

PRESS RELEASE



*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*

United Nations-led Partnership Announces Equator Prize Winners

Global distinction given to innovative sustainable development solutions that can “change the world”

New York, 9 June 2014 – Sea-level rise is making life on the Carteret Islands off the coast of Papua New Guinea unmanageable. People can no longer grow food because the ground water has become salty. The islands are literally being submerged.

Tulele Peisa – a local council of indigenous chiefs – has responded by organizing the voluntary relocation of its people, the first climate change refugee relocation effort of its kind in the world.

In their search for new land, they bring with them an environmental conservation ethos, providing a relocation model for other island communities.

Tulele Peisa is among thirty-five groups announced today as recipients of the prestigious Equator Prize, awarded every two years by a UN-led partnership that recognizes “local sustainable development solutions for people, nature and resilient communities.”

Winners demonstrate outstanding sustainable development approaches from across the globe, demonstrating community-based, grassroots action to address environment, poverty and climate change challenges head-on.

An extensive technical review process guided by international experts was undertaken over the last several months, culminating in today’s announcement. Winners were selected from a record 1,234 nominations from 121 different countries.

“These are leading local examples of innovation and achievement that can change the world for the better,” said United Nations Development Programme Administrator Helen Clark. “They are not waiting for others to act. They are on the frontlines of sustainability issues and showing what is possible when grassroots ingenuity meets the defining challenges of our time – ending poverty, protecting our planet, and responding to climate change.”

The Equator Prize has been endorsed by former heads of State Gro Harlem Brundtland (Norway) and Oscar Arias (Costa Rica), philanthropists Richard Branson and Ted Turner, a host of Nobel laureates, and celebrities like Gisele Bündchen and Edward Norton.

Twenty-five awards will be presented at a high-level ceremony at Lincoln Center in New York on Monday 22 September 2014 as a kick-off to the UN Secretary-General's Climate Summit. Winners receive a monetary prize and join a prestigious network of 152 local best practices in conservation and development.

A further twelve winners will be recognized for their work on sustainable land management in sub-Saharan Africa at an award ceremony on World Day to Combat Desertification - 17 June 2014 - in Nairobi, Kenya, through a project funded by the Global Environment Facility.

Since 2002, the Equator Initiative has brought together the United Nations, governments, civil society, academic institutions, and grassroots organizations to recognize outstanding local efforts to reduce poverty through the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

Highlights of 2014 winners include:

- *Alliance for Integrated Development (Nepal)*: This association of women-led community wetlands user groups is combining agro-forestry, organic farming, wildlife management, and radio programming to sustainably manage the largest manmade reservoir in Nepal.
- *Water is Hope (Tajikistan)*: A grassroots initiative that is using community-elected water custodians to establish an equitable water distribution system.
- *Asociación de Capitanes Indígenas de Yaigoje Apaporis (Colombia)*: An association of 21 indigenous communities that has legally established their collective territory as a National Park to address threats from multinational mining interests.
- *Northern Rangelands Trust (Kenya)*: A network of 26 community conservancies driving a community-based movement that puts indigenous communities at the forefront of land management, wildlife conservation, and sustainable livestock practices.
- *Farmer Movement of the 3rd Section of Camp-Perrin (Haiti)*: farmer-driven initiative focused on food security, organic farming and reforestation.

For a full list of 2014 award-winners, please visit:

http://www.equatorinitiative.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=818&Itemid=1031&lang=en

More information:

www.equatorinitiative.org

Media contact:

Joseph Corcoran at +1 646 781 4022 joseph.corcoran@undp.org

###

UNDP partners with people at all levels of society to help build nations that can withstand crisis, and drive and sustain the kind of growth that improves the quality of life for everyone. On the ground in more than 170 countries and territories, we offer global perspective and local insight to help empower lives and build resilient nations.