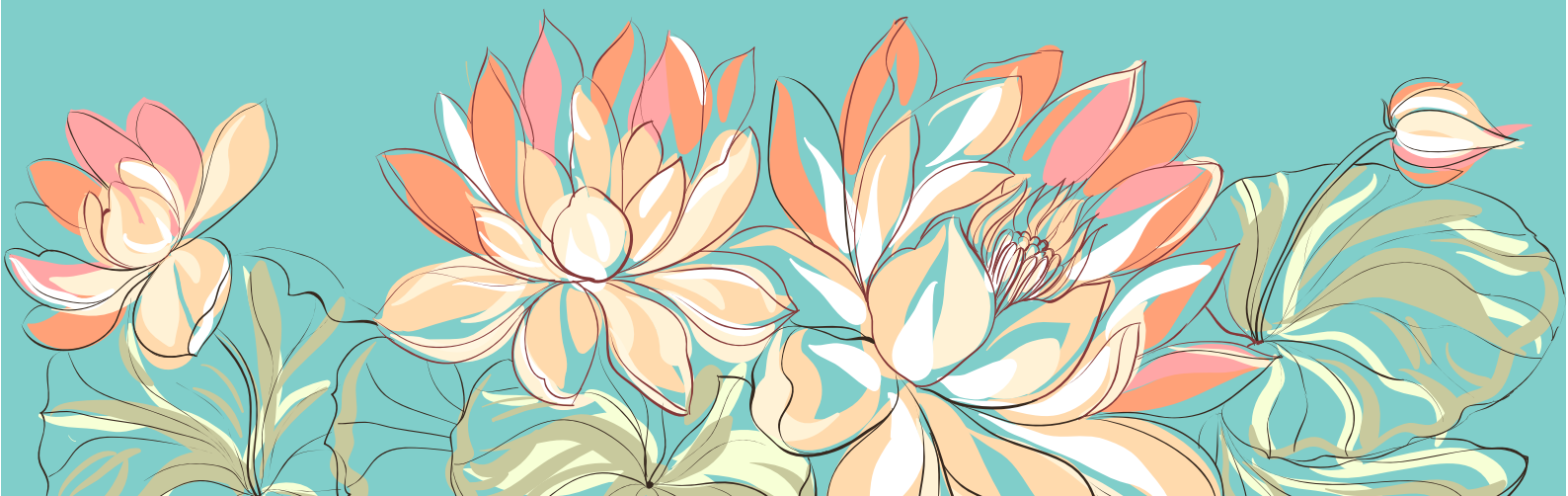


**Concepts, Framework and
Strategies of Communication
Education, Participation and
Awareness Raising Plan**

(CEPA)

**Retrieved from the Ramsar Convention
Documents and the Case Study of China**

December 2019



Introduction

Wetland habitats are among the most important natural ecosystems on earth. They have long played an important role in the development of communities around them. Various benefits provided by wetlands, including groundwater control, moderating the microclimate, provision of livelihood for local communities through fishing, animal husbandry, agriculture, natural water treatment, filtration and absorption of pollutants, ecotourism, etc., places them among the most important and valuable ecosystems of the world, in case of biodiversity and cultural conservation. The fact that several human civilizations were developed around the wetlands also emphasizes their importance. However, wetland degradation has led to devastating consequences for humans and biodiversity, such as dust storms, climate changes, disappearance of sustainable water resources, disappearance of people's livelihood, among others. Lack of awareness among the stakeholders at different levels, from decision makers to local communities, also lack of an integrated approach, insufficient understanding of wetland's natural mechanisms and lack of participation from stakeholders as the key factors associated with the lake destruction, are not to be denied.

The effects of this destructive process on human lives and biodiversity have forced several countries to take actions in regard to wetland conservation and restoration, through applying new management methods and some preventive measures in the process of achieving the sustainable development. Developing a sense of responsibility toward these natural habitats and their conservation is not limited to an independent organization; Every person should be aware of, sensitive about and responsible for their ecosystems. Having and understanding of wetlands and being aware of their values, functions and also the existing threats and dangers they are faced with, should become a basic skill among the residents of each habitat. Therefore, raising the public awareness and sensitizing the residents of each habitat, so that people can play an important role in supporting the decisions, policy-making and also conservation of natural ecosystems, could help its conservation and sometimes restoration. The more internalized and spontaneous this awareness is, the more hope there is for its sustainability. Therefore, all the members of society, regardless of their age, career and educational backgrounds, must have a relative knowledge of their habitat's environmental features and values, many of which have already been lost or are being destroyed.

Considering the above, almost all the organizations and agencies currently active in the development field, recognize the importance and special role of communication, education, capacity building, participation and awareness raising in regard to their projects and programs' success. Through appropriate assessment and planning in this field, these institutions are trying to lay the foundation for the implementation of their programs. Training and informing the stakeholders and raising their awareness, if it results in a change in their beliefs, attitudes and consequently their behaviors, will also be beneficial and improve the situation. Therefore, having an integrated and purposeful plan along with monitoring and evaluation of effectiveness of educational activities and information sharing regarding the conservation and wise use of wetland is a necessity. It should be noted that implementation of non-coherent plans not capable of being monitored and evaluated, may only bring about the ultimate desired results to some of the target groups, but will not benefit from a comprehensive and integrated approach.

Therefore, the Conservation of Iranian Wetlands Project was initiated in 2005 and in cooperation with the Iranian government (Iranian Department of Environment), the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and in recent years, with the support of Japanese government in restoration of Lake Urmia, has performed various coherent activities in CEPA, as part of its agenda. Through preparation of this booklet and also sharing the Ramsar Convention's Program on Communication, Capacity Building, Education, Participation and Awareness Raising (CEPA, 2016–2024), along with the national CEPA program for wetlands in China, this project is now trying to lay the groundwork for the development of national and local CEPA program for Iranian wetlands.

Preparation of this booklet required the efforts of the "Conservation of Iranian Wetlands Project" team and the DOE's Office of the Conservation and Restoration of Wetlands in Iran. I would like to express my appreciation to all these people and also hope that proper use of this collection will contribute to clearing the way for conservation and management of wetland ecosystems in Iran.

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