

Final Evaluation Report

Your Details	
Full Name	Mebrat Teklemariam Gebrekidan
Project Title	Enhancing Local Community-Based Conservation: An effective strategy to conserve Lesser Flamingo habitat in Chelekleka wetland in Bishoftu, Ethiopia
Application ID	43103-2
Date of this Report	23/07/2025

1. Indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.

Objective	Not achieved	Partially achieved	Fully achieved	Comments
To demarcate the boundary of the wetland and identify the conservation challenges and opportunities of the Lesser Flamingo and Chelekleka wetland			✓	<p>The boundary demarcation and identification of challenges and opportunities were completed. The manuscript was submitted to a peer-reviewed journal and is currently under review.</p> <p>180 households were surveyed and sample composition of the survey consisted of 10% of households from each respective Kebeles; and 50, 63 and 67 households were taken from Kebele 1, Kebele 2 and Kebele 3, respectively. The respondents were represented from all socio-economic and educational levels.</p> <p>Four focus group discussions were conducted; each of them consisted of 8 participants and lasted an average of 75 minutes.</p>
To prepare a designation and management plan proposal for the proposed Chelekleka community-based conservation area.			✓	The intended proposal has been prepared and is currently under review.

To discuss with relevant stakeholders and legislators on the conservation of the Chelekleka wetland and its biodiversity			✓	<p>Three discussion programmes were held with the representatives of local community, farm and hotel investors on the edge of Chelekleka wetland and relevant governmental and non-governmental institutions at local and national levels.</p> <p>Following the discussions participants were;</p> <p>1) aware of the current situation such as the;</p> <p>a) conservation prospects and threats of Lesser flamingo and Chelekleka wetland</p> <p>b) ways to address those gaps and practice those prospects</p> <p>c) development and promotion of ecotourism practices and community-based strategies for conservation of bird biodiversity and the wetland.</p> <p>d) drawbacks of transforming Chelekleka wetland to an artificial lake</p> <p>2) reach at a consensus to contribute for their role for the sustainability of the wetland and its biodiversity</p>
To conduct Lesser Flamingo censuses				<p>A four months censuses (Dec. 2024 to Mar. 2025) were completed.</p> <p>A maximum 356 individuals with an average of 274 ± 51 of Lesser flamingo were recorded.</p>

				A manuscript is currently under review.
To enhance awareness among local stakeholders on the sustainable conservation of the species and the wetland		✓		<p>Community outreach activities were applied, and local people were educated.</p> <p>A total of 125 attendees were participated during the three awareness enhancement meetings.</p> <p>The awareness creation programs proposed through the radio talk shows and school level debate programmes among the Wildlife protection club members on the restoration practices (artificial vs community-based conservation) of Chelekleka wetland were not conducted</p>

2. Describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

- a) Chelekleka Wetland has several prospects that can help to attain sustainable conservation action of the wetland and its biodiversity. However, it is highly threatened by several challenges, mainly due to anthropogenic factors.

Table 1: Challenges and opportunities for the sustainable conservation of the Chelekleka wetland and its biodiversity

Chelekleka Wetland's Conservation	
Threats	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deforestation: at the upper catchment of the wetland (Yerer Mountain) and in its fringe Sedimentation and Pollution Water Abstraction and Expansion of Agricultural Practices Eutrophication and Weed encroachment Unplanned Settlements and Urbanization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducive physical and chemical characteristics of the wetland The presence of high biodiversity Availability of diverse habitats High Tourist Destination Areas in Bishoftu town Readiness of appropriate national principles, proclamations, policies, and regulations

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illegal harvesting • Channelling Bishoftu City runoff and disconnections • Lack of law enforcement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of international conventions and treaties for bird and wetland conservation in which Ethiopia is a signatory |
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- b) The number of Lesser flamingo (356 individuals) and the duration of their visit (only December) to Chelekleka wetland is by far less than the records of our previous project.
- c) There is increased knowledge on the importance of community-based conservation areas at the local community and local governmental organization levels. They fully supported the designation of the Chelekleka wetland as a community-based conservation area.

3. Explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled.

A main unforeseen problem was the difficulty in conducting some of the community outreach activities as per the schedule due to the displacement of residents and uncertainty among others as a result of changes in the master plan and the reconstruction of Bishoftu town. The delayed planned activities were rescheduled for the following weeks/months. Inappropriately, the recent master plan also considered transforming Chelekleka wetland into an artificial lake (political decision), which didn't fulfill the environmental, social, and economic pillars of sustainability. The project team undertook additional tasks to halt the pre-construction activities on the wetland and advocate for the drawbacks of the unsustainable approach, which was cascaded from the top management of the region. The tasks include preparing and submitting a detailed report to and discussing with respective governmental officials (politicians), and creating a team to influence the temporarily paused transformation of the wetland into an artificial lake.

The value of Ethiopia's currency has fallen sharply by about 150% against the pound sterling after the government relaxed currency restrictions starting from July 2024. This worsens the inflation in Ethiopia, in which the project's actual amount spent was by far greater than the proposed budget. This difficulty was addressed by diverting some budgets to compensate for the high-priority activities of the project.

4. Describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefitted from the project.

This project was fully involved in the Local communities in several activities through their representatives, such as elders, religious leaders, farmers, and school children. They participated in providing primary data, conservation education meetings, and discussions to raise awareness about the conservation prospects and threats of the species and the wetland, designating the wetland as a community-based conservation area, and conserving its biodiversity. They also get involved in a conservation education campaign to stop the higher officials' plan to transform the wetland into an

artificial lake. The field assistant from the local community participated in the field surveys, Lesser flamingo censuses, and social research of the project. Generally, local communities benefited from discussion, education, and participation in the project activities. The field assistant benefited from an allowance based on her participation in the field work. In addition, she also boosted her experiences in research techniques such as field data collection and bird identification, and counting skills that could help her to get involved in further projects and conservation activities. The schools' Wildlife Protection Clubs also benefited from the motivational activities and support on the stationery and trash cans. We only accomplished the motivation and support activities in three schools due to the displacements as a result of the reconstruction of Bishoftu town.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

The project team plans to continue with this project to permanently halt the unsustainable plan of the higher officials on the wetland through further advocacy for the reliability of designation of the wetland as Community-based conservation area, predict the impact of climate change on Lesser Flamingo population and the wetland land use land cover changes, establish means to apply the prospects and mitigate the threats of Lesser Flamingo, the wetland and its biodiversity, and help threatened species to survive.

6. How do you plan to share the results of your work with others?

The project findings will be shared by publishing two articles in peer-reviewed journals. Additionally, we plan to share data and information of this project with the IUCN SSC Flamingo Specialist Group and in various social media, e.g., ResearchGate, X, LinkedIn. The project lead will also present the findings in March 2026 and April 2026 during the Annual Research and Innovation Conference of Ethiopian Biological Society and Wolkite University, respectively. The project findings will also be shared as a comprehensive document detailing the process and approaches of designating the wetland as a Community-based conservation area, indicating the drawbacks of transforming it to an artificial lake, including the challenges and gaps to higher officials of the region. Due to her contribution from the previous projects, the project lead has received an invitation to get involved as a member of Flamingo Specialist Group and her membership approval is ongoing.

7. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?

The most important step is to continue with the project to make sure that the restoration approach of the Chelekleka wetland fully considers the environmental, social, and economic pillars of sustainability. In addition, establish regular field and social surveys to monitor the conservation challenges and opportunities to the wetland and its biodiversity and populations of threatened species, including Lesser Flamingos. Also, ensuring the full engagement and continued capacity building of the local community members on sustainable wetland conservation and the management of ecotourism infrastructures and best practices within the communities to support a sustainable community-led wetland conservation at

Bishoftu town. Collaboration with the relevant Directorates of Oromia Regional State, Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation, Ethiopian Biodiversity Institute, and Ethiopian Wildlife and Nature History Society to complement conservation efforts and sustain the conservation of the wetland and its biodiversity.

8. Did you use The Rufford Foundation logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the Foundation receive any publicity during the course of your work?

The Rufford Foundation was acknowledged in all reports, meetings, discussions, and communications we made and publications from the previous project (such as <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gecco.2024.e03018> and <https://doi.org/10.1177/19400829251314991>). The Rufford Foundation logo was used during every stakeholder and community outreach activity of our project and received publicity.

9. Provide a full list of all the members of your team and their role in the project.

Mebrat Teklemariam Gebrekidan: The project lead, who spearheaded the monitoring and supervision of the project activities from the design, implementation, and final reporting. Designed and led the Lesser Flamingo census, questionnaire preparation, demarcation of the wetland, preparation of the designation and management plan proposal for the proposed Chelekлека community-based conservation area, and community outreach programs.

Abera Aboset Bedasa: Designed and conducted mobilization programs and support for the Wildlife protection clubs in the schools surrounding the project site. Supported questionnaire preparation and conducted direct observations to identify the challenges and opportunities of Chelekлека wetland and led awareness meetings with the community and stakeholders.

Melese Moareta Shrbeka: Designed the training materials on ecotourism practices and services, supported the design of the questionnaires on identification of conservation threats and opportunities of Chelekлека wetland and Lesser Flamingo, and determination of the local community attitudes and perceptions on designating the wetland as a community-based conservation area, and led the training of the community members on ecotourism practices and services.

10. Any other comments?

We are thankful to the Rufford Foundation for funding this project, IDEA WILD for supporting research equipment, and Wolkite University for the stationery materials and research equipment support. Bishoftu City administration and Bishoftu City Environment, Forest, and Climate Change Authority are also greatly acknowledged for issuing the necessary permits to undertake the project.

ANNEX – Financial Report

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