

DETAIL REPORT ON THE PROJECT ACTIVITY

**Report submitted for Rufford Small Grants for nature conservation project by
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**Project: - Improve Population Status of Wattled Crane through Community Based
Conservation in Boye Wetland Complex, Jimma, Ethiopia**

1. Introduction

Wattled Crane (WC) is listed as vulnerable species in IUCN. In Ethiopia, WC populations are threatened due to wetland habitat degradations and losses. In spite of these threats, poor understood of local community about WC and its habitat are limited their participated in conservation. To solve these problems, this small project was carried out to improve local community understanding on WC and wetland habitats, conservation needs and thereby enhance community participation in conservation programmers and WC population in the project area. To realize these, the main activities conducted by the project includes community awareness creation training, building capacity of future conservationist (students at school) breeding site protection, involving community in conservation efforts and sharing conservation experiences.

2. The main project activities and its achievements

To attain its objectives, the project has implemented mixture of activities and successfully achieved its objectives. Details of accomplished activities and its success history are presented in the following subtopics.

2.1. Community awareness creation

Community awareness creation training on ecosystem, social and economic values of wetlands and WC was conducted at different levels- from district to village levels (district and village are local administrative hierarchy).

District level awareness creation training: to aware local community leaders about conservation concerns of WC and wetland, first the awareness creation training was provided to local community leaders gathered from administration, education, agriculture, youths, health, gender, and water office heads (Figure 1). In order to understand the knowledge, attitude and perceptions, some basic questions on values and conservation concerns of wetlands and WC are presented to the participants. Based on the response, most of participants poorly understood conservation concern.

Through the training the value and conservation concerns of wetlands and WC, and wetland degradation effects on environment, economy and society were addressed. After the training, group discussion on wetland degradation problems, extent and causes of degradation, and effects of degradation on WC population, society and environment in the district was used a case to explore the existing situations and design future direction. The group discussion participants revealed, the existence of high wetland degradation (e.g., due to drainage and conversion to other land uses) has affected the ecosystem, society, WC and other biodiversity of the district, and the need of conserving the wetland is very high.

From the training section and group discussion, the participants realized the values and conservation concerns of wetland and WC, and convinced with the importance of conservation and worked with the project through community awareness creation, facilitating the training and providing hall for training free of charge. In addition, the participants were identified wetland degradation hotspot areas in the district and requested further training for community from the project.

Village level awareness creation training: this training was provided to village community representatives after district level training. This training was assisted and facilitated by district leaders, they assigned two representatives from the team and the representatives played great role in the training process particularly in selection of participants from village who are well-known and influential community members (able to transfer information obtained from the training to other community members and convince them).

The training approach at this level was similar to district level, before the beginning the training participants were asked some basic questions about values, status, and conservation concerns of wetland and WC. All of the respondents have clear information about the status of wetland, presence of WC in their village, but poorly understanding their values, and no idea on conservation concerns.

Through training at this level, 80 community members (**Figure 2 & Figure 3**) were participated and gained knowledge about socioeconomic values and conservation concerns of



Figure 1: Photo of district level training participants

wetlands and WC, causes and extent of wetland degradation, roles of community in conservation and conservation approaches.

At end of the training, the participants raised questions, involved in group discussions. Through discussion they understood the values and concerns of wetland conservation, and their roles in conservation. Final, most of the participants are motivated in WC and wetland conservation, and contributed for conservation efforts of the project through participated in awaking their family, friends and other community member, informing breeding areas in their village, and avoiding livestock disturbance from breeding area during reproduction seasons.

To ensure sustainable WC and wetland conservation in the area similar works should be conducted in other WC breeding, feeding and roosting area of the district. Because, WC experience move to other areas in the district for feeding and roosting so poor understanding of peoples in these area about the values and conservation concerns of wetland and WC will directly affect the conservation efforts.



Figure 2: Group photo of community awareness creation training at village level



Figure 3: Group photo of community awareness creation training at village level

School level awareness creation training: - after providing the awareness creation training for community members found around the schools; similar training was provided at schools for students (both conservation club member & non-member). On this training a total of 650 participants were involved from the two schools (Figure 4 & Figure 5). Like other community members, students lacked clear understanding on the values and conservation concerns of wetland habitat and WC. The training helped them to understand the values and conservation concerns, and inspired them to participate in conservation. Finally, most of the training participants were inspired to contribute for wetland and WC conservation through community awareness, minimizing disturbance in breeding areas, and working in conservation club. Accordingly, during the project period conservation club were participated in conservation awareness creation, breeding site identification.

Therefore, conservation team building in schools will significantly contribute for the current conservation activities and also in producing the future conservationists.



Figure 4: Group photo of community awareness creation training at school level



Figure 5: Group photo of community awareness creation training at school level

2.2. Environment and nature conservation club capacity building

Conservation clubs at two schools were used to address conservation issues for the wider community and motivate future conservationist. With this aim, besides providing trainings to school community, material (computers and stationary) were supplied to schools to help their participations in conservation efforts and future encouragement (Figure 6 & Figure 7). The schools have been using the materials to facilitate conservation works. However, the absence of separate office for conservation club in these schools has limited the club works (storing their materials, conducting committee meetings, placing documents for future generation etc...) from sharing experiences and exploiting their potential in conservation efforts. Consequently, the clubs are looking further assistance to solve the problems and strengthen their conservation activities in the community.



Figure 6: Computer and stationeries handover to conservation club at Jitu School



Figure 7: Computer and stationeries handover to conservation club at Kachama School

2.3. Conservation experience sharing meetings

Experience sharing meeting was conducted with stakeholders in two schools. In this meeting over 1500 community members were participated and gained experiences conservation (Figure 8 & Figure 9).



Figure 8: Photo on experience sharing meeting at Jitu School



Figure 9: Photo on experience sharing meeting at Kachama School

On these meeting, conservation experiences were successfully transferred to the community through drama, posters, flayers, literature and painting-art. Conservation clubs from the two schools play significant role in these activities.



This painting-art was prepared by conservation club and it shows the young WC walking behind its parents in wetlands of their village

At Jitu School, conservation club members were presented drama on deforestation and waste mismanagement on water bodies and biodiversity (**Figure 10 & Figure 11**). The dram was bases on critical wetland and WC conservation problems of the village and it try to touch the main issues. This drama took more than 30 minutes, and the audiences were enjoyed and learned from it (**Figure 12**). At end of the programme we interview randomly

selected participants, all of them mentioned that they have learned and benefited from this programmes particularly dram, which helped them to easily realized conservation problems of their village and how it can be managed.



Figure 10: Photo when conservation club members presenting drama at Jitu



Figure 11: Group photo of conservation club members



Figure 12: Photo when participants showing WC on the flyer during drama

Similarly to Jitu, conservation club at Kachama School was showed drama on effects of wetland drainage on wetlands ecosystems and WC (Figure 13 & Figure 14). The dram was based on real wetland threat in the village and took over 40 minute to present.



Figure 13: Photo when conservation club members present drama at the meeting

The meeting participants were very happy with the events and they hung up the picture of WC when they attend the drama (Figure 15). To assess the experiences gained, randomly selected participants were interviewed about the experience they gain from the overall meeting; most of them replied that they are very happy and get experiences on conservation, and motivated to protect wetlands and WC in their village.



Figure 14: Group photo of conservation club members presented the drama



Figure 15: Photo on participant response to conservation message through drama

On these meetings, the project has awarded biology and environmental science reference books for seven conservation club members' students (Jitu and Kachama schools) who

were demonstrated an outstanding performance in conservation efforts during the project period (**Figure 16**). Some of the students said that, the award was inspired them to more participate in conservation activities and to study the field in the future.



Figure 16: Photo when conservation club member receiving book reward

Also, one dictionary (English Amharic Afan Oromo) sealed with WC picture was offered to Jitu School as award for demonstrating good effort in conservation during the project period. The school was presented the dictionary for open sell through competition, then the book was sold with 1800 birr in the meeting and the school has saved this money for future expenditure of the club. This competition implies, how much community awareness creation activities inspire peoples to value and conserve nature around them (Figure 17 & Figure 18).



Figure 17: Photo when peoples are competing to own the dictionary



Figure 18: When school representatives counting money obtained from dictionary sell through completion

2.4. Breeding /nesting site identification and protection

It was planned to identify breeding/nesting area through following breeding pair and nest preparation activity, and minimize livestock disturbance in nesting site through fencing. The engagement of local community (students and farmers) in the awareness creation training made this task very simple. From their long lasting experience in the village, they know very well the specific breeding area and months of breeding, this helps us to easily identify breeding pairs and breeding area (Figure 19 & Figure 20).



Figure 19: Breeding pairs in Buyo Kachama site



Figure 20: Photo of WC nest with two eggs in Buyo Kachama site

Instead of using fence to minimize nesting area disturbance, the community has suggested other alternatives. Because, fencing materials are somewhat expensive, it can be easily decayed in wetlands, and picked for fuel woods. Thus, the local community agreed to keep their livestock away from nesting area during breeding season, and to be followed by one person. Based on the local community suggestions, one nest was exactly identified and it has been protected from livestock and children disturbance through the efforts of the community, follow up by the assigned person and project.

General, the contribution of local community in nesting area identification and protection from livestock disturbance is some of the conformations for the relevance of local community participation in conservation efforts.

2.5. Dissemination of conservation experiences to wider community

- Conservation advocacy drama video uploaded on YouTube
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QhI18IjUyo0>
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vfq_SsA0Wag&feature=youtu.be
- A comprehensive document on conservation result and experiences was sent to newsletter for publication (<https://www.ewt.org.za/ewtalk.html> may be available online on September or October 2016 issue)
- Experiences were presented on two workshops in Jimma
- Experience was shared on African Crane Working Programme and International Crane Foundation
- conservation guideline was prepared in local language and distributed to the community

3. Future conservation plans designed during the final community meeting

The local community attitude and perception on WC and its habitat (wetland) conservation was positively influenced by the project activities. Consequently, they are motivated and participated in the activities. Therefore, to ensure sustainable conservation and to realize conservation as customized culture of the community further assistant of resource, capacity building trainings, follow up and expanding best practices to other village are key issues that has to be addressed.