



Reg. No: EIA-PT 01/4032/07

Certified 72h Permaculture Design Course, Konso, Ethiopia: Certified under the PRI's Master Plan

This PDC will take place in Konso, south Ethiopia, from 5th – 18th December 2011, at Strawberry Fields Eco Lodge. It will have a special focus on the application of Permaculture to rural African communities where the successful application of PC is a way to develop long term food security and community empowerment.

Facilitators: Rhamis Kent, Alex McCausland

Dates: December 5th - 18th, 2011

Location: Konso, South Ethiopia

Venue: Strawberry Fields Eco Lodge

Cost: US\$1000

Includes: Course fees, food and accommodation for the period of the course

Excludes: Transport, accommodation in Addis, travel insurance etc.

The Course

This PDC will be lead by Rhamis Kent, a certified trainer for the Permaculture Research Institute (PRI) of Australia. This PDC is of particular relevance for those interested in rural development and indigenous communities in Africa and the wider 3rd world. The focus is on appropriate technology, soil and water harvesting, indigenous knowledge systems and Permaculture in schools. Schools are a key focus point for the communities and a chance to influence the coming generation to shift away from the mentality of dependence on aid towards self sufficiency and sustainable resource use.

The Facilitators

Rhamis Kent

Rhamis is a consultant with formal training in mechanical engineering (University of Delaware, B.S.M.E. '95) and Permaculture-based regenerative whole systems design. He has previously worked for the renowned American inventor and entrepreneur Dean Kamen at DEKA R & D for almost 3 years, with subsequent engineering work ranging from medical device research and development to aerospace oriented mechanical design. After taking an interest in the design science of Permaculture, he sought extended training with Permaculture expert and educator Geoff Lawton at the Permaculture Research Institute of Australia. This led to his involvement with design work connected to the development of Masdar City in UAE after Mr. Lawton and his consulting company (Permaculture Sustainable Consultancy Pty. Ltd.) were contracted by AECOM/EDAW to identify solutions which fit the challenging zero emissions/carbon neutral design constraint of the project.

Rhamis recently lectured at Schumacher College (named after the influential economic thinker E.F. Schumacher) in Totnes, Devon UK about the application of Permaculture in post-industrial
Detroit:



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model design has been established over the last 3½ years on degraded land to incorporate elements such as drip irrigation, grey and black water re-use, composting toilets, hot composting, tree nursery and solar fridge, solar power, solar shower and much more.

SFEL integrates an Eco-Lodge, model PC farm, an organic restaurant, a PC design training facility and runs a program of trekking and community based cultural activities in Konso. SFEL's project objectives are to promote alternative livelihoods for the Konso community through facilitating community inclusion in eco-tourism activities, and to promote food security locally and more widely in Ethiopia, through Permaculture. SFEL employs 20 permanent staff and up to 30 temporary workers seasonally.

Location: Konso, SNNPRS, Ethiopia

Konso Woreda is in the South Ethiopian Great Rift Valley (situated at 5'15' N 37'30' E). Konso's capital, Karat-Konso, is at 1600m altitude, located 85km south of Arba Minch, and around 590km south of Addis Ababa. The Konso people have a unique culture, based on sedentary mixed agriculture, which distinguishes them from their neighbours in the lowlands to the east and west who are pastoralists. Their intensely social mode of life and love of hard physical labour is unique in Ethiopia.



Their villages are remarkable for the beauty and simplicity of their workmanship, constructed entirely of natural materials, cultivated or gathered from the surroundings, and ringed by massive dry-stone walls, at least a meter thick and two meters high. Stone-lined pavements run between the housing compounds and the stones have often become polished to a shine by long years of service in the village's transport system.

Konso's agricultural system is renowned for its terracing, which has been constructed over large areas of the rugged landscape by centuries of communal labour. The terraces are crafted to balance maximum infiltration of rain water, with adequate drainage in times of deluge so they don't collapse. They are planted with sorghum, intercropped with a range of other species; including trees, *Moringa stenopetala* (also called the cabbage tree) *Terminalia birrowni*, and *Cordia africana*; shrubs such as pigeon pea, coffee and chat (*Catha edulis*) (a cash crop) and annuals including sunflowers, maize, millet, chick peas, various bean species, cotton and cassava. The terraces are fertilised with wastes from the villages including partially burned plant residues mixed with animal dung, which acts to keep the soil fertile.

The Permaculture in Konso Schools Project (PKSP)

Today Konso suffers increasingly frequent food insecurity due to climate change. The UNDP's *Rapid Assessment Report: Konso Special Wereda, SNNPR* (1999) states that; "since the 1950s, drought induced famines have hit Konso and the immediate area almost once every ten years." "Konso was devastated by the droughts in 1973/74 and 1983/84". In 2008/9 Konso was again suffering food shortage due to droughts.

The PKSP seeks to preserve aspects of indigenous (agri)culture which benefit the local ecology, but fill gaps in the traditional system by incorporating new practises, ideas and resources such as rain-water harvesting, small scale irrigation, nutrition gardens, tree



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nurseries, small livestock, appropriate labour-saving design-technology, alternative energy and nutrients based on locally available resources.

To date teachers from 10 schools have been trained in Permaculture and produced PC designs for their school compounds. From those, five schools have produced impressive model PC sites under the pilot phase of the project. The PKSP is eventually looking to expand to all 70 schools in Konso with likely support from the UK-based Ethiopia Permaculture Foundation. Visits to the school model sites will be included as part of the PDC.