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Inaugural Prize for Innovations in Bangladesh Awarded by Harvard University's Center for International Development and Anwarul Quadir Foundation

The lives of rural people of Bangladesh can be improved by utilizing absentee-owned fallow land more effectively and by employing the vitamin-rich fruits and leaves of the indigenous moringa tree. Those are the promises of the two prize-winning essays in a new annual contest sponsored by the Center for International Development (CID) at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government and the Anwarul Quadir Foundation of Cambridge, Massachusetts.

The 2007 essay winners will share the first prize of \$25,000. Saifuddin Ahmed, recently the general manager of a large agricultural organization in Bangladesh, seeks to improve the productivity of farmers. His winning proposal creates an innovative way of managing the absentee-owned land and generating large-scale employment and the production of cash crops. Anastasia M. Telesetsky, an environmental lawyer and former anthropologist who lives in San Francisco, seeks to empower rural villagers, especially women. Her project proposes promoting the use of moringa oleifera, an indigenous but not widely-cultivated nutritious plant, through community-based, small-scale gardens in low-income Bangladeshi communities.

141 essays were submitted from more than a dozen countries and ranged in focus from healthcare to energy to microfinance solutions. Details for the 2008 contest will be announced later this year.

The judging panel for the first Anwarul Quadir Prize was chaired by Robert I. Rotberg, Kennedy School adjunct professor, CID associate, and director of the Belfer Center's Program on Intrastate Conflict and Conflict Resolution. The other judges were Lewis Branscomb, emeritus professor of Science, Technology and Public Policy in the Kennedy School; Tiziana Dearing, until recently executive director of the Hauser Center in the Kennedy School and now president of Catholic Charities of the Boston Archdiocese; and Debora Spar, Professor of Business Administration at Harvard Business School. The judges were assisted in their assessments by three prominent Bangladeshi advisors: Vice Chancellor Jamilur Reza Chowdhury of BRAC University; attorney Sara Hossain, now in private practice but formerly the head of the South Asia Program of the International Centre for the Legal Protection of Human Rights; and Muzamel Huq, former general manager of Grameen Bank and now managing director of Enterprise Development Company Ltd. in Dhaka.

The Quadir family established the Anwarul Quadir Foundation in 2004 at the initiative of Iqbal Z. Quadir, who taught at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and now teaches at MIT, where he recently founded the Legatum Center. The Foundation promotes economic and social progress in Bangladesh by encouraging innovations that empower its citizens. Iqbal Quadir also founded GrameenPhone in Bangladesh.

For more information, please visit:

Anwarul Quadir Prize essay contest page, http://www.cid.harvard.edu/quadir_prize/

Anwarul Quadir Foundation home page, <http://www.quadir.org/>