

Theme 4: Climate change and biodiversity

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CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIO DIVERSITY

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Climate change impacts including drought, crop failure, flooding, sea-level rise, and extreme weather events are already being felt across the world, with the poorest people and vulnerable ecosystems hit hardest. The effects of climate change will almost certainly persist for centuries, and depending on the level of mitigation achieved, will be of increasing severity. Adaptation is necessary to cope with present and future impacts.

Ever-increasing evidence suggests that healthy, bio-diverse environments play a vital role in maintaining and increasing resilience to climate change, and in reducing climate-related risk and vulnerability. Biodiversity, ecosystems and the functions and services they provide, such as water, food, soil protection, clean air, disaster risk reduction and carbon capture, underpin the Earth's life support system and our sustainable development. This is particularly critical to many of the world's people, who depend on natural resources most directly for their livelihood and survival.

This paper includes many case studies from different countries around the world. They provide compelling evidence of the roles that ecosystems play in climate change adaptation through protecting the natural resource base, providing alternative livelihood options, and maintaining resilience to future climate change. Bird Life International's experience shows that - supporting the application of local knowledge and community engagement and action can build the resilience of natural and societal systems, delivering locally appropriate solutions to help communities, countries and economies adapt to the challenges of climate change. For the most vulnerable people in particular, an ecosystem approach to adaptation will often be the first line of defense against the impacts of climate change.

The role of ecosystems in climate change adaptation is relevant to, and can be applied at, all scales: local, landscape, national, trans boundary and international. Bird life is calling for the importance of healthy ecosystems to be effectively written into national, regional and international climate change and development policy, as a key part of ensuring the current and future well-being of people and

biodiversity. All adaptation responses should be environmentally sound, and specifically recognize the value and importance of healthy ecosystems as critical -in building resilience and adaptive capacity. Maintaining healthy ecosystems, their functions and services, should be part of an overall adaptation framework for people and our planet.