

(3) Nishorgo Support Project: This US-financed technical assistance Project -- led by a private US environmental institution -- is designed to support achievement of the objectives of the Nishorgo Program of the Forest Department. The Project currently has staff at the Nishorgo Program's five priority protected areas, along with a central office in Dhaka. The Project will assist in design of modalities of label development, Partnership operational procedures, communications documents and materials.

(4) Contributing Partners: Contributing Conservation Partners can be any private organization. Contributors may also be benevolent individuals or private foundations. The Partner should have a demonstrated concern for eco-friendly and sustainable business practices, and a love for Bangladesh's environment.

Summary of Contributor Benefits from the Partnership

Nishorgo Conservation Partners receive a number of direct publicity benefits mentioned under the 5 types of Partnerships above.

In addition, Partners will receive the following additional benefits:

- A more environmentally friendly image with consumers;
- Inclusion in the list of Nishorgo Program Partners in the Nishorgo Program Annual Report and website
- Presentation at national and international meetings on and publications on Park management;
- Receipt of quarterly Nishorgo Program newsletters;
- Invitations to special environmental events in the Protected Areas and in Dhaka.
- Recognition as a Green Company

Levels and Types of Partnership

Some Contributors will want to make more substantial contributions than others. In all the communication materials of the Nishorgo Program (website, annual report, brochure, etc.) the Partnership will classify Contributors on the basis of their annual giving into the following Bangladesh-specific classes:

- 1) Marsh Crocodile Class: The Marsh Crocodile may now be extinct from Bangladesh's waters, although it once thrived here, providing an essential balance to the riverine ecosystems of the country. This class of donor merits the highest praise for their contribution to the Partnership. Members of this class contribute over 1 Crore Taka per year.
- 2) Hoolock Gibbon Class: The Hoolock Gibbon once thrived in the forests throughout the country. It is now only found in patches of the north and southeast. Members of this class contribute over Taka 5 Lakh per year.
- 3) Bengal Fox Class: Few of these elegant mammals remain in the country, and their numbers dwindle by the day as their habitat is converted. Members of this class contribute over Taka 3 Lakh per year.



Photo: MM Faruq

A Hoolock Gibbon in Lawachara National Park

- 4) Garjan Class: The majestic garjan was once found throughout our deciduous forests in the south and east. Today, only patches remain, some of them in the areas Nishorgo is working to protect. Members of this class contribute over 1 Lakh per year.

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Funded by: USAID & Implemented by International Resources Group
With Partners: CODEC, MACOM and RDFS.

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Let us
save
nature
for our
future
generation

Nishorgo Conservation Partnerships : Private Contributions to Protect Forest Areas

Bangladesh's forests are being put under relentless pressure as we seek to meet the needs of our growing population. Many of the most unique of these forests are found within our system of National Parks, Game Reserves and Wildlife Sanctuaries -- known together as "Protected Areas (PA)". Our Protected Areas hold precious examples of our most unique biodiversity.

The rate of forest loss in Protected Areas is nothing less than catastrophic. The thousands of people carrying head loads of wood from Parks every day contribute to a gradual and irreversible degradation of forests. Other actors exacerbate the forest loss through industrial logging, transformation to agricultural uses and other changes. Bangladesh's Protected Areas -- already the 2nd smallest on a per capita basis in the world -- represent necessary havens of beauty for our growing population. But without immediate and strong action, even our most pristine Parks and Sanctuaries will be permanently transformed within a short period.

In response to the drastic loss of Protected Area, the Forest Department has initiated a Program -- called "Nishorgo" -- to build partnerships for the conservation and sustainable management of Protected Areas before they are gone. Literally, "Nishorgo" is a Bangla word meaning idyllic or serene nature. The Nishorgo Program is an ambitious effort to bring together public and private partners -- at local, national and international levels -- to ensure that the remaining large tracts of Protected Areas, and the biodiversity in them, are conserved for this and future generations.

Of all the possible partners to Nishorgo, none is more important than the private sector, including private companies and individuals. The collective experience of countries throughout the world has made it clear that nature conservation progresses rapidly only when the leading members of the private sector perceive nature conservation as good for the economic well being of the country. Conversely, when leading business interests do not stand behind conservation, it doesn't happen. The Nishorgo Program believes that it is in the mutual interest of private businesses and the Government to work together to strengthen public services.

Nishorgo Conservation Partnerships: Purpose

Nishorgo Conservation Partnerships have been designed to offer interested private businesses a vehicle for contributing to long-term forest conservation in a way that:

- ◆ is transparent;
- ◆ ensures that contributions reach their target;
- ◆ has low transaction costs
- ◆ will make a long-term difference in forest conservation; and,
- ◆ will generate beneficial public image for the Contributor

Options for Participating in the Partnership

The Partnerships program offers five distinct ways in which private businesses can participate. Options include the following:



Without other livelihood options, Protected Areas will continue to be degraded

1. Help Improve Livelihoods of People Around Protected Areas

The Nishorgo Program's success relies upon building a strong and mutually self-interested relationship with those communities living in and around Protected Areas. The relationships are formalized in "collaborative management agreements", under which community representatives maintain joint responsibility for protection with the Forest Department, and in return receive benefits generated from the Park or provided by Nishorgo. Contributors can support needs for improved health services, women's empowerment, economic development and other livelihood improvements. The Nishorgo Program can make recommendations concerning local NGOs and community associations that can be recipients of such Contributions and help ensure the contributions to livelihoods result in improved PA conservation.

Under this option:

- The Partner can contribute directly to improving the livelihoods of rural citizens while improving forest conservation.
- Nishorgo receives the benefit of local citizens in and around PAs that may be more interested in conservation.

2. Contribute to Creation of Visitor Services

The Forest Department is working actively to improve the quality of visitor services at key Protected Areas throughout the country. But needs are great and resources are limited. At each Protected Area, educational exhibits are needed to inform citizens about Bangladesh's

unique biodiversity, and also about how to visit nature properly. Marked and well-sited hiking trails, while appearing natural, are often expensive to design and construct. And even such mundane visitor services as parking and toilets are critically needed at all Protected Areas.

Under this option, Contributors might make a donation to developing an infrastructure or visitor service, and then receive recognition on appropriate plaques at park level to attest to their contribution. Other possible Contributions under this mode might include bird watching hides, rest areas, benches and sitting areas, or even simple watch towers.



Basic infrastructure is lacking in Protected Areas

Under this option

- The Partner receives name recognition on plaques at site of contribution, and
- Nishorgo receives improvements to visitor services and infrastructure within Protected Areas

3. Co-Finance Nishorgo Communication

Building a popular and broad consensus for Protected Area conservation is a multi-year and expensive effort. The Nishorgo Program will provide some funding for communication and outreach efforts to help change behaviors concerning Protected Areas. But the need exceeds current resources.

The Partnership provides an opportunity via this option for private businesses to contribute to the global Nishorgo Program communications goals via financing of select communications efforts. As special communication programs are undertaken -- say for Earth Day or Environment Day or a special youth-focused Nishorgo Day -- Contributors may provide complementary financing.



Radisson Water Garden Hotel financed printing this souvenir about Nishorgo

Under this option:

- The Partner receives name recognition on Nishorgo media, and
- Nishorgo receives financial contributions to Nishorgo communications activities

4. License the Nishorgo Image

At present, products conveying the beauty of nature, and of the country's Protected Areas, are in short supply. A few fuzzy postcards of tigers in the Sunderbans can be purchased, but few nature products beyond this can be found. Other countries can boast of hundreds of postcards, t-shirts, hats, other clothing items, books, posters and other products which capitalize on people's desire to "own" a piece of nature. At concession stalls in national parks around the world, visitors expend more on purchasing memorabilia from concession stands than they did in entering the park. And tourists, even if they haven't had time to get to the serene natural settings, still want to purchase products that suggest they had.

As one option to Contributors, the Nishorgo Program offers an opportunity to license the Nishorgo logo and name for use in creating and selling nature based products. Receipts from the licensing program will be allocated to local community development (75%) and maintenance of the infrastructures of national parks, game reserves and wild life sanctuaries (25%).

It is the objective of the Nishorgo Program to focus particularly on influential high-school and university students by creating a "buzz" about Nishorgo, and more generally about conservation of the country's remaining Protected Areas. The Nishorgo concept, image and brand may be of particular interest to this target group.

Companies with a proven track record of corporate environmental responsibility and whose products are manufactured using environmentally friendly practices and materials may be eligible to apply for a licensing agreement.

Under this option:

- The Partner receives use of the Nishorgo logo & name in selling nature products, and
- Nishorgo receives licensing fee revenue to use for communities and PA conservation.

5. Practice Park-Friendly Behavior

This option is focused only on those businesses or individuals that are located in the landscapes around PAs. In such landscapes, it is particularly important that private businesses act in a way that assists PA conservation. Businesses in those areas that act in a way supportive of PA conservation may be given the right to use the "Certified Nishorgo-Friendly" label. Criteria for receipt of the label will be set by the Partnership, in consultation with businesses in the local communities. In regions around the northeastern PAs, for example, the tea estates and pineapple cultivators may need to demonstrate that their practices are not causing soil degradation that may create runoff into the PA. Other companies for example, considerations can be shown in waste disposal, CO emissions, or fuel type selection, to name a few.

Under this option,

- The Partner receives the right to use the "Certified Nishorgo-Friendly" label, and
- Nishorgo benefits from better corporate citizens around Protected Areas.

Who Participates in the Partnership?

The Partnership achieves this through an innovative public-private relationship between the following actors:

- (1) Forest Department: As custodian and legally designated manager of the country's Protected Area, the Forest Department will establish priorities for key improvements to the Protected Areas of the country, especially in the areas of visitor services, communication targets, livelihood improvements and establishment of new PAs.
- (2) An "Honest Broker": An independent, non-profit Bangladeshi trust or foundation will act as an objective "honest broker" to provide transparent management of contributions, should the private sector donors not want to manage donations themselves. This trust or foundation would ensure that contributions reached the target requested by the private donor.