

Project Update: March 2016

Approached used for awareness creation

To select representative farmers (land users), extension workers and school community for awareness creation on the value of wetlands and Wattled crane, we have had discussion with local community administrative leaders during the training held in November 21, 2015. Accordingly, two training sites (namely Olme-yebo and Kachama) were selected based on their proximity to wetland habitats, wetland degradation and loss problems, and Wattled crane activity (breeding, feeding and roosting). Further, training participant selection was conducted based on their ability to understand the training message, effectively communicate the training message positively influence to others, and involvement in community based development activities. Also, farmers who have farmland adjacent to wetlands were included in the training.

Since the project members have no information on local community members ability regarding the above mentioned participant selection criteria, two local community administrative leaders were involved in selection of farmers for the training. In addition to selecting participants, the two local community administrative representatives play key roles through facilitating the training. While facilitating the training, they have effectively communicated the objective of the training, wetland conservation concerns, socioeconomic and ecological values of wetlands to the local community. This indicates the training we have provided to the district leaders has contributed for the improvement of local community understandings of wetland habitat and its values, and enhanced their participation in conservation.

At two the sites (Olme-yebo and Kachama), 71 farmers were successfully participated the on values of wetland habitats, Wattled crane, conservation concerns and community roles in conservations.

Community awareness creation training at Olme-yebo

On 5 March 2016, we have successfully provided the training for 41 community representatives at **Olme-yebo** site (Figure 1; Figure 2). Among the participants 38 were farmers (36 male and 2 females), and 3 were extension workers (2 male agriculture extension workers and 1 female health extension worker). As influential farmers are positively influencing decision making process of others through disseminating information, the 38 farmers participated in this training will contribute for community participation in wetland habitat and wetland crane conservation in the project area. The agricultural extension workers participated in the training will contributes for sustainable wetland habitat and crane conservation through effectively communicating socioeconomic and ecological values of wetlands and Wattled cranes to the local community through their extension system. Similarly, the health extension worker teaches the community other alternative methods to prevent mosquito breeding and control malaria instead of draining wetland.



Figure 1: Photo while providing training (February 26, 2016).

During the training we have assessed the impacts of training on participants understanding through asking questions about value of wetlands, wetland degradation and losses, causes of wetland degradation and losses, Wattled crane breeding, population trend and threats before and after the training. Before the training, the participants at this site perceived wetlands as source of grasses and water for their livestock in dry season, and in wet season it has no value. In addition, the lands under wetlands are used by landless youths and others for crop production (such as vegetables) through draining the water. Through drainage, over hundred hectares of wetlands are converted to cropland in the past decades and many peoples are benefited from that. Similarly, the participants perceived Wattled crane as crop raider because it feed maize (corn) during sowing and germination stage, and teff (local crop) at maturity stage.

After the training, we have asked the questions asked before the training and the participants reply totally different answer with good understanding. They clearly understood the values of wetland habitats after the training. For example, some of the participants explained wetland's roles in flood controlling by saying "as compared to past decades currently the amount of rain is decreased in our area but flooding gets sever this could be due to losses of wetlands and forests". Based on participant's response to the questions and interaction in group discussion, participants understanding of wetland habitats values for biodiversity conservation, water purification, and socioeconomic are relatively improved after the training. The participants mentioned that, the training has equipped them with basic information and conservation of wetlands and its biodiversity very important for the wellbeing of the society as well as wildlife but, this can be achieved if community members who drain wetlands for cropland got alternative livelihood source and techniques are devised to prevent Wattle Crane crop raiding.



Figure 2: Group photo after awareness creation training (February 26, 2016).

Community awareness creation training at Kachama

In this site we have successfully provided the training for 30 community members in March 5, 2016 (Figure 3;Figure 4). The 30 participants were from different profession; 19 farmers (all male), 3 agriculture extension workers (1 female), 3 female health extension worker and 3 school representatives. Similar to Olme-yebo site, the participants of this site were able to positively influence the large community members and contribute for sustainable conservation of wetland habitats and Wattled cranes. Because, participants of this sites have the same social profile (same level of acceptance in the society and known for their ability in positively influence other farmers decision through their daily communications).



Figure 3: Photo while providing training (March 19, 2016).

To prove impacts of the training on the participants understanding, we have asked the questions presented for participants of Olme-yebo site for this site before and after the training. Before the training, participants of this site have similar understanding with that of Olme-yebo site. Just they perceived, wetlands are used for grazing at dry season, source of grasses and water, source of raw material for handcraft and eucalyptus plantation site. They clearly recognize degradation and losses of some wetlands due to agricultural land expansion and other activities by mentioning losses of one big wetland 'called **Ariba-serig** wetland' from their village/Kachama. Before three decades **Ariba-serig** wetland is open water body and peoples cross it through locally made small boats and used for recreation, now this area is completely covered by grasses and used for livestock grazing. The participants are well understood Wattled cranes and their breeding sites however, they have no idea about its global conservations concerns, socioeconomic and ecological values. Because of this reason, the community has been destroying nests, broking eggs and sometimes kills juveniles of Wattled crane. One of the participants mentioned that "I know people in my village collect and brought eggs of Wattled cranes to Jimma town market for sell but not find any buyer, after that we understood Wattled crane has no economic value and it only raids our crops".



Figure 4: Group photo after awareness creation training (March 19, 2016).

Like the Olme-yebo site participants, after the training participant at this site has replied totally different answer for the question they have asked before the training. They expressed their willingness to aware other community members and participate in wetland and Wattled crane conservation activities. But, they mentioned the importance of further large-scale community awareness creation trainings because wetlands and cranes are distributed across the district but not only limited to our village.

Generally, the participants of both sites reflected due to lacks of scientific information the community has been destroying the precious resources. Now, they said we got some information from this training and we will work to conserve our resources with further assistances of experts.