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African entrepreneurs win UN-backed award for eco-friendly initiatives



2011 SEED Winner. Solar bread oven in Burkina Faso. Photo: UNEP

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A company that transforms groundnut shells into fuel briquettes in Gambia and a business in Kenya where women produce aloe-based skin care products are among this year's winners of a United Nations-backed award recognizing projects that help promote sustainable development.

The 2011 Supporting Entrepreneurs for Environment and Development (SEED) Awards, [announced today](#) by the UN Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)), spotlights new locally-driven enterprises that have found creative ways to overcome environmental and developmental

problems while also creating economic and social opportunities for their communities. The winners will receive a package of individually-tailored support for their businesses.

“The SEED winners illuminate a business model that cannot only be successful but have outcomes that meet the environmental and social imperatives of communities and countries across the globe,” stated UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner.

In addition to the general SEED Awards, a special [Gender Equity Award](#) was announced this year as part of SEED’s partnership with UN Women. The prize recognizes an initiative that not only fulfils the general criteria of the SEED Awards but is also women-led, or owned, and prioritizes gender equality or women’s empowerment as a core objective.

The winner of this award is an initiative in Nepal that reduces landfill waste through recycling and uses organic waste to fuel biogas plants. It consists of over 1,000 households and businesses and is run by a women’s environment committee and supported by a local municipality.

“UN Women is proud to join other UN partners and sponsor the first-ever SEED Gender Equality Award to lend a helping hand to women who drive sustainable development and the Green Economy,” said the agency’s Executive Director, Michelle Bachelet.

“As we face rising disparities, mounting protests, faltering economies, and a changing climate, we must unleash the potential of women to contribute to the solutions our common humanity has to find,” she stated. “Sustainable development depends on economic and social equity, wise management of the environment and demands gender equality.”

This year’s SEED Awards have a [special focus on Africa](#), placing particular emphasis on initiatives from Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Egypt, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

The SEED Initiative – hosted at UNEP’s World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) – is a global partnership for action on the green economy. By helping entrepreneurs to scale-up their activities, the SEED initiative aims to boost local economies, tackle poverty and improve livelihoods, while promoting the sustainable use of resources and ecosystems.

The winners will receive a package of individually-tailored support for their businesses, access to relevant expertise and technical assistance, and profiling at national and international levels at conferences and through the SEED’s partners and associates.

All of the winners will be honoured at a ceremony in South Africa that will form part of the SEED Green Economy Symposium at the end of March 2012.

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