

# **Gambella Children and Community Development Organization (GCCDO) Report on Awareness Training on Wildlife Crime Protection and Management on May 2018.**

## **I. Summary**

Akobo Woreda is the most vulnerable Woreda in the region which did not benefit from all the development activities which were carried out in the region. It is the only Woreda that is not accessible to road transportation during the dry season except the river transport that takes one day to reach on the river. This woreda is exposed to various challenges and its community migrated to the nearby Woredas because of the long resource conflict story. Since it is located at the borderline of South Sudan, the community across the river moved to the Ethiopia side to hunt and poach animals. There is no question of the crime prevailing against wildlife since there is no government structure presence currently across the river in South Sudan.

However; when Gambella Children and Community Development Organization signed a contract agreement with Horn of African, Regional Environment Center (HoA-REC) on a project that aimed to combat wildlife crime around Gambella National Park. This project was implemented in collaboration with Gambella National Regional Park Office and Gambella Regional Culture and Tourism Bureau.

Hence Gambella Children and Community Development Organization conducted community awareness dialogue on wildlife crime prevention in Akobo Woreda from May 07-8, 2018 at Kan-kan Rehabilitation point. The community awareness dialogue was conducted to 53 participants including 6 members from the Lou Nuer Community who resided at Kan-kan to graze their cattle herds. The Lou-Nuer who lived at this point, are friendly to the Akobo community and have randomly agreed to live in peace with one another.

## **II. Objective of the program**

The major purpose of the project is to increase and catalyze the community's awareness to effectively prevent and combat Wildlife Crime around National Park in Gambella Regional State. This objective was to fulfill the chief purpose of the Ethiopian Federal Wildlife Conservation Authority and HoA-WLCP in the Country. Based on this objective, the organization has the intention to increase and enhance the awareness of the crime prevention in all Woredas of Gambella Regional State.

However, due to the limited resources, we are only focusing on the selected woredas that seem to repeatedly commit crime against wildlife due to the nature of the people and lack of awareness. Hence the purpose of this program is to enhance and empower the community's

awareness to effectively prevent and combat wildlife crime around Akobo Woreda so that they know the benefit of conserving wildlife in the area.

### **2.1 Specific Objectives of the project**

The specific objective of the project included:

- To prevent illegal Tran-boundary activities on wildlife products such as ivory, hide and alike.
- To combat illegal trade that is being performed on wildlife products by the local people in Gambella.
- To prevent Wildlife poaching and hunting activity carried by the local community around national park.
- Work to reduce human wildlife conflict by introducing the values wild animal to economics status of the target community.
- Ecologically values wild animals such as ecological balance and effect on climatic change.

### **III. Participants of the community awareness.**

The participants of the community dialogue were selected from all Akobo Kebeles and the Lou-Nuer who temporarily had their cattle camps around Akobo territory and engaged in wildlife crime. The total 53 participants included delegates from police, youth and the entire Kebeles of Akobo Woreda. Among the participants, 6 of them were invited from Lou-Nuer community living at Kan-kan temporarily cattle camp. Woreda representatives who were supposed to be the concern people participated in the meeting with the consensus from the office of Culture and Tourism at Akobo Woreda. There were more men and few women who happened to attend the community dialogue. The reason for this is that women do not hunt as the culture

### **IV. Facilitation and the content of the program.**

The program was facilitated by the Woredas Cultural and Tourism Officer name Mr. Thor Chuol and the two delegates from Gambella Children and Community Development Organization (GCCDO). The content of the program included:

- The community awareness on wildlife crime prevention.
- The economic and social benefit of wildlife prevention at Akobo.
- The historical and educational benefit of wildlife conservation in the region.
- Combat on illegal trade which the community performed on wildlife products.

The community was briefed on the contents of the awareness on wildlife prevention and the possibility to combat the chronic problem existing in the area. According to the discussion held at Kan-kan rehabilitation center, the following participants commented on the dialogue.

1. **Ato: Thor Chuol**, the head of the woredas Culture and Tourism head claimed that wildlife are part and parcel of God's creation act that need protection and preservation. He said that the community in Akobo has to understand the importance of wildlife crime prevention considering them as creating beings.
2. **Rev. Simon Deng Lual**, one of the facilitator talked about the importance and the role of the community's leaders to protect and preserve wildlife at Akobo. He said that there were thousands of animals around Akobo. For him, these different animals do not exist as they are pushed out by the community.
3. **Ding Loar**, one of the police officer acknowledged the importance of wildlife presence in the area. He said that wildlife fosters the development of the region and therefore, he encouraged the participants to begin thinking of protection wildlife in the area.
4. **Peter Buom**, a member of the community at Kan-kan said that the presence of wildlife in the area contributed to the beauties of environment. He said that when a hunter is lost in the jangle, the smell of the animals in the forest indicates that the village is near. He concluded that animal brings life to the community. However, for him, mismanaging the animals, enable them to escape from the Nuer Community.
5. **Peter Gatkuoth**, a member form Kan-kan community pointed out that animals are like human beings that have to be protected and care for economic reason and educational value for the future generations.

#### V. **Ways for word/ Comments from the Participants**

The participants acknowledged the importance of wildlife crime prevention and agreed that to follow the guiding principles to prevent wildlife crime in the area.

- They agreed to form committee who will share information to the woreda's Culture and Tourism Office regarding crime against animals.
- They also agreed that they report any crime to polices
- They reached consensus that they will aware the rest of the community members who have not attended the meeting.
- They suggested to continue dialogue on crime against wildlife to the South Sudan community across the river and recommended the intervention of Gambella Children and Community Development Organization.
- They recommended that the local government at Akobo should establish rule of laws to prevent crime against animals.
- They recommended to hand any person who kills animal should be handed to the local police at Akobo Woreda.

- They recommended the continuous awareness creation to more people in the community including people from Lou-Nuer who live with them.

**VI. Conclusion and Recommendations.**

The facilitators that were delegated to conduct community awareness dialogue at Akobo observed the following points.

- The eagerness of the community to protect wildlife in the area was very high.
- Committed to engage in wildlife prevention and protection.
- There was serious lack of awareness among the community.
- The local government in the area does not seem to be concerned without any assistance from the external body.

Hence the facilitators were fascinated with commitment and willingness of the people to continue making dialogues within the respective Kebeles. The willingness to address the dialogue and carry out to other was a sign of hope that the community at Akobo Woreda would be good examples of taking lead to prevent crime against wildlife. This lifted the interest of the facilitators to continue to empower the community on the subject matter.

**VII. Pictures from Akobo Community Awareness dialogue**



animals in the bush at Kan-kan rehabilitation center.