

## US Ambassador and USAID Mission Director Visit CREL in North East Region



Marcia Bernicat, US Ambassador to Bangladesh and Ms. Janina Jaruzelski, Mission Director, USAID reviewed several activities of USAID-funded Climate-Resilient Ecosystems and Livelihoods (CREL) Project in Sreemongal on February 12, 2017. They traveled to Lawachara National Park where they met students of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology who had taken part in CREL activities promoting conservation awareness among youth. Three students, Mr. Hasan Ahmed, Mr. Rakib Bin Asgar, Mr. Syed Tuhin Ali Ahmed took the visitors for a walk along trails in Lawachara Park, explaining various features of the park and its biodiversity. During their 30-minute walk through the park, the Ambassador and Mission Director observed a variety of trees and understory plants, listened to birds, and observed monkeys in their natural habitat. Some members of the group saw wild boar and snakes. Later, the Ambassador and the Mission Director met women members of a Community Patrol Group supported by the CREL project. The women shared their stories of change - both in their lives and in the forest - that have taken place as a result of the support of USAID. The stories demonstrated the courage and commitment of these women to protecting and conserving



the forest. Also the Ambassador and the Mission Director met a group of women whose households were previously dependent on the illegal extraction of forest products and as a result were damaging the ecosystem and its biodiversity. Now, through CREL project support, these women have become part of a workforce for children's toy manufacturer, "Pebble Child". These women are now able to help support their families in a sustainable and

culturally acceptable manner and have increased their social status among their peers. In parallel, they have added their voices and efforts to the conservation of Lawachara Forest. The Ambassador and Mission Director also met participants in the CREL-supported Center for Financial and Entrepreneurial Learning – one of 200 such centers that the project operates in Bangladesh - where women receive training on basic literacy and financial management. This training helps them better manage their investments in time, effort and money in a manner that creates profitable and sustainable enterprises, while in parallel increasing their overall level of education. Both of these activities empower and enable women to strengthen their voice and role in their families and communities as well as generate parallel benefits related to health, education and security. The Ambassador and Mission Director praised these women, and in turn the women thanked them for the support from the U.S. Government and people of America. Forest Department, administration, community and CREL high officials accompanied the Ambassador and the Mission Director during their visit to Lawachara National Park.



## Sundarbans Day Celebrated in Khulna

"Love Sundarbans on Valentine's Day!" was the theme for this year's Sundarbans day celebration. Bangladesh Forest Department has been observing February 14 as "Sundarbans Day" to raise awareness among the greater community on the importance of conservation of the Sundarbans.

USAID's Climate-Resilient Ecosystems and Livelihoods (CREL) Project celebrated the day in collaboration with Bangladesh Forest Department, Khulna University, Sundarbans Academy Khulna and other national and international NGOs and projects working in Sundarbans.

Major activities of the day included a discussion meeting, a rally, an art competition, a debate competition, and a cultural program with over 1,000 people participating in the events.

## Soldiers of Green Receive Green Uniforms

Bangladesh Forest Department handed over uniforms to two community patrol groups composed of 42 members working in Hazarikhil Wildlife Sanctuary on February 10, 2017. These CPGs have been working with the Bangladesh Forest Department to conserve Hazarikhil Wildlife Sanctuary since March 2015. A colorful handover event was organized at Hazarikhil Range Office, Fatikchari, Chittagong. Mr. A. N. M. Abdul Awal, Divisional Forest Officer, Chittagong North Forest Division was the chief guest and Mr. Jashim Uddin, President, Hazarikhil CMC chaired the event.

## Secretary of MoEF and CCF Meet the CMCs of Himchari National Park and Teknaf Wildlife Sanctuary



Mr. Istiak Ahmad, Honorable Secretary of Ministry of Environment and Forests and Mr. Mohammad Shafiul Alam Chowdhury, Chief Conservator of Forests recently visited Himchari National Park and Teknaf Wildlife Sanctuary in Cox's Bazar region on 23 and 24 February, respectively. There they met with the members of Himchori CMC and members of Teknaf CMC.

During the meeting, CMCs informed Honorable Secretary and the CCF about the present status of CMCs and their future plans. Also they

discussed about CREL support and CMC sustainability beyond CREL, CMC's long term planning and their implementation strategies. Honorable Secretary and CCF expressed their appreciation for CREL activities. They handed over a crest to the Community Petrol Group (CPG) members for their services to forest conservation.

Forest officials and administrative officials from Cox's Bazar, Mr. John A. Dorr, Chief of Party, Mr. Abu Mostafa Mohammad Kamal Uddin, Deputy Chief of Party of CREL accompanied the VIPs.

## World Wetlands Day Observed at Nijhum Dweep



Nijhum Dweep Co-management Committee observed World Wetland Day on February 2, 2017 at Nijhum Dweep Bidda Niketon Government Primary School with the theme, "Wetlands for Disaster Risk Reduction". Bangladesh Forest Department officials along with members of Village Conservation Forum, Community Patrol Groups, school students and teachers and Red Crescent Volunteers

attended this day-long observation program. Program activities included discussions on the importance of wetlands in reducing disaster risks, competition among school students on cleaning the school yard, a game to locate and identify necessary and unnecessary materials, played a Word Game by the FELC learners and quiz and art competition for school students. It ended in a prize giving ceremony.