

people

MARC ONA ESSANGUI

has battled tirelessly to block the construction of an iron ore mine in the Gabonese town of Belinga. The mine is being developed by a Chinese mining and engineering company (CMEC), in partnership with the Gabonese Government. It will be powered by a large hydroelectric dam near Gabon's highest waterfall. Despite this, Ona claims that the Gabonese government has failed to consult the local population and has not assessed the impact of the development on the environment. Through his environmental organization – Brainforest – Ona is fighting an uphill battle to protect the rich biodiversity and natural beauty of the proposed site, and in April 2009, he was awarded the Goldman Environmental Prize for his activism.

CARLOS SLIM

Mexican billionaire Carlos Slim is one of the world's richest men. On World Environment Day 2009 he launched a 100 million dollar project to protect Mexico's environment along with the Mexican Government and the World Wildlife Fund. Slim hopes the project will generate jobs whilst protecting biodiversity in Mexico's deserts, beaches and jungles. Slim has shown that protecting our environment can be achieved by individuals who choose to partner with governments and non-governmental organizations. This kind of partnership is innovative in many parts of the world, giving vision and direction to many a philanthropist, government and NGO.



APA SHERPA

The man who has climbed Mt Everest more times than any man in history is climbing it once again, this time for the sake of the mountain he loves and the environment he seeks to protect. Apa Sherpa has witnessed first hand the effect that climate change is having on the Himalayan glaciers, which are melting rapidly, leaving less and less drinking water for the millions that depend on them. By climbing the mountain for the 19th time, Sherpa has captured the world's attention and underscored the dangers facing the countries that rely on Himalayan melt water.

SYEDA RIZWANA HASAN

spearheaded a legal battle, which resulted in increased government regulation and heightened public awareness about ship breaking in Bangladesh. From 2005 to 2007 more than 250 ships, with a total weight in excess of 2.5 million tons, were broken on the shores of Bangladesh. In part as a result of Hasan's work, the Supreme Court of Bangladesh directed the closure of 36 ship breaking yards operating without environmental clearance. Hasan plans to continue her advocacy to ensure that the rulings are upheld. For her work Hasan was awarded the 2009 Goldman Environment Prize for the Asia region.

ENRIQUE PENALOSA

Economist and former mayor, Enrique Penalosa brought results to his city, Bogota. In just three years, Enrique Penalosa accomplished a great deal, including changing the way that Bogota residents travel around the city. He created a bus rapid transit system which now carries nearly two million people a day. He also widened sidewalks, rebuilt deteriorating ones and created grand public spaces that have improved the quality of life and the visual appeal of Bogota.



PRESIDENT MOHAMED NASHEED

With over one thousand islands in the Maldives and not one of them two metres above sea level it is not surprising that President Mohamed Nasheed is concerned with the problem of rising sea levels as a result of climate change. President Nasheed has consistently illustrated how climate change can infringe on people's basic human rights by destroying their livelihoods, their homes and their country. Awarded the sixth Anna Lindh Prize for his work on climate change, Nasheed continues to emphasize the devastating effects of climate change, while highlighting achievable solutions; In May this year, the Maldives joined the Climate Neutral Network led by UNEP, with a pledge to become the world's first carbon-neutral nation by switching to renewable sources of energy such as solar panels and wind turbines.

GLADYS KALEMA-ZIKUSOKA

When Ugandan veterinarian Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka graduated from the Royal Veterinary College in London she returned home to become Uganda's only wildlife vet. Having worked with mountain gorillas and local people in the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, Kalema-Zikusoka gained enough insight, interest and passion to write a proposal to prevent further conflict between the rare mountain gorillas and humans. As a result, and despite stiff global competition for the funds, Kalema-Zikusoka was awarded €60,000 from the Whitley Fund for Nature. The gorilla project she subsequently set up with the funds offers local people better healthcare and greater knowledge of their gorilla neighbours. It also allows her native Uganda to benefit from gorilla tourism without harming the apes.