



International Resources Group

Nishorgo Support Project

Bangladesh's Protected Area Management Program

June 2005

Challenge:

More than 50% of Bangladesh's forest cover has disappeared in the last 30 years and today, the forests in sanctuaries and national parks collectively known as "Protected Areas"—are threatened. Bangladesh is losing its forests, the victim of modern development and an impoverished population attempting to make a living through logging, fuel wood collection and the creation of farmland. At this rate of degradation, many unique flora and fauna will be lost forever. Experts say that even today's Protected Areas will be fundamentally altered within six years.

The Bangladesh Government is seeking cost-effective and efficient ways to retain Protected Areas while fostering economic growth.

Initiative:

The Government took the first step when it passed legislation that set aside forestlands as "Protected Areas." In 2002, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) awarded a contract to International Resources Group (IRG) to support this initiative by developing a new Protected Areas management program called "Nishorgo" (Bangla for "idyllic nature"). The Nishorgo Program aims to conserve



biodiversity—the species, habitats and ecosystems unique to Bangladesh for future generations. Nishorgo focuses on building partnerships between the Forest Department and key local, regional, and national stakeholders that can assist in launching sustainable conservation efforts.

Activities:

- Establishing co-management agreements and partnerships for stake-holders to support conservation.
- Facilitating alternative income generation activities for forest dependant people.
- Helping to upgrade policies for Protected Areas such as revising The Wildlife Act, 1974.
- Building constituencies for Protected Areas conservation among public and private groups.
- Supporting institutional capacity development through training.
- Developing necessary infrastructure and visitor services, including hiking trails, and signage.
- Working on Ecosystem Regeneration and Rehabilitation.

Region: Asia
Country: Bangladesh
Sector: Forestry
Duration: June 2003-May 2008
Client: USAID



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Key Results to Date:

- Supported the Forest Department's development of Nishorgo Vision 2010, a statement of future challenges and needs.
- Formally launched Nishorgo Program at Bhawal National Park, February 2004.
- Reached agreement on five initial pilot sites; plus completed secondary data reviews, field appraisals, initial Council meetings at all sites.
- Established formal agreement with over one million Bangladesh Scouts to become active advocates for Protected Areas conservation.
- Finalized first Nishorgo public-private partnership with the Radisson Water Garden Hotel.
- Completed baseline indicators for all pilot sites.
- Facilitated eco-tourism with established hiking trails, signage, brochures.
- Trained young, unemployed local stakeholders at all sites in bird monitoring and eco-guiding.
- Provided alternative income generation training to stakeholders.



Next Steps:

- Build capacity of local Forest Department Protected Area managers at each pilot site through intensive training courses.
- Expand to a sixth and final pilot site at Sitakunda Reserve Forest.
- Formalize participatory multi-stakeholder park patrols, and co-management councils and committees as governing bodies at each Protected Area.
- Develop strategy for sustainable financing of Protected Areas management.
- Expand social forestry activities in buffer zones around Protected Areas.

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