

# **Sustaining Local Community Action for Wetlands and Waterbirds Conservation through Participatory Awareness and site Management at Sakumo Ramsar Site - Ghana**

## *Final Report*



**Financed by the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative (WSFI)  
May 2016**



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We wish to express our appreciation to the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative (WSFI) for their financial support to the project titled *'Sustaining Local Community Action for Wetlands and Waterbirds Conservation through Participatory Awareness and site Management at Sakumo Ramsar Site - Ghana'*.

We also wish to extend our appreciation to the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, Germany and Birdlife International for their contributory assistance through WSFI to our project in Ghana.

This project could not have been possible without the brilliant idea from Tim Dodman of Wetlands International. Starting from discussions on the corridors on the UN Campus during the AEWA MOP6 in Bonn, Germany, and in a bus travelling from Bonn Central Station (Hauptbahnhof) to the airport and follow-up email messages days after the MOP6, he did not only encouraged us to access the WSFI grant but also guided us through to an acceptable proposal. The Wildlife Division, therefore extends our sincerest gratitude to Tim Dodman for that effort.

Finally, we acknowledge the immense collaboration by the Friends of Ramsar Sites, a local NGO in Ghana and, the local communities, particularly, farmers working at the Ramsar Site and school children for their direct participation in this project.

## INTRODUCTION

The Wildlife Division of the Forestry Commission, Ghana received grant support of **Euro 4,000** from the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative (WSFI) in January 2016 to implement the project titled '*Sustaining Local Community Action for Wetlands and Waterbirds Conservation through Participatory Awareness and site Management at Sakumo Ramsar Site - Ghana*'.

The main aim of the project was:

- To enhance community understanding and appreciation of the wetland resources through education and interpretation that could facilitate communal support and participation in sustainable management of the site, and
- To improve on current management measures and maintain the rich biological diversity and productivity of the Sakumo Ramsar site for water birds without unduly restricting the option of local communities benefiting from compatible livelihood activities within the site.

This report communicates the highlights of the main activities undertaken during the implementation of the project from February to May, 2016.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Sakumo Ramsar Site lies along the coast (Fig. 1) between Accra (the capital of Ghana) and the harbor city of Tema, where urban development is within a few hundred meters from the site boundary. It is one of the six wetlands in Ghana reserved under the tenets of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and gazetted under the *Wetlands (Ramsar Sites) Management Regulations*, L.I. 1659 of 1999.

The site is the third most important roosting /habitat for seashore birds in Ghana. Over 60 species of water birds have been recorded including bird species of global conservation interest. Three species of marine turtle *Lepidochelys olivacea*, *Chelonia mydas* and *Dermochelys coriacea* nest at the beach. The site supports significant fisheries, crop and livestock farming for the surrounding communities. The lagoon has cultural significance as fetish for the indigenes of Tema where the Black Heron *Egretta ardesiaca* is considered sacred and protected by local taboos. The area has high educational and recreational value, being one of the few 'green' areas left in the rapidly expanding Accra-Tema metropolis.

Despite all these benefits the wetland is faced with a lot of threats including encroachment, sand winning, dumping of wastes and removal of trees, erosion and siltation of lagoon bed leading to invasion of aquatic weeds.

As a result of these threats to the ecological integrity and services provided by Sakumo wetlands is fast degrading that if measures are not taken to control the situation the entire catchment will be destroyed, with serious adverse effects that could erode the ecological values of the Site.

The main objective of the project was to enhance community understanding of the wetland conservation through education and interpretation that could facilitate communal support and participation and also to

improve current management measures and maintain the rich biological diversity and productivity of the Sakumo Ramsar site for waterbirds.

Activities suggested to address the issues included:

- Open forum using available (already published) information and brochures to educate and create awareness among targeted stakeholders to enhance public understanding and appreciation of the importance of preservation of the wetland resources;
- Targeted consultations and awareness creation among relevant stakeholders, including development planning authorities, to prevent and control future occurrences of activities that degrade the Site;
- Undertake tree planting along river banks and flood prone areas to reduce erosion and siltation of lagoon bed;
- Training of staff, local youth and civil society groups on bird identification including the use of bird guides and counting.
- Targeted training of pupils in 5 schools to build their knowledge on birds, their habitat, threats and conservation values.

The project was funded by the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative and supported a local NGO - Friends of Ramsar Sites and the school communities within the close catchment of the site for a period of 4 months (February - May, 2016).



**Fig. 1: Aerial photo of Sakumo lagoon (EPA, 2004)**

### 3.0 PROJECT ACTIVITIES EXPECTED RESULTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Project Components	Project Activities	Implementation	Expected Result	Result Indicators
1. Public Education and Awareness Creation	Conduct educational and awareness creation to sensitize 5 groups of communities, including school groups.	Visited two farmer groups operating within the Ramsar Site and 5 schools from March to April, 2016 to give talk on importance of wetland / biodiversity conservation. The schools were grouped into 2 for site visit to show children how wetlands support local farming activities on 6th and 7th April 2016, respectively.	To enhance understanding and appreciation of the importance of preservation of the wetlands.	Five hundred (500) copies of brochures with information on wetland values discussed and distributed to 500 school children including teachers. Wetland site visited by two (2) groups of school children and their teachers.
	Host youth groups and the press (print & electronic media) to participate in WMBD 2016.	Registered with the AEWA WMBD platform to celebrate WMBD in Ghana; organised pupils and teaches form five community schools around Sakumo Ramsar Site in partnership with a local NGO - Friends of Ramsar Sites (FORS) for messages, bird watching and cleaning and invited the press (Radio & TV); Printed 150 T-Shirts with message of 2016 WMBD and distributed among school children and teachers to facilitate their participation in the 2016 WMBD on May 14, 2016	The general public is made aware of the importance of birds, their migration and the need to conserve their habitats including wetlands such as Sakumo Ramsar Site through radio and TV information broadcasted.	2016 WMBD celebrated by school children at Sakumo Ramsar Site on May 14, 2016. Activity broadcasted on major national radio and TV stations. 150 printed T-shirts with message of 2016 WMBD distributed to school children and teachers.
2. Habitat management	Plant 2,000 tree seedlings along river banks	Organised school children, staff of the Forestry Commission (FC) and Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources (MLNR) for tree planting at three (3) different locations all within the Sakumo Ramsar Site. Planting at the third location planned to coincide with the official launching the National Forestry Week within Sakumo Ramsar Site. In attendance to launch the day is the Minister responsible for Lands and Natural Resources and some other dignitaries.	Over 2000 tree seedlings planted on three selected locations within Sakumo Ramsar Site to contribute to erosion/siltation control of the lagoon and also provide habitat for tree roosting birds at the site.	Two thousand two hundred and forty (2,240) seedlings made up of coconut and <i>acacia magnium</i> planted in three locations within Sakumo Ramsar Site before 30th May 2016. Participation was highly encouraging as the Minister responsible for Lands and Forestry and other dignitaries took part in the tree planting exercise.

	Targeted consultations and awareness creation among development planning authorities - Tema Development Corporation (TDC) and Tema Metropolitan Assembly (TMA).	Organised stakeholder meeting and one field visit with local planning authorities under whose jurisdiction the Sakumo Ramsar Site falls between 2 - 5 April 2016.	Knowledge of local planning authorities broadened on the negative impacts of unapproved developments with the Ramsar Site and the catchment areas and, secondly maintain and improve their planning regulations to control unauthorised developments within and around the Ramsar Site.	Action Plan to address problem of encroachment and other activities that degrade Sakumo Ramsar Site prepared and submitted to the Minister for Lands and Natural Resources on May 3, 2016 for approval for implementation.
3. Training	Organize bird walk engaging bird enthusiasts to learn and share individual birding experiences.	Supported the organisation of monthly bird walk by a local NGO - Ghana Wildlife Society (GWS) for bird enthusiasts at Sakumo Ramsar Site and Legon Botanical Gardens in February and May 2016, respectively.	2 bird walks completed in partnership with local NGO - Ghana Wildlife Society (GWS); more bird enthusiasts join not only to exercise their bodies but also join in support for the conservation of migratory birds and their habitats.	Two (2) monthly bird walks organised in partnership with local NGO - Ghana Wildlife Society (GWS).
	Train WD staff and local youth groups (local NGO)	Two-days field training on proper use of binoculars, bird identification and counting organised by staff of WD for local NGOs and youth group at Sakumo Ramsar Site.	Improve capacity of staff and NGOs on the use of binoculars, bird identification and bird counting skills.	Two (2) new staff of Wildlife Division and 5 people from a local NGO trained in basic bird identification and counting.
Acknowledge ment of donors and Partners	To enhance the visibility of project partners and donors we acknowledged them by placing their logos on banners and print T-shirts.	Logos of donors and partners were sought and printed on banners and T-shirts used for project implementation and in the final report.	Donors and partners feel recognised for their support.	Donors and partners acknowledged on banners, T-shirts and final report.

#### **4.0 CHALLENGES**

- Delay in rainfall that affected the transplanting of the seedlings at the field.
- Administrative delays in effecting proposed actions by the sector Ministry.

#### **5.0 LESSONS LERNT**

- When projects are planned to coincide and some activities shared with national and international programmes of similar objectives the impact becomes much pronounced and significant.

#### **6.0 WAY FORWARD**

- Farmer community and school groups as well as local NGOs will be continuously encouraged to participate in wetland conservation activities including tree planting and bird counting in the Site.
- The Wildlife Division will carry out continuous sensitization through communication and awareness programmes in surrounding schools and communities.
- The Division will carry out regular field visits to control unauthorized activities.
- Seek further funding sources to erected bill boards and small information posts at vantage points within and around the Ramsar Site.
- Support the Ghana Wildlife Society (GWS) in their monthly birdwalk programme to increase the number of bird watching enthusiasts within Accra - Tema Metropolis and to promote local support for migratory bird protection and the conservation of their habitats.
- We will continue our monthly bird counts in the Ramsar site to provide data on the birds that visit the site and their status.
- Action Plan to address problem of encroachment and other activities that degrade the Ramsar Site will be approved by the Minister for Lands and Natural Resources for approval for implementation.

#### **7.0 CONCLUSION**

- The project was very successful, though with small funding and in short time duration, it has enhanced public understanding and appreciation of the need to protect the Sakumo wetlands and prompted communal support and participating interest among the school and farmer communities in the catchment area. It is also envisaged that local planning authorities will step up their management measures to control unauthorised developments within and around the Ramsar Site.



## Photos



**Banner for the 2016 World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) showing, among others, the theme for the celebration and acknowledging the donors and partners of the WSFI funded project at Sakumo Ramsar Site**



**School children celebrating 2016 WMBD at Sakumo Ramsar Site.**



**School girls were taken through bird identification and counting exercise as part of the WMBD celebration at the Ramsar Site**



**Section of school children at the Ramsar Site**





**The press interacting with some school children who took part in the WMBD celebration**



**Section of school children and their teachers who participated in the 2016 WMBD celebration.**





**A section of enthusiastic school children being assisted to use the binoculars**



**Section of people who took part in the refuse collection exercise as part of the 2016 WMBD celebration at the Ramsar Site**





**Mr. Charles C. Amankwah (left hand raised), Wetlands Coordinator and Ramsar Focal Point at one of the planning meetings with some farmers at Sakumo Ramsar Site**



**A section of farmers at preparing for coconut transplanting at the Sakumo Ramsar Site**





**One of the three locations prepared for tree planting as part of the 2016 WMBD activities at the Sakumo Ramsar Site**



**The Minister for Land and Natural Resources, Nii Osah Mills, planting a tree to launch the National Forestry Week which coincided with one of the days for tree planting at Sakumo Ramsar Site for the project. At the background is the Sakumo lagoon.**





**The Duputy Ministry for Lands and Natural Resources, Ms. Barbara Serwaa Asamoah.  
At the background is the Sakumo lagoon**



**A school boy being assisted to plant a tree**





**Staff of TDC, TMA, Wildlife Division and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)  
on a site visit to assess the extent of degradation at the Sakumo Ramsar Site**



**Mr. Charles C. Amankwah (back to camera), Wetlands Coordinator and Ramsar Focal Point  
explaining a point to the Press about the problem of encroachment at the Sakumo Ramsar Site**





**Mr. Richard Agorkpa, Executive Director of Friends of Ramsar Sites, speaking to the Press about the 2016 WMBD at Sakumo Ramsar Site**