

# Policy and advocacy capacity for the BirdLife Africa Partnership boosted

Africa's ability to engage with governments and decision makers to protect sites and species got a boost this week following the training of sixteen Partner staff. The training, organised by BirdLife International, in collaboration with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) took place in Nairobi on 24th-27th June 2012 and was financially supported by the Spanish Agency for International Development (AECID). The participants from fourteen countries were trained, among other things, how to engage in action to protect sites and habitats against damaging development (site casework) and work with government focal points to influence various policies. An intensive advocacy skills session taught the participants how to develop advocacy strategies and talk to decision makers through a role-played face to face advocacy activity. Talking on behalf of the participants, Mr. Moses Nyoni of Birdwatch Zambia (BirdLife in Zambia) said the training was important in building a critical mass of policy advocates who will play a critical role at national level. "The Partners thank the Secretariat for organizing this timely course. We are seeing more and more sites coming under threat and this course has prepared us to confidently engage," he said. "We promise that we will deliver and will pass on these skills," he added. Dr Julius Arinaitwe, BirdLife's Regional Director for Africa said there was growing interest in Africa in terms of investment and resource extraction and there was need for increased policy and advocacy capacity. He said: "This training could not have come at a better time. The only way to make this work is for the trainees to make use of the acquired skills?"



Group work in progress during one of the sessions, photo by BirdLife

BirdLife The course was delivered by Sacha Cleminson (RSPB) Serah Munguti (Nature

Kenya), Melanie Heath (BirdLife Global Secretariat), Ken Mwathe (BirdLife Africa Secretariat), Rob Munroe (BirdLife Global Secretariat) and Carolyn Ah Shene-Verdoorn (BirdLife South Africa). The trainees also benefited from guest speakers from UNEP, Kenya Wildlife Service, Office of the Prime Minister of Kenya and Kenya's Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources. This is the first time policy and advocacy training is being delivered across the partnership and there will be need for more support in future. "This is only the first step. Moving forward, provision of resources that the partners can use for Site Casework and policy will be critical," said Ken Mwathe, Ag Policy and Advocacy Manager at the BirdLife Africa Partnership Secretariat.