues
- **Increase national and regional capacity to effect double mainstreaming and application of flyway concept by:**
 - Strengthening the capacity of national partners to develop and promote the flyway concept, to respond to new opportunities and monitor content standards
 - Strengthening the capacity of national government and private sector institutions to Promote “flyway friendly” practices
- **Develop, deliver and mainstream effectively the flyway friendly practices into sector processes and programmes by:**
 - Developing and integrating technical content into appropriate reform “vehicle” projects
- **Increase learning, evaluation and adaptive management by:**
 - Establishing operational project management structure
 - Establishing operational project monitoring, evaluation, reporting and dissemination systems and structures

Progress:

The MSB project was launched during the inaugural ceremony held in Amman, Jordan on April 29, 2009 by His Excellency Eng. Khaled Irani, the Jordanian Minister of Environment. Since then, a re-assessment of the viability vehicle projects and the capacity of NGO partners was initiated as well as an evaluation of project activities by the consultant Ms. Sally Timpson. The consultant recommended that the overall implementation of MSBs project be assumed entirely by BirdLife International and UNDP will assist BirdLife in accessing the Atlas and supporting financial management and reporting to GEF. These assessments and evaluation however have caused delays and most vehicle projects have ended. Meetings with project implementing partners are being planned at national level to revive the project and renew the engagement of all stakeholders.

Challenges:

There is a lack of quantitative information on whether and how some productive sectors are having an effect on populations of MSBs. This is a major barrier since it limits the design of appropriate responses. While experiences from others countries strongly suggest that certain issues should be considered as causes for concern and the precautionary principle should be applied (heavy use of pesticides, location of power lines and turbines along particularly to the flyway bottlenecks).

Collaborators:

Global Environmental Facility (GEF - Funding agency)
BirdLife International (BLI, Implementing Agency)
United National Development Programme (UNDP – Technical services and support agency including access to Atlas)
Governments of the 11 participating countries
National BLI partner NGOs or other designated NGOs and Government Institutions where applicable

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