



## First Steering Committee Meeting of GSLEP



The Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program's process is led by a high-level Steering Committee, which includes the environment ministers of all snow leopard range countries. The inaugural meeting was held on the 19th and 20th of March 2015 in Koi Tash village in the Tien-Shan Mountains, near Bishkek.

The meeting was presided by the First Vice Prime Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic, Mr. Taiyrbek Sarpashev, and was attended by senior delegates from Afghanistan, Bhutan, China, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia and Tajikistan. Also in attendance were organizations such as

the GEF, NABU, Snow Leopard Trust, UNDP, World Wildlife Fund.

After two days of rich discussion, the snow leopard range countries and partner organizations formally adopted a resolution establishing the Steering Committee, its membership, roles, and operational guidelines. The Steering committee unanimously elected the Honorable Mr. Mushahidullah Khan, Minister of Climate Change from Pakistan, as the Chair, and Mr. Sabir Atadjanov, Director of the State Agency for Environmental Protection and Forestry under the Government of the Kyrgyz Re-

public, as its co-chair for the next two years.

Recognizing the continuing support provided by Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, the range countries agreed to permanently locate the GSLEP Secretariat in Bishkek.

During the meeting, presentations were made by range country representatives about the progress of the GSLEP program. Countries shared details about Global Environment Facility (GEF) STAR 6 funding allocations for the implementation of the National Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Priorities (NSLEPs). Discussions were also held about the development of a regional grant to support Global Support Components of the GSLEP program, including trans-boundary cooperation, measures against illegal hunting and poaching, and capacity building. The issue of diversifying funding sources was also discussed, with emphasis on bringing corporations and industries on board.

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## Country updates

### Afghanistan



Awareness program in a remote village in Afghanistan



Training of international troops on illegal trade in wildlife products

Afghanistan has identified the Wakhan snow leopard landscape to be secured under the GSLEP program. Since 2009, more than 5,000 snow leopard pictures have been taken there on camera traps. These pictures are currently being analyzed and should yield a population estimate for the Wakhan by the end of 2015. Between 2012 and 2014, two male and two female snow leopards were fitted with GPS collars in the Hindu Kush part of the Wakhan landscape. Four more animals are planned to be collared in the year 2015 to yield additional infor-

mation on the ecology and predation behavior of snow leopards in Afghanistan. A basic habitat model was developed with the help of satellite data that will be further refined this summer. Baseline abundance surveys for urial and ibex were conducted in April and May 2015 to determine the population trends of the key snow leopard prey species in the long term.

Afghanistan is using 55 community rangers to monitor illegal activities, especially pertaining to poaching and illegal trafficking across the Wakhan landscape. A small

team of snow leopard specialists are currently being trained in snow leopard capture and camera trapping techniques.

As part of the conservation initiative, 15 predator-proof corrals were constructed in 2014 in remote pasturelands across Wakhan in order to reduce the predation of livestock by snow leopards and thereby lower the incidences of retribution killing of the cats. In 2015, the work continues, but with an emphasis on upgrading existing household corrals to make them totally predator proof.

### Bhutan

#### First ever Nationwide Snow Leopard (*Panthera uncia*) Survey in Bhutan

Seeking to develop baseline data on key species in the country, Bhutan leads the way in conducting a Nationwide Snow Leopard Survey. The population estimates conducted in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century were based on sign surveys and estimated the population between 100 and 200 (NSLEPP, 2013). Combined with the National Snow Leopard Ecosystem Protection Priority and the unavailability of baseline data on the species, this survey

was initiated by the Wildlife Conservation Division, Department of Forest and Parks Services, Ministry of Agriculture and Forests in August 2014. The survey is planned in two phases, with phase one focusing on sign surveys and main prey base surveys. This phase commenced in August 2014 and is expected to be completed by the end of June 2015. The second phase will begin in July 2015 and end in June 2016. The survey will reveal population

data for this species and its main prey base, blue sheep *Pseudois nayaur*. By June 2016, the department plans to come up with a landscape-level conservation management plan to guide snow leopard conservation in Bhutan. Phase one is supported by the Royal Government of Bhutan, and co-financed by the APL2-IDA World Bank, WWF Bhutan Program Office, KLCDI-ICIMOD. Funds for phase two are still currently being sourced.



Snow leopard Day celebrations at Jigme Khesar Strict Nature Reserve, Haa

## Country updates

### Celebrating the “International Snow Leopard’s Day” in Bhutan

On November 4th, Bhutan observed its first International Snow Leopard Day. Celebrations took place at the Jigme Khesar Strict Nature Reserve, Haa. The theme for 2014’s celebration was “conserving snow leopards to secure a healthy mountain ecosystem”, and for a country like Bhutan that is heavily reliant on hydropower generation, conserving the major water towers of the mountains is crucial. Essentially, saving this flagship species ensures a stable mountain ecosystem. The celebrations were co-organized by the Department of Forest and Park Services and Haa Dzongkhag administration. Honorable Speaker of the National Assembly, Lyonpo Jigme Zangpo graced the celebrations as Chief Guest. Other guests included representatives from BTFEC, WWF Bhutan Program, NRDCL, ICS, NRED, SFED, BWS, SWS & Paro division, leaders of local government and Gewog administration. School principals and heads of autonomous agencies based in Haa sector heads from Haa Dzongkhag, National Centre

for Riverine and Lake Fisheries were also in attendance. Additionally, teachers and students from Katso Lower Secondary School, Tshapey Lower Secondary School and Chundu Middle Secondary School also participated in the celebration. The event was attended by more than 500 audiences.

The festivities commenced with hoisting the national flag, singing the national anthem followed by a marching ceremony. Dasho Dzongdag introduced the Honorable Speaker, who highlighted the importance of celebrating the day. He emphasized how important it is to conserve the rich biodiversity Bhutan possesses. The Chief Guest also shared the information about conservation efforts being put forth by our visionary leaders and how each citizen is entrusted to ensure that what we have today is handed over to future generations intact. The days program included an educative quiz competition among three schools in attendance (Katso Lower Secondary School, Tshapey Lower Secondary

School and Chundu Middle Secondary School), a skit performance by theatre artists and many entertaining Bhutanese dances by school children and Dzongkhag dancers. The day ended with a vote of thanks by the Thrizin, Haa Dzongkhag and Chief Forestry Officer, Jigme Khesar Strict Nature Reserve followed by tashi labey.

The event also formally inducted the renaming of Toorsa Strict Nature Reserve to “Jigme Khesar Strict Nature Reserve”, in appreciation of the strong commitment of Druk Gyalpo to the conservation sector. The event was financially supported by WWF Bhutan Programme through the “Eco Life Project”- Sustaining Ecosystem for Livelihood, and the project is coordinated by Wildlife Conservation Division, Department of Forests and Parks Services.



Honorable Speaker of the National Assembly of Bhutan, visiting the tent with artwork on snow leopard conservation

SEVERAL  
ACTIVITIES WERE  
UNDERTAKEN BY  
RANGE  
COUNTRIES AS  
PART OF THE  
GSLEP PROGRAM



Awareness program at Laya village in Jigme Dorje National Park

## Country updates

### Kyrgyzstan



On-going educational activity in a school in Bishkek

SEVERAL MEETINGS AND EVENTS MARKED THE YEAR'S ACTIVITIES IN KYRGYZSTAN

Several research and conservation initiatives are being implemented in Kyrgyzstan toward achieving the goals of GSLEP program. This kind of collaboration between government agencies and non-government agencies can be replicated for future conservation and research programs.

The operations of the Global Secretariat in Bishkek are in full swing after the steering committee met, and unanimously agreed on the location, in March 2015. Before this, the Secretariat had been involved in organizing several events. These included the technical workshop at Lake Issyk kul in June 2014, where the snow leopard landscapes were identified, the briefing meeting at the Climate Change CoP in Lima, Peru, where the range countries were briefed about the progress up until then, and Snow Leopard Day on October 23, when celebrations took place at schools, colleges and public gatherings.

On October 23, 2014 a flash mob was organized with the support of the GSLEP Secretariat, State Agency for Envi-

ronmental Protection and Forestry under the Government of Kyrgyz Republic, the American University of Central Asia and NABU. More than 100 students from the AUCA performed a dance and released balloons in the sky. The flash mob was organized to draw public attention to the threats the wild snow leopard faces and the destruction of its habitat. A scientific conference for the youth was also held on the same day at the Bishkek Humanitarian University and was named after Prof. Kusein Karasaev, the famous phenologist and linguist from the 20th century.

In the next several weeks, Kyrgyzstan is planning to launch a country-wide survey of snow leopards using camera traps and collecting evidence of the species' presence. Simultaneously, the management planning exercise for the Sarychat (Central Tien Shan) landscape has begun. Information is currently being collected from various sources to develop the management plan for the landscape using the guidelines

launched during the Steering Committee Meeting.

With collaboration between SLT, SLFK, Interpol and the Protected Areas' Department, Kyrgyzstan is also initiating a program to reward rangers and citizens who successfully stop illegal hunting in the Protected Areas across the country. The program will include capacity building and training for frontline staff, and also hold a regional technical workshop with participation from neighboring countries on the issues of illegal wildlife trade. With full understanding of the issues of biodiversity and cultural erosion, SLFK is beginning to amass a repository of bio-cultural folklore and creating an educational strategy for children living in and around snow leopard habitats in Kyrgyzstan.



Flash mob performance on Snow Leopard Day 2014

## Country updates

### Pakistan

Back in 2013, a cub, only a few months old from Khunjerab Valley, was found by members of the community. Under the assumption she was abandoned, they removed the cub from the wild in order to give her a chance at survival. Soon after, the Gilgit-Baltistan government stepped in to offer support and ensure the cub was given adequate food and shelter.

For the last two years, she was housed in a 20 x 20 sq. ft. cage next to the Karakoram Highway, near the Khunjrab pass. With concerns of exposure to human activity and the outside elements, her housing was less than ideal. In order to provide a better future for this snow leopard, efforts are being made to construct a rehabilitation center for her and other snow leopards in need. Conservation organizations such as Snow Leopard Foundation (SLF), Parks and Wildlife Department-Gilgit-Baltistan (GBWD), US State Department's Embassy in Islamabad, International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), Snow Leopard Trust and Snow Leopard Conservancy are all on board

to realize the concept of this facility in the Naltar valley.

This Snow Leopard Rehabilitation Facility at Naltar, about 80 km from Gilgit city, would be established to provide safe custody, protection, care and training of orphaned, injured, rescued and captured snow leopard cubs and other young animals, ideally to be released back into the wild, if possible. The new 11,000 sq. ft. facility—the first of its kind in the region, will ensure safe custody of the captured snow leopard cub. The site of the rehabilitation facility is now finalized and ready for construction of three main components: a vast and specially designed enclosure, treatment center and an information center for public.

SLF is coordinating the design of the facility for human safety and cat health as well as public awareness and wildlife conservation education to connect the facility towards the country's national strategy goals. GBWD and SLF have an understanding toward the execution of this project, with commitments from the Government to provide housing

and care for the cat, refrain from breeding the cat (i.e. not to increase the captive population), improve enforcement of laws prohibiting the capture of wildlife, including 'rescue' situations, and produce positive outreach and education that support greater awareness for conservation and proper wildlife stewardship within Gilgit-Baltistan.

Federal Minister for Climate Change, Mushahidullah Khan has been elected Chairman of the Steering Committee of the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection (GSLEP) program. Representatives of 12 countries voted in his favor which includes Afghanistan, Bhutan, China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. He ensured the commitment of the present Pakistani government regarding conservation of snow leopards in Pakistan and dedication to be part of the global efforts for protection and conservation of this endangered species.



The snow leopard cub found in the Khunjerab valley by the community members

**LOST, FOUND  
AND CONSERVED  
– A SNOW  
LEOPARD  
RESCUED BY THE  
COMMUNITY IN  
PAKISTAN**



The rescued snow leopard

**Resolution of the  
First Steering Committee Meeting  
of the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program  
"Steering Committee"**

**Taking into account** the "Bishkek Declaration" on the Conservation of Snow Leopards and the comprehensive, long-term Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program ("GSLEP"), adopted by representatives of 12 Range States on the Global Snow Leopard Conservation Forum in October 23, 2013 at Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic.

**Acknowledges** the leadership of the Kyrgyz Republic President H.E. Almazbek Atambayev, the support of the Kyrgyz Government for hosting the First High level Steering Committee meeting from March 19-20, 2015 in Bishkek, and the leaders of the Governments of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Kingdom of Bhutan, the People's Republic of China, the Republic of India, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan, and the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Is **grateful** for the crucial and timely support by international partners such as Global Environment Facility, Global Tiger Initiative, Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union, Snow Leopard Trust, United Nations Development Program, World Wildlife Fund, Wildlife Conservation Society, Panthera, Snow Leopard Conservancy and other organizations for their assistance in the implementation of the GSLEP.

**Appreciates** impressive progress that has been made since the adoption of the Bishkek Declaration.

**Acting** under the Bishkek Declaration, the Steering Committee:

1. Directs and commits to an accelerated implementation of the GSLEP for building up the momentum, especially in terms of resource mobilization and awareness building;
2. High appreciates the coordination function and role undertaken by the Secretariat and supports its efforts in enhancing its capacity into a global Secretariat which could effectively service the requirements of the Range States and to help regular evaluation of the GSLEP;
3. In particular emphasizes the urgency for raising financial resources to support implementation of the GSLEP implementation over the next few years;
4. Understands and emphasizes the need to build special

capacities among frontline staff;

5. Calls all Range States to declare 2015 as the Year of the snow leopard in the Range States, and October 23 as an annually celebrated Snow Leopard Day;
6. Greets the initiative of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic H.E. Almazbek Atambayev for organizing an international expedition connecting 23 snow leopard landscapes among Range States "Reinventing the Silk Route, the Snow Leopard way" to raise awareness about the GSLEP program and the 23 identified snow leopard landscapes;
7. Agrees to an official launch of the Secretariat to coordinate GSLEP implementation with its headquarters in Bishkek, for which the Range States and Partners will explore ways to support the Secretariat on an urgent basis.
8. Requests the Secretariat to:
  - strengthen and improve cooperation efforts with Range States and other partners to improve collaboration in the implementation of the GSLEP;
  - regularly update the website ([www.globalsnowleopard.org](http://www.globalsnowleopard.org)) in order to provide opportunities for dynamic exchange of information;
  - maintain a coordinating role in assisting with the planning and implementation of priority actions at the national and international levels, including facilitation and implementation of relevant memorandums, and action plans in certain areas.

By the adoption of this resolution in Bishkek for the implementation of the GSLEP the Range States undertake to provide support and express their determination in collective action to achieve the goal of "Secure 20 by 2020".

## **Guidelines for the Steering Committee of the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Program**

Initiated and championed by H.E. the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, H.E. Almazbek Atambaev, and supported by the governments of the 12 range countries, the Global Snow Leopard Conservation Forum in Bishkek (October 22-23, 2013) endorsed two key documents—“Bishkek Declaration” on the Conservation of Snow Leopards and the long-term Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program (GSLEP).

Pursuant to the Bishkek Declaration, the snow leopard range countries have agreed “to form a high-level Steering Committee to guide GSLEP implementation, regularly review its progress, and maintain a strong commitment to meet its objectives, through a Secretariat to coordinate GSLEP implementation that is adequately resourced and staffed by the range countries and the international community.”

### **1. Objective of the Steering Committee:**

To guide GSLEP implementation, regularly review its progress, and maintain a strong political commitment to meet its objectives.

### **2. Roles of the Steering Committee:**

- High-level alliance of decision-makers within and among snow leopard range countries providing stewardship and championing strategic issues, and innovative solutions in support of the GSLEP and towards sustainable development of high-mountain landscapes and local communities.
- To interface, influence and advocate international financial institutions and donor agencies to raise GSLEP program resources.
- To enhance and diversify the alliance by establishing a well-structured partnership with industry, business and NGOs.
- To influence public policy and opinion in respective range countries and prioritize and enhance resources in support of snow leopard and ecosystems conservation.
- Strategic guidance to the Secretariat’s operations in support of the GSLEP implementation and periodic review of the GSLEP implementation process and outcomes.
- Support the GSLEP resource mobilization process, including high-level dialogue with national and inter-

national funding sources in the public and private sector.

### **3. Membership:**

The Steering Committee consists of Honorable Ministers (or their designates) of range country governments, in charge of snow leopard conservation with a right to vote. Senior representatives of major contributing funding partners to be voted in by the steering committee every 2 years as observer members with a right of deliberative vote.

### **4. Chair and co-Chair:**

The Steering Committee would be chaired and co-chaired by the Honorable Ministers from the range countries, and would be elected for a period of two years. The position would rotate across range countries. The Chair would convene and host the Steering Committee meetings, and sign communications on behalf of the Steering Committee as needed.

### **5. Meetings:**

The Steering Committee will meet in person or via a video conference at least once every twelve (12) months. A Steering Committee meeting can be called on a self-standing basis or on the margins of other international events. The Chair circulates the meeting’s date, venue, and provisional agenda two (2) months in advance of the meeting, and the meeting’s minutes within two (2) weeks after the meeting. The meeting is valid if at least seven (7) Ministers or their designates are present. Decisions by the steering committee will be made by consensus.

### **6. Operation between Meetings:**

Each Minister designates a Senior Official as the national focal point for the Program implementation. The Secretariat coordinates the work between Steering Committee meetings, and organizes the technical and logistical inputs of the Secretariat, under the guidance of the Chair with assistance from the interested partners and donors of the GSLEP.

## An interview with Mr. Mushahid Ullah Khan, Chair, GSLEP Steering Committee



“THE COOPERATION NEEDED FROM THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY IS THREE DIMENSIONAL; SCIENTIFIC, POLITICAL AND FINANCIAL.”

**Q-1) What does the snow leopard mean to the people and ecosystems of the 12 range countries and the whole of Central Asia?**

**MUK.** Snow Leopard is a symbol of the health of ecosystems and landscapes of 12 range countries. Little was known about its habits and habitat and it remained an elusive animal. It is only very recently that the scientific community was able to collect scientific data thanks to the camera trapping and satellite monitoring techniques. Snow Leopards have co-existed with the people within its vast habitat which stretches into the territorial jurisdiction of multiple countries though exact data is still to be collected. While the snow leopard remains problematic for the poor people on whose livestock it preys, there is a growing acceptance of its value to the ecosystem. It is heartening to note that all the range countries, in particular those in Central Asia, value the snow leopard's existence and are proud to have them in their countries.

**Q-2) Where do you see the most pressing conservation needs and priorities?**

**MUK.** The biggest challenge in the next few years is to continue the remarkable conservation pace set by the Global Snow Leopard Ecosystem Protection (GSLEP) over the past few years. I would like to see measurable and quantifiable actions on the ground in the next few years. The biggest challenge for the next few years will be to get much needed political support and arrange substantial finances.

**Q-3) What are the biggest challenges the GSLEP program faces in the next years?**

**MUK.** The communities that dwell in the habitat of the Snow Leopard are the key for success of GSLEP. With the looming climate change threats, it is projected that the range of Snow Leopard may also shift with more people settling in its habitat. Increased agriculture and urbanization may also result in more incidents of human and Snow Leopard encounters. It is, there-

fore, of utmost importance that community's role remain the centre of any interventions to conserve the Snow Leopard.

**Q-4) What role do the communities who live in snow leopard habitat play in this process?**

**MUK.** Snow Leopard symbolizes a healthy mountain ecosystem and has the attention of all countries beyond the 12 range countries. It is a common heritage of all mankind. The importance given to Snow Leopard all over the world is very much appreciated.

**Q-5) What is the role and responsibility of the international community beyond the 12 range countries?**

**MUK.** I expect the global community to play its active role to conserve this majestic animal. The cooperation needed from the global community is three dimensional; scientific, political and financial. I also hope that the global mechanism will continue their support. The initial progress made this year with an allocation for Snow

Leopard Conservation is a welcome signal by some countries. I also urge all 12 range countries to increase their allocations. I hope to see more activities on the ground next year and I intend to personally visit some Snow Leopard range countries.

**Q-6) What specific progress do you hope the GSLEP program will make in the next year?**

**MUK.** I hope that countries will allocate sufficient resources from their national budgets to address the immediate and long term threats to the species as envisaged in the NSLEPs and GSLEP. Simultaneously I hope that the global mechanism will continue to support the implementation of the GSLEP. The initial progress made this year by some countries with allocation for Snow Leopard Conservation is a welcome signal. I hope that this will be up-scaled by all 12 range countries. I also hope to see more activities on the ground next year. I also intend to personally visit a few Snow Leopard range countries next year.

**Q-7) How would you define success for the**

**GSLEP program?**

**MUK.** I define success for the GSLEP programme in two ways. First is the political will of the governments of range states and secondly, more ground activities that address the objectives of the GSLEP. It is also important that the priority landscapes are secured with vibrant human populations co-existing with snow leopards.

**Q-8) If you imagine a mountain community in your country living side by side with the snow leopard 15, 20 years from today - how does this coexistence look?**

**MUK.** I visualize that the economic status of communities has reached a stage where depredation and human-animal conflict would not alienate rural communities. I would also like to see that the importance of the snow leopard is considered as an opportunity by the local people. Promotion of ecotourism, predator proof corrals and livestock insurance schemes should reach the community level by the next 15-20 years, and that is my long term goal.

**Q-9) What do you per-**

**sonally associate with the snow leopard and its mountain habitat?**

**MUK.** I personally look at the Snow Leopard as a symbol of prosperity for the range countries as well as for the global community. I see that healthy Snow Leopard populations signify a good message that we are living in a healthy ecosystem.

“I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO SEE THAT THE IMPORTANCE OF SNOW LEOPARD IS CONSIDERED AS AN OPPORTUNITY BY THE LOCAL PEOPLE.”

## An interview with Mr. Sabir Atadjanov, Co-Chair, GSLEP Steering Committee



"SNOW  
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CENTRAL ASIA  
AND THE  
WORLD."

### **Q.1) What does the snow leopard mean to the people and ecosystems of the 12 range countries and the whole of Central Asia?**

**SA.** For the people of our 12 snow leopard range countries, it is an important representation of cultural, social and ecological values. Snow leopard, as a symbol for most mountain people represents beauty, strength and courage. The snow leopard is a predator that has adapted to survive in the harsh conditions of high mountains. It is an elegant and beautiful animal showcasing the beauty of nature high altitude landscapes. Presence of snow leopards can be considered as the most important indicator of the health of natural ecosystems of high mountains. That is why snow leopards can rightly be called - "Treasures of the mountain peaks" for Central Asia and the world as a whole.

The image of the snow leopard is deeply imbedded in stories, legends and folklores of our people. At the same time, people liv-

ing in snow leopard habitat often talk about this amazing animal, its habits and lifestyle.

The snow leopard represents the people's spiritual and natural wealth. Its image embodies wisdom and harmony with nature, as well as the unique environment of highland ecosystems - its habitat.

### **Q-2) Where do you see the most pressing conservation needs and priorities?**

**SA.** At the moment, one can outline a package of measures that are necessary for the conservation of the snow leopard. Firstly, these measures should be related to conservation of natural ecosystems that will in turn ensure the existence of a snow leopard. These include measures to preserve and increase the population of wild ungulates - basic food for the snow leopard. At the same time, the status of the population of these animals is an important factor in ensuring the stability of the snow leopard families that live in the mountains.

Another urgent problem is

that of the constantly increasing human disturbance, which leads to a reduction in suitable habitat for snow leopards.

The third important priority for the conservation of the snow leopard to improve the quality of epizootic monitoring and implementation of appropriate measures aimed at reducing the prevalence of parasitic diseases of farm animals that graze in the habitat of wild ungulates. The high epizootic domestic animals are a constant source of subsequent infection to wild animals, which in turn leads to instability and massive reduction in prey base of the snow leopard. Rapid fluctuations in the number of wild ungulates or their extermination can lead to a sharp reduction in the number of snow leopards.

We must realize that to save the snow leopard population it is necessary to coordinate the efforts of all countries in the area of its habitat. The threat of the disappearance of the snow leopard should be the object of special attention of the international community and the preser-

vation of species - it is a global responsibility.

### **Q-3) what are the biggest challenges the GSLEP program faces in the next years?**

**SA.** The Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program (GSLEP) is a unique initiative that aims not only to preserve the snow leopard and its supporting ecosystems that exist in Kyrgyzstan, but to create the necessary conditions for its long term survival in all range countries.

The GSLEP Secretariat has been already established; as an example, the team has launched the international meetings on the conservation of the snow leopard on the high level.

The next steps are to ensure that we maintain this international communication platform to achieve the Bishkek Declaration that was adopted during the World Forum on snow leopard conservation in 2013.

As we all know, following negotiations with experts from snow leopard range countries, 23 landscapes have been identified to be

secured by 2020. These landscapes are large in size, and we are still far from achieving the goal of securing them. Currently, each of the Range States is developing the management plans for these landscapes that will serve as the blueprint to secure these by the year 2020.

The main challenge facing the GSLEP program is the establishment of sustainable partnerships in the field of snow leopard conservation. Specifically for our country, it is necessary to organize high quality monitoring of the snow leopard population and the status of the ecosystem. We hope that methods developed as part of this program will help monitor the status of snow leopards and their habitats in all range countries.

### **Q-4) What role do the communities who live in snow leopard habitat play in this process?**

**SA.** Local communities play a key role in conserving the snow leopards. They are directly linked with the decrease in poaching of the snow leopard and its prey species. Nature's way is such that local communities, snow

leopards and the prey species have lived in harmony for several centuries.

Agricultural activities, extraction of natural resources in the high altitude and mining has caused significant impact on the snow leopard populations. Proper environmental planning and public awareness can not only reduce the negative impacts on the snow leopard, but also creates conditions for its conservation with public participation. There are already several good practices in place across the snow leopard range, including Kyrgyzstan where the local population is actively involved in snow leopard conservation. A team of young people and local experts are involved in this work. Another important component is that of environmental education so that our younger generation is educated about the value of the natural ecosystems. We need to also understand the value of environmental principles that have emerged from the local communities to provide environmental education, alleviate conflict between human and wildlife, and ensure the implementation of environmental legislation in the field.

"MANAGEMENT PLANS FOR THESE LANDSCAPES WILL SERVE AS THE BLUEPRINT TO SECURE THESE BY THE YEAR 2020"

“LIKE ANY  
CITIZEN OF THE  
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**Q-5) What is the role and responsibility of the international community beyond the 12 range countries?**

**SA.** The main responsibility of governments, experts and the public is to create conditions for conservation and recovery of snow leopard populations in the high altitude mountain ecosystems. This is precisely why the management plans are being created. To save the snow leopard, its prey base and its ecosystem at the national level, all range countries have developed national strategies under the GSLEP program. Additionally, countries need to develop cooperation to improve the effectiveness of snow leopard conservation programs across borders. To evaluate the effectiveness, program monitoring needs to be done using methods that are optimized and synchronized across the range countries. It is also important to have legal mechanisms across the range countries that support a unified strategy for its conservation. These are some of the issues that need to be addressed in the framework of interna-

tional cooperation and national action.

**Q-6) What specific progress do you hope the GSLEP program will make in the next year?**

**SA.** In my opinion, in the next year of the GSLEP program, the following should be achieved:

First, work will begin on the preparation and implementation of management plans for areas of snow leopard habitats at the landscape level.

Secondly, we will make efforts to enable a constructive dialogue between the snow leopard range countries.

Thirdly, full-scale monitoring of snow leopard populations and program performance will be initiated with the help of modern technology. The year 2015 will also require a lot of effort towards public awareness, environment education and technology.

**Q-7) How would you define success for the GSLEP program?**

**SA.** Success of snow leopard conservation can

be evaluated only in the context of reduction of the level of disappearance, and increase in their number, both within the Kyrgyz territory as well in the neighbouring countries. All other outcomes, such as conservation of prey base, and preservation and restoration of ecosystems, are secondary. Our political, communication, information, technological and other activities are inherent components of the grandiose and ambitious success of conservation of the world's snow leopards.

**Q-8) If you imagine a mountain community in your country living side by side with the snow leopard 15, 20 years from today - how does this coexistence look?**

**SA.** For a community to survive conflict-free next to the snow leopards requires a high ecological morality, conservation values and practices that are conducive to the snow leopard populations and their ecosystem. A community may put into practice the principles of natural capitalism to ensure the expansion and enhancement of the natural heritage. In this community, all

activities should be in harmony with natural cycles and laws. The community may not only focus on the needs of its people, but ensures the interests of the environment in their daily activities, and in case of human-wildlife conflicts. Such a community may be represented by a constantly evolving system that is aware of its uniqueness, and understands the value of harmonious relationship between human beings and nature.

**Q-9) What do you personally associate with the snow leopard and its mountain habitat?**

**SA.** Like any citizen of the Kyrgyz Republic, I believe that the snow leopard is the master of the mountains, and it inspires me to pursue my efforts to preserve the unique ecosystems and prey base that will ensure the snow leopard's existence. I am proud and pleased that a such a remarkable animal

lives in the mountains of Kyrgyzstan. On the other hand, I am conscious of the fragility of nature around us, especially given the impacts of modern human activities, and intensive extraction of natural resources posing a threat to the very existence of these beautiful predators.



## Dear colleagues and friends,

It is our pleasure to share the first issue of Ilbirs, the quarterly newsletter of the GSLEP, published by the Secretariat. This newsletter will aim at providing updates from our partner range countries and organizations about the relevant developments in the field of snow leopard conservation. We might also pick up a relevant theme for discussions and comments that may continue the interaction in print or on our website, [www.globalsnowleopard.org](http://www.globalsnowleopard.org).

While we might focus on the issues pertaining to the 23 identified landscapes that

the GSLEP program hopes to secure by 2020, we welcome any relevant news or information that any of you thinks needs to be shared with the world. In each issue we will also be putting together articles on certain themes, following key developments in one or more range countries. In this issue you will see a short write up on the status of wildlife laws in the Kyrgyz Republic. This article follows the developments in the country where recently a picture surfaced on the social media with an unidentified man posing with a slain snow leopard. More recently, the Kyrgyz

enforcement authorities have caught a poaching gang who were allegedly trying to sell a snow leopard and some brown bear skins on the black market. We hope to receive your comments and updates in the near future so that we can learn from each others' strengths under the aegis of the GSLEP program and help save snow leopards in the wild.

— GSLEP Secretariat

OFTEN ISSUES  
PERTAINING TO  
ILLEGAL WILDLIFE  
TRADE ARE  
CONSIDERED  
LOW PRIORITY  
AND DON'T GET  
PROPER  
ATTENTION

## Poaching and illegal wildlife trade

Poaching and Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) has recently led to local and global extinctions of several species such as the tiger in several parts of its range, Sumatran rhino and Pyrenean ibex. Often issues pertaining to IWT are considered low priority and don't get proper attention because of other pressing issues that the enforcement agencies are dealing with. Illegal trade of body parts of the snow leopard and its prey pose a serious threat to conservation of wildlife in the high altitude

mountain ecosystems in Asia. Monitoring crime can be difficult as an increase in reports of wildlife crime is not always synonymous to increase in wildlife crime. However, there are methods in statistical modelling that can individually estimate probabilities of occurrence of wildlife crime and those of detecting it. Different organizations and government agencies are using different approaches to control and monitor illegal wildlife trade and poaching.

In Kyrgyzstan, citizens are provided with the right to a safe environment. Several laws in the country provide a wide range of regulation, define standards and requirements for environment protection and provide accountability for sustainable use or exploitation of natural resources. The national legal framework ensures preservation and enhancement of biological diversity including snow leopards. The laws that are relevant to snow leopard conservation in the country



Illegal hunting of snow leopards is a serious threat to the species in Central Asia

are: law for Environment Protection, law for Fauna, law for Protection and Use of Flora, law for Biosphere Territories in the Kyrgyz Republic, law for Specially Protected Natural Territories, law for Hunting and Hunting Economy, and the Concept of Environmental Safety of the Kyrgyz Republic approved by the Decree of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic. Kyrgyzstan is a signatory to several international agreements and conventions, e.g. Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES) and Bonn Convention on Migratory Species.

Poaching of snow leopards and its prey species (argali, ibex and marmots) are a major threat to snow leopards in Kyrgyzstan, across other former Soviet states, and China. Recent research indicates poaching and trade in snow leopards could be growing. Environmental Investigation Agency (2012) estimates as many as 1000 snow leopards may have been illegally traded in 2000-2011. Interactions with local people and park rangers reveal their inability and frustration in preventing poaching by outsiders. They cite entrenched problems including an under-resourced and underfunded wildlife conservation sector and a lack of trained personnel and equipment, which severely limiting anti-poaching efforts.

As a result rangers and local people feel socially and economically disenfranchised to control poaching in and around reserves, and this supports a porous system easily exploited by illegal hunters.

Several programs are ongoing in the country to reduce pressures from illegal poaching. These include the 'Group of Bars', an anti-poaching unit set up by NABU to stop illegal hunting and trade in wildlife across the northern border of Kyrgyzstan, the citizen-ranger wildlife protection program by Snow Leopard Foundation Kyrgyzstan and Snow Leopard Trust in collaboration with Interpol to train, inspire and appreciate the efforts of state rangers to reduce poaching, and the anti-poaching development fund maintained by WWF to aid protection of wildlife by rangers and citizens.

Given the significance of the trans-boundary elements of illegal wildlife trade, a regional workshop is being proposed by the GSLEP Secretariat in collaboration with UNDP, Snow Leopard Trust and Interpol. The workshop will hope to bring to the table the issues pertaining to the current status of illegal wildlife trade in Central Asia, identify the key gaps and explore opportunities to ad-

dress these. The workshop will hope to develop and share the blueprint of improved coordination, support and efficiency for on-ground implementation of illegal wildlife trade prevention activities and institution of better monitoring systems. The key outputs of the workshop will be shared with other snow leopard range countries via the GSLEP Secretariat. A five day training led by Interpol for frontline staff representing all Protected Areas of Kyrgyzstan will follow the technical workshop.

—Koustubh Sharma &  
Iliia Domashov

AS MANY AS  
1000 SNOW  
LEOPARDS MAY  
HAVE BEEN  
ILLEGALLY  
TRADED IN 2000-  
2011



## A youngster's appeal



I HAVE ALWAYS  
STRUGGLED  
SOMEWHAT  
WITH IDENTITY.  
PERSONALLY, THE  
SNOW LEOPARD  
IS A SYMBOL  
FOR MY KYRGYZ  
HERITAGE

Youth, I find, are generally an angry people. In adolescence, people realize that the world is an imperfect place, and they begin to concern themselves with things that seem bigger and older than them. At the age I am now, 15 years old, I begin to find myself angry and saddened about wide issues: politics, global warming, college, future, employment, etc.

The issue I am most taken by is the concept of fairness, or lack thereof. I find injustice everywhere, and the wrong done to wildlife bothers me in particular. As a small Kyrgyz child, I have been troubled by the treatment of snow leopards. I lived in Bangladesh for three years, and experienced the same kind of aggravation at the treatment of the Bengal Tiger. Then for three years in Sri Lanka, I was part of a group that started a community and service project pro-

tecting precious coral reefs on the west coast of the country. I always wondered: why were we destroying something that only helped build us. Why we, as a species, were so selfish and almost malevolent in the destruction of what is beautiful on this planet. I felt obligated, as a human, to help the creatures that we have been mistreating for centuries now.

Snow leopards are exceptionally interesting and special to me. I have always struggled somewhat with identity, and the snow leopard was a part of building it. The snow leopard is historically and geographically an elemental aspect of Kyrgyz culture. There are spiritual myths surrounding snow leopards. For a country so remote and so small, something as large as a snow leopard was a source of nationalism and pride. Personally, the snow leopard is a symbol for my Kyrgyz heritage. My elementary school mascot was a snow leopard. During geography and environmental studies lessons, the snow leopard would be mentioned in connection with Kyrgyzstan.

That is probably the source of my anger. These beautiful creatures that are symbols of a culture and personal identity are dying out at an exponential rate due to illegal ac-

tivities and climate change. Injustices manifest themselves in different places, and different people are angry with that. I feel as if any young people in my position would also find themselves vaguely annoyed, if not furious.

However, the irony of this is that my main reasons listed above for saving them are also out of selfishness for my identity. This outlook I have, an outlook that probably most people have, needs to be changed. We do not need to save the animals for ourselves. We need to save them for *them*; these animals have a right to this Earth just as much as we do.

— Erika Undeland (age: 15)  
Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan



## Indigenous Cultural Practitioners Statement to Global Snow Leopard Conservation Forum

We, the indigenous cultural practitioners of the snow leopard range countries, welcome global efforts for the conservation of snow leopards and express our readiness to collaborate in the development and implementation of the comprehensive long-term Global Snow Leopard Conservation Program to meet goals of 2020 using our traditional knowledge.

The Bishkek Declaration expressed strong concern about the increasing threats to our sacred animal that is “an irreplaceable symbol of our nation’s natural and cultural heritage and an indicator of the health and sustainability of mountain ecosystems” and called for “the enhancement of the role of local communities in snow leopard conservation efforts”. Representing indigenous and local communities of our respective countries we emphasize close ties between indigenous communities and communities of our totem animals. For us the state of the snow leopard is an indicator of the state of the spiritual and socio-cultural wellbeing of our communities today and of our future generations tomorrow. Indissoluble, enduring connection and mutual dependence of the fate of our Peoples from the fate of their totem animals is an indisputable truth for us. We understand that the risks and threats for the sacred snow leopard are augmented by the loss of traditional under-

standing and respect for the value of totem animals; we therefore are eager to unite our efforts with the efforts of our respective Governments, scientists and world community.

Out of this sense of responsibility to our ancestors and our future generations, we indigenous cultural practitioners stress the central role of the snow leopard in survival of humanity facing civilization crisis, which is threatening our mountains with the cold breath of death. Snow leopards and other totem animals call us—through drastic change in their usual behavior—for spiritual renewal, for recognition and respect of the rights of Mother Nature. The snow leopard conservation measures cannot be limited just to the creation of new parks and protected territories. Conservation needs to be inclusive of the revival of cultural reverence and connectivity to these totem animals and strengthening of existing sacred sites.

Today snow leopard range countries have a unique opportunity to create a system of snow leopard survival based on the spiritual and cultural resurgence of indigenous and local communities who share with this animal its habitat, i.e. revival of the large cultural landscapes and sacred sites. We, as indigenous cultural practitioners, are ready to strengthen edu-

cational, spiritual, and ceremonial ways to ensure return of respect to the snow leopard as an ambassador of Mother Nature. Indigenous and local communities are ready to take relevant actions to ensure sustainability of the snow leopard’s prey species by banning shooting in sacred places and by enhancing sustainable traditional hunting practices.

We recognize the value of integration of our traditional knowledge with conservation science and are ready for cooperation. We call upon our Governments to enable active, full, and effective participation of indigenous and local communities, including cultural practitioners, in the development and implementation of local, national, regional, and global plans for conservation of snow leopard ecosystems through clear mechanisms of coordination, inclusion, and respect.



An indigenous community living in the snow leopard habitat

ASHU

WORKSHOP,  
KYRGYZSTAN  
SEPTEMBER 11-  
14, 2013



Kyrgyz elders suggest this petroglyph carries the message that humans have the responsibility of holding the balance in nature, so ibex and snow leopards can survive

## Who we are: *National Focal Points*

**Afghanistan**



Mr. Wali Modaqiq

**Bhutan**



Ms. Dechen Lham

**China**



Mr. Chen Difei

**India**



Mr. Shaktikant Khanduri

NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS ARE THE KEY LINK BETWEEN THE GSLEP (STEERING COMMITTEE & SECRETARIAT) AND RANGE COUNTRIES

**Kazakhstan**



Mr. Azbaev Bagdat Orazaldyevich

**Kyrgyzstan**



Mr. Bakhtiyar Abdiev

**Mongolia**



Mr. Bariushaa Munkhtsog

**Nepal**



Mr. Fanindra Raj

**Pakistan**



Mr. Syed Mehmood Nasir

**Russia**



Ms. Irina Fominikh

**Tajikistan**



Mr. Rustam Muratov

**Uzbekistan**



Aleksandr Grigoryants

## Who we are: *GSLEP Secretariat*



*Kyial Alygulova,  
Manager*

*Worked as an expert at the Offices of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic as well as a Deputy Minister of Youth, Labour and Employment of the Kyrgyz Republic for 5 years. Has also been a consultant for UNDP and the World Bank. Specializes in the field of environmental protection and law.*



*Chyngyz Kochorov,  
Fundraising Expert*

*With a degree in international relations, international economics and public administration, he has more than 6 years of experience and took an active part in the organization of the Global Forum on snow leopard conservation in 2013*



*Evgeny Grechko,  
Communications Specialist*

*Worked as an expert and program manager in local and international projects of civic education, human rights, elections and environmental protection for over 15 years*



*Ilia Domashov,  
Expert on Field Researches*

*Represented non-government movement in Kyrgyzstan for international environmental processes. For the past 10 years, conducting research on biodiversity conservation, and training scientific and environmental staff at the Faculty of Biology of the Kyrgyz National University*



*Keshav Saran Varma  
Senior International Advisor*

*With more than 30 years of experience as a civil servant and senior World Bank official, focusing on complex urban policy issues (including urban development issues in India), reconstruction programs, climate change, and conservation to enhance sustainability of infrastructure growth. Headed the Global Tiger Initiative as its Founding Director.*



*Dr. Koustubh Sharma  
International Coordinator*

*With a PhD in Wildlife Zoology, has been involved in active research and conservation for 15 years. Working with the Snow Leopard Trust as Senior Regional Ecologist since 2007, has been assisting in snow leopard research, conservation and training programs for the past 8 years in several countries including India, China, Mongolia, Bhutan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Nepal and Tajikistan.*



**To secure at least 20 landscapes with viable snow leopard populations by 2020.**

NEWSLETTER OF THE GLOBAL SNOW LEOPARD AND ECOSYSTEM PROTECTION PROGRAM

SNOW LEOPARD SECRETARIAT  
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*The snow leopard range countries and partners unanimously agree to the shared goal of the GSLEP for the 7 years through 2020. The snow leopard range countries agree, with support from interested organizations, to work together to identify and secure at least 20 snow leopard landscapes across the cat's range by 2020 or, in shorthand – "Secure 20 by 2020."*

*Secure snow leopard landscapes are defined as those that contain at least 100 breeding age snow leopards conserved with the involvement of local communities, support adequate and secure prey populations, and have functional connectivity to other snow leopard landscapes, some of which cross international boundaries.*

**We're on the Web!**

**[www.globalsnowleopard.org](http://www.globalsnowleopard.org)**

## **Next steps!**

**Management Planning of the 23 landscapes:** The immediate next and most critical step under the program is that of developing management plans for each of the 23 landscapes. With the help of the management planning guidelines, it is hoped that by the end of 2015 or latest by early 2016, detailed management plans will be prepared for each landscapes.

**Regional Technical Workshop on Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT):** One of the key threats to snow leopards and its prey in central Asia is that of poaching and illegal trade. A technical workshop with expected participation from the four Central Asian countries including Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, and several government and non-government organizations working towards controlling IWT. The workshop, in close collaboration with Interpol, will look into the current status, understand the gaps and opportunities of the IWT scenario in the Central Asian countries. The workshop shall come out with a blueprint of collaborations and partnerships to control illegal wildlife trade, improve effectiveness on ground and institute better monitoring mechanisms. The key outputs can then be shared with other snow leopard range countries to feed into a regional workshop.

**Working groups:** Three working groups with participation from partner countries and organizations will be formed to address critical issues. One group will lead a paper on economic evaluations of snow leopard landscapes, the second will identify models for innovative financing mechanisms including the corporate sector for the GSLEP program, and the third will develop strategies for capacity enhancement of the frontline staff.

