Syria completes community participation project for Al Jaboul

28 January 2004

Syrian Arab Republic

The Ramsar Secretariat is very pleased to report that the Syrian Arab Republic has completed the SGF 2001 project dedicated to ‘Strengthening the participation of local community in the management of Al-Jaboul Lake’.

Al Jaboul is a large, permanent saline lake designated as a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance in 1998 for providing an important staging, wintering and breeding area for large numbers of waterbirds and supporting more than 1% of the world population of Greater Flamingo.

Historically, Al Jaboul is a very important source of mineral salt that originates from salt-rich soils in this arid area. Major land rehabilitation projects have been initiated recently in this part of Syria, which brought many positive results such as a water level rise in the lake that prevents its drying-out during hot summer seasons, as well as a significant growth of aquatic plants that in turn attract a large number of water birds and mammals. On the other hand, it also induced the increase of human impacts on the lake ecosystem. The human settlements around the lake have grown in size and number entailing a host of problems impacting the ecological character of the site: uncontrolled hunting and fishing, water contamination from agriculture and industry that made the Government ban the use of salt for human consumption.

As Atef Deib, the Ramsar National Coordinator and coordinator of the project, reports, the principal objective of this project was to encourage the active and informed participation of local communities in the conservation and wise use of this wetland.

The outputs achieved are twofold. First, the personnel of the Ministry of Irrigation have been trained in areas related to
wetland management and particularly the participatory practices; and second, the local communities (including women and children) have increased the level of understanding of the impacts from existing activities on the lake's environment, activities that are carried out by stakeholders whose livelihood depends on the resources provided by the wetland, including the local industry, agriculture, hunters and fishermen. Government authorities involved in the conservation and protection of wetlands have already reaped additional benefits from this project due to the increased level of coordination in monitoring activities with the local people, which should enable them to promote the wise use concept to other wetland areas in Syria.

The activities carried out within the project consisted of formal and informal training sessions. Formal training ‘train the trainer’ was conducted at the onset of the project which allowed thereafter the trained people to undertake the second part of the project, including the informal public awareness sessions. Informal separate meetings organised in an interactive manner were held with each stakeholder group. The idea was to inform each group about the negative impacts of existing activities on the lake's environment, and to seek their assistance in improving the ecological character of the lake.

This work was followed by field visits arranged for each group to locations where the impact on the lake's ecology by local activities was evident. Binoculars purchased with project funds were assigned to representatives of each group to assist in the monitoring activities with the local government authorities. In addition, three posters bearing the Ramsar Logo were printed and distributed to the local population and all government authorities involved in wetland’s management in order to stress the importance of protecting Al Jaboul Salt Lake and other wetlands in Syria.

The Ramsar Secretariat would like to congratulate the Syrian Ministry of Irrigation for this successful accomplishment that should pave the way for a similar approach in other wetlands in the country.

-- reported by Liazzat Rabbiosi, Ramsar

The awareness raising seminar for farmers
Collection of salt from the salt evaporation basins

Workers at the salt production facility
Farmers and children working in nearby irrigated fields

Schoolchildren and the Ramsar awareness raising team
In front of the 100-year-old salt mining building

Explaining the negative aspects to salt workers
Explaining to schoolchildren the impacts on the lake

Schoolchildren on a field trip
Weeds growing near the lake, a sight that did not exist ten years ago

Village women weaving local fabrics
Salt accumulated from the basins to be collected and transported

Agricultural and irrigated lands near Al Jaboul Lake

Al Jaboul village
Syria's Ramsar posters
SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

Ministry Of Irrigation
In Co-operation With
Convention On Wetlands

الجمهورية العربية السورية
وزارة السري
بالتعاون مع
لجنة الأراضي المائية

May Al-Jaboul Be The Homeland Of Migrating
Birds And The Center Of Biodiversity

Some Species Of Birds That Have Settled In Al-Jaboul Lake

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