

Between The Lines – Issue 2, June 2003

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Throughout the tropical developing world, grassroots initiatives are finding new ways to combine the reduction of human poverty with the conservation and wise use of biological wealth. In early 2004, six of the most successful of these initiatives will receive the Equator Prize - a prestigious international award recognizing outstanding achievement in sustainable development. The formal Call for Nominations for the Equator Prize 2004 was made in Berlin on World Environment Day (5 June 2003) at a special event hosted by the German Government.

The Equator Initiative has two main aims in awarding its biennial prize. One is to honor the achievements of outstanding local projects and provide a financial boost to the effectiveness of their work. Each of the six winners will receive a trophy, a certificate of recognition and a check for US\$30,000.

The second aim is to amplify the benefits of best sustainable development practice by bringing local achievements to the attention of the wider world. To this end, finalists will also be given a chance to share the lessons of their experience - with each other, with local communities throughout the world and with policy makers at every level.

The 2004 Prize represents an invaluable opportunity to focus global attention on the work of pioneering local initiatives. With this in mind, the Equator Initiative asks all interested parties to help ensure that not a single exemplary project escapes the attention of the jury. So if you know of a great grassroots project, or if you work for such a project yourself, **get it nominated!**

Equator Prize 2004: Call for Nominations

The Equator Prize is a prestigious international award recognizing outstanding local achievement in combining poverty reduction with biodiversity conservation. The Prize is open to grassroots initiatives within the equatorial belt – site of the world's richest biodiversity and home to many of its poorest people. The six awardees will each receive a trophy, a check for US\$30,000 – and the global recognition they deserve. The countdown to the Equator Prize 2004 began on World Environment Day (5 June 2003) with the official Call for Nominations.

The launch of the prize process took place in Berlin at a meeting entitled *Biodiversity and Poverty Reduction* – a key component of this year's World Environment Day celebrations. The evening's activities centered around a high-level panel discussion of the critical linkages between the conservation of biological wealth and the reduction of human poverty. The event also featured a GEO Magazine photographic exhibit on the people and environment of West and Central Africa and a programme of music inspired by the goals of sustainable development.

The *Biodiversity and Poverty Reduction* event was also an opportunity to welcome the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) to the Equator Initiative's growing list of partner organizations.

The German Government has an enviable record in advancing the cause of sustainable development. Their decision to partner with the Equator Initiative demonstrates their continuing support for local efforts to reduce poverty through the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

The biennial Equator Prize has been awarded once before. The inaugural award ceremony took place at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg on 30 August 2002. The winning projects reflected the overall diversity of the competition, ranging from a community-owned 'eco-safari' lodge in Kenya to a Brazilian group specializing in the manufacture of natural cosmetics from sustainably harvested forest products.

The Equator Prize Laureates made an important contribution to proceedings at the WSSD, helping to remind participants of the need to relate their discussions to action at the local level. In the spirit of the Equator Initiative's continuing work to enable grassroots groups to influence the course of high-level discussions, the 2002 finalists were also represented at the Berlin event.

Elise Pierrette Memong Meno, of Cameroon's Support Group for Conservation and Sustainable Development Initiatives (CACID), was on hand to give would-be nominees an idea of the sort of projects the Equator Prize 2004 Jury will be looking for.

The 2002 Equator Prize finalists were selected from some 420 nominees from 77 countries. This time around, the Equator Initiative hopes to receive an even greater number – and range – of nominations.

The closing date for nominations is 5 October 2003. It is hoped that not a single outstanding initiative will escape the attention of the Equator Prize Jury. So if you know of a great community project in a developing country within the equatorial belt, please be sure to get it nominated!

Please visit the Equator Initiative website (www.EquatorInitiative.org) for a complete list of eligibility criteria, and for full instructions on how to make a nomination. The sooner nominations are made the better, since those received prior to 25 July will receive initial feedback, if requested, that may strengthen submissions before being passed to the Jury.

Nominees should demonstrate evidence of the following qualities: impact; partnerships; sustainability; innovation and transferability; leadership and community empowerment; gender equality and social inclusion.

The Equator Prize Award Ceremony will take place in early 2004 at the Seventh Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, in Malaysia: a key date in the international calendar and a truly global platform from which the 25 finalists will be able to share the benefits of their experience. The Equator Prize 2004 is thus an invaluable opportunity to bring the pioneering work of local communities to the attention of the world.

Well Bee-Hived!

*Farouk Jiwa, of the Equator Prize 2002 finalist **Honey Care Africa**, writes about the important links between biodiversity conservation, poverty reduction and bee keeping.*

Honey Care Africa was established in 2000 as a private Kenyan company with a unique 'tripartite' agenda: to simultaneously generate economic, social and environmental value through beekeeping. In many ways, Honey Care was set up as a bold experiment to reconfigure the dynamics between the private sector, development agencies, and rural communities.

Honey Care introduces communities across Kenya to beekeeping technology, and helps them acquire loans from various development sector organizations to buy hives and other beekeeping equipment. Honey Care then trains farmers in managing the hives, and provides technical support services. Most importantly, Honey Care then offers to buy the honey from the communities at a guaranteed fair price. The honey is extracted using a mobile unit that is set up close to the village during harvesting season.

Honey Care's 'Honey for Money' policy guarantees that all farmers are paid cash-on-the-spot for their produce. At the time of harvest, an agreed amount is deducted from the proceeds of each farmer's produce. This amount is remitted to the donor agency until the loan each farmer received for the hives has been repaid in full.

Honey Care's project partners have included: UNDP; the World Bank; the EU; the Danish International Development Agency; DFID; the Kenyan Government; Africa Now; the European Commission; the Aga Khan Foundation; the Soros Foundation; and the Embassies and High Commissions of Australia, United Kingdom, Germany, United States and Finland.

Biodiversity Conservation, Poverty Reduction and Beekeeping

Beekeeping is an excellent enterprise for many parts of rural East Africa because the vegetation and climate are near perfect for the activity. In addition, beekeeping

complements existing farming systems, is simple and relatively inexpensive to initiate, and requires a very low level of input (land, labor, capital and knowledge). It is therefore suitable for smallscale rural communities with few other options for such enterprise activities. Further, the pollination of food crops by the bees makes an important contribution to increasing yields and improving food security.

Since its inception, Honey Care has focused primarily on introducing beekeeping to small-scale subsistence farmers across rural Kenya. Particular attention has been paid to encouraging women and youth to take up beekeeping as an important income source to address their economic marginalization. Honey Care has now helped to establish over 14,000 hives across Kenya, and close to 2,500 smallscale subsistence farmers in villages across the country are now involved in beekeeping.

From just four hives and about 15 minutes of work every fortnight, most of the farmers are able to earn an income of around US\$250 per annum – an amount that often makes the difference between living above or below the poverty line.

Honey Care has succeeded in using the intrinsic environmental value of beekeeping as a pringboard to further environmental benefits. Beekeeping is a textbook example of an activity that uses natural resources in a sustainable manner. Bees are probably the best natural pollinating agents for a wide variety of native trees, shrubs and grasses and their role in preserving and maintaining biodiversity cannot be over-emphasized. Unlike beekeeping in other parts of the World, Honey Care exclusively uses endemic and local sub-species of bees for honey production and this is a significant contribution towards the conservation of insect biodiversity in the region. Further, Honey Care uses commercially grown pine timber to manufacture beehives, thereby helping to preserve important hardwood tree species.

Throughout its training program, Honey Care stresses the connection between beekeeping and watershed protection, soil conservation, and biodiversity conservation. This holistic approach to beekeeping is the only way that good honey yields will be maintained in the long-term. Honey Care has worked to establish beekeeping as a more attractive and sustainable enterprise than tree felling and charcoal burning in areas where these destructive activities are common.

Together with UNDP/GEF Small Grants Programme, Honey Care has embarked on an intensive tree planting /beekeeping program called *Bees for Trees* with five communities around Mt. Kenya National Park and Forest Reserve, a World Heritage Site.

Sharing Experience: Supporting Community-Based Beekeeping in Macedonia and Serbia-Montenegro

Honey Care Africa was recently invited to Serbia-Montenegro to share its experiences of community-based beekeeping in Kenya with members of beekeeping groups in the southern region of that country. Honey Care was also asked to assist community members of the Sveti Nikole and Matica Stip Regional Beekeepers' Association in eastern Macedonia to develop a better honey collection mechanism and to advise them on establishing a honey processing facility. This is an excellent example of international exchange and cross-cultural collaboration between communities from different parts of the world. It emphatically demonstrates that diverse community groups can learn from one another, irrespective of cultural or language barriers.

How the Equator Prize has Helped our Work

The US\$30,000 cash prize that was awarded to Honey Care by the Equator Initiative at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) was first directed towards creating employment for two additional Community Project Officers in western Kenya. These additional staff members are working to improve the provision of technical support and extension services to community groups involved in beekeeping across the country. Some of the funds were also used to recruit a recent graduate in Community Development from Daystar University in Nairobi as a full-time Trainer to help improve the curriculum of the beekeeping training program.

Honey Care is currently setting the stage for the transfer of training to five local training and demonstration centers located closer to participating communities. This will make information on sustainable beekeeping more affordable, since trainees' travel costs will be significantly reduced.

Training will also be conducted in local community languages, thereby making it accessible to many more people. It is hoped that this move will encourage more women to take up beekeeping, as they are often reluctant to leave the household to travel to Nairobi for training. Part of the Equator Prize money has also been set aside to help educate farmers on the responsible use of pesticides and agricultural chemicals. Honey Care Africa's community-based approach to beekeeping and its innovative business model have received a tremendous amount of publicity and exposure as a result of the Equator Prize. We have been interviewed by, among others, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Globe and Mail*, *DSTV Africa*, *UN Radio*, *AllAfrica.com*, *BBC World TV*, *The Financial Times* and *BBC World Radio*. Upon returning to Kenya, the local press also picked up on the story and Honey Care was featured in *The Daily Nation* and *The East African Standard*. This coverage helped to increase Honey Care's profile, and brought the issues of beekeeping, sustainable livelihoods and biodiversity conservation into the spotlight, both locally and internationally.

Most importantly, the Equator Prize was a crucial validation of Honey Care's work. The international recognition of our efforts to address the twin issues of poverty reduction and biodiversity conservation in a practical manner was a tremendous boost to our morale and it has spurred us on to work even harder.

Plans for the Future

Since receiving the Equator Prize in September 2002, Honey Care has teamed up with Africa Now and K-Rep Development Agency to set up and capitalize a microleasing scheme through which small-scale farmers across the country will be able to receive loans to buy hives and start beekeeping. Honey Care will continue to provide these farmers with the option of a guaranteed market for their honey. This micro-leasing initiative will be supported by DFID and the European Community and will provide over 3,000 hives to rural farmers across the country.

Honey Care has been one of the prime movers in helping to establish the Kenya Honey Forum, a multi-stakeholder initiative that will create a well-coordinated national strategy for sustainable development of the beekeeping sector in Kenya. We have also assisted in the preparation of a Residue Plan by the Government of Kenya, which, for the first time, will allow Kenyan honey to be exported to the European market. In collaboration with the International Finance Corporation of the World Bank and local community partners, Honey Care is now exploring the possibility of

replicating its community-based beekeeping model in Tanzania and Uganda over the next few months.

It is true that the work of poverty reduction and biodiversity conservation is challenging and requires sustained efforts but we at Honey Care are now convinced that we can change the world one beehive at a time!

London Meetings Put Biodiversity on the MDG Agenda

The Equator Initiative and UNDP are proud to have cohosted a pair of meetings (together with UNEP-WCMC, RSPB, DFID and The Nature Conservancy) on the critical importance of biodiversity to sustainable development.

The first of these meetings - entitled *Biodiversity After Johannesburg* - was convened between 2-4 March 2003 at the Zoological Society of London. As one of the first major biodiversity events to follow the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the meeting attracted leading academics, policy makers and community representatives from across the world. The main objective of the meeting was to identify and articulate the links between biodiversity conservation and the Millennium Development Goals.

The event commenced with a keynote address by Dr. Jeffrey Sachs, Director of the UN Millennium Project. Dr. Sachs pointed out that biodiversity issues are currently underrepresented in the MDGs - despite the fact that "the biodiversity agenda is critical for meeting the needs of poor people." *Biodiversity After Johannesburg*, he argued, was an important opportunity to bridge the gap between biodiversity and the MDGs.

Dr. Sachs' arguments were echoed in keynote addresses by Clare Short MP (former Secretary of State UK DFID), Dr. Klaus Topfer (Executive Director of UNEP) and other key international players.

Dr. Topfer stressed that healthy ecosystems are essential to human needs and "ultimately influence the development prospects of nations." When that capacity is diminished, he said, "the most serious toll is exacted on the poor who are the most vulnerable to floods or crop failures."

Ms. Short noted that "the poor of the world are the most dependent on biodiversity" and highlighted the need for "win-win situations" that would balance conservation concerns with human needs.

Participants did not have far to look for concrete examples of such 'win-win situations'. Equator Prize Laureates were on hand to provide evidence that poverty reduction and biodiversity conservation are 'mutually inclusive' aims.

From Kenya, Paya Mure described the way in which the Il Ngwesi Group Ranch is using ecotourism as a means to improve local livelihoods. Benson Venegas discussed the work of Costa Rica's Talamanca Initiative to protect biodiversity within a World Heritage Site - without ignoring the needs of the region's people. From Fiji, Alivereti Bogiva reported on the continued success of the Locally Managed Marine Area Network in placing local people at the heart of operations to conserve aquatic life.

And Muneer Monuddin Alavi described the work of India's Medicinal Plant Conservation Centre, which involves communities in efforts to protect their botanical heritage. These inspiring local stories helped to create the unique atmosphere of optimism that pervaded the entire meeting.

The presence of the Equator Prize winners also served to remind participants of the need to relate their discussions to action 'on the ground'. This reminder was crucial to the success of the meeting's second phase, during which participants divided themselves into groups and came up with concrete suggestions for the future.

In bringing the Equator Prize Laureates to Biodiversity After Johannesburg, the Equator Initiative demonstrated its continuing work to enable local groups to influence the course of international discussions.

(Please visit www.EquatorInitiative.org for a full report on the first meeting).

The second meeting, entitled 2010: The Global Biodiversity Challenge, was convened in London under the Convention on Biological Diversity between 21 - 23 May. The meeting was co-sponsored by UNEP-WCMC and UNDP. The title refers to the internationally adopted WSSD target to significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010. The meeting's main objective was to develop a system of 'indicators' by which progress towards this target could be measured.

Plenary sessions began with an address by Elliot Morley MP, UK Secretary for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Mr. Morley spoke of the "all-pervasive role biodiversity plays in our world – from food and shelter to ecosystem services, pollination and medicines," and warned that "we ignore the current decline of biodiversity at our peril."

Following a series of presentations on the key issues, participants divided themselves into four groups and worked to come up with a series of recommendations for action. Several of the working groups concluded that efforts to achieve the 2010 biodiversity conservation target must take the MDGs fully into account - and vice versa. Specific proposals were made to link the 2010 target with the global MDG effort.

The working groups found that many existing data collection mechanisms could be made to serve an additional purpose as indicators for the 2010 target. They also identified a number of gaps in the various regional, national and international data-gathering systems – and suggested ways in which these gaps might be filled (via an improved use of satellite imaging, for example).

The meeting also highlighted the need for conventions and strategies that would address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss (lack of information, unsustainable consumption patterns, failure of institutions, markets and policies) as well as the more immediate factors (pollution, invasive species and over-exploitation of wild resources). These two critical meetings helped to place biodiversity issues a little nearer the top of the international community's 'To-Do List'.

(Please visit www.EquatorInitiative.org for a full report on the second meeting).

In the Field with Equator Prize 2002 Finalists

In August 2002, six outstanding community initiatives from throughout the tropics were each awarded the US\$30,000 Equator Prize. In a surprise announcement at the Johannesburg Awards Ceremony, The Nature Conservancy generously donated equivalent prize amounts to the 19 additional finalists. All 27 awardees have now had nearly ten months to put the prize money to use. In March 2003, two Equator Initiative Programme Assistants - Jen Roynon and Seema Joshi - visited four of the finalist communities in order to learn more about their work. They found that the Equator Prize has contributed in a number of ways to their continued success.

Jen Roynon visited two finalist communities in East Africa: the Il Ngwesi Group Ranch in Kenya and the HASHI Soil Conservation Project in Tanzania. The Il Ngwesi Group Ranch has established itself as a model of communal land management on Kenya's biodiverse Laikipia Plateau. It has led efforts in the conservation of wildlife in the surrounding plain by protecting communal lands - which are home to a wide variety of indigenous species. The Ranch itself is a collectively owned venture of 499 local households and comprises an exclusive ecotourism lodge and a locally led committee responsible for land and resource management. The Ranch has successfully limited poaching in the area through communal patrols and continually emphasizes the need for sustainable management of natural resources. As an attractive tourist destination, the Ranch generates substantial revenues that are ploughed back into the development and poverty alleviation efforts of the local community. This collaborative approach towards resource management has improved local livelihoods and helped preserve the integrity of the natural environment.

The HASHI Soil Conservation Project in Tanzania is a joint effort undertaken by the Tanzanian Government and local communities to reverse the process of soil degradation through traditional means. To prolong the availability of fodder during dry periods, the project has reintroduced the *Ngitili* System - a traditional method of rotational grazing-in the desert of Tanzania. The restored areas ensure the longevity of livestock and facilitate increased production of farm and dairy products.

The HASHI Project has greatly increased the number of trees in the area, substantially improved soil conditions, and restored numerous wells. The *Ngitili* System has also helped restore approximately 250,000 hectares of grazing land in the region. Biodiversity benefits have arisen from the restoration of ecosystems, re-growth of trees and medicinal plants and the return of many indigenous species to the arid region, including bird and butterfly species.

Overall, the success of these East African projects left Roynon with a sense of the power of community action to bring about real improvements in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and in the reduction of poverty.

Seema Joshi visited two Equator Prize finalists in Asia: the Community Based Integrated Rural Development (CBIRD) Center in Sub Tai, Thailand and the Uma Bawang Resident's Association (UBRA) in Malaysia. Both initiatives are addressing the basic livelihood needs of the members of their communities while at the same time protecting the natural environment.

Motivated by acute poverty, the residents of Sub Tai village once relied on income from poaching in the nearby Khao Yai National Park - one of Thailand's oldest

national parks and a repository of many rare species. In 1985, the Population and Community Development Association of Bangkok launched CBIRD Center to address the fundamental problem of indebtedness that ultimately encouraged poaching.

Building on a relationship between the local community and the Association, villagers now have access to low interest loans. These loans are granted in exchange for a commitment by borrowers to cease poaching and deforestation. Loans are primarily extended for environmentally sustainable initiatives aimed at protecting and enhancing local biodiversity. Joshi found that the project has nearly doubled incomes in the area and has enabled many people to repay old debts. Critically, community involvement in park management has reduced illegal logging by 75% and has helped preserve the natural habitat of such rare species as the Asian elephant and tiger.

In the Malaysian state of Sarawak, Joshi visited UBRA, a group which is winning the fight to secure traditional lands for sustainable use by local people. UBRA has adopted innovative mechanisms to gain access to forestlands and protect customary land rights. In the face of foreign concerns taking control of tribal lands for forest exploitation, the people of Uma Bawang used GIS mapping as a tool to secure their homelands. These maps have been used in courts of law to regain traditional lands for conservation and sustainable resource management. Now UBRA trains other communities to use GIS mapping in order to protect their land. These efforts have reverted large tracts of forest back to local control. Communities like Uma Bawang are now practicing sustainable forestry and ecoagriculture in their communities and at the same time reaping great economic benefits from sustainable enterprises.

The finalists of the Equator Prize 2002 have maintained close ties with the Equator Initiative. Representatives from the Il Ngwesi Group Ranch in Kenya attended the first of two biodiversity meetings in London in March 2003. Both Il Ngwesi and HASHI will also participate in a Canada World Youth / Equator Initiative exchange programme in late 2003.

After meeting just these four of the exceptional finalist communities for the Equator Prize 2002, both Joshi and Roynon expressed awe at the dedication and imagination of their hosts.

Coming Events / Dates to Remember:

14-18 July 2003: Equator Initiative hosts *Learning from Community Action: Biodiversity and the MDGs* workshop in Nairobi, Kenya

25 July 2003: Closing date for Equator Prize nominations seeking initial feedback

8-17 September 2003: World Parks Congress, Durban, South Africa

5 October 2003: Closing date for all Equator Prize 2004 nominations

Equator Initiative Partners

BrasilConnects

Government of Canada

German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

IDRC - International Development Research Centre

IUCN - The World Conservation Union
The Nature Conservancy
Television Trust for the Environment
United Nations Foundation
United Nations Development Programme

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