



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Office, Jakarta Flagship Programme

UHJAK/09/Flag1

Biosphere Reserves for Environmental and Economic Security (BREES): A Climate Change and Poverty Alleviation Programme

Region:

Asia and the Pacific

Partners:

National and local governments; inter-governmental agencies; finance institutions; communities; universities and other research institutions; NGOs; private sector

General Objective:

To strengthen and promote the role of biosphere reserves in achieving environmental and economic security throughout Asia and the Pacific

Duration:

8+ years starting 2009

Estimated budget:

50,000,000 USD

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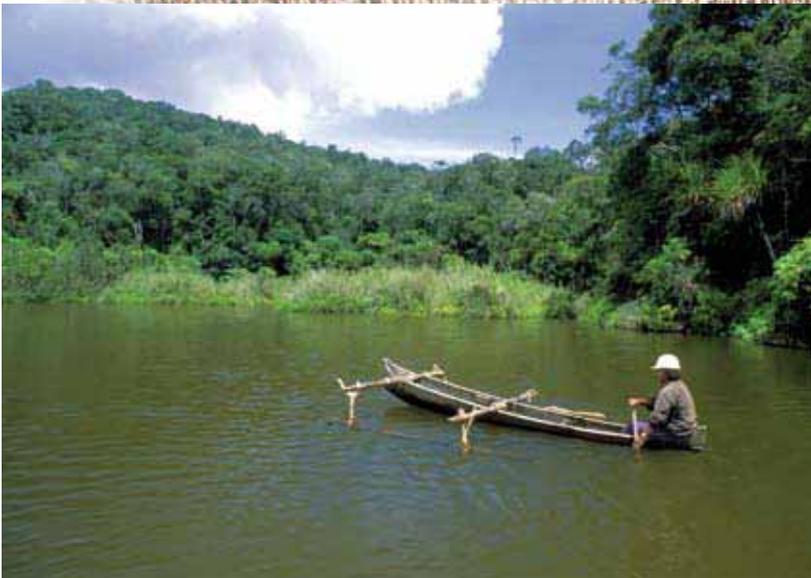


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BACKGROUND

The Asia-Pacific region is home to two thirds of the world's poor wherein nearly one out of four people lives on \$1 US dollars or less a day. The rural poor – agriculturalists, forest plant collectors, hunters, and fisherman in Asia and the Pacific – whom live along forests and coasts, have traditionally been economically and socially ignored, under-represented, and under-served. They have also historically been the victims of a tug of war between conservation and development – on one hand being asked to take part in building a country's economy while at the same time being chastised and punished for taking part in a country's unsustainable development.

The rural poor now have a real economic and social stake, and an opportunity to make sustainable development work. Climate change is here and now, and will probably be the most important challenge that this planet faces in the 21st century and beyond. Human activity emits 32 billion tons of CO₂ each year globally of which 15 billion tons stays in the atmosphere and contributes to climate change, and 17 billion tons are dissolved into the oceans and drawn in by tropical forests. The maintenance of healthy oceans and forests is what prevents even a direr climate change situation. The rural poor have already sounded the alarm that their livelihoods risk being eliminated, and ecological disruptions will have a major impact on the ecosystem services upon which all humans depend. Therefore, the wise management of forest, coastal, and marine ecosystems by the rural poor are more critical than ever in ensuring the future survival of these important ecosystems including the communities that live in them.



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WHAT IS BREES, AND HOW CAN IT ADDRESS POVERTY AND CLIMATE CHANGE ISSUES?

Biospheres Reserves for Environmental and Economic Security (BREES) is a long term regional climate change and poverty alleviation programme that will work with communities, micro-finance institutions, educational institutions, government, and donor agencies to use biosphere reserves as learning centres for environmental and human adaptability to climate change effects and to improve economic conditions for the rural poor in and near biosphere reserves.

The BREES Programme will work with donors and micro-finance institutions to establish micro-financing and grant networks in communities surrounding the 100 plus biosphere reserves in Asia and the Pacific. Through micro-financing and grants that promote eco-friendly ventures and projects by communities, NGOs, and researchers, the BREES Programme will invest heavily in

community-based efforts to alleviate poverty, and mitigate and adapt to climate change impacts. Through the hundreds of micro-loans and grants, the programme will establish a critical mass of resources and people to effectively safeguard important carbon sinks, and develop innovative solutions to enhance livelihoods of the rural poor. A regional monitoring and adaptive management system will be put in place to track ecosystems (forests, wetlands, rivers, coasts, and seas), local economies, and social systems to ensure that changes lead to sustainable development goals, and build on and strengthen local capacity in addressing the challenges that their changing environments pose. This programme will combine the unique set of expertise that UNESCO possesses in the sciences (environmental, hydrology, basic, social), education, culture, and communication and information.



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POTENTIAL IMPACTS

- Positive *environmental* impacts through maintenance of large intact natural areas which represent significant carbon sinks, maintenance of environmental services, and promotion of eco-friendly ventures and projects.
- Positive *economic* effect on clients (e.g., building non-land assets and services, job creation, local and regional branding 'Biosphere Product') and communities (e.g., empowerment of communities, stable community economy, village economic spill-over effects) by reducing poverty through inclusive economic growth.
- Positive *social* effects (e.g., empowerment of communities, access to water, sanitary conditions, economic gender equality in economy, education, health).
- Positive *national level* effects (e.g., national climate change planning, national pride, employment creation, building a next generation of social entrepreneurs, mainstreaming the financial needs of the poor into national economic planning)
- Positive *regional level* effects (e.g., environmental improvements, regional exchanges and knowledge sharing, regional climate change policies, improvement in education and sciences, poverty alleviation).
- Positive change of mindset of rural poor people and other stakeholders regarding the harmony between development and conservation.
- Positive disaster risk reduction in country efforts (e.g., mitigation policies, disaster risk reduction public education and awareness, land use planning).