

The Gaia Foundation



What characterises The Gaia Foundation?

The Gaia Foundation (Gaia), founded in 1984, is committed to empowering local and indigenous communities to recuperate and enhance their traditional knowledge and ecological governance systems.

We cannot solve a problem with the same thinking that created it

Our work began in the Colombian Amazon, in alliance with NGO partners and indigenous elders. Twenty years later, the indigenous people are legal guardians of their ancestral territories in the Amazon rainforest. They have developed their own ethno-education, health, livelihood and governance systems, rooted in their own traditions, with certain selected elements from the 'non-indigenous' world. Since the mid-1990s, we have been nurturing similar processes in six African countries, as European counterpart for the African Biodiversity Network; and likewise in India, Sweden and the UK.

A characteristic of Gaia is its commitment to working directly with elders, the custodians of bio-cultural knowledge systems that are highly adapted to local ecologies and ultimately provide the key to dealing with climatic instabilities and resisting corporate control.



What priority areas will Gaia Foundation focus on in the coming four years?

Gaia continues to grow a network of individuals and organisations nurturing elder-led, holistic approaches to rebuilding community and ecosystem resilience - what we call Community Ecological Governance. Priorities include:

- Supporting the protection of sacred natural sites, as areas of special cultural, spiritual and ecological significance that are central to ecological governance;
- Developing an Earth Jurisprudence Resource Centre, providing access to precedent-setting cases that can help communities gain legal recognition to protect their territories and life ways. Since 1999, Gaia has been generating interest in ways to transform the dominant legal system towards greater recognition of the governing principles underpinning life on this planet - Earth Jurisprudence. An online resource centre is the next step;
- Promoting an integrated approach to Climate-Biodiversity-Livelihoods. This includes indigenous knowledge systems, agro-ecology, local food systems and economies, which all are part of an invisible movement for the systemic transformation that will enable humans and the Earth to deal with the multiple crises we now face.



What does Gaia Foundation consider the main opportunities and threats in achieving its goals in the near future?

The greatest threats we face stem from the concentration of corporate power across the world, along with the disconnection from our ecological reality. And as Einstein said, 'We cannot solve a problem with the same thinking that created it'.

The challenge is to maintain our hope and our passion for justice and for life. The opportunity is to raise the profile of the viability of diverse indigenous, ecologically rooted pathways, to provide hope and direction for those ready for change. In this way we can contribute to building a critical mass to ferment the transformation required of us.

Gaia believes that indigenous traditions provide a vital source of inspiration for ways of living that acknowledge the laws of the Earth as primary and non-negotiable.



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