



Gaiaeducation  
design for sustainability

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# Sustainable Kartong: Eco-village Development and Responsible Tourism



21<sup>st</sup> February-20<sup>th</sup> March 2014

The Gambia



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## EDE Article

This EDE was the culmination of a long held dream that originated in 2007 when the Secretary General of the Village Development Committee of Kartong attended an EDE in Findhorn. It was soon recognised that sending a lone participant to attend an EDE in a foreign land was not enough to build resilience in a community struggling to survive in the face of multiple challenges to the environment, culture, community and economy. The dream was to hold an EDE in Kartong and build a critical mass of expertise and support for the hero's journey towards sustainability. Years went by and strenuous efforts were made to secure funding for an EDE with no results.

The breakthrough came when Sandele hosted, Kosha Joubert and Robin Alfred for their honeymoon. They give up three days to assist us in hosting the Kartong village elders and delegates from GEN Africa and GEN Senegal for a day long workshop. This led to the signing of an accord to explore Kartong becoming an eco village. The village gave a resounding 'yes' and the running of the EDE was a perfect first step. Having experienced this event, it is hard to imagine how a traditional village can make a transition from where it is now without the groundwork of inspiring a critical mass of people and giving them the space to dream, plan, do and celebrate using EDE principles.

Kartong is a special place, with a wealth of hitherto unrecognised assets including unspoilt and deserted beaches and great tourism potential. The two hoped for outcomes of the course were to provide proposals of how the village can move towards becoming an eco village and a plan for the tourism zone in the Kartong area. The impact started before the course with the selection process. Non-Violent Communication workshops and several women's gatherings took place to ensure that they were well supported during the course. Regular consultations with the elders of the village were critical to the success of the outcomes and our thanks go to those who gave (and continue to give) their great support at village level.

At the graduation celebration the two proposals were received to rapturous applause and a commitment of support from the elders of the village and government representatives present.

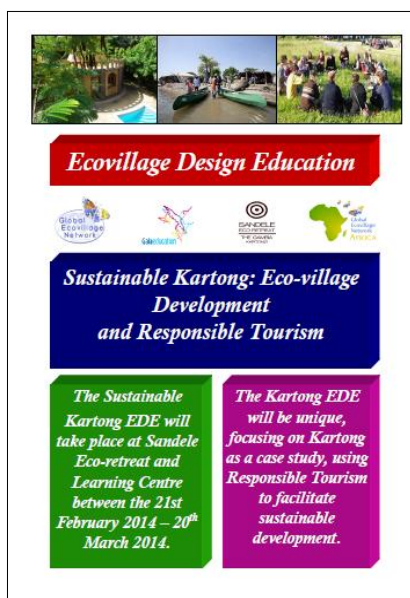
The EDE challenges were many, but these were far outweighed by the inspiration, fun and learning. The greatest gift of course, is the knowledge and wisdom gained by our tribe of enthused trainers who will be taking forward their new found skills and expertise into the village of Kartong.

As a footnote, we are delighted that our international participants brought so much and reported that they gained so much. One is still unexpectedly with us and another is planning to be back full time before long, thereby confirming that Kartong is a place that you can 'come but never leave!'

## The Selection Process

In the months leading up to the EDE, the team consulted with the community and sensitised them about the training, GEN and GAIA. Negotiations also took place concerning how the selection process would be carried out with complete transparency. After discussions with key stakeholders in the community a selection panel was formed. As part of the selection process the EDE was promoted through further sensitisation in the village and a flyer was prepared (see below). The process involved two stages; the first was a pre screening which took place on the 30<sup>th</sup> of November 2013. The purpose of this was to ensure that the applicants' levels of written and spoken English were sufficient and that they were clear about the requirements. 46 members of the community attended. They received a presentation on GEN and the Ecovillage Design Education course. They then had individual interviews and answered a written question. The selection panel accepted 17 applications straight onto the course to ensure representation and diversity. Thereafter 14 applicants were selected to attend the second stage of the selection process which involved three activities. One activity looking at teamwork and the other two concerned problem solving abilities. From there, three applicants were selected and five were put onto a waiting list. Fortunately it was possible for all five attend the course.

In order to further prepare the Kartong participants for the EDE, the Sandele Facilitation team ran a series of workshops on Non Violent Communication. The team also facilitated a women's group for the female village participants to create a safe space to share concerns, build a support network for each other and to work on presentation skills. The participants responded extremely well to the workshops and felt they were given the tools to be in their community and within themselves more peacefully.



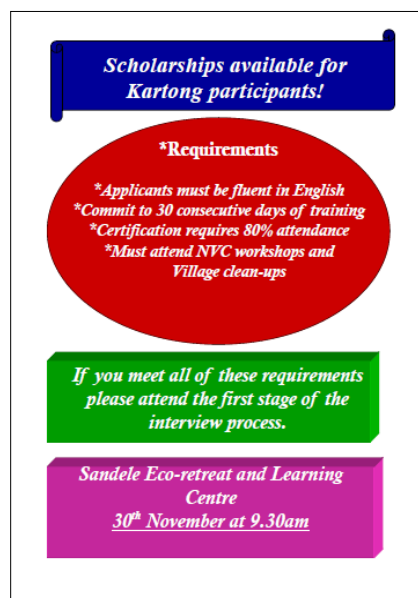
**Ecovillage Design Education**

Global Ecovillage Network | Sandele | Africa

**Sustainable Kartong: Eco-village Development and Responsible Tourism**

The Sustainable Kartong EDE will take place at Sandele Eco-retreat and Learning Centre between the 21st February 2014 – 20th March 2014.

The Kartong EDE will be unique, focusing on Kartong as a case study, using Responsible Tourism to facilitate sustainable development.



**Scholarships available for Kartong participants!**

**\*Requirements**

- \*Applicants must be fluent in English
- \*Commit to 30 consecutive days of training
- \*Certification requires 80% attendance
- \*Must attend NVC workshops and Village clean-ups

If you meet all of these requirements please attend the first stage of the interview process.

Sandele Eco-retreat and Learning Centre  
30<sup>th</sup> November at 9.30am





## The 2014 Kartong EDE family



Our family was made up of 32 participants and 9 Faculty/facilitators. 27 of the participants came from Kartong . They had known of each other for most of their lives but had never had the opportunity to get to know each other on the level that they did throughout the EDE. The Kartongkas welcomed our international participants from Holland, Brazil, Togo and a member of the Gambia Tourism Board (who ended up staying with one of the participants in Kartong during the month). The participants were made up of 11 women and 21 Men, Christians, Muslims and a full representation of all tribes in the Village. This was fundamental in healing separations in the village by gaining a deeper understanding between the different social, gender and ethnic groups. Age ranged from 19 to 57. PLUS Kiki and Providence our two EDE babies. The diversity within the group provided a rich experience for all.



## Daily Rhythm

To begin the Month each participant drew an Angel Card. This quality reflected the energy they were to embody for the EDE. The group also drew one card for the EDE itself -

***Patience.*** Evidently this quality describes very well the theme of the month. The intense experience of being together every day, tackling sensitive, complex issues, testing boundaries and knowledge, much patience was needed and much was given.

The Kartong EDE day started at 08:00 with the arrival of the Kartong participants on the bus from the Village. Everyone gathered, together with the international participants. Each morning the group were given the choice of a 30 minute practice of Yoga, Meditation or walking meditation. Yoga became a very popular practice with the participants, many of whom had never previously experienced the practice. The group had ½ an hour for breakfast with the morning session starting at 9:30 till 13:00 with a coffee break in between. Morning sessions involved mostly theory, interactive learning or role plays.

In keeping with the EDE tradition there was a strong focus on communication through announcements, participant feedback from previous or current activities and celebration in the form of singing, dancing and games.



Lunch was at 13:00, participants also used this space for personal time or prayer. The afternoon session started at 14:30, some involving practical sessions, on site, in the Village or group work on projects. At 17:00 there was another break for prayer or personal time. Between 17:30 and 18:30 participants had Kabilo (group) meetings to check in or discuss important issues. The evening sessions ran from 19:30- 21:00 and were used for films, participant presentations or singing/story telling round the camp fire on the beach. There were five free evenings throughout the month, Fridays were free and Sundays started at 11:30 to allow Christian participants to attend church.



There were two full day excursions, one to Tunbung Art Village where the late Etu shared his appreciation for his heritage and how his work was inspired by the natural environment. Participants reconnected with nature and created three group art pieces using natural or recycled materials. Many came away with a fresh perspective on nature and their own creativity. Another excursion was arranged to Lemon Creek Hotel to see their method of organic farming. The same day we then went further up country to Bwiam, St Josephs Family Farm where Farther Sean talked about the challenges of working with NGO's and donor funding. The group also spent half a day in Kartong researching sites of interest.. Total contact time was 178 hours, 105 of theory, 42 of which were practical, and 31 of which involved group work.



## Responsible Tourism

One of the outcomes for the EDE was to develop a plan for the Tourism Development Area which encompasses Kartong. (Kartong is designated as an Ecotourism site in The Gambia and receives many tourists every year owing to its natural environment and rich culture.) It was important for the course to address the issues around tourism development especially within the context of a rural community with a fragile environment. Adama Bah (Responsible Tourism award winner of The Gambia) joined the EDE for a day to raise awareness about the dangers of tourism development and advised on how to maximise the benefits to generate income and engage in meaningful encounters with other cultures. The participants also had the opportunity to experience being a tourist for the day which was a powerful change of perspective for them. By changing roles they could appreciate why people from other parts of the world would travel thousands of miles to experience the village and their community. A sense of pride and wealth was instilled in many that day.



## Highlights and Challenges



### *Ecological*

One of the main challenges for the Ecological Dimension was the travel delay suffered by our core Permaculture facilitator, Paul Yeboah. However when he finally arrived Paul, inspired many with the power of Permaculture! A high point during this dimension was a commitment from the participants to 'Green' their compounds and encourage others in the village to join them.



### *Social*

A high point for the group was the decision to support the existing social structures in the Village. A difficulty we faced was facilitating consultations with the village on the process and the projects developing during the month.

### *Culture*

Through looking closely at the culture and traditions of the community of Kartong, many of the participants began to realise how rich and precious their heritage is. However this exercise also highlighted how much they have lost already. This realisation was painful for many.



### *Economic*

During the Economic Dimension we introduced the Wealth Indicators activity. Many of the participants realised there was much more to wealth than money and how blessed they truly are. The details of how the global economy works were challenging for some of the participants.







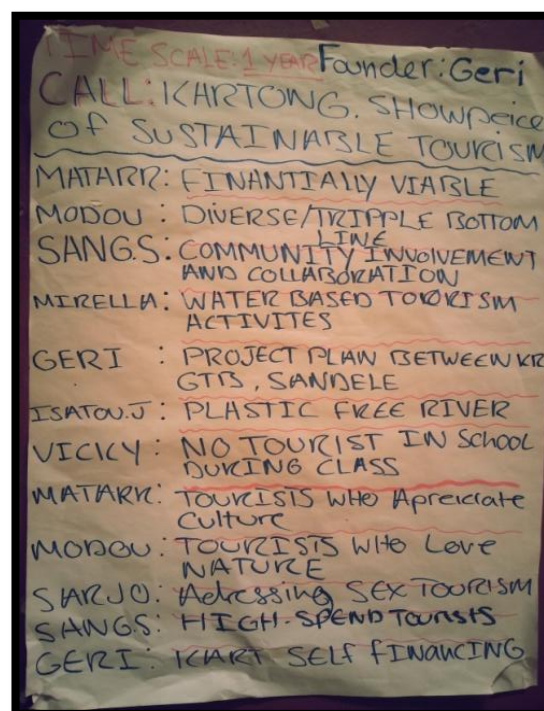
## Project Groups

In order for the group to move forward with solid project plans Kosha introduced Dragon Dreaming. This process allowed participants to understand the fundamentals of project development and to reflect on how they could best serve others and where their passion lies. This process also demonstrated how each individual is of value in different parts of the process. Many participants also learned that the model can be applied to a diverse range of scenarios in their personal and professional lives.



*Dragon Dreaming*

Five project groups were formed as a result of the Dragon Dreaming process. (Local Economy, Village Cohesion, Cultural Development, Permaculture, Overall Village /development including Tourism).. The groups began dreaming for each of these areas and formulated goals that encompassed these dreams. However as the process evolved the group decided that it would be more appropriate for the Project Groups to be based around the Four Dimensions with a fifth group for the Integral Design. The project groups were given an hour almost every day to come together and refine objectives and next steps (See Appendix 1-5). Each project group also presented to the wider group for feedback and adjustments.

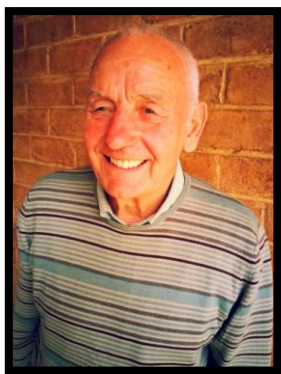


*Tourism Dreams*



## Faculty and Facilitators

*Maurice Philips*



“The one who makes all the class laugh and the way he teaches is well understood and his practical’s are done well and helpful.”

*Vicky Stallwood*



“What would we have done without this woman who was the anchor of the team, our inspirational meditation leader and all round person who made the whole thing hang together”

*Mark Taplin*



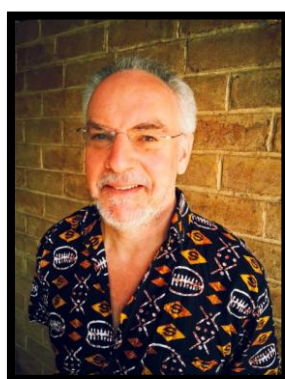
“Mark's contributions were so vital throughout the course. We were able to get a lot from him. I was in the same Kabilo with him and he is great. Thanks Mark.”

*Gilbert Jassey*



“Gilbert is an inspiring young man who is ready to learn and to teach others”

*Robin Alfred*



“What a wonderful man with a beautiful love and care for the world.”

*Geri Mitchell*



“Geri has a wealth of diverse knowledge. Her spiritualism changes life for the better”



***Kosha Joubert***



“A gifted somebody. All her work was well recommended. Her lecturing, organisation and response to questions were all important. She has upgraded my life to another level. Thanks Kosha.

***Bobby Bethall***



“A woman with a set of skills destined for an EDE. She supported participants with their presentation skills, Introduced some very entertaining games and captured many beautiful moments on camera.”

***Paul Yeboah***



“Paul is a great man. He opened his heart to anybody. He helped us to know how to grow and how to make manure for the plants and helped us to know about medicine plants”



## The Celebration!

On the day of certification the participants worked together to create a day which honoured the journey that had been taken and to signal the start of positive change for Kartong. Key stakeholders from the Village attended the celebration, including, The Alkarlo, The Village Elders, religious leaders and the Board of the Village Development Committee. The Director General and Director of Development of The Gambia Tourism Board also came to show their support. Some of the participants formed a Drama Group which performed at the celebration. The message of the drama stressed the importance of Organic farming methods and banning the use of plastics. The Drama also addressed some issues around cultural sensitivity in regards to tourism. This proved a very effective (and humorous) way of bringing awareness and communicating some important lessons learned on the EDE.



The Tolle Kaffoo

No Celebration in Kartong is complete without these women present.



Certification and Dancing!



The participants held audience to the wider community and government officials, They presented in local language on the EDE and the project proposals for Kartongs Transition into becoming an Eco-village and plans for the Tourism Development Area. The Village Stakeholders had been consulted previously on these proposals and had come to agreement on the outcomes. The Director of The Gambia Tourism Board congratulated the participants on their hard work and stated that he had, 'No choice but to accept the proposal for the TDA'

## Participant feedback

Strengths	Weaknesses
Kabilos	Changes to time table
Morning sessions (Yoga, Mediation, Walking Meditation)	More sessions in community and excursions
Participant diversity	Unfinished sessions
Peaceful atmosphere	Tight timetable

*"I have never seen a EDE so packed full of information".*

*"It's really helped me and I feel like a university graduate with all the knowledge that my facilitators have imparted"*

*"I now understand the meaning of sustainability in a community. It has inspired me to go back to my family farm that is not in use and bring abundance in food and income".*

*"This Course is teaching me how to be a human being".*

## Lessons Learned

Issue	Action
Uncertainty regarding EDE structure	Have final plan confirmed prior to the start of the EDE
Late/no arrival of Key Faculty	Flights confirmed for Key Faculty Prior to the Start of the EDE
Lack of understanding of the EDE among the community	a) Further consultation prior to EDE and weekly feedback sessions from participants to Key Stakeholders in the Community.  b) Some sessions held in the Village with Key stakeholders
Administratively and logistically demanding	There must be a strong onsite support team



## Where are we now?

Since the EDE a great deal has happened. The EDE group is meeting monthly and non-violent communication sessions are taking place. Kartong EDE has become "Kartong Ecovillage Network (KEN)" and a decision has been made for KEN to become an NGO.

A board of Trustees has been democratically appointed, a Facilitation Group continues to plan meetings and the Project Groups referred to in the Appendix are meeting regularly.

In early May the Fangdema group plus Geri and Vicky went "walkabout" to interesting villages in The Gambia and Senegal as part of their continuing education about eco-village development. The visits were funded by a crowd funding initiative led by Rowena and the group returned much enriched from their experiences.

It is not all plain sailing. There is concern among some in the village about the appearance of a group that is interested in development in areas that not everyone fully understands. Meetings have been held with key village groups and individuals and continuing consultation is a key principle within KEN.

The EDE meeting on 10th May spent some time discussing the impact the group is likely to have and how best to react sensitively to local concerns.

Overall, KEN is thriving and the EDE momentum is being maintained. The group remains very strong and united and the enthusiasm to pursue a "developed Kartong" is very much alive and well.





## APPENDICES

### **KARTONG KAMBENG KAFOO** *\*Bringing the Community together*



*Sarjo Ebrima Isatou Ernest James*

### Vision

To create a **vibrant** and **unified** community where the residents embrace **diversity**, promote **tolerance** and **peaceful** coexistence and treasure the **environment**.

### Goals

1. Build partnership between different stakeholders in the community.
2. Provide a youth centre where the community can come together and socialise.
3. Encourage all tribes to be represented in the Village Development Council
4. Encourage high standards of respect and co-operation among the community.
5. Promote gender equality and female participation at all levels of decision making in the community.
6. Network effectively with partners and stakeholders to ensure a thriving local economy.
7. Provide opportunities for individual self-development.
8. Support community development initiatives.
9. Enhance the utilisation of local resources.



***FANGDEMA KAFOO: SELF-HELP GROUP***  
***\*Economic Abundance for Kartong***



*Rowena    Maurice    Tiya    Kabiro    Mirella    Samuel    David*

**Vision**

Kartong will enjoy **economic abundance** by 2025 specifically through the development of **chemically free local products**.

**Goals**

1. By January 2015 Fangdema is an established entity.
2. By January 2015 Kartong has a community website that includes a section for Fangdema.
3. By January 2017 Kartong will have a successful business incubation unit.
4. By January 2020 Kartong will have a community banking system.
5. By January 2020 value is added to all Kartong local products.
6. By January 2020 all Kartong products are chemically free.



## ***KARTONG JUSU KUNGO***

***\*Plan for a resilient heart for our community***

*Andrew    Alagie    Abbubacar    Matarr    Sang. S*



*Isatou    Geri    Mustapha*

### Vision

Living in a community where **ecological abundance reigns**, our **culture is revived** and all our **stakeholders are economically vibrant**.

### Goals

1. To propose a Community Resilience plan, made by a partnership of Kartong, the G T Board and Sandele, that can be presented to the elders of Kartong for their contribution by the 20<sup>th</sup> March 2014.
2. To attract major donor funding for the development of eco-tourism in Kartong.
3. To develop a website by March 2015 that will promote the development initiatives of Kartong.





## *NAH CHOSHANO*

### *\*Awakening our Culture*

*Malang Susan Omar*



*Mary*

*Vicky*

### Vision

We envision Kartong to be a place where every tribe is proud and celebrates their culture and keep our heritage alive!

### Goals

1. All tribes having a voice in the village
2. Kartong Festival celebrating all tribes in Kartong
3. Written history of Kartong
4. Organising cultural events
5. Showcasing traditional crafts
6. Using traditional wisdom to solve conflicts between gardeners and animal owners



## ***KARTONG ECOVILLAGE PERMACULTURE INSTITUTE***

### ***\*Rich and Abundant food for Kartong***

*Sang. C*

*Gilbert*

*Paul*



*Martha*

*Betty*

*Mai*

*Joseph*

*Binta*

### Vision

To make Kartong the food basket of The Gambia.

### Goals

1. Permaculture Farming
2. Establishment of Community reforestation nursery
3. High garden production
4. Permaculture training
5. Implementation of Rocket stoves throughout the community



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