Equator Initiative

In this issue of Between the Lines, we are pleased to announce the winners of the Equator Prize 2004 and carry news of activities undertaken by the Equator Initiative since the start of 2004.

The winners of the Equator Prize 2004 - and the nominees as a whole - represent some of the most exciting work being undertaken anywhere in the world on the topic of poverty reduction and biodiversity conservation. Over the past months, we have come to know their work better and have been continually amazed at just how powerful their vision of community action can be. We are very pleased to be able to bring their stories to you in this issue of Between the Lines. We welcome your comments and thoughts on their excellent work.

Equator Prize 2004 Winners Announced
Seven communities, drawn from a pool of 26 outstanding finalists, are announced as winners of the Equator Prize 2004
Read more>>

Statement by the Secretary-General
UN Secretary-General Kofi A. Annan celebrates the winners of the Equator Prize 2004 with a formal statement
Read more>>

The Community Kampung at CBD COP7 in Malaysia
The Community Kampung serves as a platform for local voices at the CBD COP7 in Kuala Lumpur
Read more>>

German Partnership Produces Exciting New York Events
Read more>>

A member of Colombian Equator Prize 2004 finalists, "Red de Mujeres Productoras y Comercializadoras de Plantas Medicinales," collecting the plant species used in their medicinal preparations.
Equator Prize 2004 Winners Announced!
Seven winners of Equator Prize 2004 selected from over 340 nominations from 66 nations.

The winners of the Equator Prize 2004 were announced during a special 520-person gala ceremony held on 19 February - at the close of the Seventh Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) - in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. They were selected from 26 finalist projects, which were themselves chosen from a total of 340 nominations from 66 tropical nations. The ceremony itself was an exciting and rich event that exemplified the spirit of the Equator Prize.

In recognition of their efforts for poverty reduction and biodiversity conservation, the winners are:

- **Proyecto Nasa** - Colombia
- **Comunidad Indígena de Nuevo San Juan Parangaricutiro** - Mexico
- **Genetic Resource, Energy, Ecology and Nutrition (GREEN) Foundation** - India
- **Bunaken National Park Management Advisory Board (BNMAB) and Bunaken Concerned Citizen’s Forum (FMPTNB)** - Indonesia
- **Rufiji Environment Management Project** - Tanzania
- **Torra Conservancy** - Namibia
- **Sociedade Civil Mamiraú** - Brazil (for work in conjunction with a UNESCO World Heritage Site)

In his message to the winners, the UN Secretary-General, Kofi A. Annan, said that the stories behind the Equator Prize “showed the extraordinary passion, dedication and courage that grassroots organizations bring to issues of water, energy, health, agriculture and biodiversity.”

Similarly, Mark Malloch Brown, UNDP Administrator, emphasized the importance of the Prize, saying, “The finalists for the Equator Prize 2004, and the countless communities and grassroots groups engaged in similar work around the world, are at the forefront of efforts to forge a more sustainable future for our planet.”

He also explained the critical role these communities play in advancing sustainable development. “They demonstrate how partnerships between individuals, communities, governments, and civil society can reap huge dividends for both local livelihoods and the environment. They also offer us outstanding examples of the many ways in which local people throughout the world are taking on the challenge of achieving the Millennium Development Goals community by community.”

Achim Steiner, Director General of IUCN - The World Conservation Union, set the upbeat tone for the evening with his opening remarks. Eminent speakers included Hamdallah Zedan, Executive Secretary of the CBD; Alvaro Umaña, Head of UNDP’s Energy and Environment Group; and Professor A.K. Zakri, Director of the Institute of Advanced Studies at the United Nations University. On hand to present the awards to the winners were the Malaysian Minister for Science, Technology and Environment, Y.B Dato’ Seri Law Hieng Ding, and Nicol David, UNDP Goodwill Ambassador for Malaysia and world renowned squash player.

Each of the Equator Prize finalists demonstrated outstanding success in reducing poverty through conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. This particular focus is an increasing area of interest in the fight to achieve the ambitious development targets laid out in the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Prior to the ceremony, representatives of the 26 finalist communities shared the lessons of their experiences through the “Community Kampung” - an innovative forum for local-local and local-global dialogue that was located at the heart of the Conference venue. This unique dialogue space was a strong focal point for community voices throughout the course of this critical international meeting. >>

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The “Community Kampung” at CBD COP7
An innovative dialogue space at the 7th Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity draws community delegates from around the world.

One of the most exciting venues at CBD COP7 was an innovative dialogue space called the Community Kampung. The Kampung was designed to support local voices at the COP7 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, which lasted from February 9 to February 20, 2004. The space was inspired by the success of the Community Park at the World Parks Congress and the Community Kraal at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg.

Designed to highlight successful efforts in sustainable development and to act as a forum for local community members, the Kampung enabled a productive dialogue between grassroots participants and international leaders. Thanks to the central location of the Kampung as well as the beauty of the conference venue, presentations continually drew a diverse crowd of professionals from all over the world. Attendees explored the links between community actions, biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction, which resulted in productive discussions where all felt free to raise issues that were of both local and global importance.

![Participants in the Community Kampung enjoy a moment of laughter after a long day of sharing, discussions, and dialogue.](image)

Participants exchanged their visions for the Community Kampung - which takes its name from the Bahasa Malay word for “village”- in their native languages, and outlined their expectations and understanding of the space. Sharing, education, and power were some of the most commonly expressed themes.

As finalists arrived, an atmosphere of excitement and communion prevailed. Struggling with names from distant and unfamiliar parts of the globe, each finalist donned a nametag and proceeded to share information about their home and their respective organizations.

Equator Prize 2004 Winner Profile - Mexico

**Comunidad Indigena de Nuevo San Juan Parangaricutiro**

This indigenous collective owns 11,000 hectares of forest in the richly biodiverse state of Michoacán. For 20 years, the community has maintained a successful eco-enterprise based on sustainable forestry, creation of eco-friendly timber products, ecotourism, agroforestry and wildlife management.

Throughout the course of the Kampung, interpreters assisted those less familiar with English and soon everyone engaged in lively exchange. The sheer diversity of languages represented by the delegates was overwhelming, yet posed little barrier to communication.

By including items brought by the community delegates, such as traditional mats and handicrafts, the space reflected the diversity and union of the Equator Prize finalists. The Kampung embodied the coming together of people, their imagination and their commitment to a community of sharing and learning.

Throughout the three-week long Kampung, numerous training sessions and workshops took place. The Local Global Leaders’ Dialogue was one of the most engaging and productive events. The dialogue brought together local community leaders from around the world with the heads of international conservation NGOs and with leading development practitioners. The degree of frank exchange that these conversations allowed was unprecedented. Local participants were excited to share their views and concerns with such global leaders such as Leonard Good of the GEF, Steve McCormick of The Nature Conservancy, Walter Reid of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, and David Suzuki of the Suzuki Foundation.

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Equator Prize 2004 Winner Profile - Colombia

**Proyecto Nasa**

This project endeavors to revive the Colombian region where the Paez people live, through a variety of programs designed to promote community betterment and natural conservation. In the face of ongoing conflict, these indigenous people use environmental education, traditional medicine and agroforestry techniques to achieve their goals.
**Equator Prize 2004 Awards Ceremony**

The Equator Prize 2004 Awards Ceremony celebrates the winners of this international prize and draws community delegates and international leaders to a stunning event at the close of the CBD COP7.

If one word could describe the Equator Prize 2004 Awards Ceremony, it would be “diversity.” Over 500 people from all over the world, dressed in strikingly beautiful traditional dress, participated in the event as both finalists for the prize and as guests at the gala dinner. The evening began as community representatives and international delegates from around the world entered the lobby of the Legend Hotel to the accompaniment of traditional Gamelan melodies. The reception hall displayed the Equator Initiative booth that mapped all the locations and descriptions of the 26 finalists. The finalists took great pleasure in pointing out their homes to their colleagues.

Woven palm leaf decorations made by the Orang Asli, (indigenous people of Malaysia), adorned the walls of the front hall and swept into the Grand Ballroom. The tables were colorfully decorated with Malaysian tablecloths, and a sumptuous meal added to the atmosphere and excitement.

The Awards Ceremony began with an opening dance by the Akar Umbi dance troupe followed by an introduction by the Master of Ceremonies, Dr. Charles McNeill of UNDP. Dr. McNeill introduced Achim Steiner, the Director-General of IUCN, to speak on behalf of the Equator Initiative Partners. Mr. Steiner spoke of the event about to unfold and invited the finalist communities by region to join him on stage. As the communities proudly stood before a multitude of high level officials and delegates, the Sri Lankan finalists lit a traditional lamp to mark the opening of the awards ceremony.

**Equator Prize 2004 Winner Profile - Tanzania**

**Rufiji Environment Management Project (REMP)**

Since 1998, this project has made headway in its goal of promoting long term conservation through wise use of the lower Rufiji forests, woodlands and wetlands. Several of the villages with which the group works are adjacent to the Selous Game Reserve - a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The community members then joined the rest of the crowded room to commence the first course of the traditional Chinese meal that was enjoyed with chopsticks, forks, or by hand. Each community member joined tables accompanying CBD conference delegates such as GEF CEO and Chairman Leonard Good, Assistant Deputy Minister Karen Brown of Canada, NGO leaders like John Herity of IUCN and government officials such as the Malysian Minister of Science, Technology and Environment Dato’ Seri Law Hieng Din, who was also the host of the COP7 meeting.

Dr. Alvaro Umaña, Head of the Energy and Environment Group, gave the Keynote address on behalf of UNDP. His remarks were followed by a cultural performance from the Mah Meri Group.

Dr. Hamdallah Zedan, Executive Secretary of the CBD, took the stage to invite the Malaysian Minister of Science, Technology, and the Environment to join him in presenting the certificates of Achievement to the finalists.

As the 2004 finalists came up on stage the Malaysian Equator Prize 2002 winners from Uma Bawang, Saging Anyi and Jok Jau Evong, presented each finalist with a palm garland before they received their certificate from the Malaysian Minister.

After receiving their certificates, the finalists took a moment to present a statement they prepared together in the days before the ceremony. Each statement began with a shout of “UNITY!” and was followed by heart-felt messages presented by community representatives in many different languages.

Between the presentations and speeches guests had an opportunity to mingle and dine with their neighbors. Community leaders were afforded the opportunity to meet the heads of NGOs and together they bridged the divide between global and local action. **(Continued page 6)**
Secretary-General Marks Equator Prize 2004
UN Secretary-General Kofi A. Annan comments upon the Equator Prize 2004 and the outstanding work of the finalists and winning communities.

Transcript of the Official Statement by the UN Secretary-General

"At first glance, the dream of a world free from poverty, disease and despair may appear to be wildly optimistic. After all, some 60 countries in various parts of the world actually grew poorer in the 1990s. But in some areas, the developing world has seen enormous progress: in raising life expectancy, and in reducing illiteracy and infant mortality. Building on these gains, the international community is now engaged in a new, coherent and eminently feasible attack on global poverty: the effort to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The goals range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS, and from providing universal primary education to ensuring environmental sustainability - all by the target date of 2015. They are simple yet powerful objectives that every man and woman, from Kuala Lumpur to Kathmandu, can easily support and understand. And they have unprecedented political backing: never before have such concrete goals been formally endorsed by rich and poor countries alike, and never before have the United Nations, World Bank, International Monetary Fund and all the other principal arms of the international system come together behind the same development agenda.

Any gains that have been made thus far would not have been possible without the thousands of community organizations throughout the world who are strongly committed to the fight against poverty. The stories behind this year’s Equator Prize competition show the extraordinary passion, dedication and courage that grassroots organizations are bringing to the issues that made up the “WEHAB” framework for the World Summit on Sustainable Development - water, energy, health, agriculture, and biodiversity and ecosystem services. I would like to acknowledge the hundreds of outstanding communities from throughout the developing world that were nominated for the prize, as well as the 26 finalists, for their leadership in striving towards the MDGs on a local scale, and for giving life to the Equator Initiative partnership. This burgeoning global movement for poverty reduction and biodiversity conservation has brought local successes to international attention, and has ensured that community and grassroots experiences will inform our shared global effort to achieve sustainable development and improve the human condition."

Equator Prize 2004 Winners Announced!
(continued)

>> Both the Community Kampung and the Awards Ceremony are profiled in greater depth in this issue of Between the Lines.

"We believe that the convergence of local and global leaders at the Community Kampung during this global biodiversity meeting has served to put community interests and community-centered development at the forefront of the international conservation agenda," says Sean Southey, Manager of UNDP’s Equator Initiative, who also finally concluded that "the lessons these communities have identified will form the basis for the Equator Initiative’s continuing work." □

Equator Prize 2004 - Distinguished Finalists

ITOH Community Graziers Common Initiative Group (Cameroon); Guassa-Menz Natural Resource Management Initiative (Ethiopia); Pastoralist Integrated Support Programme (PISP) (Kenya); Ekuri Initiative (Nigeria); Ecole Instrument de Paix (Niger); KAFRED (Uganda); Chibememe Earth Healing Association (CHIEHA) (Zimbabwe); Ngata Toro Community (Indonesia); MESCOT (Malaysia); Conservation Melanesia (Papua New Guinea); KAMICYDI (Philippines); Committee for People’s Rights (Sri Lanka); Pred Nai Community Forestry Group (Thailand); CABI (Bolivia); Red de Mujeres Productoras y Comercializadores de Plantas Medicinales (Colombia); Fundacion Pro Reserva Forestal Monte Alto (Mexico); ASARATY (Ecuador); Garifuna Emergency Committee (Honduras); Junta de Manejo Participativo Pesquero de Puerto Cayo (Ecuador)
Equator Prize 2004 Awards Ceremony
(Continued)

The meeting of grassroots voices and international leaders gave both sides a deeper understanding of the mutual challenges they face, and of the powerful changes they can make together.

The Awards Ceremony dinner brought together delegates and community participants for an evening of celebration, while highlighting the tremendous innovations for poverty reduction and biodiversity conservation being undertaken at the community level.

The ceremony continued with a speech by Professor A. H. Zakri, Director of UNU-IAS, who spoke on behalf of the international Jury that selected the winners. He elucidated the process of selection and the judging criteria while explaining the challenges they faced with such a strong group of candidates. Professor A. H. Zakri then introduced Nicol David, a top ranked squash player and UNDP Goodwill Ambassador from Malaysia, invited to announce the winners.

After a brief introduction of her work with the UN, Nicol David called up each winner as she gave a description of the community’s project. On stage to present the awards were Randy Curtis of The Nature Conservancy, Karen Brown from the Canadian Government, Julia Kaiser from BMZ, Janet Boston of TVE, Kristen Walker from Conservation International and Wardie Leppan from IDRC.

In an emotional closing, Equator Prize 2002 Laureate, Benson Venegas (Talamancan Initiative), spoke of the positive impact that the Equator Prize has had on his community and the other winning communities over the last two years. He congratulated the 2004 finalists who joined him on stage and passed around the Sri Lankan lamp in a symbolic gesture of unity. The night ended with more music, celebration, and dancing.

During the Awards Ceremony, speaker Charles McNeill of UNDP noted that “the nominations for the Equator Prize 2004 reveal the types of community-led partnerships that are best able to tackle the most pressing development challenges of our time and show that the targets set out in the Millennium Development Goals are truly attainable.”

The Community Kampung at CBD COP7 (continued)

In order to better address issues important to the community members, the finalists drafted a statement that expressed the communal position on a variety of important topics. Among the subjects addressed were: community-based conservation and resource use, ecosystem management, capacity building, technology transfer, protected area management and people displacement, information and traditional knowledge sharing, and ecologically sustainable business.
"Focus on Nature" Photo Exhibit Graces UN Headquarters

Equator Initiative partners with the Government of Germany, GEO Magazine, and the Wildlife Conservation Society to host photo exhibit at UN Headquarters.

To mark this year’s celebration of Earth Day - celebrated annually on April 22nd - the Equator Initiative and the United Nations hosted an exhibition of photographs that captures the beauty and diversity of the natural environment. This stunning display was launched during a special ceremony at UN Headquarters and included images from the grassroots that show how local people and places cope with a changing and dynamic environment.

Composed of photographs from the renowned GEO Magazine, the “Focus on Nature” exhibit highlights the complexity of our species’ relationship with the biosphere. The display was organized and sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Equator Initiative, the German Mission to the UN, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), GEO Magazine, and the Bronx Zoo-based Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS).

“Focus on Nature” was officially opened by the Honorable Kerstin Müller, “Focus on Nature” in the German Mission for Foreign Affairs; Zéphirin Diabré, UNDP Associate Administrator; Alvaro Umaña, Head of UNDP’s Energy and Environment Group; and Ruth Eichhorn, Director of Photography at GEO Magazine; the exhibit runs until 8th June in the visitor lobby of the UN in New York City.

The opening event concluded with a ribbon cutting and a reception for guests from associated organizations and the general public.

Celebration of the International Day for Biological Diversity at the Permanent Mission of Germany to the UN

On May 19th - in collaboration with Germany and other partners - UNDP and the Equator Initiative organized a Global Dialogue on Biodiversity and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Featuring renowned experts - Mark Malloch Brown, Prof. Jeffrey Sachs, Dr. Thomas Lovejoy, Dr. Mark Plotkin, Dr. Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, and Prof. Manfred Niehuis – the dialogue explored the linkages between local community action and achievement of the MDGs. In his opening remarks, Ambassador Gunter Pleuger highlighted the essential relationships between poverty reduction and biodiversity conservation. During the reception that followed, Equator Prize 2004 Awards were presented to three communities. Full information about this exciting event will be in the next issue of Between the Lines.

Upcoming Events!

The coming months will see a range of diverse events being supported and led by the Equator Initiative. These range from participation in the Regional Biodiversity Forum in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (9-11 June), hosting regional workshops in Latin America and Asia, and participating in the upcoming IUCN World Conservation Congress. All of the Equator Initiative’s upcoming events are described in detail on our website. Please visit the site and let us know if you’d like to get involved in any of the project’s coming activities.

Equator Initiative Partners

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IDRC - International Development Research Centre
IUCN - The World Conservation Union
The Nature Conservancy
Television Trust for the Environment
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Further Information

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Guests at the launch of the Equator Initiative / Germany / GEO Magazine “Focus on Nature” photo exhibition view the stunning images following the opening ceremony.