

Name of Project

Community-based Conservation for Snow Leopards

Executive Summary

The Snow Leopard Trust proposes to expand Snow Leopard Enterprises (SLE), our successful community-based conservation program in Mongolia. A recent independent evaluation, funded by the Turner Foundation, confirmed that the program is both effective and efficient at providing critical protection to snow leopards and their prey species *and* improving the quality of life for hundreds of families. The evaluation stated “SLE is an outstanding example of an integrated rural development and conservation project. The program is highly valued by all participants and by all local officials questioned.”

While it is wonderful to receive accolades, we especially appreciated the recommendations on how to improve the program. One of the report’s key recommendations is to expand SLE to include more families, thereby increasing the amount of habitat and number of cats protected. Funding from the [REDACTED] Fund will make a strong program even stronger by expanding the number of participants and protecting more snow leopards. It will also help us grow the sale of Snow Leopard Enterprises handicrafts to a point where the program becomes self-supporting, allowing us to use scarce resources for other conservation projects.

Specific expected results include:

- Expand protection of snow leopards and their habitat in Mongolia by 33%
- Expand community participation in Snow Leopard Enterprises by 33%
- Launch new education component in support of micro-loan program
- Revamp snow leopard and prey population monitoring program to ensure regular collection of data and a centralized database for improved analysis.

1) Overall Conservation Program

Communities & Snow Leopards

High in the mountains of central Asia, the elusive snow leopards and nomadic herding communities share in the struggle for survival in some of the world’s harshest conditions. As herders increase the numbers of domestic livestock, wild ungulate populations decrease in response to reduced open grazing land. Snow leopards that originally relied upon these wild sheep and goats for food must then turn to killing livestock. Though people respect the cats, they can not afford to lose valuable animals and often retaliate by killing these endangered cats. Due to these poverty-induced conflicts, including illegal hunting for bones and pelts, we estimate as few as 3,500 of these cats remain in the wild today.

The sole source of cash income for many of these communities comes from the sale of raw wool. However, they lack access to city markets. Relying on passing traders, nomadic herders receive extremely low prices, and they have few choices for increasing their income. Many families live on less than \$50.00 per year.

Addressing the Problem & Identifying Solutions

To address these growing problems, the Snow Leopard Trust has developed long-term partnerships with rural communities. Through village discussions, a community-based conservation program called Snow Leopard Enterprises was launched in 1998 to provide increased income and an incentive to take a positive role in conservation.

The Snow Leopard Trust and our community partners have created an alternative source of income for herding communities. This enterprise program provides key training and equipment to families for the production of traditional hand-crafted wool products. The Snow Leopard Trust then markets these products internationally with money from sales going back to the families. As part of the program, the communities agree to assist in the conservation of the snow leopard, its habitat, and its wild prey, setting specific conservation goals and priorities for their region. At the end of each year, if the conservation goals have been met in the region, a financial bonus is given to each family and to a community conservation fund.

One Purchase Supports Conservation & Communities

By making finished products, herders add value to their wool, increasing their annual income to provide necessary food, clothes, and medicines that were out of reach before this enterprise. This partnership with over 300 families has increased awareness among local communities of the value and benefits of wildlife, generated additional income, and reduced a critical threat to snow leopards and their natural prey. This program is a great example of how successful conservation starts with communities.

Independent Evaluation

In the fall of 2006, the Turner Foundation funded an independent evaluation of Snow Leopard Enterprises. Dr. David Mallon of Manchester Metropolitan University interviewed 119 program participants and other stakeholders in the 5 provinces where the program operates. The evaluation was extremely positive as noted in the following four quotes.

SLE is an outstanding example of an integrated rural development and conservation project. The program is highly valued by all participants and by all local officials questioned. The program is relatively small in terms of its overall budget compared to some international projects in Mongolia, but it is extremely cost-effective.

The raised awareness of the snow leopard and the environment, the reduction in poaching of large prey, and wider protection of the environment as a whole have undoubtedly made a significant contribution to snow leopard conservation in the areas where the program operates.

The increased cash income gained through the program enables a general improvement in standard of living, widens choices, and increases control over members' own and their families' lives.

The program contributes to female empowerment in three main ways: raising individual self esteem; enhancing the profile of women within the family and the community; and engaging women in decision-making on the environment.

While it is always nice to hear positive feedback on our program the most valuable contributions from the evaluation were the suggestions for how to increase the impact of the program. This proposal requests support to implement several improvements to the program that will increase protection for snow leopards and their key prey species, improve the lives of more families, and help the program become self-sustaining.

The following are key points about Snow Leopard Enterprises in the format requested:

a) In situ field initiatives

- Snow Leopard Enterprises provides direct protection for snow leopards and their prey species by providing economic incentives to communities that abide by conservation agreements.
- Strong community partnerships help ensure the program achieves its dual goals of wildlife protection and improving the quality of life of program participants.
- Revenues from the sale of handicrafts will fund the cost of the program; freeing the project from the need for continued donor support and ensuring its long-term sustainability. [this doesn't really seem to be 'in situ']
- Monitoring of snow leopard populations and their prey species help verify the environmental impact of the program.
- Strict monitoring of the conservation agreements and strong penalties for violating the agreements help ensure compliance.

b) Education initiatives

- Education is built into every aspect of the program. When trainers visit communities to work on product designs they also use the chance to talk about snow leopard conservation and the purpose of the program. The evaluation stated that "Levels of environmental awareness are impressively high and represent one of the prominent achievements of the program."
- Practical education on best herding practices has reduced livestock losses and conflict between herders and predators.
- Each fall, if communities abide by the conservation agreement, they receive a bonus in addition to the purchase price of their handicrafts. Staff have added a ceremony and education component to the presentation or withholding of the conservation bonus.

c) Conservation impact

Results of Snow Leopard Enterprises have been publicized and shared in numerous ways.

- Bayara, Country Director for the Snow Leopard Trust, was a presenter at the Zoos and Aquaria Committed to Conservation (ZACC) conference held in Houston this year.
- Snow Leopard Enterprises publishes a newsletter three times a year in two languages
- The Trust was recently awarded a grant to develop and publicize its Community-centered Approach to Conservation via a workbook and DVD. Scheduled for spring of 2008 the publication will prominently feature Snow Leopard Enterprises.
- Regular updates on the program are featured in the Snow Leopard Trust newsletter and website that are read by thousands of people around the US and in 17 other countries.

2) **Project Personnel**

List project personnel/organization dedicated to each of the three areas and their role:

a) In situ field initiatives

- Agvaantseren Bayarjargal (Bayara), Snow Leopard Trust, Mongolia Country Director

b) Education initiatives

- Agvaantseren Bayarjargal (Bayara), Snow Leopard Trust, Mongolia Country Director

c) Conservation impact

- Agvaantseren Bayarjargal (Bayara), Snow Leopard Trust, Mongolia Country Director
- Dr. Thomas McCarthy, Snow Leopard Trust, Science and Conservation Director

End of Summary

Proposal

1) Project Goals and Objectives

The overall goal is to increase protection for snow leopards by implementing suggested improvements made by the Turner Foundation independent evaluation. This is an opportunity to take a successful project and help it to protect more snow leopards, involve more communities, and become self-sustaining.

The following 6 objectives are critical for Snow Leopard Enterprises to achieve this goal.

a) Research

- Improve population monitoring of snow leopard and prey species.
- Coordinate data collection and sharing among various groups working on snow leopard conservation in Mongolia.

b) Education

- Create education program to compliment the new micro-loan fund that is available to help herders purchase spinning wheels and drum carders.
- Improve linkage between participating communities and nearby protected areas.

c) Conservation

- Expand Snow Leopard Enterprises to more communities in general and to more families within already participating communities.
- Improve quality of products to help increase sales

2) Methods

a) Research

- Improve population monitoring of snow leopard and prey species.
Over the past 3 months the Trust has been reviewing its population monitoring program and has developed a plan for improving this important area of the SLE program. The program operates in the 5 provinces where the majority of snow leopards are found. The following monitoring plan has been developed for each of the 5 provinces:
 - South Gobi, Gobi Altai, and Khovd – Biologists will conduct prey species counts twice per year and conduct snow leopard sign surveys at least once per year. These surveys will be conducted in the spring and fall in coordination with trips already planned by Snow Leopard Enterprises trainers.
 - Bayan Olgii and Uvs – Biologists are in the process of setting up a new schedule for snow leopard and prey species in these provinces. Surveys will be conducted at least once per year and a new survey plan will be developed as part of this project.
- Coordinate data collection and sharing among various groups working on snow leopard conservation in Mongolia

- Through trainings conducted by Snow Leopard Trust staff the Snow Leopard Information Management System or SLIMS is widely used by park staff and other NGOs working in snow leopard areas. The Trust will work with these organizations to consolidate SLIMS data into a central database. This will provide conservation groups and policy makers a much clearer picture of snow leopard and prey populations within Mongolia.

b) Education

- Create an education program to compliment the recently created micro-loan fund that is helping herders purchase spinning wheels and drum carders.
 - To improve the quality and quantity of products produced by herders there is a need for simple tools such as spinning wheels and drum carders. The cost of these items, \$120 and \$200 respectively, has made the purchase of these items impossible for most families. The Trust recently launched a micro-loan project that will finance the purchase of equipment like this. To help ensure the loan program's success an education program focused on credit and basic business skills is needed. The program will include the following:
 - A brochure for current and future loan recipients
 - A training program for loan recipients
- Improve linkage between participating communities and nearby protected areas.
 - Both communities and protected area staff are involved in Snow Leopard Enterprises but the connections and collaboration between the groups needs to be improved.
 - Protected area staff will now submit proposals for the use of the conservation funds
 - Communities will decide on which proposals will be funded each year

c) Conservation

- Expand Snow Leopard Enterprises to more communities in general and to more families within already participating communities.
 - Snow Leopard Enterprises currently has partnerships with 22 communities in 5 provinces of Mongolia. There is a need to expand the program to more families in our existing partners and to new communities not yet participating. The improved survey system mentioned above will help prioritize which communities to bring on next.
 - The goal for the program is to increase the participation in the program by 33% over the next year.
 - The expansion of the program will increase the protection of snow leopards and their habitat by 33%.
- Improve quality of products to help increase sales.
 - The new drum carders and spinning wheels that are now being made available through the micro-loans will improve the product quality a great deal.
 - The regular trainings that already take place each spring and fall will continue.

3) Schedule

- a) Initiation Date – July 2007
- b) Completion Date – June 2008

Project Task Matrix – Snow Leopard Trust Activities

Mongolia	2007						2008						
2007 Grant Activities	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
Research													
Develop population monitoring plan	X	X											
Conduct Population surveys for snow leopards and prey			X	X	X					X	X	X	
Survey protected areas and other NGOs for SLIMS data		X	X	X									
Collect data from other groups				X	X	X							
Clean and enter data into SLIMS database						X	X	X	X				
Disseminate data to interested groups and agencies										X	X		
Education													
Create training program & brochure for loan candidates	X	X											
Carryout trainings for loan recipients and candidates		X	X	X						X	X	X	
Create/Distribute proposal format for park staff		X											
Review park staff proposals with communities			X	X									
Fund park winning park proposals				X	X								
Conservation													
Recruit new families in current partner communities		X	X										
Based on survey results select new communities							X	X					
Conduct product trainings to improve quality			X	X	X					X	X	X	

4) Background

Since 1981 the Snow Leopard Trust has been working to protect the endangered snow leopard from extinction. Today the Trust has 25 field staff managing major projects in China, India, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia and Pakistan. These 5 countries are home to an estimated 75% of the wild snow leopard population. The Trust also serves as the support organization for the Snow Leopard Network, a group of more than 200 researchers, conservationists, and educators.

The proposed project will be led by Bayarjargal Agvaantseren (Bayara) who co-founded Snow Leopard Enterprises in 1998. Bayara has helped grow sales of the program from \$2,300 in 1999 to more than \$75,000 in 2006. She will be supported by Dr. Tom McCarthy, the Snow Leopard Trust Director of Science and Conservation. Tom and Bayara have worked together for many years and have the skills needed to successfully implement the work outlined in this grant.

5) Outcome

Snow Leopard Enterprises in Mongolia is at a critical point in its development. The program is successfully meeting its conservation goals and is poised to become self-sustaining. Donor support has been critical to the program's success but can not continue indefinitely.

The recent evaluation highlighted the successes of the program and identified several key opportunities for improvement. A grant this year from the [REDACTED] Fund would allow the Snow Leopard Trust to act quickly to strengthen an already strong program. Key activities that would be funded by [REDACTED] would include the following.

- Improved monitoring of snow leopard populations as well as key prey species
- Creation of an education program to compliment the new micro-loan program
- Expansion of the program that will bring protection to 30 percent more snow leopards.

If the project is not awarded all the funds requested adjustments will be made. The Snow Leopard Trust has faced this in the past with [REDACTED] grants and has successfully completed projects by finding other sources of funding or revising the scope of the project.

A rejection of the grant would be especially challenging this year. The proposed activities are all based on suggestions contained in the recent evaluation of Snow Leopard Enterprises. Many of the proposed activities are time sensitive, such as the education components and the program expansion. A delay in the implementation of these activities risks damage to the micro-loan program and the financial independence of Snow Leopard Enterprises.

Mongolia is home to as many as 1,000 snow leopards, second to only China in total population. An investment by [REDACTED] in Snow Leopard Enterprises will help the program become financially independent; allowing it to continue providing protection for the cats while [REDACTED] can move on to fund other projects. The grant will also expand the protection of snow leopards in the second most important range country.

6) **Budget**

Community-Based Snow Leopard Conservation				
BUDGET ITEM <i>(you may add lines as needed)</i>	AMOUNT REQUESTED FROM	SECURED FUNDS - OTHER SOURCES	BALANCE REQUIRED	TOTAL PROJECT COST
Project Personnel <i>(position, hours, rate)</i>				
Bayara – Country director, 640 hours, \$9/hr	2880	2880	0	5760
Tom McCarthy, director, 160 hours, \$37.50/hr	0	6000	0	6000
Munkhtsog – Biologist, 480 hours, \$7/hr	1680	1680	0	3360
Tuvshe, Product Designer, 480 hours, \$6/hr	1440	1440	0	2880
Education Consultant, 160 hours, \$7.5/hr	1200	0	0	1200
Transportation Expenses <i>(number of persons, cost per trip, number of trips)</i>				
1 person, \$3,500, 1 trip to Mongolia	0	3500	0	3500
4 people, \$1200, 2 training/research trips to South	1200	1200	0	2400
2 people, \$900, 2 training trips to West	900	900	0	1800
2 people, \$900, 2 research trips to West	900	900	0	1800
Lodging, Meals <i>(number of days x persons)</i>				
Each field trip is approximately 30 days x 8 people at \$10/day	1200	1200	0	2400
Equipment <i>(itemize \$100+ purchases)</i>				
Handicraft Purchase from participants	2000	6000	0	8000
Training materials	200	200		400
Supplies <i>(itemize \$100+ purchases)</i>				
	0	0	0	0
Miscellaneous Expenses <i>(itemize printing, postage, etc.)</i>				
Micro-loan education handouts	0	400	0	400
TOTAL in US \$ <i>(rounded to nearest \$50)</i>	13600	26300	0	39900

7) **Letters of Support** *(required only for NEW projects)*

Attached

8) **Non Profit Information**

Attached