

## Ecological Learning Collaboratory



*Rachel Bezner Kerr (right) with collaborators Lizzie Shumba and Esther Lupafya from the Soils, Food and Healthy Communities organization in Malawi. Photo by Carmen Bezner Kerr.*

The Ecological Learning Collaboratory (ELC) explores the learning, dissemination, and innovation of ecological strategies in the development of just and sustainable food and healing systems rooted in place.



Cornell students and faculty share observations at the Nilgiris Field Learning Center in India. Photo by Neema Kudva.

The ELC formed as three Cornell faculty, from diverse disciplines and deeply committed to different places, recognized that their long-term partners in India, Malawi, and Tanzania (1) share many concerns, such as sustainability of vital, resilient communities, toxicity of food and medicines, control over means of production, and fair relations in value creation; (2) are drawn to some of the same environmental efforts, such as Slow Food International, permaculture, recycling, and ecological water management; and (3) are

invigorated by learning how others are incorporating ecological solutions into their work.

Over the next three years, the collective will grow through a series of workshops with experienced practitioners at innovative organizations in each of the partner countries (India, Malawi, and Tanzania). This initiative is also part of an emerging collaboration on issues of food and healing justice with Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto, Japan, and the University of Gastronomic Sciences in Pollenzo, Italy.

Food and healing justice are transnational issues that demand collective assessment and action. The ELC starts from the fact that both ecologies and knowledges have been remade through colonialism, nationalism, industrialization, and international development. The work takes the making of space and place through these over time – and the labors of humans and plants in these processes – as a critical site of exploration. It does not seek to develop another discrete model of development, but rather to establish the kinds of relationships that open up place making as the site of inquiry.

### **Lead Cornell faculty**

Neema Kudva (City and Regional Planning), Rachel Bezner Kerr (Development Sociology), Stacey Langwick (Anthropology)

### **International partners**

#### **India**

- Keystone Foundation
- Last Forest Enterprises Private Ltd.
- Aadhimalai Pazhangudiyinar Producer Company Ltd
- Nilgiris Natural History Society
- Nilgiris Field Learning Center

#### **Malawi**

- Soils, Food and Healthy Communities



Helen Nguya, founder of TRMEGA in Tanzania, advises a member of the organization who is establishing a community garden of indigenous and therapeutic foods and herbal medicines.

*Photo by Stacey Langwick.*

## Tanzania

- Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Center
- Training, Research, Monitoring and Evaluation on Gender and AIDS (TRMEGA)
- Women Development for Science and Technology (WODSTA)
- Dorkia Enterprises

## Meeting plans

The Ecological Learning Collaboratory will launch with a meeting at Cornell's Ithaca campus from May 29–June 2, 2018. The effort is supported by a special gift from San Giacomo Foundation through the Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies, as well as by Cornell's South Asia Program, Institute for the Social Sciences, and Office of Engagement Initiatives.

Follow-up exchanges are being planned in India, Malawi, and Tanzania. Watch this space for details.