



CBD

Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

MESSAGE

From

Mr. Ahmed Djoghlaf, Executive Secretary
to the Equator Prize finalists

22 May 2007
International Day for Biological Diversity



Biodiversity and Climate Change

As a proud partner of the Equator Initiative, it is with great pleasure that I congratulate the 25 finalists for the Equator Prize. These finalists, whose projects range from ecotourism and community fishery cooperatives to sustainable crocodile-egg harvesting and eco-agriculture, underscore the importance of thinking globally and acting locally. By helping to lay the foundation for a global movement of local successes that collectively make a significant contribution to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), they also serve to highlight the increasing global recognition of the strong links between poverty and the environment. It is with much anticipation that we look forward to the awards ceremony to be held on World Environment Day on 5 June in Germany.

Since its establishment the Equator Initiative has made a significant contribution in advancing the biodiversity agenda and recognizing the local level contribution made in the field in promoting the objectives of the Convention and emulating good examples. This unique contribution is more than ever required in light of the biodiversity challenges facing mankind and the need to redouble efforts to achieving the 2010 biodiversity target. As 2010 has been declared by UNGA resolution 61/203 as the International Year on Biodiversity, I look forward to another significant contribution of the Equator Initiative in achieving the objective of this international event.





Equator Initiative Between the Lines

Issue 11 >> March 2007

In this issue . . .

Announcing Equator Prize 2006 Finalists!

Twenty-five community based initiatives have been selected as the Equator Prize finalists



Members of COPRONAT in Senegal

The Equator Prize Selection Process

Get the behind the scenes look at the Equator Prize 2006 selection process.



Butterfly farming at Amani Reserve in Tanzania

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

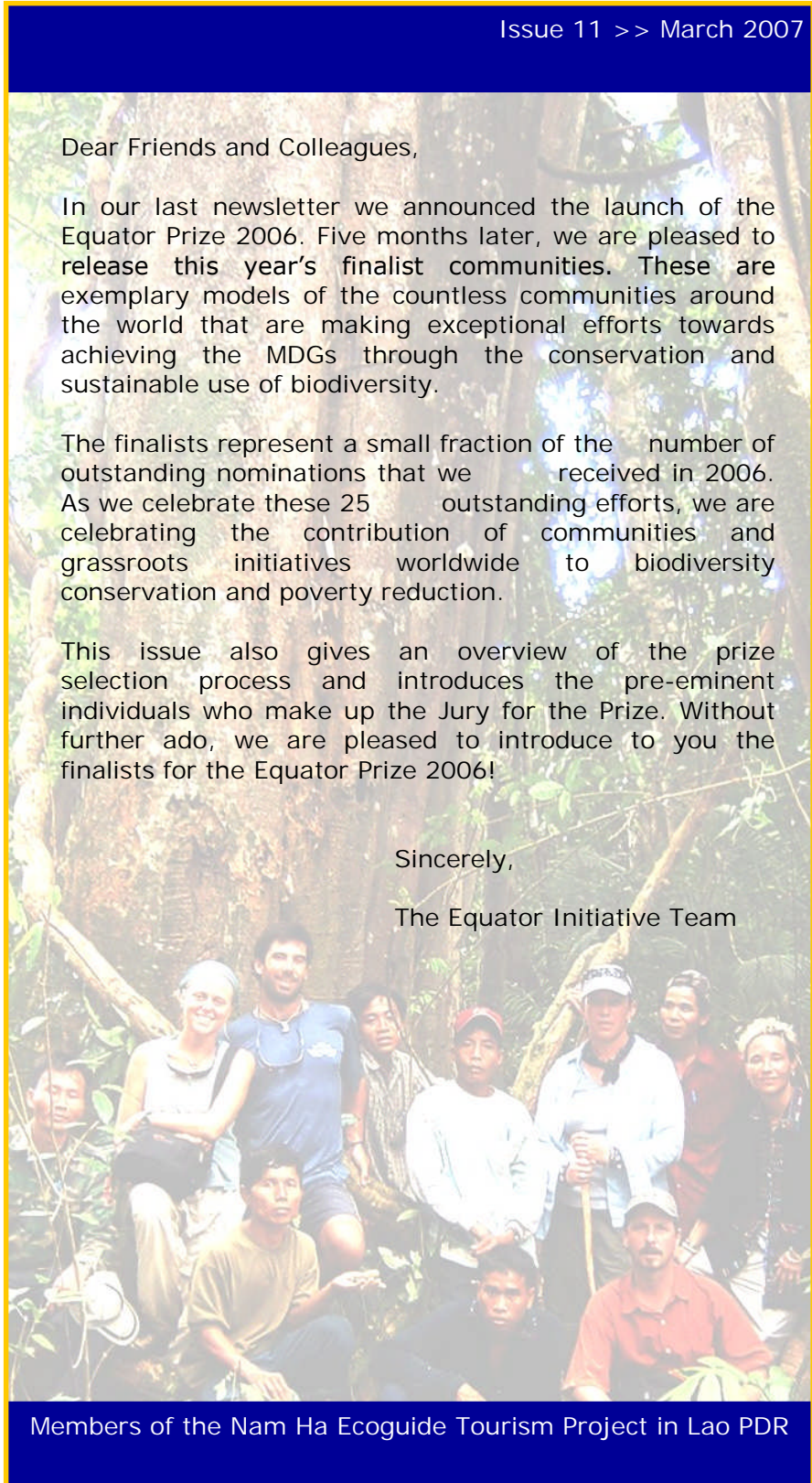
In our last newsletter we announced the launch of the Equator Prize 2006. Five months later, we are pleased to release this year's finalist communities. These are exemplary models of the countless communities around the world that are making exceptional efforts towards achieving the MDGs through the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

The finalists represent a small fraction of the number of outstanding nominations that we received in 2006. As we celebrate these 25 outstanding efforts, we are celebrating the contribution of communities and grassroots initiatives worldwide to biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction.

This issue also gives an overview of the prize selection process and introduces the pre-eminent individuals who make up the Jury for the Prize. Without further ado, we are pleased to introduce to you the finalists for the Equator Prize 2006!

Sincerely,

The Equator Initiative Team



Members of the Nam Ha Ecoguide Tourism Project in Lao PDR

INTRODUCING THE FINALISTS FOR THE EQUATOR PRIZE 2006

The Equator Prize 2006 finalists are in – and we couldn't be more excited! Selected from over 310 nominations, the 25 finalists stand out as exemplary initiatives for poverty reduction and the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. It was no simple task to choose amongst the scores of inspiring and qualified community projects. The sheer number of praiseworthy endeavors presented quite an administrative challenge as well as an encouraging indication that grassroots initiatives and community-level action are making significant and important strides towards reducing poverty, conserving biodiversity and achieving the MDGs.

Below you will find the official list of the 25 Equator Prize 2006 finalists as well as a summary of each finalist's work. Within this eclectic group you will find communities engaged in a wide variety of poverty reduction and biodiversity conservation activities. There are the marine life conservationists who are actively protecting crocodiles, crabs, octopuses, and a variety of fish species. Others have been engaged in promoting sustainable businesses involving microfinance, processed foods, and agriculture. Habitat restoration has touched wetland, forest, and grassland alike. The summaries give a glimpse into the breadth and uniqueness of this year's finalists. It is therefore with great pleasure that we announce the finalist communities and share some of the stories behind their exciting work.

AFRICA



Pole Pole Foundation/Kahuzi-Biega National Park Democratic Republic of the Congo

Amidst political turmoil and regional unrest, the Pole Pole Foundation has provided sanctuary for Kahuzi-Biega National Park's native animals and plants. Based in the park, the foundation has been a driving force in the local conservation

movement since its inception in 1992. This progressive initiative works closely with local communities through its carving programs 'poachers to artisans', environmental education, reintegration of displaced indigenous families, and reforestation efforts. A tree nursery provides seedlings for the reforestation project that has planted 426,000 trees since 1997 and supplies timber and firewood, as well as raw materials for traditional crafts.

Collectif des Groupements d'Interets

Economiques des Femmes pour la Protection de la Nature (COPRONAT)

Women's collective for the advancement of economic well-being and the protection of nature (COPRONAT)
Senegal

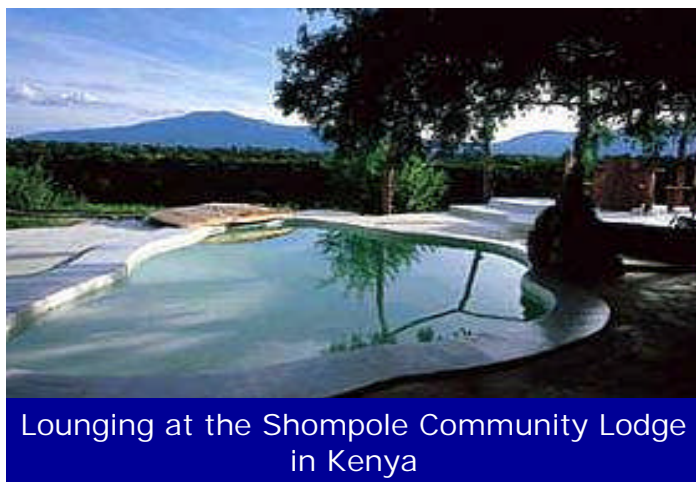
Since 1988, COPRONAT, a partnership between local communities and the Senegalese government, has protected the Popenguine Natural Reserve. This collective of women's groups in nine villages is

responsible for managing mangrove nurseries, reforestation, waste management, and environmental education. The group has made significant contributions towards restoring the mangrove ecosystem and preserving the biodiversity of the reserve and surrounding areas, affecting a total of 100 square kilometers. Their success has seen the progressive return of threatened jackal, mongoose, civet, gray duiker, patas monkey and bushbuck. Collective members benefit from access to micro-credit for income generating activities and butane gas as an alternative to fuel wood.

The Village of Andavadoaka Madagascar

Economic and environmental factors in Madagascar's village of Andavadoaka were threatening the local octopus population, putting a major strain on the village's traditional source of livelihood. In response, village leaders teamed up with marine conservationists to stabilize the species. Combining traditional knowledge with modern science, the two parties formulated a plan involving seasonal bans on octopus fishing. As a result of this project, the average octopus size and catch has increased steadily. The project has been so successful that nearly a dozen nearby villages have already replicated the model.





Lounging at the Shompole Community Lodge in Kenya

Shompole Community Trust Kenya

Since 1979, the Shompole Ranch, spanning over 62,000 hectares of Kenya's grasslands and savannahs, has preserved and restored the local environment. Re-emerging and thriving wetlands have attracted an increasing number of tourists. Revenue from ecotourism has been invested through the Shompole Community Trust in protecting and restoring the environment, as well as in funding healthcare services, education, water supply, and school fees. The trust, a legally recognized corporation, is owned by the Maasai people and addresses issues of socio-economic development on behalf of the community.
<http://www.shompole.com>

Pole des actions d'integration des droits humaines en Afrique (PACINDHA) African Center for the Integration of Human Rights (PACINDHA) Mali

In the Malian community of Ouelessebougou, the Detarium Microcarpum plant provides fuel wood, oil, and medicines, as well as being an important source of nutrition and income. In 2004, PACINDHA, in partnership with the community and local authorities, set out to restore the plant population, which had been endangered by overuse and bush fires. Community protection committees in 10 villages have since protected and restored 200 hectares of degraded Detarium Microcarpum. Sustainable harvests have provided income for women's cooperatives, children's school fees, agricultural tools and livestock.

Association Songtaab-Yalgré Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso's rural women's association, Songtaab-Yalgré, has been working to produce organic shea butter for export internationally for 12 years. The association now works with 11 villages and over 3,000 women, distributing income equally amongst members of the collective. As a result of this initiative, the income of 1140 rural women has tripled and nearly 20,000 shea nut trees are protected and managed without pesticides. The association devotes a portion of its resources to HIV/AIDS education and literacy training for women and youth.
www.songtaaba.net

Kipsaina Crane and Wetland Conservation Group Kenya

The Kipsaina Crane and Wetlands Conservation Group (KCWCG) formed in 1990 as a partnership of local communities to conserve and restore the Saiwa Swamp National Park in Kenya. Through protecting and restoring wetland areas, this initiative has ensured that neighbouring communities have access to a reliable and clean source of water year round. As a result of the conservation group's efforts, community members are now engaged in new types of business such as beekeeping, eco-tourism, and agro-forestry. These efforts have resulted in a fivefold increase in the grey crowned crane population as well as increased income from honey, fish, and produce sales.

Amani Nature Reserve Tanzania

The Amani Nature Reserve was founded in 1997 in the submontane forest ecosystem of the East Usambara Mountains. Communities resident in the reserve have worked with park officials to establish an ecotourism venture and encourage sustainable fish, butterfly, dairy, and land farming practices which have led to substantially higher production and income. Training on bio-intensive gardening, soil erosion, and sustainable forestry practices has also spread throughout the communities that live in the reserve. As stakeholders in the reserve's productive capacity, the communities earn a fifth of the revenue from the ecotourism venture and the Amani ecosystem remains stable and healthy.



ASIA AND THE PACIFIC



Field monitoring in Nam Ha, Lao PDR

Nam Ha Ecoguide Service Lao PDR

The Nam Ha National Protected Area hires and trains local residents as ecoguides and operators of village-based lodges and forest camps. Nam Ha guides and service providers monitor threats to biodiversity in the protected area and advise on appropriate levels and means to harvest forest-based resources. The members of the Ecoguide Service also prevent the sale of wildlife, as well as manage animal and plant sanctuaries in their villages. Additional income earned through the Ecoguide Service has been invested in medical services and rice supplies to fill seasonal shortages. The Ecoguide Service has also supported a Village Development Fund which has put in place clean water systems, footbridges, reservoirs and access roads.

Aharam Traditional Crops Producers' Company (TCPC) India

Aharam TCPC is an agro-biodiversity enterprise that works with marginal farmers and landless laborers to encourage the conservation of traditional crop diversity in Tamilnadu, India. Aharam's activities include the collection and cultivation of over 50 seed varieties for 15 species of traditional crops, the sustainable collection of 45 species of medicinal herbs and the provision of training in organic farming to local farmers. By facilitating access to new markets and marketing locally-produced and collected crops, Aharam has generated increased income for 150 farmer, artisan and self-help groups. This initiative has also contributed to the response to the 2004 tsunami by assisting survivors to produce high value goods and develop practices to reduce vulnerability to future disasters.

Pederasyon sa Nagkahiusang mga Mag-uuma nga Nanalipud ug Nagpasig-uli sa Kinaiyahan Inc.
(PENAGMANNAK)

The Federation of United Farmers People's Organization (PENAGMANNAK) Philippines

PENAGMANNAK, a federation of 17 community organizations, works to protect the Mt. Talinis - Twin Lakes Biodiversity Conservation Area. Through a comprehensive set of conservation initiatives, the local farmers are engaged in soil and water management while others community members help monitor and evaluate biodiversity in the surrounding forests. The establishment of a community-based wildlife sanctuary, home to thousands of endemic flying foxes, has been a notable success. A growing ecotourism industry has raised enough revenue to allow most of the local children to attend school.

Center for Empowerment and Resource Development (CERD) Philippines

In 1996, the Center for Empowerment and Resource Development (CERD) entered into partnership with the local village leaders in Hinatuan Bay to catalyze environmental conservation and economic development. The initiative has included the creation of seven fish sanctuaries, restoration of 117 hectares of mangroves, and successful lobbying for reform of local fishing law. As a result, the fish population has increased by nearly a third while average fish catches have increased by 50%. With these improvements to the fishery, the average income within the community has doubled.

<http://cerd.ph/>



Children benefiting from the CERD boat transport project in the Philippines



"If the students cannot come to the school...then the school should come to them" -Abul Hasanat Mohammed Rezwan, Executive Director of Shidhulai Swanivar Sangstha in Bangladesh

Shidhulai Swanirvar Sangstha Bangladesh

Shidhulai Swanirvar Sangstha uses Bangladesh's extensive river network to spread environmental education. Boats have been outfitted to travel from farm to farm bringing new technologies, information, strategies, and tools. Villagers have learned and implemented ways to avoid problems such as soil erosion, ground and water contamination, over-fishing, and habitat destruction. Access to this information has resulted in higher income which has enabled residents to pay their children's education expenses, gain access to better healthcare, and improve living conditions. The Shidhulai Swanirvar Sangstha reaches an estimated 87,000 families each year.

www.shidhulai.org

Phu My Lepironia Wetland Conservation Project Vietnam

The lepironia grasses that grow near Phu My Village are customarily woven into a variety of traditional handicrafts. These grasses comprise the last extensive remnant of lepironia grassland ecosystem of the Mekong river delta. To save the species as well as the community's most valuable resource, the Phu My Lepironia Wetland Conservation Project was born. Villagers have been enforcing a new model of lepironia harvesting, such that harvesting only the desirable grasses has replaced mass and indiscriminant cutting. Invasive weeds have also been targeted and eradicated. As a result of these new practices, the lepironia crop has grown significantly and the average income amongst the villagers has tripled.

Sepik Wetlands Management Initiative (SWMI) Papua New Guinea

Fire-related environmental degradation and unsustainable harvesting practices in the wetlands of the upper Sepik River in Papua New Guinea threatened the crocodile population, a valuable resource to local communities. In response, the communities partnered with the government, NGOs, and businesses to find a solution. SWMI established guidelines for the sustainable harvest of crocodile eggs, and oversees protective measures for nesting crocodiles and their habitat. These activities have led to a reassuring rise in the crocodile population as revenue from the sustainable harvest of crocodile skins and eggs provides valued income to the stakeholder communities.

Crab Bay Community Resource Management Initiative Vanuatu

The Malekula Island community launched the Crab Bay Community Resource Management Initiative in 2000 to halt the decline of the local marine ecosystem. With the closure of six hundred hectares of fishing area and the provision of village-based education in sustainable resource management, the initiative has successfully replenished the local land crab population. With over 90% of the community involved in the project, the number of crab burrows has increased eightfold and the number of Trochi (seashells) has grown fivefold in only two years. The revitalized local fishery supplies the community with food and the sale of surpluses has led to increased income which has gone largely towards children's school fees, and basic health services.



Members of the Crab Bay Community in Vanuatu

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Alimentos Nutri-Naturales Guatemala

The maya nut was once a staple food for the ancient Mayans but is threatened with extinction due to the spread of logging and conversion of land to agriculture. In Guatemala, women are using their traditional knowledge to process the maya nut into nutritious food and income. Since the project's inception, the community-based workers have helped to conserve 90,000 hectares of maya nut forests and to plant 150,000 new trees across Guatemala. Through a partnership with the local government, maya nut snacks will be distributed in schools as a healthy alternative to cookies at lunch time.

Federación Plurinacional de Turismo Comunitario del Ecuador (FEPTCE) Federation for Ecuadorian Community Tourism (FEPTCE) Ecuador

A partnership of sixty community-based initiatives composed of indigenous peoples, afro-Ecuadorians, and farmers, FEPTCE focuses on encouraging eco-friendly tourism. Since FEPTCE's establishment in 2002, participating communities have experienced an increased quality of life, gaining access to health services and education, increased employment, and public interest in biodiversity and agriculture. Communities have invested in reforestation and the protection of native flora and fauna, successfully protecting 25,000 hectares in order to use the region's biodiversity as a marketing tool to promote tourism. Conserving biodiversity has permitted the FEPTCE communities to diversify their economy, leading to added income and an improved standard of living.
www.turismocomunitario.ec



Scenic view from an FEPTCE community in Ecuador

Asociación para la Conservación de la Reserva Indígena BIOITZA The Association for the Protection of the Itzá Biosphere Guatemala



The Association for the Protection of the Itzá Biosphere (BIOITZA) is a non-profit organization owned by the Maya Itza, indigenous inhabitants of the forests of Petén, Guatemala. This indigenous association of 66 families protects the biodiversity of the 3,600 hectare BIOITZA reserve through income-generating activities such as the sustainable production of shampoos and soaps, and the processing of traditional medicinal plants. The organization also creates revenue by offering Spanish language classes to tourists and guided tours through its medicinal garden and surrounding areas of natural and cultural importance.
www.ecobioitza.org

Asociación para la Investigación y el Desarrollo Integral – AIDER Association for Integrated Development and Research – AIDER Peru

Working in partnership with 14 indigenous communities, AIDER has developed a community-based forest management plan for the Ucayali region in the Peruvian Amazon rainforest. The community-led conservation area covers 150,000 hectares of rainforest, a critical habitat for 21 species listed as endangered by the Peruvian government due to illegal extraction, hunting, and harmful commercial activities. Characterized by its participative, intercultural, and gender-balanced approach, AIDER strengthens the capacity of local communities to manage their natural heritage in a sustainable manner.
www.aider.com.pe

FrutaSã, Indústria e Comércio Exportação Ltda. FrutaSã, Industry and Trade Export Ltd. Brazil

FrutaSã is a joint conservation-business partnership venture owned by a local indigenous association and an NGO. FrutaSã is creating income for indigenous populations and small farmers through the sustainable extraction, marketing, and sales of native fruit pulps

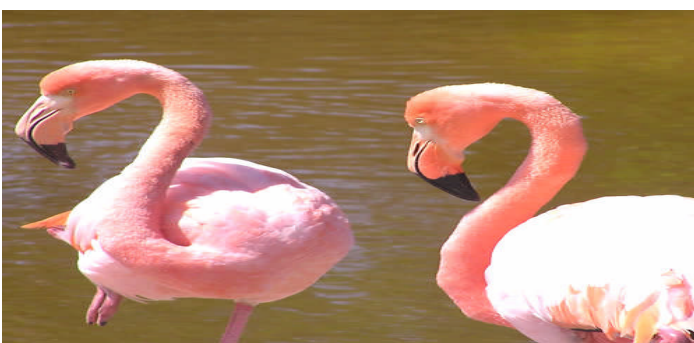
from the threatened Cerrado region of Brazil. The sustainable use of native fruits is helping stop the Cerrado from being completely converted to pasture and soy plantations. In addition to generating income for over 300 families in the region, FrutaSa has supervised the creation of a 160,000 hectare national park, and routinely lobbies the government for environmental public policies and rights for the local community.

Sociedad Cooperativa de Producción Pesquera "Pescadores de Vigía Chico y Cozumel"
Cooperative Fish Production Society "Fisherman of Vigía Chico and Cozumel"
 Mexico

Working together, these two fishing cooperatives promote the sustainable management of lobster fishing within the Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in the state of Quintana Roo, Mexico. A community trust fund, endowed by external donors, enables fishermen to buy more expensive lobster traps made out of concrete. Replacing traditional palm tree traps has helped conserve the endangered palm species. The trust fund also provides security to local fishermen and their families in times of financial difficulty and natural disasters such as hurricanes. Strategically involving all members of the cooperatives in decision-making has drastically decreased illegal and environmentally destructive fishing practices.

Asociación de Mujeres de Isabela "Pescado Azul"
Isabela Women's Association "Blue Fish"
 Ecuador

This women's cooperative on the Island of Isabela in the Galápagos Islands is providing jobs for unemployed women and sustainable economic alternatives for fishermen. Traditionally, the fishermen have relied on declining coastal sea cucumber, lobster, and shark populations for their livelihood. The Mujeres de Isabela association provides an alternative by creating a market



The birds of Isabela Island in the Galápagos



Seeing double in the Mexican village of Sian Ka'an

for tuna, a migratory species, which is processed, smoked and sold to tourists. The project also contributes to the conservation of the Galapagos by using guava wood, a destructive invasive species, to smoke the fish.

Community Tours Sian Ka'an (CTSK)
 Mexico

Community Tours Sian Ka'an (CTSK), Mayan for "where the sky is born," is a community-based, ecologically-sustainable tourism alliance of three Mayan cooperatives in the UNESCO Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve. By regulating the influx of tourists and providing high quality services, they have been able to raise their tour prices by 40% leading to increased community income with the least amount of environmental impact. CTSK is both financially and environmentally sustainable, estimating that tourism in Sian Ka'an attracts over USD \$5 million annually and dedicating 5% of its income to conserve the local ecosystem.

www.siankaantours.org

CoopeTárcoles R.L. – Cooperativa de Pescadores Artesanales de Tárcoles
Artisan Fishing Cooperative of Tárcoles
 Costa Rica

The first fishing cooperative in Central America to develop a Code of Responsible Fishing, CoopeTárcoles R.L. works to preserve local fishery customs in order to ensure the sustainability of fishing and conservation of sea life. Since 90% of the population in Tárcoles makes their living off the fishery, it is of utmost importance to maintain the viability of this resource. CoopeTárcoles provides a conservation education database for local fishermen to keep track of catches and monitor endangered species. They also work with various institutions to gain national recognition, and partner with hotels to provide guided tours of the fishing cooperative to promote a better understanding of local fishing practices.



EQUATOR PRIZE 2006: SELECTION PROCESS

Equator Prize 2006 Jury

The Equator Prize 2006 was officially launched on August 15, 2006. By the close of nominations on October 31st, over 310 worthy initiatives had been nominated for the prize. Here began the task of sifting through the nominations and picking out the best from a group of phenomenal alternatives.

To evaluate the nominations, the Equator Initiative recruited a forty-member volunteer Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) made up of experts in the fields of sustainable development, conservation, biodiversity, community development, and green business from around the globe. ([See a list of this year's TAC members](#)). After extensive deliberation the preliminary list of 25 finalists was decided.

The preliminary finalists were then verified for authenticity and fit with respect to the Equator Prize criteria. The verification process involved outreach through Equator Initiative partners, UN country offices, the references given along with each nomination, as well as to other trusted colleagues in the development network. Engaging with diverse opinions ensured that all those chosen as finalists were truly great examples of biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction.

The Equator Prize process, however, doesn't end quite yet! Five winners, one from each region of eligibility (Africa, Asia & the Pacific, Latin America & the Caribbean), along with a biodiversity-based business and an initiative associated with a UNESCO World Heritage Site, will be chosen by the Equator Prize 2006 jury of eminent persons listed below.

We are extremely honored that these individuals have agreed to donate their valuable time and attention to raising the profile of community efforts to conserve biodiversity and reduce poverty through the spotlight of the Equator Prize. [Learn about the jury](#).

This year's winners will be announced in May 2007 and will be honoured in Germany in June 2007 at a special award ceremony hosted by the German government. Stay tuned for more about the Equator Prize 2006 winners as well as the award ceremony!

With another prize cycle wrapping up, the Equator Initiative would like to thank and acknowledge all who helped make this possible. We would like to thank all those who spent the time to send in their nominations and share their local practices with us, everyone on the TAC for their thoughtful reviews and suggestions, and finally, the jury members in advance for agreeing to contribute their valued time and expertise. Thank you all for helping make the Equator Prize 2006 a success!

Her Royal Highness Princess Basma Bint Talal
Royal Hashemite Fund for Human Development, Jordan

Dr. Mohamed El-Ashry
Former CEO, Global Environment Facility (GEF)

Ms. Yolanda Kakabadse Navarro
Executive President, Fundación Futuro Latinoamericano
Chair, Scientific & Technical Advisory Panel, Global
Environment Facility (STAP/GEF)

Professor Jeffrey D. Sachs
Director, Earth Institute at Columbia University
President, Millennium Promise Alliance

Professor M.S. Swaminathan
Chairman, M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation

Ms. Victoria Tauli-Corpuz
Executive Director, Tebtebba Foundation
Chairperson, UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous
Issues

About the Equator Initiative

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

Equator Initiative Partners

Government of Canada
Conservation International
Convention on Biological Diversity
Fordham University
German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation &
Development (BMZ)
IDRC - International Development Research Centre
IUCN - The World Conservation Union
The Nature Conservancy
Rare
Television Trust for the Environment
United Nations Foundation
United Nations Development Programme

Contact Information

Equator Initiative, UNDP
405 Lexington Avenue, 5th Floor
New York, NY 10174, U.S.A.
Tel: +1 212-457-1709
Fax: +1 212-457-1370
www.equatorinitiative.org