

IIRDnorthamerica
9005 Greenridge Drive
Saint Louis, MO 63117

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For more information:

Virginia D. Klein
Executive Director
IIRDnorthamerica
9005 Greenridge Drive
Saint Louis, MO 63117
Ph: (314) 993-5599
Email: v.klein@iirdna.org

www.iird.interconnection.org

IIRDnorthamerica
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IIRD HONORED AS ONE OF THE WORLD'S TEN MOST SUSTAINABLE PROGRAMS.

For the second year in a row, IIRD has been chosen by the prestigious Prince of Wales International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF) as one of ten organizations to be shortlisted for the Rio Tinto Alcan Prize for Sustainability. The Prize, which honors the ten most sustainable non-profit programs in the world, awards a main prize of \$1 million and nine smaller grants. The prize is designed to showcase outstanding contributions to sustainability by not-for-profit, non-govern-



ment and civil society organizations.

In announcing the ten shortlisted organizations, Rio Tinto Alcan revealed that, "The Prize received 117 entries from organizations throughout the world, working across a broad range of different and excit-

ing initiatives. Having evaluated the entries, we believe we have ten short-listed organizations which highlight the diversity and depth of talent, initiative and skills existing in the not-for-profit sector."

The winner of the \$1 million will be announced in June 2009 in Montreal, Canada. For more information about the prize, the ten finalists and IIRD's application, please visit the Rio Tinto website www.riotintoprizeforsustainability.com

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EMPOWERMENT



Spring 2009

IIRD: Empowering Bangladesh's Rural Poor to End Their Own Poverty

PLANNING for the FUTURE

HOW CAN IIRD GROW TO MEET ESCALATING NEEDS?

THE CONTINUED AND MEASURABLE SUCCESS OF IIRD'S MODEL IN BANGLADESH HAS ATTRACTED THE INTEREST OF OTHER NGO'S IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. SEVERAL HAVE SENT GROUPS OF STAFF TO LEARN THE MODEL TO ADAPT OR REPLICATE IT IN THEIR OWN COUNTRIES.



IIRD looks upon each working area as a living organism. The local social relationships rooted in deep cultural and religious traditions are enriched by various economic, political and other human structures and relationships. The physical ecology of each area is unique and must be understood to properly design development programs and activities which will be appropriate and sustainable for the area and its people. The very heart of the model is to eradicate poverty through the empowerment of the poor. As IIRDnorthamerica, the US support of Fr. Bill and IIRD in Bangladesh looks to the future, we ask ourselves how we can grow this model to reach the extreme poor in other countries who face the same seemingly insurmountable problems.

IIRDnorthamerica has been studying and researching for over a year the best ways to bring IIRD's knowledge and expertise to other areas of the world, while continuing our strong commitment to Bangladesh. It is our strong belief that that we must build an infrastruc-

ture that can sustain and support that growth. We are poised to take the first steps towards the future by becoming a global source of education and empowerment to eradicate poverty and human suffering.

Later this year, with the help of several generous companies who have offered their services pro bono, IIRDnorthamerica (IIRDna) will introduce a new name and logo that will allow for that growth and a new interactive website that will include online giving, individual project support, pictures and video clips of work areas. We are doing our best to develop a user friendly, informative and updated way for you to be more informed on a more regular basis. Our materials, website and newsletter will have a coordinated look. This institutional rehab is aimed at attracting more donors, spreading the message of our successful and measurable model and encouraging interaction. We hope that you will be as excited as we are at the prospect of seeing IIRD's model offered to a larger audience and eventually to other parts of the world.



STAYING FOCUSED



HOW DO WE KEEP TRACK OF SO MANY FAMILIES?

Our holistic approach to poverty eradication is based on the proven knowledge that the truly poor face so many obstacles to their progress that without addressing the individual problems that face each family, their success would not be sustainable. To prepare individual family plans and be sure that these partner families do not lose ground on their pathway out of poverty, IIRD developed a unique field social worker network of young men and women ages 18 – 24 years who have completed eight to ten years of education and live in the same villages as our partner families. They are taught to look for signs that a family is losing ground and report any changes in a family's progress to a regional field director who reports to Dhaka. Immediate changes are then made to the family's program so that they don't lose the progress they've made. This network of trained field social workers, who are at the grassroots level of IIRD, is a unique system of on-site caretakers that insures no family "falls into the cracks", and one of the safeguards that distinguishes IIRD from other NGO programs.

ZEROING IN ON THE POOREST OF THE POOR

When a family moves into a different category, they are able to engage in a higher level of skills training in the economic endeavor of their choice. Where appropriate, microcredit can help to create small businesses or buy assets, like livestock or land for agriculture, so that the family begins to acquire the means to sustain their upward mobility.

WHAT DETERMINES WHEN A FAMILY GRADUATES?

• **GRADUATES** – families who are able to provide food security, education and healthcare. They own a small piece of land, have savings and have acquired assets such as owning livestock, a small business, or cultivate their own fruits and vegetables. They have learned the skills necessary to care for their assets and cope with daily problems.

Graduates leave the IIRD program to continue on their own or, for those who wish to continue their growth, IIRD will introduce them to other NGO's who are equipped to take them further. This allows IIRD to remain caring for the poorest of the poor.

HOW DO WE MEASURE EACH FAMILY'S SUCCESS?

In order to measure individual success, a rating system was developed to record the upward progress of each family. Every three years, field social workers and their regional director visit each family to assess their progress, discuss their plan and talk about any problems. The information base rates the ability of families to provide food and shelter, pure water and sanitation facilities, education, ownership and access to land and livestock, other economic assets, regular employment and income.

Based on this criteria, families are rated as:

- **EXTREME HARD CORE POOR** - families with the most serious food deficiencies, near starvation and unable to provide the most basic necessities for their family.
- **HARD CORE POOR** – those who have serious food deficiency especially during the four months of the rainy season. They cannot provide adequate housing, pure drinking water, sanitation, healthcare, education or weather-appropriate clothing.
- **VERY POOR** – still have some food deficiency for part of the year, struggle with daily needs and are unable to provide health care or education for their children.
- **LESS POOR** – Sufficient food year round but cannot completely take care of their daily needs.

FULFILLING THE IIRD MISSION

IIRD's mission, written in 1987, was to uplift 50% of our partner families in each work area permanently out of poverty within a fifteen year cycle. That has been, and continues to be, accomplished. Recent surveys indicate that we are now reaching that goal within a ten year time frame.

The most recent re-rating took place in most of our villages during the spring of 2008. The outcomes, once again, showed the quantifiable success of the IIRD model. During that period, 74,972 families were surveyed and 6,252 of them (approximately 31,260 people) were found to be sufficiently secure in their ability to be self-sufficient and financially stable to graduate the IIRD program. What pride they have in reaching such a dreamed of goal!

As families move up the ladder of independence, others fill their places and the cycle continues to provide hope, dignity and pride of accomplishment. IIRD is proud of its graduates and their hard work in the face of so many obstacles. Sharing in that pride are our faithful donors who keep the model alive and the numbers of success stories growing. We are forever grateful.

