

Completion of Iwokrama Ranger Training Programme for Six Wai Wais from Masakenari Village

Iwokrama International Centre Field Station, Kurupukari, Essequibo, GUYANA, September 23, 2006. Today the Iwokrama International Centre announced the completion of classroom training for persons from the Masakenari Village in Southern Guyana in Park Rangering. The course is being administered under contract from Conservation International – Guyana as part of that organisation's support for the development of the Wai Wai Community-Owned Conservation Area (COCA).

Of the seven representatives of the Wai Wai community who spent two months at the Bina Hill Institute, Annai studying basic Mathematics, English, Science and Social Studies in preparation for the Ranger Course, six completed their training at the Iwokrama Field Station. The Ranger Training Course comprises three months instruction followed by a three month internship period in their community, where each Ranger Trainee is expected to complete a project.

At the Iwokrama Field Station, course participants were exposed to various aspects of rangering, including: understanding the links between local, national, and global environmental issues; their roles and responsibilities, the importance of co-management of protected areas; environmental education and interpretation; and communication skills. In addition, the course exposed participants to natural resource management laws in Guyana, Guyana's history and political organisation, and participatory approaches to resource management including community project planning and implementation and sanitation and hygiene. The course is structured to include both classroom and field activities, which would be further reinforced by the internship period.

Course instructors included Iwokrama Rangers from surrounding local communities trained under the two previous Iwokrama Ranger Training Programmes as well as experts from the Bina Hill Institute, the Court of Appeal, Guyana Defense Force, Red Cross, Walter Roth Museum, University of Guyana, and Iwokrama.

On departure from the Field Station, participants would be returning to their community to carry out their internship equipped with a set of resources with which they can carry out their responsibilities as field-based natural resource managers. The internship period entails a Rapid Assessment Programme, Development of a programme in conservation for clubs, and development of a monitoring and enforcement plan for the COCA Management Plan. The trainees would also be participating in preparing a booklet about the Wai Wai History in

Guyana for their Museum and a pictorial booklet of all the mammals found within the Masakenari Area.

Already Iwokrama is conducting another Ranger Training course on contract from the EPA- Guyana with funding from German Development Bank - Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW). The contract provides for the training of several persons from the various protected and other areas in Guyana. The present course will be followed by a Tour Guiding course in January 2007. Other course subjects include tour guiding, participatory approaches in community-based resource management, and protected areas management.

The Training Programme is one component of Iwokrama Business Portfolio, which includes Eco-tourism, Sustainable Timber Operations, and Intellectual Property & Services.

The Iwokrama Forest is the largest functioning protected area in Guyana and it enjoys an excellent relationship with local communities. It is internationally recognised for the involvement of local communities in its management and decision making.

At the core of all activities Iwokrama undertakes, lies the principle of collaborative management, which recognises the shared responsibilities, rights and rewards related to the management and sustainable use of the rainforest.