



**ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
AND DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION**

WORLD WETLANDS DAY 2013 CELEBRATION IN CAMEROON

THEME: WETLANDS AND WATER MANAGEMENT

Slogan: *Wetlands take care of water*

**Report Prepared by
Environmental Protection and Development Association, Cameroon**

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REPORT ON THE CELEBRATION of WORLD WETLANDS DAY FEBRUARY 2, 2013



Environmental Protection and Development Association (EPDA Cameroon) is pleased to present the Report on the 2013 World Wetlands Day (February 2). This year, EPDA Cameroon decided to celebrate World Wetlands Day in two primary and two secondary schools with tenths of pupils, students, teachers and volunteers joining in the event celebration. The common purpose of the celebrations is captured in the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) which began its commemoration in 1997. Each participant who attended any of our workshops had the opportunity to learn about and identify the wetlands and Ramsar sites in Cameroon, bio-species found in wetlands especially those of Cameroon and finally were educated on the importance of wetlands with regards to the ecological, botanical, zoological, limnological and/or hydrological significance that make them unique. The workshops embraced the theme of the WWD2103 and exploited the current local and global water challenges facing the society. Focusing on the theme and slogan for the WWD2013: “Wetlands and Water Management” and “Wetlands Take Care of Water” respectively, workshop participants affirmed that humans have an important role to play in the protection and preservation of wetlands whether classified or unclassified. And finally that it is everyone that must be involved actively in the management of water to ensure sustainability and equitable access. The special message from Mr. Anada Tiega, the Secretary General, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands was read during the workshops.

At the local level, EPDA Cameroon provided the leadership to initiate and organize the WWD2013 celebrations and is honored to have the partnership of many other local organizations, corporate and individuals who joined in this effort. EPDA Cameroon in preparing this report acknowledges its local partners towards the schools’ wetlands sensitization campaigns as well as the support from the office of Ramsar in assuring the provision of

information materials which will then be distributed once they arrive our office. All photos contained in this report taken with participating schools have duly been authorized for use and therefore remain our property.

INTRODUCTION

February 02 each year is World Wetlands Day. It marks the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on February 2 1971 in the Iranian city of Ramsar. Each year since 1997, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and groups of citizens at all levels of the community have taken advantage of the opportunity to undertake actions aimed at raising awareness of wetland values and benefits in general and the Ramsar Convention in particular.

Statistically, there are currently 164 Contracting Parties among which is Cameroon; 2098 wetland sites (of International Importance) and Cameroon signed the Ramsar Convention on 13 January 2006.

Cameroon has seven Ramsar Sites covering a total surface area of 827,060 hectares. Out of its seven wetland sites, two are in the South West Region of Cameroon. The two sites have total surface area of 165,415 hectares (www.ramsar.org).

EPDA Cameroon was created in 2008 and approved on October 26, 2010 with **Registration Number: 717/G.37/D.14/1/VOL.T/T/BAAP**. Its global objective is to advance global priority areas (defined by most international treaties) on environmental sustainability, social integrity and peace in Cameroon. EPDA Cameroon crafts its operational programmes and activities under the above three main spheres. EPDA's **mission** is *to enable low-income communities improve their quality of life and living standards by building the capacity its targeted beneficiaries; inspiring them to take responsible actions towards development as well as creating awareness on environmental, social, and economic issues that provide them with required background knowledge to raise their voices for change.*

On the basis of the above, EPDA Cameroon is engaged to celebrate some related international events from which it takes advantage to undertake activities aimed at raising awareness and creating responsibility.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE 2013 WORLD WETLANDS DAY CELEBRATION IN LIMBE-CAMEROON

Global Objective

The overall goal of the World Wetlands Day 2013 celebration in Limbe-Cameroon was to join the rest of the world in the commemoration of the UN Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) under theme: Wetlands and Water Management.

Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the WWD2013 celebration organized by EPDA Cameroon were:

- Advance the specific priority of the United Nations Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) among Cameroonians especially young people;
- Unite, inspire and educate young people and adults of about the importance of wetlands;
- Encourage wise use of water as well as the protection and preservation of wetlands and Ramsar Sites in Cameroon;
- Create awareness among young people about the WWD and the characteristics of Wetlands, their identification and connections with water resources in Cameroon.

EVOLUTION OF THE WWD2013 CELEBRATIONS – METHODOLOGY AND ACTIVITIES

From the 2 – 6 Of February 2013, the **Environmental Protection and Development Association, Cameroon** (EPDA Cameroon) in partnership with DG&G Sarl, **ASYOUSED** (Assembly of Youths for Sustainable Environment and Development), **OGCEYOD** (Organization for Gender, Civic Engagement and Youth development) and **FOREP** (forsts, Resources and People) held stand-up workshops to raise awareness of wetland values and benefits. These workshops were held at the schools of the **Hoho Kings Nursery and Primary School** (Bonadikombo mile 4), **Kulu Memorial College** (Down Beach), **Kings Bilingual Community Comprehensive College** (Wututu) and the **Bethel Baptist Primary School** (Bonadikombo mile 4) Limbe, Fako Division, South Region of Cameroon. Pupils, students, and teachers were sensitized on the historical background of the Ramsar Convention (Iran,1971), the current number of global Ramsar sites, list of Wetlands of Cameroon and those found in the South West Region. They were also briefed on the importance of wetlands from the ecological, botanical, zoological, limnological and/or hydrological perspectives. A total of over 720 students, pupils and teachers, participated in the workshops.

The activities of the stand-up workshops which were brief each lasting for one thirty minutes included lectures, interactive questions and answers, opinion recounting and demonstrative wetland expedition. At Kulu Memorial College, lectures were delivered in a classroom meanwhile in the other schools; all activities mentioned above took place in an open space attributing the name stand-up workshop. Prior to the lectures, the message from the Secretary General, Ramsar Convention was read to all participants. Lectures, interactive questions and answers focused on creating awareness about Ramsar convention, identification of wetlands in Cameroon, identification of wetland species and their importance, emphasis on the importance of wetlands, and the linkage of wetlands to the challenges of safe drinking water in the South West region and beyond. The demonstrative wetland expedition enabled the pupils and students to use their bodies to make a wetland and its associated species identified during the questions and answers. Post-event assessment showed that most of the participants appreciated the message, lectures and practical activity and agreed that young people as leaders of today and tomorrow have the responsibility to drive policy making that favour effective water management and most importantly wetland protection and preservation.

The workshop banner was displayed where every participant could read and after all the activities were carried out, a group photo was taken with students and/or pupils holding the banner-significance of their commitment in continuous efforts and drive for change.

These workshops were conducted in the absence of the WWD2013 information materials (posters, stickers, flyers etc) which we applied to be sent only after our activities. Once received, these materials will be distributed to the participating schools and collaborating NGOs and corporate (DG&G Sarl).

RESULTS

Over 720 pupils and students were educated and sensitized about the Convention and the relevance of the World Wetlands Day Celebrations worldwide and in their community in particular.

CHALLENGES

Given that this was our first experience to celebrate the WWD, it was our responsibility to seek financial assistance from corporate and from our internal financial reserves to organize these workshops. For the fact that we were limited financially, more schools that were excited to host such workshops as well as councils, corporate businesses, water management committees and local media groups could not be reached. Also, we were challenged by the demands from some of the school Heads who asked for remunerations. Also, the schools demanded for field trips to a wetland in the region. Unfortunately this too could not be achieved. Most schools

were asking for printed pictures to keep as souvenirs which again we did not have the financial capacity to embark.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were arrived at during the workshops as suggestions made by some active participants (students, pupils) as well as the views of EPDA Cameroon and partners to make future sensitization more effective.

- Local strategies are developed and put in place to monitor, report on existing state of wetlands and to carry out wetland resource management
- Develop a wetland outreach program to increase awareness on wetlands in schools and local community groups.
- Carry out regular degraded wetland restoration programs in order to ensure ecosystem health
- Strengthen and reinforce wetland research in Cameroon
- School curriculum should include integrate environmental education be it at basic or higher.
- Government policy on wetland management should consider youth opinions as well as underscore youth service programs that enable youth to participate in wetland restoration and sensitization
- Policy makers should encourage innovation and creativity by youth in clean energy systems.
- Formation of water management committees should embrace gender mainstreaming to ensure balance decision making towards improved and combined wetlands conservation
- Farms lands should be set up further away from wetlands.
- Ecotourism around wetlands should be encouraged as an opportunity for youth employment.

ANNEX 1: WWD2013 MESSAGE FROM THE RAMSAR CONVENTION ON WETLANDS SECRETARY GENERAL

World Wetlands Day 2013
Message from the Secretary General



I have been celebrating World Wetlands Day with Ramsar for 12 years, including 6 years as Secretary General. World Wetlands Day (WWD) 2013 will be a special year for me as Secretary General – it will be my last WWD as part of the Ramsar Secretariat! Over the last six years, I have been much encouraged by the growing number and diversity of people and organizations that have used WWD as a key communication tool to deliver our wetland message to a very broad range of stakeholders – schoolchildren, decision-makers, politicians, local communities, journalists, among others – that healthy wetlands, and the water they are providing, are vital for life and its diversity. I am hopeful that this trend will continue, stimulating collective action for conservation and wise use of water and wetlands in the years to come.

Wetlands take care of water is this year's slogan. I hope you agree and that you will join with the Ramsar Secretariat this year in celebrating World Wetlands Day on 2nd February with our focus on wetlands and water management.

This is the UN's International Year of Water Cooperation, an occasion for all of us to look at the water challenges facing the world and some possible solutions. It is a fine opportunity for the Ramsar family to reinforce the understanding of the critical link between wetlands and water: without wetlands there will be no water – and without water there will be no wetlands.

This year we have joined with UNESCO's International Hydrological Programme in preparing our illustrated brochure that takes readers through a broad look at wetlands and water. It is well recognized that access to a clean and adequate supply is critical for human survival. Less well understood is that wetlands, as defined by Ramsar, are fundamental regulators to water regimes. Without adequate management of wetlands from the mountains to the sea there is no water of the right quality and quantity where and when it is needed.

Our WWD focus this year is the chance for all of us working for wetlands to convince those who manage water that wetlands are not competitors for water but rather they are essential components of water infrastructure, providing a clean source and store of freshwater.

In our brochure we look broadly at various water management perspectives, for example at the many challenges of transboundary, agricultural and urban water management. And of the course there are challenges for the consumers; managing water is the responsibility of all of us. As consumers we can commit to recycle, reuse and conserve water in our private lives whether it is through rainwater harvesting, water-friendly garden design, reducing water usage in our home or supporting our local wetland. Whatever your particular interest in wetlands, you can help take forward the key message for World Wetlands Day 2013 - wetlands take care of water – at the global, regional and local level.

So please join us in celebrating World Wetlands Day this year and help us to raise awareness about the critical role of wetlands in water management. To spread the word about World Wetlands Day, why not use our WWD ecards to wish your colleagues a Happy World Wetlands Day? The ecards will be available on our web site from the 21st of January.

Anada Tiéga

Secretary General

Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

ANNEX 2: PHOTO GALLAERY



Sensitizing CBC school pupils through questions and answers



WWD2013 introduction with locally made banner and Sec. Gen's WWD speech



Group picture with CBC school pupils and teachers



Open air body demonstrative performance of a wetland by students of Kulu Memorial College, Down Beach, Limbe



Group picture with students of Kulu Memorial College in body language (trees, water and fishes) for a wetland



Sensitizing students of Kulu Memorial College about wetland value, hydrological link and water management



Kulu students excited to learn about wetlands, their occurrence and importance in Cameroon



Executive Director of EPDA Cameroon instructing students on the use of body to make a wetland



Raising awareness of WWD2013 among students of Kings Bilingual Community Comprehensive College (KBCCC)



Executive Director of EPDA Cameroon conducting open air workshop to improve knowledge and awareness of wetlands and hydrological linkages



Students of KBCCC participate in "making a wetland" activity as aquatic animals swim through its water and plants



Group picture with KBCCC students and teachers and volunteers.