



## GEN @ UN's CSD Meeting, 2006

As in the past few years, a senior team represented GEN at the UN's recent meeting of the Committee for Sustainable Development (CSD), now in its 14th year of charting a winding path to a more hopeful future.

The GEN team – Rob Wheeler (EcoEarth Alliance and the Earth Rights Institute), Giovanni Ciarlo (Ecovillage Network of the Americas), Liora Adler and Andy Langford (Gaia University), and Albert Bates (GEN's Senior UN Representative) – hired the use of the Dag Hammarskold library to screen 'The End of Suburbia', the award-winning Canadian documentary film about the transition away from fossil fuels. They also showed delegates a nine-minute trailer for 'Escape From Suburbia', a forthcoming

sequel depicting permaculture and eco-community options in the post-petroleum era.

The GEN team also participated in discussions on nuclear energy, climate change and education, while the GEN stand offered opportunities for CSD delegates to meet and exchange views on ecovillages and the path to sustainability.

"Working through the UN process can be slow and expensive", said Albert Bates, "but what we have discovered in the CSD is an open, creative and transparent process, a rational conversation, and a refreshing alternative to the invective and power-brokering that would otherwise be the default tools to decide the future of our planet".

For more information contact Albert, [albert@thefarm.org](mailto:albert@thefarm.org)

## ZEGG Goes Photovoltaic



*Photovoltaic panels on one of the buildings at ZEGG.*

Those clever folk at ZEGG – supported in no small measure by the clever previous red-green government in Germany – have made a significant investment in solar technology with the installation of 99 photovoltaic panels measuring 2m<sup>2</sup> (20ft<sup>2</sup>) each. The investment of €118,000 was made possible by the attractive interest rates guaranteed by the German government.

The panels were funded by loan capital raised from community members at 4% interest – below bank interest rates.

A private company has been created that will transfer ownership of the panels to the community once all loans have been repaid.

The panels generate around ten per cent of the electricity consumed by ZEGG. All of the generated power is sold directly to the grid, with ZEGG receiving more than twice as much per kWh as it pays for its own power from Greenpeace Energy.

This gives a payback period on the investment of 12 years, a bargain given that the panels have a guarantee for 25 years (and no-one truly knows their life expectancy yet, but it seems to be longer than expected). In terms of energy payback period, it is calculated that within four years the panels will have generated more energy than was involved in their manufacture and installation.

## NextGEN Meeting In Mexico

In July 2006, a group of almost 30 young people from around the world met to explore the formation of a youth wing for GEN, called NextGEN.

Here are some impressions from Jazu Stine one of the participants from that meeting:

"Within a full schedule of organizational development, time was taken to nurture the emotional and spiritual development of the group. Through games and activities a lasting bond was formed, transforming the group of individuals into a cohesive community. The group also participated in a reforestation

project – planting more than two hundred trees on the Las Cañadas reserve, creating 'The NextGEN Forest.

"Just as we planted saplings for the growth of the NextGEN Forest, we have planted seeds for the growth of the NextGEN community by beginning to plan an international conference to be held next year. The conference will be an opportunity to solidify this growing community, while celebrating our unity of purpose and diversity of background."

To become involved or learn more about the organization, please contact: [nextgenhelp@gmail.com](mailto:nextgenhelp@gmail.com)

## Dutch Sustainable Website Launched

A new website [www.bagelhole.org](http://www.bagelhole.org) has been launched by the Dutch ecovillage, Vlierhof, as a resource for community-oriented people interested in sustainability.

Bagelhole.org aims to be a nexus point for those wishing to volunteer in communities to meet in mutual co-operation, and to share information, ideas, and projects to make a living in harmony with nature and one another.

"This is a participatory site", says founder Tom Osher, "where you can both take and give. This

is a clarion call, a shout, to let you know that we exist, and we are asking you to come and share, let others know about your successes, your failures too. Let's use the internet, let's make the know-how freely available. We want your videos, photos, and text about your communities and sustainable projects. We have just added this feature to the site. So now you can send videos! Video your projects from start to finish and share them with the world. Please."

For more information contact Tom Osher: [mofwoofoo1@yahoo.com](mailto:mofwoofoo1@yahoo.com)

## Creating Colombian Ecovillages On The Web

In Bogotá, Colombia, a group has been working to form a community that plans to construct urban as well as rural ecovillages.

The novel aspect of this particular initiative is that the group-building and planning is happening online! Through a forum on Yahoo, leaders of the EcoBarrios (Eco-neighborhoods) project in Bogotá founded in 2001, have organized a virtual community that already has 130 members. They have formed working groups (food, cooking, education, economy, exploration,

etc) and are holding workshops at weekends as well as other activities.

More details on the process can be found at <http://espanol.groups.yahoo.com/group/Aldeafeliz>

The group is very excited about this process and is hopeful that this method will help facilitate the construction of more and more sustainable human settlements.

For further information please contact Skype: [carlosgomezjaramillo](https://www.skype.com/contact) or [pato@ecovillage.org](mailto:pato@ecovillage.org)



## NEWS IN BRIEF

### ITALIAN ECOVILLAGE NETWORK CELEBRATES 10th ANNIVERSARY

Happy birthday to RIVE, the Italian ecovillage network that celebrated its 10th anniversary at a summer network meeting in the Ecovillage of Pignano (Volterra, Pisa). The meeting was held in July 2006 and attended by more than 100 participants, with 10 ecovillages represented.

The programme included presentations, workshops and a Convivium™ session, a communication tool developed by the Campo Carlo project. The film 'La Comune di Bagnaia', one of the oldest Italian ecovillages, was shown.

For more information contact Paolo Battino: [battino@media.unisi.it](mailto:battino@media.unisi.it)

### THIRD WARRIORS WITHOUT WEAPONS SCHOOL

January 2007 will see the third annual School for Warriors Without Weapons in Santos, Brazil.

The vision behind this event is the creation of a youth tribe in the world with the will and the skills to transform their communities and the planet for a sustainable future. Joy, Beauty and Co-operation are the School's guiding principles. Participation in the first two sessions of the School was limited to Latin Americans. The aim is for the 2007 session to be truly international.

"The experience of ecovillages has offered us inspiration and some practical tools that are an important contribution in the learning journey of the warriors without weapons", said organiser Rodrigo Alonso, who has spent time in a number of European ecovillages and undertaken an ecovillage training programme in Brazil.

Other inspirations are Non-Violent Communication, co-operative games, sacred dances and Brazilian indigenous wisdom.

The programme is available at: [www.institutoelosbr.org.br/uav/ua2007e.htm](http://www.institutoelosbr.org.br/uav/ua2007e.htm)

For more information please contact Rodrigo Alonso: [rodrigo.rubido@hotmail.com](mailto:rodrigo.rubido@hotmail.com)

## Women Combat Urban Poverty In Colombia



*Women at Nashira Ecovillage find their own sustainable solutions.*

An exciting and innovative project in Colombia by the name of Nashira Ecovillage is seeking to pioneer a new approach to addressing poverty among urban women in Colombia – a serious problem in a country where 72.5 per cent of female-headed households (32 per cent of the total) live below the poverty line.

The project has been initiated by the NGO, Asociación Mujer Cabeza

de Familia (Association of Women Heads of Households) based around a 1.2 hectare (3 acre) plot of land in the Department of El Valle del Cauca. 88 low income women and their families who have come to the city to escape the war – and live in dismal conditions within the poverty belt of Cali and Palmira – have been working the land over the last three years. Now lemon, orange, tangerine,

plantain and Nonie trees are in full production. The women have built their own vegetable beds and compost heaps and are in the process of harvesting worms for organic feeding of poultry and fish. Through a government programme they have been provided with units to rear rabbits, guinea pigs, ducks, quail and poultry, which they use as a source of protein or to barter with. The group is also planning to build housing.

The Nashira project goes beyond offering just a house by seeking to provide a better quality of life, offering a secure and nutritious supply of food within the compound, an environmentally friendly atmosphere and a source of income through the development of workshops where women can manufacture their own products. The Asociación has been in charge of marketing their products but the women feel it is important to develop links to international markets, not only to sell their products but also to promote the organic food produced in the compound and this unique development model.

For further details, contact Angela: [atadol@aol.com](mailto:atadol@aol.com)

## GAIA University Launches In Europe

Experts from 13 nations – amongst them Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Sweden, Slovenia, Brazil, U.K. and Colombia – met in Lebensgarten Ecovillage, Germany from 25-27 August 2006 at the first meeting of the Advisory Board of Gaia University. They were joined by a diverse mix of Gaia University Associates (students).

Andreas Goetz, Mayor of Steyerberg in Lower Saxony where Lebensgarten Ecovillage is located, welcomed the 18 attending Advisory Board members, the founders of Gaia University, Liora Adler and Andy Langford, the Associates, local organisers and more than 50 guests at a gala celebration.

"From my point of view what you and your allies have achieved is a sensation. Steyerberg, this small village in Lower Saxony, becomes a University location. I am very proud of this," said Goetz, addressing Declan Kennedy, Chair of the Advisory Board and main organiser of the event. He promised any possible support needed for the ambitious project.

The Advisory Board members presented their projects and skills and compiled their first supportive ideas into working groups concerning IT management, learning and programme design, and EU accred-



*Gaia University founders and various members at Lebensgarten Ecovillage.*

itation and funding. Powerful ideas around the development of an interest free loan fund, an internal internet based LETS system, the development of a doctoral degree committee and a special program for retired persons were among the proposals to be developed.

Both Advisory Board members and Associates are in partnership to support the global vision of Gaia University as a network of regional centres for the distribution of world

changing knowledge and skills based on the permaculture and ecovillage principles of Earth Care, People Care and Fair Share.

The Advisory Board, which now has more than 60 members, also met in October 2006 at the Gaia CERTN, The Farm, Tennessee, USA and we hope to report on that in the next issue of *PM*.

For further details contact: [info@gaiainiversity.org](mailto:info@gaiainiversity.org) or view [www.gaiainiversity.org](http://www.gaiainiversity.org)