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Sustainable development efforts of 25 grassroots groups win UN-backed prize



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Twenty-five local community projects – ranging from a wildlife sanctuary in Bangladesh to a medicinal plants farm in Brazil, a land and water conservation group in Morocco to a reforestation and farming initiative in Ethiopia – are the winners of a United Nations-backed partnership prize for promoting local sustainable development solutions.

Awarded by the Equator Initiative, a partnership that brings together the UN, governments, civil society, businesses and grassroots organizations to advance sustainable development solutions at

the local level, the Equator Prize is awarded biennially to recognize and celebrate outstanding community efforts to reduce poverty through the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

The 2012 prize will be presented to the 25 winners at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, also known as Rio+20, in Brazil in June.

The winning projects, announced on Thursday, were selected from 812 nominations submitted by communities in 113 countries across the developing world. They will receive a monetary award and participate in a “community summit” that will run parallel to the main conference.

“We wanted to make this a truly global award, so expanded eligibility to all countries receiving support from UNDP,” [said](#) the Administrator of the UN Development Programme, Helen Clark. “The overwhelming response from 113 countries in 13 languages tells us there is a world of community-based innovation out there, and that demand for a better future transcends borders.”

“These community efforts are heroic and inspiring. That is what the Equator Prize is all about – shining a spotlight on the women and men on the front lines of sustainable development,” she added.

Many of the issues to be discussed at Rio+20 are represented in the pool of winners, including food security, sustainable jobs, freshwater access, sustainable energy and oceans, among others.

The winning projects were selected from Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Middle East and North Africa.

Current partners of the Equator Initiative are Conservation International; Convention on Biological Diversity; Ecoagriculture Partners; Fordham University; Germany’s Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development; International Union for Conservation of Nature; The Nature Conservancy; Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Rare; Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA); UN Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)); UNDP; and UN Foundation.

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