

Project Update: February 2016

Project activities: *Community Awareness Creation Education*

The project team has got an opportunity to provide two awareness creation presentations and discussions (Photo 1) on the value of wetlands and threatened cranes species for over 80 people.



Figure 1 - Abebayehu conducting a presentation

The first presentation and discussion was conducted on Stakeholder Workshop entitled "ecotourism potential of wetlands in Jimma Zone" organized by Jimma University College of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine Department of Natural Resources Management and held at Main Hall of the college on 30th December 2015. The main stakeholders participated on workshop were Jimma University higher officials, lecturers, postgraduate students studying nature

conservation programme, community representatives, tourism development and environment management professionals of Jimma town. On this workshop the project has provided presentation and talks on the values of wetlands and threatened cranes for ecotourism development for over 30 participants.

Before the presentation, to assess the participants understanding and awareness on extent, values and conservation concerns of wetland in Jimma area the project has randomly selected 11 participants for interview. The interviewed participants were varying in understanding and awareness; all of them well understood wetland degradation and losses, a few understood values of wetland, and some partially understood wetland conservation concerns. After the workshop, the project also interviewed 13 randomly selected participants regarding the level of their understanding and awareness about wetland extent, values and conservation concerns before and after the presentation and discussion. This assessment show, the presentation has significantly contributed for improvement participant's understandings and awareness on wetland values and conservation concerns. As a result, the participants established a wetland conservation forum, which consists of peoples form Jimma town municipality, community representative, and Jimma University.

The second presentation and discussion was conducted on "The 2nd National Conductive Stakeholder Workshop on Integrated Watershed Management In Gibe Omo Basin" organised by CSSP, PHE, Jimma University and held at Jimma University College of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine Main Hall from 31st December 2015 – 2nd January 2016. In this workshop were over 50 participants (such as higher officials, professionals, researchers and environmental

advocators) from federal and regional government, university, non-governmental organisations, community based organizations and media agencies. The Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Energy are responsible to design water (such as wetlands, river basin etc.) body management strategy, and ensure proper implementation of water body management policies.

The presentation and talk on wetland values and its roles in sustainable watershed management provided by the project has influenced the existing understanding and drew the attention of participants on the issue. The participants discussed trends of wetland degradation, wetland values and conservation concerns. During the discussion, participants argued the existing misunderstanding on ecological values of wetlands and pointed out national needs of wetland management strategies to ensure environmental sustainability. To achieve this, the following issues need reconsideration: 1)exclusions of wetlands in watershed management plans; 2) the agricultural extension systems that encourages wetland conversion to other land use; and 3) lack of policy frame for wetland conservation. Regarding, wetland management policy issue the participant highlighted Ramsar convention of wetland, Ethiopia has signed the convention years ago, but yet not effective. Finally, from this discussion two points are included as way forward of the workshop:

- In watershed and river basin management plan wetland should be included in the plan as key ecosystem.
- Concerned body should design appropriate wetland management policy, rules and regulation.