MAYA LEADERS ALLIANCE (MLA)
Belize

Equator Initiative Case Studies
Local sustainable development solutions for people, nature, and resilient communities
Local and indigenous communities across the world are advancing innovative sustainable development solutions that work for people and for nature. Few publications or case studies tell the full story of how such initiatives evolve, the breadth of their impacts, or how they change over time. Fewer still have undertaken to tell these stories with community practitioners themselves guiding the narrative. The Equator Initiative aims to fill that gap.

The Equator Initiative, supported by generous funding from the Government of Norway, awarded the Equator Prize 2015 to 21 outstanding local community and indigenous peoples initiatives to reduce poverty, protect nature, and strengthen resilience in the face of climate change. Selected from 1,461 nominations from across 126 countries, the winners were recognized for their achievements at a prize ceremony held in conjunction with the United Nations Convention on Climate Change (COP21) in Paris. Special emphasis was placed on the protection, restoration, and sustainable management of forests; securing and protecting rights to communal lands, territories, and natural resources; community-based adaptation to climate change; and activism for environmental justice. The following case study is one in a growing series that describes vetted and peer-reviewed best practices intended to inspire the policy dialogue needed to take local success to scale, to improve the global knowledge base on local environment and development solutions, and to serve as models for replication.
Maya Leaders Alliance (MLA) is a coalition of Maya organizations and leaders collectively working to promote the long-term well-being of the Maya people through defending their collective rights to their territories. In 2015, MLA achieved a landmark legal victory when the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), affirmed that the 39 Q’eqchi and Mopan Maya indigenous communities of Toledo hold customary title to their lands, in accordance with Maya customary law. The ruling, which is the first land rights victory for indigenous peoples in the Caribbean region in a democratic court, states that Maya traditional land use practices constitute property rights equal in legitimacy to Western forms of property ownership. In addition to mobilizing community members and providing outreach, advocacy, and legal support, MLA promotes sustainable forest management and environmental conservation efforts. The organization also improves local education, health, and infrastructure services for Maya throughout the entire Toledo District.

**Sustainable Development Goals Addressed**

- **1. No Poverty**
- **2. Zero Hunger**
- **4. Quality Education**
- **5. Gender Equality**
- **10. Reduced Inequalities**
- **12. Responsible Consumption and Production**
- **13. Climate Action**
- **15. Life on Land**

**Equator Prize Winner**
2015

**Founded**
1999

**Location**
Toledo District, Belize

**Beneficiaries**
39 Maya villages, with an estimated population of 21,000 people, in the Toledo District of southern Belize

**Areas of focus**
Protecting and securing rights to communal lands, territories and natural resources; advocating for and ensuring the effective implementation of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC); advancing rights of indigenous peoples to self-governance and self-determination; protection, restoration and sustainable management of forests

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BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Maya people of Belize inhabited the Toledo District of southern Belize and the surrounding region long before the arrival of Europeans and the colonial institutions that gave way to the modern State of Belize. The Maya people of southern Belize are comprised of two linguistic subgroups, the Q’eqchi and the Mopan, and their estimated population is 21,000.

A land of rich biodiversity and cultural heritage

From the peaks of the Maya Mountains to the beaches of the Caribbean Sea, the 39 Maya villages of the Toledo District steward an estimated 200,000 hectares of tropical rainforest, savannah and wetland ecosystems, all part of the Mesoamerica Biodiversity Hotspot. The Toledo District is home to several national symbols, including Baird’s Tapir (*Tapirus bairdii*), locally known as ‘mountain cow’, the Keel-billed Toucan (*Ramphastos sulfuratus*), the Black Orchid (*Prosthechea cochleata*), and the towering Mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*). This district is home to other significant fauna including the majestic Jaguar (*Panthera onca*), the Collared peccary (*Pecari tajacu*), the White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), the Gibnut (*Cuniculus paca*), and the Scarlet Macaw (*Ara macao*).

The Maya are a land-based people, deriving their resources for food, shelter, medicine, and spiritual practices from the forests in which they live. The majority of Maya villagers engage in subsistence agriculture according to customary land use practices. The Maya apply the milpa system, which involves rotational planting of corn, beans and other crops, allowing the land to lay fallow between growing seasons. Excess harvest is sold at the market and provides a source of income for Maya families. The Maya also harvest lumber and palm thatch to build their houses and to craft woven baskets and other household items. Traditional medicines derive from the forests as well, for the Maya carry generations of wisdom about the biodiversity of their lands and their healing properties.

Traditional governance in Maya communities

Traditional farming practices are at the root of the social and governance structures of Maya communities; working the land is a collective responsibility shared by village members. All families within a village are expected to assist each other in building new housing structures, harvesting crops, and cleaning the village, among other tasks. The land use practices of the Maya people contribute to a community built upon cooperation, reciprocity, and a shared sense of responsibility. Within this traditional land tenure system, Maya villages hold land collectively, whereas individuals and families enjoy derivative, subsidiary rights of use and occupancy. These land use patterns are governed by a system of customary rules and values that are part of the social, cultural, economic, and political fabric of the communities.

In each Maya village, land and resource use follows sustainable stewardship practices. There are areas reserved for farming, medicinal use, spiritual use, hunting, and conservation to sustain a clean watershed. This system allows for Maya villages to monitor and control any deforestation that may occur. Since the Toledo district is home to rare woods such as Mahogany and Rosewood, previously overharvested during colonial occupation, tracking timber growth and extraction is particularly important. The Maya are working to improve the management of these tree species.
The traditional governance institutions of the Maya in Belize have evolved over centuries, but there has always been an elected village leader who oversees community affairs with the advice and support of elders and past leaders. Currently, the local Maya leaders (*alcaldes*) of the 39 Maya villages in the Toledo District are organized through the Toledo Alcaldes Association (TAA). TAA is comprised by 78 *alcaldes* including a first alcalde and a second alcalde from each village.

**Struggles for land security and land tenure**

For decades, the Maya have been involved in a struggle for the recognition and protection of their land rights. The government of Belize has argued that the Maya people are not indigenous to Belize, but recent migrants from Guatemala, and therefore cannot claim the territory they occupy, leaving ownership in the hands of the government. This dispute led the Maya to seek affirmation of their land rights from both international and domestic institutions through a series of legal battles.

**Origin and structure**

In this context, Maya Leaders Alliance (MLA) was formed in 1999 as an umbrella organization of community-based conservation organizations working directly with the 39 Maya villages.

MLA's mission is to “support the 39 Maya villages to achieve the protection of their rights and natural resources, and to promote their cultural, social and economic development.”

MLA pursues the achievement of its mission through the following program areas: sustaining, strengthening, and constructing Maya governance and institutions; sustaining and revitalizing the Maya culture and the 39 Maya communities; sustaining and revitalizing lands and resources used and occupied by Maya communities; leveraging Maya capacities and Maya resources; protection of the rights of indigenous Mayas; and institutional strengthening of MLA.

MLA is governed by a board of leaders known as the Maya Steering Committee, whose function is to guide, advise, and ground the work of MLA on behalf of the 39 Maya villages. Steering Committee members include representatives of current Maya *alcaldes* from the TAA, a coalition of former *alcaldes*, and other member organizations. This diverse constituency ensures that MLA operates in response to the needs and realities of communities throughout the district. Board members serve on a volunteer basis and actively seek commitment from community leaders and elders to maintain stewardship of the MLA mission.

MLA has its office in Punta Gorda Town and collaborates with a range of universities in the United States and Canada to provide the resources necessary to advance its work.
LOCAL CHALLENGES

Land security and tenure

The main challenge to the livelihood of the Maya people is land security. The Maya first sought legal protection for their lands in the mid-1990s in an attempt to combat numerous logging and oil extraction incursions. Throughout this battle for land rights recognition from the Government of Belize, the Maya have also advocated for their right to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) for any activities that may affect them, as well as for their right to protect the biodiversity of their tropical forests. While these efforts have helped curb illegal logging, deforestation, oil drilling, and poaching, incursions nonetheless continue to take place.

On 22 January 2001, the government of Belize entered into a Production Sharing Agreement granting an exclusive concession to US Capital Energy-Belize to conduct oil exploration within Maya territory in southern Belize. There was no consultation with the affected Maya communities. The concession, otherwise called ‘Block 19,’ covers an area of 313,906 hectares including all the traditional Maya lands in the Toledo District, and land within the Sarstoon-Temash National Park, a protected area that encompasses land belonging to the Maya communities of Crique Sarco, Midway, Sunday Wood, Conejo, and the Garifuna indigenous community of Barranco. In 2014, US Capital Energy-Belize installed a drill pad and rig within the national park to conduct exploratory drilling.

Furthermore, despite a court injunction, additional logging permits were issued by the Belize government to third parties in 2011 without consultation or the consent of MLA. In 2011, seven times more Rosewood timber was logged in Toledo than permitted by the Forestry Department. Maya village leaders monitored vast quantities of timber illegally removed from their land. The government initially did not take action to curb this illegal logging, permitting timber exports without explicit consent for extraction from the Maya.

In addition to the above incidents, there have been two recent court cases filed by MLA and aggrieved alcaldes for incursions onto Maya lands without consultation or consent. One such case arose from the government’s seizure of a large portion of farm lands in Jalacte Village to construct a major highway, several government structures, and a checkpoint to monitor passage on the road. The highway runs directly through the village and disrupts community members from accessing their farmland. The other case involved an individual taking residence near a protected sacred site, an area understood among the community as off-limits for building, bulldozing a road and damaging an ancient Maya temple. The individual did not follow customary practices to seek and receive permission from the government or local community.

Climate change

Like many indigenous communities around the world, the Maya communities of southern Belize are increasingly impacted by climate change. The change in weather patterns has increased the unpredictability of the planting and harvesting seasons, reduced the presence of animals typically hunted and fished, and has diminished water resources.

Although the community has taken many actions on their own to mitigate and adapt to climate change, they have faced challenges when trying to influence regional or national work to address the issue. There has been haphazard engagement with specific organizations and villages by government offices and NGOs, and unreliable funding has resulted in these projects being terminated before they can actually create positive change.

Similarly, despite the development of the national Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) program, there has been a notable
lack of community engagement. REDD+ is a climate change mitigation solution developed by Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It incentivizes developing countries to keep their forests standing by offering results-based payments for actions to reduce or remove forest carbon emissions. At the onset of the REDD+ project in Belize, MLA met with the Government of Belize and the World Bank to ensure that the project proposal for REDD+ reflected the input of the Maya people. However, practical arrangements to ensure their direct involvement throughout project implementation have not yet been established despite the fact that the project takes place primarily on Maya lands. This oversight represents a clear barrier to scaling MLA’s work on the ground.
Land rights advocacy

MLA supports the 39 villages to monitor and document potential and ongoing violations of the property rights of the Maya and to seek redress where necessary. These efforts have resulted in the milestone decisions reasserting the validity of Maya land rights in Belize by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the Supreme Court of Belize, and the national Court of Appeal.

The legal battle reached a pinnacle in 2015 with the decision of the Caribbean Court of Justice—the highest court of the Belize judicial system and the Caribbean. In its ruling, the Caribbean Court of Justice awarded “legal and constitutional effect to the umbilical relationship between the Maya people of southern Belize and the land and its resources that have long provided physical and spiritual sustenance to them and their forebears.” The decision of the Caribbean Court of Justice gave rise to collective and individual property rights within the scope of Sections 3(d) and 17 of the Belize Constitution.

This decision sets precedent for legal recognition of indigenous land rights throughout Belize, the Caribbean, and the world. During a side event at the fourteenth session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), Professor James Anaya, former United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, explained, “the judgment reinforces the international standard that indigenous peoples have collective property rights based on their own customary land tenure systems... and that states are bound to recognize and protect those rights.”

MLA was successful in these efforts due to their perseverance and to the solidarity of the Maya community. Also critical to achieving these legal victories has been the continuous legal support from the Indigenous Peoples Law and Policy Program at the University of Arizona, USA. Currently, the University of Colorado Law School, under the direction of James Anaya, assists MLA with their international and domestic legal advocacy.

Since the legal affirmations of rights to land, the Maya people have been bolstered in their efforts to hold the government and companies accountable for intrusions into their lands and extraction of Maya owned resources without prior consultation or consent. However, insecurity over the use and control of their lands persists. Logging concessions are granted without their knowledge or consent, prohibiting the Maya from effectively protecting their land base and maintaining community cohesion. Land seizure, oil extraction, and illicit burning of Maya farms are all prevalent despite the court ruling affirming Maya ownership of their land and resources.

Although the government established the Toledo Maya Land Rights Commission (TMLRC) to implement the Caribbean Court of Justice order, no substantive work has been undertaken. TMLRC claims its responsibilities are limited to studies and to take recommendations for consideration by Parliament. Even these duties have yet to be fulfilled. One of the terms of the Caribbean Court of Justice order was the need for consultation with the Maya people to create the legislative and administrative measures necessary to recognize their rights. However, TMLRC resists any meaningful engagement of the Maya in this process.
**KEY IMPACTS**

**Land rights advocacy**

- In 2004, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights recognized the rights of the Maya to their traditional lands and resources as a form of property protected by the 1948 American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man.
- The judgments of the Supreme Court of Belize (18 October 2007; 28 June 2010; and 3 April 2014) recognized the rights of the Maya to their traditional lands.
- The Court of Appeal decision of 25 July 2013 affirmed the rights of the Maya to lands, territories, and resources in southern Belize on the basis of customary use and occupancy.
- In 2015, the Caribbean Court of Justice – the highest court of the Belize judicial system and the Caribbean – ruled that there is a “legal and constitutional effect to the umbilical relationship between the Maya people of southern Belize and the land and its resources that have long provided physical and spiritual sustenance to them and their forebears.”

**Building a sustainable future**

Following the Caribbean Court of Justice Decision, the Maya have the opportunity to strengthen indigenous ways of governance, support education, protect spirituality, and embark on a process to develop their own economy. At their core, the legal battles fought by MLA to secure land rights and resources have been about the Maya peoples’ right to self-determination based on their customs, practices, and vision for a future. With decisive victories recognizing their rights to land and resources from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the Supreme Court of Belize, and the national Court of Appeal, MLA has been able to shift its focus to building a sustainable future. Although legal battles for land rights continue, Maya villages and their leaders are now beginning to envision a collective future for their common lands.

To this end, MLA and TAA commissioned a process to articulate a common dream for their land, families and communities, with a focus on economic development. The consultation process has included *alcaldes*, state-instituted village councils, women, elders, young people, and spiritual leaders. Together, they have begun projects to build resilient communities and lands, care for individual and collective well-being, and protect the environment. Embracing the holistic worldview of the Maya communities, planning has moved away from conventional development approaches focusing on market demands, short term gains, individualized profits, and consolidated accumulation. In contrast, this locally-owned development has created a space for Maya people to reflect upon who they are, their pains and joys, and their common dreams for the future. The Creating Maya Economies Initiative and Maya Food Enterprise were created at this nexus of reflecting upon the past and charting a path into the future.

Likewise, through its program, ‘Rebuilding Maya Communities,’ MLA fosters capacity building among Maya communities to support greater responsibility for their lands and community affairs. Strengthening traditional governance within communities is central to this process, particularly as outside actors consistently impact village life.
**KEY IMPACTS**

**Building a sustainable future**

- Implementation of the ‘Creating Maya Economies Initiatives’ and the ‘Maya Food Enterprise’ to facilitate the economic advancement and development within their communities.
- Implementation of the program, ‘Rebuilding Maya Communities’ to fosters capacity building among Maya communities.

**Improved environmental governance**

MLA has likewise developed extensive tools contributing to improved governance of Maya territory. The Maya seek to be sustainable stewards of the environment by developing their own land management plans, establishing mechanisms and governance frameworks for the extraction of forest products, and recommending policy and legislation reform for reducing forest cover loss and combating climate change.

MLA, in collaboration with the 39 village *alcaldes*, has developed a permission process administered by village leaders for the personal use of forest products. This has resulted in far less illegal harvesting of forest produce and gives direct responsibility to the villagers through their own system to monitor natural resources within their respective jurisdictions. The fees collected are put into individual village funds used by the village leaders to improve village infrastructure such as schools, village roads, and community meeting places. MLA likewise provides training for *alcaldes* to better carry out both their customary and state statutory duties. In 2017, trainings for *alcaldes* were conducted in collaboration with the office of the Chief Justice of Belize.

The Maya Consultation Framework of 2014 serves as a key governance tool for external relations, outlining the minimum standards acceptable for engaging with Maya people and their territory. The framework draws upon the Maya customary process, national and international human rights norms such as those stated in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). The Maya people have called upon the government of Belize and the World Bank to apply this framework in the implementation of the REDD+ project. The framework has been cited by the UN Expert Mechanism for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) as an example of a process to implement FPIC on the ground.

MLA likewise advocates for the sustainable land management practices in the government’s management of protected areas and in the National Forest Policy of Belize. The alliance also works to effectively participate in the development of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Conserved Areas (ICCAs), an initiative supported by the Global Environment Facility’s Small Grants Programme (SGP), implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). By engaging across these diverse fora, MLA seeks to ensure that the view of indigenous peoples can become a part of the discussion on biodiversity protection and climate change adaptation.
KEY IMPACTS

**Improved environmental governance**

- Established a framework for engagement with Maya communities, that has been referred to by the UN expert mechanism for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a model for implementing FPIC.
- Developed a forest produce harvesting permission process that has resulted in drastic reduction of illegal harvesting.
- Improved the capacity of alcaldes to deliver both customary and statutory duties to the Maya villages.

**Maya education and outreach**

MLA works to revitalize Maya culture, deliver quality and relevant education, and connect with younger generations. To this end, the organization lobbied and secured the implementation of Intercultural Bilingual Education, which is now being implemented in several Maya primary schools and at Tumul K’in Center of Learning, the only Maya high school in Belize. Through the alcaldes, MLA members continue to serve on the Board of the Center of Learning. MLA provides ongoing support to Maya students, especially girls aspiring access to secondary education.

Along with formal access to education, MLA engages in community visits where entire villages discuss Maya land rights and issues affecting the Maya people. This allows MLA leaders to interact directly with members of Maya villages and hear their concerns. In addition, a community radio, Ak Kutank, was created to promote the Maya culture, hold educational talks, and provide information for the 39 Maya villages. Today, the alcaldes are regular radio guests speaking on issues that affects the Maya villages. Similarly, pre-recorded audio is aired of Maya women speaking on issues affecting them.

**KEY IMPACTS**

**Maya education and outreach**

- Inclusion of Maya knowledge, philosophy, and values in the education system at the pilot primary schools and at Tumul K’in.
- Establishment of the scholarship program has resulted in over 500 Maya students, mostly girls, accessing secondary education and serving as teachers and in other capacities in the Toledo District.
- Strong relationships have been developed between MLA leaders and the Maya villages, facilitating greater awareness of Maya culture across the generations.
POLICY IMPACTS

National Policy Impacts

MLA has paved the way for significant impacts at the national and international level by asserting their collective rights to land. Due to their persistent and exhaustive efforts, the courts have formally recognized Maya land and resource rights and ordered for their protection.

In 2004, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, in the Case of the Maya Communities of Toledo v. Belize, Case 12.053, Report No. 40/04 recognized the rights of the Maya to their traditional lands and resources as a form of property protected by the 1948 American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man. Additionally, the Commission argued that the government of Belize and third parties should refrain from interfering with the land and resource rights of the Maya in the absence of consent. The judgments of the Supreme Court of Belize (18 October 2007; 28 June 2010; and 3 April 2014), the Court of Appeal decision of 25 July 2013 also affirmed the rights of the Maya to lands, territories, and resources in southern Belize on the basis of customary use and occupancy.

Furthermore, the 2015 Caribbean Court of Justice Consent order requires the Government of Belize to develop and implement mechanisms to identify and protect Maya customary property rights through a collaborative process that effectively engages the Maya people.

MLA also works to promote Maya customary land management practices, and to integrate them into national policy where possible to advance environmental conservation efforts nation-wide. Maya techniques include designating specific areas in each village for farming, medicinal plants, hunting, sustaining a clean watershed, and spiritual use, together ensuring that resources are sustainably managed. This approach enables them to ensure timber extraction and use of other national resources fall within safe ecological limits. MLA is actively working to include approaches such as these in the government’s management of protected areas, in the REDD+ initiative, and in the National Forest Policy of Belize.

Contributions to Global Agenda

Through its work, MLA has made important contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For example, its plight to secure land rights is in line with the goals to eradicate poverty (SDG 1), ensure zero hunger (SDG 2), reduce inequalities (SDG 10), promote sustainable consumption and production (SDG 12), and conserve life on land (SDG 15). At the same time, MLA’s efforts to enhance Maya education and outreach reduce inequalities while ensuring quality education (SDG 4) and gender equality (SDG 5). Finally, actions of MLA to build a sustainable future and improve environmental governance contribute to mitigating the effects of climate change (SDG 13).
REPLICABILITY, SCALABILITY, AND SUSTAINABILITY

Replicability

The Maya peoples’ use of international institutions and instruments to inform its legal strategy at the domestic level serves as a strong example of how to assert and advocate for human rights. The Maya have used the Belize domestic courts, the regional Caribbean Court of Justice, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the United Nations systems on indigenous peoples, and the Organization of American State’s systems on indigenous peoples to advocate for their land rights. While national governments are often slow to recognize indigenous land rights, international institutions are more readily open to affirming and protecting them. The 2015 decision of the Caribbean Court of Justice, in particular, is a landmark decision that provides legal precedence for other indigenous peoples to champion the protection of their own rights to culture, lands, and resources.

Scalability

The individual victories of MLA have led to a broader movement in Belize to advance land rights for indigenous peoples. In partnership with the Garifuna indigenous peoples to the north, MLA has revitalized the Belize National Indigenous Council (BENIC), which is a network of indigenous peoples committed to the principles of au bu amuru nu (me for you, you for me), komonil (togetherness as a people) and muuch’ kuxtal (living together). BENIC asserts the rights of indigenous peoples and advocate for their well-being, while promoting their active participation, in national and international spaces. Given the experience of MLA in advocating for indigenous peoples’ rights, MLA has been given the Presidency of the Council for 2018-2019. BENIC provides a platform to scale from isolated, local campaigns to secure land rights to a national-level campaign that engages diverse indigenous peoples in the country.

At the regional level, MLA has also led the way in the formation of the Caribbean Network of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples with MLA currently serving as the Belize representative in the network. Like BENIC, the Caribbean Network of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples has the potential to facilitate solidarity and scale campaigns for land rights across the region.

Sustainability

MLA engages with a broad network of organizations that provide regional and international support, including funding and legal advice. In recent years, MLA has shifted its role from advocacy to direct implementation of land rights decisions on the ground. This includes the Creating Maya Economies and Rebuilding Maya Communities initiatives.
FUTURE PLANS

Based on their ongoing work to secure land rights for Maya communities, MLA has identified a need for an assessment of Maya lands to define the limits of each village. Such a project requires ethnomapping, which is an approach that draws on sociology, anthropology, traditional knowledge, and technologies such as GIS to help determine areas of human land use and occupation. MLA plans to work with dedicated partners committed to the long-term well-being of the Maya people, their lands, and their resources. This would allow for the Maya to use their knowledge to improve monitoring and management of lands under each village's jurisdiction. Once village limits are established, the data can help to inform climate change mitigation and adaptation, poverty eradication, and local approaches to achieve the SDGx.

PARTNERS

- Christensen Fund
- Cultural Survival
- Inter-American Foundation
- Julian Cho Society (JCS)
- LUSH Charity Fund
- Maya Education Fund
- OAK Foundation
- University of Arizona Indigenous Law and Policy Program
- University of Colorado Law School

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EQUATOR INITIATIVE

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UNDP partners with people at all levels of society to help build nations that can withstand crisis, and drive and sustain the kind of growth that improves the quality of life for everyone. On the ground in nearly 170 countries and territories, we offer global perspective and local insight to help empower lives and build resilient nations.

The Equator Initiative brings together the United Nations, governments, civil society, businesses and grassroots organizations to recognize and advance local sustainable development solutions for people, nature, and resilient communities.

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