



**Nishorgo Support Project
Consultancy Report for Project Visit Feb 8-25, 2007**

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Prepared for
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With Partners : CODEC, NACOM & RDRS



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List of Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AIG	Alternative Income Generation
CMC	Co Management Committee
CODEC	Community Development Centre
CPG	Community Patrolling Group
FD	Forest Department
FUG	Forest Users Group
IRG	International Resources Group
LDF	Landscape Development Fund
MACH	Management of Aquatic Ecosystems through Community Husbandry
NACOM	Nature Conservation Management
NSP	Nishorgo Support Project
PA	Protected Area
RDRS	Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service
RPA	Reimbursable Project Aid
UP	Union Parishad (elected local government, below the subdistrict (Upazila))
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Introduction

This report was prepared following a visit to the USAID/Bangladesh funded Nishorgo Support Project (NSP) by Bob Winterbottom, Senior Manager of IRG/Washington. The consultancy was carried out from Feb 8 – 25, 2007, and included meetings with project staff in Dhaka and visits to both southern and northern field sites. The overall purpose of the consultancy was to build upon the findings and recommendations of the project evaluation carried out in 2006, and to observe and to assist the project team with analysis of achievements and reporting, particularly with respect to lessons learned from the development and implementation of the NSP co management model.¹ The specific objectives of the consultancy included:

- make field visits to observe project status and to assess progress
- assist the team in analyzing data from socio-economic field surveys
- advise on documenting the process and results of the development of the co management model
- assist with preparation of NSP technical reports for submission to the DEC
- debriefing of USAID/Bangladesh on findings and preparation of a final report on the consultancy

Brief Description of the Nishorgo Support Project

The Nishorgo Support Project began in June 2003 and is scheduled to be completed in May 2008. The project is implemented by IRG in association with local partners CODEC, RDRS and NACOM. NSP supports the national forest conservation and protected area management program of the Forest Department known as “Nishorgo”.² This program aims to conserve Bangladesh’s forest and biodiversity for future generations. At the heart of Nishorgo is a focus on building partnerships between the Forest Dept and key local and national stakeholders that can assist in protecting Bangladesh’s remaining areas of natural forest and associated protected areas. These forests are under intense pressures and the FD, as legal custodians of Protected Areas in Bangladesh, is working with local communities surrounding the PA’s to improve the management of these areas through collaborative management or “co management”. The Nishorgo Program recognizes the need to address the livelihood needs of people that have been dependent on these forests and aims to contribute to both the conservation of these natural areas and to an improvement in the income and livelihoods of people living in and around Protected Areas.

In support of the Nishorgo Program, NSP activities are organized under five components:

- development of a functional model for formalized co-management of PA
- interventions and investments for improved ecosystem management, including creation of alternative income generating opportunities for key local stakeholders
- development of policies conducive to improved PA management
- laying the foundation for a conservation constituency in Bangladesh

¹ See Annex A for detailed Terms of Reference.

² The name Nishorgo was proposed by a student in response to a national competition, and is a Bangla word that evokes the idyllic beauty of nature in Bangladesh.

- strengthening of the institutional systems and capacity of the FD and key stakeholders

Under the terms of the FD Project Proforma, two additional objectives were identified for the Nishorgo Program:

- improvement of infrastructure facilities to enable better management and provision of visitor services at co-managed sites
- design and implementation of a program of habitat management and restoration of pilot protected areas

The NSP contract amount is \$6.5 million, including \$300,000 earmarked for small grants to be provided from a Landscape Development Fund. The Nishorgo Program also has \$1 million in funding from the Government of Bangladesh, and \$2.5 million of Reimbursable Project Aid from USAID through PL-416b generated local currency.

NSP has been providing support for the co-management approach and improved PA management at the landscape level in five sites, including 3 in the northeast around Srimongal, and 2 in the southeast near Cox’s Bazar. See table 1.

Table 1 – Nishorgo Support Project Field Level Implementation Sites

<i>Name of Protected Forest Area</i>	<i>Date Established</i>	<i>Size of Core Protected Area (hectares)</i>	<i>Number of villages in the PA</i>	<i>Number of villages in landscape</i>	<i>Number of households in landscape</i>	Estimated Population
Lawachara National Park LNP	1996	1250	2	17	2255	
Rema-Kalenga Wildlife Sanctuary RKWS	1996	1796	1	20		
Satchari National Park SNP	2005	240	1	15	2190	
Chunoti Wildlife Sanctuary CWS	1986	7761	24	42	7810	
Teknaf Game Reserve TGR	1983	11615	52	113	19,617	
Total						271,557

Observation of project status and progress in implementation

Schedule of visits to northern and southern sites

Following initial meetings and briefings with Philip DeCosse, COP and Ram Sharma, DCOP and Protected Area Management specialist and other NSP staff on Feb 8-9, I visited the 3 northern sites of the project, from Feb 10-13, 2007. On Feb 11, I attended the opening session of the 3 day training course organized in Srimongal by the NSP Training Coordinator Kazi Hashem and NSP team. During the following field visits to the project sites around Srimongal, I was accompanied by Tariqul Islam, Field Coordinator, the Enterprise Development Officer, Parvez Pasha and other NSP and FD staff. I also had an opportunity to meet with the Forest Dept ACF based in Srimongal, and completed the following schedule of field visits.

Sunday Feb 11

- Participation in Forest Dept training, Srimongal
- Meeting with FUG at Ratonpur and visit of nurseries and other AIG activities
- Visit of Satchari National Park information center

Monday Feb 12

- Visit of buffer zone plantations and meeting with CPG, Rashidpur
- Meeting with Range Officer, CMC and FUG in Kalenga; visit of AIG activities
- Visit of weaver training – Chanbari
- Enrichment plantation and hiking – Rema Kalenga Wildlife Sanctuary
- Observation of Peoples Theatre - Mongaliabari

Tuesday Feb 13

- Visit of Lawachara National Park Visitor Information Center and CMC office
- Discussion with CPG; visit of Eco-rickshaw
- Meeting with Bagmara and Baligaon FUG
- Weaver training of Tipra women – Doluchara
- Discussion of LDF grant and proposed bridge renovation – Doluchara
- Participation in closing session of Forest Department Training
- Return to Dhaka

From Feb 17-20, 2007, I visited the NSP Southern Region, and had an opportunity to examine a wide range of sites and activities associated with the Chunut Wildlife Sanctuary and Teknaf Game Reserve. I was accompanied on Feb 17-18 by Dr. Ram Sharma, and on Feb 18 by Tappan Dey, Chittagong DFO, and on Feb 18-20 by Utpal Dutta, Governance Specialist and Goutam Biswas, Southern Field Coordinator and on Feb 19-20 by Quazi Nurul Karim, ACF for Teknaf.

Sunday Feb 18

- Discussion with CODEC Executive Director and staff at CODEC HQ, Chittagong
- Meeting with DFO at Bangladesh Forestry Research Institute, Chittagong
- Visit to Bashkhali EcoPark and to NSP CWS offices

- Participation in launching of elephant ride enterprise with DFO and CMC
- Visit to proposed Eco Cottage at Patikrit and discussion with CMC\
- Visit to Banpukur plantation and meeting with CPG
- Discussion with women FUG at Hindu Para and visit of chulas
- Visit Harbung FD renovated guesthouse and LPA construction site
- Meeting with DFO Abani Thakur, Cox's Bazar

Monday Feb 19

- Meeting with ACF Karim and visit of NSP Whykong office for briefing on Teknaf Game Reserve operations
- Meeting with CPG at Harikhola / Shaplapur
- Observation of CMC meeting at Shilkhali primary school, and visit of natural regeneration in the Shilkhali garjan forest
- Visit to NSP Baharchara office and AIG in the area (grocery, poultry)
- Visit of proposed Eco Cottage, Baharchara
- Meeting with FD officials at Teknaf Guest House

Tuesday Feb 20

- Visit of Teknaf Information Center, refurbished by NSP
- Visit of Teknaf ecotourism complex at Mochone Park
- Visit of FSP buffer zone fuelwood plantations and refugee camps

In the following sections, I have summarized the observations and suggestions emerging from the field level meetings and discussions with project staff, Forest Dept and other stakeholders. A number of these observations are consistent with findings from the project evaluation team, and others reflect my own analysis and suggestions.³

Summary of main observations and field level accomplishments

As described in recent NSP progress reports, the June 2006 Evaluation Report and other reference materials on NSP (see www.nishorgo.org), there has been a great deal of progress in implementing the Nishorgo program in all of the five field sites in recent years, and especially since my last visit in June 2005. At that time, a strong foundation for the Nishorgo Program had been established during the first two years of NSP, in terms of established relations with Forest Dept, communications and outreach, initial development of partnerships with Scouts and many other stakeholders, and field level analysis of threats, needs, opportunities and preliminary planning for PA management and conceptualization of the co management model.⁴ During the third year, NSP moved ahead with a focus on operationalizing the co management model, organization of effective protection of PA core areas, and progress in increasing community level benefits, among other priorities.

Community patrolling groups (CPG) have been organized and trained, and provided with uniforms and badges, boots, torches and other equipment and they are quite motivated

³ See Annex B for briefing notes provided by field teams, along with detailed observations and comments on the sites visited.

⁴ See NSP Trip Report, June 1-15, 2005.

and active. Most CGP number 30-40 individuals and are able to man patrols of 4-5 persons on a rotating basis, 7 days a week. While there is still some uncontrolled burning and continued harvesting of sun grass and fuelwood in some areas, the patrols are having a positive impact in reducing the rate of illegal felling and in protection of natural regeneration in core protected zones. While the limited staff of Forest Dept guards are not always able to accompany the CPGs, the FD with the encouragement and urging of the CMC and local community are working with the CPGs to enforce the laws against illegal felling and encroachment and to send cases of violators to the courts.

Numerous *Forest User Groups* (FUG) have also been organized and trained, including women. Many members of the CPG and FUGs as well as others in the local communities are benefitting from training, material support and other assistance for demonstration and diffusion of Alternative Income Generating (AIG) activities. These include tree seedling nurseries, vegetable gardens, poultry raising, cattle fattening, milk cows, pig raising, upgrading of grocery stores, and assistance in promoting Eco Cottages. To date, the designs for eco cottages have been developed; two are planned in the southern zone, one adjacent to CWS and one near the northwestern side of TGR. NSP is providing in largely kind support for furnishings valued at 95,000 Taka. Each facility has a design for two rooms, for a total of 4 beds; anticipated income for the manager who will provide construction funds is 500 taka/room/night. The CMC anticipates revenue of 20 taka/bed/night.

The *Forest Dept* has greatly benefitted from the training and support provided to the ACF and other staff assigned to TGR, as well as NSP support for refurbishing building, essential facilities and other park infrastructure. In addition to earlier FD funding of construction for Eco Park and Safari Park attractions and visitor facilities, the FD has more recently begun to mobilize RPA local currency funding that is available for additional infrastructure development. Together, NSP and RPA funding has contributed to the construction of field offices, gates, signs, benches, water points, trails, visitor kiosks and other park infrastructure and facilities needed to attract and accommodate more visitors to the protected areas. In addition to prior funding by the World Bank and ADB for social forestry plantations, over the past year, Nishorgo program funding has helped to establish fuel wood plantations, regenerate degraded areas and restore wildlife habitat (with fruit trees, bamboo) in targeted areas.

This sharply increased level and effectiveness of field operations has followed the progress with “*social mobilization*” and the formal establishment and operationalization of the *Co Management Councils and Committees* in both areas. Their efforts have been reinforced by extensive training, awareness raising, outreach and communication activities over the past several years. Another critically important development has been the emergence of FD leadership in the person of the ACF assigned to TGR and the active support of the DFOs for Nishorgo, along with reinforced supervision and management of field activities by the NSP team. An interesting pilot activity to sequester carbon has also been designed and launched with NSP technical assistance.

Table 2 – Progress in implementing field level activities in NSP Sites

NSP Activity	Northern Sites	Southern Sites	<i>Total Persons</i>
Forest Dept staff training	40	45	85
Study Tours	2 trips to West Bengal		35
CM Councils	3	5	55 persons / council
CM Committees with bank accounts	3	5	10 persons / committee
CMC Accountant/Admin hired	3	5	8 recruited and in training
Community Patrolling Groups	8	24	942 in the south
Forest User Groups	153	168	4698 in the south
Nishorgo Youth Clubs	8	15	626 in the south
Community Dev Schools	66		
Seedlings distributed		9175	
AIG training	613	2001	2614 persons trained and assisted
Eco cottages	1	2	grants approved and in process
Eco Rickshaw Pullers equipped		116	In the south
Improved stove training	45	87	
Improved chulas installed		890	In the south
PA Visitor Centers with product sales	3	2	
Eco Guides trained	32	39	
Peoples Theatre teams	8		In the north

Observations on selected field level implementation issues

Sustainable land management, fuelwood production and implementation of landscape management plans for the PA

While the Nishorgo program has made commendable progress, the aggregate impact of the AIG activities is still relatively small scale, and given present plans and trends, it is unlikely to provide a basis for sustainable incentives and support for CPG and other essential conservation efforts, nor sufficient sustainable livelihood benefits for the many poor households in targeted communities. Moreover, AIG activities have largely focused on alternative sources of income generating activities other than those related to the continued use and extraction of forest products, without providing alternative sources of these essential forest products (primarily fuelwood, and also sticks, fodder, various NTFP, poles and construction timber). While effective in one sense, one should examine to what extent the CPG has acted to displace (and perhaps intensify) extraction and

harvesting of fuelwood and other products from the targeted protected areas (areas to be developed for ecotourism, areas close to newly developed trails, etc.) to other areas.

The Management Plans developed to date and approved by FD are well done and provide a solid basis for improved management of the PA. The simplified plans made available to FD and CMC can provide a basis for agreement on priority actions, but decisions about priorities for implementation and mobilization of resources to implement the plans appear to still be in process. Clearly, there are still large areas both within the core protected areas of TGR and CWS as well as within the Forest Reserves and landscapes of both sites that are still deforested and degraded. In their current condition of being severely understocked (with minimal density of woody cover), these lands are much less productive than they could be. With proper management, they could become fully stocked, and contribute to both the ecosystem conservation and forest products production objectives of the landscape management plans.

The continued funding and extension of the FSP model of social forestry is not likely to be feasible (given the high cost) or effective (given the impacts achieved to date, in contrast to what is possible).⁵ What is currently lacking, more than project resources for payment of FSP type plantations, are appropriate, low cost models that provide incentives for local producers to invest in making these lands productive again, through sustainable forms of land use and improved management. Numerous households are ready to “protect and produce” if given the opportunity. Considerable skill in managing multi-purpose home gardens is present in local communities – as evidenced by the dense and healthy vegetative cover of home gardens in contrast to denuded Reserve Forest lands. Nishorgo could help to organize the restoration of these degraded lands in a manner that is compatible with conservation of the core protected areas and that contributes to the overall program objectives. In fact, without a more significant intervention in the PA landscapes oriented at making these degraded areas more productive and helping to meet the demand for forest products as well as income and livelihoods, the long term conservation goals are likely to be compromised.

With the organization and mobilization of the CMC, the strengthening of the FD and the approval of landscape management plans, Nishorgo is in a good position to give much greater emphasis to the following:

- identification of priority actions to implement the Management Plans, with particular attention to activities aimed at sustainable land management in the buffer zones, to complement the protection / conservation / ecotourism developments underway in selected core zones, and the AIG activities that are taking hold in the communities around the PA; e.g. identifying areas of buffer zones or other suitable areas for managing the production / harvesting of

⁵ In the past, funding has been provided by ADB and others to Forest Dept to pay for seedling production, plantation establishment and initial maintenance of social forestry plantations; responsibilities for tending and benefits from these plantations were assigned to persons living within 5 kms of the plantation, with 1 hectare assigned to 1 person, and with a written agreement authorizing thinnings and removals after 4 and 8 years, and a final harvest after 10 years, with distribution of benefits as follows: 45% to FD that established the plantation, 45% to the participant that tends the plantation, and 10% to a fund for reforestation.

- sungrass, fuelwood, fodder, bamboo, medicinal plants, and other NTFP and economically important forest / natural products.
- development of new, more cost effective approaches for protection, restoration, regeneration, restocking, sustainable use and improved management of much larger areas of degraded and poorly stocked areas; in addition to ensuring protection from uncontrollable cutting, grazing and fires, these models should consider giving more attention to associated soil / water conservation and agroforestry practices; reliance on fast growing, adapted multipurpose species that produce a range of readily marketed products; greater reliance on local investment and innovation, lower cost inputs and reduced requirements for support; provision of stronger, explicit guarantees of land lease rights, tree tenure, management authority, near exclusive rights to benefits, and oversight by the CMC
 - enhancing linkages between the implementation of the landscape level PA management plans (including zoning and promotion of regeneration, restocking and sustainable land management in highly degraded areas, buffer zones and adjacent Reserve Forests), selection and approval of LDF funded proposals, and the development of nature tourism, AIG and other enterprises, including those based on more intensive and integrated production of fuelwood and other forest products

Alternative Income Generation and Enterprise Development

Over the past year, NSP have moved ahead and made very good progress in helping FUG and other stakeholders to get started with most of the AIG / enterprises identified in the initial assessment of such opportunities in June 2004. Nurseries for seedling production have generated considerable interest, especially in the northern sites. AIG related to fairly short term and familiar income generating opportunities such as cattle fattening, milk cows and expanded grocery stores have been popular, especially in the southern sites. However, it isn't clear if the AIGs being supported are potentially the most beneficially for conservation of the PA and profitable for the communities.

In order to benefit larger numbers of stakeholders, and to engage more producers and tap into the most profitable and also sustainable enterprises, NSP might find it useful to revisit the preliminary assessment of enterprise development opportunities and support more in-depth value chain studies for forest and other natural products that can be sustainably produced in the PA landscape. This analysis would look at such questions as: what are the products and their most important markets; how can the value chains for these products be strengthened; what opportunities are there to increase the value and benefits that accrue to producers, through increased value added processing, improved marketing, reduction of transport constraints, etc.?

The NSP enterprise development specialist might also look into constraints and needs related to enterprise management, sustainable supplies of raw materials, value added processing, quality control, labeling, marketing and such among FUG, other producer groups and entrepreneurs in the PA landscape and consider how to efficiently and

effectively address these constraints in order to increase the sustainability and profitability of these enterprises.

Staffing and Training

NSP has organized many training sessions, but their impact has been reduced to some extent by the re-assignment of FD staff to other posts, by the process of turnover and changes in the stakeholder community. Additional FD staff are needed at several levels in the field, from ACF to ranges to guards. The Study Tours such as the trips organized to West Bengal were very useful, and could be repeated for other stakeholders and to other locations with good effect. NSP also needs to take account of turnover among the field staff of NSP partners, especially RDRS, and seek out staff to reinforce needed areas of expertise. Field coordinators and organizations need to shift from planning and organizing to give more emphasis to empowering, facilitating and supporting co management structures and community based organizations. Support staff are also needed in priority areas for implementation in the remaining months of the project, particularly in nature tourism/ enterprise development, forestry / sustainable land management and strengthening of local governance. These staff persons could focus on:

- training and mobilization of CPG, FUGs and other community based organizations in innovative production techniques, improved management skills and interventions based on the value chain analysis and increasing the profitability as well as the productivity of these targeted land use / integrated production systems, such as bamboo
- assisting FD in supporting the work of the CMC and community organizations and rural producers in the restoration and management of these areas of the PA landscape, and in the profitable production and marketing of targeted forest product value chains

Ecotourism Development and Marketing

The project has made a very good beginning with the identification and training of ecoguides, and in time a growing number of persons should be able to rely on this activity as a principle livelihood. Excellent efforts have been made to develop the “Nishorgo” brand and to supply Information Centers and visitor kiosks in the PA with caps, guidebooks, post cards and other products and information. The initiative to engage, equip and train “eco” rickshaw pullers is also interesting. The enthusiasm of FD and CMC for developing attractions and increasing the number of visitors to EcoParks, Safari Parks, Tourism complexes, protected forest, water bodies and other sites adjacent to the core protected areas is laudable. Clearly, the Vision 2010 of Nishorgo, the impacts of public awareness and communication campaigns and partnerships with Scouts and others are paying dividends in terms of an increased desire to protect, conserve nature for the next generation and to enhance the opportunities for present generations to experience nature. The RPA and LDF could assist in providing the needed investments. And the increased level of visitation could provide a much needed source of revenue from gate receipts, Nishorgo labeled product and craft sales, provision of needed services, expanded offerings such as boating and other concessions. These revenues could help to make the patrolling and conservation efforts sustainable and provide funds for maintenance of bridges, benches and other infrastructure.

To realize this potential, in addition to the highly successful progress with architectural designs, signage and trail development, NSP will need to provide specialized assistance for ecotourism development, including enhanced planning for infrastructure needs assessment and development, visitor reception and handling including provision of toilet facilities, and additional work with ecoguides and concession holders. More formal arrangements for revenue sharing with the CMC need to be developed and scaled up to a very significant degree. There is also a need and opportunity to expand the marketing of these parks and facilities as they are developed. In addition to the initial set of Nishorgo posters, brochures and guidebooks, more materials could be developed for the EcoParks and complexes such as Mochone and the Shilkhali forest, and feature expanded offerings including associated visits to Cox's Bazar beach, fishing, boating on the river, etc. Cooperation and partnerships with tour operators and establishments such as the Hotel Natong could also be reinforced.

LDF and Microfinance

The mobilization of LDF is getting underway and it remains to be seen how this additional mode of program support will contribute to the overall success and sustainable impacts of the program. The team should review the process for preparing proposals and closely examine the criteria for selection with a view towards addressing the key challenges, needs and opportunities facing the project at this time. Ideally, the LDF can serve as a catalyst and contributor to the current and near term priorities for program implementation such as expansion of AIG, implementation of landscape management plans, promotion of SLM to restore degraded areas and development of ecotourism. The use and accounting for LDF could also provide insights into the capacity building efforts needed to enable program stakeholders to make greater use of microfinance through partnerships with service providers operating in the landscape area.

Policy Reforms and Sustainable finance

NSP has taken the initiative to make the case for the adjustment and redistribution of PA entry fees, and approval is anticipated for allocation of 50% of PA gate receipts to CMC. This would provide a much needed source of income to help compensate CPG and other local stakeholders investing in PA protection and management. A consultant report on sustainable finance options was prepared and could be revisited in close consultation with FD and CMC to set the stage for selection and adoption of a range of sustainable financing tools and approaches to enable the implementation of PA management plans, infrastructure development and maintenance and sustained improved in PA management.

Addressing uncontrolled access by refugees, illegal uses and encroachment.

The continued pressure of refugees involved in fuelwood collection and other unmanaged and uncontrolled uses in the TGR needs to be addressed. NSP has promoted partnerships with GTZ on wood saving stoves and encouraged MSF and other programs that are assisting the refugees to consider providing more support for fuelwood production. However, more decisive action is needed to control / limit access to core areas (with extended fencing) and most importantly to designate adjacent lands and organize reforestation, agroforestry and fuelwood management interventions for the refugees in

these areas on a scale commensurate with demands. Given sensitivities over extension of program support to refugees, NSP and FD may want to consider what areas of the TGR landscape can be allocated for high yielding, short rotation fuelwood management by FUGs for both home consumption and for sale to projects that are directly assisting the refugees. E.g. MSF could allocate a portion of funding made available for food aid to purchase fuelwood from NSP assisted FUGs working in the TGR landscape.

In addition to the specific pressures of refugees, the PA will continue to face pressures of encroachment and unsustainable use by persons harvesting fuelwood for brick fields, expansion of rice fields and other agricultural land use, illegal felling of teak and other valuable hardwoods. The project has made much progress through social mobilization and the organization of CPG, and strengthening of the FD. The establishment of CMC and the organization of CMC meetings have been particularly important in providing a forum for identification of unsustainable and illegal uses, and enabling key stakeholders to prompt a shift from an adversarial to a cooperative relationship between FD and local communities. Continued Nishorgo training and support is needed to ensure that the CMC remains representative and enables all stakeholders to have a voice and remains a strong force for transparency and accountability and avoids undue influence on its leadership and functions by special interests. The CMC can also be more effective if leadership and assistance by the ACF and FD are enabled by increased staffing of Forest Guards in strategic posts, and additional logistical support for FD and CMC entities. In the end, the best guarantees against further encroachment and illegal uses will be for the CMC to follow through with the implementation of the landscape management plan so as to rapidly shift from “open access” forests to managed protected areas. The best protection is to occupy the land with economically valued uses that benefit the community and user groups in a manner agreed upon by CMC and with sufficient economic incentive and empowerment of the designated users and land managers to control access and use directly. Accordingly, moving ahead rapidly with the actions related to sustainable land use, especially in the buffer zones, and with ecotourism development, especially near the core protected areas, will enable progress in dealing with encroachment and illegal uses throughout the targeted landscape and not use in the zones covered by CPG.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The NSP has carried out a series of initial RRA and followed up with collection of baseline and trend data on indicator bird species. Special surveys have examined the participation of women, the poor and ethnic minorities / tribals, and additional socio-economic data collection is underway. Interesting work in applied social science research is underway, including a number of applied research efforts involving ACF; this should help to ensure that the findings and recommendations will be disseminated and acted on at the level of CMC and other program stakeholders.

NSP may want to make a concerted effort to identify and monitor the areas subjected to the greatest use, the most degraded areas and areas of regrowth and regeneration in response to increased protection, access control and improved management. This information could be used by CMC to orient and reallocate the resources of CPG and other protection efforts. Additional applied research into the actual beneficiaries and cost

effectiveness of social forestry models could be instructive, particularly as the program seeks to innovate with new approaches to support SLM and increased fuelwood production.

Finally, in addition to continued monitoring of the results and relative effectiveness of NSP activities, the team will want to continue to systematically look at the lessons learned and experience gained from various models and approaches that are relevant to the PA co management and conservation and CBNRM / sustainable land management challenges in Bangladesh. The team could use FRAME and other knowledge management tools and sources to this end.

Program Support and Cross Cutting Activities

Training and Communications

Much of the success achieved to date by NSP is due in no small measure to the extensive efforts of the project devoted to training, awareness raising, capacity building and communication. Training has been particularly critical with respect to reorienting and equipping the Forest Dept to assume its proper role in co management, and with regard to the establishment and functioning of co management structures such as the Councils and Committees. The West Bengal study tour was particularly valuable as a means to promote support for the concept and to stimulate thinking about how to operationalize co management in PA in Bangladesh. Training and demonstration have also been critical to progress achieved in support more effective protection by CPG and alternative livelihoods through AIG training.

I participated in the opening and closing sessions of the Biodiversity Conservation through Co Management Training for Beat Officers and Forest Guards, organized Feb 11-13, 2007 in Srimongal. The training was well prepared and organized by NSP's training coordinator Kazi Hashem. During the first part of the training program, I participated in a presentation and discussion of the Nishorgo Vision 2010.

Later this year, NSP plans to organize a 3 week training program for ACF's assigned to Nishorgo PA. This will be a particularly important opportunity to build upon the short term training and study tours supported to date, and will enable NSP to help provide additional instruction and training materials in such critical areas as:

- Innovative benefit sharing models: experience from the South Asia region and beyond, and opportunities for PA and degraded FD lands
- Opportunities to establish new sources of revenue and to progress with sustainable financing strategies for PA in Bangladesh
- Nature Tourism: practical considerations in realizing the potential for increased tourism in and around PA
- Nature Wealth Power: lessons learned and best practices from experiences with community based management of natural resources and protected area management

- Expansion of the PA network in Bangladesh: potential broadening of internationally recognized categories of PA, and prioritization of biodiversity conservation needs and opportunities in Bangladesh
- Improving governance and building capacity in CM Councils and Committees: issues and opportunities
- Making the landscape approach to PA co management work: issues and opportunities for implementation of PA landscape management plans
- Ecosystem restoration, regeneration and protection of critical habitats and other conservation priorities for PA management
- Mitigation of Greenhouse Gas Emissions through Co Management: assessment techniques and prospects based on the experience in the Chunoti Wildlife Sanctuary

Public Private Partnership Roundtable

On February 12, 2007, NSP organized in collaboration with the Forest Dept and IUCN a very successful roundtable to familiarize selected private sector operators about recent progress with the Nishorgo Program and opportunities for public-private sector partnerships to conserve nature in Bangladesh. The team will work on a large number of follow up activities, including a possible re-orientation of IUCN's role in constituency building, to leverage their support for prioritization of steps that could be taken to expand the Protected Area system in Bangladesh to realize the 2010 Vision. IUCN could convene specialists groups to assess the current status, threats and opportunities for biodiversity conservation and explore the potential for expanding the PA network to include as much as 10% of the land. This might be accomplished with increased PPP and also by broadening the categories of internationally recognized protected area categories. If the protected area network included more than National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries and Game Reserves, it may be possible to designate additional multiple use areas from among existing Reserved Forests that could contribute to a greater degree to biodiversity conservation and ecosystem protection objectives, while permitting sustainable use and managing for improved livelihoods by local communities. There may also be scope for formalizing protected Village Forests and other community managed protected areas outside of lands controlled by Forest Dept or managed through co-management with the Forest Dept.

Analysis of Socio-Economic Survey Data

The recently completed evaluation of NSP noted that more data on the use of natural resources in the PA by local people could be useful. As a follow up, NSP designed socio economic surveys to be carried out in a sampling of villages and households in and around all five field sites. The data was collected and I reviewed and commented on the preliminary data tables as well as documentation on the field survey design and methodology. (see separate memo provided to the team.).

Lessons Learned on Co Management Model

I had originally intended to work on an article on lessons learned on the co management model with Dr. Shamsul Huda. We did meet briefly but the full schedule of field visits and other work didn't allow sufficient time to focus on preparation of a technical article for submission to a journal. I did provide comments on the draft outline for the proposed monograph on Protected Area Management in Bangladesh: status and challenges. It would be useful to review more of the materials from the Srimongal Encounter and from the latest series of applied social science research results developed with the support of the East West Center, and publications already in the process of preparation by the team (Ambio article, etc.). In combination with observations and insights gained from field visits, and in close consultation with the NSP team and FD, it should be possible to draft and circulate a working document over the next few months.

Preparation of NSP Reports for USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse

To date, NSP has prepared and distributed a large number of progress reports, technical documents, consultant reports, briefing materials, press releases, films, photos, power point and other multi-media presentations and "deliverables" during the course of providing technical assistance in support of the Nishorgo Program and project implementation. A select number of these reports and documentation that are of interest to the broader development community are to be submitted to USAID's Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC). During this visit, I also assisted the COP is reviewing a number of reports for submission to DEC and will follow up with the IRG home office to complete the final editing, formatting and branding of these selected reports prior to their submission to DEC. Most likely, we will submit the following to DEC:

- Pre-Assessment of Enterprise Development Opportunities (JOBS, June, 2004)
- Overview of Issues Affecting the NSP Areas based on findings of the PRA (K. Studd, July 2004)
- Assessment of the Forest Department's Institutional Organization and Capacity to Manage the Protected Area System of Bangladesh (Mitchell et al., August 2004)
- Appraisal of patterns and options for change of energy use in and around selected national parks (PURE, March, 2005)
- Rights Reference Manual for Zones of Good Governance (GG Working Group, June, 2006)

Conclusions and Recommendations

While the Nishorgo program has made commendable progress, the aggregate impact of the AIG activities is still relatively small scale, and given present plans and trends, it is unlikely to provide a basis for sustainable incentives and support for CPG and other essential conservation efforts, nor sufficient sustainable livelihood benefits for the many poor households in targeted communities.

The Management Plans developed to date and approved by FD are well done and provide a solid basis for improved management of the PA. The simplified plans made available to FD and CMC can provide a basis for agreement on priority actions, but decisions about priorities for implementation and mobilization of resources to implement the plans appear to still be in process.

There are large areas within the protected areas and in forest reserves within the PA landscapes that are deforested or degraded. While past efforts in “social forestry” have had some limited success, to restore these areas on a large scale and as quickly as possible, more appropriate, low cost models are needed that provide incentives for local producers to invest in making these lands productive again. The key to successful restoration of these areas is effective protection from fire and uncontrolled grazing, harvesting of fuelwood and other uses by both the rich and the poor. The CMC are now in a good position to mobilize the participation and community support needed to shift from “open access” to protection, controlled use and improved management. The key will be to develop and support new models based on more sustainable forms of land use and improved management. Numerous households are ready to “protect and produce” if given the opportunity.

The following are some key observations and recommendations for short and medium term priorities for the NSP emerging from this visit:

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Observations</i>	Recommendations
Alternative livelihoods and income	Aggregate impact of AIG needs to be scaled up; profitability could benefit from further analysis of value chain and markets; important to link enterprise development to improved management of PA	Complete value chain analysis of promising products and target the most profitable enterprises that could be scaled up, strengthened with private sector investments, and linked to implementation of landscape plan (e.g. bamboo)
Nature Tourism development	Substantial progress made in improving PA infrastructure, development of trails, signs, information kiosks, visitor centers and product sales for tourists; opportunity to significantly increase numbers of visitors	Follow up with development of needed infrastructure to expand nature tourism offerings and capacity to accommodate more visitors; assist with local initiatives to develop ecoparks and other attractions and customize advertising /marketing for each PA; prepare an explicit strategy and action plan to tap into domestic nature tourism market, and to reinforce partnerships with tour operators and private sector investors
FD and CMC	CMC are established, and	Support CMC in agreeing on

Ownership, Leadership, Governance	collaboration and working relationships between FD and local communities are much improved; landscape management plans have been developed and are ready for implementation	priorities for improved management of PA and taking responsibility to implement priority actions; ensure that LDF supports priorities related to implementation of management plans and potential increases in community benefits tied to improved management of PA; enable CMC to balance conservation, protection and livelihood objectives of PA management; ensure transparency in management of PA revenues; continue with training of key stakeholders (FD and CMC)
Policy reforms	NSP has developed proposals for 50/50 allocation of entry fees; additional proposals pending for increased benefit sharing from multiple use areas in landscape, and new models for restoration of degraded areas, fuelwood production and multiple use / sustainable land management	Move ahead with approval and implementation of recovery and sharing of gate entry fees, and with finalization of new models for benefit sharing that can be utilized to engage a large number of stakeholders in restoring degraded areas and in increasing productivity of PA landscape
M&E	Innovative use of bird indicators; additional socio economic surveys recently completed; opportunity to monitor LU/LC changes and to strengthen linkage between M&E and adaptive management through increased participation in M&E at the local level and information sharing with CMC and field teams	Systematically track, report on and share information widely about latest data and trends on changes in LU/LC, bird counts, illegal felling, tourist visits, revenues, scorecards and people level impacts of co management