



**BIODIVERSITY  
CHALLENGE FUNDS**



## **Biodiversity Challenge Funds Projects** **Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus**

### **Half Year Report**

It is expected that this report will be a **maximum of 2-3 pages** in length.

**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: 31<sup>st</sup> October 2025**

**Please note all projects that were active before 1<sup>st</sup> October 2025 are required to complete a Half Year Report.**

**Submit to: [BCF-Reports@niras.com](mailto:BCF-Reports@niras.com) including your project ref in the subject line.**

<b>Project reference</b>	<b><i>DARCC043</i></b>
<b>Project title</b>	Living with snow-leopards: enhancing capacity for ethical conservation and livelihoods
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nepal
<b>Lead Organisation</b>	International Snow Leopard Trust
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Global Snow Leopard Ecosystem Protection Program (GSLEP) Secretariat, Snow Leopard Conservation Foundation (SLCF), Snow Leopard Foundation in Kyrgyzstan (SLFK)
<b>Project Leader</b>	<i>Dr. Charudutt (Charu) Mishra</i>
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	<i>31 October 2025, HYR2</i>
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<a href="https://snowleopard.org/">https://snowleopard.org/</a> <a href="https://www.ethicalconservation.org/">https://www.ethicalconservation.org/</a> <a href="https://snowleopardnetwork.org/">https://snowleopardnetwork.org/</a>

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

Although we are not looking for specific reporting against your indicators, please use this opportunity to consider the appropriateness of your monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) 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.

Our overall monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems continue to be well-suited for tracking project progress and impact. The project's indicators are still relevant, and the initial assumptions established at its outset still hold true.

***0.1 By 31st March 2026, Government representatives from 9 snow leopard range countries have enhanced awareness and understanding of ethical conservation practices.***

Government representatives from 11 snow leopard range countries (Afghanistan, Bhutan, China, India, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan), including 8 Environment Ministers, participated in the 9th Steering Committee Meeting (SCM) of the Global Snow Leopard Ecosystem Protection Program (GSLEP) in Cholpon-Ata, Kyrgyzstan in June 2025. Programming at the SCM Ministerial event included a session on “Strengthening ethical foundations and local community leadership in snow leopard conservation”, which touched on the principles of ethical conservation as embodied by the PARTNERS Principles. All 12 snow leopard range country governments formally agreed to review their snow leopard conservation policies from an ethical perspective, and issued a statement to this effect in the resulting ‘[Cholpon Ata-Resolution](#)’ which read: “[We resolve to...] strengthen the ethical foundations of our respective snow leopard conservation policies and action plans, particularly the NSLEPs, with support of the GSLEP Secretariat and Ethical Conservation Alliance over the next two years.”

***0.2 By 31st March 2026, at least 15 conservation organisations within 9 snow leopard range countries have one or more personnel trained in the PARTNERS Principles.***

Under this project, PARTNERS Principles training workshops have been delivered in two forms: as capacity-building training of trainers, and the subsequent training delivered by these trained trainers. In the training of trainers, 25 senior conservationists (15 women) representing 23 conservation organizations (including three of SLT’s partner organizations) from 13 countries (9 snow leopard range countries) received training in PARTNERS Principles and workshop facilitation techniques. In the subsequent training delivered by these newly trained trainers, 94 conservationists (60 women) representing 47 conservation organizations from 14 countries (three snow leopard range countries) have received training in the PARTNERS Principles approach.

***1.1: Prepare, review, and revise the audiovisual resources for the four themes of 1) participatory monitoring and evaluation, 2) economic and non-economic valuation of provisional ecosystem services, 3) sustainable economies and entrepreneurship among local and indigenous communities, and 4) management of wildlife damage conflicts***

Written materials have been drafted for all four audiovisual (A/V) modules; video recordings have been completed for two; and the final A/V toolkit for one (management of wildlife damage conflicts) is scheduled to be launched on 6th November, coinciding with the International Day of Ethical Nature Conservation. SLT has engaged an A/V consultant who is preparing and editing videos with animations to accompany the written materials. The expectation is that all four modules will be completed by the end of December 2025.

***1.2: Upload the resources on publicly accessible website of the Ethical Conservation Alliance (ECA) and share information about it via ECA newsletter and social media handles for dissemination***

As each module is completed, it will be uploaded and made available to the public on the ECA website. These materials will be shared through ECA’s and SLT’s respective social media handles (X.com, Facebook, and Instagram), and those of ECA partners, to drive traffic and spread awareness.

***2.1: Conduct a survey to identify participants to be potentially trained as trainers to deliver the PARTNERS Principles’ training***

As reported in the Year 1 annual report, potential trained trainers were invited to apply through an online survey distributed through the Ethical Conservation Alliance, Snow Leopard Network, and other SLT partners, such as the Whitley Fund for Nature. We received 132 applications

from 31 countries, from whom trainees were selected to participate in three training of trainers workshops, held in Kyrgyzstan in September 2024, Mongolia in February 2025, and Nepal in March 2025.

### ***2.2: Organise Training of Trainers in 3 countries (Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, and Mongolia) to facilitate maximum participation from the snow leopard range countries***

As reported in the Year 1 annual report, nine senior conservationists (four men and five women) from seven countries participated in the training-of-trainers workshop held in Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan from September 12-15, 2024. Similarly, eight participants (two men and six women) from six countries participated in the second training-of-trainers held in Mongolia's Hustai National Park from February 3-7 2025. The third training-of-trainers workshop was held in Kathmandu, Nepal from April 4-8, 2025, with eight participants (four men and four women) from five countries. The British ambassadors to each of these respective countries were invited and participated in one or more workshop sessions, and presented attendees with certificates of completion.

### ***2.3: Maintain contact by organising follow-up interactions and supporting further trainings in person***

We have provided on-going support to trained trainers in several forms. Written materials which have so far been shared with the trainees, or for which their contributions have been sought, include the PARTNERS Principles training guidebook, ECA newsletters, and testimonials, on the ECA website. Additionally, the facilitators of the three training of trainer sessions have remained available for and provided consultation to trained trainers. This efficacy of these consultations is evidenced by the eight trainings that have been conducted by trained trainers since April 1, 2025. Through this Darwin grant, SLT also provided material/financial support for four of these trainings.

### ***3.1: Identify organisations to host the in-country training for frontline conservationists***

Through our relationships with the trained trainers and conservation organizations around the world, our trainees have so far delivered their own training workshops at the Jersey Zoo in the UK, the Wildlife Conservation Society in Mongolia, Snow Leopard Foundation in Kyrgyzstan, the Ilbirs Foundation, and Kyrgyz State University in Kyrgyzstan, World Wildlife Foundation - India in India, Peace Schans in India, the Initiative for Conservation and Sustainable Development NGO in Mongolia, the Nature Conservation Division, Division of Forests and Park Services in Bhutan, and at the Argentinean Mastozoological Congress, with more expected during the grant period (and beyond).

### ***3.2: Provide support to the trained trainers to deliver PARTNERS Principles training to the participants & 3.3: Organise in-person and virtual trainings***

We have worked with trained trainers to plan, organize, and, wherever required, financially support the delivery of PARTNERS Principles training to a growing number of frontline conservationists. Under this process, where facilitators plan and deliver their training according to the conservation principles and facilitation techniques they learned in their own trainings, the following trainings were conducted:

On April 1, 2025, an orientation workshop was delivered to 15 participants (7 women) at the Jersey Zoo in Jersey, UK.

On April 15, 2025, an orientation workshop was delivered at the Wildlife Conservation Society in Mongolia in Ulaanbaatar for 15 participants (12 women).

On April 21-22, 2025, a training workshop was delivered for 23 participants (14 women) in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan by trained staff of the Snow Leopard Foundation in Kyrgyzstan and the Ilbirs Foundation. This workshop was financially supported through this project.

On May 16-18, 2025, a training workshop was delivered for 10 participants (4 women) in Arunachal Pradesh, India, by a trained representative from the World Wildlife Foundation - India. This workshop was financially supported through this project.

On May 22-23, 2025, a training workshop was delivered for 17 participants (12 women) in Sankoo, Kargil Ladakh, India by Peace Schan and the Department of Zoology at Sankoo Campus, GDC Kargil, under Cluster University of Ladakh. .

On May 31, 2025 an orientation workshop for 15 participants (11 women) was held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, by the Initiative for Conservation and Sustainable Development in Mongolia and the Wildlife Conservation Society in Mongolia.

Additionally, a representative of the Nature Conservation Division of the Department of Forests and Park Services of Bhutan and one from the Quimilro Project in Argentina each held training workshops in late September 2025, and we are waiting on the reports and details of those training sessions. The workshop in Bhutan was financially supported through this project. The workshop in Argentina reflects the global impact of this initiative beyond the snow leopard range countries that are the primary focus of this project. SLT also provided financial support for the session in Bhutan.

Excluding the most recent training workshops, trained trainers have delivered PARTNERS Principles training to 94 frontline conservationists, including 60 women, representing 13 countries and 47 conservation organizations. We expect to continue to support additional PARTNERS training workshops through this model.

***3.4: Identify three conservation programs based on risk and feasibility assessment in any of the nine range countries (Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Mongolia, and Uzbekistan) to be supported financially and technically to initiate a community-based conservation program***

Following an open online call to the 25 senior conservationists who participated in the training of trainers PARTNERS Workshops under this project in 2024 and early 2025, we received 10 applications for funding and technical support for new community-based conservation initiatives in the snow leopard range. After evaluating the applications under the criteria of the relevance of the project aim, the clarity and SMART nature of the objectives, the adequacy and relevance of the methodology to the stated objectives, likely effectiveness on conservation outcomes, level of engagement with local communities, and alignment with PARTNERS Principles, three projects were selected. We are now engaged with partners in Bhutan, Kazakhstan, and Nepal to support these new initiatives to collaboratively mitigate conservation conflicts with communities in each of their respective country landscapes.

***3.5: Provide and maintain a “help solve my problem” hotline for trainees to discuss and roadblocks or challenges in community engagement***

Through the ECA website, SLT has provided a platform for trainees (and any member of the public for that matter) to reach out with questions or concerns through a “help solve my problem” contact form. Through our relationships, including those created and maintained by the training of trainers workshops, our team is also available on an ad hoc basis to field inquiries and request for support to trainees.

***4.1: Collaboratively write, review and produce policy advisories to be endorsed and released at the Inter-governmental Steering Committee Meetings***

We are partnering with the intergovernmental GSLEP Secretariat to develop four policy advisories (participatory monitoring and evaluation, economic and non-economic valuation of provisional ecosystem services, sustainable economies and entrepreneurship among local and indigenous communities, and management of wildlife damage conflicts). We are on track to finish them and share with all 12 Governments by March, 2026. Because the next GSLEP Steering Committee is now tentatively scheduled by the Governments to be held in Mongolia in June 2026, the formal release and adoption of policy advisories by the governments is likely to take place soon after this Darwin grant period. This delay is caused by a delay in the 2025 intergovernmental Steering Committee meeting, which was held in June 2026, instead of January 2026.

***4.2: Organise dedicated sessions at the Inter-governmental Steering Committee Meetings on the specific themes to discuss and deliberate on the four themes***

We plan to host dedicated sessions on the four themes (outlined in 1.1) at the 2026 Steering Committee Meeting.

**4.3: All policy documents are translated into at least 3 languages (Russian, Mongolian, Nepali) and provided to the snow leopard range country governments for further dissemination**

All policy documents will be translated into Russian, Mongolian, and Nepali by March 2026.

**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.**

We have achieved the targeted outcomes/outputs related to training conservationists in PARTNERS principles (both the training of trainers and the subsequent trainings held by these trainers) without utilizing a significant amount of the budget allocated for these activities. We have submitted a pending change request to shift this excess funding to staff supporting other project deliverables, such as the the A/V modules and policy documents in Outputs 1 and 4.

As discussed under Activity 4.1, the delay of the 2025 intergovernmental Steering Committee Meeting has affected the timing of the 2026 Steering Committee Meeting. This will push the formal endorsement of the four policy briefs, which are under development and will be ready by March 2026, beyond the timeframe of the project.

On a positive note, one of our Mongolian training graduates worked with the National University of Mongolia, which has now included a course on PARTNERS Principles as part of the formal Conservation Biology Curriculum at both graduate and undergraduate levels. This course will be offered to students every year.

**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 (except as constituted by the change request)
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Formal Change Request submitted:	Yes
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Received confirmation of change acceptance:	No
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Change Request reference if known: no response yet

**4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2025 – 30 September 2025)**

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 2026)?**

Yes ☒ No ☐ Estimated underspend:



**4c. If you expect an underspend, then you should 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, and not later than 31<sup>st</sup> December. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a re-budget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes to your project if necessary.**

We submitted a change request shifting the budget lines we anticipate will be underspent to support outstanding objectives on the project.

**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 BCFs management, monitoring, or financial procedures?**

Suspensions or allegations related to fraud and error concerns should be reported to [fraudanderror@Defra.gov.uk](mailto:fraudanderror@Defra.gov.uk)

No, thank you. We are grateful for the support and appreciate the guidance.

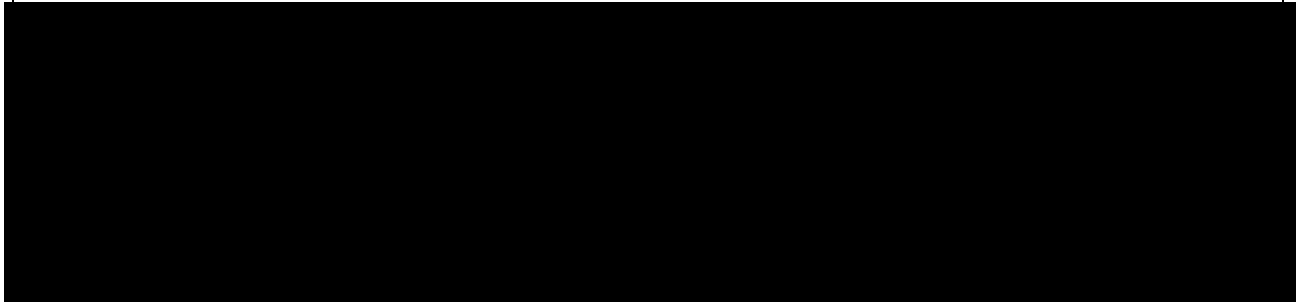
**6. Project risk management**

**6a. If your project has an Overseas Security and Justice assessment, please provide an update on any related risks, and any special conditions in your award paperwork if relevant for your project.**

n/a

**7. Please use this section to respond to any feedback provided when your project was confirmed, or from your most recent Annual Report. As a reminder, all projects that were scored as 'Not Yet Sensitive' in the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) assessment of their latest Annual Report should demonstrate how they are meeting the minimum GESI-Sensitive standard.**

In response to the feedback received, the project will integrate GESI considerations into the planned policy advisories to be completed by the project end. We will aim to assess how proposed policies may differentially impact women and other marginalized groups, and provide decision-makers with actionable recommendations to promote inclusive and equitable outcomes.



## Checklist for submission

Have you responded to <b>feedback from your latest Annual Report Review</b> ? You should respond in section 6, and annexe other requested materials as appropriate.	X
Have you reported against the most <b>up to date information for your project</b> ?	X
Have you <b>clearly highlighted any confidential information</b> within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	X
Include your <b>project reference</b> in the subject line of submission email.	X
Submit to <a href="mailto:BCF-Reports@niras.com">BCF-Reports@niras.com</a>	X
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	X