

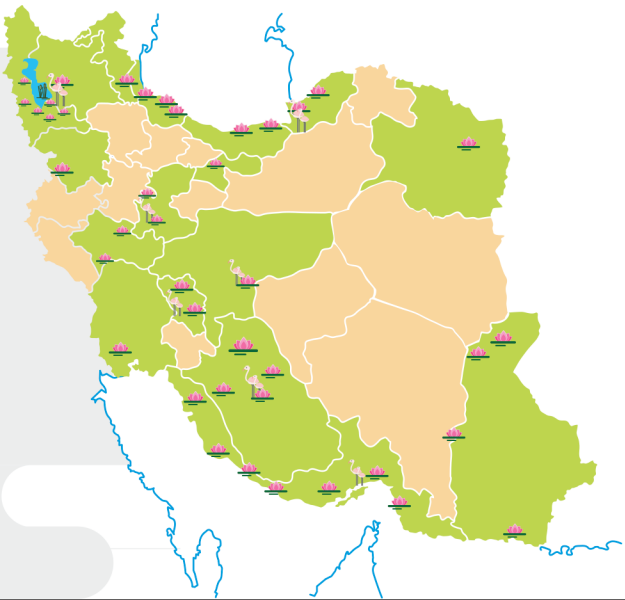
Conservation of Iranian Wetlands Project

saving wetlands
For People, for Nature



Wetland, a Valuable Ecosystem

Wetland habitats are one of the most important natural ecosystems on the earth that have long played a substantial role in development of the surrounding societies. Various benefits of wetlands place them among the most valuable ecosystems of the world in terms of biodiversity conservation. Climate diversity along with topographic and geological specific conditions in the country has led to formation of diverse wetlands, from Mangrove Forests and coral reefs to vast salty lakes in central part of the country as well as the lowland marshes of the Caspian Sea. This situation has made 41 wetland types available in Iran out of a total of 42 all over the world.



Modeling Local Participation in Restoration of Lake Urmia through establishment of sustainable agriculture and biodiversity conservation

Modeling local participation in restoration of Lake Urmia through establishment of sustainable agriculture and biodiversity conservation has been underway since 2014 with the financial support of the Japanese government and with the aim of optimal consumption of water and chemical inputs within the framework of the Urmia Lake Basin integrated management plan and helping to secure water rights of Urmia Lake. This project, has created a suitable environment for establishing sustainable agriculture, livelihood diversification, capacity building, and increasing participation of local societies and executive agencies and biodiversity conservation by engaging farmers and rural women from 183 villages in the Urmia Lake basin.

Establishment of sustainable farming techniques at farm level

The establishment of sustainable agricultural techniques is one of the most important fields of project activity that has been considered since the first phase (2014). This activity is carried out by the Conservation of Iranian Wetlands Project, the Agricultural Jihad Organization, Agricultural Engineering Companies, Monitoring Team, and non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Innovations and technologies has been developed to promote wise use of resources (water and soil) in rural regions of West Azerbaijan and East Azerbaijan provinces. Various techniques such as furrow irrigation, drip irrigation tape, soil nutrition management based on soil test, fertilizer, change of crop pattern, etc., in target villages have been implemented with a collaborative approach, and their effectiveness has been monitored at the farm level.



Livelihood diversification compatible with wetland resources

Livelihood diversification activities have been carried out to empower rural societies, especially rural women, during past phases. Evaluation of the existing situation of rural livelihoods and identification and feasibility of livelihood options are the first actions related to this activity which are carried out in a participatory manner at rural level. Then, in the pilots where necessary, the Micro Credit Funds (MCF) of rural women is formed in collaboration with the local society. Various livelihood groups are supported through these funds. Tailoring, poultry farming, pickles and dairy production, apiculture, and activities such as cactus cultivation in greenhouses are only part of livelihood activities implemented each year with the financial support of the project and cooperation of the Department of Environment, Agricultural Engineering Companies, NGOs and rural women in two provinces of West and East Azerbaijan. These livelihood activities lead to the enhancement of rural household economic capacities and somehow decrease pressure on wetland resources by reducing poverty.

Three-year project 2021-2024

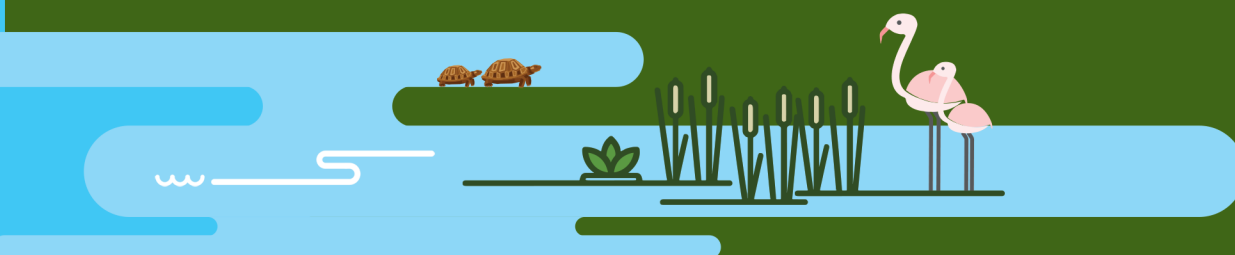
This 3-year project was developed based on the successful experience and achievements of seven years of cooperation with the Japanese government through the United Nations Development Program and the Islamic Republic of Iran for the restoration of Lake Urmia, entitled "Promoting Environmental Management and Sustainable Livelihoods in Lake Urmia and other wetlands". The main partners of Conservation of Iranian Wetlands Project are East Azerbaijan and West Azerbaijan, Fars and Khuzestan provinces. The Japanese government's financial partnership along with the national resources will be allocated to sustain the project's achievements in the Lake Urmia basin and replicate its successful experience in the Shadegan wetland in Khuzestan, and Bakhtegan wetland in Fars province.

Solutions for Wetlands conservation; Ecosystem Approach

During the last half a century, the first conservation approaches were based on nature and environment protection with absolute bans on alteration or utilization. Because of neglecting the human as a component of the ecosystem, it then encountered various obstacles. New conservation approaches such as ecosystem approach focuses particularly on the role of human and his livelihood as a part of the ecosystem, by taking the impacts of development into account and considering the relationship between various components beyond the apparent boundaries of ecosystems.

- Step 1- There is no need for conservation, development is a top priority
- Step 2- Development should be stopped. The mere necessity is conservation
- Step 3- The balance between development and conservation (Ecosystem Approach)

Based on the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Socio-Economic Development Plan of Iran, DoE with cooperation of key stakeholders has been assigned to establish ecosystem management for wetlands conservation and management. In this regard Conservation of Iranian Wetlands Project started to establish this approach for conservation of wetlands in various wetlands of the country.



Cooperation in developing the bylaw of "Regulations on preventing irreparable wetland degradation and pollution" in the Cabinet;

Modeling the reduction of natural disaster impacts on wetlands by developing an innovative drought risk management program for Lake Urmia;

Technical support for the provision of resuscitation protection legislation and management of Iran's wetlands and its approval in the Parliament;

Technical support to determine and allocate wetlands water requirement and boundary marking of 15 important wetlands in the country;

- Support the implementation of the monitoring protocols for integrated management plan of Iran's wetlands and equipping 4 wetlands of the country with online and offline ecosystem monitoring sensors;
- Introducing and institutionalizing participatory and community-based methods based on an ecosystem approach to manage and protect Iran's wetlands;
- Training and capacity building of more than 500 individuals from DoE staff and 4000 individuals from related organizations at national, provincial and local level;
- More than 60 titles of technical tools, guidelines and publications were developed, published and disseminated in order to provide technical support for establishment of wetlands conservation and management systems;
- Increasing public awareness, promoting participation, knowledge, and sharing innovative national and international technologies and experiences;

- Design and implementation of participatory monitoring system in 2 satellite wetlands of Urmia Lake in collaboration with local NGOs;
- Modeling Local Community participation in Wetlands Restoration in through introducing sustainable agriculture and local management in 183 villages around Lake Urmia to save water and provide water to Lake Urmia;
- Modelling local communities' and NGOs' participation through cooperation with more than 30 national and local NGOs to address management and conservation of the wetlands in the country;
- Providing a suitable platform and modeling the participation of NGOs and local societies in the management and conservation of the wetlands in collaboration with more than 30 national and local NGOs;
- Increasing the public awareness on the values and functions of wetlands and the need to protect them through:
 - o Publishing more than 3000 news stories and articles in newspapers, magazines and websites
 - o Participating in more than 300 TV and Radio programs and holding more than 50 festivals and local ceremonies.

Key Achievement of Conservation of Iranian Wetlands Project (CIWP) 2005-2020



by engaging and empowering local communities in the management of wetlands, and by building the capacity of the local offices of the DOE and other stakeholders to manage the threats to wetland itself.

1
At local (site) level

by engaging provincial stakeholders in the integrated management of wetlands to address externally-arising threats, and by raising public awareness.

2
At basin level

by building the capacity of national DoE for the integrated management of Iran's wetland protected areas, and by mainstreaming wetland conservation measures into other sectoral ministries.

3
At national level

Conservation of Iranian Wetlands Project
"Saving Wetland: for People for Nature"

The Conservation of Iranian Wetlands Project has initially started its activities in selected wetlands (Urmia Lake, Parishan Wetland, and Shadegan Wetland) and has tried to expand the experiences gained, to other wetlands of the country by introducing the ecosystem approach and establishing a new management system, and developing legal mechanisms for its implementation. CIWP was a 7 years joint initiative between GEF, UNDP, and the Iranian government (led by the Department of Environment) initiated in 2005, aiming to systematically remove or substantially mitigate the threats to sustain Iran's wetland ecosystems. CIWP started implementing the activities in selected and important wetlands of the country as demonstration sites. The second phase of the project was also implemented in the form of the strategy of 2015-2019. Since getting started, this project has tried to investigate the root causes of wetland degradation in Iran using ecosystem approaches of the Convention on Biodiversity at the following three levels :

2020-2025 Document

The Conservation of Iranian Wetlands Project to continue its path in the future, has developed the 2020-2025 document based on a successful experience, lessons learned, and with the participation of key stakeholders in order to provide the transition to ecosystem management through the implementation of integrated management plans of wetlands, the establishment of administrative structures, strengthening the laws and regulations and capacities associated with wetlands at the national level, raising awareness among those involved and the public about the values of wetlands. The overall goal of this five-year document is to use the ecosystem approach in wetland basins to enhance the economic level and well-being of local societies and to protect wetlands collaboratively, along with identifying and implementing the approach with complementary tools.

Components

Because of the influential role of wetlands in sustainable development, the society, government, and people should consider the importance of wetlands and take actions to preserve and restore wetlands. To implement this five-year document, three components are defined as follow: First component: Better management of Iran's wetlands through mainstreaming the ecosystem approach and applying effective tools; Second component: Management of land, water and biodiversity in wetland basins is sustainable and adapted to climate change, enhancing local community livelihoods and wellbeing; Third component: Increased public awareness, enhanced collaboration, knowledge and sharing of innovation national and international technologies and practices contributed to better condition of Iran's wetlands.

Iran the origin of the Ramsar Convention

The oldest international treaty with the subject of world nature conservation. It began on February 2, 1971, in Ramsar, where the convention has adopted its name from. By emphasizing on the wetlands' role in supplying the needs of human societies, the convention has set wetland biodiversity conservation as its main objective. Since the beginning Iran has played the main role in formation of Ramsar Convention and by the time the convention officially came into force in 1975, Iran was one of the first 7 countries joined the Convention as a contracting party.

The areas of Ramsar Sites registered in Ramsar Convention until April 2021	Number of Ramsar Sites registered in Ramsar Convention until April 2021	Number of Contracting Parties
254,563,791 hectares	2418 wetlands	171 Countries



The number of Iranian wetlands registered in Ramsar Convention	The areas of Iranian wetlands registered in Ramsar Convention	Number of internationally important wetlands in Iran
36wetlands under 25 titles	1,502,265 hectares	84 wetland

Consequences of wetlands loss

- According to the IUCN report more than 65% of the world's wetlands have disappeared since 1900
- 75% of Earth's land areas are degraded; wetlands have been hit hardest, with 87% lost globally in the last 300 years
- The annual economic damage of wetlands loss is estimated \$20 trillion per year
- Many cities of Iran are exposed to the influx of fine dusts due to the degradation of wetlands



Threats to Iranian Wetlands

Wetland degradation has had unpleasant impacts on human being and biodiversity including dust influx, climate change, loss of sustainable water resources and peoples' livelihood.

Despite all the efforts for conservation and management of wetlands, the below threats threaten the Iranian Wetlands:

- Unsustainable development in the wetlands basin;
- Unfavorable governance and mismanagement of water resources;
- Competition of wetlands and other land uses on abstraction of water resources;
- Non-compliance with wetlands environmental rights;
- Land conversion in wetland basin;
- Discharge of domestic, industrial, agriculture and urban waste water into wetlands;
- climate change, consecutive droughts and drought risk mismanagement;
- High sedimentation load of runoff to wetlands;
- Loss of native species by the entrance of invasive species.

A crude estimate of the global value of wetlands is
US \$70 billion a year

Wetland ecosystems cover at least
at least 6% of the world's area

According to estimations made by the World Tourism Organization and the Ramsar Convention, half of all international tourist destinations are wetlands, especially the coastal wetlands which makes an annual revenue of
\$95 billion

Peat lands capture
30% of all carbon stored on the land.This is twice the amount stored in all forests around the world

The coastal wetlands (Mangroves, tidal meadows) capture an average of
0.45 billion tons of carbon dioxide per year

Wetlands are habitat to more than
100,000 known freshwater species

The value of natural ecosystem services has been globally estimated to be around US

\$33 trillion per year among which US
\$4.9 trillion is provided by wetlands

