CU Humphrey Fellows Alumni News

Cornell University, Ithaca, NY

January 2012

Message from Prof. Peter Hobbs

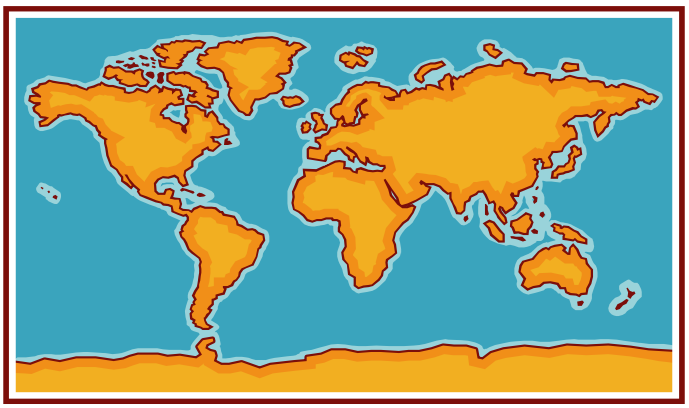
Welcome to our annual Hubert Humphrey Fellow newsletter. This is my second year as the HHF coordinator working closely with Francine Jasper, who has been working with the fellows for many years. This makes this job much easier since Francine knows the ropes inside out. This past year we successfully graduated 13 Fellows from 13 different countries; all successfully completed their affiliation and professional development as you can read in this newsletter. I am proud to have had this opportunity to learn and share experiences from these 13 fellows who all had their own unique skill sets and customs that were shared at Cornell. The program ended with a great meeting organized by IIE in Maryland where all the fellows in country could interact and swap stories about their experiences. They all received the appropriately signed certificates. The coordinators then had a chance to exchange experiences and make suggestions and comments to improve the program, although it is functioning well at present.

We received our new cohort of Fellows in early August. This time we had 11 fellows but once again from 11 different countries, backgrounds and cultures. Like in past years there was a honeymoon period followed by a period of self-doubt as the fellows struggled to adapt to the Cornell culture, classes and plans for professional visits, affiliations and program plans. Like in other years, fellows were able to find their way, successfully took classes of interest, and interacted with their friendship families and Cornell faculty. Many now have clear plans for the rest of their stay and many have scattered to far places for the Xmas holidays, at least those who want to escape the cold of Ithaca for a while.

We do think it is very important to maintain contact with all our past Fellows for several reasons. One is to keep up with what each is doing right now and to know if the experience at Cornell helped. Second is to know where each is living and how to contact in case we or new Fellows need to be able to communicate with past fellows for help and advice. We definitely want to know if any of our Fellows plan to return to the USA or Ithaca, so we can meet them. We hope this year to document some key data into a map tool that will then be posted on our HHF web site for easier access of this information. This will help all of us to nurture the growing trust and capacity to make a real difference in the world for the rest of our lives.

325 Cornell U. Alumni

- 110 Asia, 105 Africa, 54 Caribbean and Latin America, 40 Europe, 16 Middle East
- Working in fields as diverse as agriculture, the environment, energy, labor and trade relations, food science and nutrition, banking and finance, rural development and government



Alumni in New Positions

- Kesrat Suskasam, '91-92 Thailand Focal Person for the Regional Cooperative Agreement at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Vienna
- Hana Svejdarova '92-93, Czech Republic is with Hydrobiological Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. Member of an international team solving a project dealing with fresh water quality issues in Europe. This project, called REFRESH (http://www.refresh.ucl.ac.uk/), is sponsored by European Union.
- Barbara Botos '10-11 Hungary, Head of Department of Climate Policy in the Hungarian Ministry of National Development
- Dianna Pelaez Restrepo 01-02 Colombia, Project Director ADRA, Regional Development Agency in Antioquia, www.adra.org.co

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Abdullah Ahmad's ('11) Six-Month Affiliation in The Everglades N.P.



This is the story of my six-month Professional Affiliation at the Everglades National Park. - *Abdullah*

With a sub-tropical climate, Southern Florida is the place in the US with the greatest ecological similarity to the Ecological Critical Areas (ECAs) of Bangladesh that I worked in for before participating Humphrey Fellowship program. Before I came to the Everglades National Park, southwest of Miami, I had read a few things about it, but I didn't realize how amazing the Everglades are until I got here. While most other National parks in the United States are famous for their breath taking landscapes, the beauty of Everglades is hidden from plain sight. Unlike Yosemite or Yellowstone, imagine a place where a difference of just two or three inches in elevation changes the habitat significantly! The park is like a live showcase of tropical and temperate species, even though it lies at the same latitude as the Sahara desert, and is the only place in the world where both alligators and crocodiles live side-by-side. Even with all this diversity, efforts to create Everglades National Park were difficult, because they challenged the idea that national parks were meant to preserve majestic geological features. Finally, in 1947 the Everglades became the first national park in the United States to be set aside specifically to preserve its biological resources. Today, even though the park's biodiversity is at one tenth its historic level, it still attracts more than one million visitors a year.



Riding an airboat to do field work

> "The US has developed it's park management through over a century of trial and error. But there are some basic differences between national parks in the US and our part of the world...in India, Bangladesh or Nepal, people live in parts of national parks, and they can also extract resources under some regulation or restrictions."

The Everglades National Park and its management helped me realize why national parks have been called "America's best idea." By creating so many parks and preservers much before many other countries have done so, the United States has set an unparalleled example for natural conservation. The country has developed its park management system through over a century of trial and error. But there are some basic differences between the national parks in the US and our part of the world. In India, Bangladesh or Nepal people live in parts of national parks, and they can also extract resources under some regulations or restriction (see related story on p. 3).



Public meeting to share General Management of Biscayne National Park with stakeholders

I was surprised to see how much funding and efforts are invested to manage the Everglades. So many different types of projects are going on at different levels to ensure its effective management. The parks also have a special place in the heart of American people. I felt that well when I had the chance to be in a public meeting where each and every speaker strongly opposed the idea of allowing a power company to possess a piece of land inside the Everglades.

Of course the park has some issues to be concerned about. In my personal view not having a sustainable income source is one of the biggest risk factors facing national parks in America. Any big economic crises may change the fate of its parks. If the parks are to go to the private sector, the picture may be very different than what it is now.

During my professional affiliation with the Everglades National Park I had the chance to get involved with a variety of activities. Though I was primarily affiliated with park's Outreach and Interpretation office, my involvement included: participating and assisting in research and field monitoring projects; environmental education projects; fire management; law enforcement; attending planning and stakeholder meetings; compiling information for a future resource stewardship strategy; attending trainings; working with volunteer groups; leading tours for groups from around the world; helping the park's outreach office draft a successful US $25,000 grant; and interacting with various partner organizations.

My affiliation in the Everglades gave me the opportunity to get a holistic understanding of protected area management in the United States. It is not only the work but also the work environment in Everglades that I appreciate a lot. The park staffs are supportive, friendly, fun-loving and professional. Everybody accepted me very easily. The work environment in Bangladesh differs greatly from here. Especially in government offices, relationships among colleagues are more formal and the hierarchy is very strong. But here I found that the senior colleagues easily approachable.



Presenting significant biodiversity to visitors during a guided walk in the Everglades

Here one thing inspired me greatly. That is to see the willingness of people to volunteer for the Parks. People do volunteer in our country and there are some national and international volunteering organizations active in Bangladesh. However, the level is in no way as it is here in the US. Of course this is linked with our economic conditions. I served as volunteer in my country too. However, before I came to the United States I did not have the realization what a powerful tool volunteerism can be to effect positive changes in society. I think Americans have a very positive attitude about volunteerism. Now I believe that we should put further emphasize to explore the scope of volunteerism in our country.

> "My affiliation in the Everglades gave me the opportunity to get a holistic understanding of protected area management in the United States. While it may not be possible to apply all my learning here exactly in my country...[the experience] has certainly deepened my understanding and broadened my perspective about protected area management. "

I also had the chance to do some exclusively fun things here. Examples include – going out in a flight in search of aircraft wreckage in the park that are reported as missing from World War II, and snorkeling over coral reef and wreckage of old ships in the Atlantic adjacent of South Florida coast. I am also going to go out hunting for (invasive) python one night before I leave from here.

I consider my professional affiliation with Everglades National Park is a really rewarding experience and the decision to select the park for my affiliation was the right one. It may not be possible to apply all my learning here exactly in my country, because Bangladesh is a developing country that has a very different social, economic, cultural, political and stakeholder setup than here. However, my affiliation has certainly deepened my understanding and broadened my perspective about protected area management. On my return to my country I shall try to cultivate the professional relationships that I have developed during my stay here. By now I have also became aware what may be the scopes linkages. The International Affairs office of the National Park Services in the US is already considering the possibility and opportunity of developing an international exchange program for mid-career professional that I have suggested to them. ***-Abdullah Ahmad, '10-'11, is originally from Bangladesh.***

Working with Tribal People in India to Preserve Critical Areas

With nearly 1.2 billion people, preserving India's amazing wealth of biodiversity is a daunting challenge indeed. But biodiversity in India is not limited solely to the wildlife and plants found on the subcontinent: India is home to a vast array of people and cultures, including an estimated 84 million tribal people, representing 697 *scheduled tribes*. Collectively known as the *Adivasi*, the tribal peoples of India are increasingly seen as a vital partner and resource in conserving the natural resources of India.



Preservation through use— Traditional honey gathering in Southern India's Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve

Since 1995, **The Keystone Foundation** has been working in Southern India's Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve on projects aimed at helping tribal communities develop economically stable livelihoods in ways that preserve animal and plant biodiversity.

Keystone Foundation co-founder, director, and current CU Humphrey Fellow **Pratim Roy** has been instrumental in growing the organization into a powerful force for change, helping communities by strengthening their ties to their natural environment. Pratim has spearheaded a collaboration with the **Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund** (CEPF), a US-based donor which works to engage civil society groups in biodiversity conservation in critical hotspots around the world. These kind of cutting edge approaches acknowledge the vital role that indigenous and tribal people play in preserving environmental resources worldwide.

Voices

"To build capacity with U.S. institutions, finding an adequate joint point relevant to both sides can be of great significance at first. Persistence is another utmost important factor to ensure a final success. "

Changxiao Li, '08-09 China Southwest University partnerships with Cornell University and Saint John's University / College of Saint Benedict in Minnesota

Naratunya Davaa '09-10 Mongolia

Reflections on Humphrey Fellowship year and the Challenge Rope Outdoor course. It was an extremely challenging exercise, but it reflected the road we all take and the barriers in it for all of us to reach our goals and not give up...being on top of the pole near the trees I could review and assess my goals and dreams

International Symposium Aims to Move Haiti Toward a Greener Future

Despite a lush, tropical setting, Haiti has no appropriate showcase of its natural bounty. After returning from his Humphrey Fellowship year last summer, **William Cinea**, '10-'11, finally felt ready to do something about that.



Symposium participants came from the US, Canada, France, Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

During his Professional Affiliation, Cinea organized an international symposium in Haiti, bringing together several of the world's top public garden directors, as well as key people in the Haitian public and private sector. His mentor, Prof. Donald Rakow, Director of Cornell University's Plantations, was invited to participate in the International Conference held in Haiti in October. He reports: "William Cinea was the primary organizer of this workshop and he did a simply amazing job of pulling everything together despite very difficult circumstances. Besides myself, other speakers at the workshop included Dr. Peter Wyse-Jackson, president of the Missouri Botanical Garden; Mr. Gilles Vincent, director of the Montreal Botanical Garden; Mr. Chipper Wichman, president and CEO of the National Tropical Botanical Garden; and Mr. Leigh Morris, vice president for education, RBG Edinburgh."

After the earthquake in Jan. 2010, the need for a botanical garden in Haiti is even greater. Cinea's vision has been to create a place of beauty, solace, respite, learning, research and community outreach. With this in mind, the garden is being planned with the following goals:

- to provide a model and to educate the citizens of Haiti on ways to revegetative their denuded lands with native and economic crops;
- to train individuals in horticultural skills so they will be employable;
- to serve as a place of refuge in the earthquake ravaged country;
- to contribute to economic recovery by spurring tourism;
- to be a research site on ways to restore plant biodiversity.

Cinea is founder of Green Haiti and Cayes Botanical Garden, in Les Cayes, a town in Southwestern Haiti. As a strong advocate for natural resource management, he started his public garden with only $50 of his own money.

William Cinea finished his Humphrey year with the desire to develop move forward on his longstanding dream of starting a National Botanical Garden in Haiti, and now it appears that he and his colleagues have now secured a 400-hectare site. During his Humphrey experience, William had an affiliation with the Missouri Botanical Garden, which resulted in that organization putting William on a retainer for one year. Through ties with the Montreal Botanical Garden, the Humphrey alumnus arranged for important support from Dr

> "After the earthquake in Jan. 2010, the need for a botanical garden in Haiti is even greater"

Ahmed Djoghlaf, Executive Secretary of the United Nations' Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Dr. Djoghlaf is organizing a two-day training workshop in May 2012 to revise the national CBD strategy and action plan for Haiti and to discuss this important national botanical garden initiative.

CU Welcomes 2011-2012 Humphrey Fellows!

On August 1st, 2011, Cornell University welcomed a new group of 11 Humphrey Fellows, including our first fellows from Djibouti, and Trinidad and Tobago!

Mustafa Amzough, *Morocco*

Eddy Bongwele Is Akaala, *D.R. Congo*

Diogo Carvalho, *Brazil*

Sian Cuffy, *Trinidad and Tobago*

Nabil Kassoussi, *Algeria*

Dianna Kirakosyan, *Armenia*

Takang Pamela Manyo, *Cameroon*

Olena Myronycheva, *Ukraine*

Tanja Popovicki, *Serbia*

Hassan Rayaleh, *Djibouti*

Pratim Roy, *India*



From left to right: Eddy Bongwele Is Akaala, Nabil Kassoussi, Dianna Kirakosyan, Tanja Popovicki, Diogo Carvalho, Olena Myronycheva, Sian Cuffy, Takang Pamela Manyo, Hassan Rayaleh, Pratim Roy, Mustafa Amzough

"Strength lies in differences, not in similarities." - *Stephen Covey*

What does the environmental officer of a quarry, talk to a mycologist about? Another Fellow is charged with setting up the natural hazard and disaster curriculum for his university. Two Fellows work within the Congo Riverbasin Rainforest, the second largest ecosystem in the world. Fellows with diverse backgrounds in the agricultural and environmental fields come to Cornell University each year. What each Fellow carries away from the program are the tools to become global citizens and leaders. Education is one of the most effective resources for managing individual and group change. Fellows leave US citizens with a better understanding of the world too.

Eddy Bongwele from the Congo teaches Lingala to school children and Olena Myronycheva from the Ukraine also volunteers at the Greater Ithaca Activities Center. Tanya Popovicki from Serbia worked on the campaign to elect a new mayor of Ithaca, to learn more about how grassroots people organize. Svante Myrick, 24 yrs old, is the youngest and first African American mayor of Ithaca.

Fellows rolled up their sleeves to help community members sort books for the annual Friends of the Library Book sale. It is one of the largest used book sale events in the U.S. Thousands of books are recycled to resale for as little as $1.



Above:graphic on the Humphrey Fellows tshirt this year. Stephen Covey is the author of the "7 Habits of Highly Effective People.



Humphrey Fellows help a senior sort books for the annual Ithaca Friends of the Library Book sale.

We took a 4 day field trip along the Hudson River Valley watershed from the Adirondacks in upstate New York to New York City in mid-August. The Fellows were introduced to the history of the largest state protected area of wild natural land in the country, learned about rural communities who live in these areas and how they make a living, and visited an innovative farm owned by a young couple graduated from Cornell University. The Fellows also visited a Native American community, and had lunch. Finally we visited the largest fish distribution market in the U.S. and the second worldwide after Japan in New York City. This series of field visits was an attempt to bring together the diverse interests of our Fellows this year in agriculture and the environment.

Two visits were organized with Alfred State College, our associate campus partner. In October Fellows talked with residents who lived in the Susquehanna River Valley area where both natural gas and oil have been extracted over the past 10 years. http://flic.kr/s/aHsjwqhYAp The second visit in November was during International Education Week. Fellows presented posters about their culture and the highlight of the evening was a panel discussion about Muslims faith and stereotyping, featuring our three Muslim Fellows and another American Muslim at another university.

Cornell and UC Davis Fellows will hold a videoconference on climate change next month.

Cornell University

Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program

Funding Opportunities

Alumni Impact Award deadline is March 15, 2013

This grant is awarded annually on a competitive basis and for Fellows who want to continue or implement a project in your country/region using the knowledge and skills that you have gained during your fellowship year. The award is up to $10,000. See details on the national Humphrey Fellowship Program website www.humphreyfellowship.org

More alumni grant opportunities, and ways to stay connected with Fulbright and other U.S. government sponsored Fellows by joining www.alumni.state.gov

Cornell University and CALS

See video lectures on Comcast www.cornell.edu/video

Connect with other HF alumni and current Fellows, and hear about the latest news by finding us on Facebook!

Find us at:

facebook.com/cornell.humphreys

The Humphrey Fellowship Program has a LinkedIn site for Humphrey Fellows. This is a for professional networking program open to everyone.

Articles and contributions from Abdullah Ahmad, Devon Jenkins, Peter Hobbs, Pratim Roy, Changxiao Li, William Cinea, Donald Rakow, excerpt from the Mongolian Association website and Francine Jasper