

The Anzali Wetland Communication, Education, Participation, and Awareness (CEPA) Program

ED-13-09

Mohammad S. Allahyari¹, Soroush Marzban², Elham Nazari³, Tarek Ben Hassen⁴, Hamid El Bilali⁵, Sinisa Berjan⁶,*

¹ Department of Agricultural Management, Rasht Branch, Islamic Azad University, Rasht, Iran

² Department of Agricultural Extension & Education, School of Agriculture, Shiraz University, Iran

³ Department of Agricultural Extension, Communication, and Rural Development, University of Zanjan, Iran

⁴ Department of International Affairs, College of Arts and Sciences, Qatar University, Qatar

⁵ International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM-Bari), Valenzano (Bari), Italy

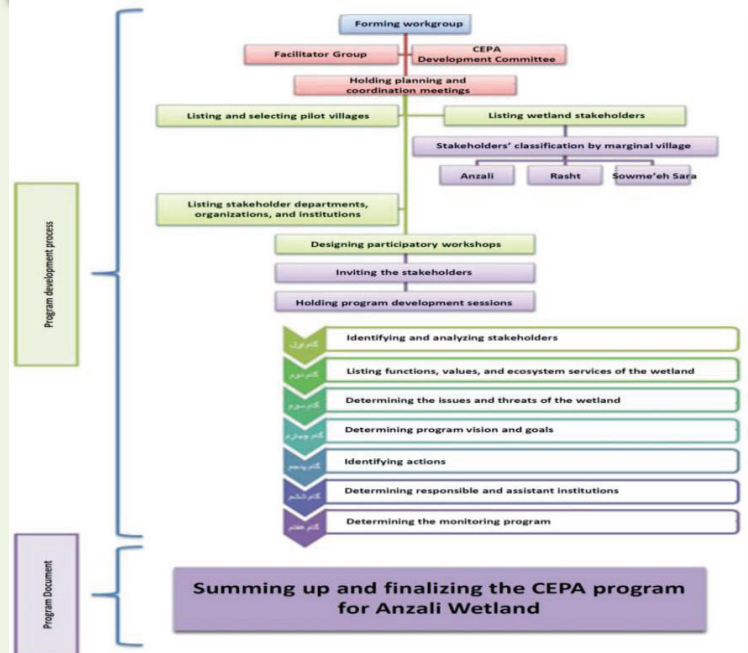
⁶ Department of Agro-economy and Rural Development, Faculty of Agriculture, University of East Sarajevo, East Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina (sinisa.berjan@ues.rs.ba)

Introduction

Wetlands are vital to human wellbeing, inclusive economic growth, and climate mitigation and adaptation. However, some 64% of the world's wetlands have disappeared during the last century. To address this severe loss, the Convention on Wetlands' Programme on Communication, Capacity Building, Education, Participation, and Awareness (CEPA) was approved at COP12 in 2015 through Resolution XII.9. The CEPA project is a nine-year strategy (2016-2024) for the protection and wise use of Ramsar sites. In this respect, the Gilan Department of Environment developed and implemented the CEPA program for international Anzali Wetland.

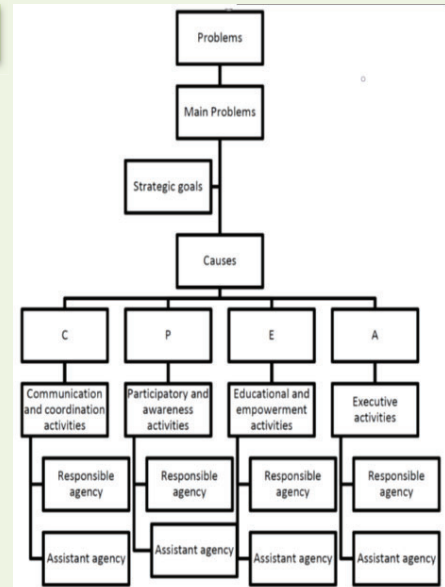
Covering more than 19,000 hectares, the Anzali Wetland is located in Gilan Province, north part of Iran, along the southern coast of the Caspian Sea. This site is one of the nearest wetlands to Ramsar city, which is the origin of the Ramsar Convention. The permanent wetland is surrounded by seasonally flooded marshes, farmlands (mainly paddy fields), and fishponds. The site is of international importance for breeding, staging, and wintering water birds, placing it among the ten most important wetlands in the world. Due to a range of human-induced impacts, the wetland is subjected to many challenges and changes to its ecological character, including fluctuations in sea level, exotic species, the inflow of sewage, wastewater, and solid waste, and eutrophication, all of which contribute to the wetland's early destruction.

Material and methods



Results

- Half of the respondents were aware of the wetland functions and agreed on its critical role in conserving wildlife. In addition, aquaculture and fishing were stated as other main functions of the wetland.
- Domestic and industrial wastewater discharge was mentioned as the most crucial source of pollution and threat for the wetland.
- Gilan Department of Environment, and the Department of Natural Resources and Watershed Management are most responsible.
- According to the importance matrix and influence level, Anzali Wetland Management Committee, Agriculture Organization, the Gilan Department of Environment, and the Department of Natural Resources and Watershed Management were identified as the stakeholders with high importance in protecting the wetland on the one hand and NGOs, local stakeholders (barrage owners, fishers, and hunters). The Organization of Education was identified as the stakeholders with high importance and strong influence in managing and wisely using the wetland.
- Anzali Wetland functions were divided into eight main categories, including ecological, agricultural, fisheries-animal husbandry, education-research, economic, cultural-sports-social, industrial-pharmaceutical, tourism, and political-military.
- 64 challenges and issues of the wetland were identified by content analysis and classified into four main areas: pollution and sedimentation, behavioral misbehavior, public unawareness, and poor intersectional relationships, and implications of construction projects.
- Long-term (10-year) vision of the wetland was drawn as *'a wetland with adequate and clean water and a beautiful perspective along with the preservation of its invaluable international place, sustainable ecosystem, and the possibility of its wise use for future generations in order to enhance the livelihood of local communities living within the boundaries of the wetland.'*



The process of cooperative development of actions based on the problems and their causes in Anzali Wetland

Conclusion

- In total, 30 actions were listed, out of which 37% had communicational nature, 27% had educational nature, 20% had synergic nature, and 16% had public participation nature.
- *"training officials (experts and managers) for changing their attitude towards the participation of local communities, transparency, and accountability to society and stakeholders"*, *"building capacity and increasing social commitment and responsibility (social institutions, public mobilization, profession, and agriculture unions, barrage owners, and local communities) through training and strengthening the existing agencies and forming relevant agencies for the wise use of the wetland"*, and *"clarifying and informing stakeholders about the boundaries of the wetland"* are the most critical measures.