

Biodiversity Challenge Funds Projects Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus Half Year Report

Note: If there is any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website, please ensure you clearly highlight this.

Submission Deadline: 31st October 2023

Project reference	IWTEX002
Project title	Empowering communities and rangers for protection of Asia's mountain wildlife
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Mongolia
Lead partner	The International Snow Leopard Trust
Partner(s)	Snow Leopard Foundation Kyrgyzstan; Snow Leopard Foundation (Pakistan); Snow Leopard Conservation Foundation (Mongolia)
Project leader	Charudutt Mishra
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR1 – October 31, 2023
Project website/blog/social media	n/a

Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) against the agreed project implementation timetable (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up to end September).

Although we are not looking for specific reporting against your indicators, please use this opportunity to consider the appropriateness of your M&E systems (are your indicators still relevant, can you report against any Standard Indicators, do your assumptions still hold true?). The guidance can be found on the resources page of the relevant fund website.

The project is designed to achieve four overarching outcomes:

1. The Citizen-Ranger Wildlife Protection Program (CRWPP) is a national program covering all snow leopard regions of Mongolia and Pakistan and is strengthened in Kyrgyzstan;
2. Across the snow leopard landscapes of Mongolia, Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan, rangers' capacities built through effective training in supporting law enforcement, crime scene investigation and first aid, and through information resources on CRWPP;
3. By 2025, Communication strategy to promote CRWPP carefully developed using local context, and deployed across the three countries;
4. Three IWT-affected local communities in each country (Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia and Pakistan) have access to contextually appropriate conflict management and livelihood initiatives.

The International Snow Leopard Trust (SLT) is working with its regional partner organizations, the Snow Leopard Foundation Kyrgyzstan (SLFK), the Snow Leopard Foundation in Pakistan (SLF), and the Snow Leopard Conservation Foundation in Mongolia (SLCF), to achieve the designed outcomes in each of the target countries. SLT and its partners have made good progress on the project as expected and described as follows.

Toward Outcome 1, SLF has established a National Committee for CRWPP in Pakistan, with its first meeting scheduled for the end of October to collaboratively determine the criteria for nomination and evaluation of wildlife rangers for CRWPP rewards. In Mongolia, SLCF has engaged with relevant government and community stakeholders to establish its CRWPP committee and is currently working to establish the constituent members of the committee. Although progress has been slower than in Pakistan, the team has met with government officials at the local and national government level, making progress toward formal authorization of the program. The SLCF team found that Mongolian government agencies were less equipped to process the proposed ranger training and CRWPP program than the other national teams. However, after multiple meetings with ministry level officials, including one-on-one meetings with SLT's Science and Conservation Director, on Sept. 6, the team has now consolidated its governmental relationship through Mr. Enkhbat Altangerel, the Director of Environment and Natural Resource Management Department who will be playing the role of the focal point from the Ministry's side for this project. Formal approval of the ranger program and establishment of the CRWPP program is expected to be achieved in a meeting scheduled with Mr. Altangerel in November. Although Mongolia is behind schedule in the implementation plan, such delay is reflective of the team's prioritisation of developing sound, effective relationships, as opposed to rushing the project. The SLCF team was able to navigate ambiguity and are now on track to maintain the long-term implementation timeline for the project. In Kyrgyzstan, SLFK entered the project with a head start, having previously established a CRWPP committee, which remains engaged in rewarding wildlife rangers for their work protecting snow leopards throughout Kyrgyzstan.

Each of the partner organization has developed pamphlets and other resource materials related to the CRWPP in their respective countries. In Pakistan, these materials will be approved by the CRWPP committee at their upcoming meeting and then translated, as necessary, and distributed through various mediums and channels available to the constituent parties. In Mongolia, SLCF has introduced the CRWPP program through its newsletter, and has printed 800 copies of the CRWPP related newsletter, of which 400 have already been distributed through administrative Protected Areas (PAs), communities, and provincial and sum governmental administrations. SLFK has an established network of channels for distributing brochures both in print to relevant stakeholders and digitally through the team's social media accounts.

As planned, SLT has established a trust fund for the benefit of the respective CRWPPs with GBP 200,000 in funding from the project. The fund will establish an annual draw to support the rewards component of the CRWPP program according to program needs and an analysis and forecasting of the funds expected performance.

Under Outcome 2, the vast majority of the work scheduled will be completed later in the project, but teams have made progress on those preliminary activities as planned in the grant proposal. Both Pakistan and Mongolia met with relevant government agencies to discuss the upcoming ranger-training program and each respective role therein. The teams have begun discussing both the need and potential process/criteria for selecting ranger training candidates. In Pakistan, the ranger selection process is expected to be formalized at the first meeting of the established National Committee, currently scheduled to convene in November. In Mongolia, formal government authorization for the CRWPP and ranger training programs is expected to be obtained in November, as the team has successfully laid the groundwork with the appropriate stakeholders, i.e. the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, local governments, and community leaders. Each of these events is expected to occur in November.

SLT successfully put out a Request for Proposal for a professional trainer to train the new ranger trainers and is now engaged with Brian Petrar, who brings an abundance of relevant experience in wildlife ranger training, including in Kyrgyzstan, through his earlier contractual relationship with INTERPOL. Mr. Petrar will begin the first training in the spring of 2024.

Under Outcome 3, the teams have made significant progress on project activities. Both the Pakistan and Mongolian teams have begun developing educational materials designed to support ranger teams once trained and formed. In Pakistan, the SLF is already working with the relevant government stakeholders to inform these materials. In Mongolia, the team has developed a brochure of the same topical material, to be translated as necessary.

Under Outcome 4, the teams have undertaken significant community engagement activities to identify and address community needs within the scope of the project. For many of the activities under Outcome 4, the team has primarily been engaged in preparatory and preliminary work, such as relationship-building and stakeholder buy-in, that has put each of the teams in position to effectively meet the downstream implementation and spending timelines. In Pakistan, SLF has held multiple meetings with community leaders and representatives from their three target communities: Gurez, Ghamot, and Bagrote. The team has conducted Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities Threats (SWOT) analyses with each of the communities. The team also undertook economic, attitudinal, and behavioural intent household surveys with 48 individuals from the three communities. The team is in the process of analysing the results to best inform the community-based conservation initiatives that will meet the needs of the communities. SLF has also begun working to establish off-season vegetable production in Bagrote, where they have already begun working with vendors to procure the necessary materials and the community to determine the beneficiaries. Work is expected to begin on construction of the greenhouse structures in November. The team has also begun working with Gurez for the development of apicultural initiatives to support the local economy there. Between 20 and 25 people will be trained in apiculture, and provided with the equipment and material (especially, boxes and beekeeping kits). The first training is expected in early November. The team has also selected 30 total trainees from the target communities to attend a four-week livestock vaccination training in Islamabad in December. At that time, the SLF staff will utilize the benefit of being in the same location to also undertake their PARTNERS principles training, as well as training in SLT's safeguarding policy.

In Kyrgyzstan, SLFK is working with communities in Temir-Kanat, Hoshoi, and Kyzyl-Dobo. In each of these communities, the team undertook the same SWOT analyses and household surveys gathered by the SLF team in Pakistan. SLFK is currently, similar to the SLF team, analysing the results of these surveys and analyses to best inform downstream initiatives. Included in that analysis, the team is identifying the best beneficiaries for English language training for women responsible for guesthouses in their community. The SLFK team has already completed their PARTNERS principles training, as well as their safeguarding policy training

The SLCF team has also completed their SWOT analysis and household surveys with their target communities in Bayan-bor, Ulziit, and Dol. Similar to the Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan teams, SLCF is now analysing this information to best inform their community-based conservation initiatives as the project progresses. The team has established local government support for the establishment of a livestock insurance program, and with that support, will now begin the process of establishing said program for the benefit of each of the targeted pastoral communities.

2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

Both the Pakistan and Mongolia teams encountered slower, more deliberate processes in gaining formal authorization for the ranger training and CRWPP programs from their respective governments than was initially scheduled into the implementation timeline (this was especially true for the Mongolian team). However, both teams still expect to meet the long-term implementation timelines, and neither foresees any shifting of activities or funding between project years.

In Pakistan, SLF and their community partners were unable to find species of honeybee endemic to the region for sale any sooner than spring of 2024. This availability will not affect the timetable for apicultural training or procurement of the other equipment necessary for the activity.

3. Have any of these issues been discussed with NIRAS and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Discussed with NIRAS:	No
Formal Change Request submitted:	No
Received confirmation of change acceptance	No
Change request reference if known:	

4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2023 – 30 September 2023)

Actual spend: ██████████

4b. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g. more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this financial year (ending 31 March 2024)?

Yes No Estimated underspend: £

4c. If yes, then you need to consider your project budget needs carefully. Please remember that any funds agreed for this financial year are only available to the project in this financial year.

If you anticipate a significant underspend because of justifiable changes within the project, please submit a re-budget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a re-budget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes if necessary. Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.

NB: if you expect an underspend, do not claim anything more than you expect to spend this financial year.

5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCF management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

SLT had difficulty obtaining formal approval for use of the IWTCF logo on its Request for Proposal (RFP) for a wildlife ranger trainer. This delayed posting of the RFP while the SLT team waited for approval.

If you are a new project and you received feedback comments that requested a response, or if your Annual Report Review asked you to provide a response with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.

All new projects (excluding Darwin Plus Fellowships and IWT Challenge Fund Evidence projects) should submit their Risk Register with this report if they have not already done so.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also be raised with NIRAS through a Change Request. **Please DO NOT send these in the same email.****

Please send your **completed report by email** to BCF-Reports@niras.com. The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number, followed by the specific fund in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: 29-001 Darwin Initiative Half Year Report**