



# Community Ecological Governance

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*CEG-News provides updates on inspiring projects and initiatives from a Global Alliance for Community Ecological Governance, with partners in Africa, South America, India and Europe.*

*If you would like more information on any of the items in this edition of CEG-News, or have suggestions for future news items, please contact Guy Fisher <guy@gaianet.org>.*

## **Gates and Rockefeller “Green Revolution” exposed – by Vandana Shiva**

A stark warning was issued to African civil society organisations at the World Social Forum, in Nairobi, against the Gates and Rockefeller Alliance for a Green Revolution for Africa (AGRA) initiative.

Dr. Shiva was speaking at Africa’s first World Social Forum, held in Kenya during 20th-25th January. She highlighted the catastrophic impact of the Green Revolution in India, where GM crops, expensive agrochemicals and hybrids have taken their toll on farmers, land and food security. Levels of hunger and poverty have increased, and farmer suicides have reached epidemic rates.

AGRA is investing over £150 million on making African agriculture more dependent on chemicals, monocultures of hybrid seeds, and ultimately genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Biotechnology in agriculture will be promoted by the Gates/Rockefeller Alliance and a G8 project, through four new major biosciences research centres in Africa.

A strong statement was issued by African civil society organizations rejecting new foreign systems, such as AGRA, and the push to privatize Africa’s land and water for export crops, bio-fuels and carbon sinks. African groups pledged to intensify their work for food sovereignty, through seed saving and enhancing traditional organic systems of agriculture.

## **African Territorial Rights Alliance – launched at World Social Forum**

An open forum on the traditional territorial relationship between land and people in Africa was held at the World Social Forum, co-hosted by the African Biodiversity Network, CEMERIDE, Shalin and Gaia.

Findings were presented on the trends, impacts and responses to land privatization in Africa.

The forum also provoked debate on collective versus private land rights, and the need to promote and advocate for alternative models of land rights and tenure for African rural communities. And information was shared on working examples, where communities have managed their own resources according to Africa’s own ecological governance systems and traditions.

A three-day community meeting in Giitune, northern Kenya, preceded the forum and enabled key speakers to prepare their discourse and take community issues direct to the WSF.

## **Strengthening Africa’s Bio-Cultural Seed Diverse GM Free Zones**

The African Biodiversity Network also held a workshop on GM free zones at the World Social Forum, to strategize and discuss next steps for strengthening bio-culturally diverse GM free zones in Africa.

The African movement for GM free zones recognises the importance of rebuilding locally adapted seed diversity, farmers’ varieties and traditional seed saving knowledge.

In Ethiopia, for example, Gambella’s regional government has declared itself a “Seed Diverse and GE Free Zone” with farmers and local governments in other parts of the country are following suit.

## Eco-mapping Workshop

In November, MELCA-Ethiopia hosted an eco-mapping workshop in the Sheka Forest, southern Ethiopia, for the local community and for African Biodiversity Network (ABN) members from Kenya, South Africa, Ethiopia and Ghana.

The workshop showed the importance of mapping as a tool by communities to recognize their traditional use and occupancy of the forest, and to guide land-use management planning by authorities, communities and other stakeholders.

Eco-mapping is a dynamic and participatory way for communities to learn more about their local environment, territory and culture. It also provides opportunity for the transfer of traditional ecological knowledge from one generation to the next.



## Cultural rights, sustainable forest conservation and the law - Ethiopia

MELCA has hosted a number of workshops at the *Kebele* level on policy issues, the law and sustainable forest conservation; human rights and the environment; community rights, cultural rights and constitutional laws.

Participants from government, colleges, universities and the media attended a workshop on laws and policies related to human rights and environment, where research on the plight of Sheka Forest was presented (see “Protecting Sheka Forest – Ethiopia”).



Community training on human rights and the environment, in Menagesha Suba, had 37 participants from Masha and Anderacha *woredas*. Participants were given group cases to work on, to practice how to search for articles in the Ethiopian Constitution and relate these cases with real life.

Other workshops have been held in Masha, on community rights, cultural rights, environmental and property rights, and FDRE constitutional laws and proclamations. Participants have included eco-advocates and members of the Justice Bureau, Women’s Associations, Youth Associations, Rural Development offices and clan leaders, and the training was carried out in the local language, Shakicho.

## Protecting Sheka Forest

One of main goals for MELCA is to conserve the Sheka Forest through creating a favourable policy environment and empowering the Sheka community to actively participate in the decision-making that affects their way of life, livelihood and environment.

Community workshops have served to raise awareness among local communities about their rights on culture and on natural resource use and management. Workshops have also been organised for decision makers and law enforcers to tackle law enforcement, forest conservation and community rights in Sheka.

MELCA has taken a lead role in mobilizing a Sheka Forest advocacy coalition group. It is analyzing the role of the East African Tea Plantation (EATP) in the deforestation of the Sheka forest, and gaining public support for the future protection of Sheka Forest.

## Youth Groups Go From Strength to Strength - Ethiopia

Institute for Sustainable Development (ISD) has been busy running workshops and training sessions for youth groups in Addis Ababa, Arba Minch, Dessie and Holetta. The youngsters receive training on sustainable income-generation activities, such as bee keeping, organic vegetable production and tree nurseries.

Holetta youth group, formed by ex-members of the Holetta High School Environment Club, has now formed a cooperative selling potatoes and onions, and ISD is helping build leadership, communication and technical skills. They plan to rent an office space, to provide the group with a physical address and allow them access to land. A big problem is that local authorities abuse the assignment of land, and ISD is campaigning on this issue.

ISD also launched a campaign against the cutting down of juniper trees. The celebration and decoration of Christmas trees is not part of Ethiopia's culture, but has become increasingly fashionable among urban families bringing European traditions to Ethiopia - resulting in the cutting down of many trees.

Water harvesting, especially in Tigray, is another focus for ISD. They are currently studying how much water farmers use and how they use it. On average, farmers who have access to water have incomes 3-5 times higher than those who have access to rain, and in some areas this leads to too many wells being dug.

## African Customary Law Workshop - Botswana

The latest Customary Law Workshop in Botswana, for the African Biodiversity Network (ABN) took place in November at Ngwenyama Lodge, near Gabarone.

Twenty-three participants from six countries participated from South Africa, Colombia, Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia and Ghana. Aside from talks, discussion and a process of experiential learning, there were visits to local biodiversity areas such as the Mogonye sacred hill and forest, where participants spent the night fasting and reflecting on their relationship with nature and the environment.

## Pioneering CEG in Venda – South Africa

Mphatheleni Makaulule has been working with elders from three communities who are connected with sacred sites in Venda, South Africa.

The African Customary Law workshop in Botswana and the Eco-mapping training in Ethiopia enabled community members to meet up with the broader CEG network and deepen their understanding of the work. *“I felt connected with nature like never before in my whole life. Sharing ideas and learning with people from different countries was so important.”* (Gladys Funyfunyu, after the Botswana workshop).

Feedback from delegates to the Eco-Mapping workshop inspired the whole community about the methodology and the results it could achieve, and preparations have begun for eco-mapping in Tshiendulu Village, around Dzata, and a major mountain and cave that all Venda people consider sacred.

Local chiefs and elders of these communities have given their utmost support to the CEG process. Elder, Vho-Masuda, exclaimed, *“we must never stop these dialogues, elders want to teach youths because they are walking in darkness. In darkness they eat every thing they come across because they do not see”*.

## Working with Traditional Healer Practitioners in KwaZulu Natal

Mr. Kenneth Ngema of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa, a respected traditional healer and leader of the district council of Traditional Healer Practitioners (THPs), also took part in the ABN workshops on African Customary Law and Eco-mapping. He returned home enthused about promoting ecological governance to other Traditional Healer Practitioners, and with a deeper insight into the importance of sacred sites and territory.

The THP council is starting to look at their role in biodiversity conservation, realising that customary law, of which they are important guardians, is important for the integrity of their environment for generations to come. The ABN will partner the THP in KwaZulu Natal to begin research on sacred sites and revive customary practices around these sites.

## Ecosystem Regeneration, Cultural Diversity and Sustainable Livelihoods – Kenya

Porini, in Kenya, promotes the regeneration and protection of ecosystems, cultural diversity and sustainable livelihoods.

During 2006, Porini has been identifying areas critical to Kenya's biodiversity, ecosystems and community livelihoods, and where indigenous and local communities are eager to revive or strengthen their traditional ecological knowledge and practices.

Porini is currently working with five communities - Karima Hill in Othaya (Central province), Giitune Sacred Forest in Meru (Eastern province), Mukogodo in Laikipia (Rift Valley province), Mtito Ndooa in Kitui (Eastern province) and Malafa in Malindi (Coast province) – where the local inhabitants are now protecting their local forests, planting indigenous trees, and establishing community learning centres so that elders can share ecological knowledge with the rest of the community, particularly with the youth to ensure continuity.

Elders within the communities are the key drivers of the CEG process and are guiding every step:

- *Mzee Stephen Leriman, 80 years old, is taking the lead in the Mukogodo community and is a spokesperson for the Yaaku people. He was at the forefront of community actions that halted the takeover of Yaaku territory by the government and private developers. The women are lead by mama Naikondo Matunge.*

- *Mzee Thuku Njembui, 80 years old, is determined to see the Karima Sacred forest landing in the hands of the community. He is working with eight community members - women, youth and elders. The women's group is led by Mama Nancy Njeri Gikiiri and mama Beatrice Wanjiku Wachira, who are keen to revive Kikuyu culture, which they say is a way towards restabilising order within the community.*
- *Hdr Mzee Mrimberia Mwongo, a traditional healer and member of the council of elders, the very highest traditional authority of the Meru people, is steering the Giitune process. His passion includes healing the Giitune forest and intergenerational learning. He is supported by an environmental committee, and by elder Mzee John Rukunga, who has a private museum in his compound, accessible and free to all. The women are also reintroducing their traditional ways of learning about culture and traditions.*

There is already increased awareness and commitment, within these and other communities, to strengthening traditional environmental practices. Porini has compiled audiovisual and photographic documentation of learning exchanges and traditional rituals for protecting forest areas., and the eco-socio-cultural profiles of different forests.

This helps to inform other communities and organizations in Kenya about community ecological governance as a viable approach for sustaining livelihoods and ecosystems.



## Community Seasonal Calendars - Zoosali, Ghana

RAINS has been working with communities in Zoosali to establish and develop community seasonal calendars. The aim is to document the main characteristics of each local season, such as the Kikaa season, which is good for drying grains and processing them for storage.

Despite the considerable local and traditional knowledge about seasonal cycles, it risks being lost to future generations unless it can be recorded.

*“We are alive because the trees, mountains and water bodies are alive. When they are extinct, we will be gone forever” - Mba Jahinfo, Zoosali community*

## Beyond the Drums

‘Beyond the Drums’ is another RAINS initiative, in Ghana, to strengthen traditional festivals and celebrations. For the younger generations, festivals are a time for drumming, dancing and singing. However, there is also a strong cultural significance to the festivals, which is often forgotten.

A series of four ‘Beyond the Drums’ sessions enabled community elders to explain the origins and importance of the festivals, many of which are related to livelihoods, environmental protection, and spiritual and self-renewal. For example, the Yam Festival of the Dagombas in northern Ghana marks the period when people can consume yams without breaking any taboo.

*“I am extremely proud of our elders. They have a lot of knowledge and wisdom. We did not know all the so-called modern things we see around have roots in traditional systems and beliefs. We need to learn more them.” - Adam, 24 year old native of Zoosali.*

*“We are alive because the trees, mountains and water bodies are alive. When they are extinct, we will be gone forever” - Mba Jahinfo, elder of Zoosali.*

Meanwhile, talks are being held with youth, elders and experienced herbalists about the underlying logic for some cultural values and beliefs; and the Taimako Herbal Centre is helping RAINS to educate young people about the benefits of traditional herbalism.



## Centro de Culturas Originarias Kawsay - Bolivia

Kawsay has held its Third Inter-Cultural Learning Workshop, in February, with a focus on Aymara (indigenous) Cosmvision, popular education, and the Constituent Assembly. An Eco-production course will be held at the end of February.

In January, a course was started that aims to the capacity of indigenous organisations in Municipal Government. The course involves six workshops, each lasting three days. Participants study Andean, Western and Amazonian cosmology; indigenous movements and their struggle for nationally and internationally recognised rights; the politico-legal set-up of the Bolivian state; and development concepts. They will also draw up concrete strategic and progressive proposals to transform current Municipal Government into effective community government systems.

## Exchanges with Uruguay and Brazil

Kawsay is a member of the Future Earth Network, which includes organisations from Europe, Africa and South America, and aims to conserve and improve the state of the environment and Mother Earth for future generations. Through an exchange programme run by Future Earth, participants of the Kawsay eco-production course visit organisations in Uruguay and networks and organizations in Brazil, and later receive visitors from these countries. The exchanges serve to strengthen their knowledge about eco-production and how to recuperate ancestral practices, such as the agro-ecological management of crops.

## Indigenous Justice Comes of Age

Kawsay also informs us that the Bolivian Government has approved a Customary Justice Law to give customary law the same legal standing as ordinary judicial processes.



## Global Alliance of NGOs to Protect 'Living Rivers' - India

Navdanya has joined forces with prominent activists and international civil society groups to forge an alliance to protect rivers.

The announcement followed two days of discussions on 'Living Rivers' in November, which were organised by Navdanya and included representatives from Waterkeeper Alliance.

US activists resolved to work with Indian groups on how the decisions of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were impacting countries, and where taxpayers' money was going.

The alliance announced it would work with Indian NGOs on scientific studies and legal actions to reverse the death of rivers due to pollution. They will work on the Yamuna and Hindon Rivers, as well as the Ken-Betwa and a few rivers in the northeast, which are threatened by mega dam building. They also offered backing for alternatives to interlinking rivers and said they would lend support to grassroots movements fighting groundwater mining by Coke and Pepsi.

Dr. Vandana Shiva said:

*"The state of the water indicates how well we are as a society. This interaction was meant to explore ways to protect rivers especially in the face of several dams coming up on many rivers under the rivers linking project, policing of open wells and use of village streams in some States while Coke and Pepsi are allowed water mining for their projects."*

For more information on Waterkeeper Alliance: [www.waterkeeper.org/](http://www.waterkeeper.org/)

## Earth Jurisprudence, 'Defining the Field and Claiming the Promise' - USA

The world's first Center for Earth Jurisprudence (CEJ), based in Florida, has opened its doors. Twenty law students are enrolled and learning the core concepts and principles of Earth Jurisprudence.

Seminal texts for the students include *The Great Work* by Thomas Berry, *Wild Law* by Cormac Cullinan, and a series of articles by other leading environmental lawyers and authors.

Patricia Siemen, Director, Margaret Galiardi and Herman Greene visited the UK in November to present their work and vision for the Center. They also took part in the United Kingdom Environmental Law Association (UKELA) Wild Law Conference and Workshop, and a panel discussion at the Gaia Learning Centre in London.

The CEJ is sponsoring a three-day colloquium, 'Earth Jurisprudence: Defining the Field and Claiming the Promise', in April. Keynote presenters include Liz Hosken, Director, Gaia Foundation; Cormac Cullinan, a leading environmental lawyer from South Africa and author of *Wild Law*; and Thomas Linzey, environmental lawyer and co-founder of the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund.

For more information on CEJ: [www.earthjuris.org](http://www.earthjuris.org)

*Left to right: Herman Green, Thomas Berry, Margaret Galiardi and Pat Siemen.*





## 2nd UKELA Wild Law Conference

The second United Kingdom Environmental Law Association (UKELA) Wild Law Conference took place in November. Supporting organisations included Brighton University, Argyll Environmental, Environmental Law Foundation and the Gaia Foundation.

John Elkington (Sustainability UK) opened the conference at Brighton University, saying that the key question was how to embark on restructuring the national and international legal system to protect the environment. Cormac Cullinan (EnAct International) followed, emphasising the need for humans to find a way back to their rightful place in the rest of the Universe.

Norman Baker (MP and Liberal Democrat Environmental Spokesman) called for a World Environmental Organisation, which would protect ecosystems, and the need for drastic changes in the way the international legal framework is set. Satish Kumar (Resurgence Magazine) concluded by highlighting the fact that global warming was a symptom of the problem, not the problem in itself.

The conference was followed by an experimental weekend workshop on Wild Law and Earth Jurisprudence in the South Downs. The workshop, which was led by Liz Rivers and Cormac Cullinan, involved participants from a broad range of ages, backgrounds and countries.

A third UKELA Wild Law event is planned for September and will focus on Wild Law responses to climate change.

## Scoping CEG on the River Thames

How can local communities and river users come together with a common vision for the Thames River, London, as a unique, sustainable, habitat for wildlife and people?

This has been theme of talks between Gaia, Thamesbank, Environmental Law Foundation (ELF), and the School of Economic Science, to see how Community Ecological Governance could be applied here in the UK, on the banks of the River Thames.

A shared commitment has been made to continue connecting lawyers and legal practitioners, along with global river initiatives, to the local context on the Thames in London.

Dido Berkely, Director of Thamesbank, will draw up a scoping document of the issues affecting and impacting upon Thames communities and development in order to help clarify and determine steps for future action.

Thamesbank, which mainly works on legal aspects of environmental protection around the Thames and its tributaries, in collaboration with ELF and others, would like to ensure that policy affecting the Thames catchment area has both social justice and environmental justice concerns at its heart.

## Gaia Learning Centre - UK

In November, Gaia hosted an evening to present the new Center for Earth Jurisprudence, which has recently opened in Florida, and a panel discussion on 'Law and Governance from an Earth Centered Perspective'.

In December, an evening was held on "Animate Earth: Science, Intuition and Gaia", with Stephan Harding\*\*, who explained how Gaian science can help us to develop a sense of connectedness with the 'more-than-human' world. In his latest book, called 'Animate Earth', Stephan inspires the reader to connect with the intrinsic value of the Earth and discover what it means to live harmoniously within a sentient creature of planetary proportions.

A schedule of weekend workshops and evenings is being planned for 2007. More news coming soon!

## Earth As Community: Celebration of the Life and Work of Thomas Berry

Green Spirit, Resurgence, Be the Change, Schumacher Society and the School of Economic Science are teaming up to celebrate the work, vision and life of Thomas Berry with an event called 'Earth As Community.'

The celebration, on 15th September 2007, will feature Dr. Vandana Shiva, Cormac Cullinan, Satish Kumar, Matthew Fox and Peter Reason, discussing the importance of Thomas Berry's thinking in the realms of law, religion, economics and education, and the importance of the Great Work.

For more information on this event:  
[www.earth-as-community.org.uk](http://www.earth-as-community.org.uk)



*Left to right: Cormac Cullinan, Thomas Berry*

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## Useful Resources and Links

Center for Earth Jurisprudence, USA  
<http://www.earthjuris.org>

Community Environmental Legal Defence Fund  
<http://www.celdf.org>

Environmental Law Foundation (ELF)  
<http://www.elflaw.org>

Gaia Amazonas / COAMA, Colombia  
<http://www.coama.org.co>  
<http://www.gaiaamazonas.org>

Kawsay Centro de Culturas Indigenas  
<http://www.kawsay-unik.org>

Navdanya / Bija Vidyapeeth Learning Centre  
<http://www.navdanya.org>

PRATEC, Peru  
<http://www.pratec.org.pe>

Thamesbank  
<http://www.thamesbank.org.uk>

The Gaia Foundation  
<http://www.gaiafoundation.org>

United Kingdom Environmental Law Association  
<http://www.ukela.org>

## SPECIAL INTEREST

Earth as Community -  
<http://www.earth-as-community.org.uk>

NGO and Civil Society Blog - Shalin Suomirya  
<http://www.ngoblog.fi>

Video clip on ABN and Porin-Kenya  
<http://www.vimeo.com/clip:78458>

World Social Forum - Nairobi 2007  
<http://www.wsf2007.org>