

## **The Rufford Small Grants Foundation**

### **Final Report**

Congratulations on the completion of your project that was supported by The Rufford Small Grants Foundation.

We ask all grant recipients to complete a Final Report Form that helps us to gauge the success of our grant giving. We understand that projects often do not follow the predicted course but knowledge of your experiences is valuable to us and others who may be undertaking similar work. Please be as honest as you can in answering the questions – remember that negative experiences are just as valuable as positive ones if they help others to learn from them.

Please complete the form in English and be as clear and concise as you can. We will ask for further information if required. If you have any other materials produced by the project, particularly a few relevant photographs, please send these to us separately.

Please submit your final report to [jane@rufford.org](mailto:jane@rufford.org).

Thank you for your help.

**Josh Cole, Grants Director**

<b>Grant Recipient Details</b>	
<b>Your name</b>	Cholpon Abasova, Snow Leopard Enterprises Program Coordinator, Snow Leopard Foundation in Kyrgyzstan
<b>Project title</b>	Strengthening and growing a handicraft program that links Kyrgyzstan herders with snow leopard conservation
<b>RSG reference</b>	16801-1
<b>Reporting period</b>	March 1 2015 – February 29 2016
<b>Amount of grant</b>	£4,750
<b>Your email address</b>	cholpon@snowleopard.org
<b>Date of this report</b>	March 14 <sup>th</sup> , 2016

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

Objective	Not achieved	Partially achieved	Fully achieved	Comments
Plan a design workshop for Snow Leopard Enterprises (SLE), Kyrgyzstan to expand and revitalize the SLE product line. Snow Leopard Foundation in Kyrgyzstan collaborates with two herder communities, called Ak-Shyirak and Enylchek that are located near the Sarychat National Wildlife Reserve (Central Tien Shan Mountains), an area of prime snow leopard habitat. The communities make handicrafts through SLE, and earn income in exchange for conservation agreements.	,		Yes	Thanks to a steady income from handicraft sales, SLE participants agree not to hunt or poach snow leopards or their wild prey. They also agree not to provide room, board or guiding services to support trophy hunters who come into area to hunt illegally. SLE's product line has been stagnant for 10 years and sales have been eroding. By planning and organising a design workshop, we hoped to create exciting new products and accelerate handicraft sales, as well as strengthen herder incentives to continue participating in the programme.
Hold a 4-day design workshop to bring together SLE participants from the Ak-Shyirak and Enylcheck, Kyrgyz and international wool craft designers, and marketing experts from our partner organisation in the US, Snow Leopard Trust. Develop a new line of handicrafts with international appeal.			Yes	We held a highly successful 4-day workshop in June 2015, at a village on Lake Issyk-Kul, about 250 km from the two villages. 25 attendees (24 women and one man) worked with three wool craft designers on new designs, and training on needle felting and traditional embroidery. New products, made from felted wool, include four new rug designs based on traditional Kyrgyz rugs ( <i>shyrdaks</i> ), embroidered, felted wallets, pet toys and pet mats.
Review Snow Leopard Foundation Kyrgyzstan's conservation work with participants during the design workshop. Learn about how			Yes	On the first day of the workshop, we held a meeting with all participants to discuss the conservation component of Snow Leopard Enterprises, talked about threats to snow leopards and their wild prey, and reviewed herder conservation

handicrafts are marketed internationally together with a conservation message on snow leopards.				<p>contracts. These are contracts that herder's sign each year in which they agree to protect the snow leopard and its wild prey.</p> <p>We also introduced Gina Cantara, Snow Leopard Trust's Sales and Marketing Manager, who talked about how Kyrgyz handicrafts are marketed in the US and internationally (through 150 zoos and other outlets). Gina also focused on how our snow leopard conservation message is disseminated to buyers of handicrafts (each product is clearly labelled with information on the endangered snow leopard, and how herders who make handicrafts are helping to protect this big cat).</p>
Sustain/increase SLE participants' interest in the handicraft programme through opportunities to make a wider range of products.			Yes	<p>Prior to the design workshop, SLE participants have been making a limited range of products; many of them have expressed an interest in making a greater variety of products.</p> <p>We were delighted to see how engaged all the participants were during the design workshop. In the evenings, after long days of product development and training, many people just kept working on their new creations. They were clearly proud of the new products and many expressed how excited they were to be making them for SLE and for leopard conservation programme.</p> <p>Participants also loved that the snow leopard and its wild prey were featured on several of the new products (e.g. rugs, cat mats).</p>
Place new product orders with workshop participants and test market through Snow Leopard Trust in the US.			Yes	<p>We were so pleased with the quality of the new products, that we were able to immediately place orders following the workshop. We picked up SLE products in November 2015 and shipped them to the US.</p> <p>Gina Cantara has told us that the response from buyers is overwhelming.</p>

				There is a particularly high demand for pet mats, small rugs and needle felted cat toys.
Increase the demand for new handicrafts to increase herder incomes, which in turn will strengthen their engagement in snow leopard conservation.		Yes		We are confident that the new line of handicrafts will significantly boost sales in the long term, and are very encouraged by the results of our test marketing in the US. We anticipate that the herders who were able to attend the workshop will be able to increase their incomes by at least 10% in 2016. We will need to provide new product training for the 15 herders from Ak-Shyirak who were not able to attend the June 2015 workshop, and we hope this will occur in 2016. Thanks to the interest in our new products, we anticipate a steady increase in herder incomes over the next several years.

**2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled (if relevant).**

Our project to hold a design workshop to create a new line of handicraft products was a huge success. The only unforeseen difficulty was that we were not able to train all 40 SLE participants. We were very disappointed that 15 herders from Ak-Shyirak were not able to attend the workshop because of family reasons including lack of childcare and livestock needs. It is essential that they are trained in the new products as soon as possible, and hope this will transpire in 2016. As you will see from the budget items below, over £1,900 of Rufford Small Grant funds were unspent.

We did notify Rufford of this budget discrepancy as part of our second update email to Jane Raymond on December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

If it is acceptable with the Rufford Foundation, Snow Leopard Foundation in Kyrgyzstan would like to use the remaining funds towards continued handicraft training in 2016, and to develop and print a “how to” book on all the new designs, with patterns and instructions.

We anticipate that a design workshop in Ak-Shyirak will cost approximately £1,500, and that the cost of the book (50 copies) will be roughly £500. We would like to hold a “mini” design workshop for the 15 women who were unable to attend the June 2015 Design Workshop this summer in Ak-Shyirak. One of the designers from our workshop last year, Jyldyz Asanakunova, has agreed to come with us to Ak-Shyirak to train the women to make the new products. Women from Ak-Shyirak who attended the June 2015 workshop would also

be welcome to participate. Some of them who became particularly adept at needle felting would be encouraged to attend to help in needle felting training during the workshop.

### **3. Briefly describe the three most important outcomes of your project.**

#### **a) Creation of a new line of beautiful wool felted handicrafts.**

These new products far exceeded our expectations and are not only popular with international buyers but are also popular with the herders who make them. For example, a participant from Ak-Shyirak called Elza, who teaches 50 children at the local school, said that she was so thrilled to learn how to make needle felted pet toys, that she would teach this skill to all her students. Elza also told us that she always passes on what she learns about snow leopards from the SLE programme to her students.

Another example of herder enthusiasm for the new products concerns Suyunbek, a 21-year-old from Enylchek, and the only man who attended the workshop. He has been helping his mother make handicrafts for 2 years, and loves the work so much (and to have had the opportunity to work with the workshop designers), that he now aspires to be a handicraft designer himself one day.

#### **b) Strengthening herder participation in snow leopard conservation.**

Getting most of the SLE participants together for the design workshop enabled us to spend a lot of time talking informally about our snow leopard conservation programmes, and strengthening our relationships with the participants. We took the opportunity to commend everyone for their incredible efforts to protect the snow leopard and its wild prey by not supporting trophy hunting, and by not retaliating when livestock are lost to predation. For example, we thanked the local SLE coordinator from Enylchek, called Raya, who made sure that herders understood not to retaliate when a snow leopard killed a herder's yak a few months before the design workshop. The community was upset, Raya told us, but they understood that they needed to keep their (collective) promise not to harm snow leopards.

#### **c) Potential for growth in the SLE program and more snow leopard habitat protected.**

Thanks to the Rufford Foundation's incredible support, we now have a new line of highly marketable handicrafts. We expect that more herders from our existing SLE communities, as well as potentially a new herder community from a remote valley region near Ak-Shyirak, will be interested in learning how to make these incredible handicrafts, increase their incomes, and become champions of wildlife conservation.

### **4. Briefly describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefitted from the project (if relevant).**

Twenty four women and one man from the villages of Enylchek and Ak-Shyirak attended the design workshop and benefitted as follows:

a) They were able to greatly enhance their handicraft skills by working with three renowned designers: Jyldyz Asanakunova and Gulmira Kutueva from Kyrgyzstan, and Sharon Costello

from the US. Jyldyz worked with the herders to make four new rug designs that are based on the traditional Kyrgyz *shyrdak* styles, but are quite original, with stylised images of snow leopards, ibex and other local animals. Gulmira trained the workshop participants in traditional Kyrgyz embroidery called “*basma*”—resulting in wool felted wallets and coasters with *basma* embroidery. Sharon taught everyone how to make needle felted pet toys and pet mats from her own, playful designs. During the workshop, all participants attended a master class on felt processing from raw sheep wool at Jyldyz’s local wool processing workshop.

b) Increased earnings potential. Before the workshop, herders were making just a few wool felted products with limited appeal for international markets. Sales had flatlined and in some instance decreased. They now can make a variety of unique products with high marketability, judging by feedback from buyers over the last few months.

c) Increased awareness of snow leopard conservation. Workshop participants gained a deeper understanding of the linkage between their handicraft work, their efforts to protect the snow leopard, and the end buyers who appreciate their handicrafts and the conservation messaging.

## **5. Are there any plans to continue this work?**

Yes. Support from Rufford Small Grant programme has helped us grow and strengthen SLE in Kyrgyzstan towards program sustainability.

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

The results of this project have already been publicized on Snow Leopard Trust website, and was the feature article of their Fall 2015 newsletter.

## **7. Timescale: Over what period was the RSG used? How does this compare to the anticipated or actual length of the project?**

The Rufford Small Grant funds were spent in June 2015 as anticipated. The project, however, continued into early 2016, as we felt it was necessary to report to the Rufford Foundation on the response from buyers for the new SLE product line.

**8. Budget: Please provide a breakdown of budgeted versus actual expenditure and the reasons for any differences. All figures should be in £ sterling, indicating the local exchange rate used.**

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments <u>Exchange rate 1 GBP = 90 Kyrgyz som</u>
Ground transportation, round trip, Enylchek to Lake Issyk-Kul for 10 people. (Mini vans and drivers.)	238	188	-50	
Ground transportation, round trip, Ak-Shyirak to Issyk-Kul for 15 people. (mini vans and drivers).	773	188	-585	Half of the SLE participants from Ak-Shyirak could not attend (15), therefore transportation costs were much lower than anticipated.
Venue costs	258	0	-258	We were able to find a venue on Lake Issyk-Kul that we could use free of charge.
Accommodation with breakfast for 26 SLE participants, 3 designers and 3 SLFK/SLT staff x 4 days	965	1061	96	Even though 15 fewer people attended the design workshop, we under calculated the cost of accommodation which was higher than anticipated.
Lunch and dinner for 32 people x 4 days	964	617	-347	Lunch and dinner costs lower due to reduced number of people attending workshop.
Interpreters	850	190	-660	We needed fewer interpreters than anticipated.
Kyrgyz designer remuneration x 2	386	512	127	
Workshop materials (fabrics, threads, print materials)	316	47	-270	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,750</b>	<b>2803</b>	<b>-1947</b>	

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

The next steps will be to:

- a) Provide new product trainings for the Ak-Shyirak herders who were not able to attend the June 2015 workshop.
- b) Develop a 'recipe book' for all SLE participants with step-by-step instructions for making each product, photos of how the end product should look, tips for what to avoid and what to remember.
- c) Increase participation in SLE through outreach to a least one new community that shares habitat with snow leopards.
- d) Begin a pilot educational project for children of SLE families based on our successful summer nature camps in India and Mongolia that foster positive attitudes towards snow leopards and an appreciation of nature in local children.

**10. Did you use the RSGF logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the RSGF receive any publicity during the course of your work?**

During the granting period, the Rufford Foundation was acknowledged through the Snow Leopard Trust's monthly Updates from the Field, in their Fall 2015 newsletter, and on their website blog.