

## BirdLife's Local Empowerment Programme



### How BirdLife is empowering communities to protect the places where they live

**Biodiversity loss affects all of us: when species disappear the value of the places where we live is diminished, and the goods and services that the environment provides – like food, shelter, clean water and recreational space – decline.**

Most people's experience of nature is local – their wellbeing and survival depends on the environment in the places where they live and work. Conservation will be more effective if it empowers people at those places to conserve the biodiversity that they value.

These people are also the chief stewards of the world's ecosystems. The vast majority of daily environmental management decisions depend on local knowledge and are determined by local people's use of natural resources.

BirdLife's Local Empowerment Programme supports the individuals and organisations who work with the BirdLife Partnership to deliver conservation, for biodiversity and for people, at the local level.

#### **A healthy environment matters at the local level**

All over the world people have strong connections with their local environment. These linkages are often central to an individual's or community's wellbeing, culture, social identity or survival – for many people, their immediate environment is a source of food, medicine, water, fuel and shelter, or the place they go for recreation and relaxation.

And yet biodiversity is being lost at an alarming rate.

Because the health of our environment plays a vital role in the quality of human life people are often highly motivated to take action to protect the places where they live. Empowering local people and organisations and working in partnership to conserve the places and species that they value is critical to ensuring conservation that is effective, sustainable and fair.

#### **BirdLife is committed to supporting conservation at the grassroots**

The BirdLife Partnership is active in over 140 countries and has identified more than 10,000 sites worldwide that together form a global network of places (Important Bird & Biodiversity Areas) that are priorities for the conservation of the world's birds and other biodiversity.

The Partnership is supporting the emergence and strengthening of networks of committed individuals and organisations who share BirdLife's conservation objectives. These 'Local Conservation Groups' are now working to help achieve conservation at over 2700 IBAs worldwide.

BirdLife Partners are building institutional and individual capacity of these local groups, supporting them with the management, monitoring, protection and sustainable development of 'their' local IBAs. This approach is rooted in local distinctiveness, enabling traditional approaches, knowledge and diversity to shape responses that address local needs and priorities. Networking creates opportunities for collective action, influence and knowledge-sharing.

## BirdLife's Local Empowerment Programme

The aims of the programme are to achieve:

### COVERAGE AND CAPACITY

Local organisations that are active at priority sites for biodiversity, with the capacity to support, influence and monitor the management and sustainable use of natural resources.

### LEARNING AND INFLUENCE

Local organisations that are networked nationally, as well as regionally and internationally, for effective sharing of knowledge and resources and to have a greater impact on decision-makers.

### RIGHTS

Local organisations and individuals that are empowered through the promotion and respect of rights which enable local access to, and responsibility for, environmental resources.

### LOCAL LIVELIHOODS AND WELLBEING

Local organisations that effectively link nature conservation to improvements in people's wellbeing and promote development of sustainable local livelihoods.



By empowering local organisations, BirdLife provides the fundamental institutional basis for grassroots action across all its conservation programmes – saving seabirds, conserving sites, protecting forests, flyways and grasslands, and preventing extinctions.

### Promoting Rights and Responsibility

With secure rights and responsibilities over natural resources, local people can be effective stewards, managing biodiversity both for local economic benefit and to meet national or international conservation objectives.

The Mahavavy-Kinkony Complex in Madagascar is important to local people for fishing, hunting and agriculture and is home to a large number of threatened wildlife species. However, the wetlands' wildlife has been threatened by over-exploitation and habitat loss. Asity Madagascar (BirdLife in Madagascar) has strengthened community associations and helped them to acquire rights to control the management of natural resources, ensuring continued benefits for local people.

### Giving local people a voice

When sites and ecosystem services important to local people are threatened by 'development' many local groups have taken a robust stance, embarking on evidence-based campaigns for a change to the plans of government or the private sector. Being connected to the BirdLife network can help bring local voices to national and even international attention.

Communities at Dakatcha Woodland on the coast of Kenya have opposed proposals to convert 10,000 hectares to grow the biofuel crop jatropha. Dakatcha is a biodiversity hotspot and the communities around the forest depend on it for their livelihoods and cultural practices. Nature Kenya (BirdLife in Kenya) has strengthened local organisations helping to ensure that their voices are heard by decision-makers.

## Your support

Around the world local communities are trying to protect the environment. For many this is a matter of survival – they depend on healthy ecosystems to provide them with clean water, food, fuel, medicines and shelter. Others want to conserve the biodiversity and the health of the planet for future generations, or for the pleasure it brings to them and their families.

You can help. Please donate now to support local action for a greener, fairer, more sustainable world.

For more information visit [www.birdlife.org/local-empowerment](http://www.birdlife.org/local-empowerment) or contact [empowerment@birdlife.org](mailto:empowerment@birdlife.org)

By donating to BirdLife's Local Empowerment Programme you will be supporting community-led action for a world that is richer in biodiversity, fairer, and more sustainable.



### Improving local livelihoods, reducing poverty

Poor people are especially reliant on the environment, and may depend on it for goods and services such as food, fuel, medicine, shelter and fresh water. Sustainable management of natural resources can also help to provide a way out of poverty.

At Natewa Tunuloa, an area of old-growth rainforest in Fiji, poverty levels are high and the pressures on the forest are intense, threatening both biodiversity and traditional livelihoods. BirdLife has supported the indigenous land-owning *mataqalis* (clan) to establish over 6,000 hectares of community protected forest, and income-generating activities have been introduced that are compatible with nature conservation.

### Adapting to climate change

Adaptation responses which directly use biodiversity and ecosystems – ecosystem-based adaptation – will often be the first line of defence against the impacts of climate change for the most vulnerable people.

Protection of the mangrove forests in the upper Bay of Panama has been credited by local communities with reducing the impact of hurricanes. The mangroves act as natural shields by absorbing wave energy, reducing erosion, and protecting fresh water from saline intrusion. They also provide a nursery area for a substantial part of Panama's shrimp and fishing industry as well as one of the best habitats for migratory shorebirds. BirdLife's Partner, the Panama Audubon Society (PAS) is supporting local communities to restore mangroves in the area, as part of an integrated coastal management plan.

### Taking action

People's local environment is important to them – it is the place where they live, work, rest and play. This strong attachment motivates local people to work together to conserve and protect the places near where they live.

BirdLife Australia established local groups which have actively protected the beach-nesting Hooded plover from predation and disturbance by holiday-makers. Endemic to Australia, "Hoodies" are an excellent indicator of healthy beaches, where recreation is balanced with coastal needs. BirdLife Australia recruited local communities and land managers to improve the Plover's breeding success. They worked to set up an integrated initiative which involved coastal residents, land managers and beach-goers in finding, monitoring and protecting nests.





# Together we are BirdLife International

## The global Partnership for **nature** and **people**

BirdLife International is the world's largest nature conservation Partnership. Together we are 121 BirdLife Partners worldwide – one per country or territory – and growing with 13 million members and supporters, more than 7,000 local conservation groups and 7,400 staff.

BirdLife's vision is a world rich in biodiversity, where people and nature live in harmony. We are driven by our belief that local people, working for nature in their own places but connected nationally and internationally through our global Partnership, are the key to sustaining all life on this planet.

This unique local-to-global approach delivers high impact and long-term conservation for the benefit of nature and people.

BirdLife is widely recognised as the authority on the world's birds and the world leader in bird conservation. Rigorous science informed by practical feedback from projects on the ground in important sites and habitats enables us to implement successful conservation programmes for birds and all nature.