

PRESS RELEASE

Equator Initiative Announces Five Communities Receiving “Special Recognition” for the Equator Prize 2008

New York, 7 October 2008 – The Equator Initiative, a United Nations-led partnership that supports grassroots efforts in biodiversity conservation and poverty alleviation, announced today the five communities selected to receive “special recognition” for the Equator Prize 2008.

The announcement was made at the Equator Prize 2008 Award Ceremony in Barcelona, Spain where all 25 winners of the prize were being celebrated, and where all will meet this week to participate in the Community Poble “dialogue space” at the IUCN World Conservation Congress.

An eminent jury of leading biodiversity and development minds that included Ted Turner, Muhammad Yunus, M.S. Swaminathan, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, Calestous Juma, Princess Basma of Jordan, and Marina Silva selected the “special recognition” communities from the 25 winners.

Special recognition was awarded in each area of geographic eligibility (Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia and the Pacific), to the community that best exemplifies community approaches in adaptation to climate change, and to the initiative that best exemplifies the conservation of agricultural biodiversity.

All 25 winners of the Equator Prize 2008 received US \$5,000 to support their work and the “special recognition” communities received a total of US \$20,000. The Equator Prize is held biennially to recognize and celebrate local level best practice in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

Equator Prize 2008 “Special Recognition Recipients”

Africa: Wechiau Community Hippo Sanctuary (WCHS)

WCHS protects the resident hippopotamus population along the Black Volta River in northern Ghana. The sanctuary is operated by a management board that represents over ten thousand people from 17 communities. Along with the hippopotamus population, the reserve is home to over 500 other animal species. In its conservation efforts, two distinct zones have been demarcated: one a protected area close to the river for the hippopotamuses, another for the human population. This model have been replicated in neighbouring communities seeking to derive economic benefits from protecting their local biodiversity. Revenues from the sanctuary are invested into the provision of safe drinking water, literacy and higher education initiatives, and solar electricity projects.

Asia & the Pacific: Community Development Centre (CDC)

The Community Development Centre conserves close to sixty indigenous varieties of roots and yams, using these traditional crops to generate income for local farmers. Through equitable benefit sharing, knowledge exchange, and seed banks, CDC works towards community empowerment and overall sustainability. Direct beneficiaries include over 300 households, with a high percentage of women. Worm farming and composting from local cultivation provide two additional forms of income. The fact that CDC farms serve as training centres, seed banks, and

the site of knowledge exchanges has meant that the CDC model can and has been effectively replicated as a sustainable, low-technology initiative across Sri Lanka.

Latin America & the Caribbean: Artisans Association of Arbolsol and Huaca de Barro of the Morrope District

Founded by local women in 2003, Asociación de Artesanas de Arbolsol y Huaca de Barro del distrito de Mórrope has worked to recover traditional methods of cotton production that are environmentally responsible and create positive socio-economic change in the region. The association oversees the planting and harvesting of native cotton varieties, using only organic pesticides. In addition to cotton production, the association has been active in managing water resources. Traditional colours of native cotton have been recovered, water resources have been cleaned as a result of better management, and organic cotton is produced for local markets. The group, which began as a women's organization, has now expanded to include the whole community.

Adaptation to Climate Change: The Indonesian Community-based Marine Management Foundation (PLKL)

PLKL supports communities in Papua, West Papua, and the Moluccan Islands in administering their marine resources through traditional tenure management systems, known as *sasi*. The foundation has been successful at creating community-based marine management areas that conserve local biodiversity, increase resource abundance, and improve incomes. PLKL has supported over 20 communities in the creation of community-based marine management areas and is serving as a model for replication through regional site visits and networking programs. Through targeted training and technical support, community-based management in the region has resulted in population growth among endemic species central to local ecosystems and livelihoods.

Agricultural Biodiversity: Union of Farming and Indigenous Organizations of Cotacachi

UNORCAC is an organization of 3,225 Quichua families that is dedicated to improving the quality of life of indigenous Ecuadorians. The group focuses its work on the conservation of agricultural biodiversity, the reintroduction and maintenance of traditional cultural practices, and comprehensive community participation. UNORCAC focuses on local capacity building in three areas: apiculture, ethno-tourism, and high-value crops (in particular, blackberries). A critical achievement of the organization has been the reintroduction of traditional crops and medicinal plants, a process of cultural renewal that has also resulted in the valuation of over 130 native plant species. Local incomes have risen dramatically and community members now grow more than half of their own food.

About the Equator Initiative

Launched on 30 January 2002, the Equator Initiative is a partnership that brings together the United Nations, civil society, business, governments and communities to help build the capacity and raise the profile of grassroots efforts to reduce poverty through the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. The world's greatest concentrations of biological wealth are found in the equatorial region, in countries that also have some of the highest levels of poverty. The Equator Initiative champions and supports community efforts to link economic development and income generation with the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

Partners: The Government of Canada, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Conservation International, Ecoagriculture Partners, Fordham University, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, International Development Research Centre, International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), The Nature Conservancy, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, RARE, United Nations Foundation.

For more information, please visit www.EquatorInitiative.org.
Questions regarding the Equator Prize can be directed to equatorinitiative@undp.org.

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