



## Inaugural Ceremony of Nishorgo Program

In the last thirty years more than 50% of Bangladesh's forest cover has disappeared. Sustainable management of the remaining natural forests, especially forests in legally-designated Protected Areas, demands urgent attention. If properly managed, the Protected Areas can become economic growth poles for localities. Unless we act now, Bangladesh's forests will be lost forever.

Recognizing the need to conserve our unique biodiversity before it disappears, the Forest Department created a new Protected Areas Management Program entitled "Nishorgo", with financial and targeted technical assistance from USAID through the Nishorgo Support Project.

The honorable Minister of Environment & Forests inaugurated the Nishorgo Program on February 24, 2004 amidst the serene beauty of Bhawal National Park. H.E. Ambassador of USA, Mr. Harry K. Thomas, Mr. Tanveer Hossain, Secretary of Ministry of Environment & Forests, Mr. M Anwarul Islam, Chief Conservator of Forests of Forest Department, and Ms. Beth Paige, the Deputy Chief of US Mission, among others, also honored the ceremony with their presence.

During the ceremony, Protected Area Managers received recognition for their efforts and contributions. The winner and runners up students from Nishorgo's naming competition also received awards.



The Protected Area Managers were recognized and awarded for their efforts at the inaugural ceremony of Nishorgo Program



Here the winner Abdul Rashid is receiving prize from the Minister of Environment & Forests and US Ambassador.

## National Competition for the Program name

The words "Protected Areas", when translated into Bangla, has little resonance with the common citizen. The Forest Department recognized early on that the new Program needed a name that would resonate with the citizens that would need to be enlisted to protect the Areas. A nationwide competition for students up to college level, or 18 years of age resulted in a new and more suitable name for the program, and involved youth with forest conservation efforts. The competition was advertised in two national dailies, one Bangla and one English. An overwhelming response of almost 500 entries came in from children as young as 7 years old. The submissions were creative and vivid; many also sent colorful drawings. A Committee consisting of high officials from the Forest Department & one from USAID applied both qualitative and quantitative techniques to select the most relevant name for the program. Several focus group discussions were held to finalize the choice. They unanimously selected the name 'Nishorgo' from amongst the many entries. Nishorgo, which means an idyllic, even surreal natural beauty, is appropriate for a number of reasons. Most of all, the image and sense of Nishorgo is one of nature, of goals and aspirations representing the overall objectives of the program.

Abdur Rashid, a student from Jhinaidoho, proposed the name 'Nishorgo' and was awarded Tk 10,000.00 by the Minister of Environment and Forests at the Nishorgo Inaugural Ceremony. Each of the four runners up in the competition received Tk 5,000.00.

## Message from the National Project Coordinator

Welcome to the 1st Nishorgo Newsletter. I am extremely happy to see this first edition published, since outreach to our many partners is critical to the success of Nishorgo. Our central focus is partnership. Without our many public and private partners, we cannot succeed. I encourage all who read this to make inquiries from the Program if they want to know more. I strongly encourage you to visit our website – [www.nishorgo.org](http://www.nishorgo.org) – to learn about our goings-on.

I'd also like to thank the team of the Nishorgo Support Project and USAID, as its financing agency, for their support to the Forest Department in our Nishorgo Program efforts. Just after the launching of Nishorgo Program, the Nishorgo Support Project arranged a housewarming party at its beautifully decorated new office at Banani, Dhaka. The presence of well-wishers added festivity to the occasion. Project implementing partners RDRS and CODEC have now set up offices for Nishorgo Support Project at the northern and southern sites respectively. Our partner NACOM, working with RDRS and CODEC, has completed PRA studies for each of Nishorgo's sites. These PRA reports give insights into co-management approaches, as well as many long-standing issues of the Forest Department. With different assessment studies on Pilot Protected Areas done, now our team is geared up to implement the co-management model at the site level.



Monoj Kanti Roy  
National Project Coordinator  
Nishorgo Support Project,  
Forest Department



## Pre-Assessment of Enterprise Development Opportunities

The Protected Areas represent enormous economic potential, both for their localities and for Bangladesh as a whole. The Project will facilitate nature-friendly and viable enterprise development opportunities at the community level, resulting in the following benefits:

- ◆ Investment around the PAs will strengthen the local economy
- ◆ General livelihood of the community will improve
- ◆ Employment generation opportunities
- ◆ Less pressure on forest resources

The market linkage possibilities must be ensured first for any sector to be viable in the long run. NSP contracted JOBS, another USAID-funded project specializing in creating business opportunities in Bangladesh, to carry out a pre-assessment study of the sectoral development opportunities in and around the Protected Areas. JOBS recently completed the survey and delivered its subsequent recommendations to select some priority interventions based on their market and production potential, impact on forests, and universality within project sites. The selected interventions include nursery, vegetable dye and cane and bamboo products. Currently NSP is taking steps to create these enterprises at the micro, small and medium level.



The Joint JOBS/Nishorgo enterprise assessment identified initial processing of bamboo/cane as a promising enterprise. Here a girl is processing bamboo near Rema Kelanga Wildlife Sanctuary.

## Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) Held for all Five Sites

Field appraisal teams, with the participation of the Forest Department (FD), conducted diagnostic meetings at all of the sites, and succeeded in identifying key stakeholder groups per each site. A brief report summarizing outcomes from all the field appraisals was circulated to a core group of Forest Department staff for their comments and reactions. The Forest Department has become increasingly forthcoming concerning the complex challenge faced in improving management at the pilot Protected Areas.



The project team conducting PRA at Teknaf Game Reserve

## Training and Exchange Visit by Senior FD Officials to Observe Co-Management Experiences in West Bengal, India

In early 2004, six senior members of the Forest Department, all working on or overseeing PA management activities, traveled to meet with counterparts in West Bengal State and to observe co-management efforts there. The FD staff members, accompanied by a senior member of the Nishorgo Project team, also began planning for an April 2005 cross-visit by local stakeholders to co-management counterparts in West Bengal. The travel to West



IRG organized a networking visit by FD officials to learn from co-management experiences in West Bengal, India.

Bengal was a cost effective means of expanding the awareness of opportunities to FD staff as this new initiative on co-management in Bangladesh is being pursued.

## Site Orientation in Each Project Site

Each of the project sites recently held a two-day long site orientation program. The first day was arranged for Forest Department staffs and during the second day participants were invited from the local community. Local



Site Orientation Meeting at the remote Rema Kelanga.

administrations, UP chairmen, UP members, teachers, policemen, and journalists attended the sessions. The local Upazila Nirbahi Officer was also present in the orientation program. During each session, the NSP team briefed participants on the Nishorgo Program, its objectives and components its future endeavors to ensure forest conservation in an interactive fashion. Group discussions yielded many fruitful suggestions from participants on methods for implementing the program. The local community in each of the site welcomed the program and expressed their hope that once the alternative income generation activities would start, their life style would be improved and the forests will be protected or in cases regenerated.

In the true spirit of collaborative management with local stakeholders, these site orientation meetings with the field level forest staff and the local community respectively helped fine tune the model and improve communication. These initiatives will ensure the right elements and model for co-management success in each of our sites.

