

Project Update: August 2018

1.0 Project Area

The Keta Lagoon Complex Ramsar Site (KLCRS) was established as a wetland protected area or Ramsar site on 14th August 1992. It is located within the South Tongu, Akatsi South, Ketu South and Keta districts of the Volta Region of Ghana. The KLCRS has an area of 101,022.7 ha which covers part of the Volta River estuary. The lagoon area of 30,000 ha is fringed by numerous settlements.

In addition to the mangroves that are globally threatened, the KLCRS contains a number of unique animal species that are relevant for conservation. Seventy-six migratory and resident waterbird species, including 21 globally significant species, numbering over 100,000 are found in the KLCRS. The vulnerable West African manatee or sea cow (*Trichechus senegalensis*) and the West African sitatunga (*Tragelaphus spekii*) – a swamp-dwelling antelope which is categorised as least concern species by IUCN – have been spotted in the KLCRS before.

2.0 Project Site

This pilot project is being implemented in Agbatsivi, Salo and Agortoe communities in the Keta Municipality.

3.0 Project Background

Overexploitation of mangroves for fuelwood and mangrove conversion to other landuses has aggravated climate change impacts (coastal erosion and floods) in the KLCRS. Interventions have focused on mangrove restoration and community education on their conservation values. Nonetheless, fish processors and households do not have alternative fuelwood sources. Consequently, mangroves are continuously degraded.

In addition to education and awareness creation, this pilot project seeks to identify and train mangrove harvesters and community groups to establish and sustainably manage woodlots made of fast-growing coppice species (*Senna siamea*) to supply households and fish processors with fuelwood and restore mangroves and their ecosystem services.

4.0 Implemented Activities in First Quarter of the Project

4.1 Inception Meeting

A project inception meeting was organised on August 4th 2018 at Salo in the Keta Municipality. It brought together 19 representatives of women groups, youth groups, chiefs, landowners, Mangrove Growers Association and the media. The meeting clarified roles and managed project results expectation by helping participating communities and target groups to gain a common understanding of the project objectives and planned interventions. The meeting was very interactive and participatory. The participants were very receptive to the project and welcome into force its full implementation.

Review of project plan: The project plan was reviewed. The consensus is that the project is better implemented if the second quarter is used for nursery establishment and seedling production, third quarter for mangrove restoration, and fourth quarter for woodlot establishment.

Communities for project implementation: Salo, Agortoe and Agbatsivi were selected for the implementation of the pilot project.

Site for Woodlot establishment: A landowner from the Salo community offered to provide a parcel of land (at least 1 ha) for the *Senna siamea* woodlot. The general consensus was that a benefit sharing arrangement be implemented to disburse proceeds from the woodlot to ensure that there is fair compensation for everyone's contribution and commitment to the project. At the end of the meeting, the land was inspected and found to be good for the woodlot establishment.

Site for mangrove restoration: Proposed sites for mangrove restoration in Salo, Agortoe and Agbatsivi were inspected after the meeting to understand the extent of degradation and to better appreciate the call for restoration of the area to support ecosystem functions.

Seedling production: The community groups (women and youth) will begin the production of 5,000 mangrove seedlings and 3,000 *Senna siamea* seedlings in the next quarter of the project.

Project Coordinators: Two individuals (Dakpo David Indigo and Adetsi Vincent) volunteered to lead and drive community actions such as coordinating and helping with nursery establishment and maintenance of the woodlot.

Commitment to project: The stakeholders, especially the chiefs present, pledged their full commitment and support for the project; and to ensure that community members are fully involved.

4.2 Awareness creation

There is generally inadequate reporting on environmental issues due to limited number of environmental journalists. As a result, female radio presenter from Volta Star Radio, a regional radio station in Ho, was involved in the inception meeting to enable her experience the issues firsthand, and appreciate the need for publicity. The participants of the inception meeting realised that humans are the cause of environmental problems, and it takes humans to solve them. It is expected that their recognition of this fundamental truth will fuel their enthusiasm to work towards project success.

An audio message in local language on conservation values of mangroves and alternative sources of fuelwood was recorded. Jubilee Radio in Keta has been contracted to play the audio advert for a year. Community Information Centre in Agortoe has also been contracted to play the audio advert for a year. The audio advert has also been shared with stakeholders on Whatsapp.

5.0 Conclusion

- A project inception meeting was organised to meet stakeholders to review the project and their involvement. Major outputs include:
 - Nursery establishment for seedling production in second quarter, mangrove restoration in third quarter, and woodlot establishment in fourth quarter.
 - Site for establishment of *Senna siamea* woodlot in Salo community and degraded areas for mangrove planting in Agortoe and Salo identified.
 - Community groups (women and youth) contracted to raise 5,000 mangrove seedlings and 3,000 *Senna siamea* seedlings.
 - Two individuals from Salo community identified and tasked to coordinate project activities.
- Audio message in the local language on conservation values of mangroves and alternative sources of fuelwood recorded. Jubilee Radio in Keta and Community Information Center in Agortoe contracted to play audio message for a year.
- Stakeholders pledged their support and participation in the project implementation. Stakeholders expect that project will be extended to other communities.



Left: Proposed land for woodlot establishment at Salo in the Keta Municipality. Right: Degraded site for mangrove planting.



Left: Participants of the inception meeting held on August 4, 2018 at Salo in the Keta Municipality. Right: Participants from Salo showing the project team the proposed land for woodlot establishment.