LOCAL ACTION FOR THE GLOBAL GOALS:
Promoting Innovative Conservation And Development Solutions

EQUATOR INITIATIVE 15YEARS

gef

SGP The GEF Small Grants Programme 25 YEARS

UNDP

Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.

Authors
Joseph Corcoran
Anne L S Virnig

Design
Kimberly Koserowski

Equator Initiative
Sustainable Development Cluster
Bureau for Policy and Programme Support
United Nations Development Programme
304 East 45th Street, 6th Floor, New York, NY 10017
Tel: +1 646 781-4023
www.equatorinitiative.org

Cite as:
United Nations Development Programme. 2016. *Local action for the global goals: Promoting innovative conservation and development solutions*. New York, NY: UNDP.

Cover Photos:
Front Cover, Left: A fisherwoman tends to her nets in Gokova bay, Turkey. *Photo credit: Zafer Kizilkaya, Akdeniz Koruma Derneği*.
Front Cover, Right: A Gurung man carries a bundle of non-timber forests products in the Himalayan foothills of Nepal. *Photo credit: Conservation Area Management Committee, Parche*.
Back Cover: One of 70 fisherwomen providing leadership on resource management in the Bozburun-Datça Area of Gökova Bay. *Photo credit: Zafer Kizilkaya, Akdeniz Koruma Derneği*.

Interior Photos:
All photos on pages 3 to 19 were provided by the Equator Prize winning communities recognized in this publication. Photos in other sections were also provided by Equator Prize winners: Asociación de Capitanes Indígenas de Yaigojé Apaporis (p. 2, credit Juan Gabriel Soler) and Arnavon Community Marine Conservation Area Management Committee (p. 20).

© 2016 United Nations Development Programme
All rights reserved
Printed in the United States

The Equator Initiative gratefully acknowledges the leadership of Jamison Ervin and Eileen de Ravin, as well as the generous support of its partners.

Convention on Biological Diversity
CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL
ecoagriculturepartners
Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
FORDHAM THE JESUIT UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
The Nature Conservancy Protecting nature. Preserving life.
IUCN
pci media impact
rare
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Sida
UNEP
UNITED NATIONS FOUNDATION

PREFACE

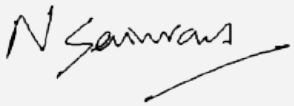
In 2015, the world agreed to an ambitious set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and 169 associated targets. The SDGs seek to catalyze a new development paradigm that treats social, economic, and environmental progress as indivisible.

Efforts to protect, restore, sustainably manage, and equitably share the benefits of biodiversity will be essential to advancing and sustaining the SDGs. Of particular importance is the role of biodiversity in reducing poverty, fostering food security, sustaining livelihoods, and generating economic growth. Biodiversity is especially important for the approximately 740 million people living on less than US$1.90 a day, 70% of whom depend upon nature to meet their basic needs. It is these indigenous peoples and local communities whose well-being and very survival is contingent on our ability to creatively address the development challenges that we face today. Their work on the frontlines to achieve sustainable development serves as a powerful engine of locally-sourced solutions.

The United Nations Development Programme recognizes the critical role local initiatives play in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals. For 15 years and 25 years, respectively, the UNDP Equator Initiative and the UNDP-implemented GEF Small Grants Programme have worked to shine a light on outstanding community-based initiatives that illustrate innovative sustainable development solutions.

The 208 Equator Prize winners and over 20,000 projects supported by SGP provide an evidence base of the impacts of local action to conserve biodiversity while meeting food, livelihood, and economic needs. These initiatives demonstrate that local action, with the proper support and recognition, leads to substantial impacts at the national and international levels. By liaising with local, district, and national level government, as well as with other NGOs and intergovernmental organizations, Equator Prize winners and SGP grantees are part of creating an enabling policy environment to encourage creative development solutions that reflect local realities.

To achieve the ambitious 2030 Agenda, we must build linkages between locally grounded action, national policies, and international priorities. The 68 Equator Prize winners and 24 Small Grants Programme recipients highlighted in this publication – representing just a fraction of diverse grassroots initiatives working around the world to meet development needs – demonstrate the ability of local initiatives to provide results across the SDGs. UNDP is committed to supporting these initiatives, and to connecting local action with national and international policy to achieve innovative, scalable solutions to the Sustainable Development Goals.



Nik Sekhran
Director of Sustainable Development, Bureau for Policy and Programme Support
United Nations Development Programme

INTRODUCTION

Indigenous peoples and local communities often depend on natural resources and biodiversity to meet their subsistence needs and sustain their livelihoods. They have demonstrated their ability to be highly effective natural resource managers under the right conditions, but are also vulnerable to environmental degradation and climate change.

For 15 years, UNDP and its partners have awarded the Equator Prize to outstanding grassroots efforts to reduce poverty through the conservation and sustainable use of nature. The Equator Initiative has recognized 208 exceptional indigenous peoples and local community groups from more than 70 countries around the world.

For 25 years, the UNDP-Implemented Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme (SGP) has promoted community-based innovation to conserve biodiversity, mitigate climate change, and protect international waters while generating sustainable livelihoods. SGP's work in over 125 countries has supported over 20,000 projects to advance local sustainable development solutions.

The Equator Initiative and SGP both advance local efforts to develop holistic approaches to addressing economic, ecological, and social challenges. Our joint experience demonstrates that when empowered with the rights and resources they need to manage their natural resources, communities can be drivers of transformational change.

Equator Prize winners and SGP grantees show how indigenous peoples and local communities effectively use environmental stewardship, biodiversity conservation, and natural resource management to deliver integrated solutions across all of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

All 68 initiatives showcased in this publication are Equator Prize winners. The 24 SGP grantees are designated in the text by the * symbol following their names. To access the full-length case studies and other media associated with the groups featured here, please click on the hyperlinked names of each initiative. To learn more about other Equator Prize winners, visit the **Equator Initiative Case Study Database**.

For indigenous peoples and local communities natural capital is often the pathway out of poverty. Community-based natural resource management is a pillar of rural economic development, illustrated by the wide pool of Equator Prize winners and SGP grantees. They show how local environment initiatives increase local incomes, expand livelihood options, and improve local productivity. Numerous prize-winning initiatives have been developed by and for the extreme poor (those living on less than US$1.25/day), leading to locally grown solutions for poverty eradication. These initiatives are particularly effective at increasing income among the most vulnerable, providing access to basic services, facilitating access to microfinance, and securing control of land rights and natural resources.

Increasing local incomes

Iniciativa Talamanca, Costa Rica.* Iniciativa Talamanca is an incubator for community-based action that seeks to address persistent social and ecological challenges by expanding livelihood options and boosting income for local farmers. The initiative has developed a range of local processing and marketing strategies and created the first organic certification program of its kind for small farmers in Costa Rica. Over 1,500 farmers have established organic agro-ecosystems, leading Iniciativa Talamanca to become the largest volume producer of organic products in Central America. The initiative generates an average annual profit of US$500,000 for poor and marginalized communities.

Providing access to basic services

Maasai Wilderness Conservation Trust (MWCT), Kenya.* This organization of Maasai communities in the Amboseli-Tsavo wildlife corridor has advanced a broad vision for linking ecosystem health with socioeconomic well-being by enhancing basic services through revenues from ecotourism. The trust supports 20 local primary schools and one secondary school, employing over 50 teachers and serving a total of 7,000 students. The MWCT health program, in partnership with the Kenyan government, operates four local dispensaries and funds outreach services to regions that lack access to medical facilities, reaching 8,000 people. By providing access to basic services to local communities, the trust provides a critical mechanism to raise local communities out of poverty.

Facilitating access to microfinance

Fédération Locale des GIE de Niodior (FELOGIE-Niodior), Senegal.* This federation of women's economic interest groups works to rehabilitate mangrove ecosystems and promote natural resource management in the Saloum Delta Biosphere Reserve. The initiative has developed a participatory code of conduct for harvesting marine resources, purchased equipment to monitor reserve access, and established a central fund to provide microcredit loans to more than 7,000 people. The rotating communal fund – which stands at roughly US$55,500 – has given women who were previously excluded from formal credit and savings systems access to small loans of between 50,000 and 300,000 CFA, enabling them to pursue pathways out of poverty.

Securing land tenure

Persatuan Penduduk Uma Bawang, Malaysia. Although the customary land rights of the association's indigenous Kayan people are recognized by the Malaysian government, their lands have not been officially demarcated, making them vulnerable to land grabs. The association uses GIS to map community-managed forests, providing a spatial basis for legally defending community land claims. By combing mapping with active resistance to incursions by commercial logging and palm oil interests through road blockades and political advocacy, the association has been able to resist the destruction of the Kayan's traditional forests. This protection of indigenous lands is essential to protect forest-dependent local livelihoods and ensure local well-being.

Local ecosystem-based initiatives are often in a good position to address food security needs, particularly in vulnerable and economically marginalized communities. Equator Prize winners and SGP grantees show how such initiatives create sustainable food production systems, increasing food security and improving agricultural productivity. Indigenous peoples and local communities often maintain seed banks that protect genetic diversity and provide access to locally-adapted plant varieties essential for building resilience to climate change. The winners and grantees also show how federations of small-scale farmers and fisherfolk provide extension services to marginalized or isolated areas.

Strengthening food security

Unión de Organizaciones Campesinas e Indígenas de Cotacachi (UNORCAC), Ecuador. The remote communities of Ecuador's inter-Andean valleys have long faced the twin challenges of food insecurity and environmental degradation. Malnutrition affects approximately 40% of the region's population, and farmers receive limited technological and economic support from formal institutions. UNORCAC was founded to address these challenges and turn the relative abundance of rare native crop varieties to the advantage of farming communities. By conserving a wide variety of native tuber, root, fruit, cereal, and medicinal plant species, the initiative has diversified income and enhanced food security for 3,225 farming families.

Improving agricultural productivity

Fédération des Unions de Producteurs de Maradi Gaskiya (FUMA Gaskiya), Niger. FUMA Gaskiya is a research-driven initiative that bring agro-ecological options to smallholder farmers. Comprised of 17 unions, 325 producer organizations, and 12,742 members, the work includes promotion of high-yield crops, sustainable production systems, participatory planning, and marketing of produce and organically-certified seeds. Fast-growing and off-season crops are being introduced to provide food security and alternative sources of income for local women. Crop yields have increased by up to 100% and farmer incomes have improved significantly, with US$36,000 generated from high-yield varieties of millet alone. Community radio has been used as a medium for information exchange, knowledge transfer, and education.

Maintaining seed banks

Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC), Palestine.* One of the oldest non-profit organizations in Palestine, UAWC supports Palestinian farmers to attain food sovereignty. UAWC works with farmers across Palestine to restore and conserve natural resources and to attain land and resource rights. In addition to various activities in land rehabilitation and restoration, water management, infrastructure development, and income diversification, the union maintains a seed bank that currently holds 270 samples from 36 different crop varieties. The seed bank gives local farmers the flexibility they need to adapt to rapidly changing climate conditions and to ensure food sovereignty needs are met.

Providing extension services

Programa de Campesino a Campesino (PCaC), Siuna, Nicaragua. PCaC Siuna has operated throughout Nicaragua since the post-war period of the early 1990s. This 'Farmer-to-Farmer Program' began with the goal of controlling the rapidly expanding agricultural frontier within the Bosawás Biosphere Reserve, while enhancing food security, increasing household incomes, and strengthening regional governance throughout Nicaragua's North Atlantic Autonomous Region. 300 volunteer extension officers work in over 80 communities and provide technical assistance to more than 3,000 subsistence farming families. Participating farmers have demonstrated that planting a diversity of corn, rice, beans, plantain, yucca, pineapple, sugar cane, and taro crops – as well as leguminous cover crops to enhance soil fertility – provide a sustainable alternative to shifting cultivation that meets local subsistence needs.

Good health and community well-being is the stated objective of many Equator Prize winners and SGP grantees that work in environmental conservation and sustainable natural resource management. They show that local initiatives often use revenues from common pool resource management to invest in public services such as health. Indeed, many Equator Prize winners and SGP grantees have used their revenues to build health care centers and medical clinics, thereby filling a gap in local access to safe, quality, and affordable medicine. Winners focus their health care interventions on local priority areas, including reducing childhood mortality rates, providing sexual and reproductive health care services for women, and treating communicable diseases.

Increasing access to health services

Traditional Healer Association, Chhattisgarh (THAC), India. In a region plagued by malnutrition, poor hygiene, and high communicable disease rates, THAC takes an innovative approach to facilitating local access to medical care. The association empowers 'village botanists' who use medicinal plants to meet modern medical needs. Work also focuses on attaining scientific certification for traditional medicines that are effective to treat fever, colds, arthritis, malaria, and gastrointestinal diseases. Health services have been provided to more than 50,000 families across 500 villages in 12 districts, and average medical costs have been reduced by 70%. More than one million trees and half a million medicinal seedlings have been planted in 100 villages, simultaneously restoring threatened ecosystems and improving local health care resources.

Reducing childhood mortality

The Pendeba Society of the Tibet Autonomous Region, China. To safeguard the Qomolangma National Nature Preserve – an area that is roughly the size of Taiwan – this grassroots initiative employs locally-nominated volunteers known as pendebas from each of the 406 villages within the protected area. Pendebas work to promote environmental conservation, enhance income generation, and improve family health. Today, more than 80% of the reserve's villages have a functioning community-based health care system that provides pre-natal and maternity care, immunization, family planning, nutrition, sanitation, and disease control. Through these environmental and social programs, the initiative has reduced deforestation by 80%, protected critical endangered wildlife, and reduced child mortality by 50%.

Improving reproductive health services

Zenab for Women in Development, Sudan. This union of women farmers empowers 3,000 women from 53 communities. In addition to strengthening the land tenure status of women, the union provides training in organic agriculture, crop rotation, and the use of biological fertilizers to improve agricultural productivity. In order to ensure women are empowered to take control of their bodies and health care options, the initiative has invested in clinics that provide services in maternal health, family planning, and HIV and AIDS prevention. The union has further empowered local women through its aggressive campaigns against female genital mutilation, violence against women, and early marriage. Zenab also provides training for rural midwives on standard obstetric care to reduce mortality rates of women and children.

Treating communicable diseases

Il Ngwesi Group Ranch, Kenya. This Maasai ranch in the central Kenyan district of Laikipia has established an 8,645-ha community-conserved area that balances wildlife conservation, local pastoralist livelihoods, and the operation of a lucrative ecolodge. In order to meet critical local needs, ecotourism revenues are directed to health interventions. The ranch has launched an outreach campaign that includes education, testing, and counseling for malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV and AIDS. The campaign has reached 13 local group ranches serving a combined population of 40,000. The ranch also runs a health clinic and a mobile health facility that enables health workers visit seven local communities weekly. Il Ngwesi has served as a model for replication across the country for its work to enhance community livelihoods, health, and well-being.

A high percentage of Equator Prize winners and SGP grantees use environment as a platform to provide quality education. Winners and grantees facilitate direct access to primary and secondary education through the construction of schools, paying school fees for children that would otherwise not be able to afford them, or providing scholarships, all with revenues from local ecosystem-based enterprises. Many of these initiatives have focused on abolishing systemic barriers to education access based on gender, class, or ethnicity. Many more work to mainstream conservation, human rights, and gender equality issues into school curricula and to promote hands-on training in agriculture, conservation, and other vocational skills.

Improving access to education

Shidhulai Swanirvar Sangstha, Bangladesh. In the low-lying northwestern region of Bangladesh, a mosaic of wetlands and waterways make travel extremely difficult, particularly during the monsoon season when extensive flooding occurs. To address this challenge, Shidhulai Swanirvar Sangstha operates a fleet of 54 solar-powered boats that provide public services to villages that would otherwise be completely isolated. Of Shidhulai's fleet, 20 boats are outfitted as floating schools, holding three classes per day for children in riverbank communities. Ten library boats are fitted with books, computers, printers, and mobile phones. Five health clinic boats bring free healthcare to more than 300 people per day, while five agricultural extension boats train farmers in sustainable farming methods.

Providing vocational training

Fondation Pole, Democratic Republic of Congo. In 1975, Kahuzi-Biega National Park expanded from 60,000 ha to 600,000 ha, leading to the forceful relocation of indigenous Batwa communities. Deprived of traditional livelihoods, food, and cultural heritage, local communities turned to widespread poaching within the park's boundaries that defied official attempts at enforcement. Fondation Pole has pioneered an innovative approach that provides vocational training in order to reduce poverty and foster natural resource stewardship across the region. The foundation has established three conservation schools and a secondary school that provides training in agroforestry. Environmental education programs have been started in another 21 existing schools around the park. Six literacy centers have been launched to teach adults to read and to write in Swahili.

Supporting school fees and scholarships

Tetepare Descendants' Association, Solomon Islands. TDA represents the legal owners of Tetepare Island, the largest uninhabited island in the tropical Pacific and one of the last remaining unlogged tropical islands in the world. To help indigenous landholders resist pressures from industrial logging companies, TDA pioneered 'community conservation agreements' whereby landholders and their communities are provided with alternative livelihood opportunities in exchange for a commitment to the sustainable management of marine and forest resources. A central part of this initiative has been the establishment of a scholarship program that enables local youth to pursue educational opportunities. The scholarship program assists up to 80 students each year with needed fees to attend high school and trade school in areas such as teaching and nursing.

Mainstreaming conservation in curricula

Yayasan Pengelolaan Lokal Kawasan Laut, Indonesia. This foundation coordinates conservation, environmental education, and livelihoods programming for 26 locally managed marine areas (LMMAs) across eastern Indonesia. Critically, the network has mainstreamed environmental education into schools in five different regions of Indonesia. It has designed unique conservation modules for 27 primary schools, each focusing on the species of greatest importance to the local people. The success of this community-driven education program led to its formal adoption by local government. The foundation has built on this traditional knowledge-based education to promote conservation and to resist the destructive effects of commercial fishing companies across the region.

Environmental management can serve as a dynamic platform for empowering women. A large number of Equator Prize winning initiatives and SGP grantees are run by women and for women, creating pathways out of poverty and facilitating economic independence. An even greater number have gender equality as central features of their programs, ensuring that women have equal opportunity to participate fully and to assume leadership. Equator Prize winners and SGP grantees have served as a platform for advancing women's leadership, securing better working conditions for women, addressing the absence of land rights for women, and facilitating access for women to credit and savings services.

Advancing women's empowerment and leadership

Centre for Empowerment and Resource Development (CERD), Philippines. The centre works in the Caraga region to conserve coastal resources and to improve the sustainability of local fishing livelihoods. CERD has brought together fisherfolk associations and government to establish marine protected areas managed by local communities. The center has created innovative 'women-managed protected areas' (WMAs) in which women direct all conservation and livelihood activities. CERD provides local women with leadership training, supporting them to direct decision-making processes for WMAs, within fisherfolk associations, and in CERD itself. Before the initiative began almost no women participated in decision-making; women now comprise 50% of fisherfolk association leadership.

Securing better working conditions for women

TRY Oyster Women's Association, Gambia.* This association brings together 500 female oyster harvesters from 15 villages in the Greater Banjul area of the country. Historically, women harvesters lacked access to boats, protective gloves, boots, and life jackets. Oysters are also often collected under dangerous conditions that expose women harvesters to risk of injury – incidents of drowning and sexual assault are not uncommon. TRY has worked to mitigate the risks of oyster harvesting by facilitating access to appropriate equipment and implementing higher standards for women's working conditions. The association has also established more sustainable natural resource management through its leadership in the development of the Oyster and Cockle Co-Management Plan for the Tanbi Wetlands National Park.

Addressing the absence of land rights for women

Zan va Zamin, Tajikistan.* This community-based initiative works to attain tenure for landless female farmers, promote sustainable farming methods, and support biodiversity conservation. The group has worked to overcome extremely low awareness amongst women on land rights, the land reform process, and the legal entitlement to cultivate private land. Over 2,000 landless female farmers have received land parcels as a result of the initiative's advocacy. Zan va Zamin has also established 12 field schools that train thousands of women in farm management and 30 seed banks that support local farmers to maintain the region's rich agrobiodiversity. 30 revolving funds have been launched to create opportunities for local entrepreneurs, with a percentage of resulting revenues reinvested into projects in health and education.

Facilitating access to financial services for women

Collectif des Groupements d'Interest Economiques des Femmes pour la Protection de la Nature (COPRONAT), Senegal.* COPRONAT brings together 1,500 women in eight communities bordering the 1,000-ha Popenguine Nature Reserve. The collective's work focuses on rehabilitating ecosystems that underpin the local economy. COPRONAT's eight 'economic interest groups' are powered by a monthly payment of 2,000 francs by each member. On a rotating basis, a different woman is allowed access to this money and is responsible for repaying the loan with minimal interest. The program has empowered women to start small businesses and supported their resiliency in the face of unexpected expenses. The collective has also played an active role in the creation of the co-managed Community Nature Reserve of Somone.

Ensuring access to clean water and restoring ecosystem functioning to allow for the reliable provision of water is a major focus for local initiatives. Several Equator Prize winners and SGP grantees have created local water management committees to ensure equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water, while others have focused on sanitation and hygiene. By working across ecosystems – including agricultural landscapes – many of these community-based environment initiatives have been able to reduce groundwater pollution, increase water-use efficiency across sectors, find local solutions to address water scarcity, and reduce conflicts over water resources.

Equitable access to clean water

Centro Alexander von Humboldt, Nicaragua. This center works in an area of Nicaragua plagued by hurricanes, severe droughts, and freshwater shortages. The organization has drilled more than 40 freshwater wells, repaired 35 community water systems, and promoted the formation of community water committees to ensure equitable access to clean water. The locally elected water committees collect water-user fees, which are directed towards system maintenance and remuneration of committee members. To date, the project has reached over 75,000 beneficiaries, empowering rural communities to take ownership of their water resources. Through public consultation, social mobilization, and lobbying, the center has profoundly impacted national water laws, including Law 620, which made water a public resource and allocated funds to increase clean water access.

Reducing groundwater pollution

Grupo de Estudios Ambientales y Sociales A.C., Mexico. Operating in the central mountain region of Guerrero, this initiative seeks to care for the Earth and its resources by improving water access for local communities. The group recognizes water as central to all life, and works to facilitate dialogue and collective action that engages communities across the region. The initiative has been able to to protect 130 springs, promote hydro-agroecological practices in more than 500 farms, improve sanitary facilities in 50 schools, build 8 black water treatment systems, and install 78 household-level water collection systems. Water quality has been improved for thousands by reducing groundwater and waterway contamination from agrochemicals and sewage.

Local solutions to water scarcity

WUA "Ob Umed", Tajikistan. Working with nine villages that have collectively faced severe water shortages, extreme droughts, and seasonal crop failures, Ob Umed has established an equitable water distribution system based on traditional water rights, distribution rules, and the communal maintenance of local water infrastructure. The grassroots initiative has reintroduced traditional water management institutions that ensure the fair distribution of water resources among villages. Ob Umed is improving access to drinking water through a model of local self-reliance and community-based action. The association now has over 5,000 active members from nine villages who have contributed to repairs to over 10,450 m of canals and other water infrastructure.

Reducing water conflicts

Pastoralist Integrated Support Programme, Kenya. On the arid rangelands of the Marsabit area of northern Kenya, the livelihoods of pastoralist groups are subject to threats from overgrazing, land use change, social instability, and climate change. PISP has worked since 1996 to increase safe and reliable water access for people and livestock, while also strengthening conservation of key wildlife species in Marsabit National Park. The group has held community dialogues and encouraged shared maintenance of water infrastructure to lessen conflicts among resource user groups. Efforts to improve grazing management and to diversify the income streams for pastoralists have also helped to reduce pressure on the water resources essential to the pastoralist way of life.

Equator Prize winners and SGP grantees promote integrated development solutions, using environment and conservation as a platform to fill in existing gaps in service provision, including access to affordable and clean energy. Whether through solar power, fuel-efficient stoves, micro-hydro dams, or other alternative energy projects, local initiatives are effectively prioritizing access to clean and renewable energy. These initiatives demonstrate linkages between affordable, clean energy and local development that will only become more important as the world works to implement the Paris Climate Agreement.

Solar power projects

Namdrik Atoll Local Resources Committee, Marshall Islands.* To reduce vulnerability to the impacts of climate change and dependence on declining fisheries, Namdrik Atoll Local Resources Committee promotes a model of community self-sufficiency through enhanced food security and renewable energy. Traditional crops such as breadfruit, taro, and native pandanus have been reintroduced to restore soil fertility and improve food security. A pearl farm provides jobs and a revenue stream to fund community development projects in education, health, and energy. Using these profits, renewable energy has been promoted across the atoll – almost every house now has solar panels and the elementary school is equipped with a 10,000 kW solar panel system.

Fuel-efficient stoves

Kijabe Environment Volunteers (KENVO), Kenya.* KENVO has worked with rural communities on the Kikuyu Escarpment since 1996, serving as a powerful vehicle for holistic local development, a driver of forest conservation, and a flexible delivery mechanism for donor-funded interventions. KENVO plays a central role in promoting fuel-efficient stoves in order to reduce firewood demand and to improve household air quality. The organization has distributed the Jiko 'rocket' ceramic stove model to over 500 households and trained young people as pioneers who then train other members of the community on stove installation and use. The associated health and social benefits are especially targeted for women, who are generally the chief firewood-gatherers in rural households.

Micro-hydroelectric units

Conservation Area Management Committee (CAMC), Parche, Nepal. CAMC Parche applies local knowledge to address local environment and development challenges, including ecosystem restoration, sustainable harvest of non-timber forest products, and alternative energy. In response to unreliable energy access that plagued local communities, CAMC Parche has harnessed two abundant resources in the region – water and gravity – to create a sustainable energy source from micro-hydroelectric units. By channeling water from high elevation to low elevation through a simple generator, each micro-hydroelectric unit can provide enough power for an entire village. Nearly 600 households now have cheap, clean, and reliable energy 24 hours a day.

Alternative energy projects

École Instrument de Paix (EIP-Niger), Niger.* EIP-Niger promotes an innovative approach to transform a troublesome invasive species in the Niger River basin into an economic opportunity. Water hyacinth has clogged local irrigation systems, limited navigability of the river, and limited market access, as well as severely impacted ecosystem health and water quality. EIP-Niger has mobilized community members to collect water hyacinth from the river for use in a number of income-generating activities, including the construction of fuel briquettes made of dried water hyacinth and agricultural waste. These briquettes help to generate income through their sale and improve energy access for marginalized riverbank communities.

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

In rural communities, nature is often the primary source of livelihoods. Equator Prize winners and SGP grantees represent the leading edge of the emerging 'green economy' at the local level — an economy that generates jobs and income while maintaining environmental integrity. Numerous winners and grantees have created versatile small- and medium-sized enterprises that ensure that economic growth does not come at the expense of environmental health. In other cases, initiatives use ecotourism as a platform for job creation, creating revenue streams from environment and wildlife protection. Many of these local ecosystem-based initiatives are also facilitating economic innovation within poor or underserved groups and creating opportunities for decent work for youth.

Small- and medium-sized environment enterprises

Swazi Indigenous Products, Swaziland. This member-owned natural seed oil enterprise provides jobs and income to over 2,400 rural women while protecting the ecosystems of the Lubombo region. Swazi Indigenous Products supports local women to sustainably cultivate and collect wild marula, trichilia, and ximenia seeds, which yield oils in high demand for skincare products. To capture a greater share of the market, the group created its own line of products, Swazi Secrets. The enterprise has paid out more than US$396,000 to its members over the last seven years. By providing decent work to local women, Swazi Indigenous Products has facilitated local economic growth and empowered local women to meet health care and education costs.

Ecotourism as a platform for job creation

Nam Ha Ecotourism Project, Lao People's Democratic Republic. In the 222,400-ha Nam Ha National Protected Area, conservation efforts are linked with ecotourism. Community members are trained as eco-guides and operate village-based lodges and forest camps. They are also trained to monitor threats to biodiversity, supporting the work of the critically under-resourced Protected Area Management Unit. Ecotourism now underpins the economy for the area's 57 villages and 3,451 households. The initiative employs more than 300 people, with an additional 172 guides active in the province and several hundred people working to provide food and accommodation to tourists. Community eco-guides and associated service providers have received over US$600,000 since 1999.

Facilitating economic innovation and growth

Medicinal Plants Association, St. Catherine, Egypt.* This association protects native medicinal plants in St. Catherine Reserve, while developing alternative livelihoods for the area's economically marginalized Bedouin population. Revenues from association activities in enhancing market supply chains for locally produced medicinal herbs, handicrafts, and honey are invested in a rotating fund. This loan program provides local households with finances to invest in small businesses, sustainable energy, and income diversification projects. Loans are awarded to projects that propose creative solutions to enhance livelihoods and reduce pressure on the environment. In this way, the association encourages economic innovation in an economically marginalized population of almost 6,000 Bedouin people.

Creating employment opportunities for youth

POLOPROBIO, Brazil. This research institute has devised a method for the artisanal processing of raw latex from rubber trees that provides livelihoods for forest-based communities. In 11 sites spanning four Brazilian states, POLOPROBIO works with over 600 producers from the indigenous Kaxinawa**á**, Shanenawa, Apurinã, and Kaxarari tribes. One kg of rubber processed by conventional methods is typically sold at US$2. When processed into high-quality products using POLOPROBIO's method, one kg of rubber is worth US$30. The initiative provides work for indigenous youth who would otherwise be forced to immigrate to urban centers – over 65% of the rubber tappers employed are aged 19 to 29.

In the vast majority of cases, Equator Prize winners and SGP grantees invest revenues from their environmental initiatives into a community fund that is then used to meet local infrastructure needs. Most often investments are made in the construction of roads, schools and medical clinics, water access and storage systems, or tourism infrastructure such as lodging and trails. These investments show that local investments in natural capital often stimulate investments in innovative infrastructure.

Roads

Ekuri Initiative, Nigeria.* The Ekuri Initiative manages a 33,600-ha forest adjacent to Cross-River National Park as a community asset, generating income, subsistence materials, and food. To finance construction of a 40-km road to reach the remote villages of Old Ekuri and New Ekuri, the initiative imposed levies on the sale of non-timber forest products by residents. Construction of the road began in 1986, reaching Old Ekuri in 1990 and New Ekuri in 1997. In addition to allowing local products to reach new markets – a boon to the local economy – the road has also enabled the construction of two schools, a health center, and a civic center.

Schools and health facilities

Wechiau Community Hippo Sanctuary, Ghana. Created in 1998 in response to the decline of hippopotami in the region due to high levels of poaching, this community-managed wildlife sanctuary has used revenues from ecotourism to deliver infrastructure investments for the residents of its 17 member communities. Poaching has been eliminated and the hippo population has stabilized within the sanctuary's core zone, while investments in schools, health facilities, solar lighting, and water infrastructure have improved the well-being of approximately 10,000 residents of the sanctuary's development zone. The group has used revenues to build three health clinics and worked through partners to ensure the shipment of medical supplies to clinics on a quarterly basis, dramatically improving the health care services available to the local population.

Water access and storage systems

Utooni Development Organization, Kenya. This NGO uses the innovative, low-investment 'sand dam' technology in the communities of southern Kenya. Utooni has built over 1,500 sand dams – concrete walls built across seasonal rivers that store water under the sand, raising the water table and enhancing availability of clean water. This low-cost technology provides insurance during the dry season and enables communities to sustainably manage water resources. The organization has also formed over 80 self-help groups and trained 2,700 farmers trained in water management, sustainable agriculture, ecosystem restoration, and alternative livelihoods. Tree cover, bird populations, fish stocks, and farmer incomes have all increased as a result.

Tourism infrastructure

Kibale Association for Rural and Environmental Development (KAFRED), Uganda.* The village of Bigodi straddles an eight-km stretch of papyrus wetland that serves as an important wildlife corridor for Kibale Forest National Park. KAFRED has established guided eco-tours through the wetlands, reinvesting income in key local infrastructure. Investments include channeling water from a protected source to meet water security needs as well as the construction of boardwalks through the wetlands that connect local villages and provide pathways for guided tours. KAFRED has also constructed a secondary school, and uses revenue from ecotourism to support the student fees and teacher wages.

Local environment initiatives are often sites for accumulation of social capital that allows for collective action to address systemic inequalities. The majority of Equator Prize winners and SGP grantees use natural resource management to empower groups that are poor, vulnerable, or socially marginalized. These initiatives balance work towards environmental conservation and economic growth with work to enhance political voice, enabling rural communities to advocate for the elimination of discriminatory policies at the local, regional, and national levels. Equator Prize winners and SGP grantees also work to attain fair prices for local farmers and fisherfolk, often through eliminating asymmetrical market conditions that have allowed middlemen to restrict market access and keep rural communities in poverty.

Social empowerment of traditionally marginalized groups

Aharam Traditional Crops Producers' Company, India.* Aharam works with socially marginalized rural producers in the semi-arid Ramnad Plains of Tamil Nadu state. The plains are home to the nomadic Valayar people, who have traditionally been of low social caste, extremely poor, and have lacked a political voice in India. The initiative uses a producer group model to promote organic certification and increase agrobiodiversity, while simultaneously raising the status of traditionally disenfranchised producers. The company creates added value through secondary processing and supply chain management for organic crops bought directly from producer groups. Aharam has grown from 500 to 15,000 producers, with a total of 75,000 estimated beneficiaries. Of these, an estimated 70% are landless women laborers.

Platforms to give communities political voice

Capitanía del Alto y Bajo Izozog (CABI), Bolivia. CABI negotiated with the Bolivian government to establish the 3.4 million-ha Kaa-Iya del Gran Chaco National Park and Integrated Management Natural Area, one of the largest national parks in South America. The innovative management agreement at the heart of the park's creation gives co-management rights to the 10,000 members of the Izoceño-Guaraní people represented by CABI. With technical support from Wildlife Conservation Society, CABI has also successfully lobbied for land rights to 1.5 million ha of indigenous territories within the park. These gains have helped to ensure that these traditionally marginalized actors have a voice against powerful economic interests, including extractive industries.

Advocacy to eliminate discriminatory laws and policies

Proyecto Nasa, Colombia. Proyecto Nasa aims to increase the political capacity of Colombia's indigenous Páez peoples, who have been disproportionately affected by violence in the Cauca department. By strengthening regional political autonomy, Proyecto Nasa has successfully lobbied for access to a greater share of public funds and services for indigenous groups. Their struggle has led to legal recognition of the fundamental rights of indigenous peoples, including recognition of the autonomy of their communal indigenous lands in the 1991 Colombian Constitution. Victories such as these are critical to fight systemic inequalities. This work has been complemented by a program of sustainable natural resource management within the Nasa's indigenous lands, which overlap with key protected areas.

Attaining fair market prices for local farmers

Community Markets for Conservation (COMACO), Zambia*. In Zambia's Luangwa Valley, COMACO works with over 40,000 farming households to increase local income and foster conservation. Farmers become COMACO members in return for adopting a package of eco-agricultural techniques that reduce environmental impact and dramatically improve agricultural yields. The initiative also helps local farmers attain fair prices for their produce and access new markets. COMACO purchases farm commodities through a network of collection centers that alleviate transport costs and guarantee a premium for organic goods. The direct link fostered between the farmers and local markets cuts middlemen out of the system, ensuring a more equitable supply chain.

Healthy functioning ecosystems are the cornerstone of sustainable communities, whether urban or rural. Equator Prize winners and SGP grantees are working to realize more sustainable communities, with local well-being and prosperity at the heart of their work. Winners and grantees include groups that use environment and conservation as a platform for providing access to basic services, as well as others that safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage. Many of the groups are focused on building resilience to climate change-related disasters, while others protect poor and vulnerable communities from water shortages. Although Equator Prize winners and SGP grantees are overwhelmingly operating in a rural context, their ecosystem protection and restoration work often has direct implications for food security and clean water provision in city centers.

Providing access to basic services

Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT), Kenya. NRT is a network of 27 community conservancies covering over 31,000 km2 of land in northern Kenya. The trusts works across ethnic divides with 315,000 conservancy members to support sustainable land and livestock management, wildlife conservation, and poverty reduction. Thousands of hectares of degraded pasture have been restored, and a degree of peace and economic stability has been introduced into this historically volatile region. In response to a historic lack of access to basic government services, new revenue streams created through livelihoods diversification have been directed to enhance sustainability of rural communities through investments in local infrastructure, education, and health.

Safeguarding cultural heritage

Community Tours Sian Ka'an, Mexico.* Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve is the largest marine protected area in Mexico, spanning more than 500,000 ha. It has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in recognition of its rich biodiversity and wealth of Mayan culture. Although the reserve receives thousands of visitors every year, indigenous communities have not historically benefited. Community Tours Sian Ka'an is working to change this. This alliance of three sustainable ecotourism cooperatives operates in the Punta Allen and Muyil indigenous communities, providing a source of sustainable livelihoods through employment in ecotourism ventures and promotion of Maya culture. Ecotourism activities raise environmental and cultural awareness of tourists, who often hail from cities, and create revenue streams to enhance vibrant indigenous communities.

Building resilience to climate change

Jeffrey Town Farmers Association, Jamaica.* The association employs diverse approaches to educate farmers on alternative energy options, ecoagriculture techniques, and disaster risk reduction critical to enhance the sustainability of this rural community. In order to increase resilience in the face of tropical storms, the group has invested in a multifaceted strategy. Terracing and gabion walls on steep slopes provide mechanical support against landslides. Tree cover and vegetative barriers enhance soil integrity through their root systems. To control water during storm periods, check dams and culverts have been installed. The association has also formed a first response team and disaster management plans that guide recovery efforts following severe storms.

Protecting against water shortages

Amsing Association, Morocco.* Amsing Association was established by an Amazirght community in the High Atlas Mountains to address economic isolation, lack of social services, and harsh climatic conditions. The association successfully reintroduced a traditional land management practice called azzayn, which has led to restoration of native flora, reduction of soil erosion, and flood prevention. The association has also invested in infrastructure that supports local sustainability through adaptation to climate change. A 'water chateau' stores fresh water for use in times of drought or when floods wash away irrigation ditches, while a water tower provides residents with clean drinking water. The association has also expanded greenhouse farming to explore new crops and improve food security.

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

Indigenous peoples and local communities are an indispensable part of achieving responsible production systems and equitable supply chains. Because of their direct dependence on the environment to meet food, livelihood, and health needs, local initiatives are on the frontlines of linking sustainable production and responsible consumption. Equator Prize winners and SGP grantees work to reduce food losses along production and supply chains, to attain organic and fair trade certification for locally produced goods, to link sustainable community forestry with market supply-chains that place greater emphasis on social and environmental responsibility, and to encourage innovative practices in sustainable production.

Reducing food losses along production and supply chains

FrutaSã Indústria, Comércio e Exportação Ltda, Brazil. FrutaSã is an eco-enterprise that creates income for smallholder farmers through the sustainable extraction, marketing, and sale of native fruit pulp. The initiative has successfully utilized locally-abundant fruit varieties, traditional knowledge of their cultivation, and modern processing and storage techniques to enhance sustainable production. The organization has provided local producer organizations with guidelines on best practice in hygiene, harvesting, and storage that have significantly reduced fruit loss and increased product value. Additionally, by providing value-added secondary processing for a previously underutilized resource and by closing the supply chain gap between fruit producers and the market, FrutaSa**V** has helped to dramatically improve local incomes and mitigate deforestation in the region.

Facilitating organic and fair trade certification

Makoni Organic Farmers Association, Zimbabwe.* This association is an organic farming cooperative of 450 farmers that was developed to transition away from chemical-intensive tobacco cultivation. Thus far, 50% of member farmers have become organically certified. The introduction of organic certification has facilitated access to new, lucrative markets and increased local farmers' incomes. The group has been able to secure a contract with one of the leading organic exporters in the region, VegFlora. In addition to advocating for the eradication of persistent organic pollutants, Makoni has been active in lobbying for organic farming standards across Zimbabwe. After four years of advocacy, the country adopted the Zimbabwe Organic Standards label, which has been internationally endorsed.

Linking sustainable practices with global supply chains

Asociación para la Investigación y el Desarrollo Integral (AIDER), Peru. AIDER works with communities living throughout 12 million ha of Peruvian rainforest. Across the region, illegal logging and agricultural encroachment pose serious threats. AIDER has obtained certification for the first Forest Stewardship Council timber in Peru, which it is now exporting to international markets. The initiative has also helped establish the first forest to meet voluntary forest certification standards in Peru, the first forest carbon project to meet Voluntary Carbon Standards (VCS) in Peru, and the first project to meet Climate, Community and Biodiversity (CCB) standards in Peru. Using these mechanisms, AIDER has played a strong role in facilitating innovative sources of financing and accessing sustainable global supply chains for forest-dependent communities.

Fostering innovative production practices

Asociación de Artesanas Unidas de Los Límites (ASOARTESANAS), Colombia. ASOARTESANAS works in an area of northern Colombia home to the last population of cotton-top tamarins. These monkeys are threatened with extinction due to extensive deforestation and capture for the illegal pet trade. ASOARTESANAS produces stuffed animal toys to raise awareness of threats posed to this endangered species. Members also collect discarded plastic bags and 'upcycle' them into handbags. Women who previously had little employment now have a stable income, with products sold in Colombia and internationally. New designs reflect market demand, and Colombian fashion shows have featured ASOARTESNA's eco-mochilas. Artisanal upcycling has removed over 3.5 million plastic bags from local ecosystems, demonstrating the power of sustainable production and consumption.

Equator Prize winners and SGP grantees show that local collective action for the environment must be considered a central part of achieving national and global climate goals. Whether it is through the protection of tropical forests – arguably among the best climate solutions available today – or ecosystem-based adaptation strategies, indigenous peoples and local community groups are advancing innovative climate solutions. Forest protection, mangrove reforestation to buffer coastal areas from storm surges, and water management in climate-stressed areas are just a few examples of how local strategies strengthen resilience to climate-related hazards and natural disasters. Many Equator Prize winners and SGP grantees also work to educate rural populations on climate change adaptation and to create platforms for climate-related planning.

Climate change mitigation

Mosquitia Pawisa Apiska (MOPAWI), Honduras. For over 25 years, MOPAWI has worked to engage local and indigenous communities in the integrated management of the Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve in northeastern Honduras. The organization has collaborated with indigenous groups to create a forest guard program that develops ecological guidelines and zoning, including rules for hunting, fishing, forestry, and agriculture. The association has also trained thousands of community members in forest stewardship, sustainable natural resource management practices, and the administration of forest management institutions. The reserve is the largest surviving area of virgin tropical rainforest in Honduras and its protection represents a major contribution to climate change mitigation.

Climate change adaptation

Trowel Development Foundation, Philippines. This community-based organization is using tie-crab farming and mangrove reforestation to improve local livelihoods and enhance adaptation to climate change. The tie-crab approach – in which crabs are tied to bamboo poles, each of which is then attached to a buoy – has helped to double the income of fishing households by reducing losses associated with storms and flooding. Mangrove reforestation efforts have restored marine biodiversity, increased food security, and, importantly, enhanced protection of coastal areas. The foundation credits its mangrove reforestation work with buffering against the worst impacts of Typhoon Haiyan, which ravaged large part of the country in 2013. Restored mangrove forests helped to protect coastal communities against storm surges.

Climate-resilient water management

Abrha Weatsbha Community, Ethiopia. Once on the brink of resettlement due to desertification, soil degradation, and lack of water, the Abrha Weatsbha community has reclaimed its land through the reforestation and sustainable management of over 224,000 ha of forest. The initiative began with a community assessment of existing constraints to local health and well-being, with special consideration for challenges arising due to climate change and environmental decline. Tree planting, ecosystem restoration activities, and the use of manure for compost and organic fertilizers have improved the soil integrity. The organization has constructed small dams, created water catchment ponds, and built trenches and bunds to restore groundwater functioning. More than 180 wells have been built to provide access to potable water.

Education on climate change

The Smallholders Foundation, Nigeria. The Smallholders Foundation promotes sustainable agriculture and environmental conservation through educational radio programs in the local Igbo language that reach over 250,000 smallholder farmers. Among other programs, the foundation developed a 20-episode serial on climate change management. Examples of individual episodes include: planting and using multi-purpose trees, water and soil management in the face of climate change, restoring degraded forests, climate-adapted fish farming, coastal areas management, coping with extreme weather events, renewable energy use, cultivating cassava in drought conditions, selecting heat and salt tolerant crops, and lobbying for government action. These educational campaigns have played a central role in helping rural communities adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Indigenous peoples and local communities depend directly marine ecosystems for food security and livelihoods. Equator Prize winners and SGP grantees show that community-based action can drive solutions to sustainably manage the planet's marine and coastal areas. These initiatives show how community action can create locally managed marine areas, protect threatened marine species, and restore marine ecosystems. Many Equator Prize winners and SGP grantees integrate conservation projects with work to ensure that small-scale fisherfolk have access to fishing rights, markets for their products, and the tools they need to eliminate destructive fishing practices. These initiatives are also creating partnerships with research institutes to ensure that traditional ecological knowledge informs science-based management plans for marine ecosystems.

Locally managed marine areas

Matabose E Qarava Na Veika Vakai-Qoliqoli E Viti, Fiji. The community of Ucunivanua is the site of Fiji's first locally managed marine area (LMMA). In 1999, villagers worked with scientists to declare a ban on clam harvesting within a stretch of inshore waters for three years, building on the tradition of taboo prohibitions for certain species. After seven years of local management, clam populations had rebounded and village incomes had risen significantly. The success of this LMMA spread rapidly, and a support network – Matabose E Qarava Na Veika Vakai- Qoliqoli E Viti – grew from this. By 2009, the network had increased to include 250 LMMAs, covering 10,745 km2 of coastal fisheries, or more than 25% of Fiji's inshore area.

Protecting threatened marine species

Associação Comunitária Nova Experiência Marítima da Cruzinha da Garça (ACNEMC), Cape Verde.* Cruzinha da Garça is one of the most important nesting grounds for sea turtles in Cape Verde. The association seeks to develop alternative forms of local marine resource use to conserve this endangered species. The project is part of a regional initiative that involves fishing communities in the conservation of marine turtles and their habitat. The association protects spawning loggerhead sea turtles in their natural habitats, engages the local population in data collection on population growth, and is developing ecotourism ventures. The group has achieved the full cessation of sea turtle poaching and created a turtle nursery that has released thousands of sea turtle hatchlings into the sea.

Restoring marine ecosystems

Yayasan Kerang Lestari Teluk Pemuteran, Indonesia. Started in response to the collapse of the local fishing industry due to coral reef loss from sedimentation, rising ocean temperatures, and unsustainable fishing methods, this foundation uses 'biorock' technology to restore coral ecosystems. The innovative technology uses low voltage electrical currents – generated by solar panels, wind turbines, wave generators, or land-based transformers – to encourage coral growth on underwater steel frames. The foundation oversees more than 70 artificial biorock coral reefs and hundreds of community members have been trained in artificial reef building. The community has created a de facto locally managed marine protected area that, together with biorock, has restored fish stocks and marine biodiversity.

Integrating local knowledge and science

Akdeniz Koruma Derneği, Turkey.* Developed in response to marine ecosystem degradation, declining fish diversity and abundance, and associated losses to local fisherfolk incomes, this initiative has created a 2,400-ha network of no-take zones that put local fishing communities at the lead of marine biodiversity conservation. Community-based enforcement strategies are complemented by cooperation with government authorities and scientific studies to monitor ecosystem health. Fish biomass has increased dramatically, and the average incomes of cooperative members have increased by as much as 180%. Monitoring activities confirm rejuvenated species abundance in the bay, which is an important nursing ground for endangered species including Mediterranean monk seals and sandbar sharks.

Indigenous peoples and local communities are the stewards of many of the world's remaining standing forests, wildlife corridors, and biodiversity hotspots. Equator Prize winners and SGP grantees show that communities are advancing some of the most sustainable and high-impact initiatives to conserve terrestrial biodiversity. Many initiatives work to protect, restore, and sustainably manage forests, effectively reducing deforestation and creating sustainable forest-based livelihoods. Many others focus on biodiversity conservation in wetland, mountain, and dryland ecosystems, using sustainable natural resource management as a way of fighting poverty and protecting nature. A high proportion of Equator Prize winners and SGP grantees focus conservation efforts on curbing wildlife poaching and reducing human-wildlife conflict, effectively integrating environment and development priorities.

Sustainable forest management

Monks Community Forest, Cambodia.* In response to widespread deforestation, the monks of Samraong Pagoda acquired legal protection of this 18,261 ha evergreen forest in northwest Cambodia, established patrol teams, demarcated forest boundaries, and raised environmental awareness among local communities. The monks developed unique approaches to law enforcement based on Buddhist principles, demonstrating the power of linking conservation with traditional beliefs. Because of their role in Khmer society as spiritual leaders, the involvement of monks brings legitimacy to forest protection and serves as a powerful deterrent to forest crime. A co-management committee of villagers, government authorities, and NGOs has been developed to manage what is now Cambodia's largest community forest.

Wetlands management

Ol Sepik I Lukautim Wara Na PukPuk, Papua New Guinea.* In its work with 50 communities along the Sepik River, this initiative has transformed the local economy and wetland health. Previously, villagers indiscriminately destroyed crocodile nest sites through hunting, agriculture, or as part of land ownership disputes. The initiative instituted a program in which local crocodile egg collectors following specified conservation guidelines receive a guaranteed return from a commercial crocodile egg retailer. The combination of egg collection and crocodile farming to produce high-quality skins has doubled the annual income in participating communities, all while raising the awareness of wetland value and stressing the cultural and ecological importance of crocodiles.

Mountain ecosystem management

Asociación de Trabajadores Autónomos San Rafael, Tres Cruces y Yurac Rumi (ASARATY), Ecuador. ASARATY brings together indigenous Quichua-Puruhâe communities in the central Ecuadorian Andes to sustainably manage 8,000 ha of montane grassland adjacent to the Sangay National Park. The association works to conserve local ecosystems by promoting low-impact livelihood activities. Recognizing that ecosystem degradation was resulting from intensive agriculture and grazing practices, ASARATY has promoted innovative ways to use local resources, including sustainable alpaca rearing and ecotourism. By generating sustainable income sources for the communities' members, the initiative has helped to conserve this critical grassland reserve and mountain watershed.

Protection of threatened species

Tmatboey Community Protected Area Committee, Cambodia. The plains of Preah Vihear support 50 species on the IUCN Red List, including the world's largest breeding populations of the Giant Ibis and White-Shouldered Ibis. Tmatboey Community Protected Area Committee, in partnership with the Wildlife Conservation Society, has developed a community-based monitoring scheme in which local residents are paid a small fee for reporting and monitoring nests of endangered species, rather than selling the eggs on the thriving black market operating on the Thailand-Laos border. This approach has been remarkably successful – generating wins for ecosystem conservation and reducing poverty for 236 families, including many from the Kui minority ethnic group.

Natural resource scarcity and land tenure insecurity are major drivers globally of conflict and violence. Equator Prize winners and SGP grantees show that indigenous peoples and local community groups are not just effective stewards of biodiversity and ecosystems, but also often leaders in building institutions for peace and justice. Many winners and grantees work to ensure that traditionally marginalized groups have equal access to justice, and that decision-making on resource management is effective, accountable, transparent, and free from corruption. A good number also work in the area of conflict resolution and peace-building, including normalizing post-conflict zones and resolving protracted resource conflicts. By working to ensure that common pool resources are managed effectively, these groups often become standard-bearers for local good governance.

Equal access to justice

Timu ya Rasilimali ya Jamii ya Ujamaa, Tanzania. This initiative works across northern Tanzania to secure land and resource rights for pastoralist, agro-pastoralist, and hunter-gatherer communities, many of whom are negatively affected by the existence of the country's large protected areas. The group's approach has capitalized on Tanzania's village land legislation, which allows communities to develop by-laws for their customary lands. By guiding socially marginalized groups through the arduous process of securing land rights, the NGO has secured several landmark agreements, including the legal demarcation of the first village for hunter-gatherers in Tanzania. The initiative serves as both an 'early warning' system for communities on unfair land legislation and provides communities with a direct voice in legislative processes.

Representation in resource governance

Chunoti Co-Management Committee, Bangladesh. The committee protects the once-degraded Chunoti Wildlife Sanctuary through patrols and the reinvestment of ecotourism revenues into conservation activities. Women-led community patrol groups now monitor the forest to prevent illegal logging and poaching. Village conservation forums (VCFs) have been established for all of the forest and wetland-dependent communities living around Chunoti Wildlife Sanctuary. There are currently 60 VCFs that channel the collective interests of 48,913 people. The VCFs feed into two people's forums where larger organizational considerations and resource governance issues are addressed. These strong institutions empower local constituents to influence decisions at both the local level and at the landscape level, creating equitable systems of natural resource management.

Normalizing post-conflict zones

Consorcio Interinstitucional para una Agricultura Sostenible En Ladera (CIPASLA), Colombia. The Department of Cauca in southern Colombia has suffered from years of armed guerilla conflict, which has left a struggling local economy and high levels of poverty in its wake. CIPASLA, a consortium of over 30 local organizations and government agencies, has worked since 1993 to make local agriculture more profitable by introducing high-value crops and encouraging businesses such as dairy processing, poultry raising, and fish farming. The consortium also works to overcome the disruption caused by years of conflict by providing youth with vocational training and apprenticeships. This strategy that has reduced both out-migration and the number of young men conscripted as guerillas.

Resolving protracted resource conflicts

Cellule d'Appui à la Conservation et aux Initiatives de Développement Durable (CACID), Cameroon. In order to rehabilitate the Waza Logone floodplain, CACID worked to resolve conflicts among farmers, fisherfolk, pastoralists, and protected area authorities over access to the floodplain's natural resources. Based on interviews and surveys, CACID concluded that traditional methods used to settle conflicts tended to favor settled communities and the owners of fishing canals at the expense of the pastoralists. To address this imbalance, the project intervened on behalf of pastoralists, working through customary institutions to mediate resolutions that would be accepted by all parties. Often this involved establishing new transit corridors for pastoralists through settled lands, terms that were agreed through exhaustive discussions with all stakeholders.

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Equator Prize winners and SGP grantees exemplify what partnerships for the SDGs can mean at the local level, demonstrating their transformative power when carried out effectively. Almost all Equator Prize winners and SGP grantees have used partnerships to advance their work, and few would have reached their scale without multi-level and multi-sector partnerships. Partners are enlisted for a number of different purposes including finance, technical support, technology provision, market access, and outreach capacity. Common among winners and grantees are partnerships that facilitate local access to regional, national and international markets. Partnerships have not been limited to the non-governmental and public sector; many communities have forged mutually beneficial and equitable relationships with private sector partners as well.

NGO partnerships

Organización de Manejo y Conservación (OMYC), Guatemala. Uaxactún is an archaeological site in the heart of the Maya Biosphere Reserve, popular with tourists for its ancient ruins. Its 168 mestizo and indigenous families subsist primarily on non-timber forest products such as edible fruits, gum resin, and palm leaves. Local management of forest resources over the past 80 years has complemented conservation efforts, leading to a productive partnership between the community and Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS). OMYC manages resource extraction within an 83,559-ha forest concession. Concession management is supported by WCS, which also provides support on sustainable use of non-timber forest products, ecotourism ventures, minimal-impact timber use, fire prevention, and conservation of game species.

Private sector partnerships

Carnaúba Viva, Brazil. Working with the indigenous people of the Jaguaribe-Açu territory, Carnaúba Viva has enhanced supply and demand for local carnauba tree derivatives in order to underpin conservation efforts and improve local livelihoods. Technical training in improved pruning, reforestation, and in-vitro seed cultivation has boosted productivity of local producers. The organization also connects producers to bigger markets through partnerships with key private sector actors such as Petrobras, a Brazilian multinational energy company. Carnúba Viva sources sustainably harvested carnauba tree fibers to produce steam transmission line coverings. The carnauba fiber offers a more durable, sustainable, and cost-effective alternative to the aluminum coverings previously used by Petrobras.

Research partnerships

Kerala Kani Community Welfare Trust, India. The trust is the result of an innovative partnership between the indigenous Kani people and a private institute that has developed a medicinal product based on traditional knowledge. Research into local use of the Arogyapacha plant (Trichopus zeylanicus) for its anti-fatigue properties revealed potential pharmaceutical applications. A long process of ethnobotanical, phytochemical, pharmacological, and toxicological research by a local research institute led to the development of a licensed herbal drug called 'Jeevani'. Revenues from the license to manufacture the drug and royalties from its sale have been divided between the institute and the Kani community.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships

Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program (TKCP), Papua New Guinea.* TKCP manages the first community conservation area in the country, an area that spans 78,729 ha and protects diverse endemic species including the Huon tree kangaroo. The initiative represents the first time that the area's diverse indigenous communities have come together to advance a shared conservation and sustainable livelihoods agenda. The organization has partnered with the private sector and the government on a conservation livelihoods program and a coffee harvesting project that has brought in more than US$75,000 for local farmers and their families. The success of the project derives from both local-level collaboration and powerful multi-stakeholder partnerships among communities, government, research organizations, and the private sector.

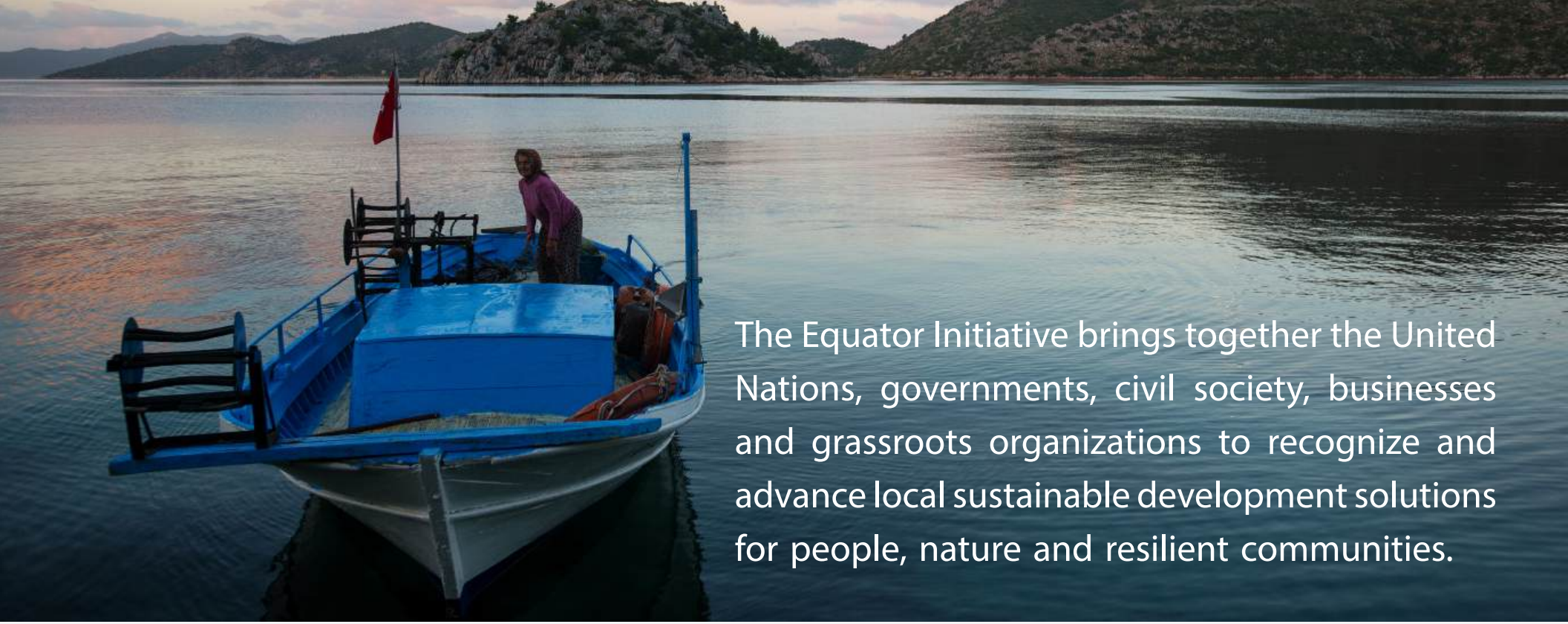
CONCLUSIONS

The diverse Equator Prize winners and SGP grantees represent a groundswell of innovation at the local level, as indigenous peoples and local communities mobilize to address the pressing environmental and development challenges of our time. The initiatives featured in this publication represent just a fraction of those that have been recognized by the Equator Initiative over the past 15 years and by the UNDP-Implemented GEF Small Grants Programme over the past 25 years. These groups, many of whom have stewarded their environments for generations, are confronted daily by the impacts of biodiversity loss and climate change. They are also often located in remote rural areas where public services have been neglected, and have often been adversely affected by policies that grant concessions to multinational extractive industries.

These communities face problems that span social, cultural, economic, ecological, and political realms. Because of the complex nature of these challenges, indigenous peoples and local communities are often at the forefront of creating locally adapted, holistic solutions to enhance quality of life, conserve biodiversity, and promote social equality. In other words, these groups provide a tangible example of what it means to promote integrated development solutions across the Sustainable Development Goals.

It is no coincidence that Equator Prize winners and SGP grantees highlighted here exemplify sustainable development solutions for all 17 of the Global Goals. At the Equator Initiative and SGP, we find that the local initiatives we work with deliver benefits across the 2030 Agenda, often developing innovative strategies that address five or more SDGs. For these communities, 'sustainable development' is not an abstract concept, it is an essential strategy to meet their basic needs.

To deliver the Sustainable Development Goals, we must build linkages between this locally grounded action, national policies, and international priorities. The Equator Initiative and SGP work in this space, supporting prize winners and grantees to liaise with local and national governments, as well as NGOs and intergovernmental organizations. We believe that in order to create transformational change, we must develop enabling policy environments that empower initiatives such as those featured in this publication to create innovative, locally-adapted solutions for the Global Goals.



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.

EQUATOR INITIATIVE 15YEARS

Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

gef

SGP The GEF Small Grants Programme 25 YEARS

UNDP

Empowered lives. Resilient nations.

Equator Initiative
Sustainable Development Cluster
Bureau for Policy and Programme Support
United Nations Development Programme
304 East 45th Street, 6th Floor
New York, NY 10017, USA

Tel: +1 646.781.4023
E-mail: info@equatorinitiative.org
Web: **www.equatorinitiative.org**