



# Between the Lines

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## Equator Initiative

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The standard of entries for Equator Prize 2002 set the bar almost dauntingly high for this year's nominees. Happily, the challenge has been met: the quality of the competition for Equator Prize 2004 is every bit as impressive as last time around. The Jury has another tough job ahead!

The awards ceremony for Equator Prize 2004 will take place on February 19 2004 at the Seventh Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Malaysia. The presence of Equator Prize finalists at this important event will once again focus global attention on the power of community action to improve people's lives while simultaneously conserving biodiversity.

The Equator Initiative played a similar role in supporting local participation at the recent World Parks Congress in Durban. The Initiative's 'Community Park' put grassroots action at the heart of proceedings, and served to remind participants of the importance of community involvement in parks-based conservation strategies. A full report on the Equator Initiative's involvement at the WPC appears in this edition of *Between the Lines*.

Among other features, this edition also brings news of an exciting new partnership between the Equator Initiative and Canada World Youth. This 'Youth Exchange' initiative gives young people from developed and developing countries a chance to learn about their respective lives and cultures and to exchange perspectives on development and conservation. It's also a great excuse to make friends and have fun!



World Parks Congress delegates deep in discussion at the Equator Initiative's 'Community Park'



## 'Benefits Beyond Boundaries'

*The Equator Initiative played a key role in supporting local participation at the recent World Parks Congress*

More than one-tenth of the earth's surface is set aside for conservation. This network of parks and protected areas – over 100,000 individual sites – represents a good proportion of what remains of undisturbed nature. The function of these areas as safe havens for biodiversity is justification enough for their existence. Yet this function is only a part of their overall value. Protected areas guard against the failure of ecosystem services that are essential for human survival. Wisely managed, they also offer the potential for poverty reduction and development. This idea of 'benefits beyond boundaries' – the big-picture benefits of protected areas – was chosen as the overall theme for the Fifth World Parks Congress, held in Durban, South Africa, from 7-18 September 2003.

In charting the future of the protected areas movement, the Congress was notable for its success in placing the needs of poor communities – the people who are most affected by parks policies – at the centre of proceedings. The Equator Initiative's 'Community Park' was an contributor to this success.



**Steve McCormick, President and CEO of The Nature Conservancy, participates in a local-global dialogue**

The Community Park – a meeting space designed to encourage discussion between local representatives and other participants – was the continuation of a tradition that began at the World Summit on Sustainable Development with the Equator Initiative's innovative 'Community Kraal'. Like the Kraal, the Community Park proved enormously popular with participants, attracting large numbers of local development practitioners, indigenous leaders, mobile peoples and other community representatives, together with top policy-makers and parks managers.

Benson Venegas Robinson, of the Equator Prize-winning Talamanca Initiative, voiced the opinion of many of the local delegates: "The Community Park was an incredible opportunity to make our voices heard at the international level. Here the experience and dedication of local development practitioners and community leaders was incorporated into the heart of the Congress as a whole."



**Participants at the Community Park hear presentations by local representatives**

The Park played host to a variety of activities over the course of the Congress, including structured workshops, presentations by community leaders – even a puppet show or two! One particular highlight was the 'Local-Global Leaders' Dialogue.' This unique event saw local leaders and top conservationists engaged as peers in a discussion of protected areas and their impact on people's lives. Community participants were joined by the chief executives of several international NGOs and conservation agencies, including Achim Steiner, Director General of IUCN-The World Conservation Union, John Croxall, Chairman of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Steve McCormick, President and CEO of The Nature Conservancy, and Russell Mittermeier, President of Conservation International.

These were fruitful discussions. A consensus emerged that while parks-based conservation strategies and development interests have often conflicted in the past, the two aims are by no means inherently opposed. Indeed, with wise management, parks strategies and development efforts can be mutually reinforcing. Participants were agreed, however, that if such a synthesis is to be achieved, local stakeholders must be involved at every stage in the decision-making process.

In addition to the Community Park, the Equator Initiative was also involved in the organization of the 'Sustainable Finance Stream' – a series of workshops on the topic of protected areas financing. Many participants at this popular series of discussions, plenaries and events argued for the desirability of a 'business model' for protected areas financing. Others shared the lessons of their experience in overcoming institutional and policy barriers. All were agreed that the long-term viability of >>



**Achim Steiner, Director of IUCN, addresses the Community Park**

## Global Biodiversity Forum

*IUCN's 18th Global Biodiversity Forum – co-organized by the Equator Initiative and other partners – was a rare opportunity for community representatives to bend the ear of Government Ministers from around the world.*

Continuing in its mandate to facilitate community involvement in key international discussions, the Equator Initiative played an important part at the recent 18th Global Biodiversity Forum.

The Forum convened in Cancun, Mexico, from 5-7 September 2003, just prior to the Fifth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization, also held in Cancun. The proximity of the two events afforded a unique opportunity for Forum participants to send a clear message to the movers and shakers of the international trade community. This was a timely conjunction, for never before have biodiversity issues been so prominent within the multilateral trade agenda.

In an opening statement, Markus Lehmann, Economic Advisor to the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, outlined the Forum's principal function, saying: "the Global Biodiversity Forum provides an opportunity for in-depth and focused analysis and critical dialogue among a wide range of stakeholders on key issues related to biodiversity". In bringing Equator Prize winners and other community representatives to the table, the Equator Initiative helped realize the Forum's stated aim to reflect the concerns of the broadest possible range of stakeholders.



**Forum participants take a break from proceedings to sample the local cuisine**

Discussions at the Forum centered around three key issues: trade and sustainable livelihoods; risk, precaution and biosecurity; and the relationship between the WTO's Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

Reflecting this tripartite focus, the Forum was organized into three workshops. In the first of these, participants discussed how sustainable trade initiatives can and should



**Equator Prize 2002 finalists Eliceo Salazar, Juanita Baltodano and Jose Juarez catch up on Day One of the Global Biodiversity Forum.**

be used as tools for poverty reduction and biodiversity conservation. A number of Equator Prize finalists were on hand to share the secrets of their remarkable success in creating environmentally sustainable livelihoods. Eliceo Salazar and Juanita Baltodano, representing Costa Rica's Talamanca Initiative, gave a presentation on their experience in promoting crop diversification and organic agriculture. Meanwhile, representatives from Mexico's Café La Selva – a chain of coffee shops that sells organic coffee grown by indigenous communities – described their achievement in finding a global market for their eco-friendly produce.

Despite this concrete evidence of the possibility of equitable local participation within the international marketplace, it was acknowledged that many obstacles still hamper efforts to connect producers to markets. Accordingly, participants stressed the need for greater connectivity between urban and rural spheres, and called for the creation of networks that would serve to engage small producers in global markets.

The second workshop addressed the closely related issues of risk, precaution and biosecurity. Participants discussed the particular challenges posed by the spread of genetically modified organisms and invasive alien species. The final workshop focused on the link between the TRIPS agreement and the CBD. Workshop participants reviewed the international agreements that recognize the rights of indigenous peoples and other local communities with respect to genetic resources and traditional knowledge. All were agreed that if local rights are to be respected, communities must be involved at every stage of the drafting and implementation of such agreements.

Gustavo Alanis, Director of the Mexican Centre for Environmental Law, delivered a summary of the Forum's outcomes to the WTO Ministerial Conference. The 'take-home message' for delegates was clear: trade must benefit the poor by creating opportunities for the sustainable use of natural resources. □

## Equator Initiative Youth Exchange

*A new partnership between the Equator Initiative and Canada World Youth sows the seeds for a long-term conservation and development movement*

Cold weather and Swahili: an unusual combination, perhaps, but one to which residents of Haliburton and North Bay have become accustomed over the last couple of months. For these quiet Canadian towns have played host, since September, to the first phase of the Equator Initiative Youth Exchange.



**Youth Exchange participants take time to relax after a hard day's intercultural dialogue**

The product of a new partnership between the Equator Initiative and Canada World Youth, the Exchange brings young people from Equator Prize-winning communities in East Africa together with youth from throughout Canada. As an integral part of the Equator Initiative's Research and Learning Programme, the Exchange gives participants a chance to learn more about their respective cultures, and to share perspectives on conservation and development.

The Exchange began in September 2003 with a pre-departure workshop held in Nairobi, Kenya. East African Participants worked to develop a common vision for their part in the Exchange, calling for "a programme that enables us to share experiences, acquire knowledge and skills under different cultures that change our perception of life and that we can use to empower and encourage our people to find solutions to community problems."

Having established a clear idea of the aims of the Exchange, participants boarded the plane for its initial phase in Canada. Since September, they have engaged in an exciting programme of activities, including work placements, educational visits, and self-organised activity days in Haliburton and North Bay. The work placements have involved participants in a range of relevant activities, from medicinal plant research to water system budgeting and improvement. Through the weekly activity days, meanwhile, participants have held discussions on a variety of issues of relevance to their lives, from HIV/AIDS to the various environmental challenges facing their very different communities.

Exchange participants have learned much from this intensive process of intercultural knowledge-sharing. As one Kenyan youth put it: "We are learning a lot. I'm sure I'll have a lot to share with my people once I go back."

The nature of this learning has varied greatly. Through work placements, African participants have mastered a range of specific skills (advanced bee-keeping techniques, for example) that will be of direct value within their home communities. On a more general level, participants have brushed up on their language skills, and all have broadened their horizons through first-hand experience of life on the other side of the developed / developing divide.

Despite the packed work schedule, the Exchange is also an opportunity for participants to make new friends and enjoy themselves. Sports, dancing, music-making and socializing are all a part of the experience. Halloween was a particular highlight, with host families, participants and project supervisors getting together for a fancy-dress party: an introduction, for the African contingent, to one of Western culture's more peculiar traditions!



**Sports and other team-based activities are an integral part of the Youth Exchange schedule**

Participants have recently arrived in East Africa for the remainder of the Exchange programme – a timely escape from the Canadian winter! During this second phase, participants will live and work in Equator Prize-winning communities in Kenya (Il Ngwesi Group Ranch and HoneyCare Africa) and Tanzania (HASHI and Suledo Forest Community).

It is hoped that this pilot programme will lead to an extended Youth Exchange next year that will involve communities from throughout Africa. The ultimate goal of the Equator Initiative Youth Exchange as a whole is to build a long-term network of individuals with the drive and know-how to create a sustainable future for their communities. □

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## World Parks Congress (continued)

>> the protected areas movement will depend on a flexible and imaginative approach to financing strategies. One particular highlight at the Sustainable Finance Stream was a session featuring presentations by Equator Prize finalists on the role of communities in sustainable financing.

The Equator Initiative was one of a number of divisions to represent UNDP at the Congress. The Global Environment Facility, the GEF Small Grants Programme, the Energy and Environment Group and numerous country offices were also present.

Charles McNeill, UNDP Environment Programme Team Manager, summed up UNDP's contribution to the Congress: "The WPC was an enormous success in the way the conservation and development communities came together with shared commitments. The strong participation of local communities at the Congress clearly helped to make this possible. We are delighted that the Equator Initiative and other UNDP programmes were able to offer some support to these communities."

Thanks in part to the Equator Initiative's involvement, the critical importance of local participation is acknowledged in the principal published outcome of the Congress. This document – the '[Durban Accord](#)' – embodies a commitment by delegates to collaborate at all levels of society as they move forward in their work of parks-based conservation. Other outcomes include a set of 32 specific Recommendations, a number of new initiatives and funding pledges, an Action Plan and a message to next year's meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity. □

### Conservation International Joins Equator Initiative

*The Equator Initiative is delighted to welcome yet another major conservation organization as full partner.*



**CONSERVATION  
INTERNATIONAL**

Since its foundation in 1987, Conservation International has established a reputation as one of the world's most innovative and effective conservation organizations. CI's decision to partner with the Equator Initiative is evidence of its long-standing belief that conservation, to be lasting, must improve the lives of local people. The partnership is also representative of the increased willingness among conservation and development groups to join forces to ensure environmental, economic and social sustainability.

The need for such collaboration is clear, since earth's most biologically diverse regions are home to many of its poorest people. Many of these are indigenous and traditional peoples who directly depend on the products of healthy ecosystems for their lives and livelihoods. This dependence is reflected in the art, religions and traditions

of indigenous cultures: a spiritual heritage that will be lost for all time if its basis – nature itself – is destroyed. It is therefore imperative to conserve biodiversity for the sake not only of its intrinsic value, but also for its developmental and cultural importance.

CI has already achieved much in strengthening the critical relationship between development and conservation. CI's partnership with the Equator Initiative will further enhance these efforts, adding credence to its message that people can live in harmony with nature.

The Equator Initiative and its partners will have much to learn from CI's experience in working with local communities for conservation ends. As Russell Mittermeier, President of CI, explains: "We are very happy to become a part of the Equator Initiative. We look forward to sharing our experience with the Initiative and its many collaborators, and in turn learning from the experiences of others." □

### Equator Prize 2004!

The Equator Prize 2004 will be awarded to six community initiatives that have achieved outstanding success in reducing poverty through the conservation and / or sustainable use of biodiversity. The Awards Ceremony will be held at 6.30 pm on Thursday 19 February 2004 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in conjunction with the Seventh Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. Those interested in attending the ceremony should RSVP to the address below.

### Equator Initiative Partners

BrasilConnects  
Government of Canada  
Conservation International  
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, questions or suggestions, please feel free to contact us at:

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