

## **ECOVILLAGES: Providing an Exemplary Means of Implementation for Community Based Development**

An integrated, multi-sectoral community based approach to development is greatly needed to support sustainable rural, as well as impoverished urban development, in communities around the world; and thus should be included as a Primary Means of Implementation for achieving the SDGs and Post 2015 Development Agenda. Thousands of communities around the world are already demonstrating what is possible but they need much more assistance, financial and otherwise, and support.

Ecovillages provide an example of some of the most sustainable communities on Earth. For example they often include such things as: low-cost and low maintenance eco-design architecture and building practices, land and water management, ecological restoration, organic agriculture, permaculture design, renewable sources of energy, small business models, social skill meeting management, conflict resolution, hands-on university programmes hosted in our communities, worldview training, youth leadership, bio-regional outreach, urban planning, community building, crime alleviation programmes, women's social rights self-help, disaster prevention and crises management, children's educational care programs, etc.

They provide an excellent means for addressing extreme poverty, which is often found in small rural communities and impoverished urban areas, and which often experience a great deal of degradation due to the poverty and lack of sufficient resources and community planning processes.

Small communities, villages, and ecovillages, informal/impoverished urban communities, etc thus ought to be included as a key part of the focus within UN processes on Local Authorities - given that this is about as organized as such smaller communities and neighborhoods get from a governance and planning perspective.

The ecovillage model is also having a significant impact on traditional and indigenous villages throughout the world. While it is important to recognize that traditional and ancient cultures are repositories of accumulated wisdom and knowledge for living in harmony with the Earth, much also needs to be done to preserve their culture and transfer skills and technologies to strengthen their 21st century reality. Many indigenous communities have thus shown a strong interest in what is being done in ecovillage communities that they can borrow or learn from. Similarly, many indigenous communities are joining the Global Ecovillage Network and giving recognition that their communities are ecovillages as well.

The Ecovillage Design Education Curriculum and Training Program provides a

wonderful proven example for how the SDGs and Post 2015 development process can be implemented in a fully integrated and holistic manner. The EDE Curriculum provides a philosophical rationale and principles that could and ought to underlie the implementation of SDG and all other sustainable development processes - being based on social/spiritual/cooperative/community based approaches to development that honor and respect the Rio Declaration and Principles, etc.

EDE, GAIA University, and Permaculture Education provide excellent examples for how Education for Sustainable Development, Sustainable Consumption and Production practices, etc can be carried out for LifeLong Learning and transitioning to a sustainable society - especially at the community level. Indeed one can participate in an unforgettable, life changing experience by joining one of the many *Ecovillage Design Education* programs being offered in 2015 in India, Brazil, Thailand, Chile, Argentina, Latvia, Canada, Switzerland, Scotland, Germany, Denmark and elsewhere around the world. See: [gaiaeducation.net/ede](http://gaiaeducation.net/ede) for a complete list of 2015 programs.

One can also participate in an online Design for Sustainability program covering such topics as: *Personal Empowerment & Leadership, Shifting the Global Economy to Sustainability, Social Enterprises, Whole Systems Approach to Ecological Design, Awakening & Transformation of Consciousness*, etc. For more information or to enroll in Gaia Education's Design for Sustainability programme go to: <http://www.gaiaeducation.net/index.php/en/design-for-sustainability>

You can also take a closer look at what happens inside some of these programmes by visiting our [Reports](#) page or research alternative solutions & harvest hundreds of valuable insights by checking out these awesome [Case Studies](#) from around the globe:

- Design an Urban Ecovillage
- Launch a Sustainability Online Cooperative
- Create an Urban Agriculture and Sustainability Centre
- Establish a Holistic School Kitchen Garden

Senegal has even established a National Ecovillage Agency which provides a good example for how governments around the world could apply, use and support the ecovillage model of development. Similarly, the same is provided by the Millennium Villages, Small Grants Programme, Equator Project, traditional and indigenous villages etc. and also ought to be supported.

These types of communities can and do bring new and appropriate technologies to rural and impoverished urban communities ranging from installing renewable energy and access to clean water to various types of technologies needed for sustainable agriculture and biological waste treatment. They provide a great

resource for increasing capacity development, including through our educational activities and ecovillage visits. At a country level there is probably no better means for rolling out technology transfer and capacity building in villages and rural communities than using an integrated multi-sectoral community based approach like what is being done by the National Ecovillage Agency in Senegal.

**We thus recommend that the international community support and fund the development of a global network of regionally based resource and service centers, coupled with training programs, where-in each of the regional centers could provide support, services, resources and training programs to multiple local villages and communities in the area.**

Ecovillage communities like Auroville in India are already working on biosphere water management, village poverty alleviation through education, dentistry from Auroville into villages in the surrounding region, low-cost village housing schemes and other rural development programs. We have already established ecovillage living and learning centers in local communities on most continents that provide a model for what could be done around the world.

Infrastructure development is also needed just as much in small rural and impoverished urban neighborhoods as it is in more developed areas. It can be difficult to provide due to the dispersed nature of rural areas but through the development of a global network of regionally based resource and service centers we could support infrastructure development in a distributed manner along with the means to maintain it.

Such things as regenerative organic agriculture; ecological restoration; permaculture; and the ecovillage development model, practices, and processes are already helping to ensure soil health, end hunger, eradicate poverty, restore the natural environment, respond to climate change and sequester carbon, etc.

**An integrated, multi-sectoral community based approach to sustainable rural and impoverished urban development should thus be adopted and included as a primary Means of Implementation for achieving the SDGs and other sustainable development agreements.**

For more Information contact:

**Rob Wheeler  
Main UN Representative  
Global Ecovillage Network  
Rob.Wheeler@ecovillage.org**

**Global Ecovillage Network  
www.ecovillage.org**