



# EARTH JURISPRUDENCE

QUARTERLY UPDATE SEPT/OCT 2005

*This Quarterly EJ update aims to provide you with a brief update on inspiring projects and news from colleagues in this growing global alliance to promote Earth Jurisprudence (EJ) and Community Ecological Governance (CEG) - from the African Biodiversity Network (ABN); also Colombia, Peru, Sweden, Finland and the UK.*

*If you would like any more information, please do not hesitate to be in touch with [guy@gaianet.org](mailto:guy@gaianet.org).*

## **Botswana: experiential learning on Tswana and local traditions**

African Customary Law and Community Ecological Governance (CEG) is the focus for experiential workshop in Botswana, in October, looking especially at Tswana culture, healing and the Universe.

Ngwenyama Lodge, outside Gaborone, will host a group from the African Biodiversity Network (ABN), plus some international participants, for a 10-day workshop led by Niall and Colin Campbell, trained 'sangomas' (traditional healers).

## **South Africa: international CEG gathering**

Following the Botswana experience, a three-day conference on CEG will take place in Hartbeespoort, South Africa.

18 participants, from South Africa, Ghana, Kenya, Ethiopia, Botswana, Colombia, Peru, Sweden and the UK, will gather to exchange information, ideas, and carry out strategic planning.

A smaller group will then take part in an intercultural exchange with Venda communities in Limpopo, South Africa. Despite external pressures, these communities continue to live according to traditional and Earth-centred principles, and maintain areas of cultural and spiritual importance.

## **Ghana: community visits, Cultural Biodiversity, and strengthening ABN**

In June 2005, an ABN delegation carried out workshops in Zoosali and Tengzuk communities, in northern Ghana, as an introduction to EJ, Gaia Theory, CEG, and African environmental law.

Local chiefs welcomed Mellese Damtie (Ethiopia) and Gathuru Mburu (Kenya) and treated them to a night of traditional dance and drumming.

A follow-up visit was made by Million Belay (Ethiopia) and Abudulai Sulemana (UK/Ghana) in August, and teachers from 13 districts took part in Cultural Biodiversity training. Five schools are already starting Cultural Biodiversity programmes.

RAINS, a Ghanaian NGO, has been commissioned to research constitutional and legislative provisions on environment, culture and traditional governance.



## **New groups in South Africa**

Growing interest in EJ and CEG issues has led to the formation of a new group in Cape Town. It has been set up under the umbrella of SEED Trust, coordinated by Haidee Swanby to work with interested communities on these issues in South Africa.

Meanwhile, the Living Earth learning centre in Cape Town, established by Cormac Cullinan, is taking shape as a base for experiential courses and lectures. In June, Brian Goodwin visited from the UK and gave a weekend workshop on Goetheian methods in scientific observation. More events are planned for later in the year.

## **Ethiopia: a new movement for ecological learning and community action**

Movement for Ecological Learning and Community Action (MELCA) has been established in Ethiopia, by Million Belay, Yonas Yohannes, Mellese Damtie and Mohammud Abdulahi.

Inspired by exchange visits to cultural and ecological initiatives in other African countries and the Colombian Amazon, MELCA will play an important role in the ABN, and aims to promote EJ and actions for cultural biodiversity in Ethiopia.

There are close links already with the Ethiopian Civil Service College in Addis Ababa, where students are researching traditional governance and culturally appropriate methods for protecting vital ecological areas. It is hoped that this learning will influence policy and decision-making once the students have graduated and take up posts in regional and municipal government.

At a personal level, members of MELCA have made a commitment to visit their own ancestral homes and learn more about customary law, traditional governance and biodiversity conservation in their 'places of origin'.

## **Forest protection and sustainable livelihoods in Sheka region**

Five researchers are working in the Sheka forests, in south-western Ethiopia, to assess the threats to these critical ecosystems, identify community-led solutions, and secure legal recognition for community eco-governance.

Findings will be released in October, for use in advocacy and campaigning for Sheka region, where biodiversity and traditional cultures are being threatened by large-scale tea and coffee production.

## **Wilderness and the Bale mountains**

MELCA is also working with National parks officials, local communities and schools in the Bale Mountains of Ethiopia, to initiate a wilderness programme - based on the Imbewu programme of the Wilderness Foundation in South Africa.

## **Governance and sustainability, Tigray**

Sue Edwards, Dr. Tewolde and the Institute for Sustainable Development (ISD) continue their work in Tigray, Ethiopia, on soil regeneration and ecological farming practices.

The project is reviving local bylaws and 'customary courts', to improve local governance in the region, and has been approved by the Ethiopian government as a strategy to combat land degradation, hunger and poverty in other parts of Ethiopia.

## **Cultural Biodiversity Festival**

MELCA and ISD are jointly organizing a Cultural Biodiversity Festival in Addis Ababa, in mid-September, to be attended by ABN representatives from Benin, Ghana, Kenya, South Africa and UK.

## **Kenya: opening spaces for traditional governance**

A new NGO called Porini, has been established by the Kenyan EJ Group in Nairobi and is already active within the ABN. Mburu, Wanjiku, Thiong'o and Kariuki are the founding members.

Porini aims to use experiential learning as a tool to make people more aware of the connection between existing environmental laws and methods of traditional governance.

Work is already underway with three forest-adjacent communities around the Aberdares and Mount Kenya, to support local ecological governance. Funding has been secured from Siemenpuu Foundation in Finland.

Esther Wanjiku (ABN delegation to the Colombian Amazon, in May 2005) is active in the Rift Valley; working with the Yiaaku community to show how traditional practices can be used to influence community rights and broader laws and policies.

## **Kenyan Constitution**

The new Kenyan Constitution, subject to a referendum in November, provides legal and political opportunities to develop ecological governance systems. A public forum will be organised shortly, on the new Constitution and its potential to promote cultural and ecological rights.

## **Sweden: Saami communities and local eco-governance**

*In August, Liz Hosken (Gaia) travelled to Sweden to see how local eco-governance is being approached. The visit was hosted by Anders Tivell (Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and participant in the 2005 ABN-Colombian Amazon exchange), a community in Kalix, and a Saami leader, Berit Marie.*

Sweden is developing policy initiatives that are opening up spaces for local eco-governance. A National Programme for Traditional Knowledge is also being developed to implement Article 8j on indigenous and traditional knowledge of the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD).

Saami communities in northeast Sweden face significant challenges to retain their traditional way of life and their own governance systems. One of their strategies is to develop plans based on Saami traditional ecological knowledge and governance systems. This would help to revive Saami heritage in today's context, and enable them to relate to other interest groups who are settled in the region.

In Kalix, a fishing community in north-eastern Sweden, local people face the challenge of how to develop their own plans for ecological government and convince the authorities that they have the knowledge, capacity, rights and responsibility to govern the area in which they live.

Kalix has a three-year agreement with the County Board to implement plans for a nature reserve and they are soon hoping to manage important local fishing areas.

During her visit, Liz Hosken talked about the Colombian Amazon and the COAMA programme for cultural strengthening and tropical forest protection. Martin v. Hildebrand (Colombia) has also been invited to visit, to explain how indigenous authorities are governing their territories according to traditional Earth-centred ecological principles.

There are plans to form a study group in Kalix to continue discussions around CEG in their own context.

## **Gaia Learning in the UK**

Monthly meetings, and courses, are now being held at Gaia in London. During 2005 the sessions have explored: EJ from an Ethiopian perspective (Mellese Damtie), Just Economics, (Ian Mason), Goetheian Landscapes (Brian Goodwin), and ecological governance in the Colombian Amazon.

In October, Alastair McIntosh (Centre for Human Ecology; author of "Soul and Soil") will invite discussion on Celtic mythology, ecological governance and land reform.

In November, the United Kingdom Environmental Law Association's [UKELA] is holding a Wild Law Seminar at the University of Brighton, with Michael Meacher (former UK Minister for Environment) and Jacquie McGlade (Head of the European Environmental Agency -EEA), among the guest speakers.

A series of weekend courses on Gaia Living is being organized by Charlotte Aldridge, for 2006. It will cover themes such as deep ecology, the Gaia story, Celtic traditional knowledge, permaculture.

## **Finland / Bolivia: exchange and learning**

In May, the ABN-Colombian Amazon exchange was pleased to welcome Tiina Saaresranta (Institute for Human Rights, Finland; and researcher at Kawsay University, Cochabamba, Bolivia). She works with Kawsay (see p.4) in Bolivia, on indigenous rights and ethno-education.

The Amazon experience highlighted many areas for shared learning between the indigenous groups: ethno-education and community schools; how indigenous people are managing health and cultural regeneration; local governance and political representation through traditional indigenous authorities (AATIs); and how ILO 169 has been used to strengthen territorial management over the last 20 years.

The experience has been shared with communities in Kallawaya, northern Bolivia, and with Guaraní leaders and communities in Zona Cruz province.

Tiina is linking with contacts made through Gaia and ABN, and sharing both the Kawsay initiative and her recent Colombian Amazon experience with others. She was recently in Norway for a course in indigenous rights, met with Saami contacts, and met with development organisations and interested others in Norway and Finland (including Ande Somby, Matthias Arhen, Siemenpuu Foundation, KIOS, and Snowchange, a Finnish organisation that documents and works with local and indigenous Saami communities of the Northern regions).

### **Kawsay: indigenous rights and ethno-education in Bolivia**

Kawsay, meaning “life” in Quechua, is an indigenous NGO. It aims to promote the indigenous vision of development; a full and holistic life for all being in the cosmos.

It works on identity, education, research, ecological production, human rights and governance; and is currently developing an Indigenous Inter-cultural University.

### **Colombia: indigenous rights and ecological governance in the Amazon**

The COAMA programme, established in 1989, has encouraged a process of decentralisation in the Colombian Amazon; the empowerment of local people; cultural respect and understanding; and preservation of the tropical forests. It has also provided legal consultancy to other Amazon Basin countries, on indigenous rights.

For the past two years, COAMA has hosted visits from the ABN and others, to experience first-hand the processes being developed by indigenous organisations to secure autonomy over their territories, and to develop their own, culturally and ecologically appropriate paths for education, health, territorial management and productive projects.

Two representatives from COAMA, Natalia Hernandez and Sylvia Gomez, will be attending the CEG workshop and learning in Botswana and South Africa.

### **Peru: Andean project for Peasant Technologies (PRATEC)**

Quechua and Aymara communities, in the Andes of South America, face severe hardships such as poverty (economic), exclusion and social inequality. Despite legal and constitutional frameworks that favour indigenous rights, there is disregard for Andean culture and heritage.

PRATEC is concerned about raising awareness and recognition for Andean traditional governance systems. Through a network of local organisations it promotes cultural regeneration and agri-biodiversity, including seed and traditional knowledge exchange, and training on ethno-education.

A member of PRATEC, Jorge Ishiwaza, will take part in the CEG workshops in Botswana and South Africa, to share experiences and alternatives for local and indigenous governance and practices that are Earth-centred.

