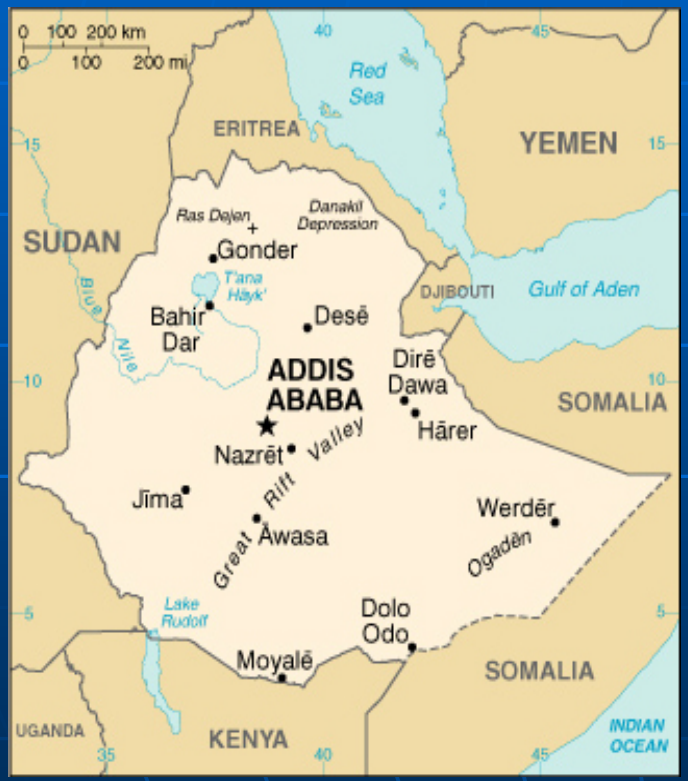
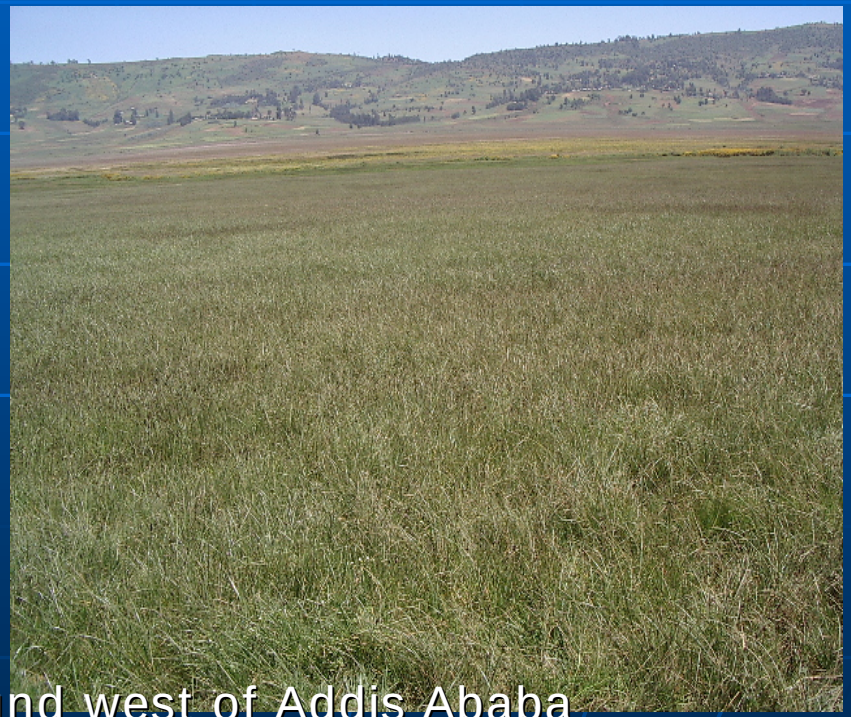
Local Management of Natural Resources, a case of wetland management in Ethiopia, Berga

- Ethiopia



Berga wetland



Found west of Addis Ababa
Geographical coordinates are 09 16' N and 38 23' E

Berga wetland

- Seasonally flooded flood plain.
- Not legally protected
- Owned by community and state Dairy Farm.

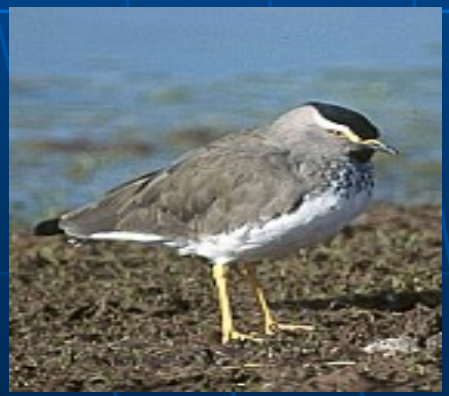
Why attention?

- Representative of high land wetlands
- Rich in natural sedge and grass unique to the area; with some endemics
- More than 143 species of birds feeding and resting; with some endemics.
- The breeding place for the globally endangered White-winged Flufftail(Sarothurura ayresi

Endemic birds of Berga WL

Wattled ibis

Rouget's rail



Spot breasted plover

Black headed siskin

Endemic plants of Berga WL

Crinum abyssinicus

Kniphofia insignis

Epilobium hirsutum

Guizotia scabra

White-winged Flufftail(Sarothurura ayresi)

African endemic; breeds only in Ethiopia; registered in IUCN red data book; less than 750 individuals

Threats to the bird:

Human & animal interference-

- grass cutting
- Nest destruction, damaging to grass and sedge

Dangers to the Breeding site

Problems of Berga WL

- Low productivity due to population pressure.
- Loss of biodiversity (natural sedge, grass and W-wF).
- Less involvement of communities in natural resource management.
- Lack of capacity of the government to support communities to sustainably utilize the WL resources
- Lack of alternative income

Strategy :

- Site Support Group (SSG) as an entry point to the community.
- Participatory Management plan development & various studies (Hydrology, Gender ,Socio-economic, Natural resource)
- Establishment of local management structures

Phase one: Establishing Berga SSG

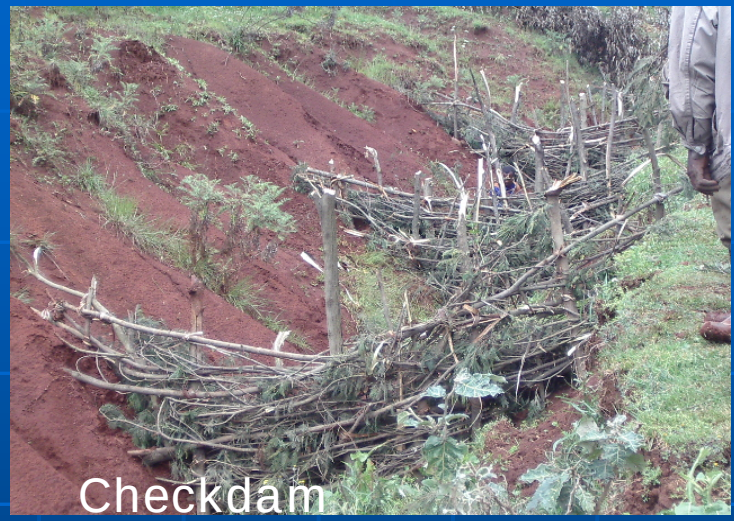
SSG are voluntary members recruited from adjacent side of the breeding site of W-wF.

Objectives of the SSG:

- Conserving W-wF & its breeding site.
- Conservation of Berga river catchments to maintain the value of the wetland resources through demonstrated activities.
- Support the livelihoods through environmental friendly activities

Main activities of SSG


Vegetable gardening


Checkdam

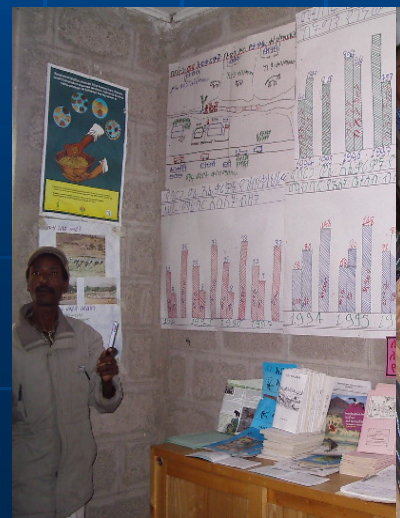

Seedling raising

SSG activities(cont.)


composting


Biodiversity monitoring


Profit generation




Awareness raising

Impacts of SSG activities

A. Conservation impact:

- Interference to nest and breeding place controlled.
- Court cases related to resource use conflict declined.
- Culture of people to grow indigenous trees improved;248,287 seeding are distributed and sold by the SSG within 4 years.
- Organic fertilizer (compost) use introduced and spread among the community.
- The local stakeholders understood the necessity of conserving birds and became informants about the danger of the bird.

B. Impact on livelihood: Income of the SSG improved

- Stress period (July to mid September) is passed with out taking crops on loan(Cycle of poverty minimized among members).
- Household assets increased.
- The very poor are able to purchase agricultural inputs eg. Oxen
- The very poor are able to send children to school.
- Nutrition of the members improved.
- Organic farming enabled to save money which had been used to purchase inorganic fertilizer.(45% of the per capita expenditure of rural areas)???

Indirect impact

- The first children class initiated at the office of the SSG.
- Community mobilized to build the 1st primary school.
- Communities show interest to conserve the bird.
- Local government show affinity to work as a partner.
- EWNHS encouraged to enhance its conservation and livelihood improvement initiatives

School children

New school

Phase two: Enhancing conservation and Livelihood improvement initiatives through involvement of the wider community

Focus area: Based on initial problems of the WL and involving 17 communities.

I. Demonstrate population control measures (of human and animal) around the WL to enhance productivity.

Major activities :Awareness campaign on relation between population pressure and resource degradation, Family planning; Training to Community Health Assistants, Support to Health post

Major activities related to human population control

- Training to community health assistants
- Awareness campaign
- Support to health post

B. Improving animal husbandry practices

Strategy:

- minimize no.of cattle per family.
- Maximize the value of milk and milk products
- Alternative fodder

Major activities: hybrid cattle rearing, Training on alternative fodder, cattle handling and milk processing establishment of milk collection and processing center

Major activities related to Animal Husbandry practices

- Organizing women group
- Training on milk processing
- Supplying hybrid cattle

II. Controlling the loss of BD esp. natural sedge, grass and W-wF

Main activities:

- Supporting low-income groups.
- Site patrolling by SSG
- Awareness raising
- Close working relationship with the Dairy Farm
- Additional breeding site search for W-wF by SSG.
- Introduction of alternative fodder.

Main activities:

Search for another breeding site to W-wF

Celebration on successes of SSG

III. Enhance Involvement of communities in natural resource management

Strategy:

- Development of wetland management structures and build their capacities
- Address community needs.
- Initiate conflict management activities??
- Sustain conservation and livelihood improvement initiatives

Main activities:

- Local cons.committee
- Shallow well
- Grain store to generate profit to sustain activities.

IV. Enhance alternative income to minimize pressure on WL

- Vegetable gardening
- Bull fattening
- Sheep rearing
- Provision of farm inputs(eg. Oxen)
- Motivating active members (eg via prizes which strengthen the income)

Sheep rearing by members

Capacity building to local government

- Experience exchange visits to bio-farm, forested area…
- Various trainings: watershed management

Success and Challenges

Success:

- Threat to the White-winged Flufftail is controlled
- Bird and site conservation contributed to livelihood improvement of the community.
- Knowledge and skill related to resource conservation better disseminated and exercised.
- Started to question the local government on its contribution to conservation and livelihood improvement.
- Networking of the SSG with local government is established.
- Sustainable resource for continuing the conservation activities in place(Revolving fund).
- Demonstrated farmers to be good research assistants(eg. New W-wF breeding site, compost trial…)

Challenges

- High dependency of the community
- Partnership is loose with local government (wereda) and not series on accountability.
- High turn over of government officials to work as partners.
- The local governors at community level are suspicious and are not active participant.
- Participation of women is limited due to high illiteracy rate.
- Local conservation committee are not fully authorized.

Overall lessons

A. Governance: Communities close to a natural resource if empowered could conserve it properly.

Be cautious:

- On power balance
- Involve community level authorities
- Involve higher level authorities in Monitoring and Evaluation to be transparent.
- Be series on gender; mix elderly and youth

B. Partnership

Conservation requires multi-disciplinary approach. Thus link the community with different government offices and partners.

Be cautious on:

- To discuss the contribution and gains of each partner
- Identify roles and responsibilities
- Cover major costs
- Keep continuous information flow
- Develop motivating schemes
- Power balance

C. Socio-economic Issues

Poverty is a threat to resource conservation and conflict on resource use aggravate resource depletion.

Be cautious:

- Assess the link between poverty and resource degradation in question and address it to a minimum.
- Address resource use conflict.
- Balance conservation and livelihood improvement activities.