



## GLOBAL **ECOVILLAGE** NETWORK

### Developing a Pan-African Ecovillage Development Programme

- ✓ to Eradicate Poverty,
- ✓ Restore the Natural Environment,
- ✓ Achieve Climate Resiliency and
- ✓ Implement the SDGs



GENAFRICA



For the past 20 years the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) and its regional affiliate, GEN- Africa, have been developing a transformative model, using an integrated, multi-sectoral community - based approach to create sustainable and resilient ecovillage communities. Africa is home to some of the most innovative Ecovillage programmes in the world, notably in Senegal where the success of grassroots ecovillage communities has led to the development of a National Ecovillage Agency working to transform 14,000 rural villages into ecovillages; and in Egypt where the SEKEM<sup>1</sup> farm and ecovillage is working with over 800 organic and biodynamic farmers, providing educational programs at the pre-school to university level, and delivering healthcare to more than 40,000 people from 11 surrounding villages.

GEN is now developing a 'Pan-African Ecovillage Development Programme' designed to radically reform current development practices and put communities, sustainability, and wealth creation at the heart of the development process.

We are convinced that financial resources can do the most good when channeled directly to the communities that most need them - the 'forgotten' rural poor, which make up 80% of the population of Africa. These communities can be the real change makers, implementing sustainable change on the ground. They are the individuals and families who, if properly respected, trained and empowered, if given the right enabling environment, incentives and 'tools', can manage their resources wisely, and provide genuine sustainable 'solutions'.

There is a wealth of knowledge that has already been acquired through a range of ad hoc Ecovillage initiatives across the African continent. We believe that the development and promotion of National Ecovillage strategies, similar to the one initiated and currently being implemented in Senegal can provide a vital contribution for achieving COP22 Climate and the UN's 2030 Agenda goals, and that communities must be empowered to lead such processes. SEKEM -type initiatives can work in other countries if the right land and regulatory environment is present. The Chololo-type<sup>2</sup> Ecovillages developed in Tanzania can work elsewhere if given the right start-up conditions. The Green school approaches in Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia and elsewhere are perfectly viable elsewhere.



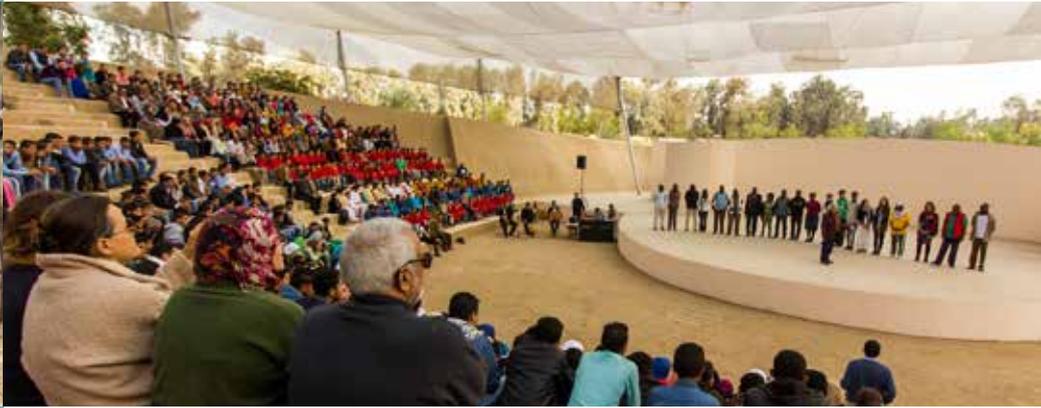
1. SEKEM is a unique community - led programme in Egypt founded in 1977 by Dr Ibrahim Abouleish ([www.sekem.com](http://www.sekem.com))

2. Chololo was one of three Ecovillages initiated in 2011 in Tanzania, funded by the EU through the Global Climate Change Alliance ([chololoecovillage.wordpress.com](http://chololoecovillage.wordpress.com))



## PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The vision of the programme is to put communities at the centre of the development process, promote sustainable livelihoods and practices that are fully in line with the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), create wealth and employment opportunities, halt environmental degradation, increase agricultural productivity, increase resiliency and provide communities with the knowledge, skills and tools to guarantee their future.



### The key objectives are:

- To initiate a change process across Africa demonstrating that community-led ecovillage methodologies can deliver effective and economically viable SDG products and processes.
- To seek the support of all appropriate stakeholders , including governments, educational establishments, local authorities, small and medium-sized enterprises, local partners, financiers and civil society organizations to work closely together to achieve the SDGs.
- To facilitate education for community-led sustainable development through courses and tools developed within GEN, and its daughter organisation, Gaia Education ([www.gaiaeducation.org](http://www.gaiaeducation.org))
- To establish a number of 'Lighthouse' Ecovillages and resource and training centres/hubs whose primary vocation is to share skills, knowledge and best practices
- To contribute towards fulfilling local and national commitments towards achieving the UN's SDGs, along with global commitments on Climate Change, Education for Sustainable Development, Sustainable Consumption and Production, and Biodiversity.

It is expected that the programme will start in a number of selected countries where communities have already shown Ecovillage commitment and leadership.





## METHODOLOGY

The programme will develop and summarise for each selected pilot country the steps that will be needed to substantially scale-up existing Ecovillage initiatives. This will involve the identification of local change-makers and community leaders who would be capable of providing the necessary inspirational leadership. It will also involve multi-stakeholder dialogues and a mapping of all the key actors in the development process.

On the basis of this work one or more Ecovillage training, research and education centres will be developed. These 'hubs' will become the breeding ground for knowledge, innovation, and information -sharing that should spin-off technologies and systems for in-country scaling up. GEN Africa will use its extensive network across Africa and around the globe through GEN International to share innovative best practices, technologies and skills. We will also seek support from a wide-ranging set of local Non-Governmental and Civil Society networks that would also share skills and knowledge in a synergetic and systemic way.

The Ecovillage Development Programme will be designed to be SMART in nature, employing Specific Measurable, Achievable action, focused on Results with Timelines for implementation. It will be monitored on a regular basis and evaluated after two years by independent specialists to verify that it was achieving its objectives. The self-sustaining and self-financing elements of the programme will be looked at quite closely.



## ACTIVITIES

Although the individual experiences of Ecovillages in Senegal, Tanzania, Egypt and elsewhere in Africa are quite varied, the overall activities of the Programme will address such issue areas as:

- Food security and elimination of poverty;
- Sustainable forestry;
- Environmental restoration and management;
- Land-use and permaculture planning;
- Renewable energy;
- Access to Clean Water and Sanitation;
- Natural and Green Building;
- Technology innovation;
- Stakeholder Participation;
- Women and girl's empowerment;
- Education for Sustainable Development;
- Media and communications skills;
- and Monitoring and Evaluation.

## EXPECTED RESULTS

The whole concept behind the programme is that it should be genuinely transformative, across the continent. It should create excitement and energy along with pride amongst communities. The programme will be judged a success if it can lead to:

- Introduction of a 'can do' mentality
- Increased incomes and revenues
- Increased employment
- Reduction in the destruction of natural resources
- Regeneration of trees, biodiversity, and fertility of the soil
- Development of completely new small scale industries based on processing of agricultural products and innovative use of natural resources
- Improvements in health care, developing 'traditional' health care products and systems
- Increases in self-esteem and dignity amongst the communities
- A new form of co-operation between all the stakeholders
- A self-sustaining snowballing of these initiatives elsewhere

# CONCLUSIONS

Hitherto, in most official documents relating to the SDGs and Climate Change in Africa, the role of communities, and the remarkably positive experiences of Ecovillages on the African continent, are somewhat invisible.

GEN believes that it is high time that communities were given their rightful place as transformative change agents. We believe that sustainable, holistic Ecovillage practices, that have been successfully developed over decades - long before the 'invention' of the SDGs - should be placed at the forefront of plans to address Africa's development challenges and needs. 'Conventional' approaches have failed Africa.

It's time for a new, fresh holistic approach, that builds on African wisdom and skills. It's time to put communities at the heart of Africa's future well-being and development.

To learn more or to get involved with or support the project contact either/or:

**Kosha Joubert**

kosha.joubert@ecovillage.org  
Executive Director GEN International

**Rob Wheeler**

GEN UN Main Representative  
Rob.Wheeler@ecovillage.org  
www.ecovillage.org

**Ousmane Pame**

President, GEN Africa  
Oalypame@gen-africa.org

Please see for more information:

**[www.ecovillage.org](http://www.ecovillage.org)**

