

## Pledge to Save Mother Earth



What started in 1970 in America bringing together growing but scattered concerns for environmental degradation has become today the global movement of Earth Day focused on raising mass awareness of how our actions are damaging the planet that we live in. In the same spirit, USAID's Climate-Resilient Ecosystems and Livelihoods (CREL) Project organized events to celebrate Earth Day-2017 engaging community members, particularly youths, co-management organizations and government officials in various parts of Bangladesh. On 22 April CREL supported colorful events in Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Khulna and Sylhet on the theme "Environmental and Climate Literacy",

In Chittagong region, school children from Khoiyachara High School, members of Adventure Club of Chittagong, Baroiyadhala Co-Management Committee, journalists and Community Patrol Group members worked together to clean litter from Khoiyachara waterfalls in Baroiyadhala

National Park.

In Cox's Bazar region, students of Dulahazra College stood by the Chittagong to Cox's Bazar Highway, holding signs as part of raising awareness among the tourist passing through that highway. Members of Fashiakhali Wildlife Sanctuary CMC, government officials, journalists and CPG member joined the students in making a pledge for Earth Day. All of them took an oath to conserve the environment.

Students of MC College of Sylhet attended a discussion meeting with Forest Department on the importance of ecotourism in conservation and following the discussion, the students hiked along trails of Khadimnagar National Park.

School children living near the Sundarbans, expressed their visions of Sundarbans as part of drawing and essay writing competitions. This followed climate literacy classes organized by CREL for these children on Earth Day.

## Turtle Time Once More

This is again the time for turtle hatching. CREL has been operating several hatcheries for Olive Ridley, a globally threatened (vulnerable) species of marine turtle. Village Conservation Groups supported by CREL keep guard on mother turtles when they come to nest on beaches in Cox's Bazar, Taknaf, Sonadia and St Martin's Island Ecologically Critical Areas. Once the turtles lay their eggs and leave, the guards collect those eggs for safekeeping and bury them in the sand in "hatcheries" (areas where they are protected from

predators including feral dogs and humans). After 50 – 70 days, baby turtles hatch from the eggs and are helped to make their way down the beach to start their adventurous life in the open sea. Despite the estimated number of nesting female turtles dropping in 2015-16 (about 40 individuals compared with about 52 in the previous year) the hatching rate of eggs relocated to hatcheries remained about 85%). Since 2014 teams supported by CREL have safeguarded more than 30,000 turtle eggs and out of these just over 25,000 hatched.



## USAID Team Visits CREL Activities



A USAID team comprising Mr. Nathan Sage, Acting Director, Economic Growth Office, Mr. Son Nguyen CREL AOR and Mr. Rene Acosta, CREL AOR visited CREL activities in Hazarikhil Wildlife Sanctuary, Fasiakhali Wildlife Sanctuary, Medakachapia National Park and Teknaf Wildlife Sanctuary in a 3-day trip. One of the major interests of the visiting team was construction supported through USAID. CREL has developed tourist facilities in these PAs which will help the CMCs to secure increased revenue. Ticket counters, shelters for patrol teams, resting shelters for tourists and renovation of CMC offices are among the facilities developed as part of construction support to these CMCs.

The USAID team met with Co-Management Committee office bearers, members of local communities, and the CREL site teams. They also met with CREL livelihoods beneficiaries and discussed the impacts of CREL support and the challenges faced by the Community Patrol Groups guarding Medakachapia National Park where they are involved in supporting assisted natural regeneration of trees.

## National Workshop on Guidelines for Wetland Sanctuaries and Co-Management

USAID's Climate-Resilient Ecosystems and Livelihoods (CREL) Project supported a national workshop on "Wetland Co-Management Guidelines and Permanent Sanctuary Management Guidelines", organized by the Ministry of Land on April 11, 2017 in CIRDAP auditorium Dhaka.

Md. Akram Husain, Additional Secretary of Ministry of Land, chaired the workshop with Dr. Mesbah ul Alam, Senior Secretary, Ministry of Land as the Chief Guest. More than 60 representatives from the Ministry of Land, District and Upazila land administrations, Department of Fisheries, Local Government Engineering Department, USAID Bangladesh, and different development partner agencies participated in the workshop.

The Ministry of Land has taken an increasingly active role in supporting multi-agency efforts coordinated by CREL project to assist the Government of Bangladesh to reform the Jalmohol



(wetland) Management Policy 2009. Two key areas of change include setting aside permanent co-managed sanctuaries and adopting a co-management approach, for both of these aspects of policy change supporting effective guidelines are needed, which is the objective of the guidelines developed under CREL that were discussed in detail in the workshop. During the workshop there was consensus among key officials of the Ministry of Land and other stakeholders on developing a network of permanent wetland sanctuaries and adopting co-management, as well as reaffirmed support for the major jalmohal policy changes that have been proposed.

## Eco-Tourism Promoted in Hazarikhil Wildlife Sanctuary

USAID's CREL Project is supporting Co-Management Organizations to diversify their revenue sources. Increased income would help CMCs to manage their conservation and forest protection operations better. Globally, nature based tourism attracts a huge number of people generating local revenue. This sector in Bangladesh



is gradually picking up pace with increasing numbers of people, especially young people, participating in nature based tourism. CREL Project, as part of its CMC sustainability initiative, has helped CMCs to set-up nature based visitor activities in several protected areas. One such site is Hazarikhil Wildlife Sanctuary in Chittagong region. Here tree based adventure activities have been created for visitors, as well boating and fishing facilities. Adventurous tourists can now set up tents to spend a night in the forest where the CMC through their Community Patrol Groups provides security and other supports. The aim is to help Hazarikhil CMC increase visitor numbers and associated visitor fees by promoting Hazarikhil as an attractive destination for tourists.