GLOBAL DIVERSITY FOUNDATION

Organisational Strategy

&

Programme of Work 2023 - 2025

We work with changemakers to help communities and environments flourish

HISTORY

Global Diversity Foundation was established in 2000 with the goal of conserving biological and cultural diversity through community-based action research, capacity-strengthening and partnership-building. Over the past two decades our organisation has grown and our mission has evolved. During our first decade we established field programmes in selected global regions to support indigenous communities as they conserve biodiversity, improve their livelihoods and build their capacities and institutions.

During this time, we encountered countless young environmental leaders working for positive change. Witnessing the importance of their efforts, we also observed how they often lacked in support, mentoring and learning opportunities. In 2011, we launched the Global Environments Network: a space for these changemakers to connect, collaborate and mentor each other. A means to realise their individual dreams for transformation and amplify their impact through collective action.

During our second decade we expanded our regional field programmes and our Global Environments Network. In 2021 we took stock of our successes and lessons learned. Following a collective re-envisioning process, we emerged with renewed purpose, values and organisational strategy. In 2022, we established the operational bases for the launch of our new strategy and programme of work for 2023-25, shared here.

PURPOSE

We work with changemakers to help communities and environments flourish.

With global catastrophes multiplying, the world needs people who will work for change, no matter what it takes. Our environmental and social crises are so entangled it is hard to know where to begin. No one solution will work on its own and no one person can make it right. We depend on each other to effect change.

GDF is dedicated to finding integrated solutions to these interconnected crises. With twenty years of experience adapting and scaling changemaking, we have a significant portfolio of projects that continue to have positive impacts on local communities. We engage with changemakers from all sectors, across all geographies and from diverse backgrounds – be they community-based activists or global movers-and-shakers. We marry local action and knowledge with global innovation to restore nature, enhance livelihoods and promote diversity.

Our support to those operating at the frontlines of environmental and social justice helps us tend the seeds of regeneration, healing and community-building. We envision a world in which regenerative alternatives blossom, thrive and connect with each other to reverse the destructive status quo, offering new ways of being in relationship with our planet and each other.

OUR VALUES

BE BRAVE

We embrace complexity, difference and possibility.
We combine diverse perspectives, innovations and connections to address complex challenges.
We're creative, daring and welcome uncertainty.

NURTURE YOURSELF

We foster autonomy and leadership.
We practice self-care.
We cultivate kindness and trusting relationships, supporting each other as we grow.

COMMIT

We're experts in our field.
We deliver concrete results.
We're in it for the long-term.

ACT COLLECTIVELY

We are rooted in our interconnection with nature.
We stay culturally grounded, taking the time to reflect, learn and adapt.
We make decisions together.

WHAT WE DO

We offer changemakers the allies, advocates and resources needed to achieve durable solutions to complex planetary challenges.

In the High Atlas of Morocco, the site of our current longterm field programme, we collaborate with young Moroccan changemakers to support Amazigh communities as they revitalize traditional practices, sustain livelihoods and restore nature. Through our Global Environments Network we connect over 600 changemakers who are operating at the frontlines of systemic change. We mentor, support and resource them to make their visions a reality. We incubate the most promising ideas through individually tailored and embedded support. We generate and disseminate case studies, lessons learned and toolkits for change that promote the replication of successful practices and ideas. We share stories of transformation and practical experiences of alternatives to bring courage and inspiration to changemakers the world over.

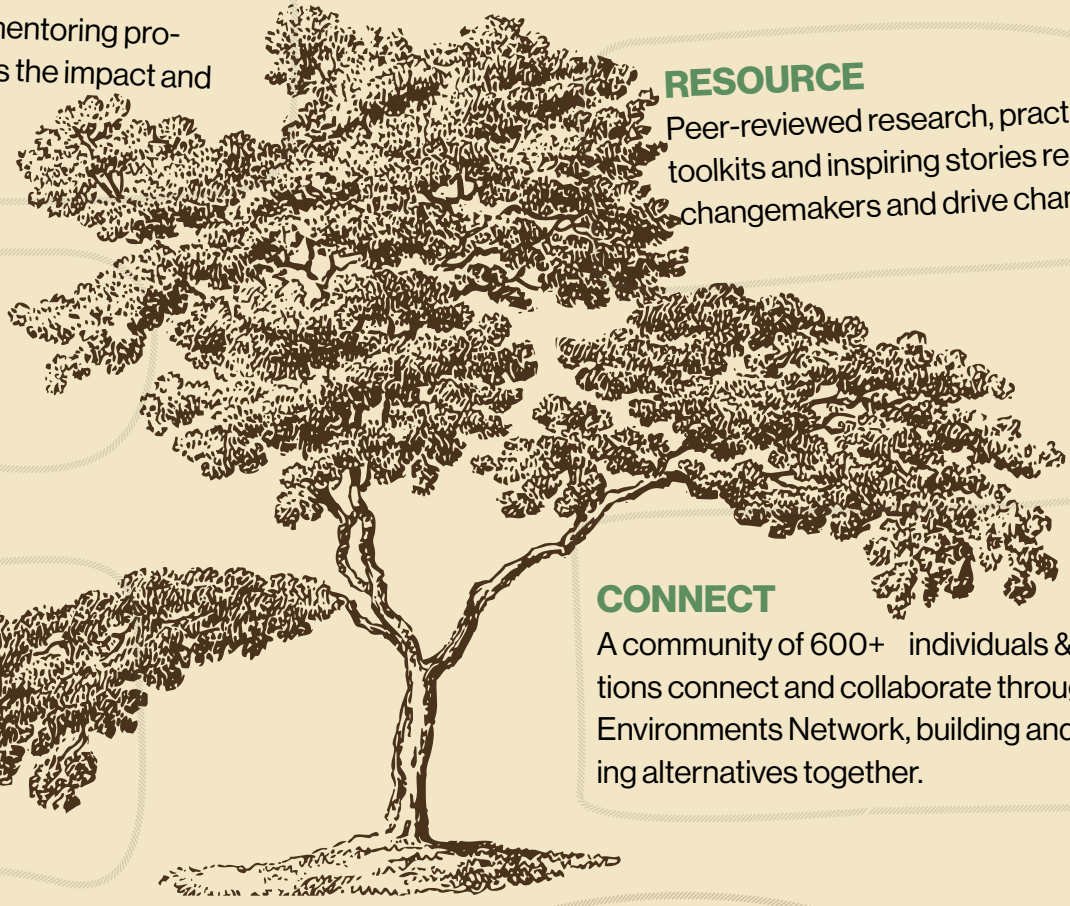
WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT

We embrace complexity. For us, biodiversity, community, rights, livelihoods, climate and culture are wholly entangled. We believe that the challenges of our time cannot be addressed in isolation from each other or with singular solutions. They need collective thinking, systemic approaches and unexpected collaborations. They need an alchemical mix of difference, courage and depth.

Our approach is steeped in this holistic philosophy – whether we are mentoring individuals, collaborating with communities or helping build global movements. We are confident in it because we have tried, tested and improved it over 20 years. We have witnessed how bringing it to our work with changemakers amplifies their reach and resilience, and the scope of their initiatives. We have seen how embedding ourselves in place and addressing local challenges in an integrated manner ensures the longevity of results. We have a deep understanding of how global change and local wellbeing are intimately intertwined - and of how to bridge them in practice. We have proof that the effort required to bring a personal, tailored and holistic approach to each individual or local reality is truly worth the investment.

APPROACH

We focus on five areas of work, which we liken to five branches of a tree. The tree is rooted in the rich soil of cumulative experience and mutual learning amongst a vast community of peers, partners and GEN members. In turn, the lessons that arise through our everyday activities in the five branches fall and nourish the roots of our tree, in a continuous cycle of learning, improving and adapting.



MENTOR
A personalised mentoring programme amplifies the impact and effectiveness of changemakers.

RESOURCE
Peer-reviewed research, practical toolkits and inspiring stories resource changemakers and drive change.

GATHER
Transformative events enhance the skills, networks and influence of changemakers.

INCUBATE
Field programmes and projects achieve positive, sustainable change at the grassroots and inform our support for similar initiatives elsewhere.

CONNECT
A community of 600+ individuals & organisations connect and collaborate through the Global Environments Network, building and implementing alternatives together.

Field programmes in Morocco, Malaysia, Mexico, Namibia and North America

Projects and experiences among our community, partners and Network

PROGRAMME 2023 - 2025

In 2021, we consolidated our purpose, values and strategy and doubled our team. We 2022, we concluded an intensive 3-year programme of work and set the stage for launching our new strategy and programme in 2023. Here we expand on our five areas of work and how they connect with each other, providing a glimpse into the activities planned for the next few years. All of the below activities are sustained by a state-of-the-art communications and storytelling strategy.

INCUBATE

As part of our 'Incubate' branch we develop, test and implement integrated solutions to social, ecological and economic challenges. We do this primarily through our flagship field programme in Morocco – a grounded, long-term and large scale experience that roots and informs our deep understanding of what it takes to effect transformation at the local level. We also provide seed funding for the initiatives of members of GEN through our GEN Seed Projects. We plan to incubate selected GEN seed projects to build longer term programmes in diverse global regions.

High Atlas Cultural Landscapes Programme: launch of 5-year, €2 million programme 'Ensuring the socio-ecological viability of High Atlas cultural landscapes'. Guided by our overarching vision of thriving High Atlas cultural landscapes, this programme supports cooperatives and communities to conserve biodiversity, ensure equitable resource distribution and increase household revenue. It does so by providing targeted capacity-building to cooperatives and rural entrepreneurs, building and resourcing a digital marketplace, innovating goods and services from the High Atlas and developing a label and associated certification process for High Atlas products. It embeds this work with cooperatives in community-based landscape-scale ecological restoration processes that involve biodiversity conservation, regenerative agriculture and agrobiodiversity management. It scales up this model through actions to create a supportive policy environment and gain political recognition for the High Atlas as a landscape designation, educational programmes, and dissemination through academic and popular media platforms.

GEN Seed Projects: support for 10-12 GEN alumni seed projects every year (30-36 in total).

Incubation: incubation of promising seed projects into long-term field programmes. One field programme launched every 3 years (2023, 2026).

Artist's Residency Marrakech: launch of three two-week residencies every year in Marrakech for artists working on the intersection of art and environmental justice.

GATHER

As part of our 'Gather' branch, we organise events. GDF has extensive and intensive experience in convening – anything from conferences, workshops and academies to festivals and retreats. We are firmly convinced of the power of bringing people together to catalyse action and collaboration. Our events are designed to maximise autonomous, embodied and experiential learning. We tap into our vast collective network to ensure that participants in our events encounter diverse perspectives, practices and backgrounds.
Under the banner of the Global Environments Network we organise four different kinds of events: Summer Academies, Regional Academies, Community Exchanges, Retreats and GEN in Conversation. While our programming remains open to emergent opportunities and inspirations, currently we have the following events planned for 2023-25:

- GESA Fellowship 2024: a five-month immersive fellowship for changemakers who are working to find durable solutions to complex social and environmental challenges.
- South Asia Regional Academy: Mangrove Conservation in the Indian Ocean. Sri Lanka, 2023.
- Mediterranean Regional Academy: Food sovereignty, resilience and community-building in an unpredictable climate. Italy, 2025.
- South Asia Community Exchange: Gendered perspectives on environmental leadership. Nepal, 2025.
- North America Community Exchange: Building solidarity networks for environmental justice. US, 2024.
- Global Retreat: This is our nature: Connecting with the natural world as a foundation for changemaking. UK, 2023.
- GEN In Conversation: at least 6 In Conversation events every year on topics of relevance to changemakers/our extended network.

Besides GEN events, GDF also organises other kinds of gatherings and celebrations, including:

- Harvest Festivals: Marrakech, Morocco. 2 editions every year. This is an integral part of our High Atlas Cultural Landscapes Programme. Cardigan, Wales. 1st edition 2024. Berlin, Germany. 1st edition 2025.
- International Society for Ethnobiology's (ISE) biennial Congress: GDF and local partner Cadi Ayyad University have applied to organise the 18th Congress of the ISE in Marrakech, Morocco, in 2024.

MENTOR

Mentoring is a cornerstone of GDF's work. Over the last ten years our team has mentored GEN members and partners both formally and informally, guiding them to strengthen their personal leadership and make the most of their projects, research or career. We organise mentoring in a number of ways:

GEN Seed Project grantees receive mentoring from a member of the team or of the Network.
GESA Fellowship participants are organized into peer-mentoring clusters and pairs.
GEN members are provided with mentors upon request.
Mentoring Academy: In our experience, mentoring is a skill that must be learned and honed, and the more support mentors get the better they can serve their mentees. To provide this support, in early 2023 we will launch our first Mentoring Academy which will provide formal mentoring training and opportunities to GEN members. Participants will graduate with a certificate and the confidence they need to take the much-needed role of mentor in the lives of their peers.

CONNECT

The importance we give to collaborative and collective action is enshrined in one of our core values. It is also represented in one of our key areas of work. We always seek to extend our networks and bring new perspectives and practices into our work by intentionally building partnerships to achieve specific goals or to grow our pool of collaborators.

One of the primary ways in which we build connections is through the GEN community. One of GEN's unique propositions is that we not only bring people together in a network, but also actively foster and nurture collaborations between them. We do this by bringing our GEN members as experts or contributors to our events and projects, funding collaborative GEN Seed Projects and catalysing connections and practical collaborations between GEN members who may not know each other and between GEN members and other partners or donors.

GEN membership grows through events: all in-person event participants automatically become GEN members. Currently we have +600 GEN members and we expect to have increased the membership to +1000 by the end of 2025.

RESOURCE

One of our key goals is to share learnings and resources to support changemakers in the implementation of projects and initiatives. We publish peer-reviewed articles, methods manuals, case studies and reports. We manage an online database of High Atlas Biocultural Diversity. We produce award-winning films such as Ait Atta: Nomads of the High Atlas. We produce and disseminate toolkits, which are practical guides, tried-and-tested resources and tools designed to help changemakers meet the challenges of our times. They often include films, podcasts, art and poetry. Over the next 3 years, we plan to publish the following:

Toolkits:
production of at least 2 toolkits per year, including:

Labelling and Certification of local products (with a How to create a label Manual), as part of our High Atlas Cultural Landscapes Programme.

Thriving Small Non-profits.

Creating contemporary harvest festivals, as part of our High Atlas Cultural Landscapes Programme.

Nature resonance and plant communication.

Creating Community-based health & nature-based initiatives.

Transforming fear into action for change

Publication of a book and manual collating 25 years of experience incubating longterm field programmes in global regions (2024).

RESOURCE (continued)

Peer-reviewed publications emerging from our High Atlas Cultural Landscapes Programme, on the topics of resilient local economies, regenerative practices and ecological restoration, and community-based labelling and certification processes.

Visual storytelling through the production of two new feature-length documentaries on the High Atlas and the co-production of a film series on Mediterranean Cultural Landscapes and short films by GEN members.

In addition to publications and toolkits, we plan to extend our publication capabilities to include:

ZINES

Publication of regular thematic zines on seed saving, traditional recipes, community-building, women in leadership and other themes emergent from our programme.

PODCASTS

Creation of The Grove podcast series to amplify the voices of changemakers in our Network, at least 6 episodes per year.

GLOBAL
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global-diversity.org

Global Diversity Foundation is a registered charity in England and Wales (number 1080731) and a US 501(c)(3) non-profit organization