

GEN-Africa Meeting – Clarifying next steps

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What has happened so far:

- Since GEN was founded in 1995, attempts were undertaken at various times to strengthen the ecovillage movement in Africa. One of the strong national networks that grew from this was GEN-Senegal.
- Summer 2008: Kosha Anja Joubert is elected as president of GEN-Europe. Kosha was born and raised in South Africa during apartheid. She takes on responsibility to move the **emergence of GEN-Africa as a separate region** within GEN International forward. Kosha's work for the anti-apartheid movement in Amsterdam in the late 80's and early 90's paved her path into the ecovillage movement.
- Summer 2009: GEN-Europe council unanimously decides on the support of the emergence of GEN-Africa as a separate region as one of its main priorities.
- In August/September 2009, 6 participants from Africa, including Lua Bashala-Kekana from Congo, currently living in Khula Dhamma ecovillage in South Africa, attend the **EDE (Ecovillage Design Education) in Sieben Linden**. The depth of work done on the ground in Africa and the potential of an African ecovillage network as a tool of empowerment becomes apparent in South-South and South-North dialogues. An understanding of the importance of combining efforts instead of working in isolation is strongly felt. GEN is seen as a great working tool for this.
- In November 2009 Lua and two more EDE-participants, Usiel Kandjii from Namibia and Thomas Mkandawire from Malawi attend the **IPC (International Permaculture Convergence) in Malawi** to gauge interest and spread the word (and a newly produced flyer) on GEN-Africa. The need and wish for a platform on which to exchange skills and knowledge as well as information on upcoming courses and events is clearly defined as necessary.
- In December 2009, Adama Ly, as General Director of the National Agency geared towards supporting **14 000 traditional villages in Senegal** in their transition to ecovillages, meets with Hildur and Ross Jackson and further members of the GEN-Europe-network during the Climate Conference in Copenhagen. Other contacts to ecovillage-activists from Africa, including Trinto Mugangu from Congo and Ibrahim Togolo from Mali are made and deepened.
- In January 2010 Lua travels to the **Congo (DRC)** to contact and visit various ecovillages and ecovillage-related projects in this vast country. She meets with the minister of information discussing government support for the development of an ecovillage network in the Congo. The results are positive and a decision is taken to send participants endorsed by the government to the Sieben Linden EDE in 2010 and to a French EDE course in Senegal in 2011.
- In April 2010 a first email is sent out to around **200 interested individuals and organisations** from all over Africa inviting them to express their interest in becoming a part of the network. The response is overwhelmingly positive and supportive. More and more dedicated individuals link up to support the GEN-Africa initiative.
- In June 2010 the Senegalese government creates the first **Ministry for Ecovillages** ever.

- In July 2010 during the **GEN-Europe Assembly** in Damanhur, Italy
 - Adama, Lua and Kosha meet with George John from Orissa, India (supporting a network of 3950 indigenous villages), Jane Rasbah (deeply connected to village networks in and around Thailand), Aili Pyhala (researching and supporting indigenous groups for many years), Inci and Ali Gokmen (working with traditional villages in Turkey), Macaco Tamerice (Damanhur) and Jan Golding (Founder of Khula Dhamma Ecovillage in South Africa) to write a first draft of an official invitation to **traditional and indigenous village-networks to link up to the Global Ecovillage Network**. First guidelines for this process are drafted, too. This document will be of value not only in the emergence of GEN Africa but globally where traditional village networks are still existent. We are responding to demand.
 - Adama, Lua and Kosha meet to refine **strategy and next steps** for the emergence of GEN-Africa
 - For the first time in the history of GEN-Europe (+Africa + Middle East) the **Excellency Award** for the most groundbreaking achievement of the last year goes to an African project, GEN-Senegal. GEN-Senegal has played a pivotal role in building the ground for the Senegalese government initiative for ecovillages. We wish to acknowledge and honour this work. Part of the prize money (3000€) will be used to install a well for potable water in one of the 45 villages of this network, thereby also strengthening the collaboration with the ministry of ecovillages. The other part will be used as start-up funds for an EDE to take place in Senegal in 2011.
 - A **special award** is spontaneously created by the GEN-members present and given to Khula Dhamma Ecovillage, South Africa in honouring of the engagement of African ecovillage projects.
 - **Contacts** linking GEN up to green companies (LUSH), universities and developmental aid networks are deepened. All involve a sense of true resonance with our aims and wish to support the emerging GEN-Africa network with funding possibilities as well as technical skills exchange.

Next Steps:

- We acknowledge that we are in a **period of transition** towards the launch of Gen-Africa as a separate legal entity in 2012. From then on, all positions within GEN-Africa will be democratically elected by GEN-Africa members (council of 5 + 2 staff, representing different regions). We propose to mirror some of the helpful practices that GEN-Europe has come up with e.g. new elections every two years, with any one person not exceeding 3 terms of two years as maximum.
- We realise that both Adama and Lua need **designations** now in order to work efficiently in the spread of GEN-Africa on the ground. We decide for the time being to use the term of 'GEN-Africa General Secretary' for Lua and 'GEN-Africa councillor' for Adama. Kosha is re-elected as President of GEN-Europe for another term of two years. She holds a role of custodian and advisor to GEN-Africa during this period of transition.
- We need to create a **legal entity** (in the form of an international NGO) and a **bank account** for GEN-Africa. External auditing will be a part of GEN-Africa bookkeeping from the outset. Lua will investigate the question of which country in Africa will be safest and cheapest for a bank account to be localised. For the time being, funds for GEN-Africa continue to move through the GEN-Europe account.

- We envision the **relationship between GEN-Africa and GEN-Europe** to remain close through personal friendships, mutual support and learning from each other. Also, we look forward to the shared inspiration and a deep emotional process of South-North reconciliation that is ensuing.
- We envision creating a platform within GEN-Africa where **all regions of Africa** find the space to become visible. Therefore we propose the following **roadmap**:
 - **EDE in Sieben Linden, Aug 2010**: 8 participants coming from Malawi, South Africa, Congo, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Kenya, Cameroon, Tanzania
 - **Other EDE's** willing to issue special invitations to participants coming through the emerging GEN-Africa network: Thai (Jan 2011), Kibbuz Lotan, Damanhur (April 2011)
 - Autumn 2010: work on several **fundraising proposals** for GEN-Africa (Aili Pyhala and others are willing to collaborate.)
 - **Congo Ecovillage Network Conference**: May/June 2011
 - **GEN-Europe Assembly** taking place in Tamera July 3-10, 2011: 10 participants from all over Africa to be invited.
 - **EDE in Senegal** for francophone countries: October 2011
 - Linked to a **Conference inviting other governments**, interested in following the Senegalese model of ecovillage development. Guinea, Mali, Niger, Burkino Fasso and Ghana government officials have already expressed interest.
 - Linked to a **youth project**, where youth from European ecovillages (14-22 years, from Findhorn, Damanhur, Tamera, Sieben Linden, maybe others) travel to Senegal to plant trees in ecovillage projects there.
 - **EDE in South Africa** for Anglophone countries: April 2012
 - **Launch of GEN Africa: July or October 2012**



From left to right: Formica from Damanhur, King of Damanhur, Kosha, Adama, Lua, Macaco from Damanhur