

My experience at CAP by: Evelyn Runjugi

Title 1. MY EXPERIENCES Background The BirdLife Council for the African Partnership (CAP) is the highest decision making organ in Africa. It brings together representatives from all 23 countries where BirdLife works in Africa. It constitutes of all Africa Partners, Partner Designate and Affiliates. Its inception meeting was held in Kenya in 1997 and since then, CAP has been meeting annually until 2008, when the meeting was changed to once every two years. At every meeting a chair is elected to serve until the next meeting. In 2012, CAP was held in Kenya for the third time from the 26th to 31ST March. The following are my personal impressions and lessons learnt during the meeting. **Before CAP** I joined BirdLife a month and a half before the event was set to begin. At first I did not really understand what CAP was all about or what it really meant. As time went by and I got involved in different meetings, I started to understand the task that lay ahead. **During CAP** On the first day of CAP, I and my colleague, Maina Macharia, were at the BirdLife desk welcoming guests. Most Partners however, did not see the point of signing a visitor's book because they had just arrived and did not have anything to comment about, yet. One of the most important assignments was to prepare the meeting papers for Africa Policy and Advocacy Working Group (APAWG) and most work involved preparing the APAWG papers and having them printed but there was an issue with printing machine. I ended up spending half a day to set the pages right. I planned to have the papers printed on Monday afternoon but due to transport issues, I had to get up early Tuesday morning to do so. The catch? The APAWG meeting was taking place that day! Tuesday morning I was in the office at 6.00 am, but everything that could go wrong did. The photocopier machine jammed thrice and I had to constantly fix it, wasting time that I did not have. Despite all the hitches, the APAWG meeting was well attended and from my bosses words 'successful'? Wednesday was a day off and delegates were joining various excursions. I was glad for the breather and happily joined the excursion to Olorgesallie in Magadi. It was so relaxing to learn about and see different species of birds. It was also a great time to interact with Partners in a more relaxed environment. On Thursday I worked with Antoinette Otieno in preparing for the poster session, during which BirdLife Partners were showing their work and managed to attend the opening and closing ceremonies respectively. In the course of the week I was also involved at the APAWG and EbA sessions. I handed the delegates questionnaires for their input on Biofuels development and collected them on behalf of APAWG. **2. LESSONS LEARNT** Finish a task before the deadline It is important to have a task completed before time especially in situations where I cannot control the events. I should always take into account what could go wrong and create room for plan-Bs Dealing with people Characters may differ when working and interacting with different people, I learnt to take people as they are especially my colleagues. Interacting with different people from different parts of the world has always been very exciting to me. Branding BirdLife/The Secretariat

Evelyn ushering in guests during CAP
2012

A large event such as CAP can be very demanding. The organizers require all the support that they can get. As the secretariat, we had so many publications to give away but most delegates felt no need to carry them because of luggage weight at the airport. Networking As much as I knew that this was a very great opportunity to network with various people from different parts of the world, I did not network properly. It was very intimidating at first to meet the delegates, but as time, I became more comfortable. However, I came short of marketing myself as a professional and learnt the need to work on my networking skills. **Developing a deeper understanding of BirdLife** I did not attend as many sessions as I would have liked. This may have been due to the fact that I was intimidated at first and I did not know much about most sessions. I should have made most out of these sessions so that I could gain a deeper understanding of BirdLife. **3. CONCLUSION** Overall, CAP was a great experience for me and I feel more confident to deal with Partners. I can now put a face to the names, which is very important for future interactions. The lessons I learnt from CAP, will help me develop into a better professional, working with BirdLife or any other organizations in the future.

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