Ecovillage Climate Solutions and Sustainable Energy for All

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Ecovillages provide an innovative approach and an excellent means for addressing climate change while helping to achieve access to sustainable energy for all. The Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) and many of its ecovillage communities have pioneered many exemplary technologies, best practices and success stories that the international community would do well to support, replicate and scale up. Many of these examples are described and profiled in a special web section that GEN created for the Paris Climate Summit at: www.ecovillage.org/climatesolutions.

This includes articles, photos, and design plans for such applications as solar food dryers, biogas digesters, mini-grids, solar hot water systems, passive solar green houses, solar water pumps, clean cook stoves coupled with production of bio-char for carbon sequestration, natural and energy conserving green buildings and materials, natural ventilation systems, etc. Such technologies are also featured in GEN's Solution Library which is now being upgraded at: http://solution.ecovillage.org.

GEN suggests that humanity will not be able to provide sustainable energy for all unless we rapidly scale up renewables while at the same time capturing much of the carbon that has already been released into the atmosphere and sequestering it in soils and plants, while also reducing consumption levels in the developed world and among the privileged classes in the developing world.

This will likely require such things as are typically practiced in ecovillage communities which help to limit our energy usage while also creating regenerative systems such as transitioning to organic and eco-restorative agriculture, reducing our consumption of meat and adopting healthier diets, reducing wastes through biological waste treatment and reuse, and the use of integrated planning processes, green building and permaculture design.

Since the dawn of agriculture humanity has released far more carbon to the atmosphere from soil disruption, desertification, and deforestation than from fossil fuels. So now we have the opportunity to reverse the process and rebuild and sequester megatons of carbon in soils and plants.

The safest and most effective approach is to capture it with millions of species of green plants, animals, insects, fungi and micro-organisms, burying it deep in soils in carbon-

rich molecules that are stable for centuries or longer. And because complex organic carbon molecules retain many times their weight in water, we can also restore vibrant life to billions of acres of parched, desertified areas that were once healthy forests or grasslands.

In the process we can also restore large and small scale water cycles, thus reversing the disruptions coming from the increasing impacts of droughts, floods, and wildfires, etc due to climate change.

It is thus essential that financing for sustainable development, eco-system restoration and distributed renewable energy systems be scaled up in the areas where it is needed most: rural communities and informal settlements particularly in the developing world.

The Global Ecovillage Network is in the earlier stages of developing a PanAfrican and a Global Ecovillage Development Programme which assist villages and communities in transitioning to more sustainable, resilient and regenerative practices. The program brochure and description can be downloaded at www.ecovillage.org/cop22. We are seeking to develop partnerships with national and local governments and with civil society organizations in developing the programmes and have already done so in a number of countries around the earth.

GEN, in collaboration with it's sister organization, GAIA Education has also developed an Ecovillage Design Education Curriculum and Training Programs that have been held in more than 42 countries around the globe. These training programs are used as a part of the planning process in developing community transition strategies in the Ecovillage Development Programmes. We have also put together an Ecovillage Consultancy with experts that are available to help any community transition to more sustainable practices and processes - including in the areas of access to sustainable energy, green building, ecosystem restoration, etc. Again see: www.ecovillage.org/cop22.

GEN has also developed a Community Sustainability Assessment Survey which is available for download on our website. We have found that ecovillages typically use less than half of the energy and other resources found in other communities in the same region, while greatly improving on the quality of life and living more harmoniously with nature. We are now carrying out a project to measure the ecological and other impacts found in first 30 and then 100 of our leading ecovillage communities.

GEN is taking steps towards achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and increasing access to sustainable energy in all of our program activities. If you are interested in working with GEN or in finding out more about our network and project activities please contact us at:

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www.ecovillage.org/climatesolutions