Community Health and Safety Plan

30 March 2023

CEPF Grant 114063

Wildlife Conservation Society

Upscaling SMART in Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan

Grant Summary

1. **Grantee organization**. Wildlife Conservation Society
2. **Project title**. Upscaling SMART in Kyrgyzstan
3. **Grant number**. 114063
4. **Grant amount (US dollars)**. $152,000 (approximate)
5. **Proposed dates of grant**. 1 May 2023 – 28 February 2025
6. **Countries where activities will be undertaken**. Kyrgyzstan
7. **Date of preparation of this document**. 30 March 2023

8. **Summary of the project**

Project Rationale

Effective law enforcement is a key component of biodiversity conservation both within protected areas and across larger multiple-use landscapes. Tools that improve law enforcement efforts, and improve understanding of where more effort is required, can help mobilize and maximize conservation impact. SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool) is a law enforcement management platform, encompassing desktop, mobile and online software and a powerful analysis and mapping interface that has been developed through a partnership of conservation organizations, including the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS). It is an excellent tool for monitoring and improving management of protection and other conservation field activities (e.g. biological monitoring) conducted in protected areas and community-based conservancies. SMART helps optimize the use of limited conservation resources available to protected area and conservancy management.

Since its launch in 2013 SMART has been implemented in more than 1000 sites in more than 70 countries worldwide. However, in comparison to other Asian cregions, Central Asia is lagging behind in the introduction of SMART. There are currently initiatives in Central Asia for introducing SMART to protected areas in Mongolia (several sites), Kazakhstan (at least 7 sites), Uzbekistan (4 sites), Kyrgyzstan (2 sites), Turkmenistan (1 site) and Afghanistan (1 site). However, the full potential of SMART has not yet been realized at any of these sites. The reasons for slow development vary from site to site, but the lack of strong involvement from government agencies responsible for protected area management has been a consistent stumbling block.

As part of the CEPF 111815 project, WCS assisted in the introduction of SMART for patrol and wildlife monitoring at two pilot sites and KBAs in Kyrgyzstan: Khan-Tengri National Park and Sarychat-Eertash Strict Nature Reserve. Under this project (which is now in the process of wrapping up) we attempted to:

1. Improve protection management at two project pilot sites (Khan-Tengri National Park and Sarychat-Eertash Strict Nature Reserve) by establishing SMART-based monitoring and adaptive management of patrols.

2. Provide equipment to increase the effectiveness of patrols and wildlife monitoring at these two pilot sites.
3. Develop and test a SMART system for wildlife monitoring.
4. Create a capacity for SMART work at our local NGO partner Ilbirs Foundation.
5. Create a capacity for SMART work within the Department for Biodiversity Conservation and Protected Areas of the Ministry of Natural Resources, Ecology, and Technical Supervision of the Kyrgyz Republic.
6. Conduct a social survey in order to establish attitudes of local villagers towards snow leopards, nature conservation and the protected areas Khan-Tengri National Park and Sarychat-Eertash Strict Nature Reserve.

All these activities (except #5 – see below) were achieved in Project 111815. Despite initial setbacks, mostly related to changes in staff both at the pilot sites and at Ilbirs Foundation (our local partner), this project successfully reached its goal of implementing SMART and the process of improving patrol effectiveness has begun. Good quality data are presently being collected on all patrols by the two pilot sites and quarterly patrol reports are produced and discussed during feedback meetings where patrol targets are set for the next quarter. For both sites already a 4rd patrol report and meeting was conducted in January 2023. However, there is a need for further technical and management support to ensure the potential of SMART is fully realized. In addition to quarterly SMART patrol reports and feedback meetings that are already occurring, annual in-depth SMART data analyses should be initiated to establish long-term trends in patrol efforts, quality of patrols, threats and results of wildlife monitoring. These processes can best start when there are at least two full calendar years of SMART patrol and wildlife monitoring data available, which will be the case in January 2025. Initiating a process of annual analyses for strategic management purposes would require continued support from WCS after the end of the CEPF 111815 project in May 2023.

Even more importantly, during the implementation of CEPF 111815 a number of shortcomings of pilot site staff became apparent, and necessary responses were beyond the scope of our original project. When Ilbirs staff members joined patrols at both sites in order to train data collection in the field, the patrol teams repeatedly encountered poachers, whereas no poachers had been reported by patrol teams in previous years/patrol activities. During these encounters, it became clear to Ilbirs staff that rangers did not know what to do when encountering poachers (especially foreigners) and appeared to have little to no experience in handling such situations or correctly issuing citations. For patrol efforts to be effective, therefore, implementation of SMART alone, while necessary, is insufficient: rangers must learn how to professionally deal with encounters with poachers, and develop the mentality needed to ensure protection of natural resources.

Building the capacity of Ilbirs NGO has had multiple benefits to the project. Once trained, Ilbirs staff demonstrated a high capacity for providing training to ranger staff on how to properly collect patrol data on the job, resulting in consistently good quality SMART

patrol data. Ilbirs staff also established that there were poachers active in both pilot sites and that rangers could turn a blind eye when there is insufficient oversight. Finally, Ilbirs staff became familiar with patrol activities and the difficult circumstances in which patrols are conducted in the field. This allowed Ilbirs staff to better assist in evaluating patrol routes and efforts and in developing meaningful and realistic patrol targets. Both the second and third benefit provide a rationale for continued involvement of Ilbirs staff in patrolling at the two pilot sites as well as at sites where SMART will be introduced for patrol monitoring and management in the future (see below).

Our experience here and in other countries of the region suggests that the absence of a strong central supporting system for SMART in Central Asian governments usually results in ineffective, and often unsustainable efforts to introduce SMART at individual sites. Site managers are often not eager to introduce SMART as it often exposes poor quality patrol efforts. Often, they will only support its introduction when the central authorities demand it and provide oversight. In Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, the central authorities have appointed "National SMART Coordinators" for this purpose. After receiving training under the CEPF 111815 project, the coordinators in Kyrgyzstan were supposed to provide oversight and support the process of introducing SMART to pilot sites. However, these coordinators were given these SMART responsibilities as a side job in addition to other, primary tasks. As a result, they spent little time on SMART and were often not available when most needed. Although international experts as well as local and international NGOs are often involved in implementation of SMART, their effectiveness is limited when there is insufficient involvement and commitment from central authorities. Moreover, international experts are usually involved only during implementation, with the risk that SMART will not be sustainable when the implementation projects conclude. Therefore, to ensure long-term stability and institutionalization of SMART, Ilbirs Foundation will need to work with relevant government entities to create a strong central conservation authority that puts its full weight behind implementation of SMART.

Such an opportunity to establish a central government SMART implementation team has presented itself in Kyrgyzstan. The Ministry of Natural Resources, Ecology and Technical Supervision of the Kyrgyz Republic is very satisfied with the introduction of SMART at Khan-Tengri National Park and Sarychat-Eertash Reserve as part of the CEPF 111815 project. The Deputy Minister, [redacted], who is head of the department responsible for biodiversity conservation and protected areas, expressed during a meeting with [redacted], Ilbirs Director, and [redacted], WCS SMART Specialist, on 15 November 2023 that he would like to establish a SMART unit in his department that would become responsible for rolling out SMART nation-wide as a standard tool for law enforcement management at protected areas in Kyrgyzstan. Mr [redacted] understands the need for a strong commitment by the ministry and its staff, has continued discussions on this topic with [redacted] of Ilbirs, and has already started the process of appointing staff to set up the SMART unit, noting that he welcomes any support that Ilbirs and WCS are able to provide. Lending civil society input via Ilbirs to this process of expanding and institutionalizing SMART will substantially

increase and consolidate the protection benefits of SMART in Kyrgyzstan, thus forming a strong rationale for engaging in this process.

We are aware that in addition to SMART another GIS tool called NextGIS is presently used and promoted by Global and Local Information Partnerships (GLIP) for monitoring and managing conservation field activities in protected areas in Kyrgyzstan. WWF Russia has been promoting NextGIS mainly in Russia and former Soviet countries, although the WWF office in the Russian Far East uses SMART in collaboration with WCS, and WWF is a member of the global SMART partnership. Whereas SMART has been developed and is being supported by a large partnership of international conservation organizations, NextGIS has been developed by a single small firm, which may limit its ability to maintain and support long-term functionality of the software. There are other differences, including that SMART is open source and free of charge whereas NextGIS packages have to be purchased and require annual fees. WCS has not worked with NextGIS and therefore we are not as familiar with it as with SMART, but as far as we understand NextGIS is more suitable for wildlife monitoring than for law enforcement. Mr [redacted], WCS SMART Specialist, has discussed the use of these two tools in Kyrgyzstan at length with [redacted] of GLIP on 27 December 2022, including the SMART work that is being supported by CEPF at the two pilot sites and our plan to assist in setting up a SMART unit within the department for protected areas. Mr [redacted] suggested that both tools should be piloted for various projects and potential partnerships by GLIP or Ilbirs with other organizations. Based on the experience gained in this way, government and non-government organizations (such as community-based organizations) can then decide which tool they prefer for various purposes in the future. WCS agrees with this flexible approach, and therefore we do not see reasons for conflicts with GLIP. The project staff will continue discussing this topic with [redacted] and share information on activities and plans related to SMART and NextGIS.

Protecting intact ecosystems often requires effective management of protected and unprotected parcels of land in a coordinated manner. Developing effective management regimes on unprotected lands is often the greatest challenge. In Kyrgyzstan, a substantial and growing number of community conservancies carry out biodiversity monitoring and protection activities. As such, community-based conservation represents a potentially important component of protecting intact ecosystems across Kyrgyzstan. As one means of integrating conservation efforts across protected and unprotected land management units, Ilbirs and WCS believe that SMART could provide a single, cohesive instrument for monitoring and managing the field work of both conservancies and protected areas. We believe this could considerably improve the management quality of conservancies, and provide a means of integrating data across various management units. Introducing SMART in protected areas as well as in community-based conservancies provides an opportunity to compare threat levels, protection effort levels and wildlife populations in both. This could form a first step towards cooperation between stakeholders aimed at developing and implementing integrated conservation strategies at the landscape level. In order to explore this potential we propose to introduce SMART to a single

community-based conservancy, Jashyl-Oroon, which has expressed great interest in this opportunity. We would use this project as a valuable step for improving conservation in Jashyl-Oroon, and as a pilot project to learn from the process, produce guidelines and create a capacity within Ilbirs for expanding the use of SMART to community-based conservancies nation-wide.

Project Approach

WCS will focus on building capacity with civil society to influence and improve protection of natural resources in Kyrgyzstan, primarily by training Ilbirs Foundation (a local Kyrgyz NGO) staff to assume a leading role in implementing SMART in protected and unprotected landscapes across the country. In many ways this approach mirrors efforts in other countries (e.g., Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Thailand, Russia) where NGO's have worked in alliance with the government to improve law enforcement in government-managed protected areas, while at the same time exploiting opportunities for effective management in multiple-use lands as well. WCS will partner with Ilbirs Foundation on all aspects of this project, with the aim of creating a capacity for all aspects of SMART work so that Ilbirs can assist the government in implementation of SMART in protected areas, but also work independently in community conservancies, ultimately providing a means of linking these two services via SMART. The overall project approach is based on building a partnership between Ilbirs, local communities and relevant government agencies, mitigating threats and promoting the implementation of sustainable co-management of protected areas and community conservancies for the benefit of biodiversity conservation. SMART, a monitoring tool to enhance protection of threatened wildlife and their habitats, will be used as a platform to guide this process. Activities will build on significant engagement of different stakeholders through co-financing, in-kind or personnel support.

Concretely, we are requesting CEPF to support a project with the following three components.

I. Strengthen and expand the SMART pilot project at Khan-Tengri NP and Sarichat-Eertash Strict Reserve

We plan to expand efforts to improve law enforcement in Khan-Tengri National Park and Sarichat-Eertash Strict Reserve beyond what has been accomplished with the CEPF 111815 project. To strengthen law enforcement efforts and institutionalize SMART at the two pilot sites a number of activities need to be monitored and supported over a period of 22 months.

A) New Initiatives at two pilot sites

There is a need for improving the mentality and patrol skills of the pilot site rangers. Hence, we plan to:

1. Conduct Patrol training

This would include training in conservation legislation, how to secure evidence at crime scenes, tactics for interacting with violators, how to produce and process citations, patrol safety, recognition and proper documentation wildlife sightings. The pilot sites have expressed a need for additional training and according to Ilbirs there are local experts that can conduct these trainings in Kyrgyz.

2. Facilitate joint patrols operating both inside and outside the pilot sites

As part of the SMART Profiles Project implemented by Ilbirs with support from Panthera, Ilbirs staff conduct patrols with police and other law enforcement agencies outside protected areas. WCS assisted in establishing SMART monitoring of these patrols (independently of the CEPF project). In contrast to the patrols in Khan-Tengri National Park and Sarichat-Eertash Strict Reserve, the "Profiles patrols" have a record of poacher apprehension (24 so far). This is probably partly due to the fact that poaching is more common outside than inside protected areas, but there is also a clear difference in mentalities of these patrol teams vs. protected areas patrol teams. In order to change the mentality of protected area patrol rangers, we plan to have them join patrols that are being conducted by Ilbirs staff together with police. In addition to the benefits for protected area staff, these joint patrols could be very effective because they would have law enforcement rights both inside and outside the protected areas. We believe that these joint patrols would improve the attitudes and patrol skills of protected area staff, which should lead to greater commitment to their jobs, and apprehension of poachers inside protected areas. But joint patrolling can also benefit the police team conducting "Profile patrols" if Ilbirs has sufficient funding to cover fuel and maintenance costs of the vehicles that are used for these patrols. Ilbirs welcomes the idea of involving protected area staff from the two pilot sites and believe that the officers of the law enforcement agencies would very much welcome joint patrols as it helps them meet enforcement targets difficult to obtain without supplemental support to cover patrol costs.

3. Award system for pilot site rangers that perform well

We plan to introduce an award system that rewards rangers who perform well based on SMART patrol monitoring data. The "award" will be that they continue to use the high quality equipment for patrols, whereas poor performing rangers will no longer use such equipment. This system has been applied in Russia for years as a successful, objective measure to reward top-performing rangers, and has a demonstrated the ability to improve effort and achieve patrol targets set during the quarterly feedback meetings.

4. Award system for pilot site SMART database-operators that perform well

Managing data collection by rangers and the site SMART patrol database involves substantial work that operators conduct in addition to their other tasks at the protected area. In order to retain the present operators that perform very well and reduce staff turn-over that threatens continuity of SMART at the pilot sites, well-performing operators will be assigned better office and patrol equipment, will be offered weekend-outings and will be given experiential training opportunities.

B) Continuation of current activities at the two pilot sites

1. SMART technical and patrol management support

Ilbirs Foundation staff [redacted] and [redacted] will continue to provide SMART related support to the pilot sites, including: checking patrol and wildlife monitoring data quality, supporting the site's SMART database operators ([redacted] at Sarichat-Eertash and [redacted] at Khan-Tengri), taking the lead in producing periodic patrol feedback reports, establishing patrol targets, and organising periodic feedback meetings. [redacted], WCS SMART Specialist, will continue monitoring these activities and will provide advice and technical support to Ilbirs as needed.

2. Participate in patrols

[redacted] of Ilbirs will continue joining patrols in the pilot sites. His presence helps Ilbirs evaluate patrol quality and assist in setting realistic and effective patrol effort targets. Joining patrols also makes it possible to establish if rangers are capable and willing to adequately address violations they encounter during patrols.

3. Provide Additional SMART and patrol equipment

There is a need for very limited additional SMART related equipment (a few additional smartphones and power banks) and patrol equipment (binoculars) to the two pilot sites.

II. Civil society support for establishment of a SMART unit in the Kyrgyz Department for Biodiversity and Protected Areas

WCS will work jointly with Ilbirs to assist with institutionalising SMART in Kyrgyzstan by strengthening the central government's commitment and capacity to implement SMART. It is our hope this process will act as an example of how to implement SMART across Central Asia. The head of the Department for Biodiversity and Protected Areas, [redacted], acknowledged to Ilbirs and WCS his desire to establish a SMART unit with at least two full-time staff members from the department, who will be dedicated fully to rolling out SMART nation-wide as a standard tool for law enforcement management at protected areas in Kyrgyzstan. During various recent meetings, he told

[redacted], Ilbirs Director, that he was already in the process of establishing the SMART Unit and that he welcomed support from Ilbirs and WCS.

We propose that with CEPF support WCS and Ilbirs will provide the following:

1. **Two desktop computers** for the SMART unit (see budget Excel document, sheet "Budget Ilbirs", section 6 Supplies, line 42 "Computers for ministry SMART Unit").
2. Assist in working out a **plan** for the unit's activities. The plan should include a list of responsibilities and knowledge required for staff members, and a list of protected areas in Kyrgyzstan where SMART will be introduced with a schedule for the introduction process.
3. In consultation with Zairbek Kubanychbekov, Ilbirs Director, and Mr [redacted], it was decided to start in 2023 and 2024 with introducing SMART to **five protected areas** in addition to the two pilot sites covered under the CEPF 111815 project: Sary-Chelek Biosphere Reserve, Padysha-Ata Nature Reserve, Besh-Aral Nature Reserve, Kan-Achuu Nature Park and Alatay Nature Park.
4. Agree on **SMART standards** including: a curriculum for SMART technical and project management training, a minimum set of data categories to be included in data-models for patrol monitoring, minimum periodic patrol reporting requirements and frequencies, standards for annual in-depth trend analyses, criteria and objectives for success when introducing SMART to protected areas.
5. Provide technical **training** in use of the SMART computer program and management training for SMART projects (specifically – how to implement adaptive patrol management cycles) for the unit staff members.
6. Provide a "**helpdesk service**" and assist with solving any problems that the unit encounters.
7. Provide **SMART related equipment**, namely smartphones (see budget Excel document, sheet "Budget WCS", Section 6 Supplies, line 37 "smartphones for data collection by protected areas") and power banks (see budget Excel document, sheet "Budget Ilbirs", section 6 Supplies, line 41 "powerbanks"). We considered providing a patrol support package for the 5 new protected areas where SMART will be introduced similar to the package we provided as part of CEPF-111815 to the initial SMART pilot sites Sarichat-Ertash Nature Reserve and Khan-Tengri National Park as this would help to improve the capacity for conducting effective patrols and it will foster a positive attitude towards the introduction of SMART among local rangers and site managers. However, these 5 sites have recently received equipment including walkie-talkie units, binoculars, tents, sleeping bags and a Canon camera from UNEP and therefore we decided not to provide additional patrol equipment as part of CEPF-114063.
8. Assist with introducing **SMART Connect,** i.e. running patrol databases on servers so that patrol data from various SMART sites can be accessed by Ilbirs staff, he SMART Ministerial unit staff members and their managers from any location with internet. The SMART Partnership recently started to facilitate running an unlimited number of databases on its servers free of charge. As a result, there are

no longer any costs involved in using SMART Connect apart from internet costs. SMART Connect brings several advantages. Firstly, the SMART Partnership's servers are extremely reliable and as a result the risk of data-loss due to computer crashes is eliminated. Secondly, when using SMART Connect, databases can be easily synchronised. As a result, stakeholders do not have to check if their data are up-to-date and the internet traffic volume that is required for data logistics is minimised. Thirdly, in SMART Connect it is very easy to view tailor-made "standard reports". As a result, protection managers that have not been trained to work with the SMART computer program can view a variety of useful overviews and maps of recent patrol efforts and results with just a few mouse clicks on their computers.

III. Creating a capacity for using SMART at community conservation level in Kyrgyzstan

We plan to assist Ilbirs and the recently established Jashyl-Oroon Community-Based Conservancy with the introduction of SMART as a tool for monitoring and managing field activities. Through this pilot we would like to try (for the first time in Kyrgyzstan) deployment of SMART as a standard tool for monitoring and protection in a community conservation area.

Ilbirs assisted in establishing Jashyl-Oroon in September 2022 as part of UNEP's Vanishing Treasures Program. The conservancy is very large (455285 ha.) and includes part of the CEPF Key Biodiversity Area KYR10. Presently the conservancy's office is a room in the UNEP project office. Approximately 30 conservancy members are conducting various field activities including patrols in vehicles, on horseback and on foot both with and without involvement of police and other law enforcement agencies. In addition to conducting patrols, the members support the work of local beekeepers, promote the conservancy and its activities on social media and conduct education activities in schools. The conservancy members are eager to start using SMART and we expect that it will not be difficult to assist the young, enthusiastic and well-educated members with its introduction. The process for introducing SMART will involve steps similar to what WCS and Ilbirs applied at Sarichat-Eertash and Khan-Tengri; namely 1) documenting and discussing field activities and information needs, 2) designing and programming the field work monitoring system, 3) developing training materials, 4) procuring equipment (15 smartphones and power banks), 5) training data collection for field staff and database management for an office staff member, 6) field monitoring test-period, 7) launch of SMART as a tool for monitoring and adaptive management of the conservancy's field activities.

Based on our experience with the introduction of SMART at Jashyl-Oroon, we will produce a guidance document in local language for the introduction of SMART at community-based conservancies.

We assume that covid-19 or other infectious diseases will not prevent us from conducting field-based work during the project duration. We will monitor the situation in close collaboration with our local partners and will abide by any regulations and measures put in place by the government to limit the risk of disseminating pathogens targeted by these measures.

METT

We will conduct a METT assessments at the two initial pilot sites where SMART has been introduced as part of CEPF-111815 as well as at the five protected areas and the Jashyl-Oroon community conservancy where SMART will be introduced as part of CEPF-114063. At the two initial pilot sites we will conduct a single METT at the end of the of the CEPF-114063 project and at the six new SMART sites we will conduct a METT both at the start and the end of the project. As METT does not mention SMART or, for that matter, anything related to spatial monitoring of field work and adaptive management using spatial field data. Because of the absence of such criteria, the introduction of SMART-based adaptive management may not impact the METT score of these sites directly.

9. **Risks to community health and safety:** This section will assess the risk of each activity to community health and safety, against criteria of probability and severity, and describe in detail all higher risks.

   Among other goals of the project, the purpose of better patrols is not interdiction of illegal activities, per se, but to improve the management of protected areas, with the understanding being that better managed protected areas result from better collaboration with community people surrounding them. SMART allows for patrols, and resulting actions (e.g., law enforcement) to be monitored, transparent and timely reported. Protected area authorities (e.g., park staff, police) will have better communications with community leaders and community members so that people understand: if law enforcement is happening, it is for legitimate reasons; for reasons that are not arbitrary or capricious.

   The people who will suffer adverse impacts will be those engaged in illegal activity and, in theory, will not be eligible for any mitigation or compensation. Recent cases indicate that violations have often been caused by foreign hunters misguided by local outfitters, and without linkage to local communities. In any case, the improved collaboration between park authorities and community members should ultimately lead to better understanding of park's regulations, less enforcement and fewer affected people.

   Further, this grant is about patrols and recording and reporting violations. It is not about enforcement, per se, or stricter penalties. In fact, in each community and around each park, rarely do "first offenses" or "minor offenses" lead to immediate formal action by law enforcement. Warning processes and education for the offender are standard processes.

In the context of any project involving patrols or enforcement, the risk to community members involves improper enforcement that violates rights, including interdiction/arrest/prosecution without probably cause, improper use of force, and not following the procedures outlined in Kyrgyz law. These risks apply, because WCS and Ilbirs personnel are not the enforcement agents.

This risk has serious consequences, but our assessment of the probability and severity is that it is low. We base this on work in the country for over 20 years and partnerships with the relevant authorities that extend to the immediately preceding CEPF grant. We have not seen such abuses in the past, and as stated above, know that standard practice in the country is to allow for "warnings" before formal action takes place. However, SMART introduction is also to decrease this level of risk by improving monitoring of enforcement actions, transparency and reporting.

Separate from these risks, there are possible risks to the rangers/patrols themselves, from being in remote settings without immediate access to medical care. Rangers work according to security standards put in place by their governmental agency and they carry wireless communication means on patrols that make it possible to request assistance in emergency situations.

10. **Risk mitigation measures:** This section will describe the measures that will be taken to mitigate all higher risks. Mitigation measures will be presented following the mitigation hierarchy, which requires that risks are anticipated and avoided where possible. Where avoidance is not possible, risks should be minimized to acceptable levels. Any risks that remain following avoidance and minimization should be mitigated.

    Separate from the mitigation measures described in Item 13, for the safety of people on patrols, part of SMART training will include reinforcement of basic patrol training and proper patrol procedures. Finally in the two pilot areas rangers will work in close collaboration with experienced Ilbirs staff, a trustful partner able to guide patrols at avoiding risks and at activating adequate emergency responses, if needed.

11. **Measures to avoid risk of communicable disease:** This section will describe the measures that will be taken to avoid the risk of transmission of communicable diseases (e.g., COVID-19) to communities at the project site(s).

There are no unusual risks from communicable diseases presented by this project. WCS and Ilbirs personnel, government counterparts, and community members will follow standard practice and recommendations in the country to prevent the spread of communicable diseases. This will include requesting that people who test positive for Covid-19 isolate for the number of days per the guidance of local health authorities. Acknowledging that disease testing might be difficult in the remote areas of project interventions, WCS, Ilbirs and government personnel will be requested not to come to work and entre in contact with local communities in case of clinical symptoms of communicable diseases.

12. **Emergency preparedness plan:** This section will present an outline of your emergency preparedness and response plan for emergency situations affecting community health, safety and security that could be caused by project activities, if relevant.

WCS and Ilbirs will work with protected area personnel in specific field sites to ensure a proper emergency plan. This will follow the existing standard operating procedure of the protected area authorities, which includes notifying supervisors of patrol plans, ensuring field staff have proper communication equipment and knowledge of first aid, and having an evacuation plan appropriate for each patrol situation.

13. **Measures to mitigate risks relating to security personnel:** If the project involves support to security personnel (park guards, community rangers, etc.), this section will describe the measures you will take in relation to hiring, rules of conduct, training, equipping, and monitoring the action of security personnel, to ensure they do not engage in unlawful or abusive acts against local people. Where security personnel are, themselves, community members, risks to their health and safety should be considered under Sections 9 and 10.

WCS and Ilbirs will establish a clear agreement with the Department of Biodiversity Conservation that states the latter's responsibilities and commitments in order for this grant to proceed, including the provision of technical assistance and equipment by WCS and Ilbirs. These commitments will include, beyond proper business practice (e.g., on equipment inventory control and maintenance) to specify the risks related to security personnel. WCS will require that staff participating in SMART training were properly hired, that they have already been trained in the rules of conduct, and that they have no negative history related to unlawful or abusive acts against local people.

The WCS team leader and Ilbirs organizational lead will be responsible for ensuring that patrols follow existing standards and global best practice regarding human rights in the context of enforcement activities. These people will monitor the work of the authorities and immediately stop project activities if adverse practices are noted.

SMART is a tool that is put in place to increase transparency and accountability of ranger patrols, it is monitoring and documenting the actions of the security personnel, hence participating directly at mitigating risks related to security personnel. It is a safeguarding tool!

14. **Timeline and resources**: This section will present an implementation timeline for each measure listed in Sections 10 to 13, together with an estimate of resource needs.

Outreach and education for communities already exists. That being said, as SMART is implemented in each area, there will be renewed efforts to engage with communities and inform them of existing rules and new protocols.

Agreements with the department will be renewed/executed upon project inception.

15. **Monitoring and evaluation**: This section will outline the steps you will take to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the measures listed in Sections 10 to 13.

The WCS and Ilbirs senior personnel will both be responsible for ensuring adherence. As stated, if non-compliance is noted, work will be immediately stopped.

Monitoring of patrol-related actions will be carried out and reported regularly with SMART.

16. **Disclosure**: CEPF requires that community health and safety plans are disclosed to affected local communities and other stakeholders. Please describe your efforts to disclose this plan.

    We will share all grievances – and a proposed response – with the Regional Implementation Team and the CEPF Grant Director within 15 days.

    Ilbirs (WCS partner in the field) will work to ensure that local stakeholders are aware of the work and understand how to voice complaints, if any. Ilbirs will post contact information in local languages at appropriate locations in intervention areas (e.g., protected area head offices).

    When holding meetings WCS and Ilbirs will inform participants that they have the right to raise a grievance at any time with WCS/Ilbirs or CEPF about any issue relating to the project.

    Ilbirs will post telephone numbers and e-mails of contact persons at Ilbirs, government authorities, and CEPF. This information will also be put on all training materials that will be produced during this project implementation, including posters, brochures, and booklets. Contact information of the Regional Implementation Team and CEPF will be made publicly available in local languages.

    We will inform stakeholders that grievances should proceed in the order below. If the stakeholder is unsatisfied with the response at any step, they may proceed further.

    - Director of Ilbirs, [redacted] (email: zkubanychbekov@ilbirs.org, phone number +996 558 271081)
    - The Ministry of Natural Resources, Ecology and Technical Supervision of the Kyrgyz Republic, (email: info@fauna.kg, phone number +996 312 536218)
    - Regional Implementation Team via https://www.mca.earth/en/contacts/
    - Conservation International Ethics Hotline: +1-866-294-8674 / secure web portal: https://secure.ethicspoint.com/domain/media/en/gui/10680/index.html

    We will put up posters to inform local villagers and stakeholders around protected areas and in the conservation conservancy of the existence of the grievance mechanism in the Kyrgyz language together with the Contact information for the CEPF Regional Implementation Team and the exact text as stipulated on the CEPF portal.