



# Between the Lines

In this issue . . .

## Nairobi Workshop a Success

Community representatives from throughout Africa share knowledge, ideas and experience at a workshop in Kenya

[Page 2 >>](#)



## Interview with Jeffrey Sachs

Professor Jeffrey Sachs, Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General, discusses the links between biodiversity conservation, poverty reduction and the MDGs

[Page 3 >>](#)



## In the Field with Equator Prize Winners

Join us as we catch up with Costa Rica's Equator Prize-winning Talamanca Initiative

[Page 4 >>](#)



## 'Net Gains'

Members of the Equator Prize-winning Fiji Locally Managed Marine Areas Network bring us up to date on their continuing success in the Pacific

[Page 5 >>](#)



## Equator Initiative

Equator Initiative Newsletter >> Sept 2003

In this edition of *Between the Lines*, we are pleased to bring news of an exciting beginning to the Equator Initiative's 'Learning Exchange Programme'. This new dimension of the Initiative's work is being launched with a series of regional workshops, designed to enable the free exchange of ideas and experience between local communities and other partners.

The first of these workshops, held in Nairobi, Kenya, between 13 and 18 July, brought together over 120 community representatives from 15 African countries. Discussions focused on local action to realize the Millennium Development Goals, with a particular emphasis on biodiversity and HIV/AIDS. Outcomes included the submission of a number of local-local partnership proposals, the most promising of which will be financed by means of a US\$50,000 fund.

This edition also features an interview with world-renowned economist Jeffrey Sachs, who is uniquely qualified to shed light on the relationships between biodiversity, poverty and the MDGs.

A year has now passed since the inaugural Equator Prize Awards Ceremony, held on 30 August 2002 at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. To mark the occasion, this issue of *Between the Lines* catches up with two of the winning initiatives, and reports on their continuing efforts to reduce poverty through the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

The deadline for nominations for the Equator Prize 2004 - 5 October 2003 - is fast approaching, so if you know of an exemplary grassroots project, don't forget to **get it nominated!**



Community representatives take a well-earned break from proceedings at the Equator Initiative's inaugural Learning Exchange Workshop in Nairobi, Kenya

## Learning from Community Action

*Community representatives share knowledge, ideas and experience at a workshop in Kenya, marking the start of the Equator Initiative's learning exchange programme*

The critical role of local communities in the global effort to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was placed center stage at a recent Equator Initiative workshop, held in Nairobi, Kenya, between 13 and 18 July. More than 120 representatives from 15 African countries came together to share experiences, identify common concerns and forge lasting partnerships with one another.

The workshop – entitled *Learning from Community Action to Realize the MDGs: Biodiversity and HIV/AIDS* – was much more than just another meeting. The meeting's unique structure was specifically designed with concrete outcomes in mind. These included the drafting of a 'Community Declaration', in which participants identified key priorities for action, and called on their national and international partners to address their particular concerns. In addition, a fund of US\$50,000 was made available to finance the creation of partnerships between participants. These partnerships – proposed over the course of the workshop by means of formal 'Learning Agreements' – will be announced in the near future.

The week's events commenced with an orientation session on Sunday, 13 July. A series of presentations served to familiarize participants with the MDGs and related issues, and prepared the ground for a detailed discussion of biodiversity and HIV/AIDS.



**Dr. Newton Kulundu fields questions from the media during the Nairobi workshop**

incomes for the poor, improving infrastructure and fighting HIV/AIDS," he said.

Dr. Kulundu's address was followed by a series of presentations by community leaders on the history of their projects. Senior Chief Simon Nduru Kinyaga of Kenya's Equator Prize-winning Il Ngwesi Group Ranch, for example, told of his community's success in protecting biodiversity while simultaneously reducing poverty. "The wild animals have come back, and now the community earns a large proportion of our livelihoods from their eco-tourism lodge. The money goes towards educating the community children,



**Workshop participants pool expertise in the drafting of the Community Declaration**

as well as expanding into new income-generating activities," he said.

The power of community action to achieve real development gains was the central theme of the workshop and provided a lens through which the issues of biodiversity conservation and HIV/AIDS could be viewed. Wednesday's sessions were entirely devoted to the latter topic. Rose Auma of GROOTS, and Athanasie Mukarwego of the Rwanda Women's Network, gave especially moving presentations on their personal experience of the pandemic, and told of their remarkable work to help others in a similar situation.

Field trips to a number of Kenyan community initiatives were arranged to remind participants of the need to relate their discussions to action 'on the ground'. Projects visited included a Maasai heritage project, a Nairobi slum-based Aids initiative and a reforestation project in Kereita forest.

The workshop ended with a gala evening on Friday. Traditional song and dance provided a fitting conclusion to the week's activities. The evening also served as the ideal occasion for the launch of Kenya's National MDG Report, which gives a detailed examination of the country's progress towards achieving the Goals by 2015.

The gala evening was characterized by a spirit of hope for the future. Richard Lolusoli of the Indigenous Information Network, Kenya, spoke for many when he said that the workshop had given him confidence that the MDGs will be realized. "The innovative practices presented by the communities and the pace at which participants are fighting the war on HIV/AIDS leaves no doubt that the menace will be out of our way sooner rather than later," he said. Overall, *Learning from Community Action* was hailed by participants as a successful beginning to the Equator Initiative's Learning Exchange Programme.

Partners with the Equator Initiative in organizing the event included a Nairobi-based Local Host Committee, GROOTS, Honey Care Africa Ltd., and UNDP's Civil Society Organizations Division. The Government of Canada, the UK Department for International Development, the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme, the Huairou Commission, and the International Institute for Environment and Development all provided support for the workshop. □

## Interview with Jeffrey Sachs

*Professor Jeffrey D. Sachs, Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University and Special Adviser to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan on the MDGs, discusses the linkages between biodiversity and development.*



**The Equator Initiative is all about strengthening the links between poverty reduction and biodiversity conservation. In your opinion, is it indeed possible to reconcile these aims?**

It's interesting that you should use the word 'reconcile' there, as if the reduction of human poverty and the conservation of biological wealth are somehow inherently incompatible. One factual point to mention first is that extreme poverty can lead to severe environmental degradation as land gets stripped for firewood or unsustainable agricultural practices, and necessary investments in protecting the environment cannot be made. To be sure, economic development around the world has often had an enormously destructive impact on the environment. But it doesn't have to be that way. Development can be achieved without adversely affecting the natural world. Indeed, conservation can be used as a lever to lift people out of poverty. All it takes is a little imagination. Leading the field in this respect are the local communities of the developing world. Literally thousands of grassroots projects are quietly succeeding in bringing about viable 'win-win' solutions that strike a balance between conservation and development. If sustainable development is to be achieved on a truly global scale, these local success stories will have to be replicated wherever possible. That's why I'm a big supporter of the work of the Equator Initiative. In spotlighting innovative and successful community projects, it's proving to the world that conservation and development can be mutually inclusive.

**The Millennium Development Goals have clearly become an important focus for the international community. Where does biodiversity fit into the overall MDG picture?**

At every level – genes, species and ecosystems – the human species relies on biodiversity for its survival and development. Food security, for example, is wholly dependent on biological diversity. If one food source fails, biodiversity can supply an alternative – a genetic variant, perhaps, or an entirely different species. At a more complex level, human beings are dependent on the ecosystem services that result from the interactions between species. The replenishment of soil fertility, the purification of water, the recycling of the air we breathe – these are all ecosystem services. So the contributions of biodiversity to the human species are truly invaluable. Nonetheless, there have been several recent attempts to calculate the incalculable. One figure puts the total value of biodiversity at 33 trillion dollars. I'm not entirely convinced of the validity of such speculation – it seems to me that to try to quantify the value of biodiversity is

paradoxically to devalue it, since to put a price on something implies that a replacement could somehow be bought. Regardless, it's clear that sustainable human development cannot possibly be achieved while the very underpinnings of human survival are being eroded. If the MDGs and other development targets are to be realized, full account will need to be taken of the critical importance of biodiversity and ecosystem services.

**In that case, why isn't there a Millennium Development Goal that specifically focuses on biodiversity conservation?**

Good question! One explanation is that the conservation of biodiversity is implied by nearly every one of the eight goals. For example, the MDGs call for an improvement in the provision of fresh water for poor people. Such an improvement will only be wrought if the relevant ecosystem services are safeguarded. Even those goals that appear at first sight to be wholly unrelated to biodiversity issues – goal six, for example, to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases – might well require the conservation of natural resources. After all, biodiversity is the source of the raw materials that underpin humanity's medicinal systems – whether we're talking about the 'informal' health sector, which caters to the needs of some 60 percent of the world's population, or the 'formal', which also derives a majority of its drugs from natural sources.

**How can the global scope of the MDGs be translated into action 'on the ground'?**

The need for concrete action at the local level does occasionally appear to slip the minds of international policymakers. This is understandable - it's difficult to come up with targets that more than 190 governments can agree on, without stripping them of any real clout or meaning. All things considered, I think the MDGs strike a good balance between macroscopic sweep and local action. They also offer a valuable opportunity to strengthen the links between the local level and the global, between the developed world and the developing. My hope is that these links will create a two-way conduit for knowledge, ideas and experience. It is increasingly recognized that the traditional 'top down' approach of government-led reform cannot exist as our sole strategy for development. As the Equator Prize has shown, the local communities of the developing world are the source of many of the most innovative and imaginative responses to the challenges of sustainable development. These communities might have never heard of the MDGs. But in many ways, they hold the key to achieving them. By enabling the exchange of best practices between communities, and by bringing the community voice to high-level international discussions, the Equator Initiative is doing a great job of bridging the gap, and, in doing so, it's helping to ensure that the local example points global policies in the right direction. □

## In the Field with Equator Prize Winners

*Equator Initiative staffer Luis Javier Montero catches up with Costa Rica's Equator Prize-winning Talamanca Initiative*

The inaugural Equator Prize was awarded at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg on 30 August 2002. The winners have now had 12 months in which to put their prize money (US\$30,000 each) to use. Equator Initiative staff members recently visited a number of the finalist communities in order to learn more about their work, and to find out how the Prize has helped to build on their successes.

Luis Javier Montero, an Equator Initiative Programme Assistant based in Costa Rica, accompanied members of the UNDP-GEF Small Grants Programme on a tour of some of the country's most outstanding local initiatives. In the course of his travels, he caught up with a number of the individual projects for which the Equator Prize-winning Talamanca Initiative serves as an umbrella organization.

The Talamanca Initiative has worked since 1983 to integrate biodiversity conservation and socio-economic development in the Talamanca region of Costa Rica.



**The STIBRAWPA Group's Yorkin Headquarters**

The Initiative's biodiversity conservation efforts have included the establishment of the Gandoca-Manzanillo National Wildlife Refuge – a last sanctuary for the endangered manatee – and the development of Central America's only permanent raptor migration monitoring programme.

To encourage sustainable development, the Initiative has promoted such measures as crop diversification, organic agriculture and ecotourism. As a result of these activities, incomes have risen substantially in many villages.

The Initiative has chosen to distribute its Equator Prize money among a number of its constituent community projects. Luis commenced his visit to these communities with a boat trip to Yorkin, a village in the heart of the

Talamanca-BriBri Indigenous Reserve. Yorkin is home to the STIBRAWPA Women's Group, which works to improve the quality of villagers' lives and to preserve their traditional culture – while at the same time conserving the natural resources of the surrounding forest.



**The Talamanca Region of Costa Rica: a Mecca for Ecotourists**

The group, which operates from a small complex of specially constructed cabins (an information centre, a handicraft training centre and a lodge for tourists), earns income for the community through ecotourism and the sale of traditional handicrafts.

Luis next visited the MANT Tour Guide Association, located within the Afro-Caribbean coastal region of southern Costa Rica. Tourism has had an enormous impact on this region over the past few years. In particular, the increase in the number of foreign-owned hotels and restaurants has engendered a corresponding decline in top-tier local participation in the tourism industry. The MANT Association is an exception to this trend. Founded by a group of young inhabitants of the Gandoca-Manzanillo area, the Association uses ecotourism as a tool for economic development, while at the same time educating the local people about the immense biological value of their beautiful surroundings. Luis found that the Association has succeeded in restoring to local people a sense of control over – and responsibility for – their natural environment.

Luis also caught up with the San Miguel Conservation Association (ASACODE) – a community association located in San Miguel de Sixaola, in the Lower Talamanca Region. Among other projects, ASACODE has established two substantial conservation areas, together with a lodge for students and ecotourists. It has also introduced a programme of sustainable forest management, to which end it has constructed its own sawmill.

Said Luis of his experience, "The first-hand view I received of my hosts' efforts reinforced my belief in the power of community action to bring about true sustainable development." □

## 'Net Gains'

*Joeli Veitayaki, Bill Aalbersberg and Alifereti Tawake of the Fiji Locally Managed Marine Areas network reflect on their project's success in combining economic development with the conservation of marine biodiversity*

Since 2000, the Fiji Locally Managed Marine Areas (FLMMA) network has worked to conserve marine biodiversity while at the same time providing for the livelihood needs of coastal communities in Fiji.

FLMMA was formed in response to the problems arising from the over-exploitation of Fiji's marine ecosystems. Over the past half-century or so, the commercialisation of the country's inshore fisheries has threatened the sustainability of its marine resources. Government strategies, with their reliance on 'top down' legislative measures, have failed to address the root causes of these problems. FLMMA has begun to succeed where the government failed because it has revived the traditional conservation practices of local communities. These practices – which include, for example, the enforcement of periodic fishing bans within certain marine areas – are relatively easy to implement because they rely on traditional institutions and systems of enforcement.



**Community clam-monitoring in Verata**

understanding. With these considerations in mind, FLMMA members use a method known as 'Participatory Learning and Action' (PLA) to involve local people in the management of their natural resources. First, background research and coordination are undertaken to ensure that the proposed action is relevant and appropriate. For this reason, the FLMMA teams are made up of people who can converse in the vernacular and who are therefore better able to interact with their community partners. In many instances prior to the introduction of this approach, resource management arrangements were finalised externally before being introduced to the communities to implement and observe.

The next step comprises a Resource Management Workshop, during which community members are asked to reflect on the state of their resources and the changes they have witnessed over the past 30-50 years. They are then asked to identify the main problems they face, together with ideas for possible solutions. The result is a resource management plan that outlines the activities that the community has agreed to undertake. Examples of proposed management activities include the declaration of fishing restrictions, the declaration of 'no take' areas and education and awareness campaigns. 'No take' areas are established in order to rehabilitate depleted marine resources and degraded habitats. The recovered biodiversity within these areas serves to 'seed' their depleted surroundings.

Monitoring workshops are organized in all of the managed sites to teach the communities how to conduct their own monitoring activities – which helps to establish a sense of community stewardship over their natural resources. Follow-up meetings and training workshops are periodically undertaken to maintain interest.

These measures have resulted in some dramatic gains in the health of local marine species. In Ucunivanua village, for example, the community's data indicate that both the number and size of clams has significantly increased in both the 'no take' area and the adjacent harvesting areas. Prior to FLMMA's involvement, it was extremely rare to find a clam bigger than 5 cm in diameter. Today, the community routinely finds clams that are over 8 cm. Indeed, clams exceeding the largest adult size class (larger than 9 cm) are now being found by villagers for the first time in three generations. As an additional >>



**Nakalou fishers of Macuata harvesting the rewards of a ten-year ban on gillnets**

The FLMMA network consists of community representatives, several Fijian government departments, the World Wide Fund for Nature, the International Marinelife Alliance, and the University of the South Pacific. FLMMA is itself a part of a wider entity: the Locally Managed Marine Area Network, an association of community-based marine conservation projects based in several countries across Asia and the Pacific.

FLMMA members have learned that to involve communities in conservation and resource management requires a great deal of consultative work, goodwill, trust and commitment. The process cannot be shortened and requires patience and

**(Continued page 6)**



## Net Gains (continued from page 5)

indicator of marine health, the community is finding that other fauna are returning to the ecosystem. For example, it has become hazardous to conduct the surveys in shallow water without foot protection because of the large numbers of stingrays (a major predator of the clams) that now frequent the mudflats.

Perhaps most encouragingly, when the people of other villages saw evidence of Ucuivanua's success in boosting clam stocks, they decided to follow suit by setting up similar 'no take' areas within their surrounding mangrove and coral reef ecosystems. As a result, a number of previously threatened species now stand a good chance of long-term survival.

The locally managed marine areas are being set up not just for reasons of conservation, but also to improve the yield of marine resources that people use for subsistence and cash income. In Ucuivanua, the increased yields of clams, crabs and other species has led to a 35% increase in household income over three years and a tripling of the resource catch per unit effort. The project also had an enterprise component which has seen the people of Verata district receive US\$30,000 to date in proceeds from licensing biodiversity samples for testing. This money has been put into a community trust fund, with the interest used to support monitoring work and to improve village resources such as primary schools.

FLMMA is fundamentally about partnerships. Whereas, in the past, communities worked in isolation and conservation organizations competed with one another, they are now cooperating to make the work of each site more effective and to enhance learning exchange between sites. An example of this cross-project collaboration is the way in which members of the different project teams visit one another's sites in order to conduct joint training exercises. In 2001, for example, FLMMA members from five NGOs and two government departments held a week-long participatory workshop to help eight villages on the island of Gau to develop marine resources management plans.

To ensure the long-term sustainability of the FLMMA approach, it is hoped that locally managed marine areas will become part of the government's work programme. Such a development would free up conservation organizations to play a facilitating role, allowing them to concentrate on developing new sites. Once management plans are fully implemented, the conservation organizations' role would be to visit sites once or twice a year to discuss results and any problems. This approach would allow for the involvement of all the community-based groups in the country.

The Equator Prize – awarded to FLMMA at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 – has benefited our work in several ways. The recognition we have enjoyed since Johannesburg has been spectacular. FLMMA's methods, and its success in involving local people in conservation efforts, have become known throughout the Pacific. The prize money

itself has been put into a trust fund. The interest from this fund will go towards future conservation activities. It is hoped that more funds can be added to the prize money to create a substantial trust that will support FLMMA's activities.

FLMMA's plan for the future has not changed from its original aim to make conservation more effective and meaningful to the people of Fiji. At the time of the submission of the Equator Prize nomination last year we were working in about six districts. A year later we are now working with villages from 36 districts. This is a good rate of progress, but we are still a long way from reaching every one of the 187 districts in the country. This goal, while ambitious, is achievable if conservation organizations, research institutions and communities continue to pull together. □

### Forthcoming Events

**8-17 September 2003:** 5th World Parks Congress on Protected Areas - Durban, South Africa

**Late 2003:** 2nd Equator Initiative Learning Exchange Workshop - Costa Rica

**February 2004:** Equator Prize 2004 Awards Ceremony - to be presented at the 7th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity - Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

### 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

### Further Information

If you have any comments or suggestions, please feel free to contact us at:

Equator Initiative, UNDP  
405 Lexington Avenue, 4th Floor  
New York, NY 10174 USA  
Email: [EquatorInitiative@undp.org](mailto:EquatorInitiative@undp.org)  
Tel: 1.212.457.1709  
Fax: 1.212.457.1370

[www.EquatorInitiative.org](http://www.EquatorInitiative.org)