



ACTIVITY REPORT

SENSITIZATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A. Introduction

Community sensitization, mobilization and engagement is prerequisite for better understanding and devising strategies for Keta Coastal resources conservation and its sustainable utilization. It is effective in bringing awareness among coastal communities, strengthening CBOs' capacity and changing behavior towards enhanced conservation and use of coastal resources and their diverse forms. Importantly, it is one of the key strategies towards contributing to the goal of the project titled "Conservation and Sustainable Management at the Keta Lagoon Complex Ramsar site, Ghana, for Birds and Community Climate Resilience". Accordingly, the project adopted various tools used in community sensitization, mobilization and engagement, a few tools like traditional authority visits, communal meetings and creative action practicum (easy to understand made banners) which are people friendly and effective in providing access to information.

Most rural coastal communities within the Keta Lagoon Complex Ramsar Site area do not have adequate information regarding climate change, migratory birds and its conservation, which is one of the barriers in appropriate utilization of the available resources and the benefits of conservation. Wider information dissemination is needed to increase the horizon of conservation of migratory birds and issues of Climate Change resilience, so that the message reaches all levels of stakeholders, including students, fishers, local community members, researchers and policy makers. Public awareness regarding climate change, migratory bird conservation is essential for effective participation of coastal communities in research and development activities. This primarily focuses on educating stakeholders about the value of migratory birds, fostering the sense of pride in co-existing with the species particularly because of their importance both locally and globally. Various local methods for community sensitization as adopted by the project are useful in creating awareness among a larger number of people from different stakeholder groups in coastal communities of Keta. Furthermore, it also helps the rural community to prioritize and take ownership for conservation and utilization of unique resources.

B. Objectives

- **Raise awareness and understanding of our project:** To educate selected community members about migratory birds, Climate Change and Agro-ecological issues of the Keta Lagoon Complex Ramsar Site.
- **Build trust and collaboration:** To establish and strengthen trust between community members, project partners and government agencies. This helps foster partnerships for smoother and more cooperative implementation of the projects.
- **Promote participation and ownership:** To encourage community members to actively participate in and take ownership of project activities that affect them.
- **Ensure cultural relevance and respect:** To make sure that the project approach is culturally sensitive and respectful of the community's norms, values, and traditions.

- **Foster social cohesion:** To build understanding and create a sense of unity among diverse groups within the four selected communities, which is essential for peaceful coexistence and collective action.
- **Encourage specific behaviors:** To motivate individuals to adopt new behaviors, such as using more efficient farming practices
- **Support advocacy and policy change:** To lay the groundwork for advocacy efforts by introducing new bird monitoring protocols and unique agro-ecological practices as a means of paving the way for future changes in their behavior or policies.

C. Methods and Process

The team adopted a mix of appropriate methods to reach the diverse groups in the project target areas. Notable methods are; traditional visits, communal meetings and creative action practicum (easy to understand made banners). It is important to mention that, different tools can be used at different times in the same community for creating awareness, mobilizing and engaging actors, as one tool may not be effective for the entire context. A total of four communities (Tegbi, Keta, Fiakor and Afiadenyigba) were engaged. A strategic approach for fair representation was adopted where for each community four groupings were recruited (Youth male [below 35 years], Youth female [below 35 years], Male [above 35], Female [above 35]). Importantly, actors were drawn from all groupings from the communities. A total of two hundred actors were engaged (50 each from each of the four communities). The engagement processes discussed the project, roles and responsibilities as well as the key elements of the marine governance tool for collective action (management and conservation of the coastal resources particularly migratory birds, mangroves etc.).

Traditional Authority visits: The local project implementation team (comprising members from the A Rocha Ghana team, Keta Lagoon Complex Ramsar Site Office, and Assembly members) paid a courtesy call on the overlord of Afiadenyigba. The team presented traditional tokens to the Togbe and elders and subsequently had a detailed discussion about the project with the leaders.

Key Highlights:

The overlord advised the project implementation team (PIT) to ensure that:

- They visit the family heads of the community as the land tenurial rites of their jurisdiction is vested in the family heads
- They prepare a memorandum of understanding for use of lands for mangrove restoration for the purpose of trust, shared roles and responsibilities.

Outcomes

- Four family heads visited and with increased knowledge on the project goal, objectives and results.
- Developed Memorandum of Understanding.

Communal meeting: The team held four different communal meetings in four communities about the purpose of the project with prescribed roles and responsibilities by all the actors. The process helped build a mutual rapport, and was critical in identifying key contact persons and fostered community participation. Also, the team introduced key components of the marine governance tool during the meetings. The participatory tool provided actors the opportunity to envisage the state of their coastal resources along a timeline, identifying how it was, how it is now and how it will be if current activities are to continue.

Key Highlights:

- Increased understanding of the project goal, objectives and results.
- Increased understanding of the status of the coastal resources particularly birds and mangroves

Outcomes

- Goodwill to collectively manage and conserve the critical resources of their communities.
- Goodwill towards the project and enhanced communal ownership
- Enhanced visibility of the project

Creative action practicum: The team utilized different creative action practicum (easy to understand made banners) with different themes on climate change, migratory birds and mangrove ecosystems to facilitate learning and sharing among community members.

Key Highlights:

- Increased understanding on different coastal ecosystem issues (Climate Change, Migratory birds and Mangroves)

Mass media (rural radio): The Keta Lagoon Complex Ramsar Site Office regularly used rural radio to sensitize and mobilize actors on key areas of interest and issues related to the management and conservation of the Keta Lagoon Complex Ramsar Site covering at least 10 communities fringing the Ramsar site. The estimated reach of this radio broadcast is 2700 community members based on community population estimates.

World Migratory Bird Day celebrations

The project within the reporting period celebrated the World Migratory Bird Day 2025. The celebrations engaged 2 schools, the Keta and Anloga Municipal Assemblies. The aim of the celebration was to introduce school children to the importance of migratory bird, threats they face and actions that can be taken to address these threats. The activities for the day included learning about birds, their threats and conservation actions using the creative action practicum, word puzzle identifying key words on migratory birds and conservation challenges, an art contest on the topic: Design your community in bird friendly way. The Assemblies pledged their commitment to supporting not only the project but adopting conservation measures into their development plans. The winners of the contest were given notebooks and a plaque to appreciate their effort and serve as a motivation to contribute to conservation initiatives both at school and in their communities. Students were also introduced to bird watching as part of the celebrations. Most students experienced for the first time the use of binoculars and scopes for watching and identifying birds. A total of 200 participants attended the celebration.

D. Conclusion

Selected Communities for the project are involved at all stages of the project sensitization programming as it helps them to understand what they do, how they do it and why they do it. Among the several tools used for community sensitization, communal meeting with number cap and the creative action practicum has been very productive and also cost effective in providing access to information on climate change and migratory bird conservation. Due to the effort of the community sensitization, mobilization and engagement, communities show increased levels of confidence, which has resulted in their active participation in various project activities , meetings and workshops. They are able to make significant impacts at these meetings, raising various pertinent issues.

Community sensitization, mobilization and engagement has resulted in attitude and behavioral changes at individual and community level and brings change in action. Community sensitization, mobilization and engagement is a continuous process, which is crucial for the life cycle of the project. Accordingly, the project will continue the processes as means of reaching all stakeholder and groupings within the landscape.

Photos of Engagements



Plate 1: Visit to traditional leaders



Plate 2: Engagement during communal meeting



Plate 3: Picture of women group in one of the engaged communities