

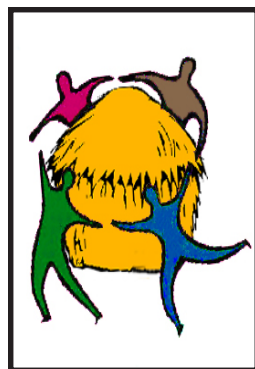
In this issue ...

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### Community Taba: Local Voices for a Global Vision

Based on an indigenous Brazilian village setting, the Community Taba serves as a networking and knowledge sharing space to community representatives as world leaders convene to discuss the Convention on Biological Diversity at COP8.

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Local voices for a global vision

### Preparing for COP8

The COP takes place every two years but preparations are ongoing. At the most recent intersessional leaders gathered to discuss traditional knowledge practices, genetic use restriction technologies, and access and benefit sharing.

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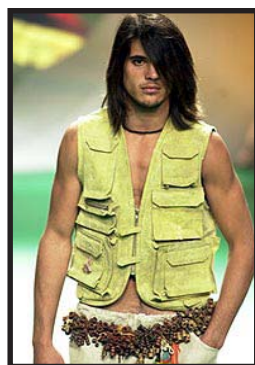


Whose is it anyway?

### Spotlighting Success in Latin America

Equator Prize finalists from previous years are still hard at work improving lives while conserving natural resources. Find out what they do, where they are now, and how the Equator Prize impacted their programs.

[Read More >>](#)



AmazonLife vest made from FSC certified Treetap®



Dear Friends and Colleagues,

It is our pleasure to bring you the latest copy of the Equator Initiative's electronic newsletter, "Between the Lines". In these pages we present updates of our work and tackle conservation and development issues of direct relevance to our increasingly interconnected world. No matter where you live, conservation and the sustainable utilization of biodiversity has a direct and positive impact on your health and well-being. We all benefit when livelihoods are sustainable and the ecosystem services that scrub our air and filter our water are restored or left undisturbed.

Our lead story this issue focuses on the Community Taba. The Taba is our 8th "dialogue space". Over the years we have continued to collaborate with grassroots conservation partners to establish interactive "dialogue spaces". Without fail, creating an open forum for communities most intimately connected to biodiversity yields constructive outcomes at local and global levels.

We invite you to join us for the next two weeks in Curitiba, Brazil as the Community Taba is already underway. Those of you who will not be able to participate in person can follow the progress by viewing the photos and reading the journal entries posted daily to our website, [www.equatorinitiative.org](http://www.equatorinitiative.org).

We thank you for your continued engagement.

Sincerely,  
The Equator Initiative Team

## COMMUNITY TABA: LOCAL VOICES FOR A GLOBAL VISION

Building on the success of previous “dialogue spaces”, on March 18th the Equator Initiative began hosting the Community Taba in Curitiba, Brazil. The Taba has brought together grassroots environmental leaders from around the world to establish a collaborative space at the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity (COP8). Now assembled, the participants are backstopped by an array of networked resources which are maximizing the impact of their ideas on COP8 outcomes, fostering new partnerships, and providing opportunities to develop and refine their conservation frameworks. The Community Taba will run for the duration of the COP, ending on March 31st.

### Concept

*Communities are the driving force behind sustainable development and communities are crucial actors in achieving both the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) and the 2010 Biodiversity Target as set forth by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.*

Over the course of the past decade it has become increasingly clear that communities play a central role in advancing sustainable development. Therefore, any undertaking in pursuit of the 2010 Biodiversity Target, a necessary first step towards achieving the MDG's in 2015, must first recognize the close relationship that exists between sustainable community livelihoods and biodiversity conservation.

For conservation to yield important and lasting results innovative partnerships must be forged that bridge the gap between bottom-up and top-down approaches. Historically, the greatest successes have been registered when local communities, protected area managers, local and national governments, the private sector, and innumerable others collaborate to establish an “enabling environment” wherein individuals may find common ground and chart their own political space.

However, despite the enormous contributions that civil society, and in particular communities, have made to advancing sustainable development, communities are frequently underrepresented at national and international policy summits. The Community Taba aims to reverse this trend, linking local voices together to articulate a global vision of effective conservation.

The Taba will demonstrate that community members, often working in partnership with local governments, national NGOs, and international organizations, are increasingly taking action to meet their basic needs while preserving the biological resources on which not only their own but everyone's future survival depends.

### Objectives

*The Community Taba facilitates exchange amongst grassroots community leaders, leverages their talents towards achieving concrete results, and connects them with national and international policymakers and funders.*

At the centre of the Taba a dialogue space exists to facilitate group discussions, presentations, press conferences, and media interaction. The dialogues between communities and international leaders will focus on key biodiversity themes of direct relevance to goals 1, 2, and 3 of the 2010 Biodiversity Target. In particular they will address the ongoing and increasingly rapid loss of several components of biodiversity including biomes, habitats and ecosystems, species and populations, and genetic diversity.

Special attention is given to representation of indigenous peoples and traditional knowledge sharing innovations and practices. Communities who have effectively managed to conserve their biological resources through partnerships and dialogue will present their cases and experiences.

The Community Taba plays host to a home space created by and for community representatives which provides opportunities to:

- Organize and coordinate their participation in the official discussions of the COP.
- Share information, priorities, and concerns with others who are struggling to sustain their families and communities within high biodiversity areas.
- Assess how peer learning exchanges and other training processes can increase the effectiveness of community conservation and sustainable biodiversity use.
- Encourage global media coverage and ensure the messages of the community leaders are communicated openly and accurately.
- Own and occupy a comfortable space that will complement and support the daily events.

## Space

The Layout for the Community Taba is based on an indigenous village setting built by the InterTribal Committee of Brazil. The space accommodates a large discussion area and several smaller meeting areas. There is an open central space for presentations and group meetings

Community representatives will be encouraged to prepare displays of their work together. They will be displayed in the Community Taba – using the outside walls of the structure as showcase areas.



The Community Taba is housed in traditional Amazonian dwellings.\*

Two days before the COP begins community representatives began organizing. On the first few days they identified and began to articulate the key issues that they want to convey and impact at the COP, as well as to build a new “community” among themselves. A community clinic was held to provide background on the CBD and potential outcomes of COP8, identify specific opportunities for impacting key issues at COP8, and provide tips for influencing delegates and making high impact presentations in this venue. Throughout the COP community leaders will engage representatives from NGOs, national governments, and international organisations on specific issues of relevance to biodiversity, poverty reduction, and the CBD. A flexible schedule will also enable presentations to the media and cultural events.



Victorino Saway, from Mindinao, and Konrad Uebelhoer, from Germany, share their impressions of the day's events.\*



Taba Participants take a break to partake in a honey tasting.\*

## Community Participants

The core constituency of the Community Taba consists of 100 community representatives from all over the developing world, including representatives of finalist communities from the Equator Prize. Special attention has been given to gender balance and representation of indigenous peoples and island peoples. This core constituency acts as the overall “host/organising” body for activities at the Taba. They are supported in this work by a small group of facilitators.

## Partners

The primary partners of the Community Taba are the participating community groups and local partner NGOs. It is their space.

The Community Taba has been organised by the Equator Initiative partners, UNDP/GEF Small Grants Programme, Capacity 2015, CBD Secretariat, and SwedBio – all institutions committed to the recognition of community successes and the enhancement of community participation in biodiversity conservation. Other partners include the government of Canada, Conservation International, the German Federal Ministry of Economic Development and Cooperation (BMZ), GTZ, the International Development Research Center (IDRC), the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) of IUCN, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), the Television Trust for the Environment (TVE), Wallace Global Fund, Islands Task Force (TAFICOPA), the United Nations Foundation, EcoAgriculture Partners (EP), Dropping Knowledge, Fordham University, Theme on Indigenous and Local Communities - Equity and Protected Areas (TILCEPA), Netherlands Development Organization (SNV), Groots International, Wallace Global Fund, The Brazilian Ministry of the Environment, GTZ, and The Institute for Cooperation between Germany and Brazil.

\*All Community Taba photos compliments of Daniel Caron

## PREPARING FOR COP8

The COP takes place every two years but consultations and preparations for the big event are ongoing. In late January and early February leaders from around the world met in Granada, Spain to attend the Fourth Meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Intersessional Working Group on Article 8(j) and related provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Article 8(j) addresses the preservation and dissemination of traditional knowledge practices and innovations, an issue which is deeply intertwined with controversies over access and benefit sharing and genetic use restriction technologies (GURT's), both of which figure prominently in discussions at the Equator Initiative's Community Tabla.



Gladman Chibememe (bottom Left) from CHIEHA, 2004 Equator Prize Finalist, participated in the Intersessional.

## Traditional Knowledge

Traditional knowledge refers to the knowledge, innovations, and practices of indigenous and local communities developed from experience gained over the centuries and adapted to the local culture and environment. Traditional knowledge is often transmitted orally from generation to generation, tends to be collectively owned, and takes the form of stories, songs, folklore, cultural values, rituals, community laws, and agricultural practices, including the development of plant species and animal breeds. Traditional knowledge impacts practice in such fields as agriculture, fisheries, health, horticulture, and forestry.

Traditional knowledge can make a significant contribution to sustainable development. Many indigenous and local communities are situated in areas where the vast majority of the world's plant genetic resources are found. They have cultivated and used biological diversity in sustainable ways for thousands of years. Their skills and techniques provide valuable information to the global community and a useful model for biodiversity policies. Furthermore, as on-site communities with extensive knowledge of local environments, indigenous and local communities are most directly involved with conservation and sustainable use.

## Access and Benefit Sharing, GURT's

One of the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity, as set out in Article 1, is the

“fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources, including by appropriate access to genetic resources and by appropriate transfer of relevant technologies, taking into account all rights over those resources and to technologies, and by appropriate funding.”

As part of a program of work addressing this commitment in addition to commitments embodied in Article 8(j) and other provisions of the Convention dealing with traditional knowledge, governments and Contracting Parties have undertaken:

- to establish mechanisms to ensure the effective participation of indigenous and local communities in decision-making and policy planning;
- to respect, preserve, and maintain traditional knowledge relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity;
- to promote its wider application with the approval and involvement of the indigenous and local communities concerned; and
- to encourage the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of such traditional knowledge.

While these elements are equally important, the last one has taken on a special significance for indigenous and local communities because in recent years traditional knowledge has frequently been exploited by modern industry to develop new products and techniques without the consent of the holders of such knowledge, who have also received none of the resulting benefits. The incorporation of GURT's into genetically engineered seeds threatens to intensify this trend as germplasm from landraces developed by indigenous communities is freely acquired, transferred to the laboratories of life science companies, patented, and then sold as a proprietary product whose conditions of use are restricted by the terms of the patent holder.

In order to ensure that benefits from traditional knowledge are shared equitably and that GURT's, if deployed, are deployed responsibly, the Intersessional attendees worked to establish concrete proposals on how to translate all of the above commitments into reality.

## Perspectives: Gladman Chibememe

Gladman Chibememe is Chairman of Chibememe Earth Healing Association (CHIEHA) in Zimbabwe and a finalist for the 2004 Equator Prize. In the following passages he offers his insight on the Intersessional.

*On the development of a sui-generis system for the protection of knowledge, innovations, and practices developed by indigenous and local communities:*

"The development of sui generis laws at the local, national, and regional level would protect traditional knowledge, innovations, and practices and help reverse the injustice already done to communities. However, what is vital is to ensure that the enactment and formulation of such policies and laws is done with the active involvement of the local and indigenous communities. These laws should embrace the interests and aspirations of the people who will be affected by them and should be implementable at the community level since it is at this level that most bio-prospecting and bio-piracy takes place."

*On mechanisms to promote the effective participation of indigenous and local communities in matters related to the objectives of Article 8 (j) and related provisions:*

"A trust fund was created to support the participation of local and indigenous communities in CBD work. Whilst such a mechanism is noble, this should be met by a corresponding reform of the formal policies of big conventions where dialogue is too often the preserve of the member states and big organizations only. At such fora local and indigenous peoples have often contributed only minimally to the outcome despite their presence. There is need to effect some form of a paradigm shift in which communities contribute their grassroots experience to the discussions. Failure to do this effectively defeats the whole purpose of having such a fund in the first place. Communities should be allowed to speak for themselves."

*On the potential socio-economic impacts of GURT's in indigenous and local communities among others:*

"This area raises a lot of anxiety and concern for local and indigenous communities who feel threatened by the possible invasion of genetically engineered seeds into the traditional cropping system. It is indeed disheartening that some states are pushing an agenda for promoting the use of genetic engineering which for local and indigenous communities results in the loss of traditional crop varieties, increased costs, environmental degradation, and many other negative outcomes."

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For more information on the Intersessional visit <http://www.iisd.ca/biodiv/wg8j-4/>. To Find out more about the Convention on Biodiversity visit the CBD home page at <http://www.biodiv.org>.

## SPOTLIGHTING SUCCESS IN LATIN AMERICA

The finalists for the Equator Prize illustrate what sustainable development can look like when support builds from the ground up. The Prize acknowledges those communities which demonstrate that human health, productive livelihoods, and responsible management of natural resources all go hand in hand. This story highlights two organizations that deserve special recognition for their continued good work: The Amazon Life Project and the Talamanca Initiative. Boosted by the recognition and resources they received after qualifying as finalists for the Equator Prize in 2002 they continue to set an example the rest of us can learn from.

### Amazon Life Project - Brazil

Hundreds of small forest communities in the Amazon Basin depend on rubber tapping to survive. They have been badly hit by a decline in demand caused by the increased use of plantation rubber. Land is being cleared for cattle breeding, which compounds the problem for both the population and the forest. However, *haute couture*, of all things, is providing a way out. By involving rubber tappers in sustainable production of Treetap®, a smooth and durable material which feels like leather, it is reversing a cycle of unsustainable forest use and poverty by helping to protect over 900,000 hectares of wild forest from exploitation.

In the region of Boca do Acre (State of Amazonas), local communities found it hard to find buyers for natural rubber, and when they did they sold it for only around US\$0.30 per sheet. To address this, AmazonLife, a fashion company, and three rubber producers' associations formed an alliance whose goal is to make the rubber tappers' traditional handicraft competitive on the international market, while also ensuring the preservation of traditional cultures and biodiversity of the forest.

Known as the Amazon Wild Rubber Project, the initiative evolved into a company that turns Treetap® into fashionable products and sells them internationally.



Treetap® is a cotton fabric which is drenched in natural latex extracted from wild rubber trees, *Hevea brasiliensis*. It is used to manufacture a range of products such as bags, backpacks, briefcases, garments, and footwear.

Treetap® is now distributed to several European countries and AmazonLife has a contract to supply top quality laminates to the French design company Hermès Sellier. It also sells bike bags in partnership with “Giant Europe”, a large European bicycle company.

AmazonLife helps to make consumers aware of the importance of sustainable development initiatives in the Amazon rainforest. Their products serve a public who want to purchase high quality goods from sustainable sources, knowing that they have been produced on fair-trade and ecologically sound principles.

With some 200 families involved so far, the product's economic success has improved the quality of life for thousands and improved access to citizenship and credit – a notorious obstacle faced by the poor in Brazil where many people have no identification documents and receive no money for their work.

Since qualifying as a finalist for the Equator Prize in 2002 AmazonLife has opened up a flagship store in Rio's famed Ipanema. In addition, they have partnered with an Italian group to develop new and profitable applications for Treetap® which has recently received the Forest Stewardship Council's certification for sustainable production.

## Talamanca Initiative - Costa Rica

Talamanca is located in southeastern Costa Rica, bordering Panama and adjacent to the Caribbean. It is the country's poorest region in socio-economic terms and the richest area in terms of biodiversity and tropical forest ecosystems. Stretching from the highest point in the country to sea level, the 3000-square-kilometre region is home to 35,000 people and many plant and animal species that are found nowhere else in the world. Unfortunately this unique geography and wealth of natural resources is frequently taken for granted and exploited for short term gain, as exhibited by Costa Rica's extremely high rate of deforestation.



Banana farmer and beneficiary of the Talamanca Initiative's cooperative produce marketing venture.

A collaborative partnership of three community focused organizations - Asociacion ANAI, APPTA, and CBTC - collectively known as the Talamanca Initiative, have worked since 1983 to integrate biodiversity conservation and socio-economic development in the Talamanca region in order to halt deforestation and rejuvenate livelihoods. The initiative's biodiversity conservation efforts include establishment of Gandoca-Manzanillo National Wildlife Refuge, a last sanctuary for the endangered Manatee, and development of Central America's only permanent raptor migration monitoring program.

The success of the Talamanca Initiative illustrates in practice that the key to conservation and sustainable development is the successful management of natural resources by the local people. This practice is based on **five core principles**:

1. No inherent contradiction exists between economic development and environmental conservation. If communities and nations are to thrive, development and conservation must take place together.
2. The best stewards of the tropical lowlands are the campesinos (local people from rural lands) and Indian farmers who have dedicated their lives to these lands.
3. All natural tropical areas that are not protected will be radically altered during our lifetime. We must work to protect these areas and preserve their biodiversity for future generations to enjoy.
4. The natural forest and other unique primary ecosystems are Talamanca's most economically valuable asset in the long term.
5. A successful strategy to address these issues must integrate environmental, social, economic, and organizational needs.

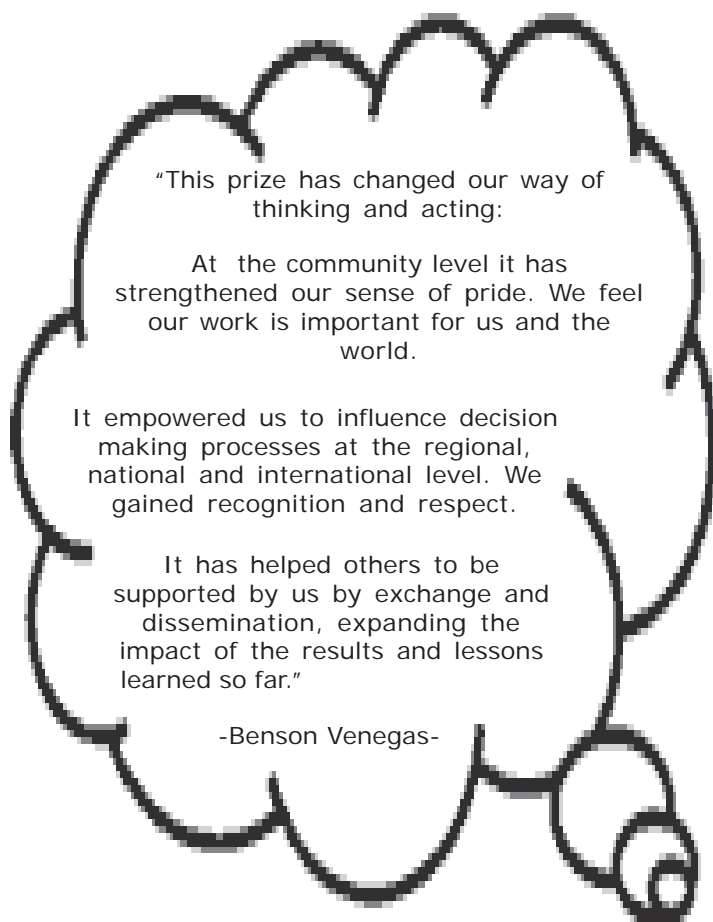
To encourage sustainable socio-economic development, the initiative has promoted crop diversification and organic agriculture, with APPTA's processing system becoming the largest volume producer and exporter of organic products in Central America. Since 1991, the initiative has also run a Regional Training Center and has helped establish 13 local ecotourism ventures. As an example of the gains that have been made through the initiative's work, income in villages has risen up to six-fold and communities have been able to engage in sustainable income generating pursuits that also work to protect their natural environment.



The Initiative now involves the collaboration and co-operation of more than 20 grassroots organisations, 1500 families, small producers, and Costa Rica's Ministry of the Environment and Energy. Participants include men and women of all the social and ethnic groups of the southern Caribbean region of Costa Rica, including Afro-Caribbean, indigenous, and mestizo peoples.

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The Talamanca Initiative has experienced many changes since winning the Equator Prize in 2002. In the words of Benson Vengas, the Executive Director of ANAI, one of the organizations managing the Talamanca Initiative:



## SIGN-UP FOR EQUATOR NET

The Equator Initiative manages an electronic listserve, Equator Net, to publicize biodiversity based development resources and opportunities. If you would like to sign up send our community network facilitator, Nina Kantcheva, an e-mail at [nina.kantcheva@undp.org](mailto:nina.kantcheva@undp.org).

## About the Equator Initiative

The Equator Initiative is a partnership program designed to reduce poverty through the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the equatorial belt by fostering, supporting, and strengthening community partnerships.

The Equator Initiative undertakes work in four strategic areas related to community conservation and development and awards the biennial Equator Prize. This prize recognizes outstanding local efforts to promote sustainable communities in the tropics. The next Equator Prize will be awarded in 2006.

## Equator Initiative Partners

Government of Canada  
Conservation International  
Secretariat of the Convention on Biodiversity  
Fordham University  
German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation & Development (BMZ)  
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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## Further Information

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

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