

Empowering the Grassroots

Title

In support of its Local Empowerment Programme, BirdLife has published *Empowering the Grassroots*, which examines the work of Important Bird Area Local Conservation Groups around the world. One of the BirdLife Partnership's most distinctive approaches to conservation is to work with local groups, which are currently active at over 2,000 Important Bird Areas – priority sites for bird conservation – worldwide. BirdLife supports the emergence and empowerment of these groups, which reflect the diversity of local cultures and traditions, and are often capable of appropriate and effective conservation responses that externally-managed interventions would be very unlikely to achieve. *Empowering the Grassroots* includes a selection of case studies which reflect the variety and scope of the work being undertaken by local groups, from monitoring and conservation action to poverty reduction and resource management, and from campaigning and policy advocacy to providing marginalised communities with a voice at local and national government level. 'The need to empower local people has never been greater', said David Thomas, BirdLife's Head of Communities and Livelihoods. 'Biodiversity is, by its nature, profoundly local, and exists mainly in specific places. International conventions won't succeed in conserving biodiversity without the support and actions of local people.' BirdLife's structure as a network of grassroots, national and local organisations means that it is uniquely well placed among conservation NGOs to develop and support such local level actions. The relationship between BirdLife's national Partners and the local groups is mutually beneficial. The Partners help local people achieve their objectives and ambitions, and local stakeholders contribute their knowledge and experience to the conservation of globally important sites and species. 'This lively and well-informed set of studies illustrates why working with the grain of local interests makes sense', said Dr Camilla Toulmin, Director of the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), who contributed a foreword to *Empowering the Grassroots*. This work was produced with support from The Aage V. Jensen Charity Foundation. BirdLife's Local Empowerment Programme aims to provide more effective support for local conservation actions, and to strengthen and expand networks of local organisations. [Read the spotlight on Local Empowerment](#) on BirdLife's datazone [Download *Empowering the Grassroots*](#).