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Dear friends of ecovillages, dear ambassadors, members, allies throughout the world,

Two major crises of our time - climate change and the refugee crisis – are intertwining to reach historical dimensions. People the world over - and all beings of nature – are existentially threatened, with nowhere to turn to.

Climate change, in the guise of a [long-term drought](#) from 2006-2011 was one of the factors that lead to the war in Syria.

In the past three years, the number of people boarding rickety fishing boats – leaving Myanmar and Bangladesh for countries further south in south-east Asia –[has tripled to 63,000 people in 2015](#). More than a million refugees have crossed into Europe in that same period! The face of our planet is changing forever. GEN is responding.

In many countries, ecovillages and activists have put themselves at service and found ways to help. Coming from the power of community, years of experience in self-organisation, and commitment to life and our planet, GEN as a network offers numerous examples of best practise in terms of a fossil-free future on the one hand and integration of migrants and refugees on the other.

GEN was actively present at the Climate Conference in Paris in December, both in the official zone, and sharing a booth with other organisation focussing on community-led change in the NGO area. The need for strong binding agreements and good governance that help to spread solutions and implement the aim of keeping temperature rise beneath a rise of 1.5 degrees is obvious.

Also, GEN has committed itself to giving immediate help: on the Greek island Lesbos, RefuGEN - a GEN initiative – is committed to having a presence of at least 5 volunteers for half a year to help refugees from Syria, Afghanistan and other countries to arrive safely in Europe. With this we follow one of the last wishes of our beloved Hildur Jackson, co-founder of GEN, who passed away in 2015.

Maybe New York's writer and Occupy philosopher Daniel Pinchbeck was right when he called the present crisis a chance for an initiation for humankind. An initiation is defined as a series of challenges which - when we respond to them with our full, heartfelt presence - empower us in the end to enter a new level of our development. In this case we can hope that responding to

current crises might lead to an evolution of humanity as far as compassion, cooperation with nature, and true solidarity are concerned. In this GEN International Newsletter we offer examples from all over the world that showcase the implementation of local change towards a global shift.

In community,
Kosha Joubert (Executive Director)
Leila Dregger and Jenefer Marquis (editors)

NEWSLETTER TOPICS

1. Fossil Free Future

[As-One Community, Japan:](#)
[Auroville, India](#)
[Carbon Farming](#)
[Damanhur, Italy](#)
[Earthaven, USA](#)
[Ecovillages in Tanzania](#)
[GEN at COP21, France](#)

2. Refugees

[A New Home for Refugees](#)
[Heart Communication with Refugees](#)
[With RefuGEN on Lesbos](#)

3. GEN International

[Co-Act: Together Network](#)
[Green Phoenix 2015](#)
[Join Friends of GEN](#)

4. News from the Regions

[First Ecovillage Network Forum China](#)
[GEN-Africa Strategy Meeting](#)
[Greece: Alternative Economy](#)
[Mexico: The Power of Grandmothers](#)
[The First EDE Course in Palestine](#)
[Turkey](#)
[ZEGG-Forum USA 2015 Tour](#)

1. Fossil Free Future



As-One Community, Japan:

Could our community be fossil-free by 2020?

Chasing economic growth has brought material wealth to Japan but also caused social problems and serious environmental challenges, such as climate change. Hiroko Katayama reports.

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Auroville, India

Renewable Energy in Auroville

Auroville, a growing international township near Puducherry on the Coromandel Coast in India, is an inspiring model for sustainable practices and ecologically-responsible living. Founded in 1968, Auroville is based on the vision of The Mother from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and is endorsed by UNESCO and Government of India as an ongoing experiment in human unity. Over the years, Auroville has won international acclaim for its efforts in social and environmental sustainability.

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Carbon Farming

The Best Way to Sequester Carbon and Reverse Global Warming

Many ecovillage communities have been experimenting with different means of carbon farming and have gone well beyond carbon neutral to become net-negative carbon communities. These villages provide best practices models for sequestering billions of tons of carbon and reversing global warming.

[Essential Reading](#): GEN Representative to the United Nations, Rob Wheeler, brings you stories of success from ecovillages around the world. We think it's a must-read!

[*Read more*](#)



Damanhur, Italy

Food from the Earth

Eating locally sourced, organic foods is one solution to reducing fossil fuel consumption. For ecovillages, this means growing your own food on your own farms and gardens. Creating a food supply for hundreds of people means finding the balance between producing in quantity with attention to variety and quality, while maintaining purity in the physical production and in intention.

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Earthaven, USA

Almost Fossil-Free: The Hut Hamlet Neighborhood at Earthaven Ecovillage

Could Earthaven Ecovillage in the southern Appalachian Mountains of the US become, as GEN advocates, "Fossil-Free by 2020"? Diana Leafe Christian reports.

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Ecovillages in Tanzania

Innovative Climate Interventions in African Villages

Ecovillages in Tanzania have the potential to lead the way in adopting an integrated approach to climate mitigation and adaptation while adding to climate resiliency. An article by Michael Farrelly, programme coordinator, Tanzania Organic Agriculture Movement, with introductory comments by Rob Wheeler, United Nations Representative, GEN, and Tim Clarke, GEN Ambassador.

[*Read more*](#)



GEN at COP21, France

"These are our friends that are being existentially threatened."

A GEN delegation of more than 15 leaders participated in the United Nations Climate Conference in Paris this December. Through our participation, we explored the questions: what role do ecovillages have in climate change and what do we seek to accomplish?

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2. Refugees



A New Home for Refugees

In this Moment, in Heilhaus Kassel...

Founded by Ursa Paul 25 years ago, the Heilhaus Kassel Community was created with the vision of being a spiritual home, offering a place for all stages of the lifecycle: birth, living, and dying. Alfred Hohmann reports on their experience welcoming refugees.

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Heart Communication with Refugees

If I don't deal with the fears in myself, I am all too ready to project them on to others.

"If I don't deal with the fears in myself, I am all too ready to project them on to others," writes Dolores Richter of the ZEGG Community of Bad Belzig, Germany. She explores the question: how can we communicate with people from a different culture who have lost everything?

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With RefuGEN on Lesbos

Nothing prepares you for Moria

RefuGEN was created by GEN Europe to help support refugees arriving in Lesbos, Greece - more than 1,000 arrive to the island daily. GEN has established a volunteering hub on the island, committing volunteers through June 2016. Leila Dregger of the Tamera Ecovillage shares her experience as one of RefuGEN's first volunteers.

Want to help?

Click here to [volunteer](#).

[Donate](#) (all RefuGEN efforts are volunteer).

[**Read more**](#)

3. GEN International



Co-Act: Together Network

Dialogue with all Actors

The TOGETHER network has launched the CO-ACT project to counterbalance the power of economic lobbies by using radically different methods. Considering that co-responsibility not only includes local actors but also public policy makers and legal frameworks at other levels, it is not enough to apply pressure with technical reports, by connecting with high-level contacts, etc.

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Green Phoenix 2015

Deep Sharing among Communities

"We are all refugees, migrating from one Earth to a new Earth" said someone during the harvesting of a silent meditative walk in the rich and magical woody mountains surrounding the Center for Unity Schweibenalp. It was during the Green Phoenix congress, initiated 5 years ago by the founder of the Center for Unity Schweibenalp, Dr. Sundar Robert Dreyfus.

[**Read more**](#)



Join Friends of GEN

Support what is close to your heart: GEN Small Projects Campaign

You can be part of making sustainable dreams come alive in 2016! All around the world there are

communities and people doing amazing work to take care of people and the planet. There are incredible examples of the restoration of degraded ecosystems, rivers and lakes; the rebuilding of community support 'nets'; the recognition of elders knowledge and ancestral wisdom; the development of economic activities and systems that create solutions and not just problems, to name a few.

[**Read more**](#)

4. News from the Regions



First Ecovillage Network Forum China

"Green land and pure water is the true wealth"

The Sunshine Ecovillage Network Forum of China held its first meeting in October 2015. Dorota Owen reports.

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GEN-Africa Strategy Meeting

Resilient communities as a seed of hope and abundance for Africa

Representatives from the GEN Africa Council, Advisory Board and from the national networks from different countries came together in Sekem, Egypt, from the 15th – 20th December 2015.

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Greece: Alternative Economy

A Crisis can Turn into a Chance

The SKALA Ecovillage leverages the economic crisis in Greece as a chance to learn about and implement alternative economic systems. SKALA co-founder Anna Filliopu reports.

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Mexico: The Power of Grandmothers

The Story of Kalpulli and Grandmother Hope

The Power of Grandmothers can create and maintain healthy communities - just like this one from Mexico, collected and translated by Tracy Barnett.

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The First EDE Course in Palestine

Waters of Hope – Nourishing the Heart of Sustainability

In November 2015, the first Ecovillage Design Education (EDE) course took place in Palestine: two weeks of learning, sharing, and community empowerment. The village of Farkha has great promise for becoming a model of sustainable ecological development.

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Turkey

Can we Try to Become Healers of these Souls?

"Peace at home and peace in the world," was the motto of Turkey's founder Ataturk. Turkey is currently riled with violence and aggression. Inci Gokman explores the question: "Can we try to become healers of these souls?"

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ZEGG-Forum USA 2015 Tour

"Deepening Community - Deepening Love"

Founding members of ZEGG, Ina Meyer-Stoll and Achim Ecker embarked this October on a teaching tour in intentional communities in California, Colorado, and New York under the theme of living in a community embraced by love, partnership, and friendships.

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*Please email feedback about the newsletter or suggestions for our next issue
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