



# Building Partnerships

Working together  
for conservation  
and development

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# INTRODUCTION

## Livelihoods and biodiversity conservation – the case for partnerships

The purpose of this publication is to share experiences, and support lesson-learning within the BirdLife International Partnership. Because the lessons learned are of broad relevance to those working on biodiversity conservation and development issues, they are also being offered to a wider audience.

The BirdLife Partnership is a global network of over 100 autonomous national conservation organisations working to conserve birds, biodiversity and the wider environment by working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources.

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment<sup>1</sup> clearly demonstrated the importance of intact, healthy ecosystems for human wellbeing, and many studies before and since its publication have confirmed the importance of the environment and natural resources to the livelihoods of poor people<sup>2</sup>.

BirdLife International shares the view that ecosystems and the services they provide are the foundation of development, and therefore fundamental to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). To this end, the BirdLife Partnership is actively involved in addressing various conservation challenges at Important Bird Areas (IBAs)<sup>3</sup>. These challenges include threats to biodiversity and local livelihoods from habitat destruction, deforestation, encroachment into forests and grasslands, bushfires, agriculture expansion, damage to watersheds, invasive species, poverty, pollution and industrial expansion<sup>4</sup>.

Work at IBAs shows that these conservation challenges are often too complex and dynamic for BirdLife Partners to address alone. Strategies involving the integration of biodiversity conservation with, for example, providing alternative livelihood options to people living in and around IBAs, working at landscape scale, or influencing national policies that affect the environment, require collaboration with institutions that have specialist knowledge and experience. This view is shared by others, and alliances are increasingly being seen as central to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015<sup>5</sup> and to delivering sustainable development.

Throughout BirdLife, Partners are working in formal and informal alliances with other institutions including development-focused non-governmental organisations (NGOs), local and central government departments, universities and training institutes, the business sector and local community organisations<sup>6</sup>. Such alliances have proved to be a powerful tool for delivering conservation, promoting sustainable use of natural resources and improving the livelihoods of local communities living in and around IBAs.

With a focus on cross-sectoral partnerships formed at the project or local level, and based on a review of 16 case studies, this publication:

- Examines the nature and type of relationship BirdLife Partners have formed
- Explores the benefits of partnership to each of the parties
- Identifies some of the difficulties and challenges of working in partnership
- Explores the importance of these cross-sectoral alliances to the effective delivery of biodiversity conservation and livelihood improvement
- Provides key lessons learned from these relationships.

## What is a partnership?

Partnership<sup>7</sup> has been defined simply as “a process in which two or more organisations or groups work together to achieve a common goal and do so in such a way that they achieve more effective outcomes than by working separately”<sup>8</sup>. Ideally partnerships are characterised by organisations working together in a transparent, equitable and mutually beneficial way (see Box 1), whereby partners agree to commit resources, and to share the risks as well as the benefits of working together<sup>9</sup>.

**“The Division of Tourism of the Department of Beni is helping to publicise the San Marcos community ecotourism project and is collaborating with Armonía in securing additional financial support for the initiative”**

Hugo Aranibar, Asociación Armonía (BirdLife in Bolivia)

**Box 1. Key Partnering Principles.** Adapted from *The Partnering Toolbook* (2003) written by Ros Tennyson and produced by The Partnering Initiative in co-operation with the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). <http://www.iblf.org/docs/PartneringToolbook.pdf>

**Transparency** – Openness and honesty in working relationships are preconditions of trust – seen by many as an important ingredient of successful partnership. Only with transparent working will a partnership be truly accountable to its partner donors and others.

**Equitable** – Equity implies an equal right to be heard at the table and validation of those contributions that are not measurable simply in terms of cash value or public profile.

**Mutual Benefit** – If all partners are expected to contribute to the partnership they should also be entitled to benefit from the partnership. A healthy partnership will work towards achieving specific benefits for each partner over and above the common benefits to all partners. Only this way will the partnership ensure the continuing commitment of partners and therefore be sustainable.

Whether partnerships are formed at the level of individuals, or organisations working at local, national or global level, will help to define the purpose, scope, structure, and depth of involvement of each party<sup>10</sup>. Partnerships may have a focus at operational, policy, strategic or/and advocacy levels. Relationships founded on a one-way transfer of money and nothing else are less likely to be described as partnerships except, perhaps, to satisfy a donor. Partnerships can be both formal and informal – some partnerships are set up on a statutory basis, whilst others are set up to deal with specific issues or meet local needs. This report deals with both formal and informal forms of collaboration where partners are working together to promote biodiversity conservation and livelihoods improvement at IBAs.

### Box 2. The BirdLife Partnership

BirdLife International is itself a global Partnership of national, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) from over 100 countries worldwide. The Partners work together to deliver a shared strategy for the conservation of birds, their habitats and global biodiversity, by working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources. The Partners share resources, expertise and information in order to maximise the impact and influence of the network at levels from local to global. This report concerns partnerships external to the BirdLife network, formed mainly at local level (sites) for the purpose of more effectively combining conservation outcomes with benefits to local livelihoods.

# ACHIEVING SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP – LESSONS LEARNED

**“The partnership with national institutions and local stakeholders has ensured national and local ownership of the project and increased awareness of this enigmatic bird within Syria – the Northern Bald Ibis has now become a flagship species for bird conservation in Syria as well as in the region”**

Sharif Al Jbour, BirdLife Middle East,

The case studies presented here comprise part of a growing portfolio of work from which the BirdLife Partnership is drawing lessons and identifying best practices. The main conclusions from these case studies are summarised and discussed below.

## Types of partner organisation

**“Through the collaboration with local government, Burung Indonesia has successfully raised awareness and gained support of local government officials for conservation and sustainable management at Sumba”**

Dian Agista, Burung Indonesia (BirdLife in Indonesia)

BirdLife Partners have formed alliances with a wide diversity of organisations, responding to the specific challenges and objectives at individual sites. Common partners include:

- *Local and central government agencies* (e.g. Rural District Council in Zimbabwe; Forestry Services Division in Ghana; Ministry of Environment in Jordan; Ministry of Public Health in El Salvador; and Police Departments of West and East Sumba in Indonesia);
- *Non-governmental organisations* (NGOs) with a focus on both conservation and development (e.g. Kulika Charitable Trust of Uganda; Organisation of Bolivian Tisanes Indigenous Communities in Bolivia; CARE Myanmar and Hill Ecosystem Conservation Association in Myanmar);
- *Research institutes* (e.g. Food and Research Institute of Ghana; National Museums of Kenya; Glasgow University working in Bolivia);
- *The business sector* (e.g. Richards Bay Minerals in South Africa; Lebanese Adventure in Lebanon).

**“The project has provided an opportunity to establish a long-term relationship with the Forestry Services Division, to help ensure their support beyond the project’s lifetime”**

Ottou Reuben, GWS (BirdLife in Ghana)

## Formality of partnership

A distinction can be made between formal partnerships, often involving a signed agreement, and informal partnerships in which organisations work together collaboratively without any formal, written accord. A signed agreement (e.g. a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), Agreement (MoA) or Cooperation (MoC)) usually spells out what is required of each partner and clarifies expectations, thus making the management and review of the relationship easier. BirdLife Partners have forged both formal and informal alliances to ensure effective conservation of biodiversity and livelihood improvement at IBAs.

**FORMAL PARTNERSHIPS** Many BirdLife Partners have signed MoUs to formalise a partnership (see table below). These range from a general agreement to cooperate, to more comprehensive documents on mutual staff commitment, sharing of resources, commitment to communicate, combining of complementary skills, and the cooperative management and implementation of projects.

| Project  | BirdLife Partner                     | MoU signed with...                                 |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| Echuya Forest Reserve Project in Uganda                                    | NatureUganda                         | National Forestry Authority (NFA) of Uganda        |
| Gola Forest Project in Sierra Leone  | Conservation Society of Sierra Leone | Forestry Division                                  |
| Northern Bald Ibis Project in Syria  | BirdLife Middle East office          | Syrian Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform |
| Community-based IBA conservation and livelihood enhancement in the Eastern | BirdLife Zimbabwe                    | Nyanga Rural District Council                      |

**INFORMAL AGREEMENTS** Informal agreements may involve nothing more than verbal agreements or an exchange of letters to signify a commitment to work together towards a mutual goal and/or an intent to collaborate. They are relatively easy to develop and set the stage for possible closer collaboration in the future. In Zimbabwe, for example, BLZ has such an agreement with government agencies like ARES (the Department of Agricultural Research and Extension Services) and the Environmental Management Agency (EMA). These organisations have formed a strong working partnership, expressed through joint community meetings, joint planning meetings (for officers) and joint meetings for sharing progress updates.

Although they have brought benefits, most BirdLife Partners engaged in informal alliances believe more could have been achieved if an agreement such as an MoU had been signed. In Myanmar, for example, where an informal partnership was formed between Biodiversity and Nature Conservation in Myanmar (BANCA) and UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) and CARE International, BANCA staff believe that a formal agreement would have ensured greater commitment to the process from top management staff of the partner organisations.

**“The relationship is not yet recognised by CARE and UNDP at national level, and is treated as a short-term expedient when we would like to forge a longer-term relationship”**

U Uga, BANCA

Some BirdLife Partners have intentionally chosen not to seek more formal collaboration agreements. *SalvaNATURA* (BirdLife in El Salvador) chose not to seek a formal relationship because of the delays in project implementation likely to be caused by the associated bureaucratic process. They also saw the process as risky – if, at the end of the negotiations, partnership and long-term commitment is not accepted by the other organisation then this may adversely affect any (ongoing) informal collaboration that might be taking place with individual staff members, and where it concerns a governmental organisation it may affect *SalvaNATURA*'s mandate to work on a particular issue or in a specific area.

## Benefits of working in partnership

**“The partnership at San Rafael brought together NGOs with different strengths – management, research, legal, production, private land stewardship”**

Alberto Yanosky, Guyra Paraguay

**COMBINING COMPLEMENTARY SKILLS** The most common benefit from forming alliances is the combining of complementary skills. For example, BANCA (BirdLife in Myanmar) formed an alliance with a development NGO (CARE in Myanmar) and development agency (UNDP). BANCA recognised that CARE and UNDP were better placed and qualified to spearhead the livelihood/food security components of the project since they had relevant expertise and experience and were already working at Natmataung National Park. Although informal, the alliance has been successfully linking development with conservation, with BANCA bringing conservation expertise. As BANCA lacked capacity and experience in rural development, the partnership was necessary to implement the overall project strategy.

In Zimbabwe a partnership has helped BirdLife Zimbabwe staff and government agriculture and environmental management departments to share experiences and learn from each other. Officers from the Agricultural Research and Extension Services provided invaluable baseline information on poverty and the environment to BirdLife as well as training and capacity building to IBA Local Conservation Groups (LCGs)<sup>11</sup>. In return, BirdLife Zimbabwe, through project resources and the technical expertise of its staff, has enabled these agencies to fulfil their mandate on sustainable natural resource utilisation, environmental awareness and enforcement of environmental laws.

**“The effective use of radio broadcasts is a challenge, requiring special experience of the processes of engaging and holding on to an audience, and gaining feedback to improve impact. BirdLife could not have used this tool without specialist help from Dodwell Trust – Mitondrasoa”**

Mamonjy Razafindakoto, BirdLife International Madagascar Programme

**LOCAL KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE** The experience of national BirdLife Partners shows the importance of working with and through local NGOs. They have their “ear to the ground” on local and national issues and politics, have established local networks, and have learned many locally-specific lessons from their own experience. At Echuya in Uganda, for example, *NatureUganda* is working closely with institutions that have a history of working with the Batwa (for example, the United Organisation for Batwa Development in Uganda (UOBDU), and African International Christian Ministry). Knowledge and experience from previous projects has played an important role in defining conservation and development strategies.

**“Close collaboration with UOBDU has ensured that the interests of marginalised Batwa communities are supported from diverse sources”**

Ambrose Mugisha, *NatureUganda* (BirdLife in Uganda)

**LOCAL ACCEPTANCE AND STRENGTHENING LEGITIMACY** Local institutions, NGOs and community groups have often already earned a community’s trust, providing an entry point when starting to work in a new area – which is especially helpful when local people are (perhaps justifiably) suspicious of outsiders. BirdLife Zimbabwe’s partnership with ARES, a credible local institution that has a track record of being an effective extension agency at community level, meant that BLZ was quickly accepted. The institution is represented at community/ward level by two officers who interact regularly with project beneficiaries and are therefore aware of the community’s social dynamics and micro-politics.

**“ARES had a good knowledge of institutional arrangements within the communities, and their experience in dealing with farmers on a day-to-day basis has helped with community mobilisation”**

Chip Chirara, BirdLife Zimbabwe

**CAPACITY BUILDING** BirdLife Partners have formed alliances with other organisations to build capacity of project beneficiaries as well as their own staff. For example, in El Salvador, SIBASI (Basic System for Integrated Health) provided training to two of *SalvaNATURA*’s environmental health promoters, and built capacity to operate the water purification and treatment plant within the San Miguelito water committee. Other alliances have built capacity in areas such as conservation, business management, marketing, and the drafting of by-laws.

**MEETING LEGAL REQUIREMENTS** In some countries NGOs need local government permission to work in an area, and it may be a legal requirement for the BirdLife Partner (or any other NGO) to work in partnership with government agencies at a local level. For example in Syria the BirdLife Middle East Secretariat has partnered with the Syrian Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform (MAAR) in jointly implementing the conservation programme of the charismatic globally threatened species, Northern Bald Ibis. Another example of a statutory partnership comes from the Nyanga Highlands IBA in Eastern Zimbabwe where BirdLife Zimbabwe (BLZ) has partnered with the local government (Nyanga Rural District Council) and an MoU gives BLZ permission to work with the Sanyatwe community. Although required by law, these alliances with government still bring mutual benefit and deliver effective outcomes.



One particular benefit is in garnering support from politicians and officials, especially where governments are suspicious of NGO motives. There is no doubt that BLZ's alliance with the Nyanga RDC helped to build trust and allay any fears, as well as meet legal requirements. Partnerships with government have also helped to support the two-way flow of information between the State and civil society.

**PARTNERSHIP WITH BUSINESS: RESOURCES, REPUTATION AND INFLUENCE** Activities such as mining and oil extraction often have negative impacts on both people and the environment, which frequently leads to poor relations between the corporations and communities affected, and a bad reputation more widely. Innovative partnerships between conservation NGOs and the business sector are attempting to address some of the social, environmental and economic consequences of mineral extraction on local communities. In South Africa, the partnership between BirdLife South Africa (BLSA), Richards Bay Minerals (RBM) and BirdLife Zululand provided BLSA with funds to promote initiatives such as "bird-based ecotourism" or avitourism, aimed at generating income for local communities and providing incentives for bird conservation. The partnership enabled RBM to redress some of the negative environmental impacts of its activities, improve its reputation on biodiversity issues, raise awareness of its operations and mitigation measures among local people, and increase the knowledge and skills of RBM employees through their involvement in recording bird populations around RBM sites. More widely, it helped them to fulfill part of their social responsibility to the South African public. However, it is important that overall reputational risk to the NGO, including being caught up in corporate "greenwash" are properly weighed up before engaging with any business and industry that has a "dirty" image locally, nationally or internationally.

**INCREASING SCALE OF INFLUENCE** Partnerships have increased the platform of engagement and influence from the local/site level to regional or national scales. An example of this comes from the Philippines where the Haribon Foundation (BirdLife in the Philippines) teamed up with several Local Government Units (LGUs) and local NGOs to influence national policy reform.

**"Our partnership (with Sablayan Local Government Unit) has led to a variety of direct benefits, including assistance in strengthening the Community-Based Forest Management Association"**

Noel A. Resurreccion, Haribon

## Challenges of working in partnership

**"Some partners wanted to be involved in the strategic decisions while others sought to be involved in day-to-day operations. In response, RSCN developed multiple cooperation mechanisms which satisfied the need of all partners"**

Yehya Khaled, RSCN, BirdLife in Jordan.

Working in partnership also brings challenges. These include upholding non-legally binding agreements; increased demand on resources; differences in priorities; and unexpected changes in personnel.

**FAILURE TO HONOUR AGREEMENTS** Most partnerships are built on trust, and take the form of informal, non-legally binding agreements (MoUs). This can create difficulties where parties fail to keep their side of the bargain. For example, in Uganda an MoU to establish a mushroom farming enterprise was signed between *NatureUganda* and Kisoro District local government. This included agreement on sharing responsibility for establishing facilities and purchasing equipment. The local government agreed to establish a mushroom seed production laboratory, but failed to do so, thus compromising the project and the investments already made by *NatureUganda*.

**INCREASED DEMAND ON RESOURCES** Partnerships can lead to heightened expectations and increased demands on resources. For example, BirdLife Zimbabwe had to meet requests for transport from the Environmental Management Agency (a partner of BirdLife at Nyanga IBA), the Parks and Wildlife Management Authority and the NRDC Natural Resources Officer. This stretched its resources very thin and restricted movement of its own staff.

**DIFFERENCES IN PRIORITIES** Partners often have different priorities and this can be a challenge to effective partnership. For example in Myanmar, BANCA struggled to carry out joint visits to the villages with UNDP and CARE staff because these larger institutions tended to dominate discussions with communities, focusing on development matters, to the exclusion of environmental issues. This situation was not helped by a tight field schedule which gave little time for a broader-ranging discussion.

**UNEXPECTED CHANGES IN PERSONNEL** Many alliances are built on strong relationships between individuals. When staff leave, the institutional relationships can be threatened. In Zimbabwe for example, the NRDC replaced three natural resources officers, disturbing the established project as relationships between individuals in the institutions were re-built.

## Role of partnerships in the effective linking of biodiversity conservation and development

**“Our Partnership with the staff of the Public Health Ministry in initiatives aimed at improving the health of local communities has helped to build *SalvaNATURA*’s relationship with these people as well as mobilising people to support biodiversity conservation”**

Oliver Komar, *SalvaNATURA* (BirdLife in El Salvador)

One of the key benefits from alliances is in bringing together complementary and often unique sets of skills and resources. Many of the examples in this publication demonstrate how BirdLife Partners have built relations with development institutions of one kind or another. Sometimes there is no direct or immediate link between the development activities and conservation, but what Partners have done is to use their wider regional and national connections, and the institutional capacity that they have built at community level, to bring in agencies able to address local development priorities. However, more often the partnership brings in development expertise related directly to local environmental problems (Box 3).

### Box 3. Development benefits from alliances

- In Uganda at Echuya Forest Reserve, biodiversity conservation was integrated with other cross-cutting issues like health. To this end, NatureUganda worked in collaboration with Kigezi Health Care Foundation (KIHEFO) to try and integrate HIV/AIDS issues by offering beneficiary communities voluntary HIV testing and counselling. As a result, farmers in Kashasha, Kacerere and Karengyere have received the above services and KIHEFO is coordinating the provision of antiretroviral drugs to infected patients in the project area.
- In Myanmar, BANCA’s alliance with UNDP and CARE Myanmar helped 16 villages to get help in starting permanent cultivation and other income-generating activities. Lack of capacity and experience of livelihoods and food security issues at BANCA meant that it could not have provided such inputs on its own.
- In El Salvador, the partnership formed between *SalvaNATURA* and staff of SIBASI (Basic System for Integrated Health) provided training to two of *SalvaNATURA*’s environmental health promoters, and enabled the provision of training in the operation of a basic water treatment system.
- The Ghana Wildlife Society (GWS) worked in partnership with the Ghana National Fire Service (GNFS) to control bushfires. The alliance has yielded some very positive impacts for conservation and poverty reduction. For example, the control of bush fires in the Afadjato Agumatsa Community Nature Reserve (CNR) and its buffer areas has resulted in an increase in the harvest of *Thaumatococcus daniellii* (a natural sweetener) from 1,160 kg in 2003 to 3,200 in 2006, worth about \$1,200 which went directly to the local people as income. It has also been reported that control of bush fires in the buffer areas has resulted in a reduction in damage to food and cash crops.
- In Lebanon, the Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL) is working in partnership with a private ecotourism company, Lebanese Adventure. The relationship allows SPNL to connect local communities at IBAs with a commercial company whereby communities have been able to benefit from their experience, professional skills and knowledge, and existing client base. This has brought benefits to people at Hima Kfar Zabad IBA, through training and employment as tour guides, and the development and sale of local produce.



*Lebanese Adventure has organised treks for students in the area, led by local guides. (SPNL)*

**“Our partnership recognises a shared concern for nature conservation, and Lebanese Adventure’s experience in ecotourism and capacity to develop this as a profitable, commercial enterprise”**

*Bassima Khatib, Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon*

## **Ingredients of a successful partnership – BirdLife’s experience**

Based on BirdLife’s experience documented in these case studies, some ingredients contributing to successful partnerships can be identified. Building on these lessons will help BirdLife Partners to forge more effective partnerships with a diversity of organisations.

Most BirdLife Partners noted that it is critical for all collaborators to deliver and not to make promises that cannot be delivered. Being transparent, open to criticism, and owning up to mistakes, are also key issues.

Clear and open communication is vital. Time must be taken to ensure that all parties understand the contents of agreements. Developing a vision of the purpose of the partnership is important, since this will mean reaching consensus on a partner’s contributions and on a timetable for delivery will be easier. Keeping agreements simple was also seen as key to successful collaboration. The more complex an agreement is and the more “control” measures there are – implying a lack of trust – the weaker the partnership.

The involvement of senior staff and directors is an important ingredient of a successful partnership. For example, in Ghana the Volta Regional manager of the Forest Service Division (FSD) serves on the project management committee, which is the highest decision-making body for the Afadjato Project. As a result, FSD, and its staff, are expected to continue their active collaboration. It is also important to ensure that the partnership is not in conflict with another area of the Partner’s work, for example policy advocacy, where the partner may for example also be actively protesting against a government organisation’s activities; or fundraising, where they may be in delicate negotiations over wider support.

Partnerships should be actively managed throughout the life of the project. This includes maintaining frequent communication with collaborators, and formally or informally checking with one another to evaluate whether all parties are satisfied with the relationship.

These and other lessons learned by the BirdLife Partners implementing the case study projects are summarised in Box 4.

#### Box 4. Lessons learned about working in partnership

##### Operational aspects/ implementation

##### Planning and set-up

- Involving potential partners at the project planning stage and keeping them informed about progress helps to enhance trust and sustain their support for project activities.
- Partners should work together from the onset of the collaboration to create one unified vision.
- Alliances succeed where collaborators have varied and complementary strengths.
- It is important to have good information about potential partners. This will help in outlining their specific roles, expectations and possible benefits. Try to ensure that everyone is as clear and open as possible about any vested interests and priorities up front.
- Formal recognition of partnerships at high level may be needed to provide recognition and approval of local-level working relationships.
- Where significant financial resources are involved, the manner in which the resources are used should be agreed and communicated clearly well in advance.
- Care must be taken to avoid creating unrealistic expectations.
- Organisations need to reach out and enlist all known key stakeholders. Even if they seem not to be available or willing to participate in the project at first, it is important to persist to bring them on board as partners.
- Projects can benefit from alliances involving local government and the private sector.
- Development of partnerships should be based on the work at hand and not on politics.
- In some cases collaboration requires the adaptation or modification of the project to meet the needs of all partners. These expectations need to be clear from the outset.

##### Development and management

- It takes time to develop strong partnerships, particularly when there is a background of conflict and mistrust.
- Having functional collaboration requires patience and consistent follow-up as different project partners have different priorities.
- Local partners may be focused on political time horizons, short-term needs or their immediate relationships and influence. Strategic planning and adopting a long-term conservation strategy may not be a high priority, and introducing these ideas, as a basis for future collaboration, may take time.
- Working in collaboration requires a great deal of communication, both informal and formal. This may be perceived by technical staff as a distraction, but it is an important part of a successful relationship.
- Collaboration (especially with government) requires flexibility and may necessitate combining formal regulatory procedures with less formal processes.
- There has to be a leader – at least a lead contact – for each partner.
- Partnerships must be two-way, with both partners investing in the project in some manner, in order to avoid creating a situation where partners expect only to receive benefits from the project/relationship. Especially dangerous is creating a situation where the only interest such organisations have in forming a “partnership” is the hope of financial gain or “greenwash”.
- It is important to analyse the capacity of the project to meet the needs of all parties involved. Frequently partners have different goals and agendas, and care must be taken to avoid partners who will try to change the orientation of the project without the agreement of the other partners. The role of each partner must be clearly established.
- It is critical to deliver what is promised, and not to make promises that cannot be kept.
- Alliances should not be terminated if partners appear inactive for some time – inactivity may be due to external pressures.

**“The most significant problem with these partnerships was personnel turnover, which caused delays in implementation and breaks in communication. Frequent visits to the National Environment Authority’s regional agency in Chepo and coordination with their personnel at all levels helped to minimise this problem”**

Lloyd Sanchez, PAS (BirdLife in Panama).

## Box 4, cont'd. Lessons learned about working in partnership

### Managing relationships

- It is important to be transparent, open to criticism, and ready to admit mistakes.
- Communication between partners must be open and clear.
- Developing personal relationships with key people in the partner organisations helps facilitate the partnership process and can reduce unnecessary bureaucracy.
- It is important to avoid giving the impression that government agencies are “free resources” (even if you obtain their services free of charge). Their contributions toward project activities should be acknowledged and valued in the same way as with any other partner.
- Exchanging experiences and lessons between key partners is key to success.
- It takes time to build strong alliances – in most case alliances get stronger as time goes by.
- It is important to acknowledge and value those that make the tea – especially in voluntary partnerships – as well as those that bring specific expertise or financial resources.

### Agreements

- Keep partnership agreements simple. The more complex an agreement is and the more “control” measures there are (implying suspicion), the weaker the partnership and the deeper the mistrust.
- Partnerships are most effective and competition is avoided when roles are clear, there is a common agenda, and organisations complement each other’s efforts.
- MoUs should be carefully assessed before signing, so as to ascertain whether both parties are able to meet their obligations.
- Informal agreements can be as good as formal agreements (such as an MoU), provided good relations are established through effective communication between collaborators. A work plan may be an effective tool to make clear the roles and responsibilities of different institutions.

## Benefits

### Trust and relationships

- Partnering with institutions already known and trusted by local community partners leads to quick acceptance by them.
- The political support of local and regional indigenous organisations is important not only because their permission is required in order to work in the communities, but also because it can help create alliances with other organisations, and lead to acceptance of the project by the communities.
- Working alone can alienate the many other interested organisations and stakeholders, and lead to project failure.

### Efficiency, integration and impact

- Partnership helps to achieve impact in the most cost-effective way.
- Collaboration with different partners provides complementary professional knowledge and experiences.
- Partnerships help to minimise duplication of roles and repetition of mistakes by different agencies involved in one area.
- Partnership between environmental and development NGOs can help to ensure that pressing human needs are met in an environmentally sustainable manner, and vice versa.
- Collaboration with private sector partners provides professional skills, knowledge and experience, and market access not otherwise available to non-profit NGOs.
- Partnership between conservation NGOs and private sector tour companies provides support for advocacy messages targeted at relevant government departments (e.g. the Ministry of Tourism).

**“All Partners have worked hard to achieve trust at each level – local, national and international. This has been accomplished through regular meetings with all stakeholders, through transparency, and through joint management”**

D.D. Siffa, CSSL (BirdLife in Sierra Leone)

#### Box 4, cont'd. Lessons learned about working in partnership

- Partnerships between businesses and conservation NGOs can bring gains for biodiversity while achieving corporate goals. Furthermore, successful strategic partnerships that deliver on a range of environmental and social objectives can facilitate longer-term institutional value exchange, where businesses and NGOs can become effective stewards of both biodiversity and sustainable community development. However, innovation and commitment is needed to ensure that the relationship goes beyond that of donor and recipient.
- Partnership with government helps to ensure that activities are well aligned with government policy and so can be easily supported and complemented by government staff at the local level.

#### Communication, information and awareness

- Indigenous knowledge and experience from local communities is important in determining community priorities.
- Collaboration leads to improved communication (between community and partners).
- Partnerships and linkages are vital communication tools – they create venues for sharing lessons and experiences and help gain support for project implementation.
- Organisations working together and delivering a common message can increase their impact.
- Working with government can provide added value as a showcase of government commitment to mobilisation of resources for conservation of the country's natural heritage.

#### Credibility

- Partnerships can help improve an NGO's credibility and reputation as a result of recognition and positive feedback from the community and partners, especially when working with an organisation that is already well known and respected locally.
- Working with a reputable and experienced ecotourism company, for example, can increase the credibility of conservation-focused NGOs which offer this or other viable livelihood options as a tool for integrating conservation with development.
- Cross-sectoral partnership can help to increase the credibility of conservation organisations and help win support from local communities with diverse interests and priorities for site conservation.

#### Access

- Building strong constituencies and linkages with local service institutions is essential in order to be able to access support services (in any form) in remote rural areas.

#### Learning

- Partnership exposes organisations to new approaches and so widens their outlook on problem-solving.

#### Sustainability

- Partnerships have the potential to last beyond the lifetime of individual projects – and therein lies a significant value.

#### Issues/ problems

- Changes in personnel, especially in government institutions, can adversely affect partnerships, as trust and relationships have to be rebuilt.
- Alliances with local and regional governments are dynamic. Difficulties can arise when a change of government or leadership results in a change of vision or change of priorities and previously existing agreements are not respected.
- Collaboration requires people's commitment – the lack of personnel, and their capacity, can be a major constraint to a balanced relationship.
- In the case of both indigenous organisations and government agencies, there can be difficulties when the people in power are more interested in their own personal gain (political or economic) than in the objectives of the project.
- Despite their influence in some quarters, government partners are often less efficient in mobilising external support and publicising success than NGOs.
- There are risks associated with working with corporates, especially where their power, political influence and resources are much greater than other partners.

## CASE STUDIES

The BirdLife Important Bird Area (IBA) programme applies a set of internationally agreed criteria to identify sites of global importance for bird and biodiversity conservation. To date, more than 10,000 IBAs have been identified, and it is expected that the final total will exceed 14,000 (IBA surveys in the Pacific, Central Asia, parts of the Americas, and marine areas are still to be completed). To support conservation of these sites, many BirdLife Partners are engaged in activities which link conservation to local livelihoods, and the products and services which the sites provide to local people. To deliver these objectives, most BirdLife Partners have engaged in some form of collaboration with organisations that have complementary skills and experience. Most of the relationships that BirdLife Partners have formed with other organisations are aimed at supporting community organisations at IBAs (Important Bird Area Local Conservation Groups – IBA LCGs) to manage and utilise natural resources sustainably for the betterment of people's lives, as well as to maintain biodiversity, the basis of their livelihoods. The case studies presented here are examples of some of these initiatives. The accounts focus on local-level partnerships that have been formed to help deliver combined conservation and development objectives.

**Figure 1. The location of the case studies**





## Fighting fires in the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe

At Sanyatwe, part of the Nyanga Mountains IBA in eastern Zimbabwe, partnerships forged between **BirdLife Zimbabwe** and government agencies have contributed to a significant reduction in the number of veld fires and have helped to protect a watershed for major rivers in the area.

The Nyanga Mountains IBA is characterised by undulating grasslands, perennial streams and rivers and patchy miombo woodlands in the headwaters of the Odzi River. Resources in the IBA are central to the livelihoods of communities in the area – poor people hunt wild animals, and harvest thatch grass and firewood from the IBA for domestic use. The IBA is also a source of stream water for domestic consumption. Small vegetable gardens, which are a major income-earning activity, are sited along the rivers. However, all these livelihood activities were under threat from persistent fire outbreaks and over-exploitation of natural resources in the IBA.

In order to tackle these problems, BirdLife Zimbabwe (BLZ) forged partnerships with various government agencies including the **Department of Agricultural Research and Extension Services (AREX)**, the **Environmental Management Agency (EMA)**, the **Forestry Commission** and local government (**Nyanga Rural District Council [NRDC]**) as well as with local communities in the area.

In accordance with local government regulations, BLZ and NRDC signed a Memorandum of Understanding before the project began. As well as committing BLZ to implement the project, the MoU assigns BLZ wider responsibilities (and influence), including participation in other environmental activities organised by the Council or the Environment Committee, and undertaking Blue Swallow surveys in other parts of the district. BLZ was also co-opted into the Nyanga Rural District Council's Environment, Agriculture and Tourism Committee (NDCEATC) and was tasked by the committee to spearhead fire management awareness campaigns in the Sanyatwe Communal Lands and to protect the grasslands, watershed and habitats for Blue Swallows. This has helped to enhance BirdLife Zimbabwe's status as an environmental NGO and has afforded it an opportunity to engage with a wider network of NGOs in the district.


For BirdLife Zimbabwe, collaborating with the Nyanga Rural District Council helped to eliminate the potential for political conflict and suspicion associated with NGO operations in Zimbabwe. The fire-fighting teams that were formed have successfully mobilised the villagers to control fires during the dry season. The agriculture, environment and tourism committee meetings organised by Nyanga Rural District have been a good platform for BirdLife Zimbabwe to disseminate its conservation agenda and also for the project officer to interact with other natural resource conservation practitioners.

AREX is a highly credible and locally accepted institution, represented at community level by two officers who interact regularly with project beneficiaries and are therefore conversant with the community's social dynamics and micro-politics. AREX extension officers have participated in all community meetings held since project inception and their up-to-date data holdings on crop production have provided a valuable baseline against which to assess project impact. They had a good knowledge of institutional arrangements within the communities, and their experience in dealing with farmers on a day-to-day basis has helped with community mobilisation. As the project progressed, AREX officers took a leading role in working with farmers. AREX has benefited as the collaboration has helped them to fulfil their own mandate more effectively.

IBA name (and number): Nyanga Mountains (ZW001)  
BirdLife Partner: BirdLife Zimbabwe  
Partner or project website: [www.birdlifezimbabwe.co.zw](http://www.birdlifezimbabwe.co.zw)

*Contributors: Chip Chirara and Osiman Mabhachi*



A young man in a red jacket is smiling and reaching for a fruit on a tree in an orchard. The background shows a hazy landscape with hills and greenery.

*Orchard farming is one of the many livelihood options for Sanyatwe communities. It diversifies livelihoods, supplements nutrition, and helps take pressure off the grasslands.*

(BIRDLIFE ZIMBABWE)

### **Key lessons learned:**

- Partnering with institutions already known and trusted by local community partners leads to quick acceptance by them.
- Partnerships help to minimise duplication of roles and repetition of mistakes by different agencies involved in one area.
- Partnerships are most effective and competition is avoided when roles are clear, there is a common agenda, and organisations complement each other's efforts.
- Collaboration leads to improved communication (between community and partners).
- Partnerships can help improve an NGO's credibility and reputation as a result of recognition and positive feedback from the community and partners, especially when working with an organisation that is already well known and respected locally.
- Organisations working together and delivering a common message can increase their impact – the Sanyatwe community is now inspired to act as a result of getting a consistent message about natural resources management from different people and from different organisations.

## Conserving forests of local and global biodiversity importance in Sierra Leone

Gola Forest Reserve is the largest area of Upper Guinea rainforest in Sierra Leone. Upper Guinea forest once spanned five West African countries, but clearance for agriculture, charcoal, mining and timber has left less than 30% of the original forest remaining. The bush meat trade and civil war in Sierra Leone have posed more recent threats to wildlife. With more than 270 bird species, including 14 that are globally threatened, the Gola rainforest is one of Africa's highest priorities for conservation.

The Gola Forest Conservation Concession Programme (GFCCP) is a partnership, formalised through an MoU, between the **Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL)**, the **Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL – BirdLife in Sierra Leone)**, the **Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB – BirdLife in UK)** and the seven Chiefdoms bordering the Gola Forest Reserves in eastern Sierra Leone. The objective of this programme is to secure the Gola Forest Reserves for biodiversity conservation and community development as a new model of sustainable natural resources management in perpetuity in Sierra Leone. As a result of an agreement signed in 2007, the Gola Forest will become the flagship site in a new national park network with local communities paid annually to replace royalties linked to logging and diamond mining in the forest.

A strength of the partnership has been its operation at a number of levels – involving partners and activities at local, national and international levels. CSSL, through its well-connected executive committee, has been able to lobby senior government officials to support the Gola Forest Programme. Internationally the partners have worked together to present the Gola Forest Programme at various international forums, including at the Council of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The **Forestry Division (FD)** is a critical stakeholder and decision-maker at the site, and the alliance has given the FD the confidence to support the programme for over 15 years, and to remain committed to establish Gola as a national park despite pressure from logging companies. Building partnerships with communities has also been critical to the FD's support for the programme.

Building trust at all levels has been a significant challenge, and is something all partners have worked hard to achieve. This has been accomplished through regular meetings with all stakeholders, through transparency, and through joint management, with trust being built along the way.

IBA name (and number): **Gola Forest Reserve (SL010)**  
BirdLife Partner: **Conservation Society of Sierra Leone**

Contributors: *D.D. Saffa and Alex Hipkiss*



*The Gola Forest Programme owes its success to a strong partnership between local and international NGOs, government and local communities. ALEX HIPKISS/RSPB*

### Key lessons learned:

- It takes time to develop strong partnerships, particularly when there is a background of conflict and mistrust.
- It is critical to deliver what is promised and not to make promises that cannot be kept.
- It is important to be transparent, open to criticism, and to admit mistakes.
- Communication between partners must be open and clear.
- Keep partnership agreements simple. The more complex an agreement is and the more "control" measures there are (implying suspicion), the weaker the partnership and the deeper the mistrust.



## Cross-sectoral alliances at Echuya Forest Reserve, South-western Uganda

NATUREUGANDA

Echuya Central Forest Reserve IBA in southwest Uganda is vital to the livelihoods of the Batwa “pygmies” in the area, who for generations have depended on it for food, medicine, firewood, timber and bamboo for roofing, and making crafts for subsistence and commercial use. However, their use is no longer sustainable, and current exploitation levels threaten people’s livelihoods and the biodiversity of the forest. The reserve is one of 30 Important Bird Areas in Uganda. Over 100 bird species have been recorded, including the threatened Grauer’s Swamp-warbler *Bradypterus graueri*, and the forest is home to 43 of the 87 restricted range species of the Afrotropical Highlands biome.

Poverty levels among communities surrounding the forest are high, and the problems threatening the forest are multifaceted, requiring social, economic, political, cultural and environmental solutions. To address these *NatureUganda* (NU, BirdLife in Uganda) has formed a variety of partnerships to support sustainable development. The most important of these are described below.

- **National Forestry Authority (NFA).** The NFA is a government body responsibility for managing Central Forest Reserves including Echuya Central Forest Reserve. An MoU between the NFA and *NatureUganda* was signed in 2002 and provides a formal framework for collaboration between the two institutions on matters of forest biodiversity conservation and management. With NU support, four Collaborative Forest Management (CFM) agreements have been signed between the local communities and the NFA. *NatureUganda*’s close collaboration with the NFA will guarantee implementation of these CFM agreements for the benefit mainly of the local community and biodiversity. NFA staff are benefiting from training in natural resources management techniques including monitoring of bamboo off-take in support of sustainable bamboo use.
- Government and District departments through the **Area Agriculture Modernisation Programme (AAMP)**, and **National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS)**. Over 100 households around Echuya have received farm inputs support from the government’s AAMP and NAADS programme and registered farmers’ groups are also benefiting from the government’s “Prosperity For All” programme. Extension services staff from the District are working closely with the project, a strategy that will help to ensure sustainability of the project interventions.
- **United Organisation for Batwa Development in Uganda (UOBDU)** has helped to identify capacity development needs for marginalised Batwa communities and participated in organising and training the Batwa community in Income Generating Activities (IGAs) such as passion fruit growing, beekeeping and cultural eco-tourism. Close collaboration with UOBDU has ensured that the interests of marginalised Batwa communities are supported from diverse sources.
- The **International Gorilla Conservation Programme (IGCP)** has worked closely with NU to develop a comprehensive eco-tourism programme around Echuya Forest Reserve that will enhance benefits to local communities.
- The **Institute of Tropical Forest Conservation (ITFC)**, the Forest Adjacent Communities (FACs) and the **Kulika Charitable Trust of Uganda**. Strong partnerships have been formed for training farmers’ groups around Echuya Forest Reserve in sustainable organic agriculture.
- **Kigezi Health Care Foundation (KIHEFO).** NU worked with KIHEFO in order to integrate cross-cutting issues like health in project activities. Communities have been encouraged to participate in voluntary HIV testing and counselling and KIHEFO is now coordinating the provision of antiretrovirals to infected patients in the project area.

### Key lessons learned:

- Having functional collaboration requires patience and consistent follow-up as different project partners have different priorities.
- Indigenous knowledge and experience from local communities is important in determining community priorities.
- MoUs should be carefully assessed before signing so as to ascertain whether both parties are able to meet their obligations.

IBA name (and number): Echuya Forest Reserve (UG002)  
BirdLife Partner: *NatureUganda*  
Partner or project website: [www.natureuganda.org](http://www.natureuganda.org)

Contributors:  
Ambrose Mugisha  
and Chris Magin



## Forest resources and alternative incomes at Afadjato-Agumatsa Community Nature Reserve in Ghana

GWS

The Mount Afadjato-Agumatsa Range forest comprises a mixture of semi-deciduous forest and savanna habitats and includes Mount Afadjato (885 m), the highest peak in Ghana. The people living around the forest are generally poor farmers, with annual household incomes of about \$400. Over 70% of communities living around the Afadjato-Agumatsa Community Nature Reserve consider the reserve vital to their livelihoods. However, their heavy dependence on the forest's natural resources for their livelihoods – for subsistence, incomes, firewood, water and other non-timber forest products including bush meat – poses a threat not only to their own futures, but also that of the site's biodiversity. The traditional slash-and-burn method of agriculture practised in the reserve's buffer zone often results in bush fires that spread into the reserve, devouring forest resources essential to people's livelihoods.

The **Ghana Wildlife Society (GWS–BirdLife in Ghana)** is implementing the Afadjato-Agumatsa Conservation and Livelihoods project, which aims to strengthen local capacity for effective protection of the IBA and sustainable use of its resources. The project has sought to promote income-generating activities such as beekeeping and grass-cutter (*Cane Rat *Thryonomys swinderianus**) farming, since these have the potential to reduce wildfires associated with the collection of honey and bush meat from the wild.

The main partner in the project has been the **Forest Services Division (FSD)** of the Forestry Commission, the government agency with a statutory mandate to protect forest resources in the country. The project has provided an opportunity to establish a long-term relationship with FSD, to help ensure their support beyond the project's lifetime. FSD have provided technical, capacity-building and material support to the project. For example:

- The **Volta Regional Office**, through its Forest Resources Management Project (FORUM) has supplied tree seedlings for agroforestry interventions in the buffer zone free of charge.
- Two project officers have benefited from training in project management and evaluation, organised by FSD.
- Important Bird Area Local Conservation Group (IBA LCG) members have benefited from other training programmes organised by FSD, which include community-based small-scale enterprise development and management, leadership skills, and participation at the community level.

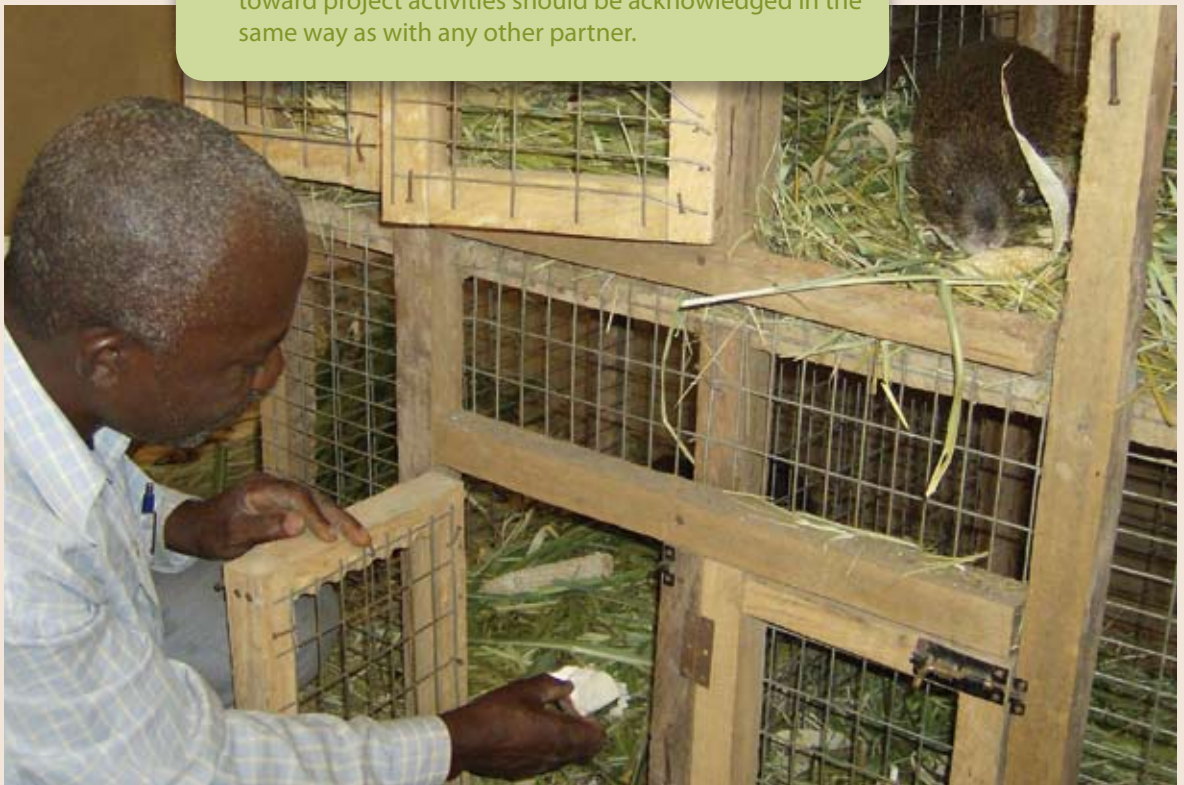
The Volta regional manager of FSD serves on the project management committee, the highest decision-making body for the Afadjato project. He is also providing inputs for the formulation of a more comprehensive management plan for the community nature reserve. It is expected that FSD will continue to support the Afadjato site as a model community nature reserve in the country.

In order to ensure effective support for beneficiaries of the alternative livelihood activities, the project has partnered with a wide range of other organisations:

- **Hohoe District Office of the National Board for Small Scale Industries** has provided technical support and guidance for the management of this component of the project, including technical advice on the mode of credit support and guidelines in identifying interested and committed individuals for the grass-cutter farming and beekeeping programmes.
- **The Food Research Institute (FRI)** is providing guidelines on standards for processing honey to meet the registration requirements for honey produced in Afadjato area.
- **The Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV)** has been helping to develop the capacity of GWS (at national level) as well as providing technical support for its projects in areas such as natural resources management, project management, alternative livelihood support, and ecotourism promotion.
- **Hohoe District Office of the Ghana National Fire Service (GNFS)** sees the partnership as support in its efforts to discharge its responsibilities for fire prevention and control. The district office has contributed towards wildfire prevention, through training of fire volunteers, wildfire sensitisation programmes, and mapping out fire-prone areas for fire belt construction.
- **Heifer International–Ghana** has capacity in beekeeping and grass-cutter farming as income-generating activities for poverty reduction.

### Key lessons learned:

- It is important to have good information about potential partners. This will help in outlining their specific roles, expectations and possible benefits.
- Involving potential partners at the project planning stage and keeping them informed about progress helps to enhance trust and sustain their support for project activities.
- Developing personal relationships with key people in the partner organisations helps facilitate the partnership process and can reduce unnecessary bureaucracy.
- It is important to avoid giving the impression that government agencies are “free resources” (even if you obtain their services free of charge). Their contributions toward project activities should be acknowledged in the same way as with any other partner.



*The project has supported the rearing of grass-cutters (Cane Rats) as an alternative to bush meat and as a source of supplementary income for farmers in the area. (GWS)*

The project has shown some immediate benefits from improved forest management arising through these partnerships. For example the GNFS has good knowledge and skills in supporting wildfire prevention and control, but lacks the logistics needed to deliver effectively on the ground. The project provided logistics such as a vehicle and field expenses for GNFS staff during their programmes in the project area. Frequent bushfires had led to a significant reduction in the harvest of a highly-priced wild berry (*Thaumatococcus daniellii*). Since the project began, the absence of fire in the reserve has resulted in an increase in the harvest of *Thaumatococcus*, providing an additional income source for many youths in the community, which has increased their support for conservation activities.

IBA name (and number): **Mount Afadjato - Agumatsa Range Forest (GH016)**

BirdLife Partner: **Ghana Wildlife Society**

Partner or project website: <http://www.ghanawildlifesociety.org>

Contributor: *Ottou Reuben*

## Working with industry to protect biodiversity and create income-earning opportunities for local communities in South Africa

Working in partnership with companies offers great scope to influence corporate behaviour and increase environmental and social responsibility. BirdLife International has a partnership with Rio Tinto, a multinational mining company, through which it aims to support the company's sustainable development objectives while achieving a range of benefits to bird conservation. The partnership has a particular focus on Important Bird Areas (IBAs) that are close to individual Rio Tinto businesses.

In South Africa at Richards Bay, where **Rio Tinto (Richards Bay Minerals, RBM)** mines coastal dune sand, the company helps to support the Richards Bay Avitourism Programme. Under this programme, IBAs are highlighted within the Zululand Birding Route, managed by **BirdLife South Africa**. The programme helps individuals from the local communities to develop both their nature-interpretation and business skills.

Through RBM's financial support, over 30 birdwatching guides from the local Richards Bay communities have been trained at BirdLife South Africa's training facility at Wakkerstroom. Visiting birders have shown extraordinary interest in using local bird guides and as a result additional guides are being trained every year. All those trained are now either employed full-time in tour-guiding businesses, or generate significant amounts of income as freelance guides. Workshops are regularly held to assist the guides to share ideas, keep skills honed and develop marketing and business management abilities. This has a multiplier effect in building local support for effective conservation and management of the IBAs. Thus, the programme helps communities to achieve sustainable livelihoods that depend on conservation and builds constructive community relations for Rio Tinto.

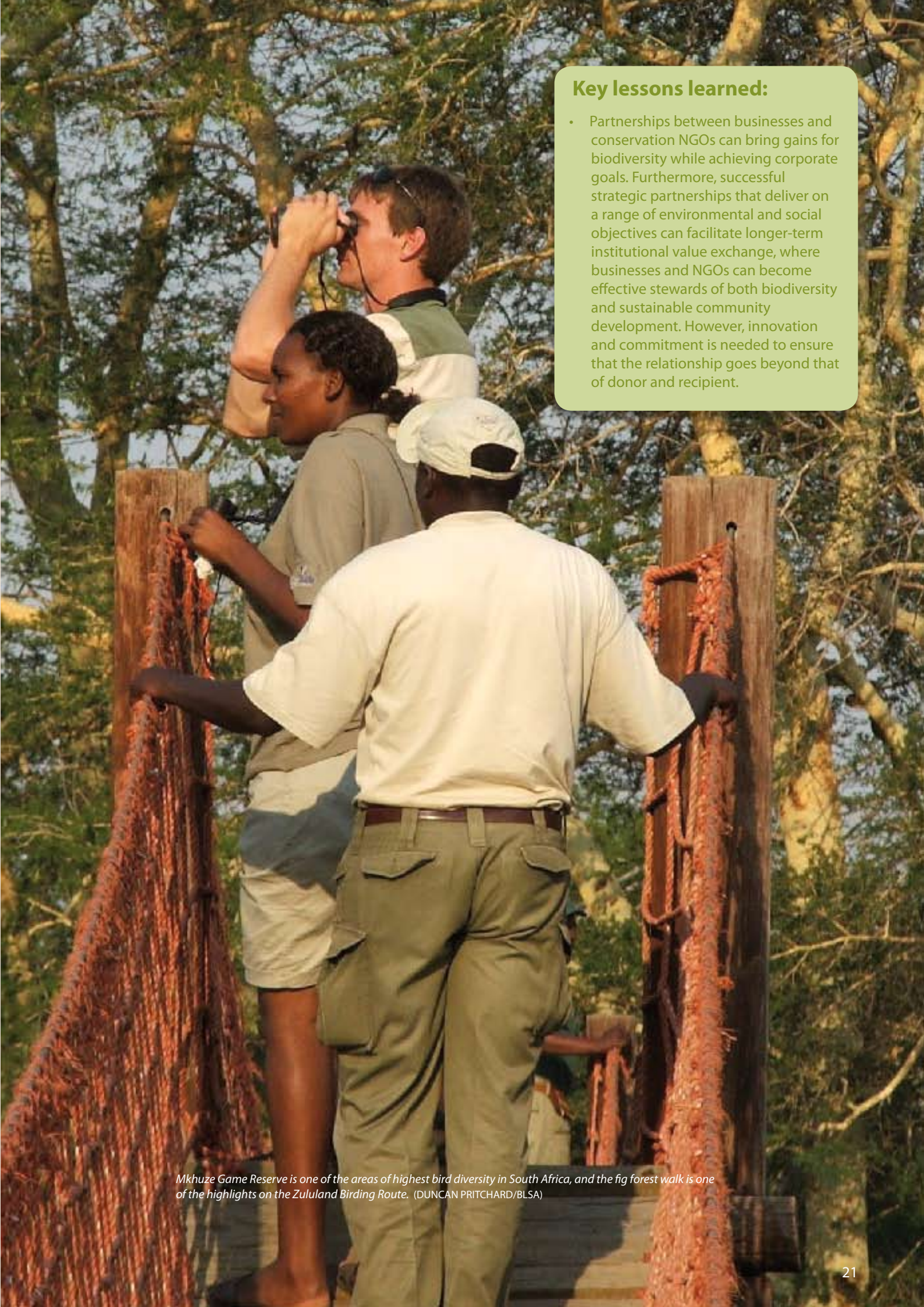
For RBM, the partnership has created opportunities to build links to local communities where their mining operations are located. It has also enabled RBM to improve its reputation as an organisation which gives consideration to biodiversity issues, and has raised the awareness, knowledge and skills of RBM employees through their participation in recording bird populations around RBM sites. The initiative aligns itself with some of RBM's long-term goals for sustainable development and mine-closure plans, by building alternative livelihoods and skills for employees and communities.

For BirdLife South Africa and **BirdLife Zululand (BLZ)** the partnership provided funds to promote initiatives such as bird-based ecotourism aimed at generating income for local communities and providing incentives for bird conservation. However, the relationship goes beyond that of donor and recipient. RBM is not only providing financial support to the project, but its employees are also involved in BirdLife Zululand activities, including guide-mentoring and bird-ringing, thus building a constituency of supporters for bird and biodiversity conservation within the mining company and the local communities from which employees are drawn.

The success of this model, as developed in Zululand, encouraged another Rio Tinto mining company to enter into a similar partnership relationship with BirdLife South Africa in the Limpopo province, leading to the establishment of the Kruger to Canyons Birding Route. This addresses a similar but distinctly varied range of objectives for further bird-guide training and sustainable livelihood development, environmental education within local communities, and building broad constituency support for IBAs, as described above. While the application of this partnership model needs to be carefully informed by the local context, it does demonstrate that such partnerships can be replicated, and that the confidence accumulated through such institutional collaboration can lead to a wider scaling-up of partnership outcomes at a more regional level.

IBA name (and number): Lake St. Lucia and Mkuze Swamps (ZA044); Ngoye Forest Reserve (ZA049); Richards Bay Game Reserve (ZA059); Kruger National Park and adjacent areas (ZA001); Blyde River Canyon (ZA008)  
 BirdLife Partner: BirdLife South Africa  
 Partner or project website: [www.birdingroutes.co.za](http://www.birdingroutes.co.za) or [www.zbr.co.za](http://www.zbr.co.za)

Contributor: Duncan Pritchard



### Key lessons learned:

- Partnerships between businesses and conservation NGOs can bring gains for biodiversity while achieving corporate goals. Furthermore, successful strategic partnerships that deliver on a range of environmental and social objectives can facilitate longer-term institutional value exchange, where businesses and NGOs can become effective stewards of both biodiversity and sustainable community development. However, innovation and commitment is needed to ensure that the relationship goes beyond that of donor and recipient.

*Mkhuze Game Reserve is one of the areas of highest bird diversity in South Africa, and the fig forest walk is one of the highlights on the Zululand Birding Route. (DUNCAN PRITCHARD/BLSA)*

## Promoting forest conservation at Siburan IBA, Sablayan, Occidental Mindoro, the Philippines

The entire island of Mindoro in the Philippines is an Endemic Bird Area. Mindoro has now been almost totally deforested and its conservation status is critical. The island holds six endemic bird species, five of which are threatened with extinction. Ten IBAs have been identified on the island, of which Siburan, containing the largest tract of lowland forest in Mindoro, is arguably the most important. Mt. Siburan is also home and refuge of the highly vulnerable tribe of Mangyan, the indigenous people of Mindoro. The continuous degradation of forest patches near the village of Sitio Palbong, in Barangay Batongbuhay, is contributing to the decline of the Siburan IBA forest. The IBA is being degraded by illegal extraction of forest resources inside Sablayan Prison and Penal Farm (SPPF) by staff and prisoners, and clearance of forest patches in and around Sitio Palbong for agriculture. Compounding these problems is the uncontrolled extraction of non-timber forest products, including hunting of wildlife for food and trade. This damage to the forest is impacting on the local economy and ecosystem services. Destruction of forests has aggravated the occurrence of flooding, led to an increase in river siltation and caused massive soil erosion on farmlands, posing a significant threat to the livelihoods of local people and to biodiversity.

**Haribon (BirdLife in the Philippines)** teamed up with key departments of the **Local Government Unit (LGU-Sablayan)** for the implementation of various project activities promoting sustainable forest management, wildlife conservation and sustainable livelihoods.

- Haribon has signed an MoA with the **Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)**, the national agency mandated to protect and manage natural resources in the Philippines. Through the **Community Environment and Natural Resource Office (DENR-CENRO) of Sablayan**, DENR takes the lead in strengthening the capacity of the **Community-Based Forest Management Association (CBFMA)** at Palbong.
- **Samahang Sablayanong Mapagkalinga ng Kalikasan (SASAMAKA)** is a multi-stakeholder group of professionals, students, local farmers, and local government officials that aims to restore and rehabilitate the remaining forests of Sablayan municipality. In partnership with SASAMAKA, Haribon conducted a wildlife festival in the municipality of Sablayan to highlight the need to conserve the different threatened species in the island of Mindoro.
- **Sablayan Prison and Penal Farm (SPPF)** is located within Mt. Siburan IBA and houses around 123 employees and 1,500 inmates. Established in 1954 it is managed by the Department of Justice (DOJ). Through partnership with SPPF a site conservation action plan has been formulated.
- A partnership between Haribon and the **Municipal Environment and Natural Resource Office (MENRO)** of LGU-Sablayan has led to a variety of direct benefits, including support for the repair and construction of a water tank in Sitio Palbong, assistance in strengthening the Community-Based Forest Management Association and the establishment of community nurseries using indigenous forest tree species for the forest's restoration programme. Haribon also has a joint MoA with LGU-Sablayan which provides the framework for development of a programme for ecotourism in the municipality. Haribon is providing technical assistance for the formulation of a Municipal Ecotourism Master Plan.

Although most of its site conservation projects are short term (1–5 years), Haribon aims to ensure that collaboration with the project partners continues beyond project completion. Benefits of the alliances it has formed have included resource sharing (finance, in-kind goods and services), and more participatory governance with a strong sense of ownership and responsibility among partners.

Partnerships and linkages have created avenues for sharing lessons and experiences and have helped gain support for implementation of community-based activities. They have also been an important avenue for more effective communication and raising awareness. Haribon has used relations with partner organisations to promote issues such as the need to use indigenous forest tree species for reforestation, to campaign for a total ban on commercial logging and mining in the remaining forest areas of the island of Mindoro, and to get the rights of vulnerable groups like women and indigenous peoples recognised.



## Key lessons learned:

- Building strong constituencies and linkages with local service institutions is essential in order to be able to access support services (in any form) in remote rural areas.
- Partnerships and linkages are vital communication tools – they create venues for sharing lessons and experiences and help gain support for project implementation.
- Partnerships have the potential to last beyond the lifetime of individual projects – and therein lies a significant value.



*Members of the Women's Core Group in Sitio Arellano, Barangay Batongbuhay, preparing their outputs in one of the community consultations conducted by the project. (HARIBON FOUNDATION)*

One of the main challenges encountered in these collaborations was that each organisation has its own priorities. There are instances where two or more stakeholders shared the same vision, but the way they see and address that vision are different. Their approach reflects the nature, culture and values of the individual organisation, but bringing these together in a shared programme is a challenging task.

In Haribon's experience MoAs and MoUs are important in defining the specific roles and obligations of the involved parties, and provide a basis for resolving future issues and a reminder of individual roles and obligations. However, bureaucracy and politics can hamper the development and implementation of such agreements.

IBA name (and number): **Siburan (PH042)**  
BirdLife Partner: **Haribon Foundation**  
Partner or project website: <http://www.haribon.org.ph>

*Contributors: Noel A. Resurreccion*



## Ecotourism and recreation for conservation and development at Kfar Zabad wetland, Lebanon

SPNL

Kfar Zabad wetland is a small marshland on the level plain of the Bekaa Valley (part of the Syrian-African Great Rift Valley and on the main migration route for African-Eurasian water birds through the Near East). The site is surrounded by steep dry mountain slopes to the east and by agricultural land in other directions. Through research and field visits by the **Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL, BirdLife Partner in Lebanon)** several globally and regionally threatened bird species have been recorded, such as Black Stork, Great Snipe and Syrian Serin (a restricted-range species), and the site has been nominated as an IBA. Local communities are poor, relying mainly on small-scale agriculture.

The biodiversity importance of the site and its use by and proximity to local communities led to a decision to declare it as a hima (a community-based protected area based on traditional cultural and social natural resources management practices). SPNL is working at Hima Kfar Zabad to integrate conservation with improvements to the livelihoods of the local community.

One of the biggest opportunities for combining conservation and development at the site is to develop its ecotourism potential. The site is situated just an hour and a half drive from Beirut, and is close to other tourist destinations such as Baalbek and Anjar archaeological World Heritage Sites.

One of the most important partnerships that SPNL has formed has been with Lebanese Adventure. **Lebanese Adventure (LA)** is a small private company, committed to environmental protection and nature conservation, that manages a portfolio of ecotourism activities, corporate events and educational programmes all linked to an appreciation of the outdoors. Based on several field visits to the site, Lebanese Adventure has developed an ecotourism plan for Hima Kfar Zabad. They have provided training courses for the Hima Site Support Group in nature-guiding skills and have had a major role in promoting ecotourism at the site. Hima Kfar Zabad has been included as a destination in their various programmes and they have brought different groups, including students and nature clubs, to participate in the activities at the site, which include birdwatching, mountain-biking, donkey rides, canoeing and guided nature walks. Hima Kfar Zabad has also been included in their marketing package which includes visits to other attractions in Bekaa, such as Anjar, Baalbak, Tirboul and wineries in the area.

SPNL and LA have developed a long-term partnership that goes beyond this individual project. The partnership recognises a shared concern for nature conservation, and LA's experience in ecotourism and capacity to develop this as a profitable, commercial enterprise. The collaboration is based primarily on a relationship of shared trust between partners, to implement specific activities or events at a specific period of time. Although no official MoU has been signed yet, the partnership has been an important mechanism through which SPNL has complemented its own skills (nature conservation) with those of an organisation experienced in commercial ecotourism, in order to bring benefits to local people (community empowerment, improved economic opportunities, job creation, preservation of valued cultural practices and a way of life). Through the relationship, LA has gained increased market access, won the confidence of local communities, and grown its own skills and expertise in areas such as bird identification.

Working in partnership with LA was not without its problems, since the approach towards financial planning and implementation differs: SPNL is a non-profit organisation, and LA is a private commercial business. This difference entailed longer discussions to reach a compromise that satisfied the objectives of both organisations.

### Key lessons learned:

- Collaboration with private sector partners provides professional skills, knowledge and experiences and market access not otherwise available to non-profit NGOs.
- Working with a reputable and experienced ecotourism company can increase the credibility of conservation-focused NGOs which offer this option as a tool for integrating conservation with development.
- Partnership between conservation NGOs and private sector tour companies provides support for advocacy messages targeted at relevant government departments (e.g. the Ministry of Tourism).

IBA name: Hima Kfar Zabad Wetland  
BirdLife Partner: Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon  
Partner or project website: [www.spnlb.org](http://www.spnlb.org)

Contributors: Bassima Khatib and Dalia Jawhary



## Sustainable development of San Rafael Forest, Paraguay

The Interior Atlantic Forest originally covered approximately 400,000 km<sup>2</sup>, extending from the western slopes of the Serra do Mar in Sao Paulo State, Brazil, to eastern Paraguay and the Province of Misiones, Argentina. Primarily as a result of agricultural expansion in Brazil the forest has been reduced to just 7–8% of its original extent. The remaining Paraguayan Atlantic Forest is severely threatened.

**Guyra Paraguay (BirdLife in Paraguay)**, has contributed to the conservation of the Atlantic Forest by purchasing 6,200 hectares of pristine habitat at the San Rafael Conservation Area (to prevent conversion of forest for cultivation of soybean), and works with a Local Conservation Group to conserve the site. Guyra Paraguay's goal is to secure the conservation of San Rafael, promote sustainable land use practices, and strengthen the Local Conservation Group.

### Key lessons learned:

- It takes time to build strong alliances – in most cases alliances get stronger as time goes by.
- There has to be a leader for each partner.
- Alliances succeed where collaborators have varied and complementary strengths.
- Where significant financial resources are involved, the manner in which the resources are used should be agreed and communicated clearly well in advance.
- Alliances should not be terminated if partners appear inactive for some time – inactivity may be due to external pressures.
- Projects can benefit from alliances involving local government and the private sector.

To help save San Rafael, Guyra Paraguay (BirdLife in Paraguay) formed alliances with the **World Land Trust, WWF, Conservation International** and the **Nature Conservancy**, among others. Partnerships were also formed with local community groups and the municipality of Alto Vera, and an alliance of national institutions was created and named the Alliance for the Conservation of San Rafael. This alliance was created based on a common interest of saving San Rafael and is composed of five national NGOs, of which one is a grass-roots institution called Procosara. The partnership brought together NGOs with different strengths (management, research, legal, production, private land stewardship), and led by Guyra they signed an agreement to change the alarming situation at San Rafael.

Through these local and national agreements Guyra Paraguay has been able to raise awareness of the need for conservation, win community and local government support, and raise the self-esteem of local people as partners and stakeholders in the challenge of saving San Rafael. The agreements were also important in terms of strengthening local people's capacities, getting recognition for their institutions and helping them in their fight against poverty. At the national level, collaboration has helped Guyra Paraguay to maximise the use of resources, avoid overlapping activities and apply the varied strengths of partner institutions for the common goal of saving San Rafael from destruction. More recently and based on the coalition created by Guyra Paraguay in the area,

**UNDP (United Nations Development Programme)** signed an agreement with Guyra Paraguay to develop a joint programme to consolidate the conservation of San Rafael. Within this partnership, the **Secretary of the Environment** is relying on Guyra's capacity to provide alternatives to the destruction of San Rafael, and Guyra will be donating land to this Ministerial Office to create the first official core area within San Rafael.

Facilitated by Guyra Paraguay, Local Conservation Groups are working in close cooperation with local governments, especially with their Environment Secretaries. Guyra Paraguay has given support to both the LCG and the municipality in monitoring environmental parameters and also providing tools for education and communication work. At the same time, an agribusiness programme has provided the basis for different sectors to begin to mainstream biodiversity into the rural economy.

Problems encountered in this alliance included poor coordination (i.e. who to lead the alliance) and lack of resources to address all the challenges facing the forest and local communities. This complicated the relations between institutions in the partnership, especially with those who looked to the alliance to provide the financial resources for their participation. At the same time, and given the low participation of governmental agencies, members of the alliance were considered and treated as state institutions thus providing extra work for Guyra Paraguay as the leader of the alliance.

IBA name: **San Rafael**  
BirdLife Partner: **Guyra Paraguay**  
Partner or project website: [www.guyra.org.py](http://www.guyra.org.py)

Contributor: *Alberto Yanosky*



## Using local radio to support sustainable use of wetlands in Western Madagascar

PAOLO VOLPONI

Western Madagascar is a dry and generally infertile region consisting largely of barren grassland and fragments of forests and wetlands. Human populations in the region are concentrated around freshwater wetland areas, because of the availability of water, relatively fertile soil for agriculture and abundant wild living resources. Such is the case in the wetlands of the lower Mahavavy River basin in NW Madagascar, including Lake Kinkony, the largest lake in the region. Here, exploitation of natural resources is typically uncontrolled. As resident populations have increased, short-term, intensive resource users have become more dominant and traditional controls on use have become less effective. The result is over-exploitation of wetland resources, with negative impacts on the livelihood security and poverty status of local communities, and on the unique biodiversity of the wetlands. The underlying problem of uncontrolled resource access can be tackled by establishing natural resource use rules that benefit local people and are compatible with the survival of native wildlife. BirdLife International has worked with the government and other local stakeholders to develop institutional and technological models and management systems for sustainable, community-based wetland management.

The development of an appropriate framework for resource use agreements that are adaptable to local socio-economic and ecological circumstances required awareness-raising and consultations with stakeholders, especially local communities in remote, rural areas. Carefully planned use of FM radio with a feedback mechanism has been found to be one of the most effective means of mass communication in rural areas, both to inform and to influence behaviour. To this end, BirdLife collaborated with the UK NGO **Dodwell Trust** and its Malagasy counterpart **Mitondrasoa**, which specialise in the development and broadcasting of radio programmes to support rural development in Madagascar. A project was designed by a working group from the **Government Directorate of Water and Forests**, BirdLife and the Dodwell Trust–Mitondrasoa, through which the latter developed and broadcast programmes on a range of local environmental and development issues. Issues or approaches were identified through focus groups. Solar/clockwork radios were distributed to 24 listener groups. Group leaders (38) were trained in radio use, organising public debates after programmes and proving feedback to the Dodwell Trust–Mitondrasoa and BirdLife by post.

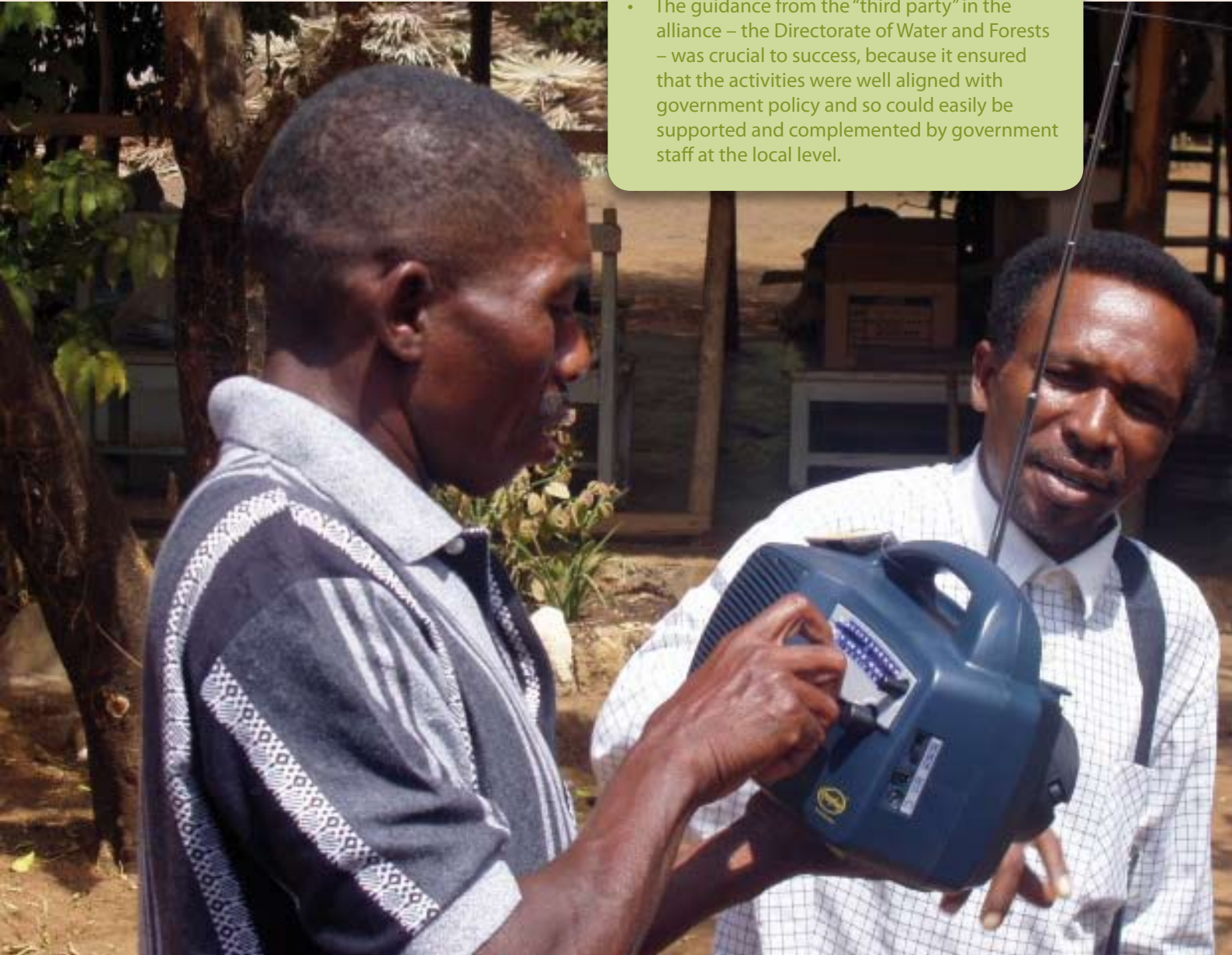
A series of 24 programmes on wetlands was produced and broadcast during 2005. Programmes covered the values of wetlands, the opportunities for local communities to take over their management under the current legislation, and the principles of sustainable use. As well as the national radio station, Radio National Malagasy, six private stations carried the series.

The effective use of radio broadcasts is a challenge, requiring special experience of the processes of engaging and holding on to an audience, and gaining feedback to improve impact. BirdLife could not have used this tool without specialist help from Dodwell Trust–Mitondrasoa. The role of the Directorate of Water and Forests was also crucial; the whole wetland conservation process is a collaborative effort between government and civil society, so input from both was indispensable. The collaboration with BirdLife, who had a well-established conservation programme at the site, also helped these organisations to achieve their missions, and, in the case of Dodwell Trust–Mitondrasoa, to expand its listener and broadcasting network to a new region of Madagascar.

The programmes were designed specifically for use at the Mahavavy, using local dialects, but one indicator of their impact was the requests received to rebroadcast the programmes in other provinces far away in the south-west of Madagascar. A crucial step in achieving community-based management and conservation, in which management is devolved to local communities under government supervision, is engaging communities, and making them aware of their rights, opportunities and responsibilities; such knowledge cannot be assumed. The radio programmes formed one component of a strong campaign of awareness-raising and outreach, and as such are difficult to evaluate for their individual impact. Feedback questionnaires and follow-up visits by the project indicated that the radio programmes were a major contribution to achieving this engagement, which is the basis of the subsequent conservation successes.

## Key lessons learned:

- Partnership exposes BirdLife to new approaches and so widens our outlook on problem-solving. The methods offered by the partner NGO were new to the BirdLife team, but came to form an important tool in the wide-ranging communication programme, complementing but not replacing more traditional means such as meetings, targeted visits, talks, posters and newsletters.
- The guidance from the “third party” in the alliance – the Directorate of Water and Forests – was crucial to success, because it ensured that the activities were well aligned with government policy and so could easily be supported and complemented by government staff at the local level.



*FM radio has been found to be one of the most effective means of mass communication in rural areas, both to inform and to influence behaviour. (MAMONJY RAZAFINDRAKOTO/BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL*

IBA name (and number): Mahavavy Delta Wetlands (MG025)

BirdLife Partner: BirdLife International Madagascar Programme

Partner or project website: <http://www.birdlife.org/action/ground/madagascar/index.html>

Contributors: Roger Safford and Mamonjy Razafindakoto



## Community involvement in conflict resolution and management of Manupeu Tanadaru National Park, Sumba, Indonesia

Sumba Island is the third largest island in East Nusa Tenggara Province. The entire island of Sumba is an Endemic Bird Area and holds four globally threatened species, including Yellow-crested Cockatoo (*Cacatua sulphurea*) (Critically Endangered). **Burung Indonesia (BirdLife in Indonesia)** has identified six Important Bird Areas in Sumba, the two largest of which form the national parks. Burung Indonesia has worked in the most outstanding IBA, Manupeu Tanadaru National Park, since 1997.

Sumba has some of the poorest human development indicators in Indonesia. Annual income per capita in 2002 in west Sumba was \$140 and only 8% of the population graduate from high school. A significant proportion of the communities on Sumba live close to the forest-edge and almost all make a living from farming (upland dryland cultivation and limited irrigated rice) and livestock.

Local Conservation Groups in Sumba are known as Kelompok Masyarakat Pelestari Hutan – KMPH (Community Forest Protection Group). Burung Indonesia has been working with KMPH on Sumba to support sustainable production on farmlands, including through cultivation of perennial plants, terracing, agroforestry, kitchen gardens and cultivation of timber species to reduce the demand on the natural forest. They have also supported the development of Rural Nature Conservation Agreements, a participatory process that Burung Indonesia has facilitated for all villages surrounding the Manupeu Tanadaru National Park (MTNP). These agreements are the outcome of negotiation between the aspirations of the community and National Park management and cover issues of boundaries, access to resources inside the park, and action by the community in support of forest conservation. After the Rural Nature Conservation Agreement is agreed, the first mechanism to implement the agreement is participatory boundary demarcation. This is the first time that conservation area boundary demarcation has fully involved the community and is an important step to ensure that the area protected is legitimate in the eyes of all stakeholders. The previous park boundary, which had not been established with community participation or agreement, had become a major factor cause of conflict between community and park authorities.

To achieve its objectives, Burung Indonesia has collaborated closely with government and local NGOs, including:

- **The Management Team of Manupeu Tandar National Park (Balai TNMT)**, responsible for park management. Its relations with Burung Indonesia have been key during the process of negotiating Rural Nature Conservation Agreements and demarcation of the boundary.
- **The Forestry Departments of West Sumba District and East Sumba District**, local government institutions committed to conservation and community empowerment in the region's forests and surrounding communities.
- **The Police Departments of West Sumba and East Sumba**, the key institutions in charge of law enforcement (mainly focused on combating illegal logging at MTNP), which have regular contact with the community (and the KMPH).
- **PAKTA Sumba Foundation**, a local NGO concerned with community empowerment for sustainable resources management. It has been a local partner of Burung Indonesia since 2000, and is now facilitating activities in all 22 villages surrounding MTNP.
- **SATUVISI Foundation**, a local NGO involved in community empowerment in Sumba, is working in four villages surrounding MTNP.

Through the collaboration with local government, Burung Indonesia has successfully raised awareness and gained support of local government officials for conservation and sustainable management at Sumba. The government recognises Burung Indonesia as an important partner and engages them fully in natural resources and environmental decision-making procedures.

Thanks to alliances with the local NGOs the number of KMHPs in Sumba has increased from eight prior to the project to 22. The KMHPs have been equipped with skills in managing complex community development-related activities and also in negotiating with external parties, especially government and donor institutions, in order to obtain their support to implement the priority work programme according to Rural Nature Conservation Agreements. Cooperation with the Police Departments enabled Burung



*The position of the park boundary is decided following negotiation between community groups and National Park officers. (BURUNG INDONESIA)*

### Key lessons learned:

- Informal agreements can be as good as formal agreements (such as an MoU), provided good relations are established through effective communication between collaborators. In this case a work plan was compiled to make clear the roles and responsibilities of different institutions.
- Collaboration (especially with government) requires flexibility and may necessitate combining formal regulatory procedures with less formal processes. Participatory boundary demarcation is an example where following procedures on boundary demarcation according to ministerial decree was combined with community participation in the process, facilitated by an NGO.
- Exchanging experiences and lessons between key partners is key to success.
- Changes in personnel, especially in government institutions, can adversely affect partnerships, as trust and relationships have to be rebuilt.
- Collaboration requires people's commitment – the lack of personnel, and their capacity, can be a major constraint to a balanced relationship.

Indonesia to enlist the police's support in controlling unlawful practices including illegal logging and livestock theft, whilst the police benefited from the fact that NGOs are trusted by the local people and this helped to improve communication and cooperation between the police and local communities.

For the Balai TNMT and Forestry Departments of West Sumba District and East Sumba District, partnership with the NGOs has facilitated the fulfilment of their national mandate to protect forests. As a result of their alliance with Burung Indonesia, local NGOs such as the PAKTA Foundation and SATUVISI Foundation now have access to the government's technical institutions. The alliance also afforded them a platform to share experiences and exchange information with these organisations.

Overall, the collaboration has scored significant successes in strengthening the capacity of KMPHs in natural resources management and in lobbying the local government to put in place natural resources and development policies sympathetic to local needs. The collaboration between Burung Indonesia and NGOs with different core competencies undoubtedly made this possible.

However, several challenges were encountered. Government institutions and local NGOs often lacked capacity in community empowerment and facilitation processes. There was also reluctance among the local NGOs to engage in the new and innovative approaches being advanced by Burung Indonesia. The police were initially reluctant to have frank discussions with local people and found it difficult to accept any criticism from communities regarding the way they handled cases.

IBA name and number: Luku Melolo (ID149), Pangaduhahar (ID 148), Laiwanggi Wanggameti (ID 147), Manupeu Tanadaru (ID 146), Yawila (ID 145), Poronumbu (ID144)  
 BirdLife Partner: Burung Indonesia  
 Partner or project website: [www.burung.org](http://www.burung.org)

Contributors: Dian Agista and David Purmiasa

## Conservation and development at Natmataung National Park IBA in Myanmar

Natmataung National Park is an Important Bird Area (IBA), comprising montane evergreen forest, including mixed oak-rhododendron and pine, that lies within the Eastern Himalayas Endemic Bird Area<sup>12</sup>. However, the forest of Natmataung National Park is threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation as a result of unsustainable human activity, including encroachment on the forest for agriculture, hunting, and collection of non-timber forest products, especially endemic orchid species that are sold to China.

The park and its surrounding buffer zone are populated by about 120 villages, 32 of which are located inside the park. Agricultural yields are low and households typically suffer from between four and nine months' food shortage annually, which they survive by reducing food intake and borrowing rice. The populations living around the park are caught in a downward spiral of poverty, food insecurity and land degradation.

The goal of **Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Association in Myanmar (BANCA, the BirdLife Affiliate in Myanmar)** for the area is to maintain the integrity of the National Park as forest habitat and for watershed protection. This can only be achieved by working locally with communities for development of alternative livelihood options and for conservation. BANCA recognised from the outset that this can be most effectively achieved by working in partnership not only with local communities but also other organisations that are present and active around the national park (see Box).

### Organisations working with BANCA at Natmataung:

- **Natmataung National Park Authority**
- **Hill Ecosystem Conservation Association (HECA)**
- **Integrated Rural Development And Nature Conservation Association (IRUDANCA)**
- **CARE**
- **UNDP Community Development in Remote Townships (CDRT) programme**
- Important Bird Area Local Conservation Groups (IBA LCGs)

These partnerships have helped to successfully deliver benefits to people and conservation. The first conservation network in Southern Chin State has been established and to date 16 communities are being supported to change from shifting cultivation to sustainable, improved permanent cultivation. Cases of poaching and illegal extraction of forest products are decreasing as villages are supported with agricultural extension in animal husbandry and crop management, to help increase production and incomes. The partnership, especially with CARE and UNDP, has been essential for the delivery of this integrated programme.

Collaboration has presented challenges however. The organisations have different styles of working – BANCA likes to spend time in villages, but the tight schedules of CARE and UNDP have made it difficult to conduct joint visits, and awareness of conservation issues within UNDP and CARE field staff is still low. Also, the relationship is not yet recognised by CARE and UNDP at national level, and is treated as a short-term expedient when BANCA would like to forge a longer-term relationship.

### Key lessons learned:

- Partnership between environmental and development NGOs can help to ensure that pressing human needs are met in an environmentally sustainable manner.
- Formal recognition of partnerships at high level may be needed to provide recognition and approval of local-level working relationships.

IBA name: Natmataung National Park  
BirdLife Partner: Biodiversity And Nature Conservation (BANCA) in Myanmar

Contributors: U Uga and Jonathan Eames

*Many Chin women weave at home. The potential exists for increasing household income from weaving by selling to tourists visiting the national park.*  
(J.C. EAMES)





## Conservation and livelihood improvement at the Upper Bay of Panama IBA

The Upper Bay of Panama IBA is both a RAMSAR and a WHSRN (Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network) site. It is estimated that 31.5% of the global population of Western Sandpiper (*Calidris mauri*) pass through the site on migration each year. A substantial part of Panama's shrimp and fishing industry depends on the mangroves of the Bay, since the bulk of the catch is of species that use mangroves as a nursery area.

The success of long-term conservation measures depends on the involvement of the local communities living in or adjacent to this key site. Twenty-three associated communities, comprising about 1,200 inhabitants, live within or immediately adjacent to the site. These communities visit the mangroves to collect sweet sap, and go to the mudflats and mangroves to collect shellfish (for sale and domestic consumption) and crabs when available.

**Panama Audubon Society (PAS, BirdLife in Panama)** is working with two remote communities, implementing a project aimed at building local capacity for sustainable resource management. The community of Chinina is made up mostly of fishermen descended from runaway black slaves ("cimarrones") who arrived in the country during the Spanish colonisation. Access to Chinina is by boat, navigating the Bayano River to the sea and then through a river bordered by mangroves. Oquendo is near the coast, and access is by boat and then walking through marshes and pasture lands. A large and diverse set of collaborative relations have helped PAS to achieve its objectives.

PAS has a long-term agreement with the **National Environment Authority (ANAM)** which contributes to the implementation of ANAM's National Environmental Strategy, provides for data exchange on conservation and resource use in the Bay of Panama, and supports activities such as mangrove reforestation and environmental education. ANAM instructors have provided training to Chinina and Oquendo communities on reforestation and orchard cultivation, and an exchange visit organised in coordination with ANAM's "Conservation and Restoration of the Panamanian Pacific Mangrove Threatened Areas Project", has been highly informative and motivational.

PAS is working with the **Ministry of Agriculture (MIDA)**, the **National Maritime Authority of Panama (AMP)** and the newly formed **Aquatic Resources Authority of Panama (ARAP)** on improved regulation of shellfish harvesting. ARAP is collaborating with PAS to provide training on capacity building, fisheries management (such as the importance of respecting fishing reserves, fishing closed seasons, shellfish monitoring and breeding periods of important species like shrimp, fish and shellfish), and legal frameworks for the management of marine resources. This collaboration has helped these government agencies to fulfil their mission to assist rural communities.

The Ministry of Agriculture in Chepo is helping to facilitate legalisation of local groups, and together with PAS staff has visited the communities to provide information on the legalisation process. The **Ministry of Education (MEDUCA)** in Chepo has collaborated with PAS in education and awareness activities, including celebration of Earth Day (April 22, 2007) and the distribution of information on the value of wetlands to local schools.

The most significant problem with these partnerships was personnel turnover, which caused delays in implementation and breaks in communication. Frequent visits to the ANAM regional agency in Chepo and coordination with ANAM's personnel at all levels helped to minimise this problem.

### Key lessons learned:

- Organisations need to reach out and enlist all known key stakeholders. Even if they seem not to be available or willing to participate in the project at first, it is important to persist to bring them on board as partners.

IBA name: Upper Bay of Panama  
BirdLife Partner: Panama Audubon Society  
Partner or project website: <http://www.panamaudubon.org>

Contributor: Loyda Sanchez

## Improving local people's health at two Important Bird Areas in El Salvador

Montecristo and El Imposible National Parks have been identified as the two most important areas in El Salvador for bird conservation. Montecristo in particular is important for the conservation of threatened bird species (Golden-cheeked Warbler *Dendroica chrysoparia*, Endangered) and 15 species of range-restricted birds of the Northern Central American Highlands Endemic Bird Area. It is a key natural area that crosses into Guatemala and Honduras and contains key habitat of two important ecoregions: Central American Pine-oak Forests (Critically Endangered) and Central American Humid Montane Forests (Endangered). In both parks, communities live within and just outside the park boundaries.

For many people in the communities around the two parks, park creation has restricted their access and prohibited hunting and extraction of products such as wood and timber. These communities are poor, and levels of development are low. **SalvaNATURA (BirdLife in El Salvador)** recognised that communities were likely to remain opposed to park creation, and that conservation efforts would be hard to implement, unless attention was given to development priorities in these park-adjacent communities. Priorities identified by local people included improvements to health care services, and provision of safe drinking water.

**SalvaNATURA** teamed up with the (governmental) park management authority and staff of the **Public Health Ministry's programme on Basic Health Care Provision (SIBASI)**, to improve access to health information and basic health care at the communities of San Miguelito (next to El Imposible National Park), and San José Ingenio and Majaditas (both within Montecristo National Park). The partnership also played a vital role in the provision of safe drinking water in the San Miguelito community. For **SalvaNATURA** these partnerships represented the most effective, efficient options for achieving the project's goals, but they also helped the partner organisations to deliver on their own mandates.

To implement activities aimed at improving health in these two areas, SIBASI trained community health and environment promoters (selected from the community) that were employed by **SalvaNATURA**. Activities have included campaigns to prevent dengue fever, population censuses, creation of participatory community maps, organisation (along with local park guides) of a community rubbish pickup campaign, raising awareness about the proper disposal of rubbish, visits to local families to discuss basic health care needs, and establishing a programme to record the weight and nutritional health of local children. These activities have been integrated with messages and activities on biodiversity conservation and environmental health.

The community at El Imposible also indicated need for assistance to ensure a supply of safe drinking water. **SalvaNATURA** and staff of SIBASI have supported water treatment in the community and have provided training in operation and maintenance of the treatment system.

Initiatives aimed at improving the health of local communities have helped to build **SalvaNATURA's** relationship with these people as well as mobilising people to support biodiversity conservation. The Public Health Ministry's Basic System for Integrated Health has benefited from using **SalvaNATURA's** biodiversity conservation projects as an entry point, extending its area of coverage and fulfilling its mandate on provision of primary health care to communities.

The health/environment promoters at both IBAs participated three days per month for a year-and-a-half in **SalvaNATURA's** bird banding programme. Their participation in this monitoring activity increased local capacities and interest in birds and their conservation, as well as knowledge transfer from staff biologists to the IBA Local Conservation Group.

IBA name: Montecristo and El Imposible National Parks

BirdLife Partner: **SalvaNATURA**

Partner or project website: [www.salvanatura.org](http://www.salvanatura.org)

Contributors: Oliver Komar and Lety Andino

### Key lessons learned:

- Working in partnership with others has a multiplier effect that can go far beyond any cost associated with the partnership.
- Working alone can alienate the many other interested organisations and stakeholders, and lead to project failure.
- Working in collaboration requires a great deal of communication, both informal and formal. This may be perceived by technical staff as a distraction, but it is an important part of a successful relationship.



*Ana López, the health/environment promoter at Montecristo National Park in El Salvador, extracting a Scaled Antpitta (Grallaria guatemalensis) from a mist net, during a bird monitoring visit organised by SalvaNATURA biologists. (L. ANDINO SALVANATURA)*



## Protecting the last population of the Vulnerable Wattled Curassow in Bolivia

San Marcos IBA in Bolivia is home to the charismatic Wattled Curassow (*Crax globulosa*), which qualifies as globally Vulnerable under the IUCN Red List criteria because it is undergoing rapid declines in range and population as a result of hunting and, to a lesser extent, habitat loss. The IBA is seriously threatened by degradation of the forest and the absence of development programmes and income-earning opportunities in the area, forcing the local Tacana indigenous people to rely heavily on the IBA's resources. Compounding this is the marginalisation of the indigenous communities in making decisions on human development policies, education and natural resource use. This is true for the San Marcos community which is often left out of decision-making processes due primarily to organisational weakness and a poor knowledge and understanding of their rights and obligations in relation to natural resources management and human development policies.

Asociación Armonía (BirdLife in Bolivia) collaborated with PRAIA (Programa Regional de Apoyo a los Pueblos Indígenas Amazonicos, Regional Programme of Support to Amazonian Indigenous Communities), Glasgow University, the Division of Tourism of the Department of Beni (a local government ministry), OCITB (Organisation of Tacana Indigenous Communities of Ballivian Province) and Conservation International to tackle these problems. In partnership with these organisations Asociación Armonía initiated a community ecotourism project to address the problem of lack of income earning opportunities in the area, institutional weakness and the conservation of the Wattled Curassow.

- **PRAIA** provided training to the members of the IBA LCG at the San Marcos community on tourism business management. The course was based on experiences and lessons from other tourism efforts in various Amazonian and South American locations. PRAIA is a non-governmental organisation dedicated to creating appropriate conditions and opportunities for the survival of Amazonian indigenous cultures and the empowerment of indigenous peoples. One of PRAIA's principal areas of action is in strengthening community tourism initiatives that promote natural resource conservation and respect of indigenous cultures. PRAIA brought to the partnership expertise in indigenous community tourism – a field Armonía is just beginning to work in.
- The **Division of Tourism of the Department of Beni** is helping to publicise the San Marcos community ecotourism project and is collaborating with Armonía in securing additional financial support for the initiative. The San Marcos community ecotourism project is included among the 150 sites identified by the Division of Tourism as priority tourism destinations in the department of Beni. Such recognition by the departmental government is beneficial because the project will be included in national and international promotional campaigns, and there is a possibility of receiving financial support directly or indirectly through workshops.
- The ecotourism project is based on a rich and diverse forest ecosystem with birds and other wildlife in the area. Proper forest management is therefore critical to the success of the initiative. **Glasgow University** collaborated with Armonía in the wildlife evaluation and conservation assessment of *Crax globulosa* and carried out a pilot study to determine the tourist-carrying capacity of the region.
- **Organisation of Tacana Indigenous Communities of Ballivian Province (OCITB)** is an umbrella organisation that represents and governs the Tacana communities in the province of Ballivian. OCITB works in defence of the rights of its members – personal rights, land entitlement – and to protect both the natural and cultural resources of the Tacana communities. Developing and maintaining a partnership with the OCITB is crucial for working with the IBA LCG at San Marcos as it is an organisation with considerable political influence. The OCITB helps to publicise the work of Armonía at a larger scale as it is affiliated with departmental and national indigenous organisations.
- **Conservation International** has supported the San Marcos community with training in tourism, particularly the legal aspects of managing a tourist operation. Like PRAIA, Conservation International brings to the partnership extensive experience in community tourism.

## Key lessons learned:

- The political support of local and regional indigenous organisations is important not only because their permission is required in order to work in the communities, but also because it can help create alliances with other organisations and lead to acceptance of the project by the communities.
- Alliances with local and regional governments are dynamic. Difficulties can arise when a change of government or leadership results in a change of vision or change of priorities, and previously existing agreements are not respected. Frequently a change of government means a change of the entire staff of government departments, making it necessary to start from scratch to build new relationships.
- In the case of both indigenous organisations and government agencies, there can be difficulties when the people in power are more interested in their own personal gain (political or economic) than in the objectives of the project.
- Development of partnerships should be based on the work at hand and not on politics.
- Care must be taken to avoid creating unrealistic expectations.
- Partnerships must be two-way, with both partners investing in the project in some manner, in order to avoid creating a situation where partners expect only to receive benefits from the project/relationship. Especially dangerous is creating a situation where the only interest organisations have in forming a “partnership” is the hope of financial gain.
- Collaboration with other organisations can reduce the costs of operation. In some cases collaboration requires the adaptation or modification of the project to meet the needs of all partners. These expectations need to be clear from the outset.
- It is important to analyse the capacity of the project to meet the needs of all parties involved. Frequently partners have different goals and agendas and care must be taken to avoid partners who will try to change the orientation of the project without agreement of the other partners. The role of each partner must be clearly established.



*An evaluation of the wildlife of the area, carried out with the collaboration of Glasgow University, has helped to determine the tourism-carrying capacity. (HUGO ARANIBAR)*

IBA name (and number): Bajo Río Beni, Región Tacana (BO003)

BirdLife Partner: Asociación Civil Armonía

Partner or project website: <http://birdbolivia.com>

Contributors: Bennett Hennessey and Hugo Aranibar



## Government-NGO partnership in Jordan: Protecting the Dibbin Forest

Dibbin Forest, situated on limestone slopes of the highest hill range in northern Jordan, comprises the best remaining area of mature, natural pine-oak mixed forest in the region. It contains a representative bird assemblage of Mediterranean pine woodland, a rare and diminishing habitat in Jordan. Dibbin was first proposed for establishment as a nature reserve by the **Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN, BirdLife in Jordan)** in 1998 after a national protected areas review programme.

As Dibbin Forest is within easy reach of several large towns, including Amman, Irbid, and Jerash, it has become the most heavily used recreational forest in Jordan. In addition to the increasing pressure from visitors, the forest is under continuous pressure from illegal woodcutting, unregulated grazing, hunting, fire and habitat fragmentation. The growing impact of these activities threatened to cause serious damage to forest integrity in the absence of protective measures and effective management.

In the light of these threats, conservation of Dibbin Forest was ranked at the top of RSCN and government priorities (and was included in the national biodiversity strategy and action plan (BSAP)). A project was therefore initiated which aimed to establish the forest as a nature reserve and put in place guidelines and strategies to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

To deliver the project's outputs RSCN teamed up with three government partners. These relations provided the legal basis, mandate and donor linkages which allowed RSCN to implement the project:

- **Ministry of Environment (MoE)** – RSCN has a mandate to establish and manage Jordan's protected areas.
- **Ministry of Agriculture** – Dibbin is the property of the Ministry of Agriculture, and RSCN also has a legal mandate to protect Jordan's forests.
- **Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation** – facilitated relations with donors and the local governorate.

A steering committee of all these partners was established with the roles of each member in the committee clearly stated and mechanisms put in place to coordinate its work. Collaboration has facilitated fundraising, helped to ensure government support for effective enforcement of regulations, increased awareness among Ministry staff of the importance and value of conservation and protected areas establishment, helped to facilitate the passage of legislation and the approval of the protected area designation, and provided local-level understanding and support for the conservation measures undertaken.

However, the partnership has also had problems. The presence of multiple agendas and the lack of one unified vision led to difficulties in the management of workplans and deadlines. This was compounded by the existence of more than one mechanism for cooperation, with no one party willing to delegate and relinquish control.

RSCN realised that one mechanism for cooperation would not achieve programme objectives with all partners because some of them wanted to be involved in the strategic decisions while others sought to be involved in day-to-day operations. Local communities were more interested in gaining greater economic benefit from the reserve.

In response, RSCN developed multiple cooperation mechanisms which satisfied the need of all partners. These mechanisms include a reserve steering committee for strategic decision-making, and tailored cooperation mechanisms with staff of ministries working at Dibbin to ensure effective partnership. RSCN also developed a long-term socio-economic programme which aimed at providing the local community with economic benefits linked to nature conservation. This diversity of approaches helped RSCN to arrive at a unified vision for conservation of Dibbin among all the partners, and by providing economic benefits for local communities helped generate more public support for conservation.



### Key lessons learned:

- Partners should work together from the outset of the collaboration to create one unified vision.
- Collaboration with different partners provides complementary professional knowledge and experiences.
- Partnership helps to achieve impact in the most cost-effective way.
- Cross-sectoral partnership helps to increase the credibility of conservation organisations and helps win support from local communities for site conservation.

*Dibbin comprises the best remaining area of mature, natural pine-oak mixed forest in the region. (RSCN)*

IBA name (and number): Dibbin (JO005)  
BirdLife Partner: Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature  
Partner or project website: [www.rscn.org.jo](http://www.rscn.org.jo)

*Contributors: Yehya Khaled and Sulaf Mubiedeen*

## Partnership for conserving the globally threatened species Northern Bald Ibis in Syria

The Northern Bald Ibis (*Geronticus eremita*) is classified as Critically Endangered, the highest threat category according to IUCN criteria<sup>13</sup>, with the only remaining wild colonies known in Morocco (150 pairs) and Syria (two pairs). The Morocco population is stable and under good conservation management. The Eastern race, formerly found throughout the Middle East and latterly only in south-east Turkey, was rediscovered in Syria in 2002 having been believed to be extinct in the wild.

**BirdLife International** and the **RSPB (BirdLife in UK)** are jointly implementing the conservation programme of the Northern Bald Ibis (NBI) along with the local project partner (the **Syrian Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform – MAAR**). All three partners to the project are committed to following up the outcomes of the programme and ensuring lasting benefits. The Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform is leading on the protection of NBI breeding sites in Syria, and in 2004 the MAAR declared the breeding sites and feeding grounds a protected area (the Ibis Protected Area). Local community involvement has also helped tremendously in protecting the breeding colony in Syria. Individuals from the local Bedouin tribes have been trained as wardens and as field guides, and they are now employed in these roles, through which they also provide an important outreach and awareness function to the wider community.

During the past three years, BirdLife has been collaborating with MAAR through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed annually. Currently there is a proposal for a long term NBI National Action Plan to be endorsed by all stakeholders and supported by MAAR. This fruitful collaboration between BirdLife and the MAAR has resulted in sound conservation and protection measures on the ground during the past three years, including the tagging of adult and juvenile birds in order to track migrating birds and locate their wintering and dispersal grounds. The partnership has also helped to mobilise additional financial resources for field operations.

The partnership also led to success in the protection of the NBI's breeding site in Syria and recently-identified wintering site in Ethiopia. The successful trapping and tagging of these migratory birds revealed the mystery of their migration route and wintering grounds. The partnership with national institutions and local stakeholders has ensured national and local ownership of the project and increased awareness of this enigmatic bird within Syria – the NBI has now become a flagship species for bird conservation in Syria as well as in the region.

The biggest challenge has been forging a partnership between government and NGOs in a country where NGOs are not assuming great roles. The absence of a strategic plan within the MAAR also made it difficult to promote adoption of a long term conservation strategy or Action Plan. Despite all this, the collaboration was very successful, including at the site and local level, where the local community has become involved in implementing and supporting the programme.

IBA name (and number): Ibis Protected Area (SY025)

BirdLife Partner: None

Partner or project website: <http://www.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/science/international/northernbaldibis/index.asp>

Contributors: Ibrahim Al-Khader and Sharif Al Jbour



**“We anxiously look for the return of the birds each year and they are met with great joy and pride despite the challenges waiting ahead. We look each year to see more and more birds returning and new ones fledging”**  
– Community guard, Ibis Protected Area, Syria

### Key lessons learned:

- Local partners may be focused on political time horizons, short-term needs or their immediate relationships and influence. Strategic planning and adopting a long-term conservation strategy may not be a high priority, and introducing these ideas, as a basis for future collaboration, may take time.
- Working with government can provide added value as a showcase of government commitment to mobilisation of resources for conservation of the country's natural heritage.
- Despite their influence in some quarters, government partners are often less efficient in mobilising external support and publicising success than NGOs.



*A Northern Bald Ibis is captured to be fitted with a satellite tag to allow its migration to be tracked. (MAHMOUD ABDULLAH)*

# Notes

- <sup>1</sup> <http://www.millenniumassessment.org/en/index.aspx> (accessed 10 September 2007).
- <sup>2</sup> For examples see:
  - Brocklesby, M. and Hinshelwood, E. (2001) *Poverty and the Environment: What the poor say. An assessment of poverty-environment linkages in Participatory Poverty Assessments*. Environment Policy Department, issues Paper No. 1, DFID, UK.
  - Narayan, D., Chambers R., Shah, M. K., and Petesch, P. (2000) *Voices of the poor; crying out for change*. Published by Oxford University Press for the World Bank.
  - BirdLife International (2006) *Livelihoods and the environment at Important Bird Areas: listening to local voices*. BirdLife International, Cambridge, UK.
  - World Resources Institute (2005) *World Resources 2005: The wealth of the poor – managing ecosystems to fight poverty*. Washington DC:WRI.
  - UNEP-WCMC (May 2007) *Biodiversity and poverty reduction: the importance of biodiversity for ecosystem services*. UNEP-WCMC, Cambridge, UK.
- <sup>3</sup> IBAs are key sites for conservation – small enough to be conserved in their entirety and often already part of (or including part of) a protected-area network. They do one (or more) of three things: hold significant numbers of one or more globally threatened species; belong to a set of sites that together hold a suite of restricted-range species or biome-restricted species; or have exceptionally large numbers of migratory or congregatory species.
- <sup>4</sup> BirdLife International (2004) *State of the Worlds' Birds 2004: Indicators for our Changing World*. BirdLife International, Cambridge, UK.
- <sup>5</sup> In 1992 the UN Conference on Environment and Development (the Rio Earth Summit) placed partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society as central to achieving global sustainable development. This has also been stressed by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) especially Goal 8 which states the need to develop global partnerships for sustainable development.
- <sup>6</sup> This report focuses on “institutional” partnerships; partnerships with local communities, their organisations and/or their representatives are not discussed further.
- <sup>7</sup> Synonyms include: alliances, collaboration, joint working, and liaison. This publication uses these terms interchangeably.
- <sup>8</sup> New Opportunity Fund (2004) *Working in Partnerships – A Source Book*. New Opportunities Fund (NOF), UK.
- <sup>9</sup> Definition of ‘partnership’ currently used by The Partnering Initiative “...*Partnership is a cross-sector collaboration in which organisations work together in a transparent, equitable and mutually beneficial way. The partners agree to commit resources, share the risks as well as the benefits to work together towards a sustainable development goal*”. <http://thepartneringinitiative.org/mainpages/why/intro/> (accessed 14 November 2007).
- <sup>10</sup> Miller, J.B. (2000) *Principles of public and private infrastructure delivery*. Kluwer Academic Publishers, London, UK.
- <sup>11</sup> IBA LCGs (also known locally as Site Support Groups – SSGs) are site-based groups, often comprised of volunteers, who are committed to conservation of the site, and connected to the national BirdLife Partner and to a wider national network of IBA LCGs.
- <sup>12</sup> Stattersfield, A.J., Crosby, M.J., Long, A.J. and Wege, D.C. (1998) *Endemic Bird Areas of the World: Priorities for biodiversity conservation*. BirdLife Conservation Series No. 7. BirdLife International, Cambridge, UK. Pp 418-421.
- <sup>13</sup> The IUCN Red List Criteria are used to determine extinction risk and set numerical thresholds for qualification for the three globally threatened categories (Critically Endangered, Endangered and Vulnerable; see *IUCN Red List Categories*). These criteria are based on biological factors related to extinction risk and include rate of decline, population size, area of geographic distribution, and degree of population and distribution fragmentation. The IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria (in English, French or Spanish) can be viewed and downloaded at <http://iucn.org/themes/ssc/redlists/RLcats2001booklet.html> (accessed 16 January 2008).

## BirdLife International

- BirdLife International is a Partnership of people that works together for birds and the environment through shared priorities, programmes and actions.
- Over ten million people support the BirdLife Partnership of over 100 national non-governmental conservation organisations and their local groups.
- A decentralised Secretariat coordinates activities, disseminates information and provides services to the Partner organisations. Together, the Partners form a powerful global conservation movement working at local, national, regional and global levels.



## The Important Bird Area Programme of BirdLife International

- The function of the Important Bird Areas (IBA) Programme is to identify, protect and manage a network of sites that are important for the long-term conservation of the world's birds.
- The IBA Programme is global in scale and more than 10,000 IBAs have already been identified worldwide, using standard, internationally recognised criteria for selection.
- IBAs are selected because they hold bird species that are threatened with extinction, have highly restricted distributions, or are characteristic of particular biomes. Sites holding exceptionally large numbers of congregatory birds also qualify.
- This network may be considered as a minimum set of sites critical for the long-term viability of wild bird populations, across the range of those birds species for which a site-based approach is appropriate.
- The programme aims to guide the implementation of national policies and strategies which support conservation and sustainable development. This includes advocating the links between biodiversity conservation and people's livelihoods, and providing support to communities for sustainable environmental management.



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