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UN Announces SEED Award Winners 2011 With Focus on African Entrepreneurs

Women Win Recognition for Innovative Businesses

Nairobi, 15 December 2011 From a company that transforms groundnut shells into fuel briquettes in Gambia, to an enterprise that has developed solar ovens in Burkino Faso, to an initiative that trains and employs street youth to collect waste materials in Ghana, which they then transform into handmade designer products, to a business in Kenya where women produce aloe-based skin care products, these are just some of the 35 winners of the 2011 SEED Awards, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) announced today.

And this year, in addition to the general SEED Awards, a special Gender Equity Award was announced as part of SEED's partnership with UN Women. This award is part of an initiative that will not only fulfil the general criteria of the Awards but in addition is women-led, or owned, and prioritises gender equality or women's empowerment as a core objective.

As last year, in addition to seeking innovative start-ups throughout the developing world, the 2011 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. This focus is part of a larger project linked with UNEP's Green Economy Initiative, which is funded largely by the European Union's *Green Economy and Social and Environmental Entrepreneurship in Africa*.

The annual international SEED Awards, which is part of the SEED Initiative, recognise inspiring social and environmental entrepreneurs whose grassroots businesses in developing countries can help to meet sustainable development challenges.

The SEED Initiative — hosted at the UN Environment Programme'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 Award winners will receive from SEED a package of individually-tailored support for their businesses, access to relevant expertise and technical assistance, and profiling at national and international level at conferences and through the SEED's partners and associates.

All the SEED winners will be honoured at a high-level award ceremony in South Africa which will form part of the SEED Green Economy Symposium at the end of March 2012.

The 2011 call for proposals saw applications from 76 countries, representing the collaborative efforts of non-governmental organisations, women and youth groups, labour organisations, public authorities, international agencies and academia.

Most of the applications were in the agricultural and rural development sectors, as well as in energy and climate change, ecosystem management, and biodiversity. Many entries at the same time addressed micro-enterprise development, IT applications, and education and training.

The winners were selected by the independent SEED International Jury of experts.

The 2011 SEED Gender Equality Award Winner

Nepal:

- The “*Solid Waste Management and Community Mobilization Program*” is a waste collection and recycling initiative of over 1,000 households and businesses and is run by a women’s environment committee and supported by a local municipality. Under the initiative, landfill waste is reduced via recycling and biogas plants are fueled by organic waste on which training is provided. A savings and credit cooperative has also been established to mobilise loans to 150 female members.

The 2011 SEED Award winners (by country)

Burkina Faso:

- The “*Solar bread oven*” is a large hybrid solar/gas-fired oven usable for all kinds of baking and roasting. Developed by a clean-tech company that is supported by international non-governmental organisations, the oven will be distributed through local women cooperatives via a franchising network.
- The “*Recycling Centre for Used Plastic Bags*” run by a women’s environmental group has developed a technique to weave fashion accessories, decorative objects, and city clothing out of used plastic bags. The community-based initiative aims to clear the streets of Burkina Faso of plastic bags while providing income and training to underprivileged women.
- “*Voute Nubienne - Building Earth Roofs in the Sahel*” The Nubian Vault Association trains entrepreneurs in the ancient technique of building durable roofs from unfired earth. Addressing the dramatic lack of access to decent and affordable housing in the region, these entrepreneurs both teach the technique and make a living from their construction skills.

Cameroon:

- “*TAYAB ECO-ORCHARDS*” aims to relieve the effects of land scarcity leading to further deforestation. The initiative is introducing organic agro-forestry, combined with eco-tourism, to generate alternative sources of income for the community. The initiative is led by a farmers’ association.

Egypt:

- “*Karam*”, a local partnership initiative, is driven by a social enterprise marketing traditional Egyptian handicraft products from natural or recycled resources which are made by rural artisans. Economic empowerment of remote villages goes hand-in-hand with development projects and the preservation of cultural heritage, helping to combat mass-migration to urban centres.

The Gambia:

- “*GreenTech Company Ltd*” markets briquettes made from groundnut shells in combination with fuel efficient stoves. Waste groundnut shells are transformed into affordable fuel briquettes which are distributed with fuel-efficient stoves produced by local welders. The new cooking stove system is piloted by partnering restaurants and school kitchens and promoted through women’s networks.

Ghana:

- “*Waste Enterprisers*” has developed innovative ways of reusing human waste with the aim of improving sanitation services for the poor and restructuring the economics of sanitation in developing countries. Drawing on technical support from local and international universities and working with the local municipality, the venture plans to turn faecal sludge into biodiesel, and to dry it and use it as boiler fuel. Wastewater is also being treated for use in ponds to allow fish farming which can provide additional income generation.
- “*Recycle Not A Waste Initiative – RECNOWA*” trains and employs street youth from disadvantaged communities to clear their streets of plastic and other material waste and uses the creative talents of Ghanaian artisans to transform them into handmade designer products such as bags, jewellery, footwear, furniture and home décor that are ethically produced and eco-friendly.
- “*Man and Man Enterprise*” and its business partners create employment by producing biomass-fuelled cooking stoves made from scrap metals, substituting for conventional charcoal-fuelled stoves that cause harmful emissions and health problems and contribute to deforestation.
- “*Bamboo substitute for timber: new livelihoods for rural communities in Ghana*” This initiative works on the full bamboo value chain from reforestation to production and marketing of substitutes for timber products, creating alternative sources of income for rural communities. The approach further relieves pressure on forests by inter-cropping plantations with food crops to prevent forest clearance for agricultural production.
- “*Rural Transportation and Renewable Products Conversion Centres for Agro-residues*” This initiative works to establish an innovative shared-infrastructure service for rural farmers, providing cargo bikes for the collection of crops as well as agro-residues which are converted to renewable energy sources such as biochar, charcoal and biofuels in a facility also set up by the initiative.

Kenya:

- *“Enhancing Grassroots Women’s Economic and Social Empowerment in Kitui County, Kenya, through Sustainable Aloe Farming”* is led by a community-based non-government organization partnering with a local university and the Ministry of Agriculture. It provides rural income and facilitates the rehabilitation of wasteland by producing aloe-based skin care products for the local market.
- *“Kisumu Innovation Center – Kenya”* is a social business marketing recycled handicrafts products in cooperation with a local women’s and orphans’ self-help group and a nationwide marketing partner. Women and youth are trained to produce marketable objects from used tins and water hyacinth, which is invasive and is creating problems in the region.
- *“Organic Farm Inputs and Farm Produce”* is led by a local enterprise which is supplying organic farmers with certified inputs and organic fertiliser while organising sales opportunities.
- *“Watamu Community Solid Waste Management and Recycling Enterprises”* serves as an example of successful cooperation between community organisations and the local marine tourism industry in creating a plastic recycling value chain. The results are cleaned-up beaches and new employment opportunities for women and youth.
- *“Use solar, save lives”* is an initiative led by a local NGO partnering with women’s groups in which youth are trained in manufacturing solar-powered lanterns which are distributed to poor rural households and as result are improving the overall standard of living and education. The households which receive the lanterns are also assisted by the initiative to start environmentally-friendly income-generating activities financed from money previously spent on kerosene.
- *“Upscaling the silviculture-based enterprises of coastal communities in Kenya”* This initiative supports community-based organisations and small-holder farmers in establishing mangrove-based operations, such as aquaculture, bee keeping, and ecotourism, linking mangrove preservation with the creation of alternative sources of income.
- *“Promoting bamboo as a craft and technology application with a view to conserving Taita Hills Forests”* This is a local non-government organisation which has joined forces with community organisations and the local government to support bamboo plantations and the marketing of bamboo and other non-timber forest products, relieving the pressure for cutting down forests by providing an alternative source of construction materials.

Madagascar:

- *“SEPALI – Community-based Silk Producers Association”* is a local spin-off of an international non-government organisation which provides technical and financial assistance to farmers and community-based enterprise groups introducing wild silk production and processing from silk moths raised on indigenous trees which can be intercropped with existing agricultural produce.

Nigeria:

- *“Sawdust Entrepreneurial Initiative Among Oko-baba Communities In Lagos, Nigeria”* Local non-government organisations and a sawmillers’ association introduced the recycling of waste sawdust into briquettes as a cheap and clean alternative fuel for stoves. They also provide technical assistance and micro-finance to entrepreneurs engaged in briquette production.

Rwanda:

- *“Project for producing edible mushroom spores”* is pioneering the local production of primary mushroom spores through a laboratory run by a cooperative of HIV-infected women and widows. Supported by international organisations and local government authorities, the initiative will make mushroom production accessible to vulnerable members of rural communities as a profitable and high-yield crop requiring little land.

Senegal:

- *“Feed yourself, care for yourself and beautify yourself with the same plants”* is a women’s cooperative and a phyto-pharmaceutical laboratory which joined forces to promote natural local products and is building a supply chain of natural ingredients based on fair-trade principles while raising farmers’ environmental awareness. The initiative also opens up additional sources of income through handicrafts training.
- *“Reusing waste charcoal as biochar”* is a family-business which currently, with the assistance of international development institutions as well as community and governmental organisations, is producing biochar from waste charcoal and clay. This is a cleaner and cheaper alternative to charcoal used in cooking and it reduces the pressure on exploited forests.

South Africa:

- *“Thrive”* is a non-government organisation partnering with governmental and research institutions to start up entrepreneurial triple-bottom line (the economic, ecological, and social criteria for measuring organizational and societal success) spin-offs in the areas of waste, local food, water, energy, and biodiversity and producing tangible environmental benefits while at the same time building capacity, creating jobs and generating income for local communities.
- *“Everpix-ACT-SA communities: natural tree products and community resource management”* This community-based public-private partnership aims to augment rural income and incentivise tree planting by manufacturing and marketing a portfolio of products from indigenous trees grown by local communities, such as Marula nut oil.
- *“Why Honey”* is a start-up aiming to increase an insufficient local bee population and building a fair-trade supply chain for honey and apiculture products by training women bee-keepers to become micro-entrepreneurs, and giving them assistance in organising themselves into cooperatives. The initiative will also handle beehive construction, processing and the sale of the honey.

- *“The Development of a Khomani San Cultural and Nature Guiding Enterprise and Association”* A partnership of local non-government organisations and local government authorities who support an eco-tourism enterprise that employs members of the local indigenous community.
- *“Imai Farming Cooperative”* is a women’s cooperative which has partnered with non-government organisations and government institutions and is increasing and stabilising farmers’ incomes and reducing waste by processing surplus fresh vegetable produce into pickles. The initiative also encourages organic farming.

Sri Lanka:

- *“Community-based, sustainable and commercially viable Aloe vera products as alternative income generation for fisherwomen in Bar Reef Special Management Area in Kalpitiya”* Low-cost aloe vera cultivation is offering an alternative livelihood to fisherwomen who produce beverages and supply the cosmetic industry. To do this, they use the unproductive lands of the coastal areas for cultivation, helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Tanzania:

- *“Butterfly farming for pro-poor tourism and environment conservation”* Replicating their successful project in Zanzibar, this partnership is setting up a butterfly park as a tourist attraction, at the same time generating income for local farmers through butterfly farming which also increases awareness on the need for biodiversity conservation.
- *“Plastic Waste Recycling as an Alternative to Burning and Landfilling”* Cooperating with government authorities, this non-government organisation is driving plastic waste management and recycling by training community members to collect plastic waste which can be sold to the initiative’s recycling facility which in turn produces plastic pellets for industrial use.
- *“Enhancing women farmers’ access to profitable markets by developing a toolkit for value-added post-harvest solar fruit drying, handling and utilisation of horticultural crops for local and regional market procurement in East Africa”* is driven by an enterprise partnering with non-government organisations and government institutions to tackle a critical lack of food preservation and storage means through innovative solar drying technology. This enables the farmers to sell more products more widely.

Uganda:

- *“Solar Sister – African women led grassroots green energy revolution”* is a partnership of non-government organisations, womens’ organisations and solar-lighting producers. They run a direct sales network of women entrepreneurs, selling solar-powered lanterns as a clean and non-hazardous light source for rural households.

Zimbabwe:

- *“Sustainable development through processing natural products”* Supported by non-government organisations as well as research and trade institutions, this initiative supports women entrepreneurs to harvest, process and market Marula-tree products, combining

individual production and processing with collective training and marketing. The initiative focuses both on passing on traditional knowledge and introducing new expertise such as sustainable harvesting.

Further details about all SEED Winners can be found on the SEED website at www.seedinit.org

Notes to Editors:

On the occasion of the announcement the following statements were made:

Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary-General, UNEP Executive Director: *“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. They underline that a transition to a Green Economy is not only a future possibility but a reality that is shaping the present and will define the decades to come if accelerated and scaled-up -- Rio+20 is that opportunity in June next year.”*

Helen Clarke, UNDP Administrator: *“The SEED winners demonstrate both the entrepreneurial spirit and the individual ingenuity needed to drive the development of the green economy forward. Their start-ups show us that there is great potential to achieve win-wins for reducing poverty and for sustaining our world’s ecosystems.”*

Julia Marton-Lefèvre, Director General IUCN: *“The SEED Award winners are true examples of what a greener economy can look like. They have found creative ways to overcome pressing environmental and developmental problems while at the same time creating economic and social opportunities of relevance to their local communities.”*

Michelle Bachelet, Executive Director UN Women: *“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. 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. Sustainable development depends on economic and social equity, wise management of the environment and demands gender equality. UN Women supports women’s full and equal participation in decision-making and most especially at next year’s Rio+20 Conference on sustainable development.”*

2011 SEED International Jury

The 2011 SEED Award winners were selected by the independent International Jury which dedicated considerable time to choosing the most promising of the applications. The members of the jury are:

- Dr. François Bonnici: Director of the newly established Bertha Centre for Social Innovation & Entrepreneurship at the University of Cape Town’s Graduate School of Business.

- Nancy Chege: National Coordinator, UNDP Global Environment Facility's Small Grants Programme, Nairobi, Kenya.
- Sasha Gabizon: Executive Director, Women in Europe for a Common Future, based in the Netherlands.
- Neville Gabriel: Executive Director, Southern Africa Trust, Midrand, South Africa.
- Leticia Greyling: Senior Lecturer, Rhodes Business School, South Africa.
- Ellen Houston: Instructor of International Studies and Economics, Marymount College, New York City, United States.
- Laure Bitetera Kananura: National Coordinator, UNDP GEF Small Grants Programme, Rwanda.
- Paul Laird: Corporate Partnerships Manager, Earthwatch, Oxford, United Kingdom.
- Richard Lewis: Partner, Hogan Lovells International LLP, London, United Kingdom.
- Andrea Margit: Head, Environment Unit, Roberto Marinho Foundation, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
- Godwell Nhamo : Programme Manager, Exxaro Chair in Business and Climate Change, Institute for Corporate Citizenship, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa.
- Bert van Nieuwenhuizen: Renewable Energy Advisor for East and Southern Africa, SNV Netherlands Development Organisation, Kigali, Rwanda.
- Tamzin Ractliffe: Chief Executive Officer, Nexii, Cape Town, South Africa.
- Luisa Emilia Reyes Zuniga: Coordinator, Area of Gender Policies and Budgets, Equidad de Género, Mexico.
- Ana V Rojas: Consultant, ENERGIA/ETC Foundation, Leusden, The Netherlands
- Sarah Timpson: Senior Adviser on Community-based Initiatives, UNDP, New York City, United States.
- George C. Varughese: President, Development Alternatives Group, Delhi, India.
- James Wakaba: Regional Manager East Africa Office, GVEP International, Nairobi, Kenya.

The SEED Initiative

The SEED Initiative was founded in 2002 by UNEP, UNDP and IUCN to contribute towards the Millennium Development Goals and the commitments made at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development.

SEED identifies, profiles and supports innovative, locally-driven start-up enterprises that integrate social, environmental and economic benefits into their business models at the outset. They work

in partnership in developing countries to improve livelihoods, tackle poverty and marginalisation, and manage natural resources sustainably.

SEED also develops learning resources for the broad community of social and environmental entrepreneurs, informs policy- and decision-makers and aims to inspire innovative, entrepreneurial approaches to sustainable development.

Partners of the SEED Initiative in addition to the Founding Partners are the governments of Germany, India, the Netherlands, South Africa, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States of America; the European Union; Conservation International; and SEED's corporate partner, Hisense.



UN Women is the UN organisation dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. Established in July 2010 by the United Nations General Assembly to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide, the creation of UN Women came about as part of the UN reform agenda. It brings together resources, mandates and important work of four previously distinct parts of the UN system for greater impact, and to become a global champion for women.

For more information please visit www.seedinit.org

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