

BirdLife: Supporting implementation of the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas (POWPA)

- **BirdLife is a global network of over 100 autonomous national NGOs which has used standardised criteria to identify more than 10,000 key biodiversity areas for birds (known as Important Bird Areas- IBAs).**
- **The Partnership's key strategic objective is to identify, document, protect, monitor and promote the effective conservation of IBAs around the world. Only half of all identified terrestrial IBAs have protected area status.**
- **Several BirdLife Partners own reserves while others manage or co-manage reserves on behalf of Governments. The BirdLife Partnership is responsible for over 6,000 reserves covering about 78 million hectares.**
- **BirdLife has pioneered conservation site planning and management approaches that are relevant to protected areas gap analysis (IBA identification methodology), monitoring (IBA monitoring protocol) and governance (participation of IBA Local Conservation Groups).**

A. BirdLife International Partnership – A Brief Introduction

BirdLife International (BirdLife) is a global network of over 100 autonomous national NGOs and 6 regional offices working at the international, regional, national and local level to conserve birds, biodiversity and ecosystem services. BirdLife Partners are actively working with other NGOs and government agencies to achieve their conservation goals. A major part of BirdLife's work programme involves the promotion of Important Bird Areas (IBAs), and more recently Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs¹) as protected areas. Since 1994, the BirdLife Partnership has supported the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) through its direct and/or indirect involvement in Protected Area (PA) work². To date, many IBAs (and KBAs) have received legal protection and/or management assistance through these efforts. A milestone in collaboration with the CBD was the appointment of BirdLife as one of only four International Thematic Focal Points³ for the CBD Clearing House Mechanism (CHM) in 2003. With this recognition, the CBD has adopted BirdLife's data on globally threatened birds, IBAs and Endemic Bird Areas (EBAs), which are freely available to CBD Contracting Parties.

The Important Bird Areas programme aims to identify, monitor and protect a global network of IBAs for the conservation of the world's birds and other biodiversity. Essentially, IBAs support one (or more) of the following three functions: i) *holding significant numbers of one or more globally threatened species*; ii) *are one of a set of sites that together hold a suite of restricted-range species or biome-restricted species*; and iii) *and/or have exceptionally large numbers of migratory or congregatory species*. IBAs are recognized as key sites for conservation; some small enough to be conserved in their entirety and/or often already part of a protected area. However, many IBAs do not enjoy legal status from their government authorities. The selection of IBAs is the responsibility of respective BirdLife national partners, with the BirdLife Secretariat taking the lead on international aspects. As of June 2009, there are more than 10,018 confirmed IBAs with a total area of over 1,070 million ha globally. The IBA network is almost completed for most regions and efforts are being made to address remaining 'gaps' (e.g. USA, Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Central Asia). A closer examination of the IBA information in the World Bird Database (WBDB) showed that 5,069 IBAs overlap with PAs (**Table 1**).

¹ Key Biodiversity Areas defined as, 'sites of global significance for biodiversity conservation'. The concept was developed with the recognition of three international conservation organization viz. BirdLife International, PlantLife International and Conservation International.

² The BirdLife Partnership adopted the IUCN's policy on protected areas as the de-facto protected areas policy for BirdLife in the 1st Global Conference in 1994

³ "Centres of excellence that can provide relevant and appropriate information on specific themes directly relevant to the Convention on Biological Diversity; as well as experience and expertise on such themes at the international level" (Thomas 2004).

Table 1: Regional breakdown of IBA status (as of 15 June 2009)

Region	Total No. of Important Bird Areas (IBAs)			Total area of IBAs under protected area status (ha)
	With Protected Area Status	Without Protected Area Status	Grand Total of IBAs	
Africa	662	532	1,194	212,474,527
Asia	1,334	1,325	2,659	234,576,051
Pacific	203	164	367	216,672,631
Middle East	90	291	381	26,777,660
Europe	2,167	1,671	3,838	116,623,884
Americas	613	966	1,579	263,003,383
Global	5,069	4,949	10,018	1,070,128,136

The identification of IBAs has also significantly contributed to the advancement of other international conventions primarily the Ramsar Convention, UNESCO World Heritage Sites and UNESCO Man and Biosphere (MAB) Reserves. Fig 1 shows the contribution of IBAs to these international conventions. By far, IBAs have had most impact on the Ramsar Convention and UNESCO MAB Reserve. Following pie-charts (Fig 2) are showing percentage contribution of IBAs towards potential Wetlands of International Importance in different regions.

Fig.1: International protection designations and proportion of IBA representation (As of 15 June 2009)

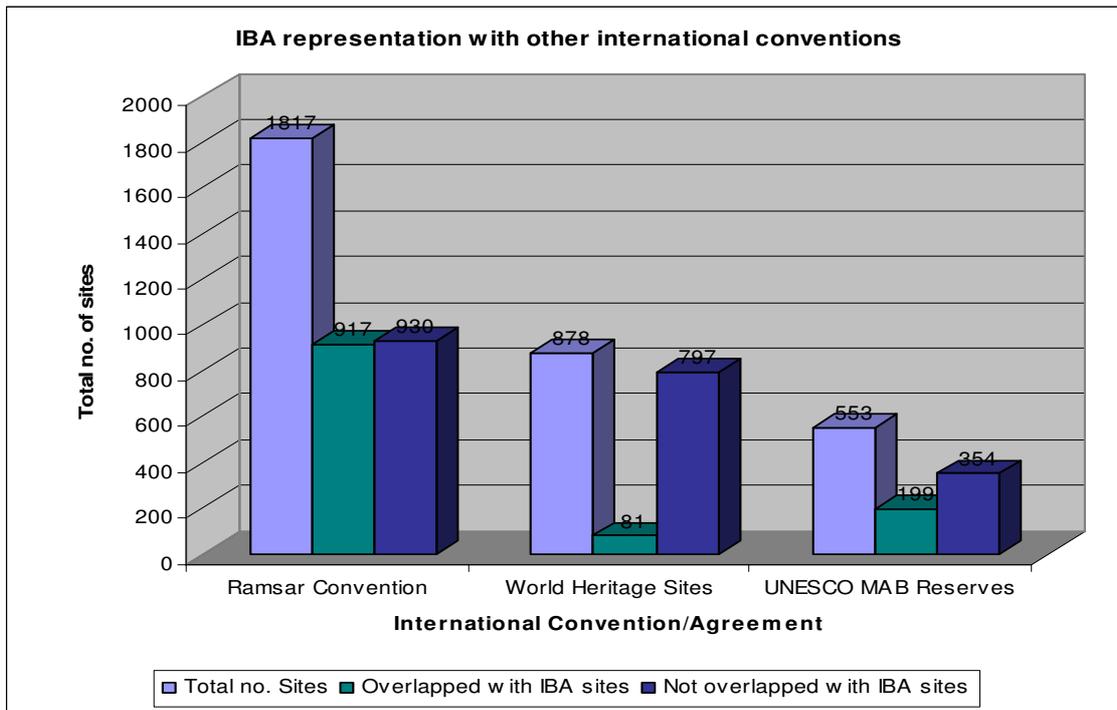
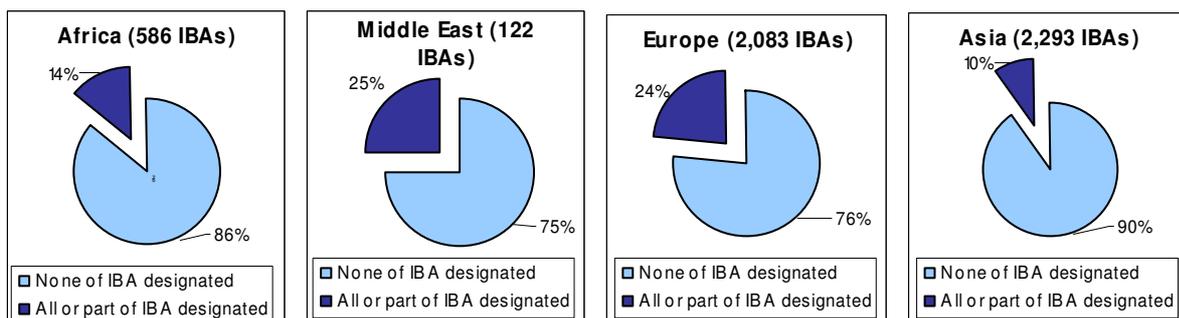


Fig 2: Many IBAs qualify as 'Wetlands of International Importance', according to the criteria of the Convention on Wetlands, but many have not yet been nominated for the designation by governments (Source, SOWB, 2004)



B. BirdLife Partnership's Contribution to the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas

To address concerns surrounding the effectiveness of PAs, an ambitious and comprehensive 'Programme of Work on Protected Areas' (PoWPA; decision VII/28) was adopted at the CBD's 7th Conference of the Parties (CoP 7) in Kuala Lumpur in 2004. The primary purpose of the PoWPA is to 'support the establishment and maintenance, by 2010 for terrestrial and 2012 for marine areas, of comprehensive, effectively managed, ecologically representative national and regional systems of protected areas'⁴ (SCBD, 2004). The achievements of PoWPA will simultaneously contribute to the objectives of the Strategic Plan of CBD, the 2010 Biodiversity Target, and the poverty alleviation and sustainable development targets of the Millennium Development Goals. Since the implementation of PoWPA, more than 2,300 new terrestrial PAs and 50 new marine PAs, covering approximately 50 million ha have been established⁵ (SCBD, 2008).

The BirdLife Partnership strongly believes that the CBD PoWPA presents an opportunity to advance the CBD objectives with concrete programmes and within the right time-frame. In 2004, BirdLife was part of the Joint NGO Commitment to support governments with technical and assistance in the implementation of the PoWPA across a broad range of areas. The Partnership's activities have significantly contributed to strengthening PAs in all the countries where BirdLife is present. In most cases, an active working relationship exists between BirdLife partners and the PA authorities for the improvement of PAs/IBAs and sustainable use of natural resources and environmental services. BirdLife Partnership's contributions to the CBD PoWPA can be categorized into four broad elements.

Element 1: Direct actions for planning, selecting, establishing, strengthening, and managing protected area system

Across all regions, nearly all BirdLife partners have either completed or are in the process of completing, their IBA listing, which is used to advocate for the establishment or expansion of PAs. BirdLife Partners are often recognized in their countries as having the necessary skills, knowledge and experiences in designing or updating PA management plans. Many BirdLife partners are also engaged in rehabilitating habitats or degraded ecosystems which contribute to establishing ecological networks, corridors and/or buffer zones in the European, African and Americas regions. Several BirdLife partners such as Nature Seychelles (BirdLife in Seychelles), Georgian Centre for the Conservation of Wildlife (GCCW) (BirdLife in Georgia), and Malaysian Nature Society (MNS) (BirdLife in Malaysia) have helped their national governments by preparing background studies leading to the completion of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs). The BirdLife Africa Partnership has also developed seven international and 15 national Species Action Plans (SAPs), which contributes to the Article 8(K) of the CBD⁶ (Anon. 2007a). Several countries from different regions have developed their national SAPs for all of their globally threatened species e.g., Guyra Paraguay (BirdLife in Paraguay), Association 'Les Amis des Oiseaux' (AAO) (BirdLife in Tunisia), Nature Seychelles have developed national SAPs for all of their globally threatened species (Anon. 2007b⁷; Essetti and Ayache 1996⁸).

Many BirdLife partners are involved in core management of 'PAs' and 'Reserves' on behalf of government authorities to develop management plans for the sites. For example, the Bahamas National Trust (BNT) (BirdLife in the Bahamas) and the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) (BirdLife in Jordan) manage the entire national system of PAs and are the *de facto* PA authorities in their countries. BirdLife partners own and manage many reserves in all continents. The partnership is responsible for over 6,000 reserves totalling about 78 million ha covering many regions. For example, in the UK, the RSPB manages 182 nature reserves covering 131,630 ha or 0.54% of country's land.

Many BirdLife partners, especially in Africa, have developed site-based planning and management activities. Through government and civil society partnerships, capacity strengthening initiatives have been undertaken for gap analysis, and promoting local participation through the Site Support Group⁹ approach. There are many partners in the European and African region assisting their respective PA authorities for the restoration and rehabilitation of PAs. Similarly, many BirdLife partners in Europe are taking urgent measures to halt illegal exploitations of PA/IBA resources through improved governance and strict enforcement.

In many countries, BirdLife Partners have been actively supporting gap analyses. IBAs have been used in conducting national gap analysis in Vietnam¹⁰ (Wege et al., 1999). Similarly, KBAs are being used for gap analysis in Turkey,

⁴ SCBD. 2004. *Programme of Work on Protected Areas (CBD Programmes of Work)*. Montreal: Secretariat of the Convention of Biological Diversity.

⁵ SCBD. 2008. *Implementation of the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas: Progress and Perspectives. Abstracts of Poster Presentations at the Second Meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Protected Areas, 11–15 February, 2008 in Rome, Italy*. Montreal: Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. (CBD Technical Series no. 35)

⁶ Anon. 2007a. Spanning Africa. *World Birdwatch* 29 (3): 15-17

⁷ Anon. 2007b. Protecting Paraguay's birds in perpetuity. *World Birdwatch* 29 (3): 18-21.

⁸ Essetti, I. and Ayache, F. 1996. Protecting birds in Tunisia. *World Birdwatch* 18 (2): 17-19.

⁹ SSGs are organized, independent groups of voluntary individuals who work in partnership with relevant stakeholders, to promote conservation and sustainable development at IBAs and other key biodiversity sites. They are one of the practical ways of achieving conservation by the local communities. (BirdLife African Partnership website)

¹⁰ Wege, D. C., Long, A. J., May Ky Vinh, Vu Van Dung and Eames, J. C. (1999) *Expanding the protected areas network in Vietnam for the 21st century: an analysis of the current system with recommendations for equitable expansion*. Hanoi, Vietnam: BirdLife International Vietnam Programme

Madagascar, Kenya and many other countries. Recently, a regional gap analysis was also conducted for the ASEAN region¹¹ (BirdLife International and IUCN-WCPA South-East Asia, 2007).

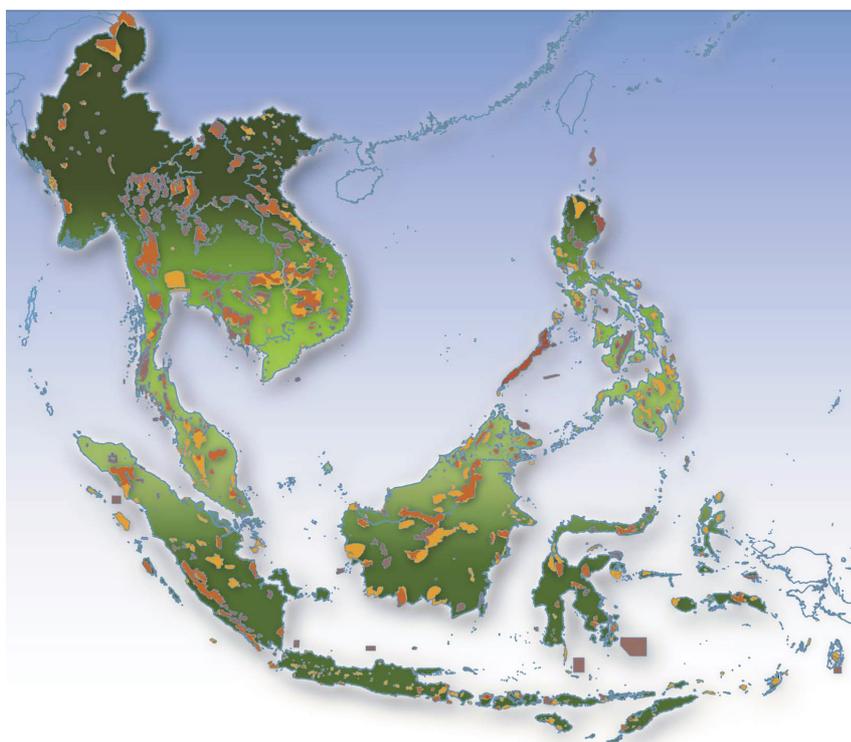


Fig 3: Gap analysis of Protected Area coverage in the ASEAN countries

Keys:

- Important Bird Areas (IBAs)
- Protected Areas (PAs)
- IBAs and PAs overlap

BirdLife Partnership is currently undertaking an analysis of climate change impacts on IBAs. The BirdLife African Partnership is collaborating with the RSPB and the University of Durham, UK to implement the ‘Conservation in the Face of Climate Change’ project. The project is using models to assess possible impacts of climate change on bird distributions in Africa’s network of IBAs.

BirdLife Partnership has also initiated National Implementation Support Partnerships (NISPs)¹² in Sierra Leone and Timor Leste, and is also an active collaborator in other countries such as Bahamas, Brazil, Ecuador, Indonesia and Palau. In Timor Leste, BirdLife is working with the government to identify, establish and manage a national network of PAs. Such actions have significantly contributed to the development of government-civil society partnerships, identification of suitable sites for PA establishment, national awareness, and long-term funding mechanisms. The BirdLife Partnership is also actively involved in advocacy for government commitments under the ‘Micronesia Challenge’ and the ‘Caribbean Challenge’ as well as being part of the Global Islands Partnership (GLISPA)¹³. The Micronesia and Caribbean Challenges comprise substantial commitments to the conservation of significant proportions of their terrestrial and marine PAs, by several island states, towards fulfilling their obligations to the CBD.

Element 2: Governance, Participation, Equity and Benefit Sharing

The breadth of experience that the BirdLife partnership has in terms of managing ‘Reserves’ contributes in promoting a broad set of PA governance. Many BirdLife partners own, lease, co-manage or manage on behalf of their governments, PAs and private reserves. For e.g., half of BirdLife’s European partners own, lease or manage ‘reserves’. Five BirdLife Partners (Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Belize, Bahamas, Cuba and Suriname) are *de facto* PA authorities in their countries. Collectively, they are responsible for 114 PAs totalling over 76 million ha. Not surprisingly, the development of the Site Support Groups (SSG) or other similar Local Conservation Group (LCG) approaches (e.g.; Local Caretaker Network) have enabled many BirdLife partners to engage actively in site-based participatory and governance process via SSG/LCGs. This is highly visible across the African and Americas regions where local communities are vitally dependent upon the PA/IBA’s natural resources (mostly NTFPs) and services for their livelihoods. In Europe, the LCGs are more predominant which assist PA authorities in monitoring biodiversity in PAs or IBAs. Some BirdLife partners, particularly in Africa, were able to demonstrate that sustainable livelihood projects around PAs/IBAs do contribute in poverty alleviation and increase social benefits.

¹¹ BirdLife International and IUCN-WCPA South-east Asia. 2007. *Gap analysis of protected areas coverage in the ASEAN countries*. Cambridge, UK: BirdLife International

¹² These are formal agreements, signed by coalitions of government agencies and NGOs, provide a mechanism for collaborative action to implement the CBD PoWPA at the national level. Most of these agreements focus on early actions required under the programme of work including development of targets.

¹³ Available at, <http://www.cbd.int/island/glispa.shtml>



Fig 4: Mere Valu, Some members of Natewa Tunuloa community are already highly committed to the protection of their forests (Source: Maaike Manten)

BirdLife Partnership has developed and extended its working relationships with Site Support Groups (SSGs) at community level. The approach is designed to foster genuine partnerships with local communities to achieve conservation goals at important sites (BirdLife International 2007¹⁴, 2008¹⁵). It has established a small grant scheme for local community groups to demonstrate the link between PAs and local people's livelihoods. In 2004-05, such grant was provided to twenty SSGs in developing countries. The empowerment of African SSGs has resulted in improved conservation status of IBAs (some of which are PAs) and better management and utilization of natural resources and ecosystem services for local livelihoods (Arinaitwe 2001¹⁶; Coulthard 2002¹⁷). Additionally, these positive changes also contributed significantly to the MDGs; poverty and hunger (goal 1), primary education (goal 2), gender equality and women empowerment (goal 3), maternal health (goal 5) and ensuring environmental sustainability (goal 7) (Arinaitwe 2004¹⁸; and Langley 2005¹⁹).

Many countries in Africa and Americas regions have clearly demonstrated the sustainable use of natural resources in PAs/IBAs. Through various alternative income generation activities such as avitourism, non-destructive agricultural activities and others, the best use of natural resources in a PA/IBA is captured without degrading it (Arinaitwe 2004; Langley 2004²⁰, 2005; Young 1995²¹; Berruti and Botha 2002²²; and Pritchard and Stacey 2007²³).

Element 3: Enabling Activities

Nearly all BirdLife partners are conducting Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) programmes. It includes various activities like media exposure, site visits and public lecturers/talks on various biodiversity themes including PAs/IBAs. Some of the BirdLife partners are *de facto* PA agencies and have incorporated PA-specific CEPA materials and programmes into their national school curriculums. Many BirdLife partners are well noted for their competence and having skills to deliver capacity-building programmes such as organizing workshops/trainings for SSGs, LCGs and the PA/IBA authorities in monitoring/evaluation, programme management and other relevant issues. For example; Nature Seychelles has recently conducted a highly successful Experience Exchange Programme for PA practitioners. Similarly, in Jordan, the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) offers conservation and environmental protection trainings to NGOs and government organizations.

¹⁴ BirdLife International. 2007. *The BirdLife International Partnership: Conserving biodiversity, improving livelihoods*. Cambridge: BirdLife International

¹⁵ BirdLife International. 2008. *Building Partnerships: Working together for conservation and development*. Cambridge, UK: BirdLife International

¹⁶ Arinaitwe, J. 2001. BirdLife's Sustainable Biodiversity Action Programme. *World Birdwatch* 23 (3): 10-12

¹⁷ Coulthard, N. 2002. *Impacts and lessons learned from The "African NGO-Government Partnerships for Sustainable Biodiversity Action" Project*. Cambridge, UK: BirdLife International. (Unpublished)

¹⁸ Arinaitwe, J. 2004. SSGs: a little goes a long way in Africa. *World Birdwatch* 26 (1): 25-26

¹⁹ Langley, N. 2005. Local Groups scoring Goals. *World Birdwatch* 27 (3): 18-20

²⁰ Langley, N. 2004. Communities sustain Sumba's forests. *World Birdwatch* 26 (4): 15-16

²¹ Young, J. 1995. A feather in our cap. *World Birdwatch* 17 (1): 14-17

²² Berruti, A. and Botha, A. 2002. Revitalising the local economy through bird tourism. *World Birdwatch* 24 (2): 25-28

²³ Pritchard, D. and Stacey, J. 2007. BirdLife South Africa is growing routes. *World Birdwatch* 29 (1): 25-28



Fig 5: Public consultation and capacity strengthening for Protected Area Management in Madagascar (Source: Asity Madagascar)

The BirdLife Partnership is actively involved in PA financing programmes that include activities like hosting workshops and implementing programmes. Some recent workshops were focused on raising awareness among key national/regional policy makers and campaigning for the political commitment for the PAs in Africa. Some other workshops had provided clear evidences on the range of benefits conserving biodiversity yields, and translating current understanding into policy relevant messages and evidence. BirdLife Partners have recently developed some innovative programmes in the PA financing system like implementing conservation concessions and trust funds. Two BirdLife Partners, the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) and the RSPB are supporting Sierra Leone Government to establish a USD10 million trust fund to manage 75,000 ha of Gola Forest, which is one of the few surviving blocks of the once extensive Upper Guinea Forest in Africa. Similarly in South-East Asia region, Burung Indonesia (BirdLife in Indonesia) and the RSPB with support from other BirdLife partners are seeking to establish a USD15 million trust fund to manage the Harapan Rainforest, approximately 100,000 ha of highly threatened Sumatran lowland rainforest²⁴ (Anon. 2007c).

Element 4: Standards, Assessment and Monitoring

BirdLife partners are actively involved in biodiversity assessment (mostly focusing on bird species) through surveys and research activities such as species-specific, bird ringing and ecological assessment. Many partners implement or participate in monitoring programmes at PA/IBA sites. For example, some African partners are currently using the Pressure-State-Response (PSR) monitoring framework to monitor IBA/PA sites at the national level. In some countries, BirdLife partners also work in partnership with various government agencies, organizations bringing together a host of skills and experiences in addressing the knowledge gap on biodiversity in PAs/IBAs. To assess the current status of birds and PAs/IBAs, many BirdLife partners employ appropriate technologies to monitor bird species by using bird atlassing, satellite tracking and GIS mapping. Monitoring activities also include the use of electronic databases and the GIS mapping by some European partners. In the African region, community-based site monitoring is demonstrated via the adoption of the PSR framework.



Fig 6: Participatory monitoring in Pugu Forests to raise conservation awareness amongst local people (Source: Jasson John – WCST)

BirdLife has also devised a simple site monitoring protocol that BirdLife partners are implementing with the involvement of local communities. In some countries, such as Kenya, it is being used to monitor the condition of, threats to, and responses of concerning parties about the progress of PAs/IBAs.

²⁴ Anon. 2007c. Forest of hope. *World Birdwatch* 29 (4): 14-17