

African NGO-Government Partnerships for
Sustainable Biodiversity Action Project
RAF/97/G31

FINAL PROJECT EVALUATION

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Executive Summary

The Terminal Evaluation of the African NGO-Government Partnerships for Sustainable Biodiversity Action Project (RAF/97/G31/1G/31) was conducted between 6 and 31 January 2003 by two independent international consultants. This five-year regional project sought to enhance biodiversity conservation in Africa through local and national NGO-Government partnerships in the Important Bird Area process. It was implemented by 10 of the 18 African NGO members of the Council for the Africa Partnership (CAP) of BirdLife International, viz. Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia and Uganda. The two Evaluators only visited 4 of the 10 countries, and the findings and conclusions reflect this.

Overall, the Evaluators found this to be an innovative, well-executed and successful regional project. It proved to be a good means of channelling international assistance in conservation down to the local level. Both national and international NGO partners functioned well, although some national NGOs are still fragile. Important links with government were established through a National Liaison Committee, bringing in NGOs as conservation partners. The IBA approach has shown itself to be a useful and appropriate means to focus conservation action, but with limitations regarding conservation of the full range of a county's biodiversity. Likewise, Site Support Groups show great promise in implementing conservation action in a number of circumstances where conservation focus can be maintained. It is recommended that GEF continue to work through such international and national NGOs.

The project was complex in its design, with a number of intertwined activities operating at a range of levels from local through national to regional. It was fundamentally about developing the capacity of people and NGOs to carry out site conservation in an effective way, and with the support of government. There were four important aspects to the project design:

- execution by national non-governmental organisations,
- co-ordination and mentoring of the partner national NGOs by their international NGO secretariat,
- use of the site-based, internationally-accepted Important Bird Area approach to identify conservation targets,
- use of local community groups to adopt and spearhead conservation action at individual site level, the Site Support Groups.

The project retained a good balance between activities such as capacity development, conservation on the ground, and efforts towards sustainability. One particular innovation was the necessity by national partners to leverage additional funding in order to achieve one of the main project outputs - conservation action on the ground. Most did this well, leading to greater organisational confidence and sustainability. It was often difficult to disentangle impacts and achievements due to the GEF project from those resulting from other conservation projects being carried out by national partners. This is recognised as a sign of maturity, both in design and in integration of activity within the organisation.

The project was perhaps too ambitious, both conceptually and in terms of expected outputs, but the individual national partners and the NGO partnership rose to the challenge. Better results may have been achieved if only eight had been involved, enabling co-ordination and support to be more focused. In particular, the project design did not adequately account for those partners that were poorly established at project initiation and those that did not receive substantial core

funding from other organisations, such as the RSPB. Activities envisaged were the same for all NGOs, but with differing levels of achievement expected.

One project design weakness was the poorly articulated communication strategy for project activities and results, including advocacy. There was also poor articulation of regional objectives, particularly shown in the unclear role of the Sub-Regional Co-ordinators and the Technical Advisory Group. An opportunity was lost here to develop a stronger regional overview and voice in advocacy.

Project implementation was generally smooth with activities being carried out in a cost-effective manner. In great measure this was due to the involvement of dynamic, committed and competent individuals at both national and regional levels, the sense of national ownership and the strong base of the BirdLife Partnership. Mentoring and support of national partners by BirdLife International was very good, although more strategic guidance to partners could have been given.

National NGOs have shown themselves to be efficient and effective implementers of biodiversity conservation; lessons are rapidly learned and implemented. The use of a regional organisation to retain a broader conservation vision is important. Capacity of the national NGOs to carry out international projects, raise and administer funds was greatly increased during the lifetime of the project, as was that of many individuals involved and the BirdLife Africa Partnership. However, this did not generally extend to government institutions or other national NGOs. Although many national partners were transformed in their approach to conservation, some of the smaller ones remain fragile, dependent on a few committed individuals and an unreliable stream of donor funding. Attention needs to be given by the NGOs to identifying their “niche”, their relative strengths and the direction they wish to go, and also to the manner in which they wish to operate.

One of the great successes of the project was the establishment of good relations between NGO partners and conservation agencies of national governments, a relationship that had often previously been fraught with suspicion. This was achieved both by the establishment of a broadly based National Liaison Committee (NLC) and by personal contacts. In some countries the NLC has broadened its mandate and will be acting in future as a forum for discussion on national conservation issues or as a way of involving NGOs in national conservation planning. In others it will probably become defunct, but the working relationships established may well be maintained. Relations between the national NGO partners and local government or other nationally active conservation NGOs were generally much less developed.

The Important Bird Area approach to conservation has shown itself to be a valuable tool. Sites are identified using internationally accepted criteria, which are a good entry point for monitoring of conservation impact. Sites are smaller and easier to envisage than ecosystems or habitats to the local population, and hence it is easier to motivate for conservation action. There appears to be some confusion on whether the identified IBA sites in each country are primarily for bird conservation, to be complemented by additional sites for other aspects of biodiversity, or whether they are a good surrogate for all biodiversity. This needs to be addressed at national level. The IBA process needs to be an integral part of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, rather than developed separately as a national IBA conservation strategy.

One of the major weaknesses in implementation of the IBA approach has been the inadequacy of site monitoring. Targets and indicators have not been clearly articulated for most sites, and there appears to be no clear mechanism for analysing and feeding back findings into site management.

Site Support Groups have shown themselves to be a good avenue for getting conservation action implemented on the ground through involvement of local communities. They are also a potential mechanism for articulating and feeding local concerns to national level. In some countries they represent a new approach, and have created much interest among government and other conservation agencies. From the evidence seen, their continued success and focus on conservation targets is doubtful in a number of cases. Potential success would appear to depend on national political and site circumstances, as well as on their own composition, structure and aspirations. Many still require much input of time and funding to maintain; they may not be the most cost-effective means of conservation when funding and other resources are limited. A strategy is required to wean them off significant external support and to ensure conservation objectives continue to be met. In the desire to involve communities, care must be taken to ensure other means of site and bird conservation, e.g. existing protected areas, are not lost sight of.

The project was better than most regional projects; it addressed appropriate issues and benefited from a regional approach. Its regional nature allowed valuable exchange of experiences between national NGOs. It helped create a critical mass of conservationists across the continent, and also increased the credibility of national partners and the acceptability of their activities. Although the project was regional, activities were primarily national with international co-ordination and support - an opportunity was lost for a regional overview and advocacy.

Twenty-two recommendations are given to both UNDP/GEF and to national partners. Major ones include: that GEF should continue to work through NGOs for conservation; that further evaluation needs to be done on the success of SSGs and the sustainable role of NGOs in conservation; that monitoring of conservation impact at sites needs to be improved; that a communications strategy needs to be developed to promulgate the IBA approach and activities to the broader conservation community; that core funding is still required for many NGOs; that the good liaison that NGOs have developed with government in each country is built upon; and that conservation targets need to be clearly articulated for each site and kept sight of by management.

List of Acronyms

AAO	Association "Les Amis des Oiseaux" (Tunisia)
APRM	Annual Planning and Review Meeting
BLI	BirdLife International
BLIS	BirdLife International Secretariat
CAP	Council for the Africa Partnership (of BirdLife International)
CBCS	Cameroon Biodiversity Conservation Society
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBNRM	Community-Based Natural Resource Management
EWNHS	Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GWS	Ghana Wildlife Society
IBA	Important Bird Area
MTE	Mid-Term Evaluation
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NIBACS	National IBA Conservation Strategies
NLC	National Liaison Committee
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PDF	Project Development Funds (GEF)
PLG	Project Liaison Group
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SRC	Sub-Regional Co-ordinator
SSG	Site Support Group
STAP	Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Evaluation

This UNDP GEF project “*African NGO-Government Partnerships for Sustainable Biodiversity Action*” was launched in April 1998 and finished in December 2002. The project has a regional component and activities in 10 African countries. In line with the procedures of UNDP/GEF and the other project partners, a final evaluation should be undertaken to provide an objective assessment of the project and its implementation. The Evaluation should address all issues related to the project, including design, management, implementation, monitoring and lessons learnt. In line with the specific ToR for this evaluation (see Annex 1), the evaluation should also:

- identify strengths and weaknesses in implementation;
- assess level of achievement of the intended impact and potential for sustainability;
- capture lessons in project design, implementation and management; and
- make recommendations regarding specific actions that might be taken in future projects.

1.2 Key Issues Addressed and Structure of the Report

The project is complex in its structure and hence difficult to evaluate. There are a number of intertwined innovations, and it has activities at a number of different levels and by a range of partners or implementers. It can be evaluated from two differing points of view – that it is about developing capacity of both people and institutions to carry out conservation action, or that it is about achieving actual conservation impact on the ground, measured in terms of biodiversity conserved.

GEF projects should show positive conservation impact, not just increased capacity among conservationists. But the period of the project is really too short to demonstrate this at present. The project, by empowering NGOs to play a role in national conservation (through organisational vision, capacity and government acceptance) and by nurturing a number of professionals in Africa to carry this out (even outside the target NGOs), may have made a significant contribution.

The project has, understandably, evolved since its original formulation and moved on from the original immediate objective of “enhancing biodiversity conservation in Africa through local and national NGO-government partnerships in the Important Bird Area process”. Given that this evolution has been consensual, and given the experimental nature of the project, we intend to evaluate it primarily on the basis of what it has evolved into, rather than against the original logframe, although the latter has also been done (see Achievements, Section 3.3).

The Terms of Reference for the Evaluation (Annex 1) requested that four key issues of concern to the project and its implementation be assessed and considered. These are: (i) the impact and usefulness of the mid-term evaluation exercise (undertaken in May/June 2000); (ii) the fact that at project outset the implementing agencies in the 10 different countries were at very different levels of organisational development; (iii) the appropriateness of using the existing network of partners within the BirdLife International partnership as national implementing partners; and (iv) the comparative advantages of regional approaches vis-à-vis the alternative of implementing separate projects in each country.

Apart from the obvious project attributes to evaluate – project design, implementation, achievements, capacity built – the Evaluation Team identified four interesting aspects that emerged during project implementation and that merit being specifically addressed. These are: (a) the use of birds, IBAs and a site-based approach to conservation, (b) the use of site-based conservation action groups, (c) the utility and value of NGOs as partners for government and others involved in conservation, and (d) the benefits of a regional approach with co-ordination and co-operation between countries.

In order to address the standard demands of an evaluation report, but also to draw out all important lessons from such an innovative and complex project, this report is divided into five Sections. Section 1 provides an introduction to the evaluation and its overall purpose. Section 2 describes the context to the project, its historical development and what it set out to achieve. Section 3 provides the main body of the evaluation team's findings. Within this, Sections 3.1 to 3.3 describe the findings and conclusions with regard to project design and formulation, project implementation, and overall project achievements, respectively. Section 3.4 then discusses six fundamental aspects that cut across or underlie all elements of the project design and implementation. The six issues are:

1. Project achievements and limitations in terms of capacity building, particularly at the level of national NGOs.
2. The development and use of partnerships in conservation action, in particular partnerships between NGOs and national governments.
3. The use of NGOs (specifically national BirdLife partners) in implementing conservation activities and in the execution of GEF projects.
4. The effectiveness and appropriateness of the site-based approach to conservation, specifically the use of IBAs with their scientifically based criteria for site selection. Issues related to monitoring and conservation science are also covered here.
5. The use and promotion of the Site Support Group (SSG) approach in carrying out site-based conservation actions on the ground, giving local communities responsibility and ownership.
6. The relative advantage of a regional approach, integrated and co-ordinated across a number of countries, rather than a series of national projects.

Section 4 provides 22 recommendations, noting which concern international or national project stakeholders. Section 5 summarises the lessons learnt from the project. Annex 2 gives a detailed itinerary of the Evaluation Mission, Annex 3 lists persons met and documentation reviewed, Annex 4 gives an outline of questions asked, and Annex 5 gives brief accounts of the six field sites visited.

1.3 Methodology of the Evaluation

The Evaluation commenced with the commissioning of 10 country-based evaluation reports to be prepared by independent national consultants in each of the participating countries. These national evaluations only covered the activities of the national implementing agency in the country. Next, the International Evaluation Team (henceforth the *Team*) was provided with general documentation regarding the project formulation, design, implementation and impacts. The Team then met in Nairobi, Kenya with key project partners, notably UNDP/GEF, BirdLife International, RSPB, and the National Project Managers from the BirdLife Partner NGOs in each country. Following an initial briefing, the Team participated in the final Annual Planning and Review Meeting (APRM) at Naivasha, Kenya. During this meeting, the Team was able to hold individual discussions with many key individuals, particularly the national project managers¹. The Team also collected and reviewed related documentation. By the end of the APRM, approximately half of the national evaluation reports were available in draft form for review.

The next stage in evaluation consisted of an in-depth assessment of activities at national and local levels. Prior to the country visits, the team developed a framework for guiding discussions and questions (Annex 4). For logistical and financial reasons, it was not possible for the Team to visit all 10 participating countries. The Team was requested to select three countries to visit as case studies. The aim of these case studies was not to evaluate the three countries specifically, but to use them as a means of understanding and evaluating the project as a whole. The Team felt that in selecting countries it should aim to: (i) visit as a Team at least one country in both East and West Africa; (ii) visit at least one country which, at project outset, had a strong NGO partner and a relatively advanced IBA process, and one that had a relatively immature NGO partner; (iii) visit at least one Anglophone and at least one Francophone country; and (iv) visit countries that are more representative of the Africa region as a whole, so that the lessons learnt could be applicable to a largest number.

¹ For logistical reasons the Tunisia and Cameroon National Project Managers were unable to attend the Review Meeting and were unavailable for individual discussions at this time.

Based on the above criteria, the Team visited Ghana for one week, and then one Team member (J. Timberlake) visited Ethiopia and the other (D. Fenton) visited Cameroon. In each country, the team members met with key national stakeholders and visited two IBA sites. A short report on the IBA site visits in these countries is provided in Annex 5.² The Team then met up again in Nairobi in order to prepare the Evaluation Report, and to briefly visit the Kenya national project. Draft findings were presented to the BirdLife International Secretariat and members of NatureKenya, and their verbal comments were incorporated into a Draft Evaluation Report. Finally, the Draft was circulated to all project stakeholders who were given one month to provide comments. Comments focused primarily on (i) the involvement of the partners in project development, (ii) issues concerning the role of the Sub-Regional Co-ordinators and support for weaker partners, (iii) the sustainability and conservation impact of SSGs, (iv) regional products and how regional the project was or could have been, and (v) the need for more examples. The Team Leader (J. Timberlake) used the comments provided to correct, add to or clarify the Draft to prepare a Final Evaluation Report.

In general, the national evaluation reports provided a simple, positive listing of project activities and outputs. They did not greatly contribute to the Team's assessment of the project's impact. As the Evaluators only evaluated three countries in detail out of the 10, examples primarily come from these. This has also, of necessity, influenced the Team's conclusions and Lessons Learned. The report remains our observations and perceptions from extensive interviews and often probing questioning of national project managers and international stakeholders, and three country visits. It cannot be considered fully comprehensive or necessarily applicable to all partners.

² Country reports were prepared for these three countries and presented to the national teams. Copies are available at the BirdLife International Secretariat office in Nairobi.

2. The Project and its Development Context

2.1 Project History, Start-up and Duration

Established in 1994, BirdLife International (BLI)³ is a global partnership NGO with a Secretariat (BLIS) based in the UK. Recently (at GEF project termination), an Africa office has been established in Nairobi. In the early 1990s, BLI, with the support of its African partners, initiated a process targeting the conservation of globally important bird biodiversity in Africa. By 1994, with the process underway in some countries, BLI and 19 of its African partners (the *BirdLife Africa Partnership*) approached UNDP/GEF for support in furthering this process. With PDF A and PDF B support, BLI and its partners undertook a region-wide consultation and assessment to clarify the issues, to design the project activities, to establish appropriate working relations with government agencies, to select the most appropriate countries for initial action, and to develop a GEF proposal. This proposal, which focused GEF support into 10 countries⁴ across Africa, was approved in mid-1997 and the UNDP project document in early 1998.

Project activities started in 8 of the 10 countries in the second half of 1998. Activities started approximately 15 months late in Sierra Leone (due to in-country security problems) and Tunisia (due to institutional complications). By January 2003, all partner countries had completed their planned activities, with the exception of Tunisia, which had requested a six-month extension with no budget increase.

The GEF contribution to the project was US\$ 4.52 million (including PDF A and PDF B activities). According to the approved GEF Project Brief and UNDP Project Document, project co-financing was US\$ 7.117 million. The main sources of this co-financing are the BirdLife International Partnership, RSPB, European Union, UK/Darwin Initiative and the UK Overseas Development Administration. The Brief and Project Document did not provide details of this co-financing in terms of geographical or technical focus.

2.2 Project Context

Although the context varied significantly across the participating countries, some elements of it applied in most or all of them. The most pertinent of these were:

- The process of identifying and describing Important Bird Areas (IBA) was ongoing in many countries across the region. The BirdLife Africa Partnership of national NGOs was implementing this process with support from the BirdLife International Secretariat, often with additional support from RSPB.
- High levels of poverty and limited economic growth in and around biodiversity-rich sites. At the same time, the international donor community is increasingly focusing its attention on poverty alleviation, strengthening governance and economic development;
- A general and growing frustration with the limits to existing approaches to biodiversity conservation, either through enforcing protected areas or through community-based natural resource management schemes;
- The general weakness of local NGOs to effectively influence national development, poor collaboration amongst the members of the conservation community, and the increasing limitations of governments to implement site level biodiversity conservation actions due to decreasing budgets and human resources.

2.3 Project Objectives and Issues Addressed

The overall objective of the project was *to enhance biodiversity conservation in Africa through local and national NGO-government partnerships in the Important Bird Area process.*

³ BirdLife International's predecessor was the International Council for Bird Preservation, ICBP.

⁴ Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia and Uganda

The Important Bird Area process consists of: (i) identifying and inventorying key biodiversity sites using an objective, internationally agreed, scientific process with birds as indicators (the sites are known as *Important Bird Areas* or IBAs); (ii) monitoring IBAs and setting priorities for conservation action at them; (iii) initiating site-level conservation action; and (iv) developing national site conservation programmes in which the cycle of monitoring, action and advocacy is well-established, with security of future funding. In each country, the work is undertaken by national teams under the co-ordination of the BirdLife national partner with technical inputs from BLIS and others. Appropriate participation guarantees that the process belongs to an in-country constituency, which greatly enhances the prospects of conservation action.

The GEF project set out to support and scale-up the ongoing IBA process continent-wide. Specifically, GEF funds were secured to develop existing national IBA programmes in 10 countries. They were also to be used to enhance regional co-ordination and sharing of skills, broaden the institutional base, consolidate sustainability and permit expansion and replication of the process in a further suite of African countries.

The project represented an innovative way of channelling international support to the African biodiversity conservation community. In the project, UNDP/GEF support fed directly into a regional partnership of national NGOs, and aimed to ensure that best international knowledge and practices were adopted through mentorship provided by the BirdLife Secretariat. This is innovative in two aspects. Firstly, other GEF projects of this scale had either worked through national governments or international NGOs. This project would actually build up, and in some countries even construct, NGOs. Secondly, the partnership allowed for a balanced, multi-country approach to develop a working, mutually sustaining network of support to the African conservation community.

2.4 Project Stakeholders

UNDP/GEF represents the project financier. UNDP/GEF played an important role in project development, appraisal and approval. Once projects begin, UNDP/GEF's role is principally technical backstopping, overall guidance, and any necessary trouble-shooting. UNDP/GEF also has a key responsibility in disseminating project lessons and ensuring their uptake in the global conservation community, notably through GEF.

UNOPS is the dedicated execution agency of the UN. As the Executing Agency, UNOPS is responsible for ensuring a timely and appropriate use of financial resources, for the timely distribution of payments, for procuring inputs and services, and for ensuring that the project planning and reporting meet UN standards and procedures.

UNDP Country Office's role may vary from country to country, depending on needs and capacity. The Country Office role may include representing UNDP/GEF and UNOPS in-country, providing technical backstopping, facilitating partnership development, trouble-shooting, and overseeing the disbursement of payments.

BirdLife International Secretariat is the co-ordination hub of all the BirdLife partners across the world. BLIS was the main single driver of project development, and was also the main sub-contractor in the project. As such, its roles in project implementation included: providing co-ordination; providing technical support (i.e. related to birds, conservation, organisational development and project management) to all national partners; facilitating the flow of information, skills and lessons across the countries; ensuring the documentation and dissemination of lessons learnt; and the expansion of the IBA process to other countries in Africa.

National NGO. In each country, the national implementing agency was always the national BLI Partner or Affiliate. The partner varies from country to country. It may be a broad-based, nature conservation society, or it may be a new organisation with a specific focus, e.g. birds. As a project sub-contractor in each country, the respective NGO's role is to manage, co-ordinate and implement all in-country activities, at both national and site level.

Other national stakeholders included government agencies, experts and NGOs. These varied from country to country. Involvement was usually formalised through the National Liaison Committee (NLC).

RSPB, European Partners of BirdLife International and other co-financers played a key role in co-financing project activities, strengthening the national implementing agencies (in many, but not all countries) and providing further technical support. The precise role and involvement varied considerably across the 10 countries.

The Council for African Partners is the highest forum for decision-making and co-ordination of the BirdLife Partnership in Africa. As such, it played a role in guiding the project, in co-ordinating with other activities and in disseminating to non-project countries. The CAP meets annually.

2.5 Expected Project Results

The GEF Project Brief and UNDP Project Document provide a large number of possible, proposed and anticipated project results. These can be divided into three categories, as follows:

- Increased capacity in the conservation community at both national and local level, notably in the BirdLife Partner. This includes an improved policy and legislative framework, strengthened partnerships within the conservation community, strengthened scientific and technical standing, and improved tools for site conservation;
- Local-level conservation impact. Although not a direct result of GEF-funded activities, the project is expected to generate follow-on activities that bring about measurable improvements in the conservation status of many of the IBA sites;
- Regional impact in terms of strengthened co-ordination, improved partnerships and improved information management and flow.

3 Findings and Conclusions

Overall, the Evaluators found this to be a well-executed, innovative and successful regional project. It proved to be a good means of channelling international assistance in conservation down to the local level. Both national and international NGO partners functioned well, although there are concerns on the fragility of national NGOs and sustainability of conservation impacts.

Links with government were established through National Liaison Committees, bringing in NGOs as conservation partners. The IBA approach to conservation shows much promise, allowing a clear identification of targets, but has limitations regarding conservation of the full range of a county's biodiversity. The use of local Site Support Groups as conservation partners can work in some instances, but is not always the most appropriate conservation tool.

The evaluation findings and conclusions are given under three headings covering project design (Section 3.1), project implementation (Section 3.2) and project achievements (Section 3.3). This is followed by a discussion on six broader issues emerging from the project activities and achievements (Section 3.4).

3.1 *Project Design and Formulation*

The project contained a number of innovations, particularly: (1) the use of NGOs as executing partners including for overall co-ordination; (2) the adoption of a scientifically-credible site-based approach to conservation; (3) the use of community Site Support Groups to implement conservation action and take ownership of the process; and (4) the requirement for NGOs to seek and obtain other funding in order to achieve project objectives. The project design was also innovative in that it built upon and into the Africa Partnership of BirdLife International, which appears to be unique in Africa. Each partner is independent and has full autonomy, although some are much weaker than others. There was a merging of interests between national and international partners, greatly encouraged by regular project meetings and the CAP.

- The project was sensitive to regional, national and local ownership, and designed to be adaptable to them. It showed a good balance between the need for regional coherence and the need to be responsive to individual countries needs. The design was flexible and achieved good national ownership. However, it was not clear to the Evaluators to what extent national partners were involved in the formulation process. Implementation was strongly national.
- The GEF project design process was long; there was a multitude of agendas as well as institutions. Did this lead to an improvement in project design and team spirit, or did it detract from potential achievements through loss of momentum and unnecessary compromise? In the case of this project it does not appear to have unduly affected momentum, commitment or direction. The evaluators were told that there were no substantial changes in the design during that period, just recasting in light of changing GEF/UNDP requirements.
- The GEF/STAP review was undertaken immediately prior to submitting the Project Brief to GEF for approval after a long, consultative formulation process. At this late stage, it was difficult for the review to contribute significantly to the technical design of the project.
- No problem was identified or articulated in the project design, hence the relationship between outputs and activities was not clear. For example, was the project aimed at individual capacity building, or at improving NGO-government relations, or at achieving conservation impact at selected sites? Or was it designed to be experimental – seeing what possibilities there were for NGO involvement in conservation and the site based/community involvement approach? We have taken the latter approach in the evaluation.
- The logframe indicators were not very useful in some instances. For example, those relating to the Immediate Objectives: “no IBAs removed”, although there appear to be no criteria for this; “conservation status maintained”, when it is not clear if this refers to legal status (which is of dubious

significance) or species/habitat status; “support for IBA process demonstrated”, which is difficult to measure. The use of such indicators is questionable. Specific activity indicators were better, although some were overly ambitious.

- The project was too ambitious in what it set out to achieve in 5 years, especially given the known very low starting points for some national partners (e.g. Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia) and organisational/legal problems (e.g. Tunisia, Ethiopia). This resulted in a fragility of achievement for some of the partners, as well as raised expectations of sustainability.
- The number of countries involved (10) was perhaps too many given logistical problems, the capacity of the BirdLife Secretariat to provide technical and administrative services, and the large differences between national NGOs. However, having a wide range of NGOs allowed for a greater breadth of experience shared and lessons learned, and potentially gave the project a more regional voice. Eight countries would probably have led to more effectiveness and efficiency.
- A good design feature was the blending and balance between activities such as training, planning, management, partnership, field survey and implementation of conservation action. This led to good linkages between local and international action, which are important for an NGO in retaining a practical conservation base.
- The project design recognised that the differing starting points of national partners would result in different levels of achievement (Project Brief, Annex 2). Unfortunately this also means that by the end of the project some national partners, for example in Kenya and South Africa, would have reached 'take-off' point (= potential sustainability), but others would not (e.g. in Cameroon). There was no indication or strategy in the project design to address this, other than that NGOs were all meant to have mechanisms in place by project termination to ensure long-term funding. However, the design was flexible in that it allowed partners to determine, within reason, their own pace and timing in implementation.
- An opportunity was missed in the design to identify regional products or activities that could have raised the profile of bird conservation within Africa, and allowed BirdLife partners to speak more loudly and with one voice in regional fora.
- Because the project was small in financial terms at a national level, but high in ambition and targets, it forced NGOs to go out and secure other funding for conservation activities. This increased their capacity for fund raising and hence sustainability.
- There was a poor communications strategy (including advocacy) for project results and achievements. Although the project management recognised this early on, and even requested direction from the Mid-Term review on this issue, no remedial measures were taken. What communication that has been done was not strategic or aimed necessarily at an appropriate audience, which would include government and other decision-makers.

3.2 Project Implementation

Execution and implementation modalities

The project was executed by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). Almost all project activities were implemented through a series of sub-contracts. One sub-contract was issued to BLIS and sub-contracts (each of US\$ 215,000) were issued to the BirdLife partners in the 10 countries. Almost all regional and co-ordination activities were covered under the BLIS sub-contract. This approach to execution lowered the number of project inputs and facilitated project administration.

- The BirdLife International contract was for US\$ 1.5 million (c.35 % of total GEF funding of US\$ 4.33 million). Could this have been handled differently? The BirdLife Secretariat was very good,

spent funds well, and was very supportive of the project and activities. Perhaps too much time and attention was spent on project management, and BLIS could have been more strategic in their allocation of project resources, focusing on the weaker partners that could not readily obtain support elsewhere. Although regional activities were good (workshops, networking), technical support to individual partners was weaker.

- Despite initial teething problems, execution was very smooth. The project finished its activities on time, and most expected activities were completed. The use of NGOs proved cost-effective and time-efficient. The fact that each national NGO had a direct contractual relationship with the UN contributed to increasing their credibility and in many cases exposed them for the first time to international planning, management and reporting standards, thereby increasing their capacity. The partnership and contractual framework helped to ensure a strong national and regional ownership over activities. Unlike many regional projects, all countries played an equal role in project implementation, and benefited equally from project inputs.
- The scale of the national contracts (\$215,000 over four years) seems appropriate, in that it allowed the national partners to undertake significant activities but did not overwhelm them or encourage profligacy.
- In many countries, and regionally, a factor in the project's success was the co-financing provided by the RSPB. Not only did this support significant organisational development in the concerned partner NGOs, it also very flexibly financed activities (e.g. training) that GEF was unable to finance.
- The project has successfully identified and fostered a group of dynamic, committed and competent individuals in each country and in each stakeholder agency to carry the process forward, a large percentage of which is still working on project issues at the project end. This group has been a major factor in project success and is key for sustainability of conservation activity.
- If one accepts the present development paradigms of gender sensitivity, then the project is unlikely to be particularly successful as it was primarily male at most levels. More effort could have been given to increasing understanding of national partners of the importance of gender.
- At the national level, project decisions were taken through national Tripartite Review meetings and meetings of the NLC. These mechanisms proved effective and efficient. A decision was also taken to hold Annual Internal Reviews in each country. When they took place, these seem to have been positive. It appears they were not institutionalised and only took place in an irregular manner.
- At the regional level, direction to the project was given through the Annual Planning and Review Meetings (APRM), involving all Project Managers as well as international stakeholders, and related Project Liaison Group (PLG) meetings. The meetings were effectively combined with regional workshops and other meetings. The APRM proved an excellent mechanism for creating a solid network, exchanging information, and developing a constructive peer pressure.
- It is unclear how it was decided to establish the PLG as the key project decision-making body, as this is not mentioned in the project documentation. Furthermore, only one national manager sat on the PLG - representing all the 10 countries (out of a total PLG membership of 7). This did not sufficiently represent national interests in decision-making.
- The evaluators had great difficulty in disentangling the activities of the GEF project from those of other conservation projects being implemented by partnership NGOs (e.g. in Ghana) or where the partners had core support from RSPB. The contribution of RSPB to core funding for 6 of the partners (Ghana Wildlife Society, Nature Kenya, Conservation Society of Sierra Leone, BirdLife South Africa, Wildlife Conservation Society of Tanzania, Nature Uganda) exceeded US\$ 3.8 million over the 5 year period, exceeding the support from GEF in each case. In countries with no core support (e.g. Cameroon, Ethiopia) achievements due to the GEF project were much clearer. However, this

integration of conservation action and funding by national NGOs is commendable and an indication of maturity.

Co-ordination and operational issues

- It is very difficult in international projects to bring the international ideas and techniques to local sites for action in an appropriate manner. This project has been more successful than most in this, probably a result of the nature and members of the partnerships within it. BLIS took on the roles of co-ordination and of supporting each national implementing agency. This was done through the GEF programme manager (based in Cambridge) and two sub-regional co-ordinators (SRC) each responsible for five countries.
- The role of the Sub-regional Co-ordinators was not fully clear. In addition, each was only in place for half the project period. Their ToRs appear to have focused them primarily on organising workshops and providing managerial support in reporting. Any technical support remained supply driven – partly a result of the partner NGOs not knowing what was available and not being in a position to judge what assistance would be most suitable. The project management team could have designed these positions to provide technical (conservation) backup, provide strategic mentoring to partner NGOs, help in establishing monitoring of conservation impact, and also to provide a stronger voice in regional conservation fora.
- There were linguistic problems in some countries. Although the francophone countries were allowed to report in French, almost all substantive project outputs were (and still are) only available in English, which severely limits their credibility and distribution in the francophone countries.
- The Team was very impressed by the focus, commitment and attitude of almost all persons met during the evaluation. Neither Team member had met such networks and recognised this to be unique. Overall, a key factor in the success of the project has been effective individuals in all NGOs, at all levels. The Team is unsure as to why this is the case. Possible explanations include: the institutional design of the project; being part of an international partnership (BLI); or it could be the technical focus of the project (birds) which tends to attract committed and dynamic persons.

Adequacy of monitoring mechanisms

- As mentioned previously, the indicators in the logframe are not sufficient for monitoring project progress or impact. On top of that, the project monitoring mechanism was extremely complex. Each country prepared bi-annual progress reports (for UNOPS), annual Tripartite Review reports and annual financial audits. Based on these, BLIS prepared annual progress reports (for UNOPS) and annual Project Implementation Reviews (for UNDP/GEF). In addition, annual internal reviews were also done, though not by national project staff. Reports on APRM and PLG meetings are also available. The result is a vast volume of documentation.
- Each report contained many recommendations. As was often recorded in subsequent reports, there was no direct follow-on to many of these recommendations, and in some cases the same recommendations appeared year after year.
- In general, this documentation was not precise and was duplicative. Most importantly, preparation of these documents represents a significant drain on the time and resources of the national staff. Despite this great effort, a question mark hangs over the usefulness of the reports; for example it is not possible from the many reports to answer simple monitoring questions, such as how many people have been trained or what has the money been spent on.

Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE)

- The MTE was held in mid 2000, by which point, on average (although there was a great variation across the countries) just over half of the funds had been disbursed and just over half of the activities had been implemented. The mid-term evaluation, whilst overall very positive, presented a long series of recommendations, many of which targeted the need to be more responsive to individual in-country needs, and the need for increased efforts to ensure the sustainability of outputs.
- The Team feels that in some ways the MTE mis-interpreted the spirit and momentum of the project. Moreover, it could be interpreted as recommending a formulaic approach to the IBA process, which the Team felt would be inappropriate. However, and most importantly, the Team feels that the MTE process led to improvements in project implementation, as follows: (i) it woke up many project stakeholders of the urgent need to move forward on some key issues; (ii) it helped focus subsequent activities in critical areas; and (iii) the criticisms raised further increased the camaraderie across the project stakeholders.

Different starting-off points in terms of organisational development

- This was a major impediment to project implementation and possibly to sustainability of project outputs in some countries. For example, the second APRM report recommended that each country have a project implementation team with the following: ornithologist; policy/advocacy specialist; site conservation officer; communications officer; accountant; and Team Leader / Executive Officer. At the outset, in at least one country (Cameroon) the partner NGO had no implementation capacity. This means that all the required personnel had to be recruited during the project and financed by the project, whereas other, larger NGOs could integrate these tasks across their existing staff. Recruitment takes time, mistakes are made, and the cost of all the additional staff is too high. Predictably, these NGOs suffered from a high staff turnover. This need for organisational development was a major distraction from implementing project activities for some NGOs.

3.3 Achievements

This section considers the project activities, outputs and achievement within the original logical framework provided in the Project Brief. More details are provided in Section 4.

The Evaluators felt the project made a very effective use of project resources. It especially noted the great number of activities implemented by the national partners on limited budgets.

Output 1: NGO-government partnerships for Important Bird Area conservation established and functioning in all (10) participating countries.

In general this Output was Satisfactory. Implementation varied across countries, generally responding to what was feasible and appropriate in-country. Partnerships have been developed and in most countries will be sustained, at least in part. The IBA process has contributed to biodiversity planning and action in all countries, including influencing the NBSAP development. Government bodies and others (e.g. international NGOs) in many cases increasingly rely on the partner NGOs for technical support related to conservation. NIBACS have been less useful in the few countries where they have been completed, and the NLCs have had a varying utility and success.

Output 2: Collaborative national (NGO-government) programmes functioning to monitor and conserve Important Bird Areas in all participating countries.

In general this Output was Satisfactory. The project has made a good contribution to the overall body of technical knowledge of birds and IBAs in the 10 countries. However, collaborative programmes are only functioning in a small number of countries, and monitoring and conservation activities generated by the project are limited, both in scope and technical rigour.

Output 3: Conservation of national Important Bird Areas achieved through local monitoring, site action and advocacy programmes.

In general this Output was Satisfactory. The project allocated only very limited seed funding to this, and Partners were expected to leverage funds from other sources. Innovative site action has been initiated in

all countries, and looks to be a successful model in many of them. Much funding has been leveraged. BirdLife South Africa used the project to help leverage a further 12 site-action projects. However, monitoring and advocacy is weak. There is also a need to ensure that the site actions, if they continue, maintain a conservation focus and a technical rigour. Finally, site action is very site and country-specific, and regional technical support did not fully appreciate this.

Output 4: *Local and national NGO and government capacity built to sustain all activities in the Important Bird Area process.*

In general this Output was Highly Satisfactory. All the national NGOs have developed significantly. They have increased in credibility and influence. They have expanded their network. They have increased technical, managerial and administrative capacity. Many have developed an understanding of how to address site action. There has been some capacity development beyond the partner NGO, but this did not extend sufficiently into other NGOs, or to government partners. A number of people in SSGs have also greatly increased their capacity to organise themselves for activities such as income generation. The project also prepared many guidelines and toolkits for national conservation actors. These are generally of high quality, but it is not clear how applicable they are in every case or whether they are in fact being used.

Output 5: *Strategy and mechanism in place to ensure sustainable long-term funding for Important Bird Area conservation in all participating countries.*

In general this Output was Highly Satisfactory. Many of the countries have used the capacity and resources developed through the project to develop firm relations with funders. A large number of mainly small projects have already secured funding, many of them at IBAs identified through the project. The project is estimated to have made a high contribution to leveraging over US\$ 4.5 million in co-funding for related actions⁵. However, some countries (Cameroon, Tunisia, Ethiopia) have failed to build up enough follow-up funding, and so face serious sustainability risks.

Output 6: *Regional structures established and functioning to exchange information and expertise and to support development of Important Bird Area programmes in new countries.*

This Output was Satisfactory. The network across the 10 countries is very strong and productive, and locally owned. All the 10 partners appreciate and utilise this network. There is a lot of regional interchange of ideas and personnel. The project supported the development of CAP and helped it become fully operational. The BirdLife Secretariat Africa Division is now located in Africa and functioning effectively. However, the impact on other African partners is not clear.

Output 7: *Regional awareness of the Important Bird Area approach created and expressions of interest made for the launch of national IBA programmes in a further (10?) countries.*

This Output was Satisfactory. IBA has played a role in regional biodiversity planning initiatives (e.g. CI planning for addressing Hotspots, African Protected Area Initiative). 38 African countries now have some involvement in the African Partnership. Often the first contacts are through the existing African Partners. Another 8 candidate partners have been directly helped by the partner NGOs involved in this project. Partner NGOs have also directly contributed to international biodiversity conservation planning processes at the Ramsar Convention, under the CBD and in the WSSD. However, best use was not made of the opportunities offered by the project.

3.4 Issues Arising

3.4.1 Capacity Development

The project has had a significant impact on capacity at several levels. The capacity of the biodiversity community to conserve biodiversity has increased as a result of the project. This section focuses on the capacity built at the national level in the 10 participating countries.

⁵ Based on table provided by BLIS project office. This figure includes only ongoing and planned projects to which the GEF project is considered to have played a 'high' role in securing financing.

- The project provided institutional support to 10 indigenous NGOs, covering in part operational and start-up costs. In most countries, this was done with a clear exit mechanism to ensure the NGO did not become dependent on GEF support.
- In order to implement the four stages of the IBA process (inventorying, monitoring, planning and action), the partner NGO requires a range of technical, individual and organisational capacity. At a higher level, it also requires an improved enabling environment in terms of relations with government agencies and access to national processes. By gently obliging the partner NGO to implement the IBA process, by exposing them to this process, and by providing them with the basic technical support and some targeted training opportunities, the project has cleverly used the IBA process to develop NGO capacity.
- In many cases, the NGOs have been transformed through their involvement in the project. They have become professional conservation agencies (e.g. NatureKenya, Ghana Wildlife Society). In particular, all 10 partner NGOs have developed their expertise to: (i) identify and survey sites, initiate and manage site action; (ii) interact with national government and international NGOs; (iii) interact in regional and international fora; (iv) provide training and organise training events; (v) prepare business plans; (vi) forecast and manage funds; (vii) prepare project proposals and design projects.
- Some NGOs have become the national focal points for bird-related issues (e.g. Kenya, Ethiopia, Ghana); in some countries they have even become a focal point for biodiversity conservation issues, and through the GEF project they have credibility in the eyes of the biodiversity community. However, their capacity to ensure the technical rigour of the IBA process is varied.
- NGO capacity in a number of countries relies on the continued involvement of a very small number of individuals. Beyond the NGO partner, capacity building has been very limited and sporadic, even at the national level. Only a small number of individuals in each country have received training.
- Looking to the future, the GEF project has "professionalised" many of the NGOs. From a conservation perspective, it is important that their focus remains on bird or broader biodiversity conservation, and does not follow the lure of large well-funded projects. Expectations and financial requirements to maintain the existing staffing and activity levels have been raised, and the NGOs in many cases are now more "fragile" - they have further to fall. Most of them have developed some form of organisational strategy with identified objectives. But it was not clear to the evaluators to what extent these are appropriate and realistic - based on pragmatism rather than hope - given foreseeable staffing, expertise and funding streams. BirdLife South Africa has developed a mature organisational structure, with a number of individuals able to stand-in for others when required. However, the range of expertise available there, the support services and the reliability of funding (much of it from the corporate sector rather than bilateral aid) allows for this.

3.4.2 Partnerships with Government

Strengthening partnerships at the national and local levels, particularly NGO-Government partnerships, was a key objective of the project. The principal vehicle for establishing these partnerships was the National Liaison Committee (NLC) and, in some countries, the Site Support Group at local level.

- The membership, mandate, regularity and effectiveness of the NLCs varied across the ten countries. In some countries (e.g. Kenya, Cameroon, Burkina Faso) the NLC became a unique national mechanism for feeding into the national policy debate and building the credibility of the NGO. This appears primarily to be a result of an attitude by the NGO partner to actively engage other stakeholders, particularly Government, and the establishment of good personal relationships. In other countries the NLC have assisted co-ordination, fund-raising and trouble-shooting. The fact that this

was a UN sponsored, regional initiative, obliged national governments to engage in constructive relationships with the NGO partner.

- For South Africa the NLC was of little value owing to decentralisation of government, government structures, and logistics. It was not an appropriate structure to ensure liaison with national government. In Ethiopia all projects are required to have a government-chaired Steering Committee with a role limited to approving project workplans and progress reports, which in fact is what the NLC was there. It has no life beyond the project.
- A number of national governments are distrustful of NGOs, their motivation, their source of funding and sometimes of their members. The project has been successful in breaking down that distrust to a significant extent in a number of countries (e.g. Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, Cameroon). Conservation NGOs are now seen more as partners than as competitors for funds. This has occurred primarily through the NLC, which has strengthened personal and institutional partnerships, and has facilitated discussion on biodiversity policy and practices. It is this improved relationship, perhaps more than technical capacity, which has helped the national partner to influence both national government and international NGOs. However, it is not yet clear that governments will be willing and able to replicate and mainstream project developments nationwide.
- Government representatives (e.g. in Kenya) noted that the NLC provided a forum for open and frank discussion, which may not always be possible on existing inter-sectoral, government-led, biodiversity committees.
- The future of the NLC is not clear in most cases. From questioning, it appears that in many cases the stakeholders are quite keen for the NLC to continue, but have no clear ideas on who will take the initiative, what its mandate will be, if it should be expanded to include others, or who will fund it. In such cases it is likely that the NLC will fade away. In other cases, such as Kenya and Burkina Faso, the NLC is likely to be transformed into a national mechanism to get NGO input into national policy debate.
- In some countries partner NGOs have entered into MoUs or similar arrangements with government departments regarding conservation actions (e.g. Ghana with the Ghana Forestry Department, Cameroon with the Ministry of Tourism). This is a result of the NGO being active at a particular set of sites and demonstrating a longer-term commitment and ability to raise funds for conservation action.
- There are some observed weaknesses with the NLC approach: (i) in almost all countries, government membership of the NLC was inconsistent, and in many the effectiveness of the government representative in disseminating project findings across government was very weak; (ii) in some countries, many meetings were delayed or cancelled for logistical reasons, implying that its value to those participants was marginal; (iii) one of the objectives of the project was to formalise future actions in the National IBA Conservation Strategy (NIBACS). This has been useful in some countries (e.g. Burkina Faso) but much less in others. NIBACS were possibly prepared as an obligation to the project and in response to the Mid-Term Evaluation, and insufficient strategic thought was given to their role.
- At the local level, in some countries (e.g. Cameroon, Kenya), the SSG helped generate strengthened linkages between local government, local people and NGOs. Traditionally, at many of the sites, the presence of local government is limited. Through the SSG and IBA process, the project has strengthened the credibility of local associations and developed a mechanism for an improved interaction between the local populations and government. There are signs of local governments having increased respect and increased interaction with local people and NGOs.

- Two-way, equal, national-local partnerships have also developed in some countries (e.g. Kenya). In particular, the holding of NLC meetings at sites and the presence of SSG members on the NLC has facilitated the two-way flow of information, ideas and trust.

3.4.3 Use of NGOs as Conservation Project Executors

- In all cases, national NGOs have proved to be efficient and effective implementers of this project. Many have shown great commitment and achieved a lot with relatively little funding. They have proved generally more flexible than governments and more readily able to leverage additional funding. Their focus is more grassroots and action-orientated. At a regional level, the BirdLife Africa partnership has also been a very good base for the project.
- International NGOs such as BirdLife International are in a strong position to take a regional view, something that governments are generally not able to do. Resources, including time and assistance, can be allocated according to need or capacity across a broader area, and hence greater conservation impact achieved. They are also able to promote conservation in different fora and take a less nationalistic viewpoint.
- A big advantage of using NGOs as executing partners is that lessons learned, e.g. with site-based conservation and support for SSGs, are learned and implemented rapidly. Government agencies, being larger and less flexible, are generally much slower at learning lessons.
- The NGOs involved in the project were, and still are, at very different levels of organisation. Most are membership-based with a membership in the hundreds (NatureKenya has membership in the thousands) and a constituency generally covering urban professionals, educators, schools and, in some cases, rural communities. The differing levels and implementation capacities was a limitation during the project and resulted in some partners readily achieving set activity targets and enhancing their capacities (e.g. Kenya, South Africa, Ghana), while others (such as Cameroon and Ethiopia) were stressed and overworked, and the increased capacity is fragile. However, the project has given all of them confidence and ability to handle funds and activities previously beyond them.
- Our concern lies with this fragility. Many are small, understaffed and dependent on one or two key individuals. Their mandates are also self-given, and they are responsible only to their members and funders. What is needed now, particularly for the less developed NGOs, is to more clearly separate operational management from strategic direction and to identify "core business" and strengths. A number of partners have carried out strategic reviews on where they are going with the help of the project and co-financing agencies, and a few have developed business plans (e.g. Ghana, Kenya, South Africa).
- A weakness of smaller NGOs is that they are vulnerable to taking on projects or activities beyond their limited human resources and capacity, and that large funding inputs can have a disproportionate influence on their direction and growth. Some NGOs in the GEF project are sufficiently large (e.g. BirdLife South Africa and NatureKenya) to overcome this, but others are so small that the project has possibly taken them along at a faster pace than they can handle, e.g. Cameroon. By adopting a "one size fits all" approach to activities, coupled with a 5 year time frame, the project has possibly raised expectations unsustainably and may leave the NGO more vulnerable than it was previously. Sustainability is not primarily about funding. Treated as an experiment - and where the financial burden is borne externally - there is less risk. But each NGO has to ask itself if the experiment is likely to succeed in the next 2-3 years. The Team had particular concern about AAO in Tunisia (though it was not possible to follow upon this and confirm). AAO appears to have a strong amateur base that the project may have damaged by attempting to "professionalise".

3.4.4 IBA/Site Approach

- There has been a high level of achievement for both the BirdLife Partnership and national NGOs to get the present network of IBAs identified and documented. 518 IBAs have been identified in the 10 countries, 77 of them prioritised as Critical. Bird conservation is now on the national agenda of a number of countries, whereas previously it was often ignored. IBAs have proved to be a valuable tool and a good starting point for conservation of other biodiversity, but with limitations (see below). Credit should go to BirdLife International and the RSPB for getting this process going in many countries before the advent of the GEF project, while the project has helped to consolidate the process in some countries (e.g. Ethiopia, Ghana) and initiated it in others (e.g. Cameroon).
- IBAs are spatially compact sites, and these are easier to envisage than ecosystems or habitats, and generally more compact than species. IBAs are thus more tangible and readily recognised by communities and decision-makers. Sites do not have to be formally protected (i.e. part of a Protected Area system), but can be multiple-use. The criteria used to identify IBAs are sound and comparatively easy to apply.
- A national network of IBAs, chosen on avian criteria on the basis of birds being a surrogate for all biodiversity, will not cover all of a country's important biodiversity areas. There was an understandable tendency among many partners, notably Kenya, to regard IBAs as a surrogate for a much broader range of biodiversity and to assume that conservation of the identified IBA network would cover most national conservation targets. No firm evidence was offered for this assumption. The Team found this a little worrying. It is important to recognise the limitations of IBAs for broader biodiversity conservation and establish a mechanism to add areas to the national network based on importance in other groups, e.g. plants and fish.
- The need now is to better document the IBA network, especially from the point of view of other taxa, and to ensure a good representative spread across each country. Data on the IBA network in South Africa is good, as is coverage. In Ghana, on the other hand, all 32 IBAs mentioned in the original Project Brief were forests (some wetland ones have since been added), and almost all those given for Tunisia were wetlands (25/29). The Team did not see many data on other biodiversity for IBAs.
- Given the limited capacity, both human and financial, for conservation in many countries, prioritisation of sites is required. NatureKenya produced a protocol on this through the project, but it was not clear if the prioritisation process being carried out elsewhere used it as a basis, or if the data available were adequate. Biological data in many countries are not good owing to difficulties in access, too few people tasked or able to carry out basic inventory work, and the magnitude of the task. In this regard, birds are much better known and form a good starting point in conservation - something the project has admirably built upon.
- There is a strong need for the clear setting of conservation objectives in site conservation, whether based on species or habitats. Conservation action under the project in many instances seems to have focused on the process and actors rather than on the conservation target. This probably occurred as partners were under pressure to show activity and set up SSGs. Conservation impact needs to be convincingly measured.
- The major way to determine conservation impact is through monitoring of specified conservation targets, whether species diversity, population numbers or breeding success. Although important in the project design and activities, conservation monitoring was fragmented and weak, with the exception of the regular waterfowl censuses carried out through Wetlands International. It was not always clear if birds or habitat were being monitored, and what this meant at a national or regional level. The few results collected were often not analysed or conclusions fed back into conservation planning, site action and advocacy. Different partners appear to be monitoring different things in different ways; there is a danger of inappropriateness and divergence of objective. Important questions that have not been addressed by the project or partners include: Who is responsible for monitoring and analysis?, Who peer reviews?, What need is there for outside expertise?, How this can be procured?, and What are the acceptable limits to change? This is where BirdLife International could have taken a leading role, assisting with analysis where necessary and also synthesising to provide a regional picture.

- Although there have undoubtedly been such achievements in this project, clear examples of conservation success as measured in bird diversity or populations maintained or increasing, or gazettement of protected areas, etc. were not brought to the attention of the Evaluation Team. This was probably due to the shortcomings in monitoring and documentation and to the short timespan of the project. Such achievements are not in activity, implementation or funding, but in demonstrable impact on biodiversity. A lack of such examples means the successes of the project cannot easily be used in advocacy and are open to varying interpretations. One significant conservation success seen by the Team was in the Berga wetlands of Ethiopia. Here a small sedge wetland holds one of two breeding populations of a globally threatened bird species, the White-winged Flufftail. The two major threats were from illicit cutting of reeds by outsiders for ceremonial purposes and the privatisation of the State dairy farm, which would probably result in habitat destruction. This has been averted through local opposition and active lobbying by the partner NGO and others, with the SSG playing a significant political (but perhaps not active) role. Here the issues and threats were clear, and a range of local stakeholders was likely to lose out if the State farm was privatised.
- In order to get national acceptance and government 'ownership', the IBA network needs to be incorporated into the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs). This has happened in some countries - in Cameroon IBAs formed a basis of the NBSAP - but it needs to be complemented by recognition of areas important for other taxa. In this regard, the development of NIBACS is not the priority, unless country-specific circumstances dictate differently (i.e. no substantive NBSAP or one that is very general and not focused on species). It was not clear to the Team to what extent each NBSAP attempted to identify a network of Important Biodiversity Areas for conservation or if an ecosystem approach was taken.

3.4.5 Site Support Groups

- The project required each partner NGO to establish SSGs at two or more priority IBAs, to ensure their conservation, and to leverage funds from other sources for SSG activities. 60 SSGs have been established across the 10 countries. Sometimes the most fundable sites, or those with the most potential for success, were not regarded as 'critical' in the IBA prioritisation process. As the GEF project can be considered experimental in many regards, rather than predicated on achieving conservation impact immediately, this is acceptable.
- There was a strong tendency among partner NGOs to regard SSGs as the main conservation tool and the main project activity, a sort of *raison d'être* of the GEF project. Other approaches and perhaps more important sites were too often ignored. There was not a sense that SSGs are a means to conservation, one of a range of tools and one that is not appropriate in a number of circumstances. As a conservation tool, their success must be judged by conservation impact, not by their ability to attract funding or by socio-economic parameters.
- The use of SSGs has raised a lot of interest among other conservation agencies and in some governments, e.g. in Ghana and Kenya. It is a novel approach in some countries, such as Ghana where CBNRM is relatively new, and has allowed an expression of this paradigm there.
- In some places SSGs appear to have worked well in the sense of attracting funding, raising community profile and awareness (e.g. Kikuyu escarpment in Kenya, Amansuri wetlands in Ghana), but in others their impact has been minimal (e.g. Menagesha-Suba forest, Ethiopia). The Team only visited 6 SSGs in 4 countries, and so are not able to draw clear conclusions as to why some may be successful and others not. However, preliminary observations suggest that where SSGs have been moderately successful in terms of activity it is where there have been one or two strong individuals in the group to lead it and keep direction and focus. Success depends greatly on the socio-political situation, community sense present, opportunities on offer, and the personalities and approach of those involved. Where they have been less successful is where and there appears to be no clear focus in the group and the NGO is continually providing resources. In Ethiopia there is little tradition of

civil groups taking responsibility, and a number of legal hurdles. Their use in conservation there at present must be regarded as experimental or exploratory, with a high investment required by the NGO in time and energy for little immediate conservation impact.

- Sustainability of SSGs is a major concern, not just in financial or organisational terms, but also in their continued conservation or environmental focus. The two Ethiopian, two Cameroon and one Kenyan SSG visited, for example, appeared to have strong economic (income generation) or social interests. Links between the understandable social or economic agendas and environmental or conservation concerns need to be created or reinforced, e.g. through ecotourism or provision of continued ecological goods and services.
- Five out of the six SSGs visited remain heavily dependent on the national partner NGO. Funding has been found for their continued activity after the end of the GEF project, most notably at Amansuri in Ghana, but there is no weaning mechanism from the NGO.
- In a number of instances it has been pointed out by government officials and others that the formation of SSGs at local level and the involvement of NGOs allow articulation of local concerns to be heard more strongly at district or national government levels. As such they can be a very useful conduit of communication and give a voice to communities.
- Most SSGs are relatively new (2-3 years old) and it is still too early to evaluate their success and limitations. A more thorough study needs to be done in a couple of years time on a wider range than the Evaluators could visit to determine sustainability, conservation impact and useful lessons.
- The links that NGOs have to National Parks and Wildlife authorities appear poor in some cases. In the understandable desire to involve communities in conservation, less emphasis may be given to conservation through established mechanisms such as existing protected areas. For successful bird conservation a balance needs to be retained.

3.4.6 Regional Approach

- Project activities could have been carried out as 10 separate national projects with or without a separate project providing regional co-ordination. The opinion of the Team is that the regional co-ordination and role of the BirdLife International Secretariat greatly enhanced both the value and impact of the project, and could only have taken place through a single, regional project. There was much interchange of experience among participants at an informal level, weaker or slower partners were stimulated to achieve goals by peer-pressure and a sense of (friendly) competitiveness, and camaraderie was built. The project was better than most regional projects, which tend to work at governmental level and rarely attain much synergy, and addressed issues appropriate for a regional project.
- Some benefits of the regional approach observed by the Team were:
 - a) Being part of continent-wide, UN-supported initiative increased the credibility of the partner NGO in their country;
 - b) Governments accepted some innovative aspects of the project (e.g. using an NGO as an entry point, establishing NLCs) because the project was regional,
 - c) Regional meetings and workshops directly built individual capacity through the exchange of information and experiences;
 - d) Peer-pressure amongst the participants generated through the project and the regional meetings increased the standards and ambitions of each of the national Partners. Some Partners emphasised that they may not have had the courage to attempt some elements of the project (e.g. SSGs) without this peer-pressure;
 - e) The regional network and partnership created, consisting of BL Partners and related persons, is a very impressive and useful tool for further biodiversity conservation continent-wide. Although based very much on individuals, this ‘network capacity’ is undoubtedly sustainable;

- f) The project indirectly supported the development of various regional products (e.g. the Africa IBA Directory, BirdLife CAP).

Some disadvantages of the regional approach were:

- a) It increased demands on BirdLife partners in terms of reporting and time required to attend regional meetings;
 - b) In some cases, differing requirements for technical support, especially on different timelines, could not be fully met by the regional support mechanisms;
 - c) Communications infrastructure (electronic and travel) is limited in the region.
- It is always difficult to balance national concerns with regional activities. The project did not have in its design any regional products other than meetings and co-ordinating mechanisms. Hence activities were primarily national, and the regional component was linked to co-ordination, communication, training and exchange of personal experiences. It was more a multi-country project than truly regional. There appears to have been little direct impact on other African BirdLife partners. The Team felt that an opportunity was lost here in the design to develop a stronger regional voice through creating a common position in regional conservation fora and through advocacy. One relevant regional product was the excellent African Directory of IBAs ("Important Bird Areas in Africa and Associated Islands") which has had significant continental impact. It is not clear how much the GEF project contributed to this, but it was not stated as an output in the Project Document.
 - Some regionally appropriate products such as guidelines for the IBA process (on prioritisation, monitoring, etc.) were produced, and 17 regional workshops held. It appeared to the Team that the guidelines were not used to any great extent by other project partners, possibly in part because they only appeared towards the end of the project when such activities had already been initiated. For example, Ghana requested assistance in 1998 in developing monitoring, but the project only developed its monitoring protocol in 2001. The guidelines, however, should prove useful if and when other African BirdLife partners start to implement the IBA process.
 - The Sub-Regional Coordinator (SRC) positions could have been used to develop a more regional approach, but this was not articulated in their ToRs and neither position was occupied for more than 2-3 years. Their ToRs could have included more frequent country visits (Cameroon would have benefited from this early on, only the SRC was not then in place) and a proactive approach to provision of technical advice. In practice, support was demand-driven primarily in administration, reporting, development of proposals and organising of workshops. It appears that the role of the SRC was considered more an extension of project management rather than the opportunity being grasped to provide mentoring and technical support to project implementation teams. These teams were mostly small, often working at their limits of their capacity and handling a range of activities from field survey and establishment of SSGs through to liaison with government, reporting and attending international meetings; strategy and technical issues sometimes got lost. The project partners, however, did not see this as important or necessary as such expertise was thought to already be available in the region (in fact, this is why the East African SRC position was not renewed). But in our opinion it remains a missed opportunity. The project in many respects was experimental and exploratory, and could have taken this on board even though it was not clearly articulated in the Project Document.
 - The Technical Advisory Group envisaged in the project document was never established. A decision was taken that this was not useful either because appropriate persons were not available or because expertise required was already within the project (opinions differ). The role of the TAG was distributed across BLIS, SRC and UNDP/GEF. Despite or because of this delegation of activity, technical advice was opportunistic and demand-driven, not structured or directed. The Sub-Regional Coordinator positions could have played a useful role here if their ToRs had been changed.

4 Recommendations

International Level

1. UNDP/GEF should continue to work through focused, international partnerships, such as BirdLife International, to achieve conservation objectives. Such partnerships provide a regional or global perspective, provide mentoring and encourage committed individuals at all levels, yet because of their structure are sensitive to national issues and concerns.
2. UNDP/GEF should continue to work through national conservation NGOs to achieve conservation objectives. These organisations are flexible, well integrated into the local context and cost-effective in implementation. Care should be taken not to raise expectations or to encourage rapid expansion, and to ensure a continued rigorous conservation focus.
3. UNDP/GEF or BLI should undertake an evaluation of the impact of SSGs at a range of sites in 2-3 years time. This evaluation should cover both the sustainability of SSGs and their continued conservation focus.
4. GEF should carry out a detailed assessment, within the next year, of the contribution of the project's experimental approaches to biodiversity conservation in Africa. Specifically, the following aspects should be looked at: (a) the use of national NGOs in implementing conservation action; (b) the value of international conservation partnerships; and (c) the IBA process as a tool to achieving broader biodiversity conservation.
5. BLI or RSPB should evaluate the results of the GEF project within the context of their own overall activities in Africa. The present evaluation does not cover these aspects.
6. UNDP/GEF should ensure that future regional projects clearly distinguish between providing co-ordination across a number of countries, providing technical support to a number of countries with similar needs, and developing a regional perspective (overview, regional products). This project addressed co-ordination across the region, but missed good opportunities to provide a regional overview and voice.
7. GEF should hold the STAP review earlier in the GEF project cycle, possibly just after approval of the Project Concept.
8. UNDP/GEF should ensure that future projects have a separate budget allocation for translation of documents into national working languages.
9. Monitoring is vital to demonstrate conservation impact. The IBA process offers a good basis for monitoring biodiversity and its conservation, and this could be of relevance to the broader, global biodiversity community. GEF should consider funding further research, development and implementation of this idea.
10. All project stakeholders should ensure that future projects have a strategy to communicate project activities and findings to the appropriate audiences, notably decision-makers. This should include advocacy. In a communications strategy, thought needs to be given to the message, the target and the medium.
11. BirdLife International should develop a mechanism for ensuring that the 'bigger' bird conservation/IBA picture continues to permeate and drive national IBA programmes and partners. National programmes need to remain coherent across the region.

12. All BirdLife Partners should determine how the many project successes could be mainstreamed strategically and formalised into the broad conservation community across the region, including governments. They should not remain within a single NGO.
13. Core support should continue to be provided to the BirdLife Partners, particularly the more fragile ones, if project achievements are to be maintained. This may come from a number of sources, including RSPB.
14. UNDP/GEF should consider supporting SSGs through its Small Grants Programme, probably through national BirdLife partners in most cases. Big projects are likely to overwhelm community groups and raise expectations unsustainably.
15. Reporting requirements for GEF and UNDP projects need to be appropriate to the size of the funding and scale of activities, particularly when considering relatively small NGOs. Heavy and repetitive, non-focused reporting requirements detract from project activities.

National Level

16. National Partners should ensure that the good co-operation and regular dialogue with government and other stakeholders developed through the project National Liaison Committees is maintained. This can either be through a continuation of the NLC with an updated mandate, or through other mechanisms such as the NBSAP committee.
17. National Partners should review their NIBACS and determine its value in relation to the NBSAP. Ideally, the NBSAP should be the biodiversity conservation planning vehicle. If NIBACS, which are sectoral, are retained, strong efforts should be made to ensure their national acceptance and strategic incorporation into broader biodiversity conservation.
18. National Partners should review their business plans, with support from BLI, to ensure their niche is properly determined and exploited, and to ensure they are to remain conservation focused.
19. National Partners should review each IBA site to determine which are appropriate for the SSG approach to conservation. Other approaches should be used for sites where SSGs are not appropriate.
20. National Partners should clearly articulate and monitor conservation targets at each site. True, effective monitoring should start immediately. As a starting point, a good, clear, simple indicator needs to be identified for *each site*. This will allow an immediate communication of conservation impact. The indicator system should be reviewed and modified as necessary.
21. National Partners should monitor and document, in a standardised manner, the evolution and impact of all the SSGs.
22. National Partners should ensure that all conservation-oriented actions are based on best available technical knowledge, using regional and international resources as appropriate.

5 Lessons Learned

General

It is possible for GEF and others to think globally but act locally in international co-operation projects. If the right partners are carefully selected, it is possible to construct a network stretching from the global to the local level. Such a network, whilst being sensitive to the issues and constraints at each level, can ensure that international best practices are fed into local activities, and that local concerns and findings feed up into the bigger picture. However, in such a complex network, the involvement of a range of partners will inevitably lead to some trade-offs and confusion.

Channelling international assistance for biodiversity conservation through national non-governmental organisations can be very effective and efficient. A large number of well-designed activities can be implemented well at relatively little cost. A budget of \$200,000 over 4-5 years for national activities is appropriate.

Ultimately, a cadre of committed, dynamic individuals, focused on a particular topic, is the key to ensuring the success of projects and initiatives. Flexible, dynamic, focused non-governmental structures provide an incentive framework for developing such individuals.

For a project to be truly regional, it has to develop regional products and a regional view. It should not be a collection of totally national activities. A regional view, presented in international fora and through advocacy, can have a much bigger impact than that solely presented by the separate participating countries - it allows them to speak with a louder voice.

Experimental projects with a range of innovative activities can be useful in helping develop successful new approaches to conservation. The disentangling of their successful elements, however, is not easy.

Specific

NGOs

The innovative use of an international NGO partnership (the BirdLife International Africa Partnership) allowed for the essential involvement of national NGOs, whilst maintaining a beneficial continental overview. Care needs to be taken that the international view is not swamped under national concerns.

National NGOs are good at carrying out conservation activities. They can be both efficient and effective, particularly at the site level. Larger developed NGOs, with clear division of responsibilities, tend to be more sustainable and can have a greater sustained impact on national conservation. However, most NGOs are relatively small and hence limited in their ability to influence national policy and other conservation partners. Their success and impact is often a function of their constituency (i.e. membership) and strong dynamic individuals. Too often, they are also fragile, depending on one or two key individuals and a small number of donors. Large funders or projects can cause them to lose focus on what was their "core business". There is a danger that by greatly increasing their workloads, or by widening their mandates, NGOs are forced to grow faster than their internal structure can handle. Their differing levels of organisational development and implementation capacity need to be recognised and accounted for in projects by both partners and funders.

Carefully constructed, international projects can help national NGOs develop sustainably and become important members of the biodiversity community. International projects can help them gain technical and political credibility, and also allow them to develop new lines of conservation activity and new partnerships.

Conservation Activities

The IBA process provides an internationally acceptable innovative approach for identifying sites, for setting clear conservation targets (bird diversity, bird numbers), and for focusing conservation attention on recognisable, manageable issues. It deals with tangible and identifiable issues that can be readily understood, taken up and implemented at a national level. Targets are comprehensible by local people and give a clear entry point into community-based conservation. However, it must be recognised that a national IBA network does not include all important biodiversity sites, and a complementary system to address other aspects of biodiversity is also required.

Conservation projects have to demonstrate conservation impact in terms of biodiversity conserved, or rates of loss reduced. In order to demonstrate this impact, so important in a competitive funding arena, more attention and project resources should be given to identification and monitoring of conservation targets. Too often projects are judged on levels of activity and funds disbursed or received, and sight is lost of the actual conservation objective.

SSGs are a useful and appropriate means for conservation action in a number of circumstances. They can develop practical solutions to conservation and development challenges, and they can ensure local concerns are integrated into national conservation management and planning. They work well when there is a sense of community, when there is strong local leadership, and where strong links can be shown between human livelihood concerns and conservation objectives. However, where communities are unstable, transient or disorganised, or where people need to over-utilise their environment for survival, they are unlikely to succeed. Fostering SSGs usually requires much time and effort that, in some circumstances, may be better strategically utilised in other forms of conservation. Most SSGs visited were not primarily driven by conservation concerns, so non-monetary incentive systems may need to be developed or linkages with ecological goods and services or ecotourism clearly made. Continued conservation impact needs to be monitored.

Capacity

Effective development of individuals and institutions is best achieved by involving them in a clear results-oriented process, with manageable timelines, clear internationally recognised objectives, regional peer-pressure and technical support. Likewise, effective development is best achieved by involving concerned institutions in a concrete process with international best practices, the use of clear targets and timelines, and by dealing with easily recognisable issues.

UNDP/GEF projects can strengthen Government-NGO working relationships, with a positive impact on conservation activity. A National Committee can be an appropriate vehicle for achieving this. In countries where relations are weak, a National Committee can overcome suspicions and other obstacles. However, this requires a lot of time and effort from the NGO, and ultimately success may be limited by low capacity in government.

Project Design and Execution

The use of NGO partnerships such as BirdLife International increases national ownership and sustainability of activities. The use of this Partnership has provided a good entry point for international technical assistance through the BirdLife International Secretariat.

By having a project with a finite life which requires the implementing NGOs to leverage funds in order to carry out the stipulated activities leads to better financial sustainability. But this can be hard work.

Project reporting requirements need to be rigorous, oriented towards progress and problem-solving, and yet proportionate to the funding levels and the capacity of the contracting agency. Otherwise too many limited resources are utilised on reporting, without the reports clearly indicating problems or recording progress.

Regional Aspects

To optimise the impact of regional projects, regional lessons must be drawn and a regional perspective developed. The regional African IBA Directory demonstrates that regional products can have an impact and an influence that exceeds the sum of national ones. Truly regional (as opposed to multi-country)

projects must be actively designed and managed to ensure the identification and adequate resourcing of *regional* products. For example, formal exchanges across countries and a mechanism for synthesising and promoting a regional picture.

List of Annexes

- Annex 1 ToRs of the Evaluation Team
- Annex 2 Detailed itinerary
- Annex 3 List of persons met and documentation reviewed
- Annex 4 Framework for guiding discussions and questions
- Annex 5 Summary of the Team visits to the IBA sites

Annex 1.

Terms of Reference:- Final Project Evaluation of UNDP GEF Project: African NGO-Government Partnerships for Sustainable Biodiversity Action

Introduction

This UNDP GEF project was launched in April 1998. It builds on the work of the national institutional partners of BirdLife International in Africa which, since 1994, have been collaborating to promote the conservation of sites of global biodiversity significance. Sites are identified using objective international criteria and birds as biodiversity indicators. Teams of people, both professional and amateur, identify the sites, (known as Important Bird Areas (IBAs), agree on priorities for action in relation to these sites, advocate for, manage, and then monitor, these sites. Appropriate participation at all stages guarantees that the process and priorities belong to an in-country constituency, greatly enhancing the prospects of effective conservation action. While the overall objective is to contribute to ensuring the conservation of all globally important biodiversity sites in Africa, the specific programme objective is to enhance biodiversity conservation in Africa through local and national NGO-government partnerships in the Important Bird Area process⁶. The five-year phase of GEF funding was to support the development of existing national programmes in 10 countries, to enhance regional co-ordination and sharing of skills within Africa, to strengthen the institutional base and programme sustainability, and to permit the expansion and replication of the process in a further suite of African countries.

Wider Objective/ Goal:

To conserve all globally important biodiversity sites in Africa

Immediate Objectives:

To enhance biodiversity conservation in Africa through local and national NGO-government partnerships in the Important Bird Area process

Project Outputs:

1. NGO-government partnerships for Important Bird Area conservation established and functioning in all (10) participating countries
2. Collaborative national (NGO-government) programmes functioning to monitor and conserve Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in all participating countries
3. Conservation of national Important Bird Areas (IBAs) achieved through local monitoring, site action and advocacy programmes
4. Local and national NGO and government capacity built to sustain all activities in the Important Bird Area (IBA) process
5. Strategy and mechanism in place to ensure sustainable long-term funding for Important Bird Area (IBA) conservation in all participating countries
6. Regional structures established and functioning to exchange information and expertise and to support development of Important Bird Area (IBA) programmes in new countries
7. Regional awareness of the Important Bird Area (IBA) approach created and expressions of interest made for the launch of national IBA programmes in a further (10?) countries

The 10 countries involved are: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda.

⁶ The Important Bird Area (IBA) process is the application of internationally agreed criteria to define the global importance of sites for biodiversity conservation at a national level, followed by a cycle of monitoring, action and advocacy to ensure the conservation of sites, in perpetuity. National and local capacity for achieving biodiversity conservation is built through the process.

Objectives of the Evaluation

The final project evaluation is a requirement of the UNDP/GEF for all regular projects. Furthermore, the Final Project Evaluation is required by BirdLife International (*and other project stakeholders*) to provide an objective assessment of project implementation and lessons to guide future conservation efforts.

The overall objectives of final project evaluations are to:

- ◆ identify strengths and weaknesses in implementation;
- ◆ assess level of achievement of the intended impact and potential for sustainability,
- ◆ capture lessons in project design, implementation and management; and
- ◆ make recommendations regarding specific actions that might be taken in future projects.

This final project evaluation will address issues of design, management, implementation and monitoring of the project. Specifically, the evaluation should address the following questions:

1. Has the project made satisfactory progress towards achievement of the intended impact?
2. Has the project implementation and execution modalities operated effectively, efficiently and in a timely manner?
3. Are the innovations developed through this project working?
4. Is the impact of the project likely to be sustained?
5. Lessons learned: e.g.
 - what has worked particularly well and could be considered “best practise”?
 - what should be done differently in similar projects in the future?
 - what should not have been done because it had little or negative impact on the overall objective?

Special Issues to be Addressed

1. Intensive mid-term evaluation: An exhaustive mid-term evaluation was undertaken that concluded that achievements of the project were very considerable at that stage. The recommendations of the mid-term review focussed on refining the indicators in the logframe, developing toolkits, putting more emphasis on developing IBA conservation strategies (output 2) and sustainable fund-raising (output 5), developing mechanisms for sustaining NLCs and SSGs, training partners in Site action, clarifying the link between birds and biodiversity, enhanced communication, and seeking more resources for “weaker” NGOs. Most of these recommendations have been addressed. Has this helped achievement of impact? Are there lessons to be drawn from this?
2. At the beginning of the project, the implementing NGOs were at different levels of organisational development. It was envisaged therefore that a) the NGOs would deliver outputs to different levels and b) the incremental value of the project in terms of the NGO capacities would differ. Are there lessons to be drawn from this?
3. The project was designed to use and build on the existing network of African BirdLife Partners. A flexible, process approach was employed, meaning that programmes have been developed appropriate to each national context and with national ownership. Is this approach working? Are there lessons to be drawn from this?
4. Regional vs individual country approach. The project is regional involving 10 countries. Clearly an alternative would have been to establish 10 or 11 separate projects. Related to this is the role and function of the sub-regional coordinators. The evaluators should reviews the value added, and subtracted, as a consequence of the chosen approach.

The following outline is suggested for the evaluation report:

Evaluation Report Outline

Executive summary	(2 pages)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How the evaluation was conducted ▪ Brief description of project ▪ Context and purpose of the evaluation ▪ Main conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned 	
Introduction	(2 pages)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Purpose of the evaluation ▪ Key issues addressed ▪ Methodology of the evaluation ▪ Structure of the evaluation 	
The project(s) and its development context	(3 pages)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project start and its duration ▪ Problems that the project seek to address ▪ Immediate and development objectives of the project ▪ Main stakeholders ▪ Results expected 	
Findings and Conclusions	(6 pages)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project formulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Process or approach used - Linkages between project and other interventions within the sector - Indicators - Management arrangements, including monitoring and evaluation ▪ Implementation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Execution and implementation modalities - Co-ordination and operational issues - Adequacy of monitoring mechanisms ▪ Results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Immediate results at the regional, national and site levels - Sustainability - Contribution to upgrading skills of the regional, national and local stakeholders 	
Recommendations	(4 pages)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Corrective actions for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project ▪ Actions to follow up or reinforce initial benefits from the project ▪ Proposals for future directions underlining main objectives 	
Lessons learned	(2 pages)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Best and worst practices in addressing issues relating to relevance, performance and success 	
Annexes	(10 pages)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ TOR ▪ Itinerary ▪ List of persons interviewed ▪ Summary of field visits ▪ List of documents reviewed ▪ Questionnaire used and summary of results 	

The evaluation report is expected not to exceed 30 pages.

Evaluation Team

A team of 2 international consultants will participate for the entire duration of the evaluation, i.e. 26 days plus travel to and from Nairobi. One international consultant will be designated as team leader and will carry overall responsibility for organising and achieving the evaluation and delivery of a final report.

The international consultants will be supported in each country, by a national consultant. In all the countries, the National Consultants will work for up to 7 days to gather basic data, set up meetings, identify key individuals, assist with planning and logistics, and prepare an “objective” evaluation brief giving a perspective from outside the immediate project environment. National Consultants will also be

available for up to 1 day each during the period of the international evaluation in order to respond to requests for information or to participate in telephone conferences. In those 3 countries where the international consultants undertake field missions, the national consultants will work for an additional 5 days to prepare for and then accompany the international consultants in their work.

Methodology for the Evaluation

The evaluation will start with the National Consultants preparing evaluation briefs for the international consultants. These will describe and assess the performance of each national component, as per the Terms of Reference for the national consultants (attached). These briefs will be provided to the international consultants, along with the approved “Project Brief” and “Project Document” for the project prior to their departure from home base. It should be noted that the Project Document and the Project Brief contain exactly the same descriptive information about the project and its objectives. However, according to the mid-term evaluation this is arranged in a confusing manner in the Project Document and use of the Project Brief is preferred. The Project Document does contain an input based budget and details of arrangements for execution that are not contained in the Brief.

The international consultants will meet in Nairobi and be briefed by BirdLife Secretariat staff, the key partners in project management, and implementing and executing agency personnel and they may contact other relevant stakeholders. At any stage the consultants can be provided with any additional documentation they require, including making requests for national documents and if necessary, further work by the national consultants. Telephone interviews with the national consultants can also be arranged as required by the international team.

The International Consultants will then participate in a three-day Final Project Evaluation meeting in Nairobi, attended by all project managers, the Africa Regional Committee, representatives of the implementing and executing agencies, representatives of the main co-funders, and the BirdLife and RSPB staff involved in project co-ordination and supervision. This meeting will provide an opportunity to the consultants to gain as a broad a view of the different national contexts as possible.

After the workshop, the international consultants will visit one country together and a selection of up to two other countries to meet other stakeholders including relevant government officials, NLC members, other conservation agencies, local government officials and site-based stakeholders. Selection of the countries to visit, and the specific issues to follow-up in those countries will be done by the evaluators based on their overview of project performance in different countries.

Annex 2. Detailed Itinerary of the Evaluation Team

Date/Time	Activity
Week 1	
6 January	Travel to Nairobi. Reading background documentation
7 January	
AM	First meeting of Evaluation Team. Meet up with staff of Project, Nature Kenya, BirdLife International and RSPB. Visit to Nature Kenya. Travel to Kenya Wildlife Training Institute, Naivasha
PM	Briefing with project staff, BirdLife International, RSPB and UNDP/GEF
8 January	
AM	Internal discussion among Evaluation Team. Planning discussions with Project Staff, BirdLife International, RSPB and UNDP/GEF. Reviewing project documentation
PM	Introductory meeting with all National Project Managers ⁷ . Participation in Annual Project Regional Meeting
9 January	
AM	Participation in Annual Project Regional Meeting. Individual interviews with National Project Managers from South Africa and Uganda and with Charles Nyandiga, UNDP Kenya.
10 January	
AM	Participation in Annual Project Regional Meeting. Individual interviews with National Project Managers from Burkina Faso and Tanzania, and
PM	Interview with Katerin Topar-Michon, UNOPS, New York (telephone). Preparation of initial feedback from the Evaluation Team
11 January	
AM	Participation in Annual Project Regional Meeting. Presentation of initial feedback. Individual meeting with Panta Kasoma, Institute of Environment and Natural Resources, Uganda
PM	Site Visit to Kinangop Plateau IBA and discussion with local Site Support Group. Travel to Nairobi
12 January	
AM	Interviews with John Hough and Alan Rogers (UNDP/GEF) Internal discussion amongst Evaluation Team. Reviewing documentation
13 January	
AM	Individual interviews with National Project Manager from Sierra Leone and Paulinus Ngeh, Project Sub-regional Coordinator for West Africa. Meeting with NatureKenya to define Kenya visits and finalise logistical issues
PM	Interview with Hazel Thompson, former GEF Programme Manager, Director BLI Africa Programme Travel to Accra (Ghana) via Addis Ababa
Week 2	
14 January	
AM	Rest. Internal discussion amongst Evaluation Team.
PM	Visit to GWS. Discussions with GWS staff involved in project implementation
15 January	
AM	Meetings with Ministry of Finance; Dutch Development Agency (SNV); Conservation International
PM	Meeting with UNDP; Meeting with National Evaluation Consultant; Meeting with Head, Zoology Department (NLC Member)

⁷ Note, for logistical reasons, the Cameroon and Tunisia Project Managers were unable to attend the meeting

16 January	Mission to Amanzuri IBA site and Dutch-funded ICDP project. Discussions with project staff and site support group.
17 January	Meeting with Amanzuri Community Project Management Committee. Visit to Ankasa Forest National Park. Internal discussions and outlining of Ghana report
18 January	
AM	Meeting with the Paramount Chief for the Western Region. Return to Accra
PM	Presentation of initial finding to GWS
19 January	
AM	Internal discussions and initial Ghana Report writing
PM	JT travels to Ethiopia. DF Ghana report writing and further document review
Week 3 – Jonathan Timberlake	
19 January	Arrive Addis by air from Accra
20 January	
AM	Introductory meeting at EWNHS with Mengistu Wodafrash (INBA project manager) and Hailemariam Hailemeskel (National Consultant). Separate interviews
PM	Interview Project Leader, WWF Ethiopia. Interview Director and Head of Planning, Ethiopia Wildlife Conservation Organisation
21 January	
AM	Interview with Head of Biodiversity Department, Environmental Protection Authority. Interview Exec Director & others, Institute of Biological Conservation and Research
PM	Interview Technical Advisor, Christian Relief & Development Association (NGO umbrella)
22 January	
	Field trip to SSGs at Berga wetlands and Menagesha-Suba forest
23 January	
AM	Interview Asst. Resident Representative, UNDP Ethiopia. Interview Dean of Science, Addis Ababa University
PM	Interview Mengistu Wondafrash, IBA project manager. Preparation of Ethiopia report
24 January	
AM	Preparation of Ethiopia report. Presentation of preliminary evaluation findings to EWNHS
PM	Interview Mengistu Wondafrash, IBA project manager
25 January	
AM	Depart by air for Nairobi
Week 3 – Dennis Fenton	
20 January	Travel to Yaoundé vis Lagos and Douala. Review Itinerary with Cameroon Biodiversity Society Staff ⁸
21 January	
PM	Meetings with CBCS Staff. Document Review
22 January	
AM/PM	Meetings with CBCS Staff. Interview with Cameroon Environmental Watch (NLC member) and Ministry of Tourism.
23 January	
	Site visits to Mbam Minkom and Ngovayang
24 January	
AM	Interview with UNDP, Michael Vabi (National Evaluation Consultant) and MINEF representative

⁸ Due to flight delays, delays in processing visas and lost baggage, the trip took longer than planned.

PM	Depart for Airport at Douala. Debriefing with Director, CBCS. Depart for Nairobi
25 January	
AM	Arrive Nairobi. Rest
PM	Draft Cameroon report
Week 4	
25, 26 January	Internal Evaluation Team discussions, initial overall report writing
27 January	Meetings with Nature Kenya, UNDP Kenya, NEMA, Kenya Wild Life Society, Africa Wildlife Society, Kenya national Evaluation Consultant
28, 29 January	Draft Report writing
30 January	
AM	Draft Report writing
PM	Presentation of draft report to BL Africa Secretariat
31 January	
AM, PM	Finalisation of 1st Draft
PM	Depart for Brussels (Fenton)
1 February	
AM	Finalisation and sending of 1 st Draft
PM	Depart for Harare (Timberlake)
2 February	Depart for Bulawayo (Timberlake)

Annex 3. List of People Met and Documents Reviewed

PEOPLE INTERVIEWED – CAMEROON

Mr Eric Benun Representative, SAILD (local potential partner at Ngovayang)

Dr Guillaume Dzikouk, National Project Manager, Programme Development Officer, Cameroon Biodiversity Conservation Society (CBCS)

Mr Josef Benjamin Ekoa, President, 'Alliance' (local potential partner at Ngovayang)

Dr Roger Futso, Director, Wildlife Conservation Society – Cameroon, President CBCS

Dr Russell Bian Mbah, Biologist, CBCS

Mr Felix Ndi, Environmental Journalist and Potential Representative, SSG, Ngovayang

Mr Nke Ngona, Representative, CODEGEN (SSG at Mbam Binkom)

Dr Roger Ngoufo, Executive Director, Cameroon Environmental Watch, Member NLC

Mr Victor Pewo, BirdLife Focal Point (NLC Member), Dept. Fauna & Protected Areas, Ministry of Environment & Forests

Mr Pascal Tatieze Temgoua, Division Chief, Ministry of Tourism

Dr Michael Vabi, National Evaluation Consultant, Birdlife Mt. Project Director

Mr Martin Zeh-Nio, Programme Specialist, UNDP Cameroon

Four Village Chiefs and other local leaders at Mbam Binkom

PEOPLE INTERVIEWED – ETHIOPIA

Dr Abebe Demissie, General Manager, Institute of Biodiversity Conservation and Research, Addis Ababa.

Prof Afework Bekele, Dean of Science and Department of Zoology, University of Addis Ababa.

Mr Akalewolde Bantirgo, Technical Advisor, Christian Relief and Development Association (NGO network), Addis Ababa

Mr Amiyayu Egigsemahu, Forest Manager, Natural and Man-made Forest Development Centre, Menagesha-Suba State Forest

Mr Anthony Shimelis, Research Officer, IBA project, Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society, Addis Ababa

Ms Aster Tefera, Conservation Officer, IBA project, Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society, Addis Ababa

Ms Deberite Eyene, Cold Room & Herbarium Service Head, Institute of Biodiversity Conservation and Research, Addis Ababa

Dr Ermias Bekele, Project Leader, Forest Conservation in High Priority Areas, WWF Ethiopia Office, Addis Ababa

Dr Getachew Eshete, Head of Biodiversity Department, Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), Addis Ababa.

Mr Getachew Taye, Head of Planning and Programming Service, Wildlife Conservation and Development Organisation, Addis Ababa

Dr Girma Balcha, Deputy General Manager, Institute of Biodiversity Conservation and Research, Addis Ababa

Dr Girma Hailu, Assistant Resident Representative, UNDP, Addis Ababa

Mr Hailemariam Hailemeskal, Project National Consultant and Director of Programmes, Agri Service Ethiopia, Addis Ababa

Mr Mateos Mekiso, Ecology Team Leader, Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), Addis Ababa.

Mr Mengistu Wondafresh, IBA Project Manager, Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society, Addis Ababa

Mr Tesfaye Hundesa, Director, Wildlife Conservation and Development Organisation, Addis Ababa

Mr Tsegaye Legesse, Administration and Finance Officer, Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society, Addis Ababa
Berga Wetlands Site Support Group members

Menagesha-Suba Forest Site Support Group members

PEOPLE INTERVIEWED – GHANA

Mr Awulae Annor Adjaye III, Paramount Chief, Amansuri and Ankasi areas

Mr Augustus Asamdah, Programme Manager, GEF Project, Ghana Wildlife Society, Accra

Dr Dan Atuquayefio, Head, Department of Zoology, Legon

Ms Cynthia Cudjou, Community and Small-scale Projects officer, Amansuri Conservation and Integrated Development Project, Ghana Wildlife Society, Amansuri

Prof Clement Dorm-Adzobu, Executive Director, Ghana Wildlife Society, Accra

Dr Stephen Duah-Yentumi, Sustainable Development Advisor, UNDP office, Accra

Dr David G. Kpelle, Director of Programmes, Conservation International Ghana, Accra

Mr John Naada Majam, Senior Wildlife Officer, Ankasa Conservation Area, Wildlife Division, Forestry Commission, Elubo

Mr James Parker Mckeown, Project Manager, Amansuri Conservation and Integrated Development Project, Ghana Wildlife Society, Amansuri

Mr Samuel Kofi Nyame, CBNM Advisor, SNV Ghana, Accra

Ms Edwina Okoh, Coordinator, Marine Turtle Conservation Project, Ghana Wildlife Society, Amansuri

Mr Yaw Okyere-Nyako, Development Manager, Ministry of Finance, Accra

Prof Alfred A. Oteng-Yeboah, Deputy Director General, Environment and Health Sector, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, Accra (national evaluation consultant)

Dr Erasmus H. Owusu, Director of Conservation Programs, Ghana Wildlife Society, Accra

Amansuri Project Management Committee members, Benyin

PEOPLE INTERVIEWED – KENYA & INTERNATIONAL

Dr Gary Allport, Assistant Director, Programme Development, BirdLife International, Cambridge, UK.

Mr Julius Arinaitwe, GEF Programme Manager, BirdLife International, Nairobi

Mr Paul Buckley, Head, Global Country Programmes Unit, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Sandy, UK.

Mr Stephen Evans, Species and Sites Conservation Programme Manager, BirdLife South Africa

Mr Michael Gachanja, Coordinator Kenya Forest Working Group, East African Wild Life Society, Nairobi

Dr Chris Gakahu, Asst. Resident Representative, UNDP Nairobi

Dr John Hough, Principal Technical advisor on Biodiversity, Global Environmental Facility, UNDP, New York

Prof Panta M.B. Kasoma, Director, Institute of Environment and Natural Resources, Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda

Ms Maaike Manten, Institutional Fund-raiser, BirdLife International, Nairobi

Dr Paul Matiku, Executive Director, NatureKenya, Nairobi.

Mr Ambrose Mugisha, Site Conservation Officer, Nature Uganda, Uganda

Mr Elias Mungai, Conservation Officer, Wildlife & Conservation Society of Tanzania

Mr Parkinson Ndonge, CBD Focal Point, Kenya National Environment Management Authority, Nairobi

Ms Catherine Ngarachu, Membership Services Manager, NatureKenya, Nairobi

Ms Patricia Ngari, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, PACT Kenya, Nairobi (Kenya national evaluation consultant)

Dr Philip Muruthi, Chief Scientist, African Wildlife Foundation, Nairobi

Mr Solomon Mwangi Ngari, IBA Programme Manager, NatureKenya, Nairobi

Dr Paulinus Ngeh, West Africa Sub-regional Coordinator, BirdLife International, Accra

Ms Fleur N'Gweno, Secretary, NatureKenya, Nairobi

Mr Charles Nyandiga, Environmental Focal Point, UNDP Nairobi

Mr Georges Oueda, Biodiversity Programme Manager, Naturama, Burkina Faso

Dr Alan Rodgers, Regional Coordinator (Eastern Africa), UNDP-GEF Biodiversity Projects Office, Arusha, Tanzania

Mr. D.D. Siaffa, Executive Head, CSSL, Sierra Leone

Mr Alhaji Siaka, IBA Project Manager, CSSL, Sierra Leone

Dr Hazell Thompson, Head of Africa Division, BirdLife International, Nairobi

Ms Katerin Topar-Michon, Portfolio Manger, Division for Environmental Programmes, UNOPS, New York (telephone interview)

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Hagen, R., Trempe, F. & Kasisi, J.-R. (2000). Mid-Term Evaluation. African NGO-Government Partnerships for Sustainable Biodiversity Action Project RAF/97/G31/1G/31. UNOPS, New York.

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Annual Project Review Meeting Reports, 1999, 2000, 2001 (Jan), 2001 (Oct)

BirdLife Annual Progress reports (excluding Annexes), 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002 (mid-year)

Toolkits prepared by the Project:

- Guidelines for NIBACS Development
- Guidelines for establishment of SSG
- Guidelines for Site Action Planning
- Guidelines for ornithological training
- Framework for IBA monitoring

Various workshop reports

Kenya Draft National Evaluation Report
Kenya Internal Project Review, 1999
Kenya Internal Project Review, 2000

Annex 4. Framework for Guiding Discussions and Questions.

The Evaluation Team at the outset of the Evaluation developed the following text and questions. They provided a framework for interviews in all countries, and also for documentation reviews. In most cases, the following were not asked directly, but acted as a guide to discussions and questioning.

Introductory text

The reviewers' remit is to evaluate the GEF project to see if it had been effectively and efficiently executed; to identify strengths and weaknesses in implementation; to capture lessons in project design, implementation and management; and to make recommendations for specific actions in future projects. This is to be done across the whole project area – 10 countries – although the reviewers will only visit four countries as case studies. These are Ghana, Cameroon, Ethiopia and (partially) Kenya. Your country was not evaluated specifically as a country, but only as a case study for the project as a whole.

During initial briefings at Naivasha, Kenya, attended by staff of UNDP, GEF, BirdLife International, RSPB and most of the project managers, the reviewers were of the initial opinion that the project was, in general, well designed, well implemented and effective. The project team had risen to the opportunities and challenges offered.

Issues

The discussion and question should/cover the following issues. Obviously it is necessary to fix questions to the interviewee, and to focus quickly on key issues.

Breaking the ice/getting started

- Length of involvement in the project/process
- Specific interests and technical background

Preparation of the project

- How was the project during the early (pre-PDF and PDF) stages?
- Where did key ideas come from?
- Who drove the process and the concept? BirdLife, or UNDP, or GEF?

Generalities

- What is your role and how has it evolved?
- What are your general thoughts on the project? Its value-added? Its niche?
- Has the project been flexible and responsiveness to national issues?
- Was the pace of project appropriate?
- Assess any logistical issues/ personnel of project. Review equipment provided, and discuss contracting and payments arrangements.

Planning and Reporting

- Discuss project planning and reporting mechanisms.
- Was the reporting useful, or was it a distraction from technical and conservation work?
- Did your country get a fair benefit from the project, compared to other countries?

Technical Support

- What was the quality and timeliness of technical support from BirdLife, from UNDP, from GEF, from the sub-regional Coordinator, from RSPB or others?

BirdLife Partner NGO

- How was it before the project? And now? (in terms of staff, equipment, personnel, mandate, relations, confidence)
- Has the NGO developed partnerships?
- What difference did GEF make?
- What is the technical capacity of the NGO? Has it maintained an appropriate technical focus (conservation vs birds vs 'development')?
- Does the NGO have a secure future?

The NLC and Government-NGO relations

- How have these relations evolved during the project? Will the NLC continue afterwards, and what will it do?

- Have there been any policy or legislative changes regarding NGO involvement in conservation?
- The NLC – who, when, what, where?
- What difference did the GEF project make?
- Was there a significant involvement of other NGOs?
- General NGO-NGO partnerships, and NGO-GO partnerships. Has there been a change?
- NIBACS? Where is it? Who does it belong to? What is its content, and how was it prepared?
- Has the project had an influence on conservation approaches or policy in-country?

Other partners/stakeholders

- Who are main conservation actors in the country?
- What is the specific niche of this project, of the BL partner NGO?
- How are relations amongst the conservation community?

Approach to conservation

- Is it unique/innovative? If so, how?
- Is it appropriate to the country? If not, why not?
- Is the approach effective?

IBA process

- Status in country? Project contribution?
- Strengths/weaknesses?
- How good and complete is the monitoring of the IBA sites?
- Are you not neglecting other species/sites for birds?
- What difference did GEF make?

Site Support Groups

- Where did the idea of SSGs come from?
- Is it innovative? Appropriate? Effective?
- How many SSG are there in the country? How many sites do they cover? How many members?
- What is the approach to preparing and managing an SSG?
- How are the SSG members motivated and how are they financed?
- How much support do they need? Are they ready to become autonomous?
- Do the SSGs have access to adequate technical support (conservation, science and alternative livelihoods)?
- What difference did GEF make?

Training

- Who chose the training events, and who benefited from it?
- What has been the impact of the training?
- Government, NGO, all staff, others?
- Was the training timely and well designed?
- How have things changed?

Outputs

- What have been the outputs in terms of posters, guidelines and toolkits?

Co-financing and leveraging

- Who was responsible for fund mobilisation?
- How successful has this been?
- Are the leveraged funds focused on IBA and conservation?
- How did GEF help the resource mobilisation?

Regional/multi-country

- What was the role of the SRC?
- How did you benefit from the regional partnership?
- Have you learnt from other countries?
- Would you have prepared a single country project? Why?

Future

- How will things evolve in the coming years?

- What will you, personally, be doing in 1, 2 years time? And your staff?
- What lessons have you learnt? For the country? For other countries?

Other

- How was the mid-term evaluation? Useful, or a distraction?
- What are the relations between NIBACS and NBSAP (in terms of both product and process)?
- Has the project created a parallel approach to national conservation (e.g. to NBSAP and government programmes)?

Specific things to investigate at the SSG

- What is the status of the biodiversity?;
- What is the history and evolution of the Group? How is it financed? How is it motivated?
- Who sets the Group's agenda?
- What is the Group's technical and management capacity?
- How is the Group involved in the IBA process, eg monitoring?;
- Is the Group making an impact on biodiversity, or on land/resource use?
- How are the Groups relations with local government? National Government?
- What conservation, development, resource management activities is the Group implementing?

Annex 5. Summary of IBA Site Visits

Cameroon - Mbam Minkom

The site lies within approximately 30 km of Yaounde at one edge of the ‘Yaoundé massif’ range. It covers approximately 200 km². The site comprises hilly rainforest (Guinea-Congo forests) which, although degraded and highly threatened, still contains a large amount of original forest considering the proximity to the capital city. Rockfowl (*Picathartes oreas*) is a key bird species, with over 120 other restricted range bird species also present. The area also reportedly contains sizeable populations of chimpanzees and lowland gorillas. Approximately 3-4,000 people live in the villages surrounding the forest. The main threats are hunting and land-clearing for farming.

Following survey work over many years, in mid-2001 CBCS helped establish a Committee for Development and Environment in Mbam Minkom (CODEGEM). This Committee is overseen by a Council consisting of 5 village chiefs, with a sub-committee in each of the five villages, and a Coordinator-Delegate and extension workers. I met with the Coordinator-Delegate and all members of the Council, and drove along most of one edge of the site. CODEGEM is a channel for conservation and development activities at the site. CBCS have also influenced the Ministry of Tourism to select the site as a pilot ecotourism site, under a project supported by the German Government. CBCS has also developed a strong network of individuals to monitor developments in the area and help identify approaches and actions.

Following awareness and education campaigns, the villagers are committed to stop hunting and to stop clearing new forest for farmland. This has reportedly led to a large increase in the mammal population, with crop-damage increasing significantly. The villagers are frustrated that they have not been rewarded for their changed behaviour regarding forests and hunting. Many further conservation and development activities have been identified by the villagers in consultation with CBCS. The villagers truly appreciate the participatory approach adopted by CBCS, which they stated is in clear contrast to governmental initiatives. Although they have had training, they await subsidised inputs to launch new agricultural activities, and they await assistance in launching tourism and developing the local infrastructure.

Further capacity building is needed for the villagers in the fields of: basic ecotourism; action planning; taking initiatives; biodiversity and birds. It should be possible to develop a local ownership over and pride for the biodiversity, as has been seen at SSGs in other countries.

Cameroon – Ngovayang

The site lies approximately 200 km from Yaounde, on the southern edge of the Yaoundé massif range, approximately 4 hours drive on good roads. The site, although not officially demarcated, covers over 600 km². The site contains hilly rainforest (Guinea-Congo forests) and large amounts of original forest remains intact. Over 300 species of bird have been recorded, including Rockfowl, Forest Swallow, Green Parrot and over 100 restricted range species. Large populations of chimpanzee and gorilla are reported. Previous large-scale logging in the region has now stopped, and the main threats are small-scale logging and hunting (for sustenance and commercial purposes).

CBCS is at the stage of identifying potential local partner associations, which would form the basis of a SSG. Four potential partners have been identified, covering the 7 most important of the 11 villages around the site. The aim is to develop an inter-village committee – a similar model to CODGEM at Mbam Minkom. These local partners are development oriented, with a notable focus on integrating the Pygmy population into the economy and society. CBCS has also identified a possible site Coordinator-Delegate, a well-reputed environmental journalist from the site.

Following initial awareness-raising, the level of hunting has reportedly decreased significantly. As a result, there is much less bush-meat available in the local markets, and there are some (unconfirmed) reports of more large mammals being observed in the forest. Many possible conservation and development activities have already been identified. CBCS is awaiting funds before launching or promising to launch more activities. There is a good likelihood of CBCS securing some project resources in the near future.

Ethiopia - BERGA WETLANDS AND MENAGESHA-SUBA STATE FOREST

The Berga Wetlands, an IBA site situated at the bottom of a broad shallow valley some 70 km north-west of Addis Ababa, were visited on 22 January 2003. They are on a 450 ha State dairy farm, supporting a herd of 286 Jersey dairy cattle and a workforce of 56. Grazing land comprises 400 ha, most of which is also mown for hay; the rest is cropped. The valley bottom is open grassland, with a c.20 ha “eye” of rough grassland/sedge where the breeding sites (one of only two known worldwide) of the secretive and globally threatened White-winged Flufftail are found. Breeding takes place in July-August among reeds with a water depth of 10-20 cm. The main threat is illegal cutting of reeds (*Juncus*, but also sedges) for placing on floors on traditional occasions. Demand is principally from people living in Addis Ababa, and is greatest during the main bird breeding period. The State Privatisation Agency planned to sell the state farm to investors, which would probably have resulted in destruction of the wetlands, but strong lobbying by EWNHS and various state conservation bodies (EWCO, EPA, IBCR) and the wereda (local government) has stopped this.

A Site Support Group was formed by EWNHS around 18 months ago from members of the four surrounding Peasant Associations. The group has 36 members of which 8 are women – none receive any allowances for attending meetings. A meeting was held with 11 members plus the Director of the State dairy enterprise. The SSG meets regularly, and helps police the area from reed cutters, who often come at night. Cutting is year-round, but mostly from July to September, which is when the SSG has 'guards' patrolling. They do not have powers of arrest - incidents are reported to the state farm director, the local police or district authorities. One of the main local “helpers” of illicit cutters has now joined the group as a result of peer-pressure. People in the area are poor, relying on smallholder farming, grazing and trading for a living; a number are employees of the dairy farm. The local population much prefers the employment and known modus operandi of the state dairy farm compared to the unknown of a private investor.

The state dairy farm supports the SSG by offering meeting facilities and some logistical support. The SSG has set up a tree nursery where they raise *Eucalyptus* seedlings for sale and seedlings of indigenous species (*Juniperus*, *Olea*, *Dovyalis*, *Hagenia*) for free distribution to the surrounding community. Their intent is to become more self-sufficient through sale of seedlings and vegetables, perhaps a small store. Their motivation is more self-improvement than conservation. Interestingly, none of the SSG members questioned had ever seen the Flufftail; they are just taking the word of others. There is local pride in having a bird of international significance in the area, and in the visitors from outside that come to see it.

EWNHS has greatly supported the SSG since its inception with regular visits and persuasion. It is not clear if it would have taken off without a lot of time and effort being invested by Aster Tefara, or whether it can continue without this. Funding has been obtained from various sources (the Disney and Laing Foundations) to carry on with site activities for the next year (2003), including the construction of a small building to house both the SSG and to provide a kindergarten for members children – something that they themselves regard as a priority.

The SSG is primarily focused on self-improvement and see the IBA site as a way of leveraging group spirit, recognition and funds. They are not so worried about the wetland or the bird. Their major concern was that a private investor would come in, take away state farm employment, and alienate the land. At present they can access some of the state farms' resources at certain times of year. They are happy that the threat of this has been removed for the present by lobbying of the Privatisation Agency by conservation bodies, and also by the wereda (District) authorities.

In the afternoon, a visit was made to the Menagesha-Suba State Forest. This 3500 ha area, one of the few natural forest areas left in central Ethiopia, comprises tall natural forest of *Juniperus procera*, *Podocarpus* and *Olea europaea*. In addition there are extensive plantations of *Cupressus*, *Juniperus*, *Pinus patula* and others. Mammalian wildlife is not uncommon, and residents of Addis use the area for recreation. The area is an IBA on the basis of high bird diversity and its biome-restricted assemblage; 228 bird species have

been recorded. The main threats are from illegal cutting of indigenous and exotic timber, particularly on the western border. This is sold in Addis, from where the demand comes.

The Forest Manager was interviewed and expressed satisfaction with the SSG and their activities. He provides a significant amount of assistance to them, including land, transport, construction materials and training. The SSG has 32 members (7 women), some are employees of the Forest Department. Others are teachers or students from schools in the surrounding villages, or self-employed. The SSG is based on the southern and south-eastern margins, away from the problem areas. They have built a tree nursery raising 20,000 seedlings this year (*Eucalyptus*, *Juniperus*, *Podocarpus*, *Entada*), and have recently started with a bee-keeping project. They have currently 16 hives in a small fenced area. The SSG has been in place 3.5 years, but has only been active for the last 2 years. It has been supporting the Forest Department in road construction, gully reclamation and informing on poaching. The reason given for this free labour input by the SSG is that it is their area and they want to protect it.

The SSG has criteria for admission. Persons have to be permanent residents of the area and a minimum education standard of Grade A. All are volunteers and receive no money or allowances from EWNHS or others. Recently the group has constructed a building in Suba village for their use. Timber was provided by the Forest Department and the tin roof and furniture by EWNHS. The Society has run training courses for 10 SSG members on the IBA programme and bird identification, and a separate, more advanced course to Forest Department staff. 24 SSG members received training in bee-keeping from a nearby State bee-keeping training centre.

Over the next few years the group would like to develop the tree nursery for extra income, develop bee-keeping and a dairy, and also create awareness among surrounding villagers on birth control and environmental issues. They do not appear to have plans to contribute to actual conservation activities, only to general environmental awareness.

Ghana - Amanzuri Lagoon and GWS conservation projects

The Amanzuri Lagoon catchment area covers approximately 1000 km². It is a freshwater lagoon system that at points it is only separated from the sea by thin sand bars, over which freshwater periodically flows directly to the sea. Seven permanent rivers feed the lagoon and one permanent river carries waters out to the sea. In addition to the lagoon, the project area contains swamp peat forest, swamp forest, floodplains, mangroves and sandy beaches, lying within a mosaic of agricultural land. The area contains biome-restricted birds and the river estuary is used by large numbers of waterbirds. The beach is an important nesting ground for three species of turtle. The land is community-owned and conservation cannot be legislated for.

GWS is implementing two separate Dutch-funded ICDP projects that aim to conserve/sustainably use biodiversity in the catchment area and to protect turtle nesting sites. Both projects benefit from a broad community involvement. Conservation activities include advocacy, awareness raising and ecotourism development, while development activities include small-scale physical constructions, micro-credit schemes and tourism. In addition, GWS has developed three site-specific conservation tools using local volunteers: community agents to increase awareness and promote actions in each community; tour guides to encourage and oversee tourists; and monitors to ensure turtles laying eggs are undisturbed.

During two-day visit, the evaluators held intensive discussions with the project managers and full-time staff responsible for turtles, community liaison and tourism. The evaluators also met with the paramount chief for the area, whose support has been critical to the process. Two separate round-table discussions were held, one with volunteers and one with the Project Management Committee (PMC). The PMC comprises representatives of each community and each sector of society, and takes many project-related decisions. The lagoon and some surrounding forests were also visited.

Amansuri has a range of ecological attributes in good condition. It is certainly of national (and probably regional) value and is deserving of protection efforts. It also has tourism potential. The ICDP projects are adopting a sound approach to conservation and seem to have established a good foundation for success.

Notably through the volunteers, the project is gaining invaluable first-hand experience of the potential trade-offs between conservation and development, and possible solutions. The IBA programme has also given it national recognition and a form of community protection. The PMC provides a good mechanism for preparing feedback to government. GWS provides technical support, which government is unable to channel to communities due to its lack of presence in the area. At present, monitoring and recording of biodiversity and conservation activities is weak. Technical support to both conservation and tourism development may be inadequate. For the future, care should be taken to ensure that the local groups develop independence whilst maintaining a conservation focus, and that conservation has a scientific basis. Finally, it should be noted that tourism will not be a solution to all conservation and development activities in the area, and care should be taken to not create too high expectations.

Ghana - Ankasa Forest National Park

Ankasa National Park, established in 1976, covers approximately 500 km² of pristine higher forest, lying close to the coast. At the closest point it is approximately 50 km from the Amanzuri lagoon catchment area. It is a globally significant IBA with many biome-restricted birds, including endangered and restricted-range species. It also provides a habitat for important mammals (e.g. chimpanzee, bongo and forest elephant), as well as significant plant diversity. It is surrounded by lightly used agricultural land, and borders a Forest Reserve and a protected area in neighbouring Ivory Coast. The main threats are poaching and local harvesting of forest products.

The evaluators had a short meeting with the Officer-in-Charge of park management, briefly inspected the educational facilities, and took a short walk along the botanical trail. We also met with the paramount chief for the area, whose is a strong supporter of conservation and community development. In the past, the government approach was to enforce total protection of the Park using guards and evicting all entrants. Recently, new efforts include working with the surrounding community, providing development opportunities for them, and developing the park as an education and tourist facility. These efforts have been supported by the EU, including the piloting of the national CREMA scheme (Community Resources in Environmental Management Areas) at one local village.

The forest remains in good condition. However, increasing demographic and agricultural pressure mean its future is not assured. Monitoring may be inadequate, as is the technical contribution to management. Recent changes to a community-oriented approach are commendable, although may be top-down. It is recognised that long-term sustainability can only be achieved by improving living standards, largely through the development of the agricultural and tourist sectors. Local communities can then appreciate the forest. Operationalising this is the challenge. Tourist facilities should be strategically developed – possibly in tandem with the nearby Amanzuri tourist attractions. Care must be taken to not over-rely on tourism as a source of economic development