

## Tsering

My name is Tsering, I live in a village called Kibber. It is in the province of Lahaul-Spiti in Northern India. Kibber is one of the highest villages in the world: the altitude is 4,200 meters



(nearly 14,000 feet). Many tourists visit our village and sometimes they get sick because they cannot breathe properly because of the altitude. I never have trouble breathing – in fact my friends and I love to play sports! During the summer we play volleyball in the school playground. I have two girls, the eldest is three years old and the other just a baby: my wife carries her in a wool shawl, which she made herself from our sheep's wool.

In our village, most people have a few livestock: I have 2 cows, 1 yak, 4 goats and 3 sheep. Every morning my wife and I get up very early so we can milk our cow. All the men in the village take turns to take the livestock out the pasture for grazing. This month it is my turn. My two friends and I wait every morning in the center of the village. Slowly all the animals come out of the houses and gather in the square. When all the animals are gathered, we take them up to the pastures. In the summer this can be quite difficult, because the goats always try to eat the peas growing in our fields! So we have to shout and get them all out of the agricultural areas to the pastures. Our village has several different pastures; we usually go to one area for a few days, then we change to another area. We used to allow the yaks to graze by them selves but recently we have lost many calves to wolves and snow leopards, so now somebody always goes with them.



There is quite a lot of wildlife in our mountains. We have bharal and ibex and wolves and snow leopards. We have a special project that will help our wildlife. Although the mountains seem very quiet and empty, in fact there is not much pastureland. This means there is not enough for the wild sheep and goats to eat. Because the International Snow Leopard Trust is helping us, all the people in our village have agreed to avoid one valley for 5 years. We will not graze our livestock there. This is very good for the bharal, and we are seeing more and more. Bharal is one of the main foods of snow leopards, so we also expect to see more signs of the cats too!

We grow most of our own food ourselves – potatoes, some wheat, vegetables; we get milk and fat from livestock and sometimes we share meat when somebody has to slaughter one of their animals. Everyone in the village has some land, and most families get cash income from growing and selling peas. Because our village is so high, the climate is quite cool and we can grow peas much later in the year than in other parts of India. We can sell our peas for a lot of money in the big cities like Simla and even New Delhi. Some people also get jobs in road construction: our roads always need repairs because they go along such steep mountains. We are also hoping to make a bit of money by taking tourists out to see our wildlife. We tell them about all the plants and help them see bharal. If they are really lucky they might see wolves or maybe a snow leopard footprint. No-body ever sees a snow leopard, their fur blends into rocky slopes so well, they are completely invisible!



## Narantuya

My name is Narantuya, I have 3 children and my husband and I don't have much money. We live in South Gobi Province in Mongolia. We live in a "ger" and we move ever two or three months with our small herd of 40 sheep, 35 goats, a few horses and 3 camels between the mountains in winter and the grasslands in summer. Most other people in this area have more livestock than us, but our herd is growing. Right now, life is quite tough, but we manage and we enjoy all the great milk products we can make from our livestock's milk.

We don't have jobs in factories or companies, we spend all our time taking care of the livestock. During the summer I get up early and milk all the goats. Then my son Byamba (he is 8 years



old) takes them out to pastures to graze. He must take good care of them; if he leaves any animals behind, they might get eaten by wolves or snow leopards. My husband says snow leopards don't eat meat, they just suck the blood of their prey. He said that after we found one of our horses had been killed by a snow leopard two years ago. At first I couldn't understand why the horse was dead, because we couldn't see any wounds and no meat had been eaten. Then we found scratches on the horse's back and 2 small holes in the throat. It looked like the snow leopard sucked the blood, but Byamba learned at school that is not possible. Maybe the snow leopard came back later to eat the meat.

Sometimes we have to leave our horses and camels alone in the mountains for several days. When the children go away to school in the winter, my husband has to take care of the sheep and goats, so he cannot stay with the horses. Then the horses range very far so we worry about snow leopards. I am not scared of snow leopards for myself, they never attack humans and we believe we shouldn't attack them either. Even though I don't hate snow leopards it is very difficult if a snow leopard attacks our livestock, we depend on them for everything. I just wish the snow leopards could keep eating ibex. When I was a child I used to see a lot of ibex when I was out with the goats. Nowadays I don't see so many. I don't know why.

We use milk from the horses and camel – very nutritious; we use wool from the sheep to make felt coverings for our "ger" (our home); we use meat from all the animals to feed us during the winter, when there is no milk. When we have to go somewhere we ride our horses or camels. We also need money to buy flour and send our children to school: we get money from selling wool. It is difficult to get a good price because we don't have a car or truck to take the wool to market. So we sell our wool to traders who come by, they don't pay well.



Now it is getting better, because I can make some extra money by knitting products for Snow Leopard Enterprises instead of just selling the wool. Last year I earned more than 60.000 tugrugs (\$60) by knitting 10 pairs of socks! Later, I got another 12.000 tugrugs (\$12) bonus because nobody in our valley killed any wildlife that year! My husband still is quite angry about that snow leopard killing our horse, and sometimes talks about going out with his gun. I tell him – you mustn't try to kill any snow leopards because if you do, you will go to jail and I will not be allowed to make this extra money and anyway it is really bad luck to kill a snow leopard. I think he believes me!

