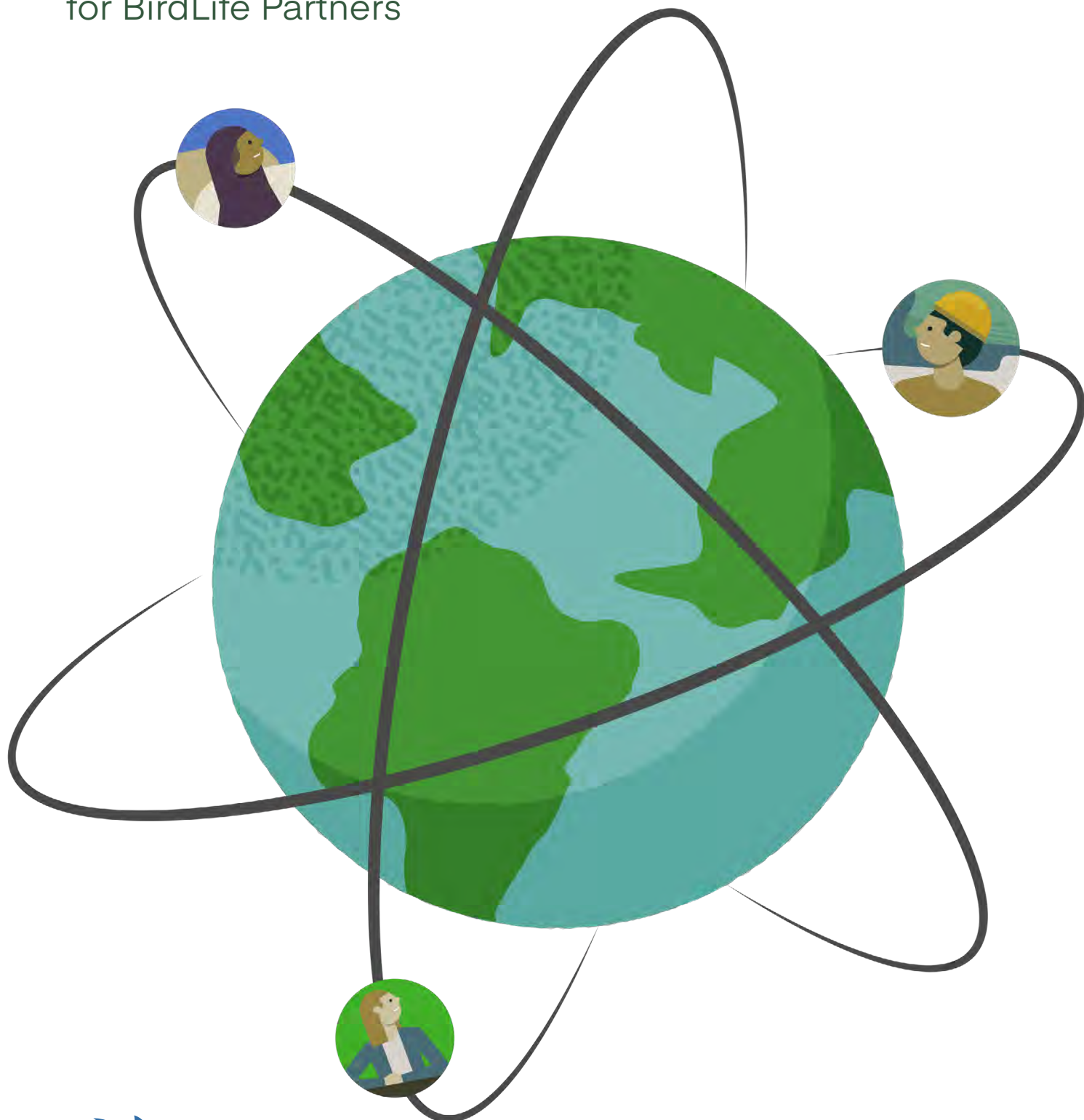


Building Civil Society *support*

A Good Practice Guide
for BirdLife Partners





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Building Civil Society *support*

A Good Practice Guide for BirdLife Partners

This is the third in the series of 'Good Practice Guides' produced by the Capacity Development Programme of BirdLife International.

BirdLife International is a network of over 115 national conservation organisations united by a shared vision to conserve over 13,000 priority sites for the benefits of birds, biodiversity and people. We believe a strong and effective partnership of civil society movements for nature is the only way to ensure conservation impact in the long term: so, a major focus of BirdLife's work is on organisational capacity building, from science to policy and conservation

action, as well as developing a civil society constituency, governance, management, communications and marketing. Vogelbescherming Nederland / BirdLife in the Netherlands, one of the founding Partners of BirdLife, has provided technical and financial support to Partners across Africa, Asia and Europe for over 20 years. Building on the extensive knowledge and experience from across the Partnership, this joint publication is the third in a capacity development toolkit series of Good Practice Guides, to support the development of followers, supporters and members as constituencies for civil society organisations.

Whether you are striving to be a Partner or are an existing Partner of the BirdLife International Partnership, we hope this guide is useful to *you*.



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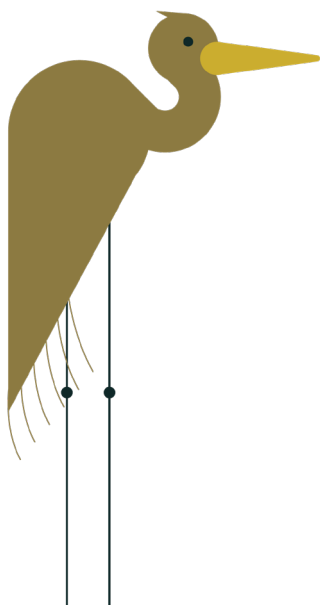
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Foreword



Global conservation NGOs generally fall into two groups. One model is a single organisation, usually based in one of the richer countries, with field projects, offices or subsidiaries around the world. These satellites are managed with varying

degrees of control and work together, at least some of the time, on centrally agreed programmes and targets. Another approach, harder to define, is of loose-knit groupings of smaller bodies with roughly similar aims, collaborating only when expedient. The latter are often at the more radical end of the conservation spectrum, working together on key campaigns and resistant to any permanent or legally binding relationship. They are often less stable; new groups regularly emerge and some of the older ones gradually fade away.

Both approaches have strengths and weaknesses. BirdLife International is the inventor and perhaps the only real example of a third way; a conscious coming-together of carefully selected national bird- and nature conservation organisations with similar aims to form a single, mutually supportive and collaborative network. There is nothing casual about the grouping; generally, only one organisation per country can join, these are carefully vetted and make a series of policy, organisational and financial commitments. The result is a rather different and unique Partnership and, for those of us inside it, in terms of civil society, very powerful.

The key point here is that BirdLife is a genuine *partnership*, and far more than just a slogan. The Partners are independent and have chosen themselves to be a partner after complying with the criteria of BirdLife. While all Partners have their own national roles and priorities, a key reason for

belonging is to gain the advantages of working together, on the shared strategy of BirdLife, on collaborative projects, joint fundraising, cross-learning, mutual support, shared monitoring and research, and collective efforts at enthusing governments and civil society to take conservation seriously. As a BirdLife Partner ourselves, we swap information, ideas and experiences all the time; we teach, and we learn.

Birds are our passion and also a symbol of wider nature conservation issues that are easy for people to sympathise with and to understand.

The Partnership is much more than a group of ornithologists and conservation professionals. BirdLife survives or fails through the people who support us, in a wide variety of ways. The sheer numbers of people openly backing our aims gives us political influence, meaning that we are often punching above our weight and governments, industry and other stakeholders are forced to take us seriously. Members also provide a lot of our funds, our labour force, advocates, researchers and champions. We desperately need people to engage.

However, our understanding of what 'engagement' means is changing over time and differs between Partners. What works in the Netherlands won't work everywhere else, and what works in the Netherlands is also likely to change over time.

Choosing the right strategy for civil society engagement is therefore critically important. I therefore welcome the variety of experience from all over the Partnership feeding into this guide – and sharing this is why Vogelbescherming Nederland sponsored this guide. We hope you will find it useful in building strong, resilient partnerships into the future, and that the cooperation between Partners continues and grows. I learned things from the good practices collected here and hope that you will too.

Fred Wouters,
Executive Director of
Vogelbescherming Nederland



Preface



BirdLife International is a unique, successful and very exciting collaboration enterprise. In our headquarters in Cambridge, UK, we employ people from all over the world, reflective of the enormous ethnic and cultural diversity of

the Partnership itself. Collaboration involves a very conscious mixing of perspectives and methods, which stimulates fresh ideas and new approaches to problem-solving. And as part of working together, all these Partners have agreed to follow certain policies, including that they have an active membership.

However, the world is changing, and now quicker than ever. What worked a few years ago may no longer be so appropriate. The BirdLife 'model' of membership organisations, with members paying an annual fee, was invented in Europe. The pioneers were in wealthy countries and operating at a time when many people were happy to pay an annual subscription and become an official 'member' of an organisation whose aims they supported, complete with membership card, badge and car sticker. But this doesn't work everywhere. In some societies the whole question of committing to pay money to join an organisation is counter to cultural experience and likely to be resisted; in a few cases, our Partners spend more on recruiting and servicing members than they gain in membership fees. While this can be worthwhile if it results in a cadre of committed conservationists, it may not be the most efficient model.

Even in countries where the membership model is long-established, younger members are demanding a new approach, more interactive, democratic and much faster to respond to events than is offered by an occasional printed magazine. There are long-term changes in the way that people interact with, and offer support for, organisations. Some Partners

find that they are moving from traditional 'members' to a looser knit, but potentially more engaged, group of followers, supporters and volunteers who also contribute to the organisation through regular giving. Differences are influenced by where in the world the Partner is operating, and by issues of age, background and expectations. In addition, increasing use of social media, selective forms of engagement, different needs and expectations of civil society all play a role in stimulating change. Some BirdLife Partners have already read the signs and are fundamentally changing their approach. Others are combining the best of the old and new demands or continue to use their traditional model because it works for them, or are indeed trying to find the right model that works for them.

Despite the challenges Partners experience in recruiting and sustaining memberships, the BirdLife International Partnership also recognises the strength, legitimacy and influence a constituency grants a Partner to advocate for favourable nature conservation policies at local, national or international level. A membership base or a group of supporters provide Partners with a legitimate way to democratically elect their governing bodies.

The Good Practice Guide advice in the following pages reflects the hard-earned experience of over a hundred people working for the BirdLife International Partnership around the world, and who have learned through test and trial what works and what doesn't. Our consultants have asked for advice, listened carefully, collected and systematised the responses to produce this guide. We're pleasantly surprised, and very grateful, that so many busy people took time to engage. The guidance and case studies will help you think about suitable approaches to strategise, attract, retain and maximise the development of followers, supporters and members as part of a constituency to develop a strong civil society organisation. Whether you are striving to be a Partner or are an existing Partner of the BirdLife International Partnership, we hope this guide is useful to you.

Patricia Zurita,
Chief Executive of BirdLife
International

Introduction

The need for engagement

The whole philosophy of BirdLife International, which is unique amongst the larger NGOs, is based on the principle of interchange. The first form of interchange is between the Partners themselves, which unlike institutions like WWF or The Nature Conservancy, remain independent and often very different bodies, but are united around a common theme and actively work together and support each other's activities. Next, BirdLife as a whole interacts with other institutions, including governments and intergovernmental bodies, non-governmental organisations, corporations and civil society groups, in terms of collaboration, negotiation and advocacy. Lastly, but perhaps most important of all, independent BirdLife Partners interact with the public, through their followers, supporters and members. This last form of interchange is the focus of this guide. The guide has been developed by and is focused on BirdLife Partners and Associates. But given the wide variety of Partners, in terms of size, resources and remit, we hope that the guide will also be of use to the wider conservation community – all of whom engage civil society in their work in one way or another.

Many aspects of the rapid learning curve we have all been on in 2020 relate directly to the BirdLife mission. Better electronic communications are incredibly useful for an organisation with members in over a hundred countries. When we first talked about doing this project, we were assuming that we would try to set up a series of meetings at key events to ensure we had a chance of interacting with people from different countries. In the event, we have done this online; in Zoom meetings where we can see everyone's faces, get to know each other and laugh together. People who would never be able to afford to go to a training workshop can take part using their mobile phone.

At the same time, the ways in which BirdLife and its Partners interact with their members are changing.

The days of people wanting to 'join' an organisation, get a quarterly magazine and a few perks like free entry to nature reserves seem to be coming to an end, and in some countries never really begun. More and more people today want to interact more fluidly, supporting something if and when it appeals to them, rather than paying an annual subscription, taking an active role rather than being passive receivers of information, and wanting information instantly instead of waiting for an annual report or an occasional letter. This is often presented as a generation change, but in reality we are all learning to interact in different ways.

These important social changes present BirdLife with both huge opportunities and some potential problems. As a result, the Partnership has been actively thinking about how it could and should change to meet the challenges of running a global, diverse conservation organisation in the 21st century. This has in turn helped to shape the present guidelines, which are not simply about increasing membership but look more broadly at how BirdLife Partners interact with civil society.

Background to the current guide

This guidance is one contribution to that process. It builds on work that has gone before, including detailed analysis of best practice for governing an NGO.¹ A review for BirdLife carried out by the University of Cambridge, UK, identified a series of issues to be addressed, including communications and uptake of tools like the extranet; differences between Partners; capacity building; and generally how to increase mobilisation of members.² Analysts talk about the 'post-bureaucratic framework' for NGOs, with an emphasis on decentralisation,

1 Harley, A. ed. (2015) *Governing a Conservation NGO: A guide to good practice*. Cambridge and Sandy, Bedfordshire: BirdLife International and RSPB.

2 Kiambi, L., Baleta, T., Bayasgalan, O. & Clyde Knowles, L. (2020) *Translating popular support into action through the world's largest civil society partnership through nature*. Cambridge University and BirdLife International.

consensus-forming and networked relationships.³ Many individual BirdLife Partners are actively wrestling with these issues on a daily basis and, as we discovered, many have already started to make major changes in the way they do business, while others are continuing to struggle with a business framework that really doesn't work for them.

Against this backdrop, the current project looked in detail at how BirdLife Partners can most effectively build public support. We did this in a number of ways. First, we talked, and more importantly we listened, to BirdLife staff and Partners in a series of one-on-one interviews and group webinars, both to hear what their particular challenges are in this regard and how they have gone about solving them. The bulk of this guide is made up of the good practices and case studies that emerged from these conversations, so was truly developed from the bottom up. At the same time, we did not ignore what was happening outside BirdLife and conducted some literature research into ways that other large social movement NGOs have addressed these issues. We also undertook a review of all BirdLife Partner websites and social media (see Appendix 2).

In all, we carried out 44 interviews, covering every continent except Antarctica, and ran three large brainstorming Zoom meetings attended by 75 people. One-to-one interviews were by invitation, based on suggestions from BirdLife staff in Cambridge, our own reading and sometimes advice from regional coordinators. We were pleased and surprised by the level of response, the enthusiasm with which people shared ideas and the fact that several have continued to follow up since. The webinars, which aimed to fill remaining gaps in our understanding and give others a chance to comment and input, were open to all BirdLife Partners and scheduled to fit different times around the world. We recorded interviews, took notes and have fact checked the case studies with the people involved. In the case of webinars, people had the chance to speak directly, post notes in the chat or use the MeetingSphere software, which allows anyone to write into a group document. The three of us have analysed the results in consultation with staff in Cambridge and many Partner organisations, to identify the set of good practices outlined below.

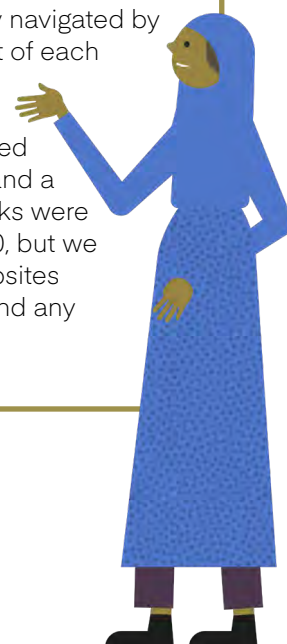
Next steps

Over the coming period, we will be rolling out the guidance, translating it, making sure all the relevant people know about it, and exploring how to get the ideas out in different formats, such as films, MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) and **Talking Points** summarising good practices for a range of specific questions. And BirdLife will continue to build knowledge. If you have not had the opportunity to input but would like to, we hope that this body of research continues to be built upon and refined by the BirdLife Partnership, and there will be plenty more opportunities for sharing and reflecting on good practices.

How to use the manual

The days when most people read reports from cover to cover are long gone. We have tried to write this guidance for busy people, and to make it as easy to use as possible. The good practices, in Part B, are organised around four themes: *strategise*, *attract*, *retain* and *maximise*. Under each theme a series of overarching principles are then elaborated into good practices with examples from Partners. In some cases, factual boxes are provided with more detailed information on specific issues, and there are several 'story box' examples from Partners around the world. The PDF document has embedded links, which are also provided as footnotes throughout for the printed version. All the principles and good practices are extensively cross-referenced, allowing users to follow up on specific issues of interest; on the PDF version these can be easily navigated by using the infographic at the start of each section of Part B.

A note on links: We have included many links to BirdLife Partners and a range of online resources. All links were functional as of December 2020, but we realise links do change and websites disappear, so apologies if you find any links which are broken.



³ Hensby, A., Sibthorpe, J. & Driver, S. (2011) Resisting the 'protest business': Bureaucracy, post-bureaucracy and active membership in social movement organizations. *Organisation* 19 (6): 809–823.

Part A

why do we
need a guide?



The BirdLife International Partnership

BirdLife International was established in 1993, evolving from the International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP) founded in 1922. The BirdLife Partnership brings together independent nature conservation organisations with a shared strategy and a vision for a world rich in biodiversity with people and nature living in harmony, equitably and sustainably. The BirdLife Partnership aims to work together on shared priorities, policies and programmes of conservation action, exchanging skills, achievements and information. Within the Partnership, each BirdLife Partner is independent, maintains its own finances, activities, and acts in its own name, while also collaborating with other Partners and with the overall aims of the Partnership. This is the largest global Partnership of non-governmental conservation organisations (NGOs); comprising, as of the end of 2020, 115 organisations across 112 countries striving to conserve birds, their habitats and global biodiversity, working with people towards the sustainable use of natural resources.

The BirdLife Partnership consists of two different categories of organisation: Partners (voting members within the BirdLife Partnership who have signed the Agreement for Partners) and Affiliates (non-voting members). The criteria for being a BirdLife Partner or Affiliate are outlined in the Operational Procedures of the BirdLife International Partnership and its Secretariat.

One of the key responsibilities of the BirdLife International Secretariat in Cambridge is to support and help build the organisational capacity of the Partners that make up BirdLife.

A vision for enhancing the role of civil society across the BirdLife Partnership

BirdLife aims to build a strong, skilled and mutually supportive Partnership of civil society conservation organisations – national NGOs and their local conservation groups – that has global reach and capability for concerted action. The intention is to engage and motivate a wide spectrum of people and organisations to care about biodiversity and its conservation, including youth, business leaders, policy makers and the ‘general public’ – through education, awareness raising and involvement with nature, especially with birds.

BirdLife claims to speak for some three million members and over seven million supporters around the world, calculated from Partners’ membership lists plus various other categories of people who have shown support through, for example, volunteering, donations, etc. The way that the number of supporters is calculated differs between BirdLife Partners, so this figure is approximate but is nevertheless a powerful advocacy lever.

This guidance seeks to help BirdLife Partners cultivate and nurture these supporters and members and to source from across the BirdLife Partnership **practical, affordable and scalable strategies** on how to build a strong, dedicated and growing network around civil society engagement. The guide underpins a wide vision of civil society engagement which encompasses the following points:

Why involving civil society is important for Partners to:

- Build awareness of and support for bird and other nature conservation and the BirdLife Partnership conservation vision
- Provide legitimacy for the policy and practical work of the Partners
- Develop grass-roots mobilisation and advocate for conservation and for climate change action
- Collaborate with national experts, across a range of disciplines, to build capacity
- Identify volunteers, and potential staff, to provide practical assistance
- Support the wide dissemination of information on the importance of birds and biodiversity, and most importantly on what people can do to help
- Build capacity in the public to generate data useful for monitoring conservation success
- Demonstrate civil society support for conservation to aid advocacy and thus influence policy
- Encourage the development of networks and action groups to promote conservation (often focused regionally or on specific species or habitats) and other sustainability issues
- Contribute to putting knowledge and evidence into practice
- Ensure accountability by keeping the organisation on track and ensuring that multiple voices help steer its development

The guide aims to help BirdLife Partners maximise positive links with civil society, to build support and strengthen their *mission*.

Why a global constituency is important to the BirdLife Partnership to:

- Show global support for the shared vision and mission of conservation
- Develop a community of practice around civil society engagement
- Contribute core funding to the coordinating work of BirdLife International

What would success look like?

- A loyal and growing alliance of followers, supporters, members and volunteers in BirdLife Partners around the world
- Powerful, coherent and effective advocacy for policies that help ensure the conservation of birds and other biodiversity, enhanced through civil society support
- Beneficial interchange of data, ideas, techniques and lessons to increase overall success

Aim and scope of the guide

The whole philosophy of BirdLife International is predicated on the power of working together, so that civil society support is integral to the BirdLife Partnership, for direct support, to build political momentum and to ensure the sustainability of individual BirdLife Partners. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that there is no single model for engagement, for example some BirdLife Partners

have over a million paying members, others have tried many strategies to build membership but can only raise a handful; political, social and economic differences make it imperative to have a range of different engagement strategies. Differences are not only geographic and political but also temporal; what works at one time may no longer be effective a few years later. Many BirdLife Partners are currently rethinking their civil society engagement strategies considering changes in expectations, donor patterns and changes brought about through social media.

The guide aims to help BirdLife Partners maximise positive links with civil society, to build support and strengthen their mission. The good practices in Part B are suggestions, drawing on the experience of Partners and others, they recognise that the variable political and social conditions in which Partners operate means that what works in one place or one time may not necessarily work elsewhere, or later.



Primary aim: to help BirdLife Partners cultivate and nurture these supporters and members and to source from across the BirdLife Partnership **practical, affordable and scalable strategies** on how to build a strong, dedicated and growing network around civil society engagement.

In addition, the guide aims to:

1. Help create a common language when discussing key elements and goals for how the BirdLife Partnership works with supporters and members
2. Act as a starting point for a wider outreach programme on developing civil society engagement across the BirdLife Partnership

Objectives

1. Explore and understand how supporters and members contribute to a sustainable and successful NGO
2. Identify practices and tools useful for recruiting and nurturing a supporter base and membership
3. Develop a Good Practice Guide on engaging with civil society for use by BirdLife Partners
4. Develop a framework for outreach of the Guide to BirdLife Partners, including training, capacity building, translation, Partner to Partner cooperation, etc.

Outcomes intended from this work include to:

1. Maximise the impact of BirdLife Partners and BirdLife International by showing the extent that civil society supports the conservation of birds and the wider social, economic and cultural benefits of conservation
2. Improve the effectiveness and impact of BirdLife Partners and BirdLife International
3. Strengthen the sustainability of organisations within the BirdLife Partnership
4. Promote diversity and innovation within the BirdLife Partnership
5. Enhance collaboration between BirdLife Partners in developing civil society engagement through the sharing of successes, failures and lessons learned

Definitions of concepts and terms used in the guide

This guide is being written in English and will be translated into other languages. Concepts and definitions around terms like ‘support’, ‘civil society’, ‘engagement’ and so on can vary widely, depending on the context of discussion. To help you use this guide effectively two key concepts are thus defined and discussed below.

Civil society: is defined as a community of citizens linked by common interests and collective activity. Civil society is sometimes called the ‘third sector’, which comes after, and is distinguished from, government and commerce. Civil society organisations are defined as *‘the wide array of non-governmental and not for profit organisations that have a presence in public life, express the interests and values of their members and others, based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious or philanthropic considerations’*¹ In the context of this document, we are using civil society to define the group of people, outside of government and commerce, which BirdLife Partners wish to engage with and who share the objectives of the BirdLife Partner organisation. Of course, most BirdLife Partners will also have working relations with governments and a range of commercial partners; although clearly important, these are not the focus of this guide unless there are specific issues which need discussion or clarification, for example the category of corporate members in the discussion on membership. The guidelines are also focused primarily on the individual as opposed to civil society organisations; the engagement of the latter involving a whole extra layer of planning and implementation in terms of engagement (e.g. deciding which organisations to work with, developing memorandums of understanding to define working relationships, etc.).

Civil society engagement: refers here to actions that encourage engagement with BirdLife Partners, for instance through membership, volunteering, internships, social media support, etc. We do not include broader strategies for involving whole communities in conservation work through participatory planning, resource-use agreements, community engagement, etc., although we acknowledge that there is an overlap between these strategies.

1 worldbank.org/en/about/partners/civil-society/overview

Types of civil society *engagement*

Civil society engagement is varied, and the terminology used differs considerably across the BirdLife Partnership. No one term is right or wrong, but for the purpose of this guide we have identified six overarching categories of civil society engagement, which are defined in more detail below:

1. Follower
2. Supporter
3. Member
4. Volunteer and intern
5. Patron
6. Associated groups

Not all these categories will be suitable for every BirdLife Partner; but what is important is that each organisation clearly defines the different types of civil society engagement it has or is aiming to have. Each of the overarching categories includes a range of types, which are *not mutually exclusive* and an individual or organisation could fall into two or more of these types and several categories. ***This guide focuses specifically on the first three categories: followers, supporters and members.***



1. Follower

Used in this context to describe a person who chooses to see an individual's or organisation's posts in their content feed. For BirdLife Partners, this usually means people who follow their organisation's social media outputs.

The main social media outlets considered here are: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. But other formats like, YouTube and TikTok are also relevant.

2. Supporter

A person or group of people who supports, promotes, advocates and/or champions a cause or movement. For BirdLife Partners, supporters describe people/groups who are not staff members and do not make regular membership payments but whose details are known and managed by the organisations (e.g. in a supporters' database). Their support for an organisation can take many different forms such as providing financial support, responding to campaign related activities such as letter writing and participating in events.

Examples of types of supporters

- Individuals or groups (e.g. community groups, youth groups, local/regional groups or interest groups covering e.g. species like raptors or areas like a specific lake, wetland, forest, etc.)
- Participants in events
- Supporters of petitions, demonstrations, etc.
- Library users
- One-off or regular donors
- One-off visitors to reserves with entry fees
- Birdwatching guides

3. Member

A person/group who belongs to an organisation, has a role in the organisation's governance and abides by that organisation's rules and regulations. Generally, BirdLife Partner members pay a fee to gain status, benefits and the satisfaction of knowing they are supporting conservation. In some cases, membership may not involve a fee. Membership implies long-term commitment to the organisation (at least for one year and hopefully more). Membership usually confers voting rights within the organisation's governance structure.

Examples of types of members

- Subscription members: most organisations with a membership have a range of options, some examples are given below, and some may have different pricing structures for students, older people, non-residents (local or national, etc.)
 - a. Individuals
 - b. Couples
 - c. Families
 - d. Groups
- Invited expert or honorary members

4. Volunteer and intern

A person who devotes unpaid time, or receives minimum payments to cover expenses, to support the work of the organisation, e.g. through active management work, bird monitoring, office work, helping at events, etc.

Examples of types of volunteers/interns

- Students, graduates or others looking for work experience
- People on work placements, sometimes as part of re-employment strategies for unemployed, etc.
- Individuals who work willingly without pay
- Citizen scientists who take part in surveys and monitoring
- Specialists contributing to bird identification apps, databases and providing technical support

5. Patron

a person who agrees to lend their name to an organisation as a way of supporting that organisation's work, usually because they are well known and can attract support, e.g. in the form of members, media coverage, donations, etc.

Examples of types of patrons

- Eminent members of society
- Celebrities and influencers
- Strategically placed people
- Conservation champions
- Wealthy people and potential donors

6. Associated groups

A person or organisation that is officially associated to the BirdLife Partner. This involvement is likely to be subject to a specific agreement identifying the type of relationship, skill set and the terms under which the organisations work together. This agreement can take the form of a memorandum of understanding (MOU), legal agreement or contract, or a set of guidelines and principles for working together.

Examples of types of associates

- Local communities, site support groups, local conservation groups, community-based organisations
- Bird clubs, local branches, species specific groups
- Other NGOs/civil societies/activist groups
- Schools
- Private sectors, such as travel/tourism companies
- Project partners
- Scientists
- Researchers
- Journalists
- Photographers

Part B:

Principles and good practices of civil society engagement



Introduction

This is the largest section of the guide and aims to provide a wealth of advice to BirdLife Partners and Affiliates on developing civil society engagement. It is divided into four sections:

Strategise what type of civil society engagement is needed?

Attract what are the best ways to encourage civil society engagement?

Retain how best can civil society engagement be maintained over time?

Maximise how can civil society engagement be utilised most effectively to support conservation?

Each section includes a brief overview and several overarching principles under which are a series of good practices, to make navigating the guide easier. The good practices are illustrated by examples from BirdLife Partners and Affiliates (both referred to as 'BirdLife Partner' from now on) from around the world who have shared their innovations. The principles and good practices (abbreviated to GPs in the cross-references) are also cross-referenced to aid navigation around the document. You can navigate around the principles and good practices using the infographics at the start of each of the four sections. Through our research, we also discussed with BirdLife Partners many challenges to civil society engagement; where appropriate these have been noted, but attribution has not been given.

Strategise

What type of civil society engagement is needed?

BirdLife Partners are as varied as the species and habitats they protect. One model of civil society engagement will never fit all Partners; indeed, one model might not even fit one organisation all the time (see box 1). The first consideration therefore needs to be what type/s of engagement to pursue. BirdLife International's *Guidelines for BirdLife International Partners on Preparing Strategic & Operational Plans*¹ provides guidance on developing an organisation's future direction and a broad framework of the goals and objectives needed to achieve them. In this section, we focus on issues related to understanding the context for planning civil society engagement and developing civil society engagement strategies and action plans.

¹ Only available at present on the BirdLife Extranet: birdlife.org/partnership. birdlife.org/display/PCC/Planning,+Monitoring+and+Evaluation

Box 1 Civil society engagement must be tailored to your context: an example from Germany

NABU, Germany (Naturschutzbund Deutschland or Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union) was founded in Stuttgart in 1899 as Bund für Vogelschutz, long before the Cold War divided Germany into East and West. Under the different regimes, two separate cultures emerged that still affect voluntary engagement today. West Germany was characterised by individualism and economic capitalism, whilst in East Germany the communist governance was highly centralised as was nature conservation itself with only limited civil society engagement.

When the two states unified in 1990, the Deutscher Bund für Vogelschutz from West Germany also unified with the recently established Naturschutzbund of East Germany to form NABU.

Even now, some aspects of engaging with civil society, e.g. volunteering, work differently in former East and West Germany. In order to engage and motivate volunteers, NABU has needed to become experienced in dealing with the different cultures. Now both cultures are at the core of the organisation, e.g. the former Eastern structure of national voluntary expert groups advising the executive board on specific topics – as well as the local volunteer groups the organisation was built upon in the West.

Click on the principles and good practices to head straight to what interests you.



Principle 1: Understand the context for planning civil society engagement

Good practice 1.1: Get to know your constituency (current and potential)

Non-targeted outreach to attract followers, supporters, members, etc., can be a waste of time and money. The more you can identify people interested in your cause, and *how* they are interested (which can range from seeking birding information to being involved in campaigning, or in the governance of an organisation), then the better you can cater to different segments of your potential audience. This type of research is usually the foundation of an NGO's fundraising strategy; but it can also be a useful first step in developing civil society engagement – the focus being more on how people engage and in what areas than on donations.

A good first step is to find out if any relevant research has already been carried out, for example on:

- Types of civil society engagement in biodiversity conservation in your area/ country. For instance, looking at how people are likely to engage (e.g. becoming a follower, supporter or member), level of engagement/interest, etc.
- Profiles of civil society engagement and of who is most likely to engage. Are certain genders, age groups or people from specific areas more likely to engage than others? Targeted reports such as the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's 2011 report *Birding in the United States: A Demographic and Economic Analysis*² are rare, but some countries research their population's relationship with specific issues (e.g. the Canadian Households and the Environment Survey³). Sometimes, research highlights the challenges BirdLife Partners face in developing civil society engagement. **SAVE Brasil** found that the environmental cause was ranked far below any other social causes in research carried out a few years ago to understand the Brazilian donor culture.

2 fws.gov/southeast/pdf/report/birding-in-the-united-states-a-demographic-and-economic-analysis.pdf
3 www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/16-508-x/16-508-x2015001-eng.htm

A second step is to survey the followers, supporters and members that you already have and ask them about how they want to engage, on what issues, etc., and find out more about them so you can understand their demographics and interests:

- Followers, supporters and/or members can be approached to complete a survey using a free online tool like *SurveyMonkey*⁴ or *google forms*⁵.
- If funds allow, market research companies can develop sophisticated profiling of an organisation's civil society support (see box 2).
- You may also be able to do research using analytical tools if you have a website or social media presence (see box 3).
- Understanding 'the market' should not be a one-off exercise or just thought about at the start of an engagement strategy. The **Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society (EWNHS)** aims to capture expectations of members through questionnaires and check if those expectations are met at least once a year.

4 surveymonkey.com/mp/take-a-tour/
5 google.co.uk/forms/about/

Using multiple tools can help counteract any bias in the data. **SAVE Brasil** surveyed its members in 2018, and matched this with profiles from the Facebook page when developing a new membership strategy. The two surveys found over 50% of members were middle-aged men; keen birdwatchers who

want to support SAVE's work and have access to the outings offered on a members-only basis. The respondents (about 57% of members responded) were the same group that used Facebook; however, analytics from Instagram revealed a younger group interested in their work. They plan to repeat the surveys soon as membership has doubled so they can understand the profiles of their new membership. The **Nigerian Conservation Foundation**, as well as undertaking member surveys, also surveys visitors to reserves and analyses online campaigns. **SABUKO (Society for Nature Conservation), Georgia** does a lot of Facebook analyses (see [principle 6](#)) which can be used as indicators of campaign success, for instance assessing:

- Which posts receive the most interactions?
- What time of day posts receive the most interactions?
- Which species receive the most interactions and how does this change over the years?

A third step is to identify any other groups of people or organisations most likely to engage with you. International organisations such as the Rotary Club, for example, have a [birders group](#)⁶.

⁶ rotary.org/en/love-birds-links-rotarians

Good practice 1.2: Compare your organisation's conservation vision against your civil society image

Just as it is important to understand the current or potential support-base, so you need to understand how your audience, and wider civil society, views your organisation. Quick surveys of both membership and the general public can help (see GP1.1), if you can access them easily.

If your organisation is not well known, it might be worth undertaking some broad publicity before initiating a major civil society engagement strategy. Some people think bird conservation organisations' activities are quite limited (focused just on species and not habitats, for example). **Fuglavernd, Iceland** found that it is primarily seen as a 'friends of the birds' organisation, providing advice on bird feeding, care, sighting, etc. They want to change their image to reflect what they actually do better; particularly to show their activist and conservationist credentials. This is true for many BirdLife Partners, which may be working on wider environmental issues but are not attracting support for these issues (see GP4.1). If people think an organisation is not engaged in climate issues, but this is their own main interest, making the links between

Box 2 Using market research: A UK example

RSPB, UK worked with a research company to get a better understanding of how people viewed wildlife and nature. Over 3,000 people were interviewed across the UK on their connection to nature, how they feel about the problems facing nature and what would encourage them to take action. The survey asked questions like: How concerned are you about wildlife and nature? Do you recycle? Do you buy eco-friendly? What outdoor activities do you take part in?

From this, the RSPB built a seven-segment model for the UK population, each with distinct values, beliefs and motivations, which was

mapped onto their database. It found that members were more likely to be in two of the segments: being passionate about the outside world and enjoying spending time outside. This allows them to identify who they need to target, what might make people want to act and also who they should not work too hard on because of their distance from the cause.

The research allowed the RSPB to work out what communications are needed more broadly and where they might have gaps in their offer to attract new people, helping to steer brand and new product development.

Analytics: Collecting data from the web

By analysing key data on visitors to your social media profiles and websites, you can carefully tweak strategies and make a huge difference to the efficacy and efficiency of your outreach.

Website data

The essential data to be collecting from your website include: tracking visitors (how many individuals are visiting your site); referrals (how are your visitors finding you?); [keywords](#)⁷ (what keywords are people using to find you? What are your visitors most interested in?); top pages (what pages on your site are receiving the most visits? Which ones are people spending the most time on?); exit pages (which pages have the highest number of people leaving your site?); and conversion rate (how regularly are people on your site signing up to become supporters/members/volunteers?). Most website hosts offer some analytics tools, another free alternative is [Google Search Console](#).⁸

Social media data

Your social media channels also provide a wealth of important data (see also principle 6): number of followers; engagement (what posts are receiving the most likes, comments, shares? What time of day do your posts receive the most interactions?); and traffic (are people using the links on your profiles to access your

website). Facebook, Instagram and Twitter all host native analytics tools.

Email list data

You can collect data on any email list. These data include: list growth; open rate (how many people are opening your emails can tell you how good your subject lines are); clickthrough rate (how many people are clicking your links?); conversion rate (how many people clicked on a link and completed an action?); bounce rate (what percentage of emails are not being delivered?); and unsubscribe rate (this should be steady as un-subscriptions are normal, but a spike could indicate something was wrong with a recent email). Most email list services like [Mail Chimp](#)⁹ offer these analytics.

Data can be collected to help you reach your organisational goals (see Strategise section) underpinned with specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound targets, for example, 1,000 more website visits per month, or 100 membership sign-ups per month or triple social media interactions within three months. Collect and review data at least once per month and store in a spreadsheet of the metrics you have decided to track. Then analyse the data you are collecting and record what is and isn't working, feed this back into your outreach strategy.

⁷ thebalancesmb.com/keywords-using-google-trends-to-select-website-keywords-1794558

⁸ search.google.com/search-console/about

⁹ mailchimp.com/?dsrc=1276838&gclid=CjwKCAIA4o79BRBvEiwAjteoYLnY3pTCSTioMB080neYEaT8RNp7iLdWEWSFA3kxP2ijIUZFC95xoCLHkQAvD_BwE&gclidsrc=aw.ds

climate change and bird conservation could be part of the engagement strategy. More rarely it may be necessary to consider the whole focus and objectives of the organisation if you want to rely on civil society engagement to support and assist your work, but find your objectives are unlikely to encourage that support (see [principle 4](#)).

Good practice 1.3: Consider the strategic implications of socio-economic and technological change

BirdLife Partners are often some of the oldest and most respected conservation organisations in a country; their systems and processes for civil society engagement developed many decades ago. Sometimes it is hard to grasp the rate of social and technological change. Research into how people access information on climate change, for example, found 18–24 year-olds are three times as likely to access alternative sources of news, such as social media posts and blogs, as compared to over-55s.¹⁰ These changes impact how organisations engage civil society. **BirdLife Malta** is changing its strategy and

¹⁰ digitalnewsreport.org/survey/2020/how-people-access-news-about-climate-change/

BirdLife Malta is changing its strategy and how it thinks about membership, focusing more on increasing membership for greater lobby strength rather than revenue generation. Also members' expectations have changed. Members once enjoyed receiving a newsletter to read about what has happened, but now, with social media, they expect far more rapid news and information on online platforms, devaluing the need for a newsletter. Why read a newsletter about something that happened three months ago when you could have read about it 10 minutes after it had happened on Facebook? One BirdLife Partner puts effort into a monthly digital newsletter, sent to over 2,000 people, but analytics show that only 9% of newsletter emails are even opened.

Technology allows a two-way conversation with current and potential followers, supporters and members; making it easier to hear and understand their needs, and also increases a sense of belonging to a wider community (see box 4). Over 4.5 billion people now use the internet, with numbers climbing all the time (there were 346 million new internet users between August 2019 and August 2020) and 5.15 billion use mobile devices.¹¹

11 smartinsights.com/social-media-marketing/social-media-strategy/new-global-social-media-research/

In countries where an emerging middle class is developing an increased environmental awareness, it may be worth utilising a broad media strategy (see GP3.1) to reach people with little knowledge of the environment. **Burung Indonesia** employs a broad range of social media engagement tools (see [principle 6](#)), including photos of their birding trips on Facebook, to attract the newly affluent and growing middle class seeking travel opportunities, hobbies and causes on which to spend money.

The way people show support is also changing; organisations do not always change as fast. **Fuglavernd, Iceland** notes that being a member of something in Iceland is common for people over 45, while volunteering has been uncommon. But this is changing, young people want to volunteer and attend courses, but not necessarily to become members of an organisation. Such changes need to be constantly observed and engagement strategies revised and restructured accordingly.

Technology allows a two-way conversation with current and potential followers, supporters and members; making it easier to hear and understand their needs, and also increases a sense of belonging to a wider *community*.



Box 4

Understanding value exchange

For decades, members would express their support for an organisation's values by buying or being given a badge to put on their clothes, car, etc., or by having an identification card. Whilst such expressions of support remain important, BirdLife Partners are increasingly engaging with civil society in an open-access environment through digital technology. Marketing experts term this type of transaction 'value exchange' (as opposed to the direct exchange of money). It enables the digital, data-led economy to be free, as there are many opportunities for freely given information to be used for profit, knowledge generation or other benefits. Research shows that some communication through social networking, emails and messaging carry such high perceived value that people are happy to sign up for them without quibbling over the data-sharing aspects.¹²

For BirdLife Partners this provides a range of opportunities. Before social media, information on members' values would be limited to whatever was collected on the membership

form – with advice generally being that short forms encourage people to join. Followers and supporters who were not members would be anonymous. Today there is ever-increasing information available on followers, supporters and their networks. This allows BirdLife Partners to understand what their 'consumers' value, much like trying to convey an organisation's own values to civil society. For BirdLife Partners, this can lead to organisations generating large numbers of leads through social media platforms, which they access freely or with technical support, to identify supporters and potential members. The basis of this particular value exchange is that people are prepared to share their data with the BirdLife Partner if they consider the exchange to be of high enough value. And this information exchange goes two ways. BirdLife Partners also need to be comfortable about giving supporters the rights to share information received as they wish through social media channels. Finally, in an increasingly data-driven world, BirdLife Partners have a responsibility to explain how data they hold on people is being used.

¹² experian.co.uk/assets/marketing-services/white-papers/delivering-value-in-the-digital-age.pdf

Good practice 1.4: Understand your organisation's and country's legal and policy frameworks

A first step is to ensure that the constitution and rules governing your organisation, e.g. by-laws, and any national legislation regarding non-profit making organisations, are known and understood. Some BirdLife Partners, for example, are required to have a membership structure as part of their by-laws. For **Armonía, Bolivia**, this requirement has been one of the impetuses behind implementing a new strategy to build membership; along with the need to be in a position to better inform Bolivians about bird conservation priorities and to build some unrestricted funding to help operational costs. **natur & ëmwelt, Luxembourg** is divided into a club, which manages the 10,000 members and 130 volunteers, and a foundation which is focused more on supporters and functions independently. This is for legal reasons; the foundation can accept money from donors whilst the club can have members (which the foundation cannot). The club is the BirdLife Partner, not the foundation. **Burung Indonesia** was established in 2002. After 10 years operating as a country programme of BirdLife, the founders decided to form an associated membership organisation, to allow members to be part of decision-making and overall governance.

Many BirdLife Partners are revisiting their civil society engagement strategies, particularly to respond to the increasing dominance of social media platforms. However, this may require major changes to an organisation's constitution, which is never easy!

Principle 2: Develop civil society engagement strategies and action plans

Good practice 2.1: Discuss and agree your priorities for developing civil society engagement

The world is changing fast. As the **RSPB, UK** explained, much of the conservation world is moving away from the old model of 'you pay us, we are the experts, we will save the planet' towards a more collaborative approach 'we can only do this together – how do we help you to save the planet!'

In many countries the old model is not resonating with people anymore, as they want to be more closely involved (see **principles 12, 17, 18** and **21**). Many organisations reflect this collaborative approach in their civil society engagement through more focus on *supporters* as opposed to *members* (see **principle 5**), in the language they use, and their advocacy and projects, e.g. through increased use of citizen science (see GP17.1); campaigns (see GP7.2; volunteers (see GP18.1); and identifying skill sets (see GP16.2).

When developing civil society engagement, it is important to answer some key questions by talking with staff, board members, volunteers or other BirdLife Partners:

- What benefits come to your organisation from developing civil society engagement (see GP16.1)?
- What sort of engagement are you aiming for (see GP2.1)?
- What capacity do you have or can you realistically call upon – ranging from staff time, to websites, finances, systems and technology – to implement your strategies (see GP2.4)?
- What help do you need? This could range from reaching out to other BirdLife Partners for guidance (see GP2.2) to fundraising for a specific project.

There is no one model for civil society engagement and strategies can also change over time, developing a theory of change (see box 5) can help if a restructuring or rethinking is required.

Box 5:

Theory of change

Using a 'Theory of Change'¹³ (TOC) approach can help plan civil society engagement. This involves developing a clear description of how and why a desired change is expected, e.g. an increase in membership. The process identifies the long-term goal/s and works backwards to identify the conditions that must be in place (and how these relate to one another) to reach the goal/s. These are mapped in an 'Outcomes Framework' which provides the basis for identifying what type of activity or interventions are necessary. The aims of a TOC approach are to create more effective planning by developing a better understanding of how change happens. It also leads to better evaluation, as it is possible to measure progress towards longer-term goals that goes beyond simply identifying a programme's outputs.

¹³ theoryofchange.org/

Good practice 2.2: Reach out to BirdLife Partners and other similar organisations to share experiences and lessons learned

A first step is to reach out to neighbouring organisations, or those which share a language, similar structure or stage of development, to explore shared experiences and advice (see box 6 for an example). Technology is facilitating links between BirdLife Partners. *Hatch at BirdLife* is a BirdLife platform that will increase collaboration and sharing. The extranet is an internally facing platform allowing Partnership members to collaborate by sharing experiences and reaching others for advice.

Box 6 Peer-to-peer knowledge transfer: An example from the Balkans

The Balkan Initiative started as a result of the efforts of **Društvo za Opazovanje in Proučevanje Ptice Slovenije (DOPPS), Slovenia** to affiliate organisations in the Western Balkans to the BirdLife Partnership. This process was strongly supported through the project 'Wings Across the Balkans' (2009–2011), which helped several national NGOs to finally join BirdLife as partners including Biom (Croatia), BPSSS (Serbia), CZIP (Montenegro) and MES (North Macedonia) as Partners. One of the project goals was to build the capacities of these organisations and to establish partnership between them.

Given their similar background, and culture, it was assumed these organisations were facing similar challenges. An assumption confirmed in a Quality Assurance System assessment conducted in 2018. Analysing the results, the main challenges identified were around membership development and unrestricted income. Thus in 2019, as part of the project 'Capacity Development Fund: Strengthening the Organisational Development of BirdLife/MAVA Partners in the Mediterranean Basin', BirdLife proposed the creation of the Balkan Initiative, with the direct support of a subregional capacity development officer.

The first Balkan Initiative Meeting was organised in February 2019 in Serbia. The main goal of the meeting was to find synergies and increase cooperation between Partners. As a result, several activities were selected to focus on: (1) developing membership strategies, (2) setting up customer relationship management systems, (3) developing platforms for public engagement, and (4) establishing cooperation with the corporate sector.

Regarding developing membership strategies, it was agreed to review examples of BirdLife Partners that were very successful in that field. Several meetings were organised to share experiences with MME (Hungary), Natagora (Belgium) and SEO (Spain), and materials from other organisations were circulated to the partnership. A group of interested staff from the organisations meets once or twice a month to discuss specific issues regarding membership with the aim of developing membership strategies, due to be finalised by the end of 2020.

Further funding support from 2021–2022 will enable implementation of strategies. The aim is to grow the initiative to include more partners and to organise a 'Public Engagement Working Group' as part of BirdLife Europe and Central Asia¹⁴, where Partners could exchange knowledge and documents regarding different types of public engagement.

14 birdlife.org/europe-and-central-asia/news

Good practice 2.3: Take a staged approach and think about the right type of engagement to focus on initially

The type of engagement will depend on factors including a country's legal and policy frameworks (see GP1.4), socio-economic realities (see GP1.3) and the history and attitudes of citizens on being supporters or members of any cause (see GP1.1). Attracting, retaining and maximising the benefits of these different types of engagement are discussed in detail in the good practices,

Table 1: Overview of the different categories of civil society engagement and issues to consider when developing engagement strategies

	CATEGORY			
	Follower (see principle 6)	Supporter (see principle 7)	Member (see principles 8,9,10)	Volunteer (see principle 18)
Type of engagement	This is usually achieved through setting up a social media presence and attracting followers.	This involves keeping records of, and keeping in touch with, supporters who show an interest in your work; e.g. have followed you on social media and then provided their contact details, attended events, donated one-off payments or bequests, or become 'regular givers'. Supporters are not members and have no governance rights.	Usually entails having some benefits to offer, a range of levels and types of membership (e.g. different payment scales, focus on different demographics, local groups or issue/species groups, etc.) as well as including a role in the governance of the organisation.	Can depend on socio-economic situation (e.g. availability of people with time to spare or needing work experience); needs clarity of roles, expectations.
Managing engagement	Many organisations have a staff member or volunteer dedicated to managing social media, ensuring regular and timely content, moderating content, ensuring unsuitable content is removed, etc.	The more sophisticated your understanding of your supporters' interests, philanthropic behaviour, etc., then the more benefits can accrue. So, the more supporter information held on databases, the more effective your supporter engagement will be.	In addition to the type of information needed for supporters, processes for retaining membership (see below) and involving members in governance processes are required. Membership is usually linked to benefits, ranging from newsletters to reserve entry.	Involves managing a successful volunteer programme.
Retaining engagement	Engagement will be linked to interest, primarily through social media posts.	Ideally engagement needs to be focused on supporters' interests and will often entail supporters also being followers and volunteers.	The aim is to maintain regular renewal of membership; which is linked, as with followers and supporters, to level of interest and to subscription processes ranging from payment arrangements (e.g. annual direct debits) to ensuring benefits are a compelling reason to renew.	Retention may depend on tasks needing to be done. Ideally volunteers should also be, or be converted into, members or supporters.
Challenges of engagement	The main challenge is to ensure social media content is relevant and up to date. When considered as part of an overall civil society engagement strategy, followers are potential supporters and members, and processes should be in place to encourage increased engagement.	Supporter networks need to be managed in a way supporters can be easily reached regarding specific issues that interest them and where they can help the organisation achieve its objectives (e.g. donations, letter writing campaign, etc.). Strategies will be needed to ensure supporter networks grow and are effectively used.	Membership on any scale requires significant management capacity (staff, databases, payment management, etc.) and associated benefits which are subject to careful cost/benefit analysis. Strategies will be needed to grow and retain membership. High levels of membership may be beyond the capacity of small organisations with a conservation focus.	Ensuring volunteer safety, effectiveness and satisfaction requires significant organisation and capacity.

but Table 1 provides a brief overview of issues to consider. Choosing the right type of engagement depends on the organisation's priorities (see GP2.1). In many cases it will be a progression or staged approach, for example, building followers via social media (see [principle 6](#)) and then encouraging supporters to register their details with you (see [principle 7](#)), become members (see [principles 8, 9 and 10](#)) and/or volunteers (see [principle 18](#)).

Good practice 2.4: Assess your organisation's capacity needs (people, resources and funding) for engagement strategies

Any type of engagement strategy requires capacity – from managing social media to running a membership programme. Before spending too long on a strategy, consider your capacity. One BirdLife Partner gave a cautionary tale about launching a membership programme without having appropriate management and follow-up structures in place. This caused criticism from both existing and potential members. Everyone wanted membership to succeed but staff were overcommitted. Another organisation spent core funding on membership, because membership fees only covered about three-quarters of total costs of membership benefits, communication and human resources. A third Partner saw membership grow quickly but did not have the membership management in place, and subsequently most members did not renew.

Even where capacity is in place, it can take years for supporter and particularly membership strategies to break even financially and for the other benefits of increased supporters/members to be realised. The **RSPB, UK** estimates that it takes two to three years to break even on a member cost. And if the capacity is not in place to service new members, potential gains can be lost, and time and effort wasted.

Good practice 2.5: Develop your strategy and have a clear action plan and timetable

Any activity needs careful planning, from a conservation intervention to developing membership. This can range from a project plan for a specific campaign to a full business plan. At its simplest, a civil society engagement plan includes:

- **What** you want to achieve? This is expressed as **aims** or objectives and can range from increasing an organisation's visibility and funding base by attracting supporters, to increasing new members, increasing existing member retention, etc. It is important to ensure you have a clear definition of what you mean by 'engagement', 'supporters', 'membership', etc., as concepts and definitions around these terms can vary widely (see part A and box 7).

Box 7

Definition of member engagement

Civil society engagement needs a clear definition and vision. The Advanced Solutions International (ASI) Member Engagement Toolkit¹⁵ gives a useful background for defining, or redefining, an engagement strategy: *'Member engagement is the creation of a deep and meaningful relationship between the member and the organisation, that endures over time*

and drives renewal, upgrades decisions and advocacy. It goes beyond joining and includes member involvement and interactions as well as their connections with the organisation and its member community. Engaged members are aware and 'get the bigger picture'; they are passionate and proud to be associated with the organisation.'

15 researchbydesign.co.uk/assets/Member-Engagement-Toolkit/Member-Engagement-Toolkit-2017-Version-1.pdf

- **Who** do you want to reach? There is a vast difference between engaging dedicated birders and reaching out to people with only limited interest in conservation. Some sections of society are more likely to be birders than others. Deciding on the demographics (see GP5.1) and the scope of outreach is a critical element in your strategy.
- **How** you are going to achieve your aims/objectives? Consider issues such as:
 - Gaining a deeper understanding of what supporters/members need and want (see GP1.1).
 - Increasing the potential for sustainable long-term growth (the 'engagement journey'; see [principle 12](#)).
 - Allocation of the right 'services' and benefits to each type of supporter/member depending on their interests (see principle 5) and at different stages of their life (see [principle 12](#)).
 - The costs/benefits of different types of engagement (see [principle 2](#)).
- **Targets:** a verifiable **output** or **outcome** that can be monitored and reported. Developing targets is an art. In terms of civil society engagement, the measurement is relatively simple – the output (e.g. what is achieved) can relate to numbers signed up as followers, supporters, members, etc., and can relate to the number of activities undertaken to increase engagement (e.g. the number of events attended), retention of those engaged (e.g. number of members joining for more than a year). These targets need to be linked with monitoring and assessment (see GP2.6). They may reveal that some actions that are successful at attracting civil society have a poor retention rate. In these cases, a seemingly successful strategy may need revising; this is particularly important for membership, where Partners report it takes time to break even on the investment in recruiting (see principles 8 and 9). Targets should consider the wider conservation strategy of the organisation and of the BirdLife Partnership as a whole. **BirdLife Malta**, for example, specifically wants to build more civil society engagement in conservation than those engaged in hunting; which means reaching over 10,000 supporters (about 1/50th of the population) to show a strong constituency and lobbying strength for conservation. Targets can be linked to incentives for staff working on developing engagement strategies.
- **What** are you going to do? The **actions** or processes to undertake.
- What do you **need**? The inputs required including capacity, both in terms of people, equipment, software, website, etc., and associated budgets and/or fundraising needs.
- When are you going to do it by? **Timelines** should ideally relate to targets but could be staggered (e.g. a five-year target to increase supporters/members could be reported on annually).
- Who is **responsible** for the actions?
- **Monitoring:** how are you doing (see GP2.6)? Monitoring strategies were discussed in BirdLife International's *Guidelines for BirdLife International Partners on preparing Strategic & Operational Plans*¹⁶. In terms of monitoring civil society engagement issues to consider include:
 - Engagement/participation at events
 - Feedback from followers/supporters/members (e.g. polls)
 - Website visits/online social media interactions and other analytics (see box 3)
 - Responses to previous PR campaigns/advertisements
 - Member renewals

16 Only available at present on the BirdLife Extranet: partnership.birdlife.org/display/PCC/Planning,+Monitoring+and+Evaluation



Association BIOM, Croatia is just beginning to develop a membership strategy, which is based on three overarching elements:

- Make members feel they are a part of the BIOM family.
- Ensure BIOM is membership-ready i.e. has clear definitions of supporter/member/volunteer and ways of approaching each category and offers a sustainable benefits package to attract cause-driven members.
- Grow the membership as a consequence of BIOM's good conservation work and communications.

Good practice 2.6: Regularly monitor, review, adapt and revise your strategies and action plans

Birders are familiar with monitoring bird numbers, migrations, threats, etc.; the same rigorous monitoring can support other organisational strategies, including supporter and membership strategies. Organisations need to review these constantly, adapt to changing circumstances, new information, technologies, etc., and adapt as needed. Having clear targets or priorities (see GP2.1 and 2.5) will help.

Even the most established organisations need to revisit their engagement strategies from time to time. When **BirdLife Australia (BLA)** was first established, almost 120 years ago, it was an ornithological society. But since then it has cast its net wider and identifies itself as a science-based grassroots bird conservation charity. BLA realised that to build a movement for change, it needed to engage a large segment of society: to win hearts and minds. You cannot do this by just focusing on scientists – although they need to be your North Star, giving credibility and ensuring work is evidence-based. Some politicians increasingly choose to ignore science, but they cannot so easily dismiss the public who elect them. Market research showed BLA that while there are around 20,000 passionate bird lovers in Australia, there are 4–5 million people who love birds and nature. This is the audience BLA is now aiming for. Having a broad section of society means a lot of diversity in politics, income, etc., which can strengthen advocacy, and it means better tracking of who these people are, to target communications. This realisation came at the same time as a practical need to revise the civil society engagement strategy. In 2013 BLA had 8,000 members and a database of 23,000 people for fundraising. Members were paying 50–70 AUD per year, covering membership administration, a magazine and governance costs. BLA's conservation projects were mostly grant funded, but that year the federal government dramatically reduced funding for the environment. This prompted BLA to totally revise its business model: becoming a supporter-centric charity; attracting more supporters, encouraging them to give time, voice and money and developing a means beyond social media platforms for managing the supporter network (see [principle 7](#)). This meant changes in a number of organisational components:

- moving from single species projects to multi-species landscape-scale programmes (in collaboration with partners) to increase impact and tell bigger stories
- investing in fundraising, which is now integrated with communications and marketing
- a more donor-centric organisational culture
- running campaigns and establishing a 'hero' event to raise awareness, engage new supporters in the database (not just social media supporters) and encourage action

Now there are 10,000 members and by the end of 2020, there will be 200,000 supporters. The result is that in 2013 BLA was 70% government-funded and is now 70% funded by philanthropy and diverse income sources.

The **Ghana Wildlife Society (GWS)** was established in the 1970s. Another BirdLife Partner provided support with membership engagement and financial support, and by the late 1990s the membership was vibrant. However, membership fees only covered the cost of producing an ID card. With the other benefits on top (free museum/park/zoo entry, etc.), GWS had effectively structured membership as a loss-making enterprise, but members had come to expect consistent engagement and benefits. In the early 2000s, additional funding to support membership came to an end and although support and advice on membership continued, without the money to run activities to sustain members' interest, numbers began to dwindle. GWS relaunched its membership scheme in July–August 2020 with revised fees, membership categories and benefits. The new strategy is resetting members' expectations; previously people expected lots of travel opportunities and freebies. Now, GWS wants membership to understand it is an NGO with objectives that need the membership's support. GWS is looking to attract members who are passionate about conservation, who want to support with time and resources, recruit new members, etc. GWS's new membership fees are actually lower to attract more members, but the associated benefits are less tangible and less costly; there are no free museum/park/zoo entry benefits but instead opportunities to visit the GWS-owned ecotourism site at a reduced fee (not free), to elect council members, free access to the GWS library and monthly bird walks, regular updates on conservation issues and projects, and an electronic bi-annual newsletter in which members' names are listed as a thank you. Almost 50 people participated in the Zoom launch and GWS is hoping membership will grow by the end of the year. It plans to hold regular meetings with members to strategise on projects that could be done collectively and allocate activities and responsibilities for upcoming projects. GWS wants members to actively participate in conservation, to change negative behaviours (like purchasing non-reusable plastics) and feel a sense of belonging to the society – this is based on feedback from members in the past and GWS staff hope this will ensure the sustainability of membership into the future.

Similarly, **natur & ëmwelt, Luxembourg** found its membership was stagnating, young people were not interested in joining and older members were passing away. Young people are happy to volunteer or give money to a particular project but are less interested in becoming a member. The organisation therefore needs to revise its strategies to attract young and middle-aged people who will bring their families within the membership and hopefully start a life-long journey (see [principle 12](#)). Basic analytics can help organisations get to know their potential constituency (see box 3), to help determine the level of interest among supporters, members, etc.



Box 8

'Hitting a brick wall': what to do when nothing seems to work

No one should underestimate the challenges of developing a successful strategy for civil society engagement. For small organisations every social media hit or new member can be a cause for celebration; whilst for large organisations the pressure to retain support and attract large numbers of new supporters, members, etc. can also be overwhelming. And sometimes, despite following all the best advice nothing seems to work.

So, what can you do when you 'hit a brick wall'?

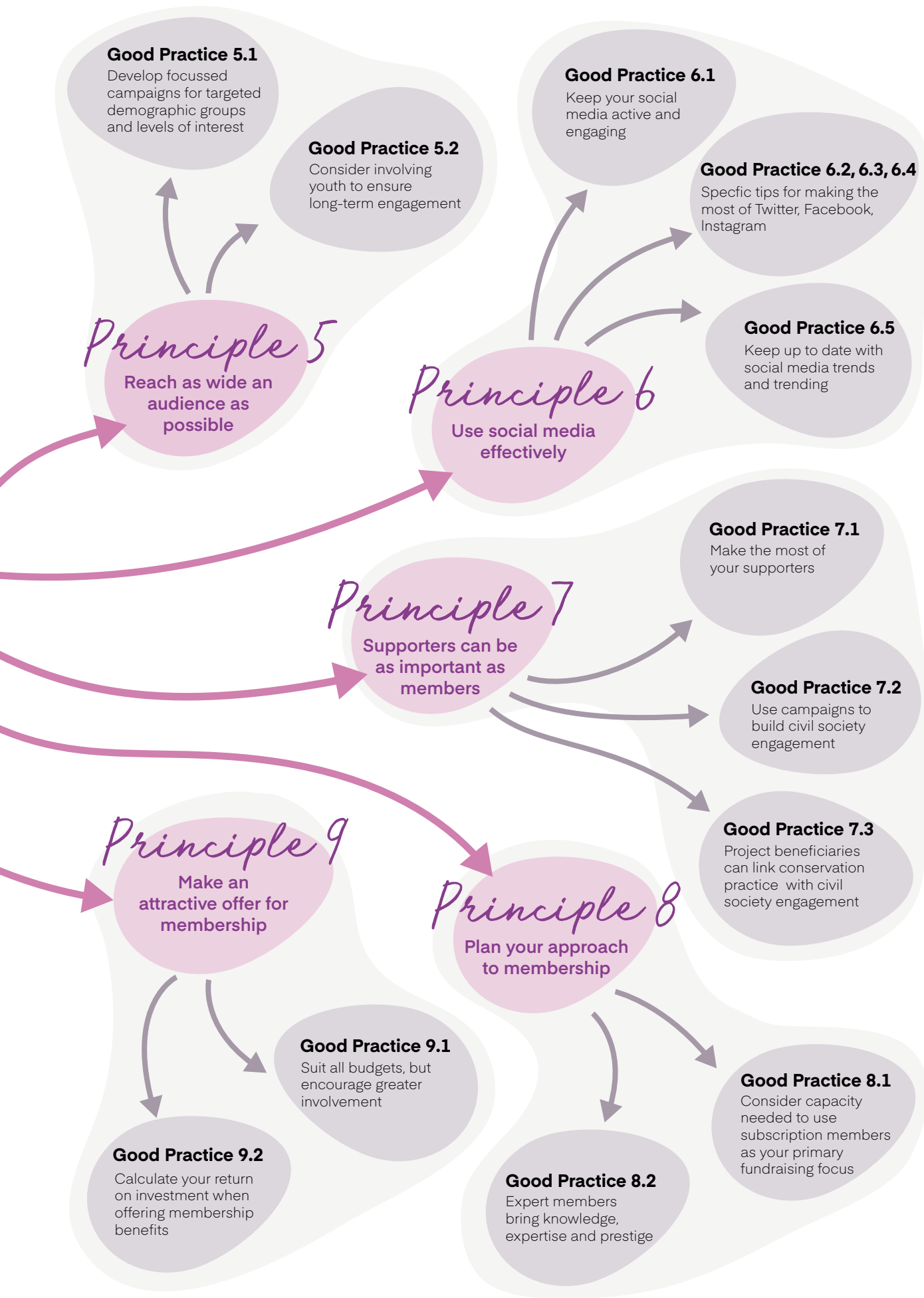
- Go back and review your strategy – are you aiming for the right thing?
- Bring in a new team (e.g. staff member, volunteer or reach out to other BirdLife Partners) to get some fresh ideas.

Click on the principles and good practices to head straight to what interests you.

Attract

What are the best ways to encourage civil society engagement?





Attract

Attracting and building an informed, engaged and cause-driven civil society constituency that supports conservation is a key component of the BirdLife vision. Growing a constituency that supports your conservation goals requires careful public communications (getting your message out there and becoming a household name) and recruitment (recruitment mechanisms, recruiting the right people and attractive offers). All issues discussed below.

Principle 3: **Develop your organisation's profile**

Good practice 3.1: Work with the media and other outlets to help get your message widely known

Organisations with a higher visibility can reach more potential followers, supporters, members and volunteers. Having good links with the media is one obvious step, although increasingly social media influencers are as, if not more, important (see GP6.6). **Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan (ACBK)** has developed a good network of journalists to publicise its work. ACBK provides them with useful information, builds their trust, encourages them to care about environmental issues and provides them with pre-written articles. Staff specifically nurture relationships with local media and work to amplify their messaging.

Successful media or other outreach usually depends on either being in the news (if you have a new and exciting story) and maximising any publicity received, or successfully linking your work with a current event (see box 10). The pandemic of 2020 has led to an increasing reliance on the media for a range of interactions. In cooperation with the Ministry of Education, the **Palestine Wildlife Society (PLWS)** is launching a live TV channel for two hours a day, directed at students unable to attend school or university during the COVID-19 lockdown. This will be open to the public (possibly on YouTube or a local TV channel) and will aim to involve students with conservation activities. It is hoped that teachers will utilise the channel to develop student curriculums.

Innovative publicity does not have to come from the media. Making the links between birds, conservation and business can offer major opportunities to reach civil society. In the 1990s, **DOPPS, Slovenia** approached the CEO of a mobile phone network company for sponsorship; the thought being birds use the sky and so do mobile carriers! The CEO was keen but identified a more equal and profitable synergy, knowing that nature could help sell their products. He offered DOPPS the opportunity to partner: DOPPS had a surplus of wonderful bird photos and videos, and the company had an avenue to promote DOPPS and wanted beautiful imagery for advertising. They designed pre-paid phone credit cards with bird motifs and buses in the city had DOPPS pictures and branding. The connection between birds and mobile phone carriers is simple; suggesting that there may be many other synergistic opportunities to partner with the private sector to promote conservation organisations. In total, the campaign lasted ten years but even now, people can identify bird species correctly because they remember the cards and buses, and the public still see DOPPS as Slovenia's number one conservation organisation.

Principles of persuasion

Why do people say 'yes' to something ... and how can you persuade people to say 'yes'? For most Partners thinking about increasing civil society engagement, the critical step is to turn potential into actuality ... by getting people to commit to being a supporter or member. Interesting advice on this issue comes from research into the psychology of influence. The 'Principles of Persuasion'¹, for example, is worth a read. The six principles are:

1. **Reciprocity:** With the advice being, be the first to give and ensure that what you give is personalised and unexpected. For BirdLife Partners, and NGOs in general, there needs to be thought around actual gifts (see GP9.2); perhaps the main gift you are giving supporters/members is a conservation outcome for something (a species or habitat) that means something to them and the personalised gift can be as simple as a well thought out thank you message (see [principle 13](#)).
2. **Scarcity:** Although these principles were developed for marketing products, scarcity is, unfortunately, often the focus for BirdLife Partners work ... whether endangered species or habitats at risk. So, pointing out what is unique about your proposition and what supporters/members, and the world, stand to lose if they fail to engage is often a clear message (see [principle 4](#)).
3. **Authority:** This principle is focused on the power of credible, knowledgeable experts. Again, for BirdLife Partners this should be a given but may depend on an organisation's profile (see GP1.2 and [principle 3](#)). Being part of the BirdLife Partnership confers additional authority and usually features prominently in an organisation's publicity.
4. **Consistency:** People like to be consistent with things they have previously said or done. This is where the concept of a journey (see [principle 12](#)) of developing civil society engagement comes in. Ask people directly to take out an expensive membership subscription and they might say no. Asking them first to like you on Facebook or follow you on Twitter, then to become a supporter and eventually a subscription member fits in with this concept of consistency.
5. **Liking:** People prefer to say yes to those they like. So when developing relationships with civil society your strategy needs to consider at least three issues: (1) people like talking to people who are similar to them, so think about the demographics you are focusing on (see GP5.1) and their likely interests (see [principle 1](#)), (2) people like to be paid a compliment, and (3) people like to cooperate towards mutual goals.
6. **Consensus:** People will look to the actions and behaviours of others to determine their own, so the more success you have in connecting with civil society, or a specific group within civil society that shares the same interests, goals, etc., the easier it will be to encourage further engagement.

1 influenceatwork.com/principles-of-persuasion/

Good practice 3.2: Have an effective website

If your organisation is yet to develop a website, or you are planning a redesign or relocation of domain name, there are several simple options available to help build a site for low cost. Wix², Squarespace³ and Wordpress⁴ are three of the most advanced Do-It-Yourself, free, online website builders available. All website builders have their pros and cons; Wix is the easiest to use, Squarespace has more attractive design features, whilst Wordpress is more customisable with access to lots more third-party plugins. Wix has templates that are specifically designed for non-profits, such as the *Fundraising* template and the *Community Action Group* template that allows volunteers or members to register onto the site. For more information on the pros and cons of these three, see this website⁵. To conduct e-commerce, take donations and have

2 wix.com/

3 squarespace.com/

4 wordpress.com/

5 websitebuilderexpert.com/website-builders/comparisons/wix-vs-squarespace-vs-wordpress/

a domain name, there will be some costs, but these can often be flexible for non-profits.

Some attractive BirdLife Partner websites to look at for inspiration include:

- [The Bahamas National Trust](#)⁶
- [Nature Canada](#)⁷
- [Grupo Jaragua](#)⁸
- [Bombay Natural History Society](#)⁹
- [Pronatura, Mexico](#)¹⁰

- 6 bnt.bs
- 7 naturecanada.ca
- 8 grupojaragua.org.do
- 9 bnhs.org/
- 10 pronatura.org.mx/
- 11 audubon.org/

The above websites are beautifully designed with attractive landing pages with vivid imagery and inspirational messaging, for example the **Bahamas National Trust** site welcomes you back to nature where ‘you belong’. This inclusive language is also seen on the **National Audubon Society’s** [membership page](#)¹¹ which tells the visitor ‘You are what hope looks like to a bird’. A call to action on your opening page helps inspire people and implies that the simple act of joining your constituency will help protect the nature they love.

One third of the BirdLife Partner websites reviewed (as of September 2020) did not have a clear option for applying for membership via the website. Your landing page should feature easy-to-find options to join (see GP11.1), i.e. to become a supporter, member or volunteer and become a follower on social media platforms.

Other website design tips include ensuring social media buttons open links directly to your profiles via new browser tabs so that visitors don’t leave your website, and keeping pop-up advertising off your page; pop-up adverts often result in visitors leaving your site due to fears of viruses.

Search engine optimisation is the process of improving the quality and quantity of traffic to your website from search engines like Google (for more information, see Google’s [free guide](#)¹² to optimising your site). To make your site more visible in Google search results:

- Register your site with [Google Search Console](#)¹³ and [Google My Business](#)¹⁴.
- Identify key words people might be searching with and add them to your headings, page titles, meta descriptions and URLs.
- Work with journalists, bloggers and other organisations to create embedded links to your site from their websites (sometimes referred to as ‘backlinks’), Google counts these backlinks as votes of confidence in your site.

- 12 support.google.com/webmasters/answer/7451184?hl=en
- 13 search.google.com/search-console/welcome?hl=en
- 14 google.com/business/

National Audubon Society’s membership page tells the visitor ‘You are what *hope* looks like to a bird’.



Box 10 Taking publicity opportunities: an example from Malta

BirdLife Malta's (BL Malta) 2015 referendum campaign aimed to stop spring hunting in Malta – this practice allows people to kill birds while they are migrating north to breeding grounds. Legally they are allowed to hunt only one (it was two during the referendum) species but end up shooting many protected birds and these become trophies. Although a total of 1,240,000 people from across the political spectrum chose to vote with BL Malta, the campaign was lost by 202,200 votes. But having the support of half the nation increased BirdLife Malta's lobby strength, and crucially membership and more broadly supporters drove the campaign forward, created momentum and allowed BL Malta to push for better practices in policy.

During the referendum, a head teacher, also a BL Malta supporter, called BL Malta with news; a protected kestrel that had been shot and injured was found in her school's playground; she wanted them to save it. The BL Malta team immediately mobilised their journalist contacts who took photos of the team rescuing the bird. The journalists also interviewed the upset school children in the playground who sent a direct plea to the prime minister to stop the hunting. This provided an emotive and powerful story and ten minutes later the prime minister

issued a statement to stop the hunting season. This act saved more birds in one hour than all the BL Malta projects combined.

For this, BL Malta needed an active and engaged supporter (not a member; the Headmistress was a reader of the BL Malta newsletter – although in gratitude she was offered free lifetime membership) to connect them with this story, and a network of journalists who trusted and wanted to support them. The media is one of the most important components of civil society. To harness this resource, BL Malta keep the media aware of situations on the ground and make stories convenient; for example, when BL Malta issue press releases they provide journalists with a written story in both Maltese and English, along with footage, etc. Essentially, making the journalists' jobs easier has increased responsiveness and trust.

BL Malta staff also need to be flexible and think on their feet: at any given time, they have a box of BL Malta t-shirts in the office. If there is a press opportunity, the staff each grab a t-shirt before leaving the office: having one member of staff addressing the press with ten others stood behind them creates a unified and professional appearance.

American Bird Conservancy (ABC), USA researched the use of search terms on Google, etc., i.e. what people are searching for when they do a Google search on birds. ABC then created content on the website corresponding to those subjects. For example, ABC discovered people really like owls and were Googling different species, so created content on different owl species to gain some of that web traffic, where people would see the ABC page as one of the first results on Google. On the site, ABC talks about owls but also about its own conservation work and has developed a pop-up that asks if the viewer would like to become an email subscriber. Best of all in terms of attracting people are compelling stories from partners/beneficiaries on the ground (IBAs/KBAs).

Principle 4: Develop your conservation message

Good practice 4.1: Consider broadening your scope from birds to wider environmental and conservation issues

Although bird conservation and birdwatching are popular pastimes in many countries, this is not the case in all. For some BirdLife Partners it may be easier to attract civil society by linking bird conservation with social, environmental or even global issues. The link between conservation and the COVID-19 pandemic is one current opportunity, but links to health, well-being and quality of urban environments are all possible ways of capturing people's imagination.

Belize Audubon Society (BAS) wants to build civil society support and membership for the increased advocacy support it can provide – not for financial reasons. For example, the Government of Belize has given a one-year timeframe for phasing out single-use plastics. BAS advocates with the government to meet this goal and actively looks for support from like-minded individuals. **Nature Society (Singapore)** has a programme encouraging civil society to engage in conservation called 'Every Singaporean A Naturalist' (ESN)¹⁵. Students are trained in data collection, doing transects in their school premises to document urban wildlife and share it via iNaturalist and several social media channels. As children get more skills, they are awarded different badges of attainment.

¹⁵ nss.org.sg/project.aspx?id=47

Good practice 4.2: Identify iconic species, habitats or issues that can boost public knowledge and support your work

The conservation needs of a species or cause do not necessarily align with the public appeal of a species/cause. Thus, civil society engagement strategies will often not be the same as a Partner's conservation priorities. Research has shown the public appeal of birds focuses on familiarity, both in terms of density and being easily seen in areas where most people live, and aesthetic appeal, in particular size and colour¹⁶. Thus, conservation messages start by getting people to think about birds and their needs in general, not just focusing on rare, elusive birds that are facing extinction.

¹⁶ See for more details: peerj.com/articles/1728/

Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan (ACBK)

engaged people in the former capital city of Almaty, through owl call counts at night. In the daytime, the average non-birder tends to only see or be able to identify pigeons in Almaty. Unsurprisingly, this doesn't inspire a love of birds and nature. So, ACBK began a campaign asking people to listen at night for owl calls, from their homes all over the city. ACBK helped people identify calls by providing recordings on its website. The public were thrilled to learn that they have owls right next to their apartments. Noises they previously had assumed were car alarms or kids' toys were the magical hooting of owls! This not only inspired a love of nature and birds in the public, it also built capacity in that people learned to identify owl calls and species, etc., and learned that they have nature right on their doorstep. **Burung Indonesia** holds events at the city's zoo to increase public awareness about wild birds that live in urban areas, especially in the largest open green space in the city of Bandung.

Box 11 Species focused groups: an example from Australia

For many people, specific birds or habitats can become the focus of engaging with conservation, as well as a place to find friends and shared passions. **BirdLife Australia (BL Australia)** has over a dozen local 'Friends of the Hooded Plover'¹⁷ groups, and several other groups focused on beach-nesting birds.

Local volunteers can participate in several ways:

- Every two years, BirdLife Australia's Beach-nesting Birds (BNB) team coordinates a population count of Hooded Plovers in their Eastern mainland range. Hundreds of volunteers survey thousands of kilometres of coast on a given weekend in November to give the best estimate of the 'hoodies' population. Over time, the count has expanded to include beach-nesting birds in other coastal regions, such as Red-capped Plovers on the Samphire coast.
- Volunteer monitors commit to monitor a given pair of birds or a particular beach to build a complete picture over the entire breeding season, while other volunteers travel to multiple sites and report on behaviours such as breeding or flocking or details of flagged/banded birds.
- Site Protector (on-ground, breeding site protection) involves responding to management alerts and setting up protective signage and fencing around vulnerable nest and chick sites. Depending on the support networks, this can either be done independently, guided by BL Australia's BNB team, or as an on-ground response team, working with land managers and/or other volunteers.

- Regional Coordinators take on extra responsibilities to assist in delivering the BNB project, which includes coordinating and supporting volunteers at a local regional level, engaging with local land managers, education and awareness raising events and activities, coordination of data collection, and working closely with the BNB Team at BirdLife Australia (see GP21.3).

Each role is clearly defined, a sign-up form provides clarity on responsibilities, and training is offered. The MyBeachbird¹⁸ portal collects data and helps improve on-ground conservation actions. Together, these actions have helped to slow the decline of the Hooded Plover across the Eastern mainland. The 'Word about the Hood'¹⁹ is a biannual newsletter which reports on volunteers' activities, features volunteer reports, species status, how results are being used and associated merchandising.

Volunteer enthusiasm is evident, for example Chris Willocks, Volunteer and Committee member, Friends of the Hooded Plover Mornington Peninsula Inc. notes '*Being a part of a fantastic volunteer group has connected me to like-minded people and I have made wonderful friendships and increased my environmental and conservation knowledge. It has also given me the privilege of monitoring the birds in the restricted area at Point Nepean where I get to see beaches and rock platforms that have limited visitors.*'²⁰

17 birdlife.org.au/projects/beach-nesting-birds/for-volunteers

18 portal.mybeachbird.com.au/

19 birdlife.org.au/projects/beach-nesting-birds/newsletters-bnb

20 birdlife.org.au/documents/bnb_Word_about_the_Hood_Edition_23_Winter_2020.pdf

Principle 5: Reach as wide an audience as possible

Good practice 5.1: Develop focused campaigns for targeted demographic groups and levels of interest

There are obvious links between developing your conservation message (see [Principle 4](#)) and reaching out to as wide a range of civil society as possible. Engagement strategies ideally draw on research to consider the benefits and possibilities of multiple types of engagement (see [principle 2](#)) depending on a range of different demographic criteria (e.g. age, sex, education, nationality, religion, ethnicity) and level of interest and knowledge about birds. Figure 1 represents the Civil Society 'onion,' used by the **American Bird Conservancy (ABC), USA**. The sweetest and softest part is at the centre, representing your core constituency, people who really care about birds. The next layer is a little tougher to reach, people who like birds but don't know much about them. The final outer layer is the hard skin. You have to be really dedicated and have resources available to engage with this section of society who are not really interested in birds or any other related issues.

Identifying different groups or a specific demographic within this 'onion' is an important part of strategy development (see [principle 2](#)). Once you understand these groups, you can focus your outreach on them. As the **Haribon Foundation, The Philippines**, notes, *'it all starts with understanding the people we are talking to, which makes different types of audience surveys crucial'*. Identifying target audiences involves profiling, such as analysing demographics and psychographics (the study and classification of people by their attitudes, aspirations and other psychological criteria). Language, material, design, platform and timing will all depend on audience. Posters in public markets written in the vernacular are a good way to reach mothers in communities, while social media infographics are best in connecting with urban millennials. It is critical to get the target audience right at the onset.

Many organisations suffer from being synonymous with a certain type of follower, supporter, member, etc. and thus those who do not fit that profile feel excluded. **Nature Kenya** has struggled for years to change the perception that the environment is a 'white person's affair'. Pre-colonisation, the relationship between African Kenyans and their environment was strong and they are now trying to rebuild this in areas where there is considerable human-wildlife conflict and high poverty. Whilst there is a growing middle class in Kenya, this is not translating into support for conservation and 90% of funding is still from overseas; Nature Kenya sees a responsibility to heal this disconnect. Under this goal, Black membership has grown from 50% in the 1990s to more than 75% today. Similarly, in the USA, the birding and, more broadly conservation world has been undergoing a diversity revolution. Inspired by endogenous initiatives such as Black Birders Week (see box 12), the **American Bird Conservancy (ABC), USA** has realigned its organisational, and indeed broader sectoral image with values of equity, diversity and inclusion in its civil society engagement.

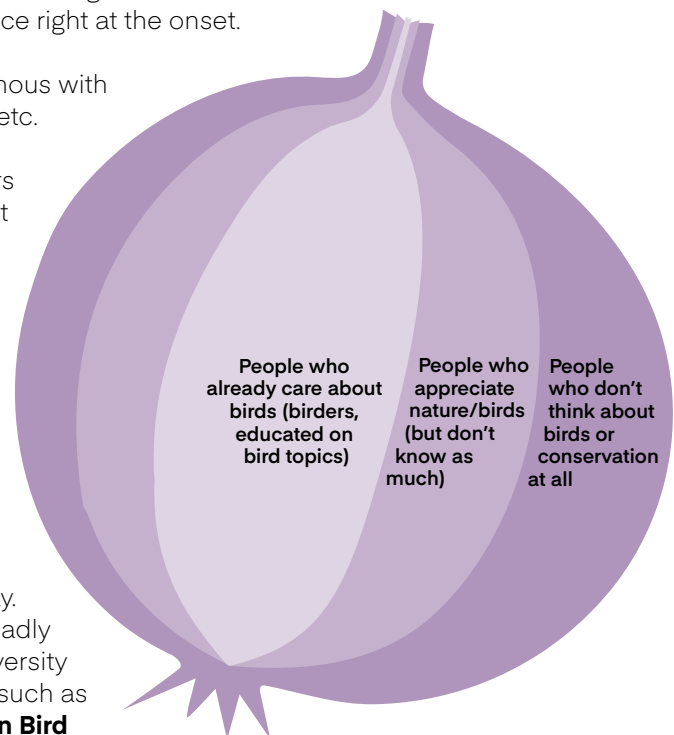


Figure 1: **Layers of civil society engagement**

Box 12 **Black Birders Week: an example from the USA**

In May 2020, with a backdrop of COVID-19 and the George Floyd killing, an extraordinary series of events took place in the USA. People were shocked by the appalling treatment of Christian Cooper, a Black birder in Central Park, New York City, by a white woman whom he had asked to restrain her dog due to concerns for birds in an area where dogs are required to be on a leash. This incident led to a broader acknowledgement of the poor treatment of Black people in nature and the creation of Black Birders Week (BBW) – an event aiming to increase the visibility of Black people enjoying nature and in particular birdwatching.

The birding community in the USA is already a niche community, Black birders are a niche within a niche. BBW had a simple and meaningful message: The Black experience goes beyond trauma, it includes nature, resilience, strength, joy, pride, etc. and sadly not everyone has the same freedoms to enjoy the outdoors. Despite representing 12.7% of the population, African Americans make up just

7% of pass-holders at national parks,²¹ while white people make up 78%.

The incident in Central Park connected a lot of issues: conservation, Black birders, racism in the USA, politics and dog owners. BBW leveraged these connections to encourage the use of natural spaces by people of colour, promoting diversity and combating racism. BBW gained 600 million impressions worldwide (e.g. likes, shares, comments and use of Hashtags) over multiple social media platforms during two weeks and over 100,000 people joined live Zoom discussion. BBW will now be an annual event and has led to similar follow-up events including Black Mammologists Week.

Ultimately, these events highlighted a missed demographic. Whilst it is unclear yet whether this has resulted in more People of Colour joining the National Audubon Society or American Bird Conservancy, USA, BBW and the events surrounding it have made visible a demographic of people that weren't previously catered for by birding organisations.

21 [theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2020/may/31/being-black-while-in-nature-youre-an-endangered-species](https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2020/may/31/being-black-while-in-nature-youre-an-endangered-species)

Similarly, the **Nigerian Conservation Foundation** reaches out specifically to faith groups. Whilst **BIOM, Croatia** observe that male and female participants in their activities programme get involved for different reasons. Male participants are more likely to be 'collectors' getting 'hooked' on birdwatching after acquiring the skill of bird identification and then wanting to see as many new species as possible. They often develop these skills further and become proficient enough to carry out ornithological surveys and participate in research activities. They are likely to pursue this interest individually, and only exchange their experiences, photographs and lists with likeminded birdwatchers. Female participants, on the other hand, are more often nature- and community-oriented. They are less interested in honing their bird identification skills and more likely to simply enjoy spending time in nature and learning about it, usually in company. They are thus more likely to join different volunteering activities and contribute to BIOM's work in a more general way. This also results in more female than male participants, volunteers and supporters. BIOM adjust their expectations and approach to these groups accordingly, but also note that there are always exceptions to these 'types'.

Good practice 5.2: Consider involving youth to ensure long-term engagement

One of the great advantages of cultivating an interest in birds is the simplicity of the task and the ease of fulfilment. The sound of one bird singing or the sight of a few common birds on a feeder can be enough to create a lifelong passion. Strategies should consider a life-long journey of engagement, from children's clubs and parties, through to volunteering for different age groups, family membership and activities, and special offers, trips for elderly supporters and rewards for long-term engagement (see [principle 12](#)). But such life-long



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journeys need planning at each stage. Youth engagement is clearly the first place to focus. Not only can this start the life-long journey for the BirdLife Partner, but in many cases ensures that the governance of an organisation is staffed or supported by a membership that has been involved since childhood. Early involvement also means you have advocates in a range of disciplines from the media to government policy makers. Youth engagement is widespread across the BirdLife Partners, so just a few examples are provided below.

A quarter of the **BirdLife (BL) Malta** staff work in the education team. They organise school trips to reserves and provide teachers with educational materials. Kids earn points for their schools through project competitions and the winning school goes on a special trip and a banner is hung outside the school. BL Malta has also built an Erasmus programme called One World Learning²² (OWL) from its flagship education work 'Dinja Wahda' meaning 'One World' in Maltese. Dinja Wahda consists of lesson plans and teacher resources to encourage learning through nature. So far, BL Malta has collaborated on OWL with BirdLife Partners (see GP2.2) from Lebanon, Spain, Poland, Portugal, Georgia, Finland, Cyprus, Croatia, Serbia, UK and South Africa. Under the programme, staff have transferred to other Partners to learn about their education programmes and exchange lessons and materials.

22 birdlifemalta.org/environmental-education/one-world-learning/

Other examples of engaging children in birding and nature learning include those from the **Palestine Wildlife Society (PWLS)** and **Belize Audubon Society (BAS)**. When **PWLS** first began taking kids into the field with binoculars and looking at birds, it was thought to be crazy – wanting to follow birds amidst the tanks and rubble seemed like highly eccentric behaviour. Some of those original kids, now 30–40 years old, are avid supporters of PWLS. Through a two-year collaboration with the Belize Scouts, **BAS** has developed a curriculum and a Birding Badge. Many of the **Nigerian Conservation Foundation** members were also originally involved in their school conservation club. **BIOM, Croatia** targets youth with a combination of educational plus practical activity; engaging youth in simple activities to get them more involved means that they are usually open to becoming volunteers.

DOPPS, Slovenia has set up Youth Clubs for people aged 10 to 24 years, including trips for groups of kids with a mentor, it hosts research camps, bird ID campaigns and implementation projects. Youth Club kids become full members and most stay into adulthood; indeed most of the DOPPS staff came from the Clubs. The **Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society (EWNHS)** is a pioneer in initiating Environmental Education programmes in Ethiopia for the students of 500 elementary, secondary and tertiary schools and universities. Nature Clubs were established in these institutions, with science teachers as patrons. EWNHS runs outdoor and indoor conservation activities for Nature Club members, provides them with assorted environmental publications and local magazines on topical issues, and grants seed funding for capacity building. Members often later join EWNHS as adult members and play a vital role as vanguards and supporters of the Society. Some Club members are now directors of civil society organisations, working in partnership with EWNHS, while others work in government ministries and provide significant support to EWNHS. **Ghana Wildlife Society GWS** supports self-sustaining school nature clubs from Grade 1 to 12 in primary and secondary schools. Clubs have coordinators who donate their time coordinating Club projects in schools. To establish Nature Clubs in remote communities, reliant on natural resources and therefore the beneficiaries of conservation projects, GWS usually visits local schools and introduces the idea. In more urban environments, head teachers call and express an interest in starting a Club. They then elect a coordinator – someone passionate about nature – and structure the curriculum around an excursion to a nature conservation site. They may have art competitions, fundraising activities, etc. GWS guides them; advising on which donor organisation might wish to fund school excursions, providing a ‘Leader’s Guide’ and inviting them to an annual teacher training workshop where they revise the Leader’s Guide to include new innovative activities. GWS encourages the club to fundraise to sustain its activities; the workshop might include, for instance, training by experts in plastic collection, recycling plastic into materials that can be sold, tree-planting, nursery establishment, composting from school canteen leftovers, etc. Funds raised support the programme. The Nature Clubs also run their own Eco magazine called the ‘*Nko*’.

A particular challenge with youth engagement is what happens when children reach their teenage years (13–19 years old) or are termed ‘youths’ (15–24 years old). Many BirdLife Partners have set up a youth network that bridges them into adult membership. **Forest and Bird (F&B), New Zealand** has almost 10,000 members in its volunteer-run Kiwi Conservation Club (KCC) aimed mainly at 6–13 year-olds. To bridge the gap from KCC members to full adult membership and facilitate continuous engagement, F&B set up a Youth Network (YN) in 2017. Crucially, this is decentralised, run by young adults and led by high-schoolers and university students who organise mostly online. 45 F&B branches are typically responsible for local projects, management of 35 F&B-owned reserves, engagement with local Maori tribes, local climate change actions, monitoring and research, advocacy in the community, etc. In the future, F&B envisions the YN members becoming increasingly involved in their local branches to give them experience in running reserves, projects, local campaigns, research, etc. The plan is to start with just a couple of branches and use these as a template for increased youth involvement in all branches. This would provide great experience for young people who will, in turn, help provide some of the technical capability needed. The F&B staff role is currently to bridge YN regional branches with F&B campaigns. F&B gives them their own version of the official F&B logo to use, provides t-shirts (the YN are always at the front of environmental protests and marches!) and resources campaigns and actions. F&B is currently exploring how best to include the YN at the governance level also. Supporting the YN requires one staff member two days per week. Since it was established in 2017, the Youth Network has now grown to 3,000 members all between 13 and 25 years old. It is now the fastest growing part of F&B.

Principle 6: Use social media effectively

Good practice 6.1: Keep your social media active and engaging

Social media refers to websites and computer programs that allow people to communicate and share information on the internet using a computer or mobile phone. The fast and vast adoption of social media technologies has virtually overnight changed how organisations interact with civil society and vice versa (see GP1.3). More than half the world now uses social media and users now spend an average of nearly 2.5 hours per day multi-networking across an average of eight social networks and messaging apps.²³ Note that whilst social media is a quick, easy and free way to connect with a broad audience, not all social media channels may be available or useful in your country. It is worth thinking about these different channels and which are the most appropriate before investing time building a social media presence. Think about your organisational strengths; if you have a keen photographer, why not let him/her manage an Instagram profile as part of their core responsibilities (see GP6.4 and 6.7).

23 [smartinsights.com/social-media-marketing/social-media-strategy/new-global-social-media-research/](https://www.smartinsights.com/social-media-marketing/social-media-strategy/new-global-social-media-research/)

Most organisations have websites (see GP3.2), but platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are fast becoming the favoured communications method (see Appendix 2). Using these effectively and efficiently requires careful planning (see box 13). Staff time is needed to ensure active engagement (e.g. regular posts); for example, **Armonía, Bolivia** has one staff person dedicated to managing its Facebook and Instagram presence. **SEO, Spain** advises making four or five tweets and one or two posts on Facebook or similar each day. **Burung Indonesia** has dedicated staff to monitor and manage social media content (which is currently about 6,600 Twitter, 30,000 Facebook and 18,000 Instagram followers). Photos, news and videos are regularly posted. **SalvaNATURA, El Salvador** invites its supporters to help run WhatsApp groups on conservation and project themes.

Include visuals and videos (see box 14) on posts as often as possible; videos are ten times more likely to engage your audience. Posting stories with a human face catches people's attention; think of these people as characters in your conservation story. They might include your founder, staff, beneficiaries or members of your constituency. **Groupe de Recherche pour la Protection des Oiseaux au Maroc (GREPOM), Morocco** finds its most successful way of engaging and retaining followers is through 'call to action' posts, quizzes and news regarding protection and conservation of wildlife. GREPOM also engages followers by asking them to enter and vote on competitions, for example on International Migratory Bird Day, 2020, GREPOM asked followers to 'vote'²⁴ for their favourite photography entries by liking photos. **Forest & Bird, New Zealand** advises social media posts should be about one third 'isn't nature wonderful', one third celebrations of conservation successes and one third advocacy and calls to action. **SABUKO, Georgia**'s strategy on 'doom-and-gloom' posting is to do it rarely and with impact. For example, although a major conservation issue, posting on poaching is kept to a maximum of twice a year. People do not need to be reminded that the world is in a terrible situation. SABUKO prefers to focus on inspirational posts, a member of staff takes photos and writes poetry about birds which go alongside describing the field situation or difficulties.

24 [facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=1464675103704557&id=135237636648317](https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=1464675103704557&id=135237636648317)

Finally, monitoring and responding to mentions, replies and comments on your posts is another great way to create a community. **American Bird Conservancy (ABC), USA** can have dozens of interactions from the public through social media posts around the clock. Within the comms team, ABC splits responsibilities for staffing social media channels during designated time periods. The staff enjoy learning about what is on the public's mind. However, once you open your organisation to direct communication with the public

through transparent social media channels, you also open yourself up to allowing people to write things on your wall. These sentiments or language may not be aligned with your values as an organisation, but it can be very tricky to manage this if you have hundreds of comments per post.

Box 13

Tips for using social media platforms effectively

Ideally, your social media profiles become well respected and trusted and posts reach a wide audience reliably and regularly. Ways to achieve this include:

- **Quality content:** Making high quality content is not always easy but is ultimately the best way to create a loyal, engaged community. For example, people like 'behind the scenes' posts. Content might also add value to your audience's lives (e.g. the top 10 things you can do today to protect local birdlife, how to DIY a bird feeder and bath, top 10 plants that will attract birds to your garden, best birding locations within 20 km of the city, etc.), be beautiful to look at or be part of a broader conversation. There are [many social media monitoring tools](#)²⁵ that can help monitor and respond to key words ensuring you are part of the conversations and trends that relate to your organisation.
 - **Posting frequency:** Any social media strategy should include a posting frequency target (note these may be different for different platforms, i.e. Twitter profiles usually post more frequently than Facebook or Instagram – see GP6.1). Try not to post in bursts as this can result in interpreting your posts as spam and unfollowing, but do post consistently; if your audience thinks the profile is inactive they may choose to unfollow.
 - **Refine your bios:** This is the first thing visitors will use to form an opinion of you. It needs to describe what your organisation is, what you do, appeal to your target audience and establish a tone that connects to your constituency; informality is often the best tone on social media.
 - **Handles and tagging across the BirdLife Partnership:** Use of incorrect handles or lack of tagging is frequent across the Partnership,
- reduces the ability of interested people to find BirdLife Partners and constitutes a lost opportunity for promoting work. Promoting the Partners' Twitter profiles through tagging each other correctly is critical. Both the BirdLife International social media profiles (e.g. @BirdLife_News, @BirdLife_Asia, @BirdLifeEurope, etc.) and Partners themselves should try to tag each other frequently and using the correct handles (see Appendix 2). BirdLife Partners can also follow each other directly, frequently tag each other and share content to increase reach.
- **Crisis planning:** Importantly, your social media strategy should include a crisis management plan; not all publicity is good publicity.
 - **Widen your audience:** Following other similar accounts and participating in a regular social media event, such as #FollowFriday (or #FF), can increase followers, and adding your location to your bio can attract local influencers and journalists who might also help expand your reach.
 - **Linking to social media:** People might find your social media channels via your website or email so be sure to include your handles in your email signatures and all other outgoing communications (newsletters, reports, business cards, white papers, etc.) and embed follow buttons in your website.
 - **Hashtags/#:** The use of [popular birding Hashtags](#)²⁶ can raise profiles and increase reach. Or creating a brand-specific Hashtag might help track your mentions or monitor a competition (as above). Hashtags always start with # but don't include spaces, punctuation or symbols and they shouldn't contain too many words. But be sparing with the use of Hashtags; too many can appear 'spammy'.

²⁵ blog.hootsuite.com/social-media-monitoring-tools/

²⁶ ritetag.com/best-hashtags-for/birding

Good practice 6.2: Specific tips for making the most of Twitter

Twitter could have been designed for BirdLife; it is one of the most effective social networking tools devised, with a birding logo and name! Many birding organisations have embraced Twitter and are keeping their profiles active and engaging (see Appendix 2). There are many tips and tricks suggested online to help increase your Twitter engagement and most don't require an enormous time investment.

For example, the blue verified Twitter badge helps people know that an account of public interest has been verified. As such, getting verified has become a symbol of trust and authority, in fact the top five BirdLife Partners with the most Twitter followers all have blue checks. To get your organisation's account verified, ensure your profile is correctly and fully filled out (including a confirmed phone number and email, website, profile and cover photo, and your organisation's birthday), set tweets as 'public' and visit the [verification form on Twitter](#)²⁷.

Hosting a Twitter chat²⁸ takes preparation but can help to establish credibility in the sector and build a conservation community. Encourage staff with Twitter accounts to engage with your content and give feedback – this will give your profile a more human touch and help to avoid 'spammy' content.

Ideas to increase audience engagement include pinning your best or most current tweet to the top of your profile; using a Twitter scheduler²⁹ to plan ahead and supply your timeline with high-quality, well-timed content; live-tweeting a relevant event; keeping tweets short (tweets between 71 and 100 characters earn the most engagements) and occasionally retweeting yourself. Embedding your Twitter feed into your website is also a great way to create free and fresh content and improve your search engine optimisation (see GP3.2).

For inspiration, why not check out some of the active profiles from your fellow BirdLife Partners:

- [Guyra Paraguay](#)³⁰
- [The Nigerian Conservation Foundation](#)³¹
- [Aves Argentinas](#)³²
- [Birds Canada](#)³³
- [BirdWatch Ireland](#)³⁴
- [Vogelbescherming Nederland](#)³⁵
- [LPO France](#)³⁶

BirdLife Partners can develop Partner Twitter lists, such as this one [BirdLife Partners Twitter List](#)³⁷, to establish authenticity, help people to easily follow all Partners at once, and identify which Partners they might be interested in following.



27 help.twitter.com/en/managing-your-account/about-twitter-verified-accounts

28 blog.hootsuite.com/a-step-by-step-guide-to-twitter-chats/

29 blog.hootsuite.com/how-to-schedule-tweets/

30 twitter.com/guyraparaguay

31 twitter.com/ncfnigeria

32 twitter.com/AvesArgentinas

33 twitter.com/BirdsCanada

34 twitter.com/BirdWatchIE

35 twitter.com/vogelnieuws

36 twitter.com/LPOFrance

37 twitter.com/i/lists/1281543991113265153

There are many tips and tricks suggested online to help increase your Twitter engagement and most don't require an enormous time investment

Good practice 6.3: Specific tips for making the most of Facebook

Facebook is the most generic of the social media platforms; it can be as political and thought provoking as Twitter and as beautiful as Instagram. So, connecting other social media profiles to your Facebook can ensure your Facebook profile appears active and engaging. For example, ensure your Instagram posts are automatically reposted onto your Facebook, these images often generate a lot of engagement.

Facebook profiles can be integrated with customised tabs like email capture forms, links to other social media platforms, quizzes, podcasts, videos, polls, etc. This keeps profiles fresh and encourages more interaction.

It is also possible to create invite-only groups for your most engaged audience; these should be smaller and highly focused on a particular topic, e.g. a regular birding group, a group for beach clear-ups, a youth group, etc. Note that groups represent a larger time commitment and there may need to be rules in place to govern group use and discussions, but they can establish a dedicated and active community.

There is much contradictory information online about the costs and benefits of paying for Facebook advertising. Facebook's sponsored adverts can increase the number of 'likes' on your page but may not increase the frequency of interactions (sharing, commenting, mentioning, etc.), so your content is largely ignored. **SABUKO, Georgia** advises not paying for Facebook advertising. If you start paying for sponsored adverts, Facebook's business model algorithms reduce the potential organic reach of organisations. Thus, SABUKO has far greater page interaction than some other NGOs in Georgia but has fewer page likes.

Good Practice 6.4: Specific tips for making the most of Instagram

Ensuring you have an Instagram business profile and including a link to your homepage, latest campaign or blog post in your bio are simple steps to reassure the public that your profile is authentic.

Instagram is the most visual of the social media platforms, so posts tend to be beautiful and informative. Staying consistent with fonts will establish a professional aesthetic and the colour palette of your content could be aligned with your brand aesthetic, colours and visual style. **Pronatura Mexico** is a great example of an Instagram profile with beautiful content pulled together by a graphite grey theme. Photos, using captions for micro-blogging or asking questions and encouraging engagement from followers, and 'stories' can show behind the scenes, real-time, less-polished content.



Good practice 6.5: Keep up to date with social media trends and trending

The freely available worldwide web means that social media platforms and trends can virtually appear and disappear overnight. Large-scale take-up of new platforms can be extremely rapid. TikTok, for example, gained about 20 million new users worldwide per month from mid-2016 to 2018.¹ Keeping up with these trends can be time consuming; but can help ensure different generations, who tend to ally themselves with different types of social media, keep you informed and relevant. Staying on top of what is *trending* locally is key. **SABUKO, Georgia** relates a story from early in 2020. A crow in the capital Tbilisi started to attack people in the street, she didn't do too much damage, but people started to post about it, referencing Hitchcock's film *'The Birds'*. This was early in the COVID-19 pandemic, so people were very active on social media. SABUKO engaged in this conversation by offering a few webinars and posts on why crows are attacking at this time of year, i.e. because they are nesting and protecting their chicks. The public loved these posts and shared them widely because they were topical and helpful.

Haribon Foundation, The Philippines has short video clips to encourage membership and influence other civil society organisations to be involved in conservation and development work. Videos should tell stories, rather than just being campaigning messages, but can be linked to a Partner's project activity. Videos which appeal to personal empathy are especially powerful.

Box 14

The video-making generation

Over 90% of people in the world own a mobile phone and most own a smartphone.³⁸ One outcome is how easy it is to make and post videos. The under-25s are at the forefront of this trend, but parents with young children are increasingly uploading videos. The viral video-sharing app TikTok has 800 million active users and has been downloaded over two billion times.³⁹ A recent survey of business marketing reported that video is the number one way to attract attention on social media. As a result, 80% of brands are posting a video weekly to Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.⁴⁰

38 www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/us/Documents/technology-media-telecommunications/us-global-mobile-consumer-survey-second-edition.pdf

39 oberlo.com/blog/tiktok-statistics

40 socialmediatoday.com/news/10-consumer-and-marketer-social-video-trends-that-will-shape-2020-infograp/571161/

Good practice 6.6: Use influencers/celebrities to attract followers

Business researchers identify influencer marketing as the fastest growing online customer acquisition method, and marketing research indicates that 70% of teenagers trust influencers more than traditional celebrities.⁴¹ **SAVE Brasil** partnered with an influencer and wrote several posts for them to share with their followers. Posts were on topical messages about a grasshopper outbreak and links between COVID-19 and deforestation. This partnership helped SAVE to reach a much broader audience than their typical birdwatching supporters and resulted in 8,000 new Instagram followers for SAVE, although now there is the challenge of turning those followers into members. **Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF)** is running a successful campaign on vultures, the key to success being high-profile artists and sports people as ambassadors, which attracted supporters, members and volunteers. NCF also used the campaign to kick-start longer term engagement with some organisations. The celebrities hosted an Instagram chat each, and one together. The celebrities gained additional supporters as well as NCF.

41. digitalmarketinginstitute.com/blog/20-influencer-marketing-statistics-that-will-surprise-you

Partnering with celebrities, influencers and other public figures sharing your goals and with a large social media following can help your message to 'go viral'. Viral media spans multiple social media channels and multiple countries; scaling and amplifying your conservation message to the public. Ask public figures to come together over an event or hashtag – the more they are involved and promoting the movement, the better. Asking other BirdLife Partners to help you amplify the message can increase reach. Does your message affect other Partners' regions? If yes, why not get them on board and posting?

Good Practice 6.7: Decentralise social media communications

In the spirit of BirdLife civil society engagement, powerful movements for change tend to be decentralised, improvised, innovative and driven by passion. When BirdLife Partner staff are given the freedom to pursue adjacent interests that support organisational goals and are encouraged to communicate publicly, they can start positive movements for change. Decentralising and democratising public communications can allow your staff the freedom to continually engage the public on important issues – ensuring more engagement for your organisation. For example, Tykee James, Government Affairs Coordinator at the **National Audubon Society, USA**, is a co-founder and co-organiser of Black Birders Week (see box 12). This was an extra-occupational activity, run from Tykee's personal Twitter profile, however Audubon encouraged Tykee to pursue the organisation of the event and broader movement. Audubon also supported Black Birders Week by providing their Zoom logins and Facebook accounts to host discussions and webinars, and promoted the week through its own social media channels. Subsequently, Tykee was invited onto international news channels including CNN and National Geographic to talk about Black Birders Week; this benefited Audubon by associating itself with the movement. Whilst there were around 30 individuals responsible for running Black Birders Week, the movement itself was also decentralised; encouraging local movements, connecting with local issues and passionate individuals through the use of common hashtags (see GP21.3). Local stories connect a much larger theme or pattern with personal experiences and resonate more with the public.

Principle 7: Supporters can be as important as members

Good practice 7.1: Make the most of your supporters

Assuming that one of the benefits of civil society engagement is the power this gives an organisation to effect change, does it make a difference whether that engagement is through subscription membership or supporters? Attracting members can be hard work, and although ideally members join for altruistic reasons, it is easier if the benefits of membership are attractive, for instance access to reserves which would otherwise need an entry fee. Membership usually means some level of input into how an organisation is governed (see **principle 21**). Becoming a supporter does not usually confer multiple benefits and is not linked with governance (see Part A for definitions). As such, supporters do not pay membership fees but can be asked to donate to campaigns or on-going conservation actions.

Supporters are different from followers (who, for example, simply click a 'like' button on a social media page), but followers are often the starting point for attracting supporters. Many BirdLife Partners now focus on a three-tiered approach to civil society engagement: *follower*, *supporter* and *member*. By treating this as a hierarchy, you encourage followers to become supporters and perhaps supporters to be members; but trying to get followers to go straight to membership may be more challenging.

BirdLife Serbia stresses the importance of letting people choose what they want to give (as opposed to a formal membership fee). **BirdLife Australia (BLA), Australia** uses an online database where supporters are asked to sign up to a login. When they do this, BLA asks them if they would like to: become Wildbird Protector Regular Givers (through direct debit); make a one-off donation; become a member; volunteer and/or set up a bequest. The Regular Giving programme was started a few years ago to directly fund conservation. They can give as little as 10 Australian dollars per month or as much as 1,000 Australian dollars a month, allowing for flexibility. Membership does not fund conservation. Members are often highly invested volunteers who 'want a say' in the organisation's governance, such as voting at the Annual General Meeting. Membership has a simple fee structure covering the costs of membership administration and organisational governance costs. Similarly, **Palestine Wildlife Society** has two types of members. The first are regular members (paying annually or monthly); these tend to be birders so it functions as an ornithological society, with monthly activities and communication through a large WhatsApp group and between individuals. The second group are called 'unpaid Supporters,' who are not necessarily birders and do not want to be included in the large birding WhatsApp group. They make donations and have no voting rights within the organisation.

This structured supporter network is important as it elevates followers into showing a more dedicated level of support for an organisation. As **BirdLife (BL) Malta** notes, people think that they are supporting the organisation by following on social media, liking and sharing posts. This is great but saying there are 20,000 Facebook followers does not hold much weight when speaking with the government or trying to change policy, indeed many followers could be from outside the country or may be hunters wishing to see what the opposition is doing. So BL Malta is also developing a network of supporters who receive all information online, reducing costs greatly, but whose names and contact details are recorded to solicit further support and gauge the level of real supporters to the campaigns. **Belize Audubon Society** posted an interactive

Facebook competition that was viewed 45,000 times – this is big considering Belize’s population of 450,000 people, so staff know their message has a wide appeal, but this interest is not translating into members. This may be the fear of a recurring cost, commitment or just not very attractive benefits, for example free entry to their seven protected areas is offered but the Belizean Government offers very cheap entry to other protected areas anyway. In this case perhaps a supporters’ category would help. Similarly, **SAVE Brasil** finds the Annual Brazilian Birdfair (Avistar) is the most successful way of attracting and engaging with civil society: 45,000 people come to the festival in Sao Paulo but only 20–30 members join each year. There is clearly an opportunity to convert these 45,000 birdwatchers into a constituency for SAVE, along with the 100,000 Brazilians who access the [wikiavis](#) website each day.

Good practice 7.2: Use campaigns to build civil society engagement

A strategic approach to civil society engagement (see **principle 2**) is to build first through social media followers and then use campaigns to reinforce and build databases of supporters’ details for future engagement. Online petitions and campaigns should be simple, understandable and have one clear ask; various online resources for creating petitions exist such as [change.org](#)⁴². Campaigns can be targeted at particular demographics (see GP5.1) and conservation needs (see principle 4). Petitions and campaigns need to do more than collect information. Organisations must plan to do something with the results and report clearly on outputs and outcomes. Think about what you want out of civil society and ask for it – be clear. Through its Birds of Prey campaign, the **RSPB, UK** submitted 100,000 signatures to the Prime Minister whilst identifying signatories as people with an interest in birds of prey, so this information could help build a supporters database to target communications and future appeals.

42 change.org/start-a-petition?source_location=homepage_large_button

Good practice 7.3: Project beneficiaries can link conservation practice with civil society engagement

Beneficiaries of conservation projects, e.g. local communities in [Important Bird Areas](#)⁴³, can make impassioned supporters or members with a strong voice and experience. Organisations should think of beneficiaries as potential supporters/members. If you work with community groups and they learn to conserve and sustainably use their nature, eventually you can expect them to continue this work on their own – then they will in effect be a voluntary group. It may also be worth offering them an honorary or group membership package.

43 birdlife.org/worldwide/programme-additional-info/important-bird-and-biodiversity-areas-ibas

The **Malaysian Nature Society (MNS)** is developing a community membership category to better realise the vital role communities can play in protecting Malaysia’s natural heritage, especially ecologically sensitive landscapes. Communities will be given the opportunity to establish and build their network and get recognition for their work. In return, MNS will be able to increase the number of members and build communities’ capacity in habitat protection, and their combined voices will enable MNS to advocate for effective management and conservation of natural heritage. In the Pacific, local communities are engaged in delivering conservation action and in some cases Local Conservation Groups have been set up. These affiliate themselves to the BirdLife Partner organisation but are not paying members; they do however take part in biodiversity surveys, monitoring, local/provincial training workshops, and other activities carried out by the Partners.

Principle 8: **Plan your approach to membership**

Good practice 8.1: Consider capacity needed to use subscription members as your primary fundraising focus

Subscription members pay a fee to gain status, benefits and the satisfaction of knowing they are supporting conservation; members also usually have a say in the governance of the organisation they have joined. For some BirdLife Partners, subscription members are the major focus for fundraising. For the **RSPB, UK**, money from individual supporters, through direct membership, appeals (four times a year), philanthropy and legacies accounts for around two-thirds of income. However, the RSPB also acknowledges that considering the expense required to attract and manage the membership, it takes two to three years for a member to begin to add value. The average RSPB member lasts seven years, so there is four years of profit for the average member; thus it is possible to calculate what the budget should be for developing the capacity to attract and manage members.

Good practice 8.2: Expert members bring knowledge, expertise and prestige

Membership does not have to be by subscription. Some organisations do not have the capacity to run large membership systems, but instead invite expert or honorary members to help promote the organisation, take a role in governance, etc. Other Partners cater to their expert members slightly differently, aware that they may want a different package of benefits and engagement opportunities to the non-expert members.

Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society developed a Membership Policy and Strategy for the first time in 2010, to mainstream membership as one of its core activities. The policy document clearly explained the benefits expected of members and the services that need to be extended to them in return. The Policy and Strategy served as a framework for the Society to design an Action Plan to promote membership as one of its pivotal core activities. The Action Plan started with some important assumptions. Seeing membership as a revenue generator is unlikely to be the case in Ethiopia in the short to medium term, the rationale behind recruiting members must be different. The main aim is to retain strong vanguards for advocacy and lobbying to influence policy and decision-makers to create favourable circumstances for the Society to achieve its objectives and mandate. Priority can be given to influential individuals and institutions when recruiting. Thus, it would be better to give higher priority to quality than quantity (a few paying and active members are better than many non-paying and inactive members). The number of members should be optimum, that is, a size that is manageable.

It takes two to three years
for a member to begin
to add *value*

Principle 9: Make an attractive offer for membership

Good practice 9.1: Suit all budgets, but encourage greater involvement

The cheaper the membership fee, the more members you are likely to attract. But as **SEO, Spain** stresses, becoming a member of an NGO means you are donating to support the cause you believe in. Members are donors, and maximising their donation is important. Thus, selecting a minimum fee is not always a good idea – and would be better aimed at a supporter category as noted above (see **principle 7**). Membership fees need to be aligned with the civil society engagement strategy (see **principle 2**); if membership is a major fundraising strategy then fees can be relatively high, similarly if additional staff or systems are needed to run membership then fees need to ensure these costs are covered and aligned to an overall business plan (see GP8.1).

Thus, although options for civil society engagement should be affordable to most people in the country of operation as part of the long-term journey of engagement (see **principle 12**), fees can be more flexible for supporters and more structured for membership.

Most organisations have a wide range of subscription options, with some higher level fees subsidising cheaper options, so calculations on income required (see **GP8.1**) and targets for membership (see GP2.5) should ensure such pricing options are taken into account, some examples are given below:

- Youth
- Individuals
- Couples
- Students
- Unemployed
- Directed at specific professions (e.g. teachers)
- Disabled
- Families
- Groups
- Older people
- Non-residents (local or national, etc.)
- Life membership or similar long-period memberships

Membership can be offered at different levels depending on different benefits received, or length of time members have been engaged. Pricing options and/or associated benefits (see GP9.2) can also encourage those less able to pay or target specific demographics. Categories can also be characterised. **Grupo Jaragua, Dominican Republic** presents its different membership packages under fun, nature-inspired names⁴⁴. For example, the package targeted to teachers is called the 'Burrowing Owl package' while the 'Black-crowned Tanager package' is aimed at students.

44 grupojaragua.org.do/en/apoyanos_en

Good practice 9.2: Calculate your return on investment when offering membership benefits

While some NGOs have decided that membership is just about supporting an organisation's goals and having a say in its governance (cause-driven membership), others have developed a culture of offering benefits to tempt members to join (benefit-driven membership). This has led to some organisations feeling pressured into offering lots of benefits, and risking making a financial loss on membership. It is vital to calculate the margins carefully when giving away gifts with membership. You are probably better accepting slightly lower conversion rates to membership if you know you have people joining for the cause and not just for the benefits.

SABUKO, Georgia offers members a choice of several benefits: a bird badge, attendance at seminars and workshops or on a trip run by SABUKO, or purely a membership fee with no benefits. SABUKO predicted that no one would sign up to receive nothing, membership is a very unusual idea in Georgia, but actually 50% of people who sign up select the 'No benefits' option. **SAVE Brasil** found when surveying its members (see GP1.1) that they were far more interested in supporting SAVE's work than in merchandise benefits like t-shirts, but they were very appreciative of the birding outings and hotel discounts near birding sites offered. **RSPB, UK** notes that membership benefits are a matter of careful planning; you need to work out what membership will cost both initially and as on-going costs to ensure delivering a return on investment. Unless you calculate accurately, membership can be a loss-making strategy. The RSPB magazine, for example, is expensive to produce and mail out to members (although costs are covered by advertising), but is a crucial way of communicating stories of success and where donations are spent. This is one of the key contributors to the circa 90% retention rate of its members. **Haribon Foundation, The Philippines** specifically uses content marketing / value-driven content, finding that providing materials people find of value is a good strategy to engage audiences. So, in the early stages of building the relationship the content may be 80% value-driven and 20% call to action; but this percentage will change over time. A list of the various types of benefits BirdLife Partners offer is given in Appendix 1.

As an alternative to benefits which cost money to produce (e.g. printing, etc.), **BirdLife (BL) Malta** is looking into virtual benefits. Members could have a login to the BL Malta website and be able to download all past issues of the magazine, access live footage from cameras showing bird nests, receive e-calendar invites to activities and get discounts on BL Malta merchandise. The member would feel unique because they have an online profile and would benefit from the convenience of renewing their membership on the platform, signing a campaign petition, etc.

...work out what membership
will cost both initially and
as on-going costs to
ensure delivering a
return on *investment*

Principle 10: Consider a variety of recruitment approaches

Good practice 10.1: Unsolicited membership drives need considerable resources to be effective

Several options exist for recruiting supporters and members without previous contact. Cold calling describes unsolicited contact where there is no information on your potential supporters/members and thus considerable persuasion skill is needed to sell your organisation and options for supporting it. Telemarketing is divided into two types of approach. 1) Inbound telemarketing, where potential customers/supporters call telemarketers to know more about the organisation and supporter/membership options that they have come to know recently through an advertisement or media campaign. 2) Outbound telemarketing; calling current and/or former supporters or members to inform them of fundraising drives, membership options, etc. Other similar options include cold-mailings (which are very expensive) or cold emailing. Most approaches like this tend to end up in junk email boxes or paper recycling without being opened. A more nuanced approach is to use the mailing list of previous donors, people affected by issues you are working on, etc., to send membership campaign materials by post. Some of the larger BirdLife Partners, such as **NABU, Germany**, find these can work well but note they are an expensive way to collect funds. **Magyar Madártani és Természetvédelmi Egyesület (MME), Hungary** notes that staff time may be needed for handling complaints when using this type of approach as some recipients find it offensive to receive unwanted mail.

Good practice 10.2: Use face-to-face engagement to increase civil society engagement

Face-to-face campaigning and nature experiences leave people with positive feelings and can generate many supporters and/or members. The message from across the BirdLife Partnership is, if you can, get outside, meet people and involve them in what you do! Show them the nature that you want them to help protect.

There are four main options for face-to-face engagement.

1. Contracted street campaigners

Hiring a third party for engagement may be a good option if your organisation does not have the capacity to get onto the streets and meet potential members. Such an approach is expensive and thus possibly not feasible at an initial stage. **NABU, Germany** hires third party 'fundraising' companies to campaign for them – these are trained professionals that engage the public in the streets and tell them about the great work NABU is doing. This approach results in a lot of new members and these members tend to have high retention. **SEO, Spain** also hires experts with a good knowledge of birds and SEO for membership recruitment, they found that using volunteer recruiters sometimes led to a poor first impression of the organisation if the volunteers were not suitably trained. **RSPB, UK** needs to recruit about 200+ new members a day just to maintain its current membership size of over 1.1 million. The best strategy is through a team of face-to-face fundraisers meeting people on reserves but also in shops and on high streets. This team tends to be wildlife and nature enthusiasts who are great at inspiring the public through storytelling. The other main channel for recruiting new members is online.

2. Member-get-member

Give rewards to members (e.g. books, binoculars, telescopes, etc.) for recruiting new members. The more members recruited the bigger the gift, although this should be carefully calculated in a cost-benefit analysis (see GP9.2). This type of recruitment can even be framed as a competition within a time limit (e.g. get so many supporters/members by the end of the month). Where volunteers are given free membership as a thank you, they can be asked to recruit one additional member or supporter. **NABU, Germany** has 40,000 volunteers across 2,000 regional self-governing volunteer groups – the structure reflects the federal government structure. If you visit a mall in a German city or town, the chances are you will see a sign and a stall run by the regional volunteer group, offering membership to NABU and information on projects. This has helped raise NABU to a household name. NABU hosts competitions for regional volunteer groups to grow their membership, resulting in more members engaged in local issues. NABU gives prizes to the volunteer groups with the most new members.

3. Staff membership drives

Staff, interns, volunteers, etc. should all be familiar with a one-minute 'elevator pitch' to deliver if asked about being a supporter/member of the organisation they work for. The pitch can be structured around the following four points:

- We are...
- This is what we do...
- This is our strategy...
- We need your support because...

It is good to develop these points with staff on a cheat-sheet, and practise what to say and how to say it. In 1997, **RSPB, UK** had a major push to reach one million members – it did this by getting every staff member to go out and recruit members. Many staff initially found this uncomfortable, but the RSPB persevered in encouragement: put the membership brochure under a friend's nose and the worst that can happen is that they say no...!

4. Local contact

Many BirdLife Partners act as focal points for any bird related issues, and can often be in direct contact with civil society to provide advice on bird health, etc. **Fuglavernd, Iceland** found engagement with civil society was increased by opening its office to the general public. This allows people to call in and ask about bird identification or rescuing injured birds; also having someone able to pick up the call is important for establishing a reliable and active presence. Likewise, **BirdLife (BL) Malta** places a huge emphasis on how a member of the public feels when getting in contact: every interaction is an opportunity to gain a supporter or member. In the spirit of making people feel great after their interaction, BL Malta recommends that if someone calls in with an injured bird you provide them with the information on why this is an important species, if it was not for them the bird may not have made it, etc. That person will then talk to their friends about this experience and they may even become supporters. For the **RSPB, UK**, the peregrine falcon Tate campaign, part of the RSPB's broader 'Dates with Nature', worked brilliantly, showing people in a busy city that nature was so close to them really had an impact (a peregrine nested on the building housing the Tate Modern art gallery, one of London's top attractions with about 6 million visitors a year). People were excited to see the bird and the face-to-face fundraisers could then ask them about joining – peregrines were a great start to the conversation.

Good practice 10.3: Use external events effectively to sign up members

Events and bird fairs can be excellent ways to meet people, but Partners suggest these are more about profile and sales than gaining members. It is important to have a strategic approach about which events to attend and tactics to be taken, which may be very different depending on whether it is a bird fair, food fair, country fair, etc., each of which are likely to attract different types of people.

Where events are used to gather subscription members, it is important to close the subscription at the stand. Special gifts for signing up at the event can be attractive, but as stressed (see GP9.2), they must be cost effective. In May 2016, Amigos da SAVE Brasil (*Friends of SAVE Brasil*) was officially launched on **SAVE Brasil**'s stand during the Brazilian Birdfair (Avistar). For this event, which received between 3,000 and 5,000 visitors, 500 leaflets were printed to invite people to join Amigos da SAVE Brasil, and the staff wore t-shirts promoting the programme. During this event, 57 people signed up, surpassing SAVE's goal of 50 new members from the fair. An additional 19 interested people asked to pay later and provided their contact details. An email was sent to them the following day but none of them paid for membership.

Peregrine watching in London



Principle 11: Ensure easy and safe sign-up

Good practice 11.1: Ensure people can find sign-up options easily

Sign-up forms can be the most important way to engage civil society. Choosing to become supporters or members of a BirdLife Partner without additional prompting (e.g. through telemarketing, face-to-face interaction, etc.) is generally directly linked to an organisation's profile (see [principle 3](#)) – i.e. people know about your work, decide to become involved usually by doing an internet search and signing up online. So, it is important to have an effective and easy to find website and sign-up forms (see GP3.2). Visitors should be able to identify where to sign up within 30 seconds of landing on the homepage. This should be presented as something like 'Join our movement' or 'Protect nature now', rather than a tab or button called 'Donate', as engaging civil society is not the same as giving money. The **Romanian Ornithological Society**⁴⁵, for example,

45 sor.ro/

has arranged their civil society engagement options under a tab on their website called 'Contribute'; this tab houses options for volunteering, becoming a member and donating. This is a good layout as it cements the idea that there are many ways for people to contribute.

Sign-up forms should also be simple and the information an organisation wishes to obtain carefully planned. Some best practices on sign-up forms from the [business sector](#)⁴⁶ include allowing 'social sign-ups', e.g., using people's Google or Facebook sign-in information to auto-fill forms. Also, ensure you make sign-up mobile friendly, so people can easily sign up using their phone.

46 abtasty.com/blog/best-practices-sign-up-forms/

Good practice 11.2: Use ready-made online resources for data and donation collection

Signing up as a supporter or member should be as simple as possible, language should be direct and understandable, and there should be minimal links/clicks to follow if online. **SEO, Spain** believes that if subscription membership is your goal, the payment data is the most important part of the sign-up. SEO recommends creating a form at JotForm and using a platform such as Donorbox (see box 15) to collect funds, these tools can be embedded in your website (see GP3.2). Don't forget to add a recurring giving option and any legal disclaimers and tick boxes regarding compliance (e.g. national/regional data protection policies and regulation such as the European General Data Protection Regulations). A decade ago, **Fuglavernd, Iceland** had chaotic membership records, which had been managed by multiple volunteers and resulted in an Excel spreadsheet with 500 names, many of whom had died or moved home. The first step to sort this out was to buy a cheap database to manage and clean up the records. Although relatively inexpensive, at the time this was a big investment. The database is still in use today and supports bookkeeping and invoicing members for renewal. Back in 2019 there were 400 members, this grew to 1,300 members in a year, at a time when financing was tight.

Visitors should be able to identify
where to sign up within 30
seconds of landing on your
website's *homepage*

Online resources for managing data

Databases do not have to be complicated or expensive. You can start with an Excel spreadsheet or the various online resources suggested below. Having databases made specifically for your organisation can be expensive and require continuous support, which can also disappear overnight if companies fail, change priorities or prices, etc. There are various customer relationship management (CRM) systems available for use. Several recommended by BirdLife Partners are introduced below. (Note weblinks below are for English versions of software but some of these programs are available in a range of languages.)

Jotform⁴⁷ an online form builder makes it easy to create robust forms and collect important data. It has a 'drag-and-drop' interface from which users can build forms and has a large range of ready-made templates. JotForm has multiple subscription options, including a free plan. Free users have access to all of the same features as paid users, but with lower limits on form counts, form submissions, form views, upload space and submission storage. Forms can have a standalone link or be embedded into websites. JotForm adheres to European data protection laws, and data can be stored securely on their German server if required. The JotForm website includes tutorials, etc.

Donorbox⁴⁸ is another online system aimed specifically at non-profit organisations to manage a range of functions including building forms to collect donations and/or store donor data and manage recurring donations. It provides an easy way to generate payments through charging an admin fee (1.5% for every donation to a maximum of US\$25). Useful features include pop-up donation forms, which can link to Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn pages. It is possible to share fundraising progress using a goal meter, by including this as part of your form design

or embedding it separately. Every donor automatically receives a tax receipt for each donation. Donorbox is available in 39 countries.

DK Business Solutions⁴⁹ is an Icelandic based company⁵⁰, with software aimed at non-profit groups. Their donations module manages transactions, registration and management of supporters in a single system which includes reporting tools and allows supporters to be categorised on users' criteria, e.g. demographic variables such as region, age, education, etc., or based on interests, hobbies or motives. Prices vary depending on factors such as number of users, complexity level and where the software is hosted.

CiviCRM⁵¹ is a user-community driven, web-based, open source software for non-profit organisations and civic sector organisations. It can be used to develop supporter and/or membership management systems including online sign-up, payment, automatic reminders, member-only emails, etc. The system can also be linked to accounting processes and being open source, organisations can develop their own systems tailored to specific needs, generally with the help of a programmer.

Salesforce⁵² is a customer relationship management system which can integrate marketing, sales, commerce and service. Used by both businesses and non-profit organisations globally, there are a number of non-profit organisations packages⁵³ which offer a range of different functions at different pricing structures.

47 jotform.com/

48 donorbox.org/

49 dk-bs.co.uk

50 dk.is

51 civicrm.org/home

52 salesforce.com/uk/

53 salesforce.com/uk/solutions/industries/nonprofit/overview/

Retain

how best can civil society engagement be maintained over time?

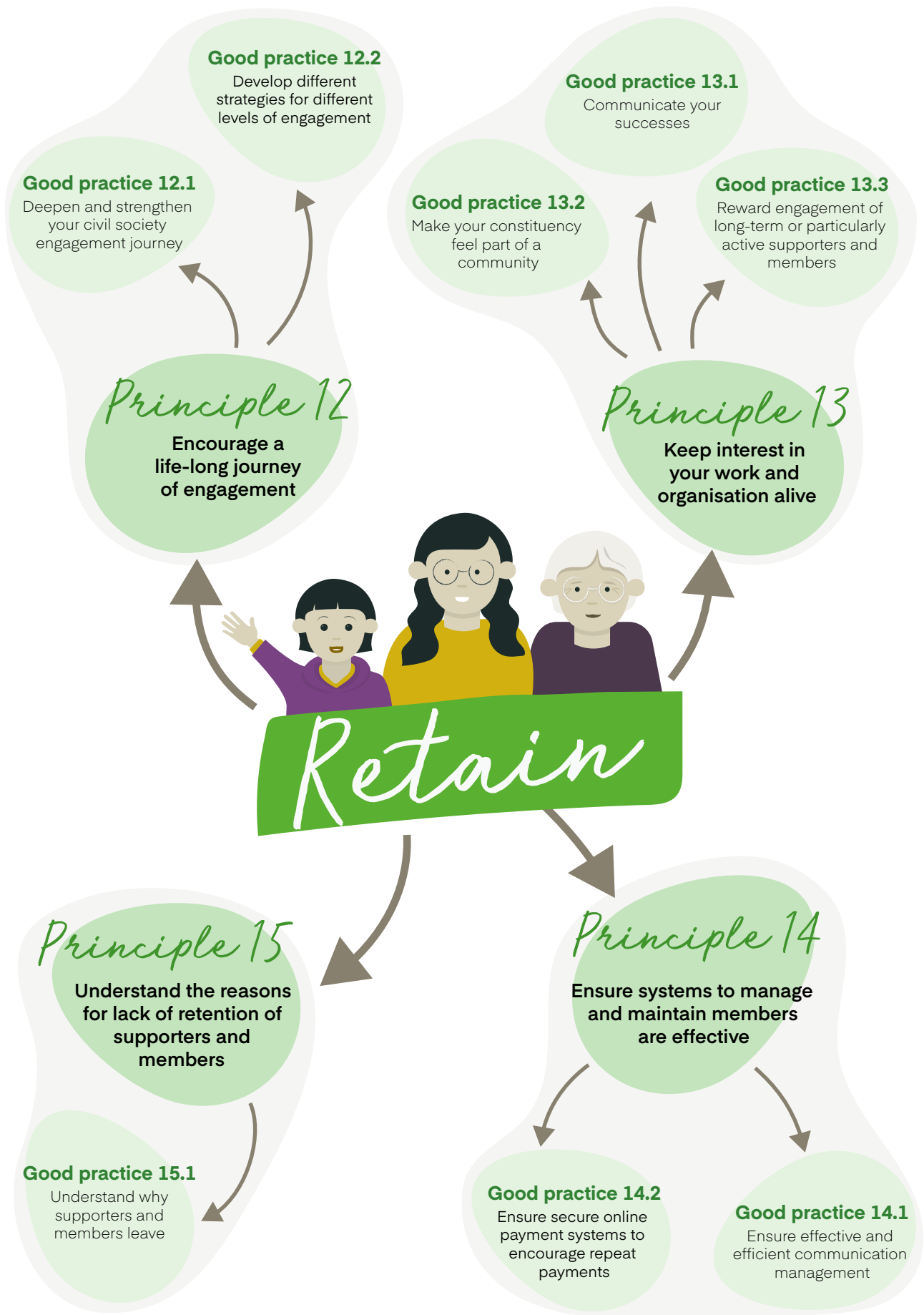
Principle 12: **Encourage a life-long journey of engagement**

Good practice 12.1: Deepen and strengthen your civil society engagement journey

Whatever door a follower/supporter/member/volunteer, etc. comes in through, their 'journey' with your organisation should deepen their engagement and understanding of your conservation objectives, and new doors should open to get them further involved (see box 16). Followers might become supporters and volunteers as well, volunteers may become members, etc. And this journey can be encouraged from childhood through to adulthood. Understanding the attitudes of your followers, supporters and members (see **principle 1**), keeping up with social media (see **principle 6**), environmental and conservation trends (see **principle 4**), tailoring engagement to specific demographics (see **principle 5**), managing data effectively so you don't lose track of people – are all good practices directed towards taking people on a journey they are interested in. Life-long engagement strategies are often based on local action/conservation on the ground, starting with carefully targeted programmes for children in school and further education, and moving towards more evidence-based conservation at a later stage, both in terms of engaging people in volunteering, social science, etc. (see **principles 17, 18, 19**), but also in reporting conservation success (see **principle 13**). **Forest & Bird (F&B), New Zealand** finds people usually start their journey by giving money or volunteering or even just following a Facebook post – these are the doors that people walk in through. After initial engagement, F&B quickly follows up asking them to join a campaign; this shows that the organisation is active and needs support. In parallel, F&B always asks for money or additional money – people can always say no, it never hurts to ask.

Engaging with people who have just become members is a completely different prospect from people who have been members for decades, they have different mindsets and need different strategies. Longstanding members are loyal, believe in what you do, so don't need much persuasion, whereas you need to excite new members and show them that you are making a change. The **Mauritian Wildlife Foundation** notes the need to invest and nurture the relationship with 'key ambassadors' of different civil society groups. These people are natural leaders, and can really motivate and help recruit new members, retain members and give insights and ideas.

Click on the principles and good practices to head straight to what interests you.



Box 16 A typical civil society engagement journey: an example from Australia

For **BirdLife Australia (BLA)**, a typical supporter journey might be as follows.

BLA runs a social media campaign, to save the Swift Parrot for example, or the Aussie Backyard Bird Count (see GP17.1) and asks people to take an action. People are also asked to join the BLA 'Supporter Network'¹; the barriers to entry are low; it is free, you get access to a monthly e-newsletter, etc., and opportunities to volunteer. This includes:

- making a small gift
- easy volunteer surveys (i.e. in the backyard)
- advocacy campaigning actions
- volunteering activities with a bigger time commitment, like supporting programme staff

BLA's Aussie Backyard Bird Count is their 'hero event' for engaging new and existing supporters (see GP17.1) in citizen science. As the supporter base is diverse, it is important to understand people's specific interests, and what issues they are most inspired by (see Principle 1). This is difficult to do with a manual system, so BLA is currently developing a new Customer Relationship Management system using Salesforce (see box 15). This will improve supporter experience by targeting engagement and actions based on their preferences (such as advocacy actions, volunteering, web pages visited, etc.).

¹ support.birdlife.org.au/sign-up

Good practice 12.2: Develop different strategies for different levels of engagement

There is a subtle balance between keeping followers/supporters/members engaged and overwhelming them with calls for action, funds and support. Getting the balance right will vary between cultures, types of supporters/members, age groups, etc. Good practices to enhance the ways civil society engagement can be utilised effectively are dealt with in the section below (Maximise). However, you also need to keep reminding people about your existence and your goals.

One way is to develop different strategies for more active supporters and members (e.g. those that want to volunteer, come on birding trips, get involved in the organisation's governance) and those that are passive (e.g. happy to provide financial support but too busy to engage actively in the Partner's objectives). **RSPB, UK** has a variety of members; from those that are quite passive and happy to pay their fees, get the magazine, go to the reserves for free, to the more active who want to participate in volunteering, letter writing, campaigning, etc. There are different databases for different elements: one for volunteers, another for members, supporters, letter writers and fundraisers, and a third for contacts in education. Other types of engagers include pioneers, advocates, responders (who respond to a direct call to action), networkers (who derive value from networking with peers), learners (who wish to gain knowledge/skills).

Principle 13: Keep interest in your work and organisation alive

Good practice 13.1: Communicate your successes

Communicating success creates a good feeling, making people more likely to renew/give again (see box 17). The key is to show gratitude and be specific: *'Thank you for supporting us, look what we've been able to achieve with your support!'* If they are interested in a particular topic, e.g. birds of prey, do not overload them with information on other issues, e.g. the success of the climate change programme.

- **Think about how you communicate success:** talk about 'what we were able to do with your support' instead of just talking about the organisation. The **Haribon Foundation, Philippines** has developed a [Story Gathering Tool Kit²](#), providing a step-by-step guide to story gathering, standard interview techniques, writing tips and sample stories to inspire good communication. **MNS, Malaysia** is compiling inputs from members to document the organisation's journey towards preserving the natural heritage of the country, to be published as MNS's 80th Anniversary book.
- **Make it personal:** **Palau Conservation Society** stopped putting photos of birds in its letters and swapped them for people who are benefiting from projects. Personal stories of one person that has benefited work best – people resonate with one person's journey as opposed to a group or community.

² palauconservation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/PCS-2019-Annual-Report.pdf

Communicating success creates a good feeling, making people more likely to renew/give again. The key is to show gratitude and be specific: *'Thank you for supporting us, look what we've been able to achieve with your support!'* If they are interested in a particular topic, e.g. birds of prey, do not overload them with information on other issues, e.g. the success of the climate change programme

Box 17 The Gratitude Report: an example from Palau

The **Palau Conservation Society (PCS)** doesn't have an Annual Report, instead they have rebranded it as a 'Gratitude report'³. If you view the report, the first thing you will see is a smiling face, followed by text which is very affirming of the support: *'2019 marked 25 years for Palau Conservation Society as Palau's national conservation NGO. This significant milestone was made possible by YOU – our members, donors, grantors, and supporters. Thank you for your contribution to protecting Palau's environment – for the people of Palau and for the thousands of animal and plant species who call its clear blue waters and pristine forests home.'*

The concept is well thought out: the text makes you smile, you feel proud to have supported such great work, are inspired by the thousands of species, pristine forests and clear blue waters being conserved, and are empowered to continue to make change. PCS talk about *'what we were able to do with your support': 'because of you ...'; 'thank you for...'; 'your support helped...'* They let people know that their donation matters even if just one dollar. For guidance on how to write and design reports and engage civil society with stories, see the [Non-profit Story Telling Conference](#)⁴.

3 palaucconservation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/PCS-2019-Annual-Report.pdf
4 nonprofitstorytellingconference.com/

Good practice 13.2: Make your constituency feel part of a community

The concept of being part of a community has changed radically, from being part of a locality to being in a widespread geographical group, online chatroom, etc. A community is still based on sharing or having certain attitudes and interests in common. BirdLife Partners need to be constantly aware of the community they are building, and the importance of that community to those who belong. From the many examples given here, it is clear that being part of a BirdLife Partner is not only about supporting a cause, it can also be where people find like-minded friends, future careers, social outings, holidays and educational/personal enhancement.

At its simplest, BirdLife Partners help people feel part of a community through branding, e.g. car stickers, ID cards, bags-for-life, other branded merchandise including clothing, or simply by the name you choose to call your constituency. **SalvaNATURA, El Salvador**, among many others, refers to their supporters as amigos de SalvaNATURA (friends of SalvaNATURA), a simple starting point to show that supporters are part of a community. **Haribon Foundation, Philippines** focuses membership retention on consistency. Currently (in the pandemic), members meet regularly on Zoom. It is like a hangout session carried out in an informal manner. During these meetings, Haribon started the #QuaranThingsForNature campaign where members share how they are helping the environment even while on quarantine. Some started urban gardens, are composting, building bird boxes, etc.



© BirdLife International

Good practice 13.3: Reward engagement of long-term or particularly active supporters and members

Rewarding long-term membership is always a good strategy to keep loyal supporters engaged. **Sociedade Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves, Portugal** gave special mention and awarded pins to all its founding members at its 25th anniversary celebration. **Haribon Foundation, Philippines** marks membership milestones by highlighting certain members who made significant contributions in newsletter articles, sending special gratitude notes and holding membership appreciation nights.

One idea is to use ‘gamification practices’ to reward loyalty⁵. To use an example outside the NGO sphere, several coffee shops ask clients to register and gain stars with every purchase, which can be exchanged for free drinks and food. Examples of gamification⁶ could be used by Partners to reward supporters, members, etc., who are particularly effective at recruiting new supporters/members, or be linked to volunteering (see **principle 18**) or success related to running local groups, etc. (see GP21.3). **Nature Society (Singapore)** awards different badges of attainment through its education programme (see GP5.2). Rewards scheme results can be included in BirdLife Partners ‘Gratitude Reports’ (see Box 17) in sections highlighting supporters’ and members’ milestones.

5 For more information see: researchgate.net/publication/315329180_Governments_Should_Play_Games_Towards_a_Framework_for_the_Gamification_of_Civic_Engagement_Platforms/link/58d8caffa6fdcc1baeb8fda1/download

6 mycustomer.com/community/blogs/monicawells/top-10-best-examples-of-gamification-in-business

Principle 14: Ensure systems to manage and retain members are effective

Good practice 14.1: Ensure effective and efficient communication management

Effective systems for managing supporters, members, etc. are vital. This is to ensure rapid response to initial contact (e.g. instant acknowledgement and a welcome letter to new supporters/members), ensuring you stay in touch regularly, where possible direct communications based on people's profiles and ensure any expected payments or campaign donations are collected efficiently. Using the right database for an organisation's needs is vital (see [principle 11](#)).

Also don't forget to ask supporters/members what kind of communications they would like. With so many options from post to email and social media options, knowing your supporters'/members' communication preferences is vital to getting, and retaining, engagement.

Good practice 14.2: Ensure secure online payment systems to encourage repeat payments

A difficult payment system is a quick way to put off potential supporters and members; aim to make the process of sign-up and payment as easy and seamless as possible. Packages with clear prices and clear benefits are important (note that benefits don't always have to be tangible and can also be in terms of supporting projects, i.e. connections to local appeals and volunteer groups – see GP9.2). Another good practice is to have payment methods integrated into your website with an automated and immediate email or SMS receipt of payment and a quick follow-up with new membership details or acknowledgement of a donation.

There are many international online payment options, the most popular being Visa or Mastercard. Maestro Card is popular in Europe, South America and Australia, whilst American Express is widely used in North America. Paypal is a good alternative third party payment system if your site is not well-known and people may feel uncomfortable entering their card details. There will also be many country-specific options, for example many East African countries rely heavily on mobile payment systems like M-pesa, consequently this is an option for paying membership to **Nature Kenya**. Good practice is to assess where international supporters and members are likely to live and ensure you have some payment systems in place that can cater to them along with popular national systems.

It is important to clarify quickly if there are problems with payments. If people have to fill out a simple registration form with their contact details (ideally an email) before payment, you will be able to see if someone has abandoned their payment. If this is the case, respond quickly with a phone call or email to ask if there is a problem and offer support. After predicting a possible decline in membership and retention due to COVID-19, **SEO, Spain** gave some members a moratorium on membership in 2020.

Encourage regular givers or members to set up direct debits if it is available in your country. **RSPB, UK** has a retention rate of 90% and direct debit has been the best way to maintain membership; if you've signed up to something through direct debit, it is an easy to maintain and control payment method that spreads the cost. Retention rates are higher than if someone has to choose to pay by

cash annually. It's possible that different sign-up mechanisms might preclude setting up a direct debit, for example, **SAVE Brasil** gains most of its members via bird fairs and notes that setting up a direct debit in person is impossible, resulting in the loss of many of these members after one year.

Consider making options available for three-, five-, ten-year and life-long membership. If direct debits are not available in your country this is a possible solution to ensure members are retained and that the membership pays for itself. You could offer discounts on multi-year membership.

Principle 15: **Understand the reasons for lack of retention of supporters and members**

Good practice 15.1: Understand why supporters and members leave

Knowing why people stop supporting an organisation is important, if lots of people start leaving does the civil society engagement strategy need revising (see [principle 2](#))? Having a multifaceted engagement journey (see [principle 12](#)) can help. If people no longer have funds to be members, can they be supporters for less financial output but stay engaged with the organisation? Declining membership is often linked to changes in the BirdLife Partner's work plans. One Partner noted they had stopped research field trips, which involved students, and perhaps their membership decline was due to no longer engaging with university students. Many birdwatching organisations were set up a long time ago, when they may have been one of a very few, if not the only, conservation organisation in a country. But now there are many organisations and most have a specific focus (e.g. activism) and are attracting people the BirdLife Partner finds it hard to reach. If this is the case, it is important to review your engagement strategy (who you want to engage and how) and take into consideration that you may be competing with many organisations for a new constituency.



Maximise

How can civil society engagement be utilised most effectively to support conservation?

Principle 16: Ensure civil society engagement provides benefits to conservation

Good practice 16.1: Ensure benefits align with, and enhance, the conservation objectives of the organisation

Balancing your organisation's objectives with the expectations of your supporters/members should be considered in the civil society engagement strategy (see principle 2); with engagement ideally being cause-driven rather than benefits-driven, people focused on your cause are more likely to stay with an organisation for many years. Benefits are two-way; with both followers/supporters/members and the organisations benefiting from engagement.

Grupo Jaragua, Dominican Republic finds that most people want activities or the opportunity to volunteer and go into the field. Such engagement is wonderful, but it is important to manage expectations, so people are not disappointed. Thus, if volunteer work is available it is important to be clear about the type of opportunities; most volunteering, for example, is local and often the need is for fairly simple tasks such as litter picking, rather than trips to an exotic location to monitor rare species. Being clear and realistic about the type of benefits is an important part of the offer (see principle 18) and should be aligned to the conservation objectives.

Table 2 provides a summary of the benefits and challenges of various engagement offers, in terms of contributing to the overall conservation strategy of the BirdLife Partner. Each of these engagement offers is discussed in separate principles and associated good practices below.

Good practice 23.1
Use civil society engagement for fundraising campaigns

Good practice 23.2
Use social media presence to raise funds through marketing

Good practice 16.2
Develop your supporters' and members' knowledge linked to your organisation's objectives

Good practice 16.1
Ensure benefits align with, and enhance, the conservation objectives of the organisation

Principle 23
Use civil society engagement to raise funds

Click on the principles and good practices to head straight to what interests you.

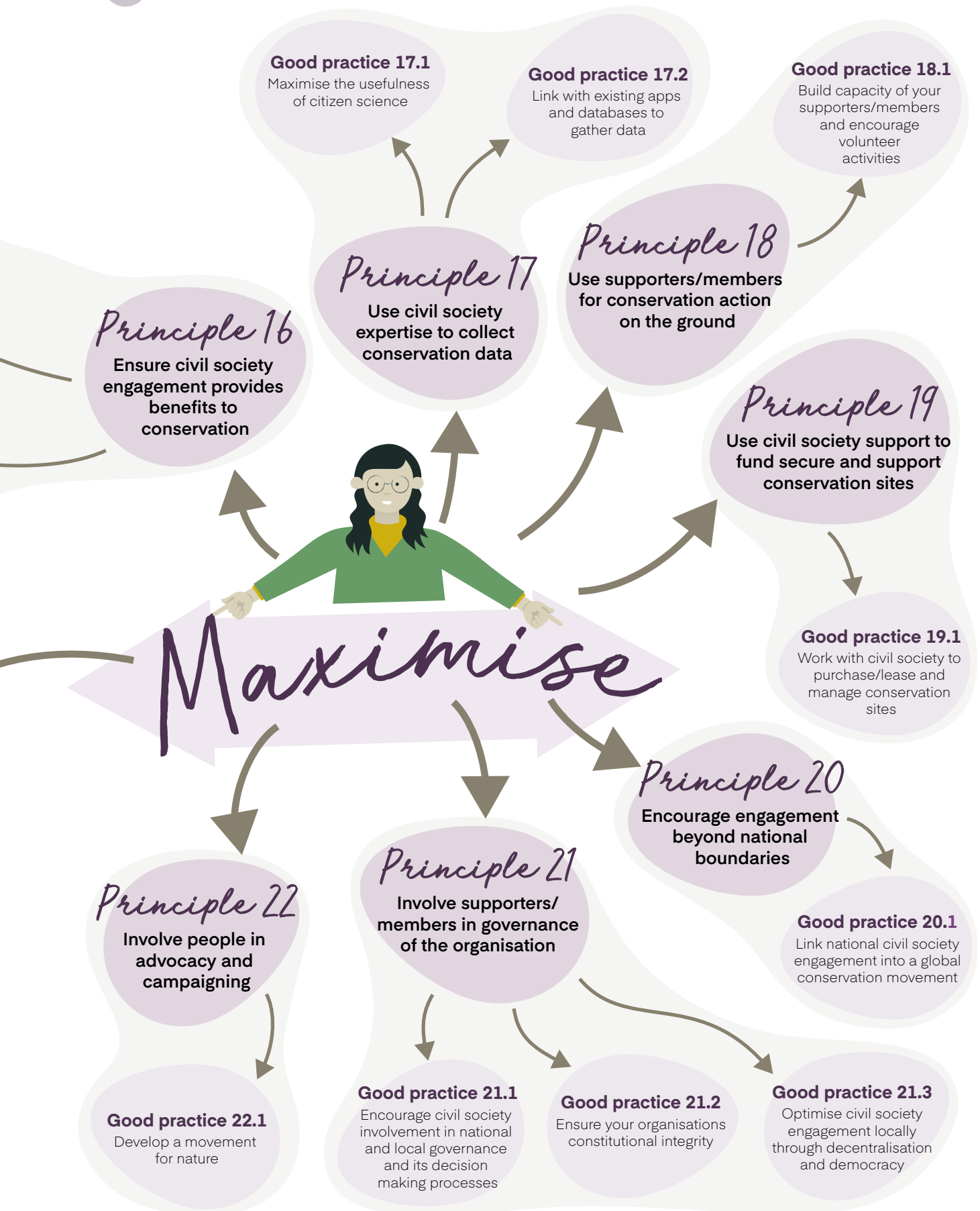


Table 2: **Linking engagement with overall conservation strategies**

Engagement offer	Benefits to Birdlife Partner	Needs and challenges to Birdlife Partner
Collecting conservation data	<p>Keep updated on conservation issues – nationally and internationally, e.g. bird sightings, threats</p> <p>Citizen science</p>	<p>It is important data is collected that is relevant to the organisation’s objectives</p> <p>Data needs to be used and feedback reported to those who took part in collection</p>
Conservation action (volunteering)	<p>Willing group of people to run/manage/carry out management actions</p>	<p>Can lack continuity if people only engage for a short time</p> <p>Capacity to manage volunteers and keep them safe and/or an organisational structure that allows for completely separate self-governing volunteer groups</p>
Entry to conservation sites	<p>Can be a major reason for people to become a member if multiple visits save them money or they can access an area the general public cannot</p> <p>Fundraising strategies, including from supporters/ members, can be based on very tangible land purchase/lease</p> <p>Allows rapid interventions due to non-restricted funds; quick purchase/lease of lands when threatened/on market, etc.</p> <p>Reserves can be purchased and managed/ funded by groups affiliated to the BirdLife Partner (e.g. ‘friends of’ a specific place)</p>	<p>Major capacity commitment to purchase and manage sites, unless the site is managed autonomously</p> <p>Usually major associated fundraising programmes</p> <p>Regular report backs on management of sites</p> <p>Mechanisms needed to ensure continuity of support from affiliated groups (e.g. accommodation to visit the area)</p>
Conservation beyond national boundaries	<p>Well-funded NGOs (often in relatively biodiversity poor countries) support projects overseas (in biodiversity rich areas).</p> <p>Opportunity for member funding to have wide reach (multiplier effect)</p> <p>Can be linked to overseas trips (to project areas?)</p>	<p>Major capacity commitment to manage overseas projects</p>
Involvement in governance of organisation	<p>Role in governance (voting rights, eligibility to run for positions, etc.)</p> <p>Can bring wide expertise to an organisation which cannot afford large staff or to employ consultants</p>	<p>Organisation can be taken over by specific interest groups (e.g. hunting lobbies)</p>
Advocacy / campaigning	<p>A large and/or influential constituency of supporters/members can be powerful partners in lobbying for conservation issues</p>	<p>Supporters often reflect the type of organisation; some are only interested in birds, others in wider conservation and environmental issues.</p> <p>Care should be taken in using supporters in advocacy, to ensure issues reflect the majority of the organisation’s supporters. Paying members can resign if they do not agree with a specific campaign or position taken by the organisation</p>
Funders	<p>Source of funding</p>	<p>Reporting</p>

Good practice 16.2: Develop your supporters' and members' knowledge linked to your organisation's objectives

One way to help ensure organisations benefit from civil society engagement is to develop the capacity of supporters/members to contribute to the organisation's conservation objectives. This can include training volunteers working at conservation sites or skills to carry out fundraising or recruit new members (see [principle 10](#)).

People tend to become more attached or supportive of a cause when it becomes more tangible and familiar to them, when there is a sense of ownership and responsibility. Education can focus on issues such as species recognition, understanding species' needs (e.g. creating wildlife habitats), etc. Educational activities are the highlight for many people who join organisations; **Nature Kenya's** Wednesday morning bird walks have been running for some 50 years and have nurtured many of Nairobi's birdwatchers. **Nature Uganda** has hosted many events in East Africa training people, particularly women, on bird identification and guiding skills, inspiring many to take up new careers as bird guides. **MNS, Malaysia** has launched a membership app as a creative tool for conservation and environmental care. The aim is to close an information gap by allowing MNS members and followers based in cities, suburban and rural areas to have the same access to the latest conservation news and practical 'know-how', to supplement what they learn from textbooks and other platforms. The app provides users with a platform to share their findings on environmental disturbance or wildlife losses within their neighbourhood.

BIOM, Croatia had an educational programme 'Bird ID' funded by a Norwegian university, to build ornithological capacity and interest in Croatia where birdwatching was not very popular. This free programme lasted for three years and each year enrolled 20 new participants who each took part in 15–17 field trainings in different habitats and 20 lectures on bird ecology and identification. Whilst the course itself was free, participants had to provide their own transport, with BIOM helping organise lift shares. During this course, BIOM introduced participants to their on-going projects, impacts they were having, etc. Many of the peer group became loyal volunteers and supporters and were trained to implement some BIOM project work including some more advanced conservation activities. This loyal base proved effective for expansion too, because they would bring in friends. This created a local presence. BIOM is now organising birdwatching tours under another project (two to four times per month). The people that join for volunteering continue to join these tours whilst bringing new people: they are enjoying nature, learning about BIOM's work and growing and strengthening the supporter base. These supporters, previously unfamiliar with BIOM's work, are now reading the newsletters and asking about what they've read, so are engaged and some have become paying members.



Principle 17: Use civil society expertise to collect conservation data

Good practice 17.1: Maximise the usefulness of citizen science

Citizen science is defined as the collection and analysis of data relating to the natural world by members of the public, typically as part of a collaborative project with professional scientists. Citizen science makes supporters/members feel useful: people like to provide helpful data to support conservation and by doing so they feel more engaged in an organisation's work. Promoting ways for people (not just supporters/members) to participate actively in conservation engenders a feeling of meaningful contribution, it is something people tell their friends about (thus potentially increasing engagement). Getting many people to contribute to citizen science projects is one of the best ways to develop supporter data – and to provide contacts for future support or membership (see [principle 7](#)).

Citizen science has a long history linked with bird conservation. Today, mass reporting of garden birds run by BirdLife Partners is the world's largest wildlife survey. **The RSPB, UK** organises the Big Garden Birdwatch as well as many other surveys which encourage civil society participation¹, and the Great Backyard Bird Count is run by **Audubon, USA**. The RSPB², BirdLife Australia³, Natagora⁴, **Belgium/Wallonia**, Natuurpunt⁵, **Belgium/Flanders** and Vogelbescherming⁶, **Netherlands** have all set up information websites for their respective events. **Fuglavernd, Iceland** found its winter garden bird survey, which started in 1994–1995, began engagement with a broader segment of the country's population and brought the organisation considerable publicity. The **RSPB, UK**'s Big Garden Birdwatch has been running for the last 30 years and up to 500,000 people now take part. It started as a simple winter activity for junior membership but grew into a regular event for all ages. The Birdwatch usually leads to about 10,000 new members joining. The survey is promoted widely through the website, TV, posters on the London Underground train network, cinema adverts, radio, etc. Similarly, the **Palestine Wildlife Society** big garden birdwatch is used to monitor species and collect contact information of participants. Participants are 'hot leads' and 25% become paying supporters. **Burung Indonesia** takes part in the Asian Waterbird Census – a worldwide citizen science initiative to assess the status of waterbirds. Members and the public gather to undertake the survey; participants who are not members are asked to join and offered merchandise to purchase. New Zealand's experience of developing a garden bird survey has been fully documented – and provides a [useful reference](#)⁷ for those starting on this concept.

It is important that the citizen science project is focused on conservation need and results are fed back to those who participated and ideally into conservation practice. **DOPPS, Slovenia** published the new *Atlas of Breeding Birds of Slovenia (2002–2017)*. Part of the data used was collected via a web database (2013 onwards) allowing for real-time uploads of data on species, location, time, etc. The number of entries increased dramatically once the database was live, people began competing. DOPPS is now working on an app to allow an even more streamlined process (see GP17.2) and further increases in uploads. Many people that use the database are neither members nor experts. **BirdLife Australia (BLA)** notes that the data collected from the Aussie Backyard Bird Count does need to be 'cleaned' to ensure the records are accurate. But six years in, BLA can see some trends from the data such as birds disappearing from parks and gardens.

1 ww2.rspb.org.uk/thingstodo/surveys/

2 rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/birdwatch/

3 aussiebirdcount.org.au/

4 natagora.be/?id=devine_qui_oiseaux0

5 natuurpunt.be/het-grote-vogelweekend

6 vogelbescherming.nl/actueel/bericht/we-gaan-weer-vogels-tellen-met-de-nationale-tuinvogeltelling

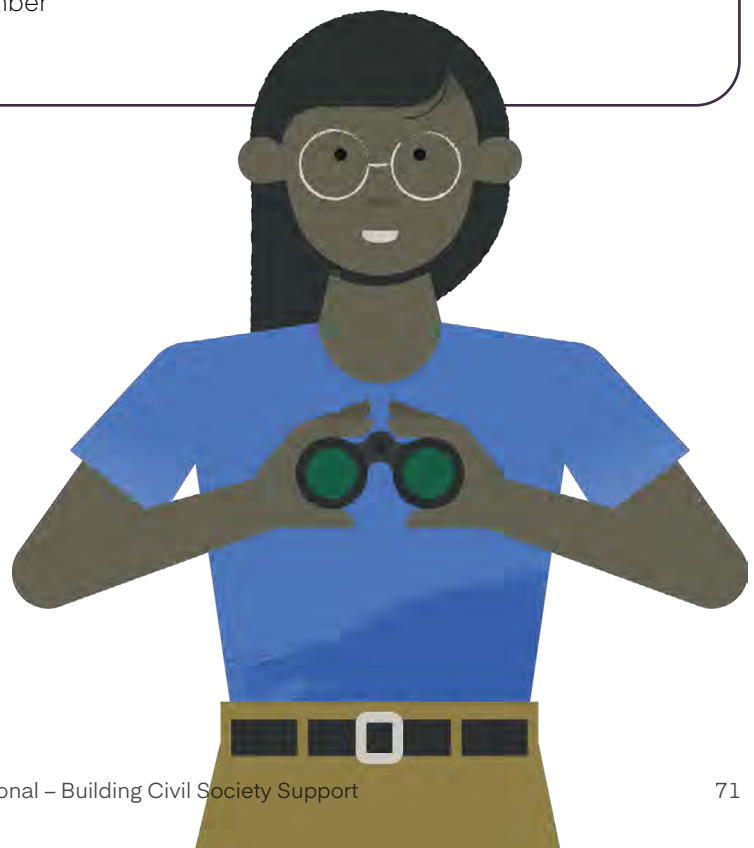
7 theoryandpractice.citizenscienceassociation.org/article/10.5334/cstp.108/

A beginner's guide to app development or selection

Most BirdLife Partners will not have the resources to develop their own app, but if you are thinking of going down this route a few basic considerations are noted below.

- **Business model:** Apps along with the big data they produce can be expensive to develop and manage. You may need to consider financing issues like app purchase cost to the consumer or in-app advertising sold to third party businesses. Many apps available are free although some of the more sophisticated apps charge a download fee (the SENED Bird World app costs US\$14.99) or have in-app purchasing (SENEB Bird World charges an additional US\$9.99 for regional packs; prices as of December 2020).
- **Data you want from the app:** You may want simple information such as absence or presence of rare or interesting species, for this you need to consider how users record location and time of sightings. Alternatively, you may want complete bird lists, in which case, consider designing the app around 'Trip Checklists' so that users start a 'Trip' and record all the birds they see on the trip along with their relative abundance (Ebird does this). These two options are not exhaustive and are likely to be appropriate for different audiences, dependent on skills and experience. To create a login, most apps need an email address or phone number
- **Audience:** Consider who will be using your app. What kind of additional information might app users need to generate useful data? If the app is aimed at beginners, you may need to include identification information like photos, call recordings or range maps. More experienced birders may not be interested in simple bird sighting lists but may want to conduct full trip checklists.
- **Educating your audience:** Consider what you would like your audience to learn from the app. Some apps offer guidance on the ethics of birdwatching, while others link to species' profiles on BirdLife International's [Data Zone](#),⁸ to provide users with more information on population size, Red List categories, etc.
- **Audience benefits:** Many apps allow users to collect points for spotting birds and provide a log to track locations, dates and times in Spot Lists. You may wish to host a competition for the birder with the most points.
- **Data you may choose to disclose:** Consider the conservation implications of disclosing the locations of rare birds.

8 datazone.birdlife.org/home



Good practice 17.2: Link with existing apps and databases to gather data

Apps, short for applications, are computer programs or pieces of software designed for a particular purpose that can be downloaded onto a mobile phone or other mobile device. They are helping make birdwatching much more approachable for young people, allowing them to record and identify birds on their phone in real time. They are also the ultimate tool for citizen science.

Unless you have the capacity and require full ownership over the app design and data produced, it is recommended that you look at partnering with an existing app. There are currently dozens of birding apps available for iOS and Android worldwide and more are evolving all the time. All have some form of identification support, bird lists in your area and a process for logging the time and location of the sighting. Many apps like [Ebird](#)⁹ and [SENED Bird World](#)¹⁰ are global, allowing users to identify and log birds seen in most countries. Others cater to just one or a handful of countries – providing bird lists restricted to these areas and allowing logging only within these boundaries. Other birding applications that may be available include [EyeLoveBirds](#)¹¹ and [Sasol eBirds Southern Africa](#)¹².

Some BirdLife Partners have already developed apps through partnerships with research institutions and app developers. For example, **Audubon USA** partnered with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to develop Ebird, which is now also promoted and used by **SAVE Brasil** and **Asociación Calidris, Colombia**. Ebird allows identification and recording of birds all over the world. **Nature Society (Singapore)** has been trying to engage young people and has launched freely downloadable mobile apps on the birds and butterflies of Singapore.

BirdLife Australia (BLA) has developed two apps for different segments of civil society: [Birdata](#)¹³ is aimed at more experienced citizen scientists and birders and the [Aussie Backyard Bird Count](#)¹⁴ is targeted at people new to birds. BLA developed new apps after reviewing existing apps. Australia is a large country with a low population density so repeat standardised site surveys are essential. Birdata records geolocation, spatial and programme-specific data while protecting the precise location of 'sensitive' (threatened) species. In contrast, the Aussie Bird Count app is a simple app with a guided bird identification menu for inexperienced users. Both apps are carefully designed to allow BLA to use the data collected to inform conservation priorities and improve supporter experience.

Outside the world of apps, some BirdLife Partners have utilised online databases to encourage their constituencies to log data on bird sightings. **SAVE Brasil** uses [Wikiavis](#)¹⁵ and **DOPPS, Slovenia** has used [Avibase](#)¹⁶. This may be a more practical option for many reasons, but of course the downside is recording information via a website on a computer or phone lacks the convenience of an app.

Ultimately the intention is that data collected from the apps and websites yield useful information for conservation. But it is also a good way of collecting details of potential supporters or members. Carefully designed apps and websites will include prominent buttons or pop-up screens to prompt users to sign up to newsletters, more information on the projects, etc.

9 ebird.org/home

10 sened.net/?page_id=20

11 <http://eyelovebirds.com/>

12 penguinrandomhouse.co.za/app/sasol-ebirds-southern-africa

13 birddata.birdlife.org.au/

14 birdlife.org.au/get-involved/whats-on/bird-week#:-:text=Simply%20record%20the%20birds%20you,and%20the%20whole%20of%20Australia!

15 wikiaves.com.br/

16 avibase.bsc-eoc.org/about.jsp

Principle 18: Use supporters/members for conservation action on the ground

Good practice 18.1: Build capacity of your supporters/members and encourage volunteer activities

For many BirdLife Partners, volunteers are the organisation's mainstay. **BIOM, Croatia** has a questionnaire on its website so volunteers can say what they are interested in, linked to the Association's needs, giving the choice between occasional and long-term volunteering. BIOM is finding volunteers are no longer just keen birdwatchers but come from a broad section of society with many different backgrounds and interests. This change can be reflected in the types of volunteer tasks on offer and for BIOM it has meant offering more education with volunteering opportunities. **Groupe de Recherche pour la Protection des Oiseaux au Maroc (GREPOM), Morocco's** active members are mainly experts who work directly with the organisation to carry out conservation; about 50 volunteers (all ecologists/ornithologists) implement activities to support the small team of staff. Volunteers are organised by eight regional unit coordinators covering almost all the country; these are selected from members who have been with GREPOM over three years and are on the national council. Coordinators implement projects in their region helping GREPOM to reach more people, especially in remote areas. In addition, GREPOM is divided into seven thematic units to focus and mobilise the association's human resource efforts. Any member may, depending on his or her affinities, join one or more thematic unit, to which they contribute. Each unit is coordinated by an expert on the theme. The **Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society (EWNHS)** has a members' skills database; drawn from the initial registration form. The database is used to identify appropriate local volunteers among members. This encourages exchange of experiences and best practices through involving members, partners and other persons who have shared objectives with the Society on internships and voluntary service schemes. EWNHS believes that the exercise provides mutual benefits both for the Society and the individuals that take part. **Grupo Jaragua, Dominican Republic** notes that it is important to define the difference between volunteers who may be core staff and volunteers who can take part in programmes in the field.



© Group Jaragua

Volunteers who are particularly active, but are not members, can be offered a free membership, particularly if this also comes with encouragement to go out and attract more supporters/members.

Many people who support BirdLife Partners want to be actively engaged, as they desire to contribute to the Partner's objectives through meaningful action and engage with like-minded people. Volunteer opportunities can for some people be the main reason for supporting an organisation. But using volunteers requires considerable planning and management (see box 19). The **RSPB, UK** has a department dedicated to volunteers; who are treated like staff members (e.g. objectives, appraisals, regular one-to-ones, etc.) and represent 85% of the people who work for the society, which equals almost 1 million hours of volunteer time a year.¹⁷ **natur & ëmwelt (N&E), Luxembourg** offers ornithological classes and training at its wildlife centre to attract and support the volunteer network. The training is run for a couple of hours in the evening over two years. The first year is theoretical and the second more practical. N&E advertises these courses in its journal and usually only has to put out one or two advertisements before maximum class size (25 students) is achieved. Most people join to support their birding hobby and most attendants continue supporting N&E's monitoring work after completing the course.

N&E uses volunteers for bird ringing, monitoring, its wildlife centre, youth work, etc. To attract these volunteers, N&E currently has a campaign to increase volunteers including 15 short videos on monitoring, ringing, etc. to attract new volunteers. It also runs a lot of events that help to attract volunteers. Volunteers tend to become members eventually.

17 Mitchell, B.A., Stolton, S., Bezaury-Creel, J., Bingham, H.C., Cumming, T.L., Dudley, N., Fitzsimons,

J.A., Malleret-King, D., Redford, K.H. & Solano, P. (2018) *Guidelines for privately protected areas*.

Best Practice Protected Area Guidelines Series No. 29. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN.

Box 19

Some important considerations when setting up a volunteer network

Clear expectations: The objectives of the volunteer work should be fully understood by the volunteers and BirdLife Partner staff/person or group leading the work.

Job gratification: It is important for volunteers to know that their work is vital to the Partner's objectives and they can see the impact their contribution is having.

Providing knowledge: For many volunteers, this type of engagement will be an opportunity to gain new skills or knowledge, so ensuring effective training is important as part of the volunteer experience.

Take home message: Volunteers can be encouraged to take home the knowledge they learn and experiences they gain to become ambassadors for the Partner's work. At best,

volunteering can lead to widespread take-up of conservation practices and wider support for the Partner.

Management: Volunteer programmes need careful management to ensure effective, efficient and safe volunteer engagement.

Attention to legal compliance: Each country has a legal framework on workers and working conditions which BirdLife Partners must know. Specific regulations for volunteer work sometimes exist.

Measure results: Evaluate volunteers' experience to learn what works and what could be improved.¹⁸

18 This box has been developed from a similar box in IUCN WCPA's *Guidelines for privately protected areas* portals.iucn.org/library/node/47916



Principle 19: Use civil society support to fund, secure and support conservation sites

Good practice 19.1: Work with civil society to purchase/ lease and manage conservation sites

Site-based civil society engagement is possibly one of the most effective engagement strategies to inspire people about conservation. Many BirdLife Partners have one or more sites they own or manage. Site entry is one of the main reasons for membership of some BirdLife Partners; the **RSPB, UK** has over 180 sites available to visit for free if you are a member. Having a close link with a site is also the impetus behind engagement as a volunteer (see principle 18) or can be the basis of other engagement focused on land purchase and management. **Armonía, Bolivia** set up the Barba Azul Nature Reserve¹⁹ in northern Bolivia in 2008 to protect the Critically Endangered Blue-throated Macaw. The reserve was made possible thanks to the generosity of a handful of people from the US, who are passionate about saving the wildlife of Bolivia. These 'Friends of Barba Azul' are a club of supporters who help with management and conservation actions through annual funding contributions. They receive regular updates on information and opportunities to visit the site in return.

¹⁹ armoniabolivia.org/friends-of-barba-azul-nature-reserve/

Principle 20: Encourage engagement beyond national boundaries

Good practice 20.1: Link national civil society engagement into a global conservation movement

Birds are a great way to connect people across countries and continents thanks to the amazing migratory feats of many species (see box 20). Supporters and members of many of the larger BirdLife Partners are funding and sharing conservation activities all over the world.

Box 20

Building a natural link for birds and birdwatchers between continents: a story of migration

International cooperation has a long history in ornithology and bird conservation: in 1901, Johannes Thienemann, a Protestant minister from Germany, was the first person to ring birds on a large scale, engaging an army of volunteers across the country to tag 2,000 storks (*Ciconia Ciconia*) before their migration to Africa. There were few telephones and no television, so all they could do was wait and hope that someone in Africa would find a bird, notice the ring and news of this discovery would hopefully find its way back to Germany. Astonishingly, the first information about a tag made its way back to Thienemann just a few months later and between 1908 and 1913, he received news of 48 recoveries, which he plotted on a map, revealing for the first time the extent of the stork's impressive migration to the southern tip of Africa.

It is no coincidence that the BirdLife International logo features the Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*); the species' circumpolar breeding distribution requires a 71,000 km trip to meet two summers each year, by far the longest migration. Not only does the tracking of migratory species like the Arctic tern and the stork require international cooperation, their conservation does too. Over the following decades, Thienemann

wrote about the decline of storks due to the increased danger along their migration paths from war, hunting, drainage of wetlands and the growing popularity of pesticides in industrialised agriculture. BirdLife International and the International Wader Study Group have identified eight major migratory bird flyways for the 2,274 migratory bird species, each comprising a number of critical stopover sites where exhausted migrants stop to rest and refuel. The conservation of a stopover site in Indonesia can affect birds that travel to Japan or Australia and vice versa. Likewise, efforts to protect a stopover site in one country are futile if the species is sustaining heavy hunting pressure on its route through another.

BirdLife Partners play a crucial role in linking conservation not only to foster multilateral agreements between countries but also to inspire and coordinate civil society action across flyways. Projects like BirdCast,²⁰ for example, help birdwatchers in the USA to track movements of migratory species and advocate for Lights Out initiatives in cities to prevent bird strikes. When this tool becomes global, it will help civil society coordinate multilaterally on bird conservation and monitoring.

20 birdcast.info/

Principle 21: Involve supporters/members in governance of the organisation

Good practice 21.1: Encourage civil society involvement in national and local governance and decision-making processes

In most organisations, membership infers a role in governance. BirdLife International has provided a [good practice guide to governance](#)²¹, which covers this issue in detail. But it also has many links to how a BirdLife Partner engages with civil society. As **BirdLife Australia (BLA)** notes, members are usually the most invested in the organisation and want a say in its future, to become an office bearer at a local branch or group, and/or run for the board and vote for candidates. This ensures effective governance across BLA and its community groups (see box 11). Many members also donate to help fund BLA's conservation work. The **RSPB, UK** has a [Youth Council](#)²²; this select group have the chance to influence the society's work, speak publicly at events and gain significant recognition for their work – and hopefully become important advocates for the society's work for the rest of their life.

21 birdlife.org/sites/default/files/attachments/governance_report_final_0.pdf

22 rspb.org.uk/about-the-rspb/about-us/how-the-rspb-is-run/rspb-youth-council/

Good practice 21.2: Ensure your organisation's constitutional integrity

Governance structures need to be robust enough to ensure the organisation's overall objectives are maintained and to avoid infiltration and takeover by people with opposing views on conservation; several BirdLife Partners have faced this problem. **Nature Conservation Egypt (NCE)** members start as 'Affiliate members' who subscribe but cannot vote, after two years they can apply for full membership which allows them to vote and run for election onto the board. This provides a buffer to allow NCE to assess whether or not the member is aligned with their cause, whilst allowing the organisation to meet targets for membership numbers.

Good practice 21.3: Optimise civil society engagement locally through decentralisation and democracy

Civil society engagement is ultimately an exercise in democracy, decentralisation and trust that the people closest to an issue will have the best solutions to resolve it. If you have passionate and capable individuals aligned with your organisational vision and are based regionally, consider encouraging them to start a regional branch or local group.

Although volunteer groups choose their own topics/projects and many buy/manage land for nature, the BirdLife Partner needs to foster these groups, supporting them through training, communication materials, project suggestions, support on funding applications, and connections to media outlets. A clear strategy for development of groups is advisable, and a staff person or perhaps a board member to give them a voice. **NABU, Germany** has volunteer groups with many members. There is a process to register as an official NABU voluntary group. Whilst membership fees are collected at NABU HQ, a portion of the fees go to the NABU regional offices and then a portion gets divided up between the voluntary groups for projects. The system is democratic; they are independent entities and decide on their own projects and operations with their own budgets (they can raise additional funds from city governments or even NABU funding pots).

Principle 22: Involve people in advocacy and campaigning

Good practice 22.1: Develop a movement for nature

Much of this document is focused on aligning civil society engagement with the BirdLife Partner's conservation objectives. The BirdLife Partnership's global reach and millions of supporters and members create a constituency that can help make a real difference to conservation. As the **RSPB, UK** noted, we need a movement for nature – this isn't just about membership, this is about people who care for nature and are actively trying to save it in a variety of ways including demands to politicians. The RSPB has about 20,000 'letter-writer' supporters who respond to requests in the magazine, they write to MPs demanding certain laws be put in place. Hundreds of thousands of letters written to then prime minister Tony Blair resulted in a banning of the wild bird trade.²³

²³ community.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/b/markavery/posts/wild-bird-trade

Box 21 From hunters to watchers: an example from North America

This guide focuses on current practice and inspiration from BirdLife Partners, but sometimes a little historical perspective is good. Over one hundred years ago in North America, a simple idea began a citizen science movement (even if it was not named as such in those days), linked to a simple campaigning idea – to count not hunt – as part of a fun holiday activity. It was also of course a great way to collect data on people with like-minded interests.

On Christmas day, 1900, the first Christmas Bird Count was organised by Frank M. Chapman of the Audubon Society; birders across North America were asked to count birds during the holidays rather than hunt them.²⁴ 120 years later, this tradition has grown into a major wildlife census providing essential scientific data. In 2019, 460 counts took place in Canada, 1,974 in the US and 181 in the Caribbean, Latin America and Pacific Islands, involving nearly 80,000 volunteer counters.²⁵

²⁴ audubon.org/conservation/history-christmas-bird-count
²⁵ audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count

We need a movement for *nature* – this isn't just about membership, this is about people who care for nature and are actively trying to save it in a variety of ways including demands to politicians.

Principle 23: Use civil society engagement to raise funds

We have deliberately listed fundraising as the last principle. Using membership to generate large, unrestricted funds has often been the first goal of a BirdLife Partner's civil society engagement strategy. For some organisations this is undoubtedly an extremely successful, long-term strategy developed over many decades. But it is also clear that the way society engages is changing. As outlined above, support for a cause is no longer primarily seen as being about membership, and for those BirdLife Partners trying to develop strategies for civil society engagement today, fundraising from subscription membership may not be the most effective path. BirdLife International has published a [fundraising manual](#)²⁶, although this is focused more on donor grants than on using civil society support. Below we briefly outline the two most important links between civil society engagement and fundraising – but note that more guidance on this could be developed in the future.

26 conservationleadershipprogramme.org/media/2014/09/FundraisingManual_English.pdf

Good practice 23.1: Use civil society engagement for fundraising campaigns

Whole books have been written on this subject and the development of fundraising campaigns is not the focus of this guide. Suffice to say, being able to contact people who share an organisation's visions and ethics is a marketing dream and having a detailed understanding of your constituency (see [principle 1](#)) can help target fundraising campaigns more effectively.

Good practice 23.2: Use social media presence to raise funds through marketing

Funds can be raised by linking up with a company with a product to sell that is relevant to your supporters/members through advertising their product on your apps or website, or advertising a product for them through product placement and discount links in your social media posts (in this case payment is usually a commission for each product sold). There are many products specifically associated with birdwatching (e.g. binoculars, telescopes, bird guides and apps, bird feeding and nesting products, birding trips) as well as associated, often branded, merchandise. **Burung Indonesia** works with two outlets [BurungShop](#)²⁷ and [HijawStudio](#)²⁸, which are a source of unrestricted funding and a way of recruiting members, who find out about the organisation when purchasing from the online shops. Burung Indonesia also gives members birthday gifts from these outlets, further promoting the merchandise and allowing personalised communications with members.

27 [instagram.com/burungshop_/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/burungshop_/?hl=en)

28 [instagram.com/hijaw_studio/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/hijaw_studio/?hl=en)

Appendix 1: Types of benefit offered by BirdLife Partners

The list below has been collected from BirdLife Partners on the type and range of benefits offered to supporters/members; these benefits do not always have to be physical items but can be access to resources, advice, etc.

- Access to reserves**
- Magazines**
- Free gifts**
- Access to library**
- Book launch events**
- Social events**
- Social connections with like-minded people through social networks**
- Volunteer opportunities**
- Voting rights**
- Discounts on trips**
- Discounts on merchandise**
- Discounts on entry to events (e.g. bird fairs)**
- Discounts on training courses**
- Study tours**
- Talks/lectures**
- Birdwatching walks**
- Citizen science (census)**
- Calendars**
- Quizzes**
- Raffles and lotteries**
- Apps**
- Family events**
- Educational material**
- e-cards to mark special occasions**
- Annual reports**
- Posters**
- Videos**
- Technical/conservation advice**
- Online courses**
- Bird lists**
- ID cards**

Appendix 2: BirdLife Partner website and social media review

The table below presents our best attempt at researching all the BirdLife Partner websites and Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages as of

December 2020. Information on all Partners can also be found at: birdlife.org/worldwide/partnership/birdlife-partners

BirdLife Partner	Website	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram
Asity Madagascar	www.asity-madagascar.org	www.facebook.com/AsityMadagascar/	N/A	N/A
Asociacion Armonia	armoniabolivia.org/	www.facebook.com/armoniabolivia	twitter.com/ACLaArmonia	www.instagram.com/armonia.bolivia/
Asociación Calidris	calidris.org.co	www.facebook.com/AsoCalidris/	twitter.com/AsoCalidris	N/A
Association BIOM	www.biom.hr	www.facebook.com/biom.hr/	twitter.com/BiomHr	N/A
Association Burundaise pour la protection de la Nature	www.abn.bi	N/A	N/A	N/A
Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan	www.acbk.kz	www.facebook.com/ACBK.kz	twitter.com/ACBK_Kazakhstan	www.instagram.com/acbk.kz/
Association Les Amis des Oiseaux	www.aao.org.tn	www.facebook.com/AAO.tn	twitter.com/AAO_Tunisie	N/A
Aves Argentin	www.avesargentinas.org.ar/	www.facebook.com/avesargentinasAOP/	twitter.com/AvesArgentinas	www.instagram.com/avesargentinas/
Aves Uruguay	www.avesuruguay.org.uy	www.facebook.com/avesuru/	twitter.com/Aves_Uruguay	www.instagram.com/aves_uruguay/
Aves y Conservación	www.avesconservacion.org	www.facebook.com/avesyconservacion/?fref=ts	N/A	www.instagram.com/avesyconservacion/
Azerbaijan Ornithological Society	N/A	www.facebook.com/azerbaijanornithologicalsociety	N/A	N/A
Bahamas National Trust	www.bnt.bs	www.facebook.com/Bahamas-National-Trust-25034035861/	twitter.com/BNTBahamas	www.instagram.com/bahamasnationaltrust/
Belize Audubon Society	www.belizeaudubon.org	www.facebook.com/belizeaudubon	N/A	www.instagram.com/belizeaudubon/
Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Association	www.banca-env.org	www.facebook.com/BANCAmyanmar/	twitter.com/bancamyanmar	N/A
Bird Conservation Nepal	www.birdlifenepal.org	www.facebook.com/BirdConservationNepal/?__mref=message_bubble	twitter.com/birdlifenepal	N/A
Bird Conservation Society of Thailand	www.bcst.or.th	www.facebook.com/bcst.or.th/	N/A	www.instagram.com/bcst/
Bird Protection and Study Society of Serbia	www.pticesrbje.rs	www.facebook.com/BirdLifeSerbia/	twitter.com/BirdLifeSerbia	www.instagram.com/birdlife_serbia/
BirdLife Australia	www.birdlife.org.au/	www.facebook.com/BirdLifeAustralia	twitter.com/BirdlifeOz	www.instagram.com/birdlifeoz/
BirdLife Austria	www.birdlife.at/	www.facebook.com/BirdLifeOesterreich/	twitter.com/BirdLifeAustria	www.instagram.com/birdlife_austria/
BirdLife Belarus	www.ptushki.org	www.facebook.com/APB.BirdLife.Belarus	twitter.com/ptushki	www.instagram.com/apb_birdlife_belarus/
BirdLife Botswana	www.birdlifebotswana.org.bw	www.facebook.com/BirdlifeBotswana/	twitter.com/BirdlifeB	
BirdLife Cyprus	www.birdlifecyprus.org	www.facebook.com/BirdLifeCyprus/	twitter.com/birdlifecyprus	www.instagram.com/birdlifecyprus/
BirdLife Finland	www.birdlife.fi	www.facebook.com/birdlifesuomi/	N/A	www.instagram.com/birdlifesuomi/
BirdLife Malta	www.birdlifemalta.org	www.facebook.com/birdlifemalta	twitter.com/BirdLife_Malta	www.instagram.com/birdlife_malta/
BirdLife Slovakia	www.birdlife.sk	www.facebook.com/ornitologicka/	twitter.com/vtaky	N/A
BirdLife Slovenia	www.ptice.si	www.facebook.com/pticeDOPPS	N/A	N/A

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BirdLife South Africa	www.birdlife.org.za	www.facebook.com/BirdLifeSouthAfrica/	twitter.com/BirdLife_SA	www.instagram.com/birdlife_sa/
BirdLife Spain	www.seo.org	www.facebook.com/seobirdlife	twitter.com/SEO_BirdLife	www.instagram.com/seo_birdlife/
BirdLife Switzerland	www.birdlife.ch	www.facebook.com/BirdLife.Schweiz/	twitter.com/SVS_BirdLife	www.instagram.com/birdlife.ch/
BirdLife Zimbabwe	www.birdlifezimbabwe.org	www.facebook.com/BirdLifeZimbabwe	twitter.com/birdlifezim	www.instagram.com/birdlifezim/
Birds Canada	www.birdscanada.org	www.facebook.com/birdscanada	twitter.com/BirdsCanada	www.instagram.com/birds.canada/
BirdWatch Ireland	www.birdwatchireland.ie	www.facebook.com/BirdWatchIreland	twitter.com/BirdWatchIE	N/A
BirdWatch Zambia	www.birdwatchzambia.org	www.facebook.com/BirdWatchZambia/	twitter.com/BirdwatchZambia	www.instagram.com/birdwatch_zambia/
Bombay Natural History Society	www.bnhs.org	www.facebook.com/groups/thebnhs/	twitter.com/BNHSIndia	www.instagram.com/bombaynaturalhistorysociety/
Botanisch-Zoologische Gesellschaft	www.bzg.li	N/A	N/A	N/A
Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds	www.bspb.org	N/A	twitter.com/BSPB_BirdLife	N/A
Burung Indonesia	www.burung.org	www.facebook.com/burungindonesiapage/	twitter.com/BurungIndonesia	www.instagram.com/burung_indonesia/
Center for Protection and Research of birds of Montenegro	www.czip.me	www.facebook.com/czip.cg?fref=ts	twitter.com/CZIP_CG	N/A
Centro Nacional de Áreas Protegidas	www.snap.cu	www.facebook.com/cnap.snap	twitter.com/cnap_snap	N/A
Chinese Wild Bird Federation	www.bird.org.tw	www.facebook.com/TWBF1988/	twitter.com/cwbf1988	N/A
Comité Nacional Pro Defensa de la Flora y Fauna	www.codeff.cl	www.facebook.com/codeffchile/	twitter.com/codeffchile	www.instagram.com/codeffchile/
Conservation Society of Sierra Leone	N/A	www.facebook.com/conservationsl	N/A	N/A
Czech Society for Ornithology	www.birdlife.cz	www.facebook.com/birdlife.cz	twitter.com/birdlifecz	N/A
Dansk Ornitologisk Forening / BirdLife Denmark	www.dof.dk	www.facebook.com/BirdLifeDanmark/	twitter.com/BirdLifeDanmark	www.instagram.com/danmarksfugle/
Djibouti Nature	djiboutinature.org	N/A	twitter.com/djiboutinature	N/A
Doğa	www.dogadernegi.org	www.facebook.com/DogaDernegi	twitter.com/DogaNetwork	www.instagram.com/doganetwork/
Environment Protection Society	www.keps.org.kw	www.facebook.com/KEPS74/	twitter.com/KEPS74	www.instagram.com/keps74/
Estonian Ornithological Society	www.eoy.ee	www.facebook.com/ornitoloogiyhing/	N/A	N/A
Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society	www.ewnhs.org.et	N/A	N/A	N/A
Falklands Conservation	www.falklandsconservation.com	www.facebook.com/FalklandsConservation	twitter.com/FI_Conservation	www.instagram.com/falklandsconservation/
Faroese Ornithological Society	www.faroenature.net		N/A	
Field Ornithology Group of Sri Lanka	http://fogsl.cmb.ac.lk	www.facebook.com/groups/fogsl/	twitter.com/fogsl_official	
Forest & Bird	www.forestandbird.org.nz	www.facebook.com/forestandbird/	twitter.com/Forest_and_Bird	www.instagram.com/forestandbird/
Fuglavernd – BirdLife Iceland	www.fuglavernd.is	www.facebook.com/Fuglavernd/	twitter.com/Fuglavernd	N/A
Ghana Wildlife Society	www.ghanawildlifesociety.org	www.facebook.com/ghanawildlifesoc/	twitter.com/ghwildlifesoc	www.instagram.com/ghanawildlifesociety/
Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society	www.gonhs.org	www.facebook.com/gonhsgib/	twitter.com/gonhsgib	N/A

BirdLife Partner	Website	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram
GREPOM	www.grepom.org	www.facebook.com/GREPOM.org/	twitter.com/GREPOM	www.instagram.com/grepom_birdlife/
Grupo Jaragua	www.grupojaragua.org.do	www.facebook.com/grupojaragua/	twitter.com/grupojaragua	www.instagram.com/grupojaragua/
Guyra	www.guyra.org.py	www.facebook.com/guyraparaguay/	twitter.com/guyraparaguay	www.instagram.com/guyra.paraguay/
Haribon Foundation	www.haribon.org.ph	www.facebook.com/GoHaribon/	twitter.com/GoHaribon	www.instagram.com/goharibon/
Hellenic Ornithological Society	www.ornithologiki.gr	www.facebook.com/BirdlifeGreece/	twitter.com/ornithologiki	N/A
Hong Kong Birdwatching Society	www.hkbws.org.hk	www.facebook.com/hkbws/	N/A	www.instagram.com/hkbws1957/
Latvian Ornithological Society	www.lob.lv	www.facebook.com/LOB.lv	twitter.com/LOB_lv	www.instagram.com/lob_lv/
Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli	www.lipu.it	www.facebook.com/LipuOnlus	twitter.com/LipuOnlus	www.instagram.com/lipuvarese/
Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux	www.lpo.fr	www.facebook.com/LPO.fr	twitter.com/LPOFrance	www.instagram.com/lpo_idf/
Lithuanian Ornithological Society	www.birdlife.lt	N/A	N/A	N/A
Macedonian Ecological Society	www.mes.org.mk	www.facebook.com/MES.org.mk/	twitter.com/ContactMES	www.instagram.com/macedonian.ecological.society/
Magyar Madártani és Természetvédelmi Egyesület	www.mme.hu	www.facebook.com/groups/132922473579587	twitter.com/MME_Monitoring	N/A
Malaysian Nature Society	www.mns.my	www.facebook.com/MalaysianNatureSociety.Official	twitter.com/MNSMalaysia	www.instagram.com/malaysiannaturesociety/
Natagora (Wallonia)	www.natagora.be	www.facebook.com/natagora	twitter.com/natagora	N/A
natur&emwelt	www.naturemwelt.lu	www.facebook.com/naturemwelt/	twitter.com/Natur_an_Emwelt	www.instagram.com/naturemwelt/
National Audubon Society	www.audubon.org	www.facebook.com/NationalAudubonSociety	twitter.com/audubonsociety	www.instagram.com/audubonsociety/
NATURAMA	www.naturama.bf	www.facebook.com/lanature.net/?fref=ts	twitter.com/NaturamaBurkina	N/A
Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union	www.nabu.de	www.facebook.com/Naturschutzbund	twitter.com/NABU_de	www.instagram.com/nabu/
Nature Canada	www.naturecanada.ca	www.facebook.com/NatureCanada	twitter.com/NatureCanada	www.instagram.com/naturecanada_/
Nature Conservation Egypt	www.natureegypt.org	www.facebook.com/NatureConservationEgypt/	twitter.com/Nature_Egypt	www.instagram.com/nature_egypt/
Nature Iraq	www.natureiraq.org	www.facebook.com/groups/natureiraq/	twitter.com/Nature_Iraq	N/A
Nature Kenya	www.naturekenya.org	www.facebook.com/NatureKenyaEANHS/	twitter.com/Nature_Kenya	www.instagram.com/nature_kenya/
Nature Mauritania	natmau.org/en/	N/A	N/A	N/A
Nature Seychelles	www.natureseychelles.org www.cousiniland.net	www.facebook.com/natureseychelles	twitter.com/NatureSey	www.instagram.com/naturesey/
Nature Society (Singapore)	www.nss.org.sg	www.facebook.com/naturesocietysingapore/	twitter.com/mcgnss	www.instagram.com/naturesocietysingapore/
NatureFiji-MareqetiViti	www.naturefiji.org	www.facebook.com/NatureFijiMareqetiViti	twitter.com/NatureFiji	www.instagram.com/naturefiji/
NatureUganda	www.natureuganda.org	www.facebook.com/NatureUganda/	twitter.com/NatureUganda	www.instagram.com/nature_ug/
Natuurpunt (Flanders)	www.natuurpunt.be	www.facebook.com/natuurpunt	twitter.com/MijnNatuurpunt	www.instagram.com/natuurpunt/
Nigerian Conservation Foundation	www.ncfnigeria.org/	www.facebook.com/NCFNigeria/	twitter.com/ncfnigeria	www.instagram.com/ncfnigeria/
Norwegian Ornithological Society	www.birdlife.no	www.facebook.com/fuglevern	twitter.com/Fuglevern	N/A
Palau Conservation Society	www.palauconservation.org	www.facebook.com/PCSPalau/	twitter.com/PW_Conservation	www.instagram.com/pcspalau/
Palestine Wildlife Society	www.wildlife-pal.org	http://www.wildlife-pal.org/	twitter.com/Wildlife_Pal	www.instagram.com/wildlife.pal/

BirdLife Partner	Website	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram
Panama Audubon Society	www.audubonpanama.org	www.facebook.com/audubonpanama/?fref=ts	twitter.com/audubonpanama	www.instagram.com/audubonpanama/
Polish Society for the Protection of Birds	www.otop.org.pl	www.facebook.com/OTOP.BirdLifePolska/	twitter.com/OTOP_tweets	N/A
Portuguese Society for the Study of Birds	www.spea.pt	www.facebook.com/spea.Birdlife	twitter.com/spea_birdlife	www.instagram.com/spea_birdlife/?hl=pt
Pronatura	www.pronatura.org.mx	www.facebook.com/PronaturaMexicoAC/	twitter.com/Pronaturamexico	www.instagram.com/pronaturamexico/
Romanian Ornithological Society / BirdLife Romania	www.sor.ro	www.facebook.com/SOR.BirdLifeRomania/	twitter.com/SORBirdlifeRo	www.instagram.com/sor_insta/
Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature	www.rscn.org.jo	www.facebook.com/rscn.org	twitter.com/RSCNJordan	www.instagram.com/rscnjordan/
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	www.rspb.org.uk	www.facebook.com/RSPBLoveNature	twitter.com/Natures_Voice	www.instagram.com/rspb_love_nature/
Royal Society for the Protection of Nature	www.rspnbhutan.org	www.facebook.com/rspnbhutan	twitter.com/rspnbhutan	www.instagram.com/rspn_bhutan/
SalvaNATURA	www.salvanatura.org	www.facebook.com/salvanatura/	twitter.com/SalvaNATURA	www.instagram.com/salvanatura.sv/
Saudi Wildlife Authority	www.swa.gov.sa	www.facebook.com/SaudiWildlifeAuthority	N/A	www.instagram.com/saudiwildlifeauthority/
SAVE Brasil	www.savebrasil.org.br	www.facebook.com/SAVEBrasil	N/A	www.instagram.com/savebrasil/
Sociedad Ornitológica Puertorriqueña, Inc.	en.sopipr.org/	www.facebook.com/sociedadornitologicapuertorriquena	twitter.com/Aves_PuertoRico	www.instagram.com/sopi_pr/
Société Calédonienne d'Ornithologie	sco.over-blog.org	N/A	N/A	N/A
Société d'Ornithologie de Polynésie	www.manu.pf	www.facebook.com/Manu-SOP-212922695414646/?fref=ts	N/A	N/A
Society for Nature Conservation	www.sabuko.ge	www.facebook.com/sabuko.org/	twitter.com/SABUKOGEORGIA	www.instagram.com/birdlife.georgia/
Society for the Protection of Birds	www.vogelbescherming.nl	www.facebook.com/vogelbeschermingnederland	twitter.com/vogelnieuws	www.instagram.com/vogelbeschermingnederland/
Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel	www.natureisrael.org	www.facebook.com/SPNI.EN	twitter.com/SPNI	N/A
Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon	www.spnl.org	www.facebook.com/SpnlOrg/	twitter.com/toyourna	N/A
SOS-FORETS	www.sosforets.ci	www.facebook.com/sosforets/	twitter.com/forets_sos	N/A
Swedish Ornithological Society	www.birdlife.se/	www.facebook.com/BirdLifeSverige/	twitter.com/birdlifesverige	www.instagram.com/birdlifesverige/
Syrian Society for Conservation of Wildlife	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Te Ipukarea Society	tiscookislands.org	www.facebook.com/tiscookislands/	twitter.com/TelpukareaSoc	www.instagram.com/te_ipukarea_society/
The Mauritian Wildlife Foundation	www.mauritian-wildlife.org	www.facebook.com/MauritianWildlife/	twitter.com/mwfWildlife	www.instagram.com/mauritianwildlife/
The Society for Conservation of Nature in Liberia	www.scnlliberia.org	www.facebook.com/www.scnlliberia.org/	N/A	www.instagram.com/scnlliberia/
Ukrainian Society for the Protection of Birds	www.birdlife.org.ua	www.facebook.com/birdlife.org.ua	N/A	N/A
Wild Bird Society of Japan	www.wbsj.org	www.facebook.com/wbsj.bird/	twitter.com/wbsjt	N/A
Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malawi	wesm.mw/	www.facebook.com/groups/302760476458071	twitter.com/WESMLilongwe	N/A

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