

# Learning Endogenous Development

Building on Bio-cultural Diversity



Foreword by Rigoberta Menchú

 COMPAS

## **LEARNING ENDOGENOUS DEVELOPMENT**



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This book presents outcomes of a long process of learning by a large number of people, the start of which cannot clearly be defined. It is the result of the different ways in which people in different cultures have learned, shared experiences, tried new ways of supporting local initiatives and relearned. The pioneers in this field are many and their sources of inspiration diverse. Through the Compas programme, some important players in these fields have shared the lessons learned and enhanced their understanding of traditional knowledge and values and its complementarity with modern knowledge.

In the early 1990s, only a few organisations were interested in learning more about worldviews, culture and spirituality in relation to poverty alleviation or, better, the creation of well-being. It wasn't until 1996 that the first small case studies were carried out, leading to the first phase of Compas (1998-2002), during which the emphasis was on detailed field studies and documentation of endogenous development. The second phase of Compas (2003-2006) focused on showing the diversity of endogenous development methodologies and how endogenous development could be learned. As this book shows, the fruits of this learning process are not limited to field-based organisations, but are also gradually starting to feature in the university systems of a number of countries throughout the four continents where Compas is active.

Credit for the results of this Learning Endogenous Development book (LENDEV) goes to all those rural women and men, traditional leaders and carriers of ancient wisdom who have been willing to share their views on life with the Compas partner organisations. Staff of the Compas partner organisations reflected on how they have learned endogenous development and documented it. In 2005 they shared these experiences during LENDEV workshops in South Africa, Bolivia and Sri Lanka. Chesha Wettasinghe of ETC Ecoculture, the Netherlands documented the learning experiences of Sri Lankan Compas partners, and Mr O.B. Ramasubramanian and his team of the Samanvaya group based in Chennai, India carried out similar documentation of the Indian Compas partners. Early in 2006, Laurens van Veldhuizen of ETC Ecoculture and Stephan Rist of the Centre for Development and Environment of the University of Berne conceived the general framework for the LENDEV book. Later they were joined by Sara van Otterloo-Butler who edited the case studies that form the backbone of the book. The Compas international coordination team in the Netherlands finalised the book after an inspiring discussions with all Compas partner organisations in Poland in September 2006.

We would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the book in whatever capacity. We hope that Compas partners will share the birth of this book with the elders, leaders and rural men and women in the different communities, and with their own colleagues and those from other organisations in their areas. We also hope that the book will lead to fruitful dialogues and

discussions about all that has been learned, and new experiences and insights that can be shared and discussed. Above all, we hope it will inspire you, the reader, to build bio-cultural diversity.

The editors

# FOREWORD

## Live the Culture of Life!

We have witnessed many declarations, movements, development programmes and international policies aimed at reducing poverty. However, we have witnessed no major progress: most western-based development approaches have a narrow material and economy-based vision. Such a narrow vision is not found in traditional cultures. Indigenous peoples' cultures, knowledges and languages are rich and diverse, but there is one important value that cuts across all: their

relationship of harmony with the land, with Mother Earth. Indigenous peoples have a great deal to contribute to the new value system that humanity needs in order to achieve true sustainable development. They have depended for their livelihoods on Mother Earth for thousands of years, and as a result they have developed ethics, practices and values related to living in harmony with all living beings. There is enormous scope for including these values in academic circles, in economic systems and in political dialogues with the government. The knowledge developed by the ancestors forms an ancient yet living teaching tradition that is still profoundly relevant today.

Many of these values of humanity are not written in declarations, but are found in the hearts and lives of peoples. Maybe there we can find the secret of our humanity: where it is not written. Maybe there we can find some clarity concerning the spiritual value of our existence. We have to re-discover our values of humanity. These values cannot be found in the agenda of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs are like a reference, a pretext that people from the city, the government and NGOs can accept, and upon which they base their agenda for reducing poverty. We should not forget, however, that the MDGs have been designed and developed from above and not through a bottom-up participatory approach.

In Guatemala, those who are working with the MDGs can derive strength from the peace agreements, and also from elements of our ancestral knowledge and spirituality, so that we can build an agenda with a clear cultural dimension. However, we know that the MDGs alone are



Rigoberta Menchu (centre) addressing the 'Conference on Endogenous Development and Bio-Cultural Diversity' in Geneva, 4 October 2006. On her left is Freddy Delgado, Compas Regional Coordinator for Latin America and on her right is A.V. Balasubramanian, Compas Regional Coordinator for Asia. [www.bioculturaldiversity.net](http://www.bioculturaldiversity.net)

not sufficient to transform poverty into well-being. We have to revitalise the values of humanity and turn to our lands, saying: *"Mother, forgive us for what we have done to you"*.

According to the sacred Mayan calendar, humanity is living at present in a time called 'No Tiempo' or 'No Time'. In 'No Time' there is more negativity and risk against life than in favour of it. We see this culture in all corners of the world: poverty, hunger, cancer, accidents, war, suicides, personal crises, loneliness, no common language among lobbyists to make a strong voice for humanity and solidarity. Amidst this global polycrisis, however, a message of hope emerges around 2012 when, according to the Mayan calendar, humanity will enter a new era with new visions of life: the life of the planet, linked to the cosmos and not only to us humans. An era of humanity and solidarity, an era of love as meant by our ancestors, in harmony with our Mother Earth. This new era will be a Culture of Life.

We have to prepare ourselves for this, as defending this Culture of Life will also require personal changes. But we will not necessarily need to read more books. The real challenge is to implement this Culture of Life in our daily life. My recommendation to Compas, the readers of this book and others who are engaged in endogenous development is this: rather than developing concepts, theories and texts for declarations, it is important to gather new experiences that demonstrate the collective benefits of the endogenous development vision. Live the Culture of Life in your daily life. Do not confuse cosmovision with vision. Cosmovision is much more profound as it includes the energies of the cosmos, the rivers, the trees, the animals, of Mother Earth. Discuss and share the Culture of Life, based on mutual respect for all living beings, so that we can make a strong voice for humanity and solidarity.

Rigoberta Menchú, campaigner for the rights of indigenous peoples in Guatemala and elsewhere, and winner of the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize, speaking at the conference on Endogenous Development and Bio-cultural Diversity, Geneva, Switzerland, 3 October 2006.

Fundación Rigoberta Menchú  
[www.frmt.org](http://www.frmt.org)

# INTRODUCTION

## Endogenous development

This book is about learning in and about endogenous development. Endogenous means 'growing from within'. Endogenous development is, therefore, development based on people's own resources, strategies and initiatives. The available resources and solutions developed at the grassroots include material, socio-cultural and spiritual dimensions. It is local people with their own resources, values, knowledge and organisations who drive local development. Support to endogenous development aims at strengthening the resource base of the local population, enhancing their ability to integrate selected external elements into local practices and to broaden the options available to the people, without romanticising their local views and practices.

Everywhere in the world, communities are changing fast in response to economic and cultural changes that may have a local or a global origin. This process is generally accompanied by increasing domination of mainstream or modern knowledge systems and technologies. The prevailing education and research systems are based on mainstream knowledge and its underlying values. Development cooperation is often part of this process, as many development interventions favour external, modern technology. At the same time, and often unconsciously, these interventions promote western culture and values. While this has led to definite improvements, such as improved communication and increased world food production in certain areas, these developments have often marginalised the social cohesion, and the knowledge and values of communities they were supposed to serve.

Many poor people in developing countries experience the globalisation process through the limitations placed on their local economies. They need to develop coping strategies to improve their lives in a fast-changing environment. For most people in these circumstances, their culture and faith provide direction in their everyday decision making. Supporting endogenous development aims to enhance this process. It requires a move away from the often prevailing notion that, for true development to take place, innovations need to 'come from the outside'.

## Compas and the challenge to join the experiments

This book is about how local communities learn and how staff of community-based organisations, NGOs, government organisations and universities, and other development actors have learned to support endogenous development. It is inspired by the work of the

Compas network, an international network that supports initiatives for endogenous development. The partners in the network are community based organisations, NGOs and universities in Latin America, Africa, Asia and Europe. Building on existing initiatives and programmes of these organisations, the Compas network and its partners have been experimenting since the mid 1990s with ways to develop effective approaches and methods to support endogenous development in interaction with local communities and their leaders. These experiences, their results, lessons learned and challenges have been documented through the Compas magazine, conference proceedings and a number of books produced by its partners and the regional and international coordination units.

Now the Compas partners feel confident enough to reach out to the wider development community and share their experiences of the past 10 years in a more systematic way. This book is an important part of this sharing effort. This book does not provide concrete guidelines on how to organise training and learning activities. Rather, we hope to challenge and inspire development workers around the world to take a look at the principles and methods involved in supporting endogenous development, and to critically look at the experiences and cases as presented in this book. We hope that this book will stimulate them to experiment with methods that fit their own economic, social and cultural situation. The experiences presented here have been gained through trial and error and this will remain the case for those who decide to follow the path of supporting endogenous development.

## The users of this book

This book is primarily aimed at staff of community-based organisations, development organisations and projects, who work directly with communities, farmers and groups. They may work within government- or non-government organisations and have extension, research or general community development tasks. The focus of their work may be agriculture and land use, health or nature conservation, or may cover other livelihood issues. As part of their main task, however, they all interact frequently with communities and are interested to learn how their interaction can become more effective and lead to truly sustainable development at the local level.

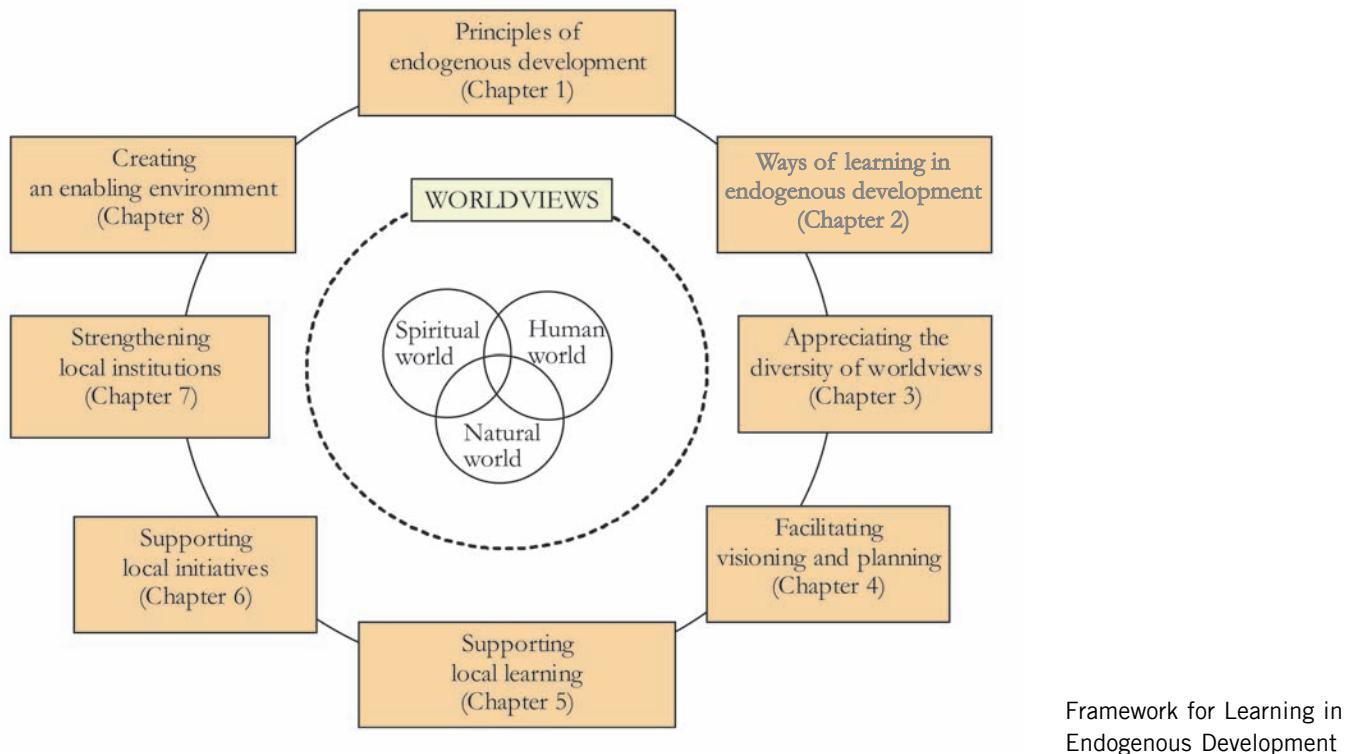
In addition, this book may provide ideas and challenges to those who are responsible for supporting field staff as they learn this new approach. We refer to these as 'trainers', although subsequent chapters will make it clear that learning this approach may require more and/or other learning pathways than conventional classroom training events. The book therefore provides examples of learning pathways designed to look critically at existing development approaches and to create openness to endogenous development. It explores ways of coming to terms with the professional and personal controversies that this may imply, and of developing the skills to interact with local communities on an equal basis.

## The structure of the book

This is not a 'how to' book for people who want concrete guidelines! It is not a straightforward manual that tells you about the best way to support endogenous development, as there is no one way of doing this. Instead, each chapter of this book provides a number of practical examples of how people have supported endogenous development in their own context. These cases cover four continents as well as a wide variety of institutional settings. They aim to inspire the reader to try and adapt the approach in his or her own work, where appropriate. Cases from the north are included as well, to show that the approach is also relevant in industrialised settings.

The eight chapters follow a framework for learning in endogenous development as it has been experienced by the Compas partners.

The first two chapters deal with the general and theoretical aspects of endogenous development and of learning in endogenous development. If you are interested in a comprehensive overview of the main ideas, principles and elements of the approach, turn to Chapter 1, which gives an overall synopsis of endogenous development. If you are a trainer or interested in the way learning in endogenous development has taken place you may wish to read Chapter 2, which describes various learning forms used in endogenous development.



The subsequent chapters give more practical examples. If you work regularly with communities and are interested in learning from the experiences of other practitioners and how they support endogenous development, you may wish to turn directly to the practical case studies in Chapters 3–8. Each of these chapters addresses a specific part of the endogenous development process: appreciating the diversity of local worldviews; visioning and planning; supporting local learning; supporting local initiatives; strengthening local institutions; creating an enabling environment. The last section of each chapter provides reflections on some relevant issues concerning the theme. Finally, the appendices consist of a glossary, a list of resources for obtaining further information and training materials, and a list of organisations.

We regard this book as a starting point rather than a final statement. We invite the readers to read, become inspired, to agree or disagree, and to take up the challenge to design their own approaches and build up their own experiences, and to share these with colleagues. Compas is always pleased to receive feedback and accounts of new experiences so that we can continue to learn together.

## Chapter 1

# PRINCIPLES OF ENDOGENOUS DEVELOPMENT

This chapter gives an overview of endogenous development, its principles, its main components and how it can be supported. It provides the reader with a context within which to understand the practical case studies in the following chapters.

## Polycrisis: problems and opportunities

The world is approaching a critical point in its evolution. The technological, economic and political developments of the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have been tremendous. New technologies are becoming increasingly sophisticated and have been adopted on a massive scale. Their use is influencing ways of living and living standards in all corners of the globe. Electronic communication and free trade have contributed to an enormous boost in global flows of capital, products, people, information and ideas and have contributed to important economic, social and cultural developments. They present new opportunities and challenges.

At the same time, a number of human-created crises are threatening the sustainability of global society. The deteriorating ecological situation, diminishing bio-cultural diversity, persistent poverty, social, political and religious tensions and conflicts between people and countries, and the proliferation of illegal networks and trade present a *polycrisis* for which appropriate answers are urgently needed.

**Ecological crisis:** Ecological degradation continues and climate change, diminishing natural resources, shortages of food, water and energy, and wide-scale pollution are problems for which we do not have adequate answers. Important international agreements and conventions are being drawn up, but their ratification and implementation lag behind the urgency of the issues.

**Diminishing bio-cultural diversity:** The world is witnessing an alarming reduction of both biological and cultural diversity. Studies estimate that over the next 30 years some 20% of the world's existing species will be lost and that this figure may increase to 50 % over the next 100 years. It is estimated that in 100 years time about 50% of the 6000 languages will have disappeared. In addition, the continued existence of traditional communities, their worldviews, values and knowledge systems, medicine and food systems, and culture is at stake. The loss of bio-cultural diversity is a great threat to the stability and resilience of the globe and has major economic, intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual consequences.

**Poverty:** Despite global economic growth, poverty still persists worldwide. Poverty has many faces and affects mainly those living in rural areas and shantytowns in the South. It leads to hunger, bad health, low education and social disintegration. Nearly half of the global population has a purchasing power of less than USD 2 per day. However, material poverty may also be accompanied by other notions of poverty, such as lack of cultural identity, self esteem and spiritual meaning. Many social systems, where solidarity and reciprocity functioned as safety nets for the poor and provided identity and social control, are disintegrating.

**Social, political and religious tensions:** Tension and conflicts between rich and poor, and between ethnic and religious groups, are on the increase. Globally acting entities try to control the worldwide processes of production, consumption and political organisation, but at the same time, information and communication technology is breaking through conventional barriers of time and space and central control, and linking people in every corner of the globe. Migration is high: from rural areas to urban centres and from poor to rich areas in the world. The multiculturality of nations is increasing and leads to social tensions. The social cohesion of modern societies is disintegrating; traditional cultures and local institutions are losing their function. At the same time, ethnic and religious entities are receiving new momentum and new political alliances are emerging.

**Proliferation of illegal networks and trade:** Access to weapons is becoming easier, and has escalated to an increasing number of nation states, political and/or criminal organisations and individuals. Powerful international organisations are engaged in trafficking people, drugs, weapons and other illegal activities. The use of nuclear energy and weapons is increasing and the necessary precautions are not always taken. Different groups accuse each other of terrorism, and use this to justify increased use of their own weapons to fight the other.

**Opportunities for new thinking:** The polycrisis is leading to uncertainty and instability, but also to new opportunities. There is widespread awareness that the sustainability of the global economy, security, social system and ecology is at stake. The existing problems are human made, and thus, it is within humankind's own scope to deal with them. But we need a new way of thinking and acting.

The dominant materialistic worldview is increasingly being challenged. There is a great gap between the worldviews of sciences and policy institutions on the one hand and those of the general public on the other. The first group emphasises continued global economic development and increasing efficiency through technological changes, whereas the public attaches more value to solidarity, regional development and diversity. This explains the gap that exists between the different actors in the debates on issues such as redistribution of wealth, urban and rural development, the use of genetic technology, the globalisation of markets, and quality in food production. Policies have not taken sufficient account of the wishes and values of those they were designed to serve, and this has led to lack of trust between the public and policy makers. Increasingly, the conventional, materialist and science-based approaches to development are being challenged and increasingly, innovative individuals, citizens' groups, scientists and policy makers are presenting new ideas on how things can be done. New approaches to science are emerging, as are new policies and practices in fields such as rural

renewal, organic agriculture, sustainable energy, complementary medicine, alternative education and solidarity economics. Endogenous development is one of these new approaches.

Compas is an international network engaged in comparing and supporting endogenous development in Latin America, Africa, Asia and Europe. Over the past ten years the partners within the Compas network have been engaged in a continuous process of action-research, with important learning and training components (see Resources Appendix for information on the Compas partners). The partners have documented, systematised and published their experiences with endogenous development and the way learning takes place in this context. This period culminated in a meeting of all partners, during which a political stance was formulated. This declaration on Endogenous Development and Bio-cultural Diversity is presented below.

## **Declaration on Endogenous Development and Bio-cultural Diversity, Lezajsk, Poland, 27 September 2006**

We, the members of the Compas network, who are the representatives of different community-based organisations, NGOs, universities and peoples, with different cultural backgrounds from Latin America, Africa, Asia, Europe, gathered at the Compas partner meeting in Lezajsk, Poland, September 2006, have agreed on the following:

1. For the last ten years we have been working to maintain and enhance bio-cultural diversity by supporting Endogenous Development. This is development based mainly, but not exclusively, on locally available resources, values and knowledge. We are developing mechanisms for local learning and experimenting, for building local economies and for retaining benefits in the local area. We are determined to further contribute to efforts which enhance Endogenous Development and bio-cultural diversity, by:
  - supporting local communities;
  - cooperating as partners in the Compas programme;
  - collaborating with other community-based organisations, NGOs, universities and governmental and international agencies that support Endogenous Development and bio-cultural diversity.
2. We recognise that there are important and valuable initiatives for bio-cultural diversity: national and international policies and conventions, initiatives by grassroots organisations and social movements. Yet not enough is being done to prevent further erosion and destruction of bio-cultural diversity. We are concerned about the global environmental, social, economic and cultural crises as well as the way biological and cultural diversity is being eroded and destroyed by human activities.
3. We note that the domination of materialist and mechanistic worldviews in mainstream sciences, technology and commercial systems is contributing to the global crises and the

reduction of bio-cultural diversity. We therefore draw attention to worldviews, systems of wisdom and sciences present in

- the history of humankind, including that of cultures now dominated by materialism;
- the diverse cultures and sciences throughout the world;
- the minds and hearts of people and social movements;
- feminine perspectives on life;
- recent scientific developments such as transdisciplinarity and new trends in quantum physics.

4. We call on scientists, educators, policy makers and corporate organisations to be fully aware of the consequences of the proliferation and domination of materialistic and commercial values and practices. We invite initiatives from these, and from all parts of civil society, to enhance and respect endogenous innovations and recognise collective rights.
5. We acknowledge that local knowledges, sciences and wisdom of traditional and indigenous peoples may have their specific strengths as well as weaknesses. We also affirm that mainstream science has its own strengths and weaknesses too. Hence, activities are required which build on the strengths and reduce the limitations of both.
6. Intra-cultural and inter-cultural processes of learning and research should be strengthened and collective rights acknowledged.

**We reject:**

- The growing levels of material, social and spiritual poverty in all parts of the globe.
- The loss of territorial and food sovereignty, as well as the destruction of ecology and livelihood systems.
- The global geo-political, socio-cultural and economic power strategies and the expansion of the global market economy, with its destruction of biological and cultural diversity.
- The loss of social cohesion, solidarity, reciprocity and mutual help in rural and urban communities.
- The negative effects of globalisation, the market economy, and commoditisation of life, water, genetic resources, and the knowledges and wisdoms of traditional and indigenous peoples.
- The loss of spiritual values and practices and the reduction of the role of spirituality in giving people meaning and direction.
- The imposition of dominant values, religions and belief systems on diverse cultures and peoples.
- The lack of respect for and communication between different religions and spiritual traditions, and the related increase in tensions and aggression.
- The dominance of mainstream science as well as the marginalisation and underestimation of traditional and indigenous sciences.

- The imbalance in credibility, prestige, power and access to resources between mainstream and traditional knowledges and sciences.
- The global and national policies that promote and generate the erosion of biodiversity, and of the knowledges and wisdoms of traditional and indigenous peoples in the fields of agriculture, health and conservation of nature.
- The erosion of roles and functions of traditional institutions; systems of governance for managing ecosystems and social organisation of traditional and indigenous communities.
- The dominating role of materialistic and mechanistic worldviews, as well as the global spread of these in policies for development, commercial activities and sciences, and their impact on bio-cultural diversity.
- The lack of recognition of and regard for the collective rights of traditional and indigenous peoples, and the imposition of laws of intellectual property rights and free trade agreements upon these groups.
- All forms of intellectual property rights on living beings.
- The production of genetically modified organisms which is taking place, predominantly driven by commercial interests of transnational corporations, with insufficient attention to environmental and bio-safety aspects, and the lack of transparency in the processes of decision making. We reject the negative impact that the production of GMOs has on farmers' autonomy.

## We recommend:

### For Policy

1. That the international and national bodies concerned with development policies incorporate programmes and projects that defend collective rights, support the revaluation and revitalisation of wisdoms and ways of knowing of traditional and indigenous peoples, and the non-commodification of local knowledges and natural resources.
2. That national governments respect and acknowledge traditional institutions and organisational systems.
3. That global and national policies strengthen local economic systems, giving priority to local production and marketing, sovereignty and safety of food
4. An increase in the allocation of resources for research and development of knowledges and sciences of traditional and indigenous peoples.
5. Training for scholars and professionals who are committed to the values and principles of traditional and indigenous peoples to:
  - Develop, update and improve their theories and practices;
  - Set standards for students and professionals;
  - Evaluate mainstream knowledge and practices from traditional perspectives;
  - Enrich the foundations of their own sciences.

6. An increase in intra- and inter-scientific cooperation for mutual learning and co-evolution of mainstream and local sciences (e.g. in health and agriculture), as well as the interaction between folk, classical and mainstream practitioners, enhancing the symmetry in power position and resource access for both types of sciences.
7. Acknowledgement of and respect for the views of territory held by peoples and communities.
8. Acknowledgement of and support for cultures, nations and traditional and indigenous peoples to protect their systems of health and medicinal resources, including their physical, spiritual, mental and social aspects.

### For Research

1. Recognition of the collective nature of traditional knowledge.
2. Attention by mainstream scientists and thinkers to traditional and indigenous knowledges, sciences and wisdoms as valuable sources.
3. The establishment of an international research centre and/or an alliance for Endogenous Development and Bio-Cultural Diversity.
4. Support for local experts to assess, understand, document and disseminate information on:
  - *Indigenous plants, crops and animals, as well as local knowledge, values and land-use systems.*
  - *Indigenous institutions and effective practices in community organisational development;*
  - *Local and indigenous concepts of territory and the existing threats and opportunities for peoples' territorial sovereignty;*
  - *Gender perspectives on bio-cultural diversity in different cultures;*
  - *Collective rights and ways to protect these.*
5. Support for carriers of local knowledge and wisdom in their own research and dissemination of the outcomes, and are acknowledgment of them as researchers in their own right.

### For Education

1. That primary, secondary and higher education curricula include traditional sciences and technologies in their theories, methods and practices.
2. Support of informal and non-formal education focusing on Endogenous Development and bio-cultural diversity.
3. That self-confidence and pride in local culture and traditional professions be reinforced and strengthened.
4. Sharing information with farmers and communities on bio-safety and land-use rights, cultural rights, ownership of knowledge and commodities.
5. Incorporation of local experts as teachers in schools and in research.

## For Activities and Initiatives

1. Development of methodologies for working with indigenous and traditional institutions.
2. That in engaging with communities, outside agents identify and work with existing institutions rather than establish new organisations.
3. The promotion of empowerment of traditional authorities through training, networking and exchanges.
4. The recognition and use of traditional structures as channels through which traditional authorities and their communities influence the development process.
5. Initiation and support for policy dialogues amongst stakeholders from different cultural backgrounds on cultural rights and local management of natural resources.
6. Coordination of initiatives for promoting local resources such as indigenous seeds and animal breeds in different parts of the world.
7. That dominant religions respect local spirituality, religions and belief systems.

## Endogenous development uses a diversity of methods

In the course of their ten years of action research, the Compas partners have designed, applied and tested a variety of methods for enhancing endogenous development, particularly methods for learning from and with local people, for testing and improving indigenous practices, for networking and training. Rather than being an outside development agency, in endogenous development the NGO and government-based development agents play the role of catalyst for development from within the community. The changing position of the NGOs vis-à-vis the community therefore requires a deliberate redefinition of the relationship between local people and the supporting agency. This redefinition goes hand in hand with a continuous reflection and learning path.

The results and impact at the level of the rural population differ according to the economic, socio-cultural and ecological situation. The Compas partners have reported improvements in terms of income, positions of the rural leaders, tree cover and water resources, interest of youth in culture and traditions, food and nutritional situation, human and animal health, health communication between youth and elders, position of women, on-farm experimentation with traditional practices, and ancient texts on labour saving, soil improvement and disease management.

Exchange and training workshops for managers and staff of the Compas partners have been held; Compas partners have taken part in several national and international meetings and conferences and contributed to the international debate on bio-cultural diversity. Through on-the-job training, field staff have acquired new skills and methods. The partners have worked in this respect at local, regional and international level. We can see that the ways in which endogenous development has been supported are very diverse. This is exactly the idea: depending on the ecological, economic and cultural situation and the skills, values and insights of the rural community and development agency, different practices and options exist for endogenous development.

Compas regards endogenous development as a process of change that enhances local control of the development process and primarily builds on local resources. It makes a distinction between social, physical, economic, human, spiritual and produced resources. This approach thus explicitly recognises the importance of cultural diversity and suggests that there are at least as many notions of 'development' as cultures. Endogenous development is understood as based mainly, but not exclusively, on locally available resources. It has the openness to consider, modify and integrate traditional and outside knowledge. It has mechanisms for local learning and experimenting, building local economies and retention of benefits in the local area. The main actors in endogenous development are the people in the communities, villages and towns, with their own self-determined traditional organisations and leadership and civil organisations that have emerged more recently. They are the main carriers of the development process.

### Local initiatives and use of local resources

In all cases there are a host of *locally available resources* that are being *used for development activities*. Rural and urban people have shown a wide range of insights and practices that have enabled them to survive under difficult circumstances. The localities with their site-specific soils, plants, trees, crops, local wild and domesticated animals, the climate and the wider ecosystem provide resources that bear the potentials and limitations for development, often untapped or underestimated by outsiders. There is a great diversity in social organisation, local experts and leadership. These traditional social organisations are often being eroded, but under the surface traditional and spiritual leaders play an important role in daily practices and decision making. Local economies have mechanisms for saving, investing, income generation and marketing whose real contributions and potential are often undervalued. The local social systems,

### DEFINITIONS

**Endogenous development:** development based mainly, though not exclusively, on locally available resources, local knowledge, culture and leadership, with openness to integrating traditional as well as outside knowledges and practices. It has mechanisms for local learning and experimenting, building local economies and retention of benefits in the local area.

**Indigenous or local knowledge:** knowledge generated, used and developed by people in a certain area. It is not limited to indigenous peoples and can include knowledge originating from elsewhere that has been internalised by local people through local processes of learning, testing and adaptation. It forms the basis of the art of identifying, combining, unfolding and protecting local resources. It is rooted in and stems from local practices, hence it is specific to the local context and often gender specific.

**Traditional knowledge:** a cumulative body of knowledge, know-how, practices and representations, maintained and developed by peoples with extended histories and often transmitted orally. It encompasses understandings, interpretation, classification systems and language, is based on a worldview with its logic and values, and has mechanisms for learning, experimenting and adaptation. It is not necessarily being practised anymore.

These and more definitions can be found in the Glossary on page 235.

In endogenous development we distinguish six different resources:

- Natural resources (land, ecosystem, water, climate, waters, plants, animals)
- Human resources (knowledge and skills, local concepts and ways of knowing, learning and experimenting)
- Produced resources (human-made things such as roads, canals, irrigation systems, schools, infrastructure)
- Economic resources (markets of goods, food, labour; ownership, price relations, credit systems, reciprocity)
- Social resources (family systems, ethnic organisations, social institutions, leadership, ways of solving conflicts and taking decisions)
- Cultural or spiritual resources (beliefs, norms, values, festivals, rituals, art, language, lifestyle, ancestors and spiritual beings)

worldviews and economies are not always easily understood or accessible. The fact that field workers accept and respect people's worldviews has contributed to rural people's feeling of ownership of their resources and to initiatives that take a new look at the development process. Cultural and social resources are often underutilised and once taken seriously, they can enhance local capacity to use the available local resources.

## **Supporting local people in endogenous development**

Local actors may solicit support from NGOs or government agencies in their efforts to improve their livelihood. However, to ensure that the local population remains in control of the

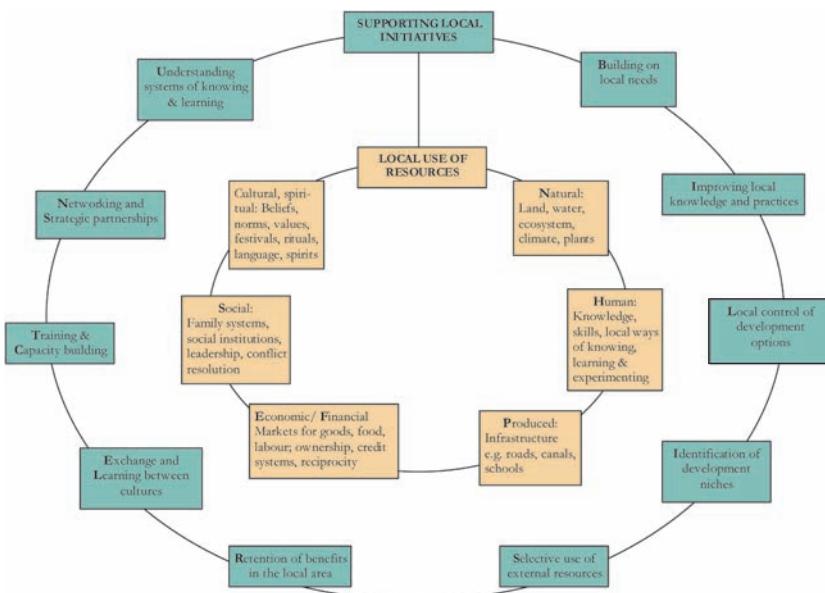


Fig. 1: Key principles for supporting and enabling development

development process, supporting agencies should play complementary roles only. This means that the support role has to be carefully chosen and be in tune with the wishes and needs of the local people.

On the basis of Compas' experiences, we have defined ten guiding principles for supporting endogenous development (see Figure 1).

Support to endogenous development does not start from a technical or science-based position or problem solving perspective. Rather, it starts from the understanding of daily life of the communities involved: their worldviews, values, their social organisation and the resources they have and the way they value and use them.

## 1. Building on locally felt needs

Generally, economic growth, or increased income, is the primary objective in conventional development. For rural and urban-based marginalised people in many cultures of the world, however, income is not always the major parameter in defining well-being. Other aspects, such as social cohesion, health, good children, natural resources, and good relations with the spiritual world may be of equal importance in the development decisions. Local concepts of well-being and of poverty may differ substantially from those used by national governments or international development agencies (see the example in Case 3-6). As a result, the general goals for endogenous development may vary, and include a combination of objectives, such as poverty reduction, diminished ecological exploitation, increased equity and justice, or cultural and spiritual goals. On the other hand, the definition of the needs may vary depending on sex, social position or age. Gaining insight into the diversity of felt needs, looking for ways to accommodate the most relevant ones for all categories involved, overcoming contradictions and coming to a joint definition and acceptance of the felt needs and development goals may take some time, but all these steps are crucial if sustained development is to take place.

## 2. Improving and complementing local knowledge and practices

Endogenous development aims at revitalising, enhancing and complementing *in-situ* development of indigenous knowledge and practices. The first task of the field workers is to acknowledge, experience and understand local processes, concepts and values and their specific worldviews. In this way they gain insights into local ways of reasoning, methods of experimentation and the systems of learning and communication on which these are based. This implies that field staff participate in local activities with an open mind, in order to understand the concepts used and the values behind them. Local knowledge may have its limitations and can be improved by intra-cultural learning and dialogues, as well as by dialogues and learning together with persons or organisations from outside (inter-cultural learning). For that purpose a participatory learning-oriented diagnosis can be made of the actual situation, the changes taking place and the risks involved in these. This forms the basis upon which to choose options to improve the situation and, later on, to test these options in an appropriate way. Local leaders, local concepts and local criteria play important roles in these experiments.

### **3. Increasing local control and enhancing the dynamics of local knowledge**

Conventional development models tend to be based on the introduction of externally developed innovations to local communities. Endogenous development, in contrast, aims for local control and decision-making about the way ahead. This includes the principle that the members of the communities use their own mechanisms to take decisions within their local context. Therefore, traditional authorities play an important role and the community itself manages internal power conflicts, coming to grips in the process with gender balances and leadership systems. Based on this idea, they will decide whether to accept or reject external support and practices.

The process of local control and decision making, of course, cannot avoid the problems raised by differences in interests and values amongst the various groups within a community or region. In some cases rural people themselves see the use of local knowledge and resources as a step backwards. They fear that the opportunities that external resources represent will be denied to them. Decades of development rhetoric and commercial influences have created a firm association in many minds that 'development' implies the use of western-style development alternatives and that the possibilities for building on local resources and leadership are limited.

Moreover, subcultures abound and differences in gender, class, caste, ethnic subgroups, age, geographic origin, religious affiliation, language, education, wealth and power inevitably lead to different needs and objectives. Addressing these subcultures is a delicate process. The role of the Compas field workers can be to facilitate the community's role in decision making, and in monitoring and evaluating the activities. Empowering local communities and local leadership may lead to problems of internal community or leadership tensions and may go against the implicit politics of national governments. Governments and formal religions have often considered traditional leadership a hindrance to the development of local communities, and in many cases have consciously tried to marginalised their influence or have incorporated the traditional leadership in a system of indirect rule. Re-valuing the role and experience of the traditional leaders is therefore an activity that requires careful negotiation and strategic choices.

### **4. Identifying development niches in the local and regional economy**

In the conventional development approach, rural families are often considered as potential consumers or producers of a variety of products that serve the needs of outsiders. Local producers are required to supply products that can be processed and commercialised in a uniform way for the national and international market. In the case of endogenous development, the initiatives are based on the specific ecological and cultural characteristics of each locality that can generate additional income or otherwise contribute to local notions of well-being. Stimulating the production, processing and marketing of region-specific products opens up a reservoir of untapped local opportunities. Developments based on local food items, traditional crops and domestic animal breeds are examples of this. Village-based and locally managed tourism may also be a new development niche. Identifying and opening up market possibilities for local food items, local herbs or fibres in the regional or national capitals or on the international market are important activities.

### 5. Selective use of external resources

It is obvious that in many cases local knowledge and resources may have their limitations. Local practices, leadership, climate or biological resources usually have a better potential if combined with specific external inputs. For example, it might be possible to optimise the local system by using an external input such as cement, a bicycle, a pump, transport systems, electricity, fertilisers, seeds, chemical pesticides or drugs. Loan facilities may be a way of financing the external inputs. External advisors or teachers can be called upon if a local community does not have the required expertise. Most rural families experiment with a combination of local and external inputs, for example to increase the productivity of their land and thereby achieve a more efficient utilisation of their local resources. However, selective use of external resources is important. Many farmers have lost their property as a result of not being able to repay the loans provided for fertilisers. Chemical pesticides may show positive short-term effects, but pollute the environment and food system over time. A tractor without the necessary spare parts may bring more disillusion than benefits.

Therefore, in the endogenous development process, the first questions to ask are: is it possible and feasible to solve the identified problem with our own resources? what are the possible solutions from outside and how sustainable are they? What are the advantages and risks involved in external resources? What possibilities are there for building up the capacity to reproduce and maintain external technology? And can we learn from experiences of other communities, regions, or cultures that are related to this problem?

### 6. Retention of benefits in the local area

Communities may be vulnerable to external development initiatives aiming for profits that will subsequently be taken away from the community. Investments in tourism for example are often made by foreign companies. When the management positions and most of the jobs are taken by foreigners, and food and drink items are brought in from outside the community, the benefits for the community may be very limited or even nonexistent. Prices for local producers may vary greatly throughout the year. In many subsistence economies, food prices fluctuate so that producers may have to sell their produce at low prices just after the harvest, while in cases of food deficits they may have to buy the same food back later at much higher prices. Creation of storage facilities and the provision of credit to buy food items during the cheap post-harvest period often result in direct benefits for the families involved. In each situation opportunities to keep the benefits of new economic activities in the local area need to be explored: examples include the production and processing of local food, village-based tourism, employment creation for the rural youth.

### 7. Exchange and learning between cultures and religions

The exchange of experiences and worldviews between different cultures and corresponding religions is part of the current Compas programme. Comparing the concepts behind the local health traditions in various cultures, for example, has resulted in the observation that there are

numerous striking similarities. This continuing process has enhanced the self-esteem and dynamics of the often marginalised local health practitioners, and shown ways forward based on the insights gained. Exchange between rural people, farmers, field staff, managers and researchers can lead to fruitful cross-cultural exchange, learning and cooperation.

## **8. Learning and capacity building**

Learning is not a neutral transfer of data; it involves conceptual frameworks that are related to worldviews and values. In large areas of the world, western-biased education systems dominate learning, and as a result western values and concepts are spreading and replacing other scientific traditions. Despite the fact that many years have elapsed since the passing of the colonial system, western concepts and values still play an important role in many curricula. This is more so for universities and colleges than for primary and secondary education, but even in the latter, mathematics, physics, economics and religion are often taught in a way that reflects only the western worldview and value system. Development workers are trained in methods of transferring knowledge, rather than in methods of learning from and with the rural people and in participatory technology development. They tend to have learned about technical subjects rather than social processes or methods of enhancing the dynamics of local knowledge and the spiritual dimensions of the local knowledge system and culture. Therefore systematic training and possibly also a process of de-schooling need to be considered and carried out. In the short run this could take place for the field staff engaged in endogenous development. This can take place on the job, in service, or even during a pre-service phase. This book is specifically about these processes.

## **9. Networking and strategic partnerships**

Endogenous development acknowledges the importance of the links with regional, national and international processes, and the necessity of looking for synergy and partnership rather than dependency, exploitation, homogenisation and external control. The local market niches are often largely determined by international trade relations; national policies are influenced by international conventions and agreements; research priorities are often influenced by prevailing western criteria. Endogenous development can only thrive when a conducive policy environment exists. This can be gradually created through networking, cooperation and advocacy. Examples of activities in this domain include linking up with like-minded NGOs, strategic alliances with relevant government agencies at local, regional and national level, presenting experiences and ideas in international forums, interesting funding bodies in the relevance of endogenous development, making suggestions for policy changes or research programmes, and building up partnerships with commercial, political or religious organisations.

## **10. Understanding forms of knowing, learning and experimenting**

Understanding the basic concepts of the various indigenous knowledge forms is important in international cooperation. The western knowledge system has gone a long way towards

developing powerful technologies, but it also has its limitations. Other forms of knowledge may provide elements to help solve the problems the world is facing today. Many traditional forms of knowledge are based on different paradigms. For example, the Ayurvedic, Andean, Mayan, Chinese and African health practices each have their own theories and concepts about the causes and effects of health and disease. The same applies to forms of knowledge related to agriculture, nature and socio-spiritual practices. The ways of knowing have been achieved within a particular worldview and by using a particular research methodology. Theories, models and typologies, concepts and definitions underpin problem definition, and the design of a method for collecting and interpreting data. For example, the notion of time, the relationships between cause and effect, the importance of quantification, intuition and the use of consciousness, the way of observing, interpreting, measuring, learning and experimenting differ from one form of knowledge to the other. These differences manifest themselves in the knowledge used in everyday life and in the philosophy of science, and in the way these forms of knowledge are used and changed.

## Code of conduct

Applying the principles of endogenous development is not without complications and risks. While it implies respect for all cultures and peoples, it does not mean that all value systems and beliefs should be wholeheartedly and critically embraced. Respect means the willingness to listen, openness to the possibility of learning, responsiveness to information, questions and suggestions, as well as the courage to criticise when necessary. Compas partners have therefore developed a Code of Conduct which is summarised below.

### Code of Conduct for enhancing endogenous development

The partners of Compas realise that there are risks involved when an outsider works with indigenous knowledge and practices. These risks include:

- the extraction of local knowledge for purposes not in the interest of rural people;
- disturbing the existing status quo at community level;
- domination of local processes by outsiders who do not understand the local values and mechanisms of decision making;
- introduction of values and lifestyle that are not consistent with or complementary to the local values;
- Prying into people's private matters (e.g. beliefs and spirituality, power relations).

The partners have agreed to work with rural people according to the following code of conduct:

Accept the idea that local communities have indigenous knowledge which has its own rationale and logic. Universities and NGOs commit themselves to learning from the local knowledge and value systems with their technical, social and spiritual dimensions.

Commit themselves to work in the interest of the local communities and design their activities in consultation with the community leaders. Programmes will only be implemented after approval by the local community.

Accept the rules and regulations set by the local community for accepting and receiving visitors and respect the limitations or conditions set by local leaders.

Accept that scientific knowledge can be complementary to the local knowledge system. They will seek complementarity between both knowledge systems, and avoid domination of scientific over local knowledge and value systems. They should also be aware of and acknowledge the existence of conflicts.

Accept the fact that in many cases new methods will have to be developed, as the conventional approaches to research and development are not always appropriate for enhancing endogenous development.

Pay attention to the changes in attitude that staff and students may have to make in enhancing endogenous development. They should accept the fact that they are also students in this respect and accept the local leaders and or experts as their tutors.

Empathically learn from the local knowledge systems and enter into a respectful and constructive dialogue about their epistemologies and paradigms with local leaders and experts.

In order to respect traditional community rights, the staff of the universities and NGO staff involved in a programme will accept the guidance of local leaders to ensure that the information collected will be used in the interest of the community. Sharing of experiences within and between rural communities is important. Publication for other audiences will only be done after approval by the local leaders.

## Supporting endogenous development: case studies

The cases below illustrate different aspects of the overall process of endogenous development. Grounded in experiences from four continents, they show the limitations of some conventional development approaches and outline the main principles and fundamental assumptions upon which endogenous development is based. Against the background of different contexts, they also show the strategies and main methodologies of development agencies, mostly NGOs, in working with communities, farmers, local organisations and leaders to support endogenous development. This work is not without challenges, and some cases therefore also illustrate the controversies that development practitioners and communities face when trying to put these ideas into practice, as well as ways of handling these. We would add here that this book is intended as a starting point rather than a final statement on how to support endogenous development, and the cases throughout the book are intended to provide inspiration rather than blueprints.

## Case 1–1

### The work of the Green Foundation in South India

Women play a crucial role in agriculture as well as in other walks of life. The work of the Green Foundation is especially directed at women, who have a special awareness of the need to conserve biodiversity and the related local knowledge base.



Green Foundation is a grassroots organisation working with small and marginal farmers towards conserving, promoting and reviving genetic and cultural diversity in South India. Seed and soil conservation are its major concerns. It recognises the significance of culture, traditional knowledge systems and spiritual beliefs amongst different social groups as a dominant element governing people's lives.

The Green Foundation's Compas field programme started in 1998 with the aim of enhancing endogenous development by linking biodiversity with culture. The communities that Green Foundation works with are situated in a highly complex rural environment not far away from the industrial metropolis of Bangalore. This area is fast changing, dynamic, and inspired by the urban market. The conflict between traditional and modern could not be more apparent than in this hybrid rural culture. As a result, a plurality of strategies and a diminishing sense of identity amongst farmers can be observed. At the same time, there are clear remnants of a civilisation which has not severed its links with nature. Green Foundation set out to restore faith in the indigenous system and re-establish valuable practices that are on the verge of extinction, while promoting seed conservation and the exchange of traditional crop varieties.

### The approach

Green Foundation's approach and its methodology for reviving cultural and biogenetic diversity has five major components, developed over the years.

#### Creating awareness

One of the major concerns, and the first step in the methodology, is to create awareness and foster bonds with and amongst the rural people. Over the years the Green Foundation has developed several ways to create awareness of the importance of biodiversity and culture, for example through seed fairs. These bring farmers together to collect and exchange indigenous seed varieties. They are held annually, soon after the harvest, at the Green Foundation's farm for exchanges at a regional level and increasingly in villages.

Through Green Foundation's involvement with Compas, a new dimension was added to the annual seed fair. The event now starts with a traditional ritual, thereby highlighting the importance of rituals in Indian agriculture. Traditional seed varieties are displayed, as well as 'cosmovision charts'. Folk songs and dances that had almost died out have been revived during

these seed fairs. Local groups of folk artists, health healers, schoolchildren and women, who go from village to village after the harvest telling stories of the flora and fauna, are now honoured for their contribution to promoting local genetic and cultural diversity.

### Documentation

Documentation of indigenous knowledge and practices about crop diversity is a next step in the Green Foundation methodology. This is an ongoing and integral component of the programme. In addition to specific data related to the traditional crop varieties, the documentation includes more general aspects such as technologies to increase disease and pest resistance, pest management, agricultural rituals, folk tales, traditional human and animal health care practices, storage systems, and methods of controlling wild animals.

To document indigenous knowledge and record oral culture, a combination of methods including observation, participatory rural appraisal, guided field walks and gathering information from the elders in the villages is used. It is Green Foundation's experience that information is sometimes incomplete in terms of form, content and language. Eroded cultural values may explain this problem in part. Another reason is that indigenous knowledge has a strong practical base, but a weak theoretical foundation. Unless a concerted effort is made to transfer the oral knowledge, the next generation will have very little of this knowledge available in written form.

### Experimenting

Green Foundation's approach to reviving cultural practices starts with documentation but does not stop there. Though well aware of the advantages of traditional crops, farmers are often hesitant to switch back to them all at once. They tend to follow a very cautious and step-by-step approach to enable them to withstand ups and downs, and sudden shocks. Therefore, if

#### Negilu Pooje

Practices are documented and experiments carried out by village-level volunteers and interested farmers. *Negilu pooje* is an important ritual performed as a pre-test germination before the onset of sowing. Two new ploughs are placed facing north-east and tied together. A sheath made from areca palm leaves is attached and a mixture of manure and cow dung deposited inside. Nine varieties of seeds (sorghum, finger millet, niger, field beans, red gram, horse gram, mustard, paddy and castor) are then placed in the mixture to germinate and water is sprinkled on them. A symbolic deity made of mud is placed on top of the leaves and worshipped with flowers and fruits. After nine days the seedlings are examined. The varieties with the best germination results are chosen for cultivation. Healthy germination is crucial to cultivation. The ritual marks the celebration of diversity, but its practice had declined in the wake of scientific progress and technological advancement. This reflects the steady destruction of value systems and people's science amongst the farming community.

The Negilu pooje ritual is unique to Savirbatha village, about 25 km from Thalli, but its re-introduction led to new practices as well. Five farmers in this village recorded their observations between germination of the seedlings and the harvest of the selected varieties of crops, and as a result the farmers started to experiment with different mediums for germination.

these practices and rituals are to be revived, it is necessary to experiment with them, to understand their nuances and give them more scientific validation. Green Foundation conducts some experiments itself, and in other cases encourages farmers to try out and compare different practices themselves.

### Introducing external ideas

It is not only in reviving and strengthening lost practices that Green Foundation intervenes, but also in adding elements of external knowledge through training and other capacity building programmes. One example is the case of rice cultivation, where Green Foundation has learned from biodynamic farming in Europe about concepts which are similar to those of Indian traditional science and folk knowledge. A group of rice farmers has experimented with several 'preparations' – herbal medicines made according to the biodynamic tradition.

### Creating local institutional structures

Strengthening village level organisations is another central element of the Green Foundation methodology. At first indigenous seed varieties were distributed from the Green Foundation seed bank in Thalli. Later on the aim became strengthening and promoting decentralised systems of seed disbursement. The villagers opted for reviving or starting farmer and local artisan *sangas*, an old type of village level organisation. The typical membership of these groups is between 15 and 25. Members of the groups are represented in village level organisations, 'committees' now taking their own initiatives.

It is important to include women in the village level organisations. Women play a crucial role in agriculture as well as in other walks of life. When it comes to decision making and social positioning, however, they are often marginalised. In the power relationship between men and women, they are on the receiving end. An increasing awareness has arisen among women about the need to conserve bio-diversity and the local knowledge base.

### Involving schoolchildren

In order to involve school children in biodiversity conservation, contests were organised. The response was encouraging and they have been extended to include several primary schools, twelve high schools, three pre-university colleges and a university. The objective is to raise awareness and at higher education levels to stimulate the assimilation and acquisition of traditional knowledge. In our experience, establishing contact at the school level has been an effective way of disseminating information. Children attending schools represent different villages. The school has therefore been important for gathering information that might not otherwise have been found. It is often difficult to involve children, especially girls, at village level meetings. These biodiversity contests have also sensitised teachers. Villagers are often reluctant to share hidden knowledge, particularly with outsiders, whereas they share it readily with children and other family members. The Compas programme also stimulates respect for traditions and cultural values. Elders are happy to see their knowledge, customs and traditions being revived and have significantly contributed to the effort.

## Some results

Involvement with Compas encouraged the communities and Green Foundation to look for further ways to strengthen the local institutions from an endogenous development perspective. Joint seed storage under the responsibility of the village committee is, for example, in some villages now preceded by a small ritual that confirms the transfer of the individual seed resources to community ownership and thus leaves the seeds better protected from theft and other disturbances.

The main results of Green Foundation's work:

- Activities in a total of 83 villages with over 1000 farmers; in the Green-Compas project 500 farmers in 41 villages are conserving local crop varieties
- Three 'bio-cultural seed villages' established
- Regional and local seed fairs organised
- Youngsters trained as 'barefoot taxonomists' to analyse the local biodiversity
- School children engaged through demonstration plots and competitions
- Traditional village organisations revived in 31 villages now manage seed diversity and exchange
- Traditional practices on genetic resources, health and spiritual perceptions documented
- Central seed bank with 179 species in Green Foundation's farm/training centre
- Seed specimens, herbarium, photographs and slides on traditional crop varieties
- Networking and publications in local language and English

Source: Vanaja  
Rampasad, Green  
Foundation

## Case 1-2

### IDEA's holistic approach to working with tribal communities in India

Endogenous development is the guiding principle of the Indian NGO Integrated Development through Environmental Awakening (IDEA). Established in 1981, IDEA is based in Visakhapatnam, in the state of Andhra Pradesh, and works among the tribes of the Eastern Ghats.

IDEA believes that participatory, people-focused and indigenous knowledge-driven programmes are essential components for all development interventions. Proper consideration of local values, customs, practices, resources and institutions is the main pillar in this development process. Judicious blending of these components with elements of modern development is one of



Tribal women's groups use their indigenous knowledge to prepare nutritious snacks.

the philosophical principles of endogenous development. This is especially vital in the tribal areas where a rapid transition is taking place.

## Where conventional development efforts have failed

The Eastern Ghats are experiencing severe ecological destruction. In the past, tribal societies used several regulatory mechanisms to manage the environment and control the effects of shifting cultivation. Today, indiscriminate felling of trees as part of modernisation has resulted in de-forestation, denuded soils, reduced ground water and the virtual disappearance of traditional crops. The tribal people themselves are being pushed deeper into the remote areas, into marginalisation. With their generally low awareness of the value of money, they are easily victimised by traders. Interaction with non-tribals is leading to an increasing loss of identity and is giving rise to aspirations that are difficult to fulfil.

The main development programmes, such as those introduced by the government, have ignored the existing tribal institutions and knowledge and the role they play in natural resources management, e.g. the role of the clan totems (see Box). The lack of understanding of these has led to the failure of so-called integrated development initiatives.

### A holistic approach

These problems have inspired IDEA to work in a different way, to look for ways to facilitate endogenous development that emphasises active participation, builds on local experiences and institutions and blends these with modern elements. Its approach, which grew out of close interaction with the communities, consists of four main stages.

#### Entry

When entering a new community, we start by building up a relationship with individuals, followed by case studies, group discussions and building relations with traditional leaders. We encourage and participate in cultural programmes with our own songs related to peoples' history, culture and festivals, their ancestors, clan totems and environment. This attracts immediate attention and creates emotional participation and physical integration. Extensive

#### The role of the clan totems

Tribal peoples believe that their ancestors originated from nature. Each clan, therefore, is the direct descendent of a bird, an animal or a tree. This totem is a supernatural power that protects them. Thus, in each community, people identify themselves as belonging to clans such as the Barking Deer, Peacock and Jungle fowl. Each clan has a strong affinity for the species whose names they have adopted. There are many different totemic clans in each community. They will never harm this animal or plant and will protect it as much as possible. The totem symbols gradually evolved as the basis for ceremonies, festivals, customary practices and taboos in tribal communities. These taboos act as regulatory mechanisms, helping to maintain the stability of the natural and cultural identity of the clans and communities.

dialogues are held with the community leaders on the interconnectedness of the natural world, the human world and the spiritual world.

### Emotional integration

Then the more formal part of the process begins, the objective of which is to strengthen community feeling. We call this element emotional integration and it is central to the IDEA methodology. IDEA believes that emotional integration of communities must take place before initiating any kind of development activity. There is a systematic pattern whereby the community is nurtured through a series of practices that the people understand, enjoy and identify with, thus building a strong emotional bond within the community. By reviving traditional cultural practices, songs, dances, festivals and systems of education which have the potential to strengthen their identity, IDEA brings them together on a common agenda.

### Emotional integration in detail

The concept of emotional integration and awakening consists of the following elements:

- **Emotional content:** the specific information, perception and knowledge that is in the mind of an individual or a group of people.
- **Emotional realisation:** realisation of mind(s) or change of mental attitude for proper action with proper perception.
- **Emotional involvement:** participation of mind(s) and heart(s).
- **Emotional edge or rationality:** realisation of set objectives with emotional content and involvement.

### Techniques for promoting emotional integration and awakening

Different techniques are used to promote this process in the target groups. In the case of IDEA, these are different tribal communities with diverse forms of indigenous knowledge, worldviews, habitats, customs and language when it comes to addressing a common problem, whether related to health, nutrition or agriculture. It is important to talk to these communities about human, cultural, tribal and socio-political developments in a form of language that is relevant to them (**emotional content**). This might include using stories, songs or pictorial presentations. Thus the members of the community can create a perception that is meaningful and also helps them to realise (**emotional realisation**) that although they may be from different ethnic or linguistic groups, they come from a single homogenous social race and their common problems can be tackled through community social action. This helps to promote or revive tribal cultural identity, which can be the basis for building up their tribal solidarities (**emotional involvement**).

An eco-restoration or biodiversity conservation programme, for example, that includes emotional integration and realisation starts from traditional tribal nature resource management practices and indigenous knowledge related to ecology. Short simple lectures are given during group and village meetings. Examples and evidence from the community are discussed, and explanations of the meaning of the songs are given. We try to (re-)establish relationships between customs, norms, festivals, environment and animistic religious practices. This enhances people's confidence in their practices. The community feeling is strengthened in their minds and hearts. All people, including the traditional leaders, participate in the programme.

### Planning and implementation of development activities

The third stage includes organising activity-based groups and helping them to set a common agenda. This may involve experimenting with sustainable technologies, documenting local practices, or reviving cultural practices. It is at this level that we make sure that the local knowledge systems interact with outside practices.

For example, traditional herbalists receive training in documenting their local practices, and at the same time learn about allopathic first aid. Traditional birth attendants receive training in mother and childcare, immunisation and nutritional improvements. Environmental protection and development groups (EPDGs) are established and work out plans for integrating their ecology-related cultural festivals and their natural resource base. Village-based women's groups are organised with involvement of their traditional leaders, for example to enter into the thrift programmes.

### Consolidation

The fourth stage includes leadership building, networking and lobbying. A key strategy in IDEA's approach is to work with the tribal leaders, assisting them in reviewing their roles in the present context and in organising themselves. As a result of this work in the various communities, the Naik Gotna network was established in 1998: the Network of Tribal Leaders. This network organises various activities that benefit the tribal population as a whole. For example, hundreds of representatives of the various tribal groups and their traditional leaders join the yearly festivals organised by the Naik-Gotna network (see Case 7-3). These regular festivals provide a platform for traditional leaders to exchange and demonstrate their knowledge, practices and experiments. They create space for intercultural dialogues and for strengthening networking between different tribal communities to promote endogenous development.

Source: Gowtham  
Shankar, IDEA

## Case 1-3

### Community Organisational Development in Ghana

The Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Organisational Development (CIKOD) in Southern Ghana supports organisational development in villages in line with the principles of endogenous development. Endogenous development can be defined as 'development from within' or 'development based mainly, but not exclusively, on local strategies, knowledge, institutions and resources'. It is a continuous process of 'healing', adaptation and innovation, starting from within the local community. A key criterion for endogenous development is that it is controlled by local actors. The main aim is to strengthen local resources for the benefit of local populations, and to enhance the ability of the local population to integrate selected elements from outside into local practices.

Endogenous development is not a uniform or linear process. It has many expressions and is based on different dynamics, depending on the starting position and characteristics of the local community or ethnic group. These characteristics include, for example, the type and availability of local resources, values and ways of knowing, the internal dynamics, and the interactions with the 'outside world' or the wider society. Supporting endogenous development is therefore quite a complicated process, which goes much further than conventional development strategies of enhancing certain production technologies, supplying credit or modifying marketing systems. Enhancing the endogenous development process involves the material, social and spiritual dimensions of the people in the area. Endogenous development implies strengthening local mechanisms for learning and experimenting, for building local economies and for retaining benefits in the area.



Respecting the community entry protocol is the first step in the process of supporting endogenous development. Here development workers consult the chief and elders as the first step to community entry.

## Community Organisational Development (COD)

CIKOD anchors its organisational development work in these principles, which it used to develop its Community Organisational Development Approach (COD). It uses the *eta*, the traditional grinding stick of the Akan people, as a means for conceptualising COD. Its shape reflects the composition of a typical community. The narrow portion of the *eta* represents the individual or individual institutions within the community. The two broad portions represent the wider community. While both conventional OD and COD have to do with institutional identity and the ability of an institution to fulfil its mandate, conventional OD focuses on the individual person or individual institutions in the community (the middle portion of the *eta*). In contrast, COD focuses on the individuals, institutions and the community as a whole (both the middle and the broad ends of the *eta*). We refer to this principle as the '*eta* principle'.

Table 1 summarises the further key differences between the two approaches to organisational development. COD aims at building relationships and social capital, and bringing about social cohesion. Conventional OD, however, tends to focus on the rational self-interested individual, which often results in the



An *eta* (traditional grinding stick), which is used to symbolise the Community Organisational Development approach (COD).

### Conventional organisational development versus Community organisational development from an Endogenous Development perspective

#### *Conventional organisational development*

Focuses on individual person or institutions in community

Emphasis on rational self-interested individual

Results in strengthening of individual choices

Requires group entry requirements that may exclude some of the poor (e.g. entry fees, educational status, dress code) as in the case of co-operative societies.

Carried out by external consultants

Based on western rational principles of competitiveness and efficiency

#### *Community organisational development from an ED perspective*

Focuses on both individuals, institutions and the community as a whole

Aims at building relationships and social capital, and bringing about social cohesion

Integrates the indigenous and the modern, resulting in broader community support

All inclusive and open to all categories of people in the community as the only entry requirement is to be a member of the community, e.g. *asafo* groups (vigilante groups), *nnoboa* (collective work groups), *nksuo kuo* (community development associations, e.g. to contribute labour to bigger projects such as building roads, clinics.) Those living outside the community contribute money.

Collective approach involving members of the community and outsiders, that addresses both individual and community interests

Based on the African worldview of attaching equal importance to material and spiritual well-being and social cohesion

strengthening of individual choices as opposed to broader community interests. COD involves integrating the indigenous and the modern, thus resulting in a broader constituency.

An important difference between conducting COD and providing conventional OD services is that, whereas the latter is carried out by external consultants and is based on western rational principles of competitiveness, efficiency and the interests of individuals, COD is a collectivist approach that seeks to address both individual and community interests and is based on the African worldview of attaching equal importance to material and spiritual well-being and social cohesion.

Source: Bernard Guri,  
Cikod

## Case 1-4

### Growing to understand endogenous development in Bolivia

Agruco is a university-based centre of excellence in Bolivia that supports sustainable endogenous development through the revalidation of local wisdom and knowledge, and the culture of indigenous rural peoples, and by enhancing and strengthening peasant systems of production and agro-ecology. In the course of time Agruco has increasingly learned why rural people act the way they do and has developed methodologies for supporting their endogenous development without interfering too much with the structures, values and social context of each community. This has been accompanied by a process of learning how to incorporate these experiences into university education, as well as in the policies of development institutions and local governments.

Agruco started its work with rural communities, taking organic agriculture as practised in Switzerland as its starting point. The focus was on the technical and agronomic aspects of organic agriculture: the interrelations between soil, plants and mixed cropping. Working with ecologically sustainable strategies based on a systems approach, the aim was to combine the technical aspects of organic agriculture with understanding the organisational and cultural structure of rural communities.

The subsequent phase saw the implementation of an agro-ecological approach whilst carrying out interdisciplinary research and extension activities. Education and technical assistance was provided to the communities in an attempt to overcome the traditional gap between academic research and its practical application. The focus was on the methodology involving participatory research, revaluing local indigenous wisdom and knowledge, and devising a decision-making model. This approach enabled reciprocal relations between researchers and community members. This turned out to be easier than expected, because there are many similarities between agro-ecological principles and the essence of traditional Andean agriculture practised today.

In the third phase, the conclusion was reached that a deeper understanding was needed of the communities' worldviews in order to develop a context within which the actions can take place. This phase emphasises the importance of indigenous knowledge and wisdom and sustainable development in the communities where Agruco works, and the need for a dialogue between these knowledge systems and those from the academe, which would essentially have an intercultural character.



Promoting endogenous development seems possible if local skills and potential are taken into account. This includes elements that are difficult for outsiders to understand, such as the meaning of local festivals and rituals.

## Combining higher education with support to rural communities

The intercultural dialogue between scientific and local knowledge systems thus became central to Agruco's approach. To this end it needed to develop an institutional framework that would allow horizontal, meaningful and long-term interaction between the university and the rural communities. It also needed to address the issue of attitudes, to enable an exchange between the community and the university and encourage staff to overcome the limitations of conventional education, which tends to focus on the use of quantitative methods.

In its institutional organisation, Agruco avoided the typical university departments of research, education and extension, and structured itself into four programmes: academic education, research, social interaction and a programme of extension and communication. This combination of education, research and support to the communities allows local experiences to be integrated into the educational process at the university. When a peasant technology is described, or when a student produces a thesis within a community and in collaboration with its members, it results in both a contribution to participatory research, and support for the communities and inter-cultural education. Courses are also held within the Quechua and Aymara communities for students, university teachers and professionals, during which the local people are able to transmit their knowledge and capabilities, their needs, preoccupations and aspirations to them.

## Revitalising endogenous knowledge

### PICADS

The support that is given by the Agroecology Programme of the University of Cochabamba (AGRUCO) to local communities focuses on strengthening the organisation of the local community and on the implementation and management of projects according to the priorities set by the community. These activities take place within the Integrated Community Programmes for Self Management and Sustainable Development, or PICADS.

### Potato seed bank in Majassaya Mujili

In the area of Ayllu Majassaya Mujili, the communities now manage a local seed bank containing over 45 varieties of native potato seeds, including seeds of some varieties that are no longer grown, or are gradually disappearing. Agruco researchers revalorised several peasant technologies allowing the farmers to multiply the seed varieties in-situ. After the harvest, seeds are re-deposited in the bank. In this way the biological and cultural diversity of potato growing is sustained and revitalised.

A fund has also been established to multiply seeds in communal plots, thus providing another source of seeds that are managed by the farmers themselves. In addition, local experiments done to improve potato seeds include selecting plants, hand-picking tuber seeds and storing seeds under diffuse light in special greenhouses. These experiments also include western practices such as multiplying potato seeds from rooted cuttings taken from the sprouts. This is a complex practice and helps free potato tubers from disease caused by viruses.

These PICADS also form the basis for the interaction between the communities and the municipalities in which they are located. The municipalities manage government funds for local development activities, under the 'Law for Popular Participation' which came into force in 1992. This law entitles communities to receive financial support from the state through the local municipalities.

With the help of Agruco technicians who have been trained in working on the basis of an intra- and inter-cultural dialogue, the communities define small local projects for the PICADS. After co-ordination with other communities and regional organisations, these projects are submitted to the corresponding municipality. If approved, the communally-designed plans become part of the annual operating activities of the municipality. Successful experiences of negotiating for development funds can then be replicated by building them into the operational plans of the PICADS. See case 4-4 for an example of a PICADS.

### **Handbills for revalorisation**

A second important part of Agruco's approach is the preparation of 'revalorisation handbills' (information sheets) to rescue and revive local farmers' knowledge and technologies. They describe in a simple yet comprehensive way a practice or a new piece of information or knowledge, including its social and spiritual relevance within a community and where it originated from. These handbills have helped to stimulate self respect within communities. They also motivate members of the community to continue with the process of reflecting on the importance of local knowledge and customs and how they can be applied in processes of endogenous development. They have contributed actively to the generation of a new model of community development and to proposals for innovations in the university curriculum. Handbills are described in more detail in Case 5-4.

### **Lessons learned**

Firstly, Agruco has learned that it is often not appropriate to introduce modern technologies that come from outside the socio-cultural context of rural communities, such as the European model of organic agriculture, without recognising that communities had their own organic production methods that respected ecological principles and could be revitalised or improved.

Even in shifting to participatory interaction with the communities, Agruco staff unintentionally continued the transfer of external (ecological) technologies and knowledge. As a response Agruco now combines scientific research, participatory action research for revalorisation and intercultural communication between farmers and scientists to support new research paradigms based on endogenous development.

The process of entering indigenous communities for the first time is critical. Experience and sensitivity are required. In the past mistakes have been made, for example trying to meet with the leader of a community at a time of community fasting or during spiritual withdrawal, without taking this into consideration. Respecting, sharing and becoming part of the ritual in a

deeply spiritual way are important principals for educating professionals who are intending to work in sustainable rural development.

Thus far the communities have achieved encouraging results. Promoting endogenous development seems possible if local skills and potential are taken into account. Agruco's experience also suggests that revaluing and recovering local knowledge, wisdom and culture can be achieved by combining support to communities with participatory action research and with the training of students developed within the same rural context.

Source: Agruco

## Case 1-5

### Grupo Semillas and its work with an Afro-origin community in Colombia

Grupo Semillas is a Colombian NGO established in 1993. We work with different sectors of society in the fields of the environment, agro-ecology, sustainable management of biodiversity, genetic resources, traditional knowledge, and public policies affecting local communities. Grupo Semillas carries out its work with local organisations through training and assessment activities (workshops, meetings, seminars, exchanges) and by disseminating information (publications aimed at local communities and the general public).

### Context of the territorial management plan

The Pacific coastal region of Colombia is one of the regions with the greatest biodiversity on our planet, composed of complex and diverse tropical forest ecosystems and enormous plant and animal biodiversity. It is also home to numerous indigenous ethnic groups and communities

of African origin. The geopolitical and economic context of this region makes it a strategic zone in the country and of great interest to the global economy, aspects that are expressed in the conflicts that the indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities are engaged in. These communities were the only inhabitants in these tropical jungles until just a few decades ago, isolated from and marginalised by the national government and the rest of Colombian society.

The communities lived side by side and developed livelihoods and production systems out of the tropical jungle, in harmony with the capacities and limitations of these fragile ecosystems, and in accordance with their cultural and socioeconomic requirements. In the 1980s the Colombian state granted the indigenous and black



Local maize varieties are the central pillar of food self-sufficiency and the culinary culture.

communities collective property rights for these territories (which amount to more than 10 million hectares), and recognised their right to government, autonomy of use, management and conservation of these territories in perpetuity. However, there have been dramatic changes recently, as the region has attracted considerable interest from international companies due to its strategic location in the Pacific rim, and in particular because of the enormous reserves of natural resources. The national government is now attempting to dismantle the collective territorial rights by changing the law and treaties on free trade.

The complex regional situation has been made even worse recently by the escalation of the conflict between different armed groups in the region for control of the territory and of the strategic resources: forest, mines and palm oil plantations. This has led to much migration of local people to urban centres. The cultivation of coca for the drugs trade has also started to invade the region, and has had enormous environmental and socio-economic impact. An additional worry is what the effect will be of the Free Trade Agreement between the United States and Colombia, which will result in new laws and legal measures concerning forests, water and intellectual property. These will permit the privatisation and exploitation of the forests, the biodiversity and other resources in what is now collective territory. It is in this context that the black communities living in the region of the Cajambre River decided to formulate a plan of management and control of their ancestral territory, as a mechanism of cultural reaffirmation and for seeking alternative forms of use and sustainable management of the existing resources in their territory, and also for implementing strategies to defend themselves against the global and national threats they face.

Extension workers of Semillas had followed the social movements of the communities of African origin in the area for a period of more than ten years. They gradually became aware of the importance of relating the initial interests of Semillas (in-situ conservation of genetic resources) with the community's own historical project to recover their autonomy and management of their territory. Instead of working as extension workers, they became allies of the local partners in their struggles. They also had to learn a different language and way of thinking, expressed for example in the way 'genetic resources' are conceptualised by the local population. The experience of Semillas has shown that key elements in this process are the reconstruction of a community's own history upon which organisation and action can be based.

## **The Community Council of the Cajambre River**

The Community Council of the black community of the Cajambre River is an ethnic territorial organisation, formed as a result of the state recognising the collective property rights of the communities over their traditional territories. The Council consists of 2811 people from 586 families, all of black descent, who have a joint cultural heritage of traditions, history and life. The population has a strong relationship with its lands and has developed multiple systems of land use that complement the natural water cycles and the local species. Of these systems, the most important are fishing, agriculture and extraction of forest products for commercial ends. The

traditional territory covers a total of 757 km<sup>2</sup>, consisting of forest areas, connected by an extensive network of ravines, rivers, and river estuaries consisting largely of tidal mangrove swamps. Most of the forests are in the highland area, and are characterised by a high floral diversity, many endemic species and rich biodiversity of species. The communities collectively use and manage about 587 locally occurring species.

## How the Territorial Management Plan came into being

All the activities that are developed in the Cajambre River have to be able to rely on active participation of the majority of the population, because they concern Collective Territories. The Community Councils are non-hierarchical organisations; decisions are taken collectively in general assemblies and local assemblies. Once the decision had been taken to draw up a Territorial Management Plan (*Plan de Manejo Territorial*, PMT), a territorial diagnosis was made of social, cultural, economic and infrastructural aspects, with the support of Semillas. This included recording the community's perceptions of the notion of territory and natural resources. On the basis of this diagnosis it was possible to formulate the programmes, strategies and community actions that would be needed to guarantee sustainable development. The information from the diagnosis helped in the drawing of territorial maps that show what the community possesses, the state of these resources and how the community wishes to proceed in terms of the territory. The PMT that was drawn up consists of four main principles: organisational strengthening, territorial organisation, food sovereignty; and research and management. These principles guide the activities of the Community Council in the short, medium and long term.

In addition, regulations concerning access, use, management and exploitation of natural resources were formulated. These are based on the ancient cultural codes of conduct for territorial and resource management. These regulations enable rules to be established for positioning the communities with respect to external agents (e.g. government institutions, NGOs, research centres and private companies). The objective is to implement mechanisms of control, establish criteria for agreements on projects and activities that take place within the territory so that resources are not removed from the territory. Grupo Semillas has supported the formulation and adjustment of these internal regulations for territorial control.

The PMT is our way to reaffirm our inalienable rights, including those of liberty, life, organisation and sovereignty over our land and its resources, our neutrality regarding the armed conflict and our desire for improvement and social development. We also want to ratify our commitment by guaranteeing conservation and sustainable management of the ecosystems, natural resources, forests and all biodiversity within the territory. In addition we seek to protect the dignity and territorial sovereignty of our people in the face of the political and economic interests that threaten our territory and defend ourselves against the external programmes promoted by the government and private enterprise. In this sense the PMT is the foundation upon which we face the future and plan what we intend to do with our natural resources.

## Achievements

One of the main achievements, derived from the way the Territorial Management Plan was formulated, was the ability of the communities to reach a consensus. This was obtained primarily by using a methodology based on discussion, consultation and reflection at the local and general levels. Another successful aspect was the identification of themes of work that guided the different actions proposed for formulation and elaboration of the PMT. Each one of these produced very interesting results:

- **Organisational strengthening:** improvement in the capacity for action of council meetings, training of the Community Council, creation of opportunities for consultation and decision-making, establishment and strengthening of internal groups, identification of important stakeholders in the management of the territory, identification of structural requirements of the Council.
- **Territorial organisation:** demarcation of the boundaries of units for territorial management, identification of areas of natural, social, cultural and economic importance in the communities, understanding of the territorial dimension, current state of the resources and forests, definition of options for use of certain collective areas.
- **Food security:** development of *agro-ecological guidelines*, including a new proposal for agro-forestry in the humid tropics, with a methodology for recovering the biodiversity of crops including rice, Amazonian wheat, tubers and fruit trees by integrating them into farm orchards, and by sowing vegetables and medicinal plants in raised areas called *zoteas*.
- **Research and management:** formulation of a series of programmes and community initiatives designed to fulfil the plans and future projections of each one of the thematic elements, as part of the implementation of the PMT. In dealing with the forestry problem, a classification of forest products and their commercial potential was undertaken, covering wood, wines and forest seeds. In the tropical timber market, we hope that the Council will take on commercial matters itself, and will complement this by proposing the construction of a school of arts and crafts in wood in the river region, thus generating productive alternatives for the vulnerable young sector of the population.

## Lessons, opportunities and challenges

After formulating the PMT we became aware of the enormous difficulties, obstacles and sacrifices its implementation will mean; but we realise these will not be as great as they were when we started. We have now reached a point of maturity where we are ready to start the process of fighting to maintain our rights and autonomy, so that we will be the ones to decide on the future of our land and that of our children. We want to live peacefully with the river, following our own culture, but with better opportunities for improving our lives and dignity.

Formulating the plan has also taught us to look to our neighbours, as we share common problems concerning social, economic and cultural conditions, especially in relation to outsiders

who have different expectations and different interests. We recognise that it is good to unite to actively defend our territories and their natural resources.

At the same time we have learned to select our friends carefully, and distinguish them from our enemies. Concerning the way in which the community councils are organised, we now identify ourselves with these institutions and feel they are our institutions, rather than something we have to submit to. We can use them by participating actively in them to defend our rights, on the basis of respect, voluntarily and under conditions of equality.

The case study demonstrates how, in the first instance, endogenous development depends on the degree of strength of the social organisation of the groups involved, but above all that the strength of the organisation should not be defined primarily on the basis of economic or productive aspects, but rather on the basis of the reconstruction of a collective identity. Only on this basis is it possible for non-indigenous and indigenous groups to reconnect with their history, culture and identity in a sustainable way that enables them to determine how they conduct the sustainable management of their territory, its natural resources and biodiversity.

Source: Germán Velez,  
Grupo Semillas,  
Stephan Rist, CDE

## Case 1-6

### Endogenous development in the Netherlands: the VEL-VANLA environmental cooperatives

One way of characterising endogenous development is to contrast it with the patterns frequently observed in exogenous development: endogenous development is locally determined, whereas exogenous development is transplanted into particular locations and externally determined. Endogenous development tends to lead to higher levels of retained

benefits within local economies whereas exogenous development tends to export the proceeds of development out of the region. Endogenous development respects local values whilst exogenous development tends to trample over them. And finally, endogenous development is founded mainly, though not exclusively, on locally available resources. These may include local ecology, labour force, knowledge and patterns for linking production to consumption. Endogenous development can revitalise and give dynamism to local resources, which might otherwise be ignored or dismissed as being of little value.

A member of the VEL-VANLA cooperative works on hedgerow maintenance, contributing to the preservation of the historical landscape in the province of Friesland, in the north of the Netherlands.



Two 'environmental' cooperatives, VEL and VANLA, set up by farmers in the Northern province of Friesland in the Netherlands, provide an example of endogenous development efforts in practice.

## Environmental cooperatives

Environmental cooperatives are a form of farmer-based local organisation that has arisen in the last fifteen years in the Netherlands. They bring together farmers in the area around the shared objective of ensuring the continuity of their farming practices in an environmentally sustainable way.

The small-scale farmers of VEL and VANLA were experiencing increasing tension between the restrictions placed on farming as a result of new government environmental policies and the growing economic pressure. Through a process of self-organisation and common effort, local people formed environmental cooperatives to develop their own answers to these problems. Targets are decided upon collectively and there is also collective accountability for fulfilling the targets. A key focus is on making use of the potential that the region itself possesses. VEL-VANLA's motto is 'identify the resources you already possess and start strengthening these'.

About 80 – 90% of the farming families in the area belong to the environmental cooperatives, indicating that nearly all farmers, irrespective of farm size, gender and age, are convinced of the advantages of membership.

## Activities

The cooperatives undertake various activities to make farming more sustainable, both economically and ecologically. The core elements are two tracks, the 'nature and landscape' track and the 'mineral' track. Together these have given the farmers a way of dealing with environmental problems of acidification resulting from modern farming techniques that provides an alternative to the often inappropriate centrally formulated government policies. The 'nature and landscape' track consists of farmer-managed restoration and improvement of the historic valuable landscape and the biodiversity in the region, while the 'mineral' track involves a farm management system known as the 'cycle system' and is about the enhancement of the nitrogen efficiency in the production cycle. The system is designed to address the environmental problems of ground water and acid rain that are the result of high fertiliser use and intensive livestock farming. The core of the system is to improve the efficiency of the separate elements of the production cycle (i.e. the soil, plant, animal and manure cycles) as well as their interrelations. In designing the system the farmers worked closely with scientists from different disciplines.

The cooperatives built a financial incentive into this work: the better the quality of the nature conservation, the higher the compensation for the farmers involved. The co-operatives designed their own method of control: an 'inspection committee'. This committee monitors the progress

and quality of the landscape management efforts of each individual farming household, and checks whether they are complying with the contract between co-operatives and government.

Involvement in these activities has had a positive impact on the existing local resources, and has created new resources as well. The landscape and its nature have become a new resource.

## Success factors

A number of factors have been important in the success of these environmental co-operatives, many of which can be understood only by taking the local farming culture and worldview into account.

1. The presence of knowledgeable farmers has been crucial. They act as pioneers and leaders, and in this way can motivate and activate other farmers. The pioneering spirit, which builds upon collective memory, solidarity, coherence and reliability, defines and governs the relations with the outside world. Even when external conditions are perceived as deteriorating, this pioneering spirit encourages a search for new responses and sees that they are implemented. In turn this strengthens autonomy.
2. Shared social values, such as the sense of 'belonging to the same community', have played an important role. The farming families felt unjustly treated and believed that the future of their farms was threatened as a result of the state-imposed regulations concerning manure treatment. This touched upon a shared history: the huge sacrifices of

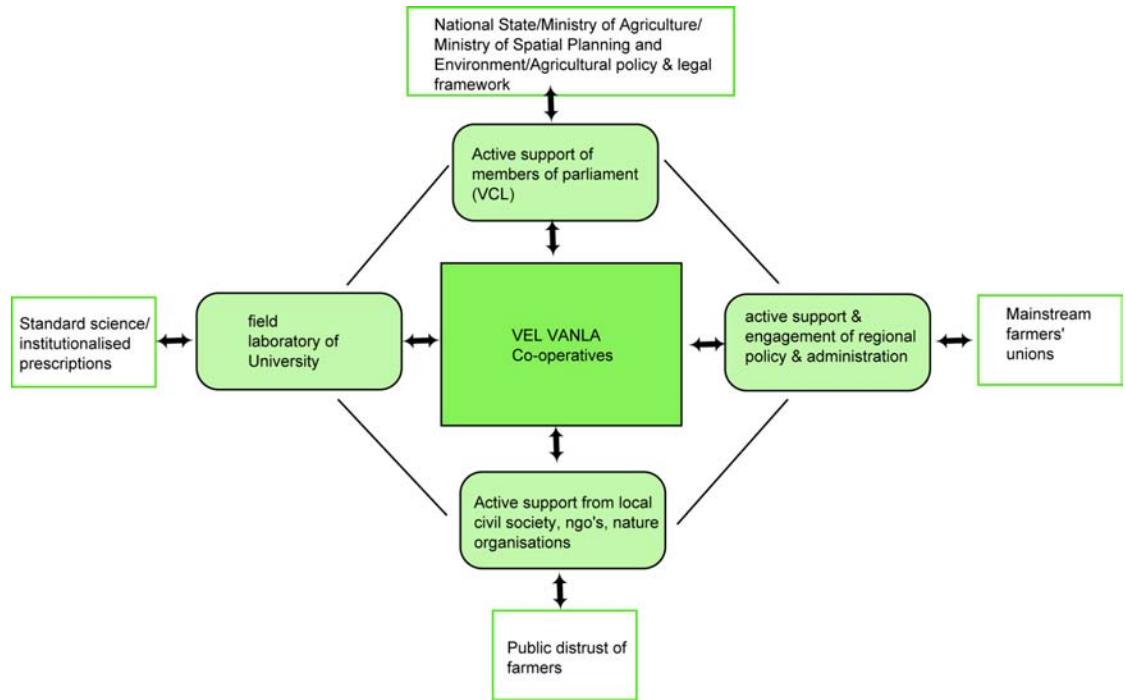


Fig. 2: The support structure of VEL and VANLA

their ancestors to found farms on these poor soils would all have been for nothing. 'Nobody can just take away our farms' is their motto.

The feelings of social cohesion are also based on the historical custom of supporting each other in difficult situations. Previous generations would not have been able to survive without mutual help. Although the technological developments on the dairy farms have decreased the need for co-operation, some patterns of solidarity have remained, such as labour exchange and the sharing of machinery.

3. An element in the worldview of the farmers in this region is their sense of autonomy. They define themselves as a 'free people that cherishes autonomy'. Self-supportiveness, self-sufficiency and reliance on their own capacities are important values. Too much state interference had triggered resistance.
4. Another shared value is reliability, or the commonly shared perception that once made, agreements must be kept. As the director of the managing board of the cooperatives put it, 'Farmers here need time to decide whether they commit themselves to something or not. But once they have made the decision to join, you can be assured that they will keep their promises.'

## **An enabling environment and the role of support institutions**

The environmental co-operatives have not only led to environmental improvements, financial gains for the farmers, and upgrading of the historical landscape and biodiversity. The members have also derived more collective strength. The cooperatives act as a legal entity on behalf of the members towards the local authorities, higher government levels and other stakeholders. In addition, the cooperatives mediate between the farmers and other landowners in the area and also between the farmers and governmental agencies. As a result of their negotiating power the cooperatives have been able to some extent to develop their own ways of dealing with environmental problems instead of having to adopt government-formulated policy requirements. This way of working also has advantages for the government agencies, as the environmental co-operatives constitute a clear point of contact, thereby reducing administration costs and the time needed to check whether farmers are complying with guidelines.

The diagram below illustrates the institutional context within which the VEL and VANLA co-operatives operate. Three levels are distinguished.

The inner circle is the 'experiential space' of the two co-operatives, within which the patterns of endogenous development are moulded. The outer circle refers to the prevailing 'regime' in the Netherlands. It corresponds with the major interest groups and dominant institutions: the national farmers' union, the general public, scientific institutions, and the various government ministries.

The strategies of the co-operatives, however, are at odds with the logic of these reigning structures at a number of levels.

In this respect the 'intermediate circle' forms the crux: this is the network of support institutions, actors and mechanisms that have allowed VEL and VANLA to find their own way forward, and have created an enabling environment for these initiatives. The key players and the support role they play can be summarised as follows:

- Members of parliament who have supported these farmers in defending and regaining the required political space.
- A group of researchers at the agricultural university in the Netherlands, Wageningen University, has helped to transform the VEL/VANLA experience into a 'field laboratory', in which both farmers and scientists participate in research, to provide and generate specific kinds of knowledge. The research agenda is strongly farmer-driven: twice a year the research agenda is jointly discussed and decided upon.
- The provincial authority, which has effectively shielded the co-operatives from severe attacks by the national farmers' union and has made resources (funds, staff) available to support them in implementing certain activities.
- NGOs, such as the nature and environmental movements, have supported the co-operatives. Strategic partnerships with these organisations have been helpful, for example, in negotiating the required exemption from national legal frameworks (lobbying).

Source: Sabine de Rooij, ENED

## Chapter 2

# WAYS OF LEARNING IN ENDOGENOUS DEVELOPMENT

### Introduction

A book about the learning process in endogenous development should address the relationship between mainstream or 'scientific' and endogenous or local forms of knowledge. The contributions in this book show that mainstream knowledge and local forms of knowing are definitely not the same. We want to make visible the context and manner in which the different forms of knowing emerge and interact. In doing this we are neither categorically rejecting mainstream knowledge and science, nor romanticising traditional and indigenous knowledges. Rather, our aim is to search for the strong and the weak points of both ways of knowing to overcome the weaknesses, build on the strong points and look for possible synergy between mainstream and local knowledge. In this way we can stimulate dialogue and cooperation between the different knowledge-holders that leads to co-evolution of different forms of knowing. Endogenous development is a social learning process that involves communication and cooperation between different parties and actors.

The Compas partners experience endogenous development as a continuous and collectively shared learning process. For the past ten years, individuals, communities, community-based organisations, NGOs, government organisations, educational institutions and others from different cultures and parts of the world have learned major lessons, which we describe in this chapter.

1. Cultures differ in what they understand by learning and in the methods and contents of their learning.
2. A major difference exists between ways of learning in dualistic (where the learner and environment are separated) and in non-dualistic worldviews (which assumes a unity between the learner and the environment).
3. Endogenous development builds on the different existing practices for learning.
4. Endogenous development is a social learning process, involving different partners that share formal and informal learning activities.

## Lessons learned

### Lesson 1: Cultures differ in what they understand by learning and in the methods and contents of their learning



Traditional leader in northern Ghana pouring a libation and interpreting the signs from the spiritual world.

Compas has learned that in different cultures there are different ways of looking at learning. The way that learning is perceived and how people actually learn, depend on the worldviews and the beliefs of particular groups or communities, as well as the socio-economic and ecological context of their livelihoods.

In the conventional western notion, learning is generally understood as the process of sense-making and acquiring

knowledge, skills, or attitudes. Learning is expected to influence behaviour, perceptions, attitudes, self-image or values. Learning simultaneously involves processes of perception, interpretation or imitation. It is generally accompanied by reflection based on observation, introspection, or experience achieved. This notion of learning uses education and training as conscious attempts to promote learning in others. The primary function of 'teaching' is to create a safe, viable, and productive learning environment. Hence, the roles and responsibilities of educators, teachers and trainers on the one hand, and the roles and responsibilities of trainees and learners on the other, are distinct. This notion of learning and training focuses on learning as an activity undertaken by and between humans.

An alternative notion, often observed in non-western cultures, is that learning is not exclusively a capacity of humans, but is a universal phenomenon. Every individual, every social group (and even every life form and possibly even matter) has a capacity to gather information and experience and to react to it.

All living creatures have the capacity to experience and to translate this experience into behaviour. Consciously or unconsciously they can make the choice to adapt their behaviour to the environment and/or to adjust the environment to suit their needs. A bird (and in a comparable way a colony of ants, a school of fishes, and also plants) will look for a suitable habitat to settle and then build its nest (or take root) and find food among the materials found locally. Similarly humans settle in habitable areas of the globe and then build their houses, roads and develop other ways of life that respond to the environment and to their worldviews and values. The notion of 'vital forces in matter' is found in a number of western and non-western cultures. Animist cultures believe that 'everything is alive', 'everything is consciousness', or 'everything has a soul'. The world is considered to be a community of living beings, only some of whom are human. In such cultures learning is not considered to be an activity of human

'subjects', who learn about 'objects', but is seen as the result of interaction between different beings. In the box below we present a few examples of how worldviews in different parts of the world result in different ways of learning.

## Different worldviews and ways of learning

### Latin America

**The Andes:** The natural, social and spiritual worlds are united. (non-duality as basic notion) Sacred time-space (Pacha) goes beyond the physical or socio-economic domains. There is a spiral notion of time that is not separated from space (territory). The first ordering principle is relation; everything is related and this leads to a reciprocal relationship between humans, animals, plants, rocks, water, wind, sun, moon and stars. The relations are embodied in astronomy, rituals and fiestas.

**The Mayas** have a holistic worldview, with their own Maya calendar, their own system of mathematics (based on the number 20), health and agricultural systems that build on the calendar, rituals and ecological principles.(See Delgado & Escobar, 2006.)

In these cultures, learning takes place by experiencing the relationship between the human, the natural and the spiritual worlds. 'It is through our connection with Pacha Mama that we learn'. Learning from within is based on intuition and lessons from nature. More than being interested in mechanical explanations on 'how things are', there is an emphasis on the question 'why things are'. In asking 'why', the interaction between the human, the material and the spiritual world is taken as a given. Moral and ethical questions play an important role, as human behaviour can have a direct influence on the natural and spiritual worlds.

**Africa:** In the African worldview the world is made up of ancestors, the living and the not yet born and nature is sacred. Within this worldview there is a hierarchy between divine beings, spiritual beings, ancestors, living human beings and natural forces. Nature provides habitats for human and spiritual entities. Time is cyclic and goes from the present to the past. Ancestral spirits have powers that can be used both in negative and positive terms. In the present day African reality, one can observe two co-existing systems of beliefs and knowledge: traditional and modern. Each of them is accompanied by specific values, logic and interpretation of cause-effect; this often leads to different choices about lifestyle, spirituality and practices of farming and health. In addition, the ways of learning are different. (See Millar et al., 2006.) In the traditional African view, learning implies being receptive to the teachings of those who have lived before us, the elders, and reading the signals of the spiritual world expressed in nature. Also, here the emphasis of learning is more on 'why things are' than on 'how things are'.

**India:** In the Vedic tradition the real world and the fundamental principles upon which life systems are organised are different from those in the West. Reality is a continuum of matter, mind and consciousness. Vedic knowledge has a notion of 9 existential principles, 41 qualities and 5 types of action, upon which for example the Ayurvedic health system is based. The term Akasha refers to the unifying energy inherent in all four elements (earth, air, water, and fire) in nature and thus also in every living creature. Essentially, it is the all-encompassing spirit energy. In this worldview all entities can learn, and learning is not limited to the use of the five senses. It takes place through a combination of sensory perception, intuition, inference and the teachings of seers or gurus. If the mind is free from prejudices (lust, anger, greed, intoxication, delusion and jealousy) it can learn from within. Meditative techniques and yoga are used in addition to ancient written texts in the pursuit of knowledge for liberation and enlightenment. Lessons from previous lives can also play a role. (See Balusubramian & Devi, 2006.)

In India the Vedic way of knowing exists alongside that of the (often animistic) tribal populations and with that of mainstream modern knowledge. In Sri Lanka the Buddhist worldview indicates that attachment to the material world is the cause of the suffering of humans. The 8-fold path with the use of the right insights, intentions, words, acts, lifestyle, efforts, attention and concentration leads to enlightenment (nirvana).

### Different worldviews and ways of learning

**Europe:** In the dominant or scientific-oriented western worldview, the world is conceived of as consisting of, in the first place, separate and autonomous identities, such as humans, trees, animals. This notion leads to importance being attached to rationality and self expression and to a domination of the attitude of self-interest as a main goal in life. A relation between entities is not regarded as an essential part of these identities. First there are two separate identities, and the relationship between them is secondary.

In the 'Enlightenment' view, knowing is based on measuring and the use of the five senses. Rational logic, materialism, mechanism and the self-interest of the individual or group are strong ordering principles through which Western people comprehend reality. There is also a perceived duality, expressed in dichotomies such as mind-matter, creator-created, man-nature, and object-subject. There is a tendency to reductionism, and knowledge is separated into separate disciplines. In this materialist and mechanistic view, learning is done by subjects that are separate from objects and quantifiability is important. The emphasis of research and of learning is on 'how things are': how a certain effect is caused within the laws of physics or other sciences.

In the 'Post-modern' view, the world is regarded more from a holistic perspective, where uncertainty, diversity, chaos and self-regulation, and synergy are seen as ordering principles. It takes distance from or relativises generic principles and universal science or values (such as human rights, democracy, good governance). Post-modern science is more non-dualistic. Sources of knowing include pre-enlightenment views, new scientific insights from quantum mechanics and transdisciplinarity, social learning and a diversity of ways of knowing and ways of learning from non-western cultures. (See Haverkort & Reijntjes, 2006.)

## Lesson 2: A major difference exists between ways of learning in dualistic and non-dualistic worldviews

Building on the first lesson that the differences between worldviews may lead to a different focus in the method and content of the learning, we have observed that there is an important distinction between dualistic and non-dualistic (holistic) worldviews. The first makes a deliberate separation between the learner and his/her environment (the subject and the object) whereas the second assumes unity between all that exists and thus assumes connectivity and reciprocity between all learners. The first puts an emphasis on 'how' and the second on 'why' things are. This means that, in the process of guiding the learning processes for endogenous development, outsiders need to understand to what extent indigenous ways of knowing and learning are dualistic, or non-dualistic, and to what extent elements of both coincide. On that basis the choices can be made for the most appropriate way to link local/traditional with external ways of knowing.

The dualistic worldview is essentially materialist. It separates mind and matter, mankind and nature, subject and object. The only thing that can objectively be observed and experienced is

matter, which is regarded as non-living, or inert. It only responds to the laws of physics, has no capacity to experience, no memory and thus no capacity of its own to learn. Mind on the other hand is not tangible and therefore cannot be subject to serious quantifying scientific research. Non-dualistic or holistic views do not accept the separation between mind and matter and between the observer and the observed. They consider all non-human beings and also matter to be sentient (having the ability to feel or perceive), carriers of vital forces, or gross expressions of subtle or spiritual reality.

The materialist, dualistic notion is dominant in the mainstream scientific world. The non-dualistic notion is often dominant in traditional cultures, but it is also accepted by and can be explained and understood by advanced conventional scientific schools such as quantum mechanics and transdisciplinarity. In reality, however, both ways of thinking can and do co-exist. They can exist separately as parallel systems or they can merge. This can lead to synergy, but also to confusion or tension, as the values and criteria for decision-making may turn out to be quite different in the two cases.

In the dualistic notion, learning is a change in behaviour as a result of new experiences or perceptions with respect to an outside environment. Experiences are accepted as true and valuable only if they are the result of objectively verifiable perception by the senses. Dualism thus leads to a way of learning that sees the environment of the learner as separate from that of the learning subject. Education serves the purpose of transmitting information from the person who knows to the person who does not know.

In a non-dualistic or holistic perspective, learning is not based on separation or on absorbing information from outside. The learner is regarded as an intrinsic part of, and thus not separate from, a greater whole. Thus, the learner seeks connection to a superior source of knowing. Knowing in this perspective is more than processing data, or acquiring information and responding to it by producing new knowledge and skills. It also implies connectivity, judgement, morality and wisdom. In this perspective, learning results from the sense of being united, being part of one and the same whole. It results from communication, participation, reciprocity and unity. While learning is based on the use of the senses, it also has an element of learning from within, or intuition. To intuit is to know without necessarily being aware of the logical or empirical reasons.



Schoolchildren and teachers join parents in celebrating a ritual related to agriculture in the Peruvian Andes.

### Lesson 3: Endogenous development builds on the different existing practices for learning

Traditional leaders discuss endogenous development in Ghana, with Bern Guri of Compas partner CIKOD (right).



For enhancing endogenous development, we need to find ways in which traditional or local ways of learning can be strengthened and – where possible and relevant – be complemented by outside practices and ways of learning. Endogenous development can be a way of bridging the gap between indigenous identity and forms of learning on the one hand, and conventional forms of learning on the other. To do this we need to consciously take local practices and potentials

as the starting point. The way local people learn, experiment and teach is therefore the key for development support. This process requires activities to strengthen learning within cultures (intra-cultural learning) as well as exchange and learning between cultures (inter-cultural learning).

This idea has been developed in endogenous educational practices and theories. Perhaps the most influential of these is the 'pedagogy of the oppressed' of the Brazilian educator and philosopher Paolo Freire. Freire emphasised the need for a change from regarding the student as a 'passive trainee' to seeing the student as an 'active learner'. He also insisted on the need for continuous exchange between action and reflection within the learning process. Building on this, the experience of COMPAS shows that learning also means knowing how to read the signs of nature (winds, stars, clouds, plants, animals, dreams and feelings) as part of communication between humans and the surrounding universe.

More recently, the Earth Charter Initiative, which includes many world leaders as well as organisations promoting ecological sustainability, called for education based on eco-pedagogy or earth-pedagogy. This implies re-directing formal curricula to incorporate values and principles of the culture of peace and sustainability. This pedagogy includes peoples' culture, respect for identity and diversity, and looks at the human as a being in continuous development, interacting with others and the world (Corcoran et al., 2005). Compas partners have experiences in building on local knowledge and ways of learning. They are presented in more detail in Chapter 5. The example below presents a roadmap for reforming education in Africa, as expressed by an African chief, Nana Nketsia.

### African roadmap for reforming education

- The school must integrate the African worldview and indigenous relationships. The learning process must start transmitting these values and traditions at an early stage, along with the knowledge of why such activities must be sustained.
- The teachers must be those who live by and have experienced the form of knowledge they are transmitting. Teachers themselves urgently need a programme to unlearn in order to re-learn their cultural selves.
- It is necessary to teach how Europe has been imbibed as 'education' and in the process has unravelled Africa. Without understanding the colonising culture, it may be very difficult, if not impossible, for the African to teach about Africa. Un-learning must be a special subject.
- Ownership of the school system is vital. Endogenous development can only materialise when there is constant community responsibility for the institutions of learning.
- The language of transmission must embody the meaning and culture of the society within which the knowledge is being transmitted. African dictionaries of English, French, Spanish or Portuguese need to be created.
- Assessment of students should include the level of culture and depth of socialisation of the individual achieved. There must be a strong social and cultural basis for evaluating the level of knowledge gained.
- Modern technological innovation is not antithetical to endogenous development, but should be integrated in a manner that is based on the way of life and creativity of the community. This process needs to be part of formal education.

Source: Nana Nketsia, Compas Magazine 10

### Lesson 4: Endogenous development is a social learning process involving different partners that share formal and informal learning activities

Learning in endogenous development is not just something that takes place in training sessions where persons with similar backgrounds are subject to training; rather it is a mutual and therefore social learning process between persons who may have different backgrounds and positions in society. There is an intimate connection between knowledge and activity, and learning takes place in daily life as much as during formal training sessions. Problem solving and learning from experience are central processes. Knowledge is integrated in the lives of communities that share values, beliefs, languages, and ways of doing things. The processes of learning and of membership in a social environment are inseparable.

Social learning takes place in 'communities of practice'. Communities of practice are groups of people who share similar goals and interests. In pursuit of these goals and interests, they employ common practices, work with the same tools and express themselves in a common

Farmers and a technician (centre with white cap) collaborated in building a model of the territory to support the presentation of group work. This is an excellent way of creating common understanding.



language. Through common activity, they build up common experiences and thus learn together.

Learning in endogenous development implies that the learning processes of the rural or urban people and of NGO development staff or scientists from outside the community go hand in hand. The learning of local people and that of outside supporters complement each other. Outsiders can learn from local people about their worldviews, local resources and concepts

and practices, and equally, local people can learn with and from outsiders to improve their own ways of learning and experimenting, and also to assess and possibly use relevant information from outside.

## Compas and social learning

Social learning is the way in which Compas goes about endogenous development. This means that research and action are integrated into a framework that involves a dialogue between different actors and the forms of knowledge they hold as part of the learning process.

The first and most important consequence of seeing endogenous development as a social learning process is that all actors are as much students as they are teachers. Another consequence is that it shows the close interrelationship between the development of cognitive, social, spiritual and emotional competences, and the relation these have to values and ethics (see Figure 1). In addition to explicit knowledge, there is also implicit knowledge: the knowledge that people or a community have but are not necessarily conscious/aware of, which gives meaning to natural or social phenomena. An analysis of the life histories and the social and spiritual kinship of Aymara peasants in Bolivia (Delgado, 2002; Rist, 2002) shows that the dynamics of different forms of knowledge play a fundamental role in the revitalisation of local knowledge. Understanding and increasing consciousness of latent or intuitive patterns of interpretation – underlying indigenous knowledge – is therefore a key feature in endogenous development.

Understanding endogenous development as a process of collective learning among professionals, researchers and local people is a challenge to conventional forms of training. When no fundamental distinction is made between trainers or trainees, knowledge can be generated through exchange of experience and knowledge, and through joint reflection between people of different social, cultural and cognitive backgrounds. Given the significant differences between the knowledge and the skills of scientists, extension workers and farmers, new types of interaction need to be created. We need to change the idea of 'knowledge

transfer' into one of 'inter-cultural communication'. This means recognising that scientists and indigenous people do not necessarily relate in the same way to the different dimensions of the learning processes. Local people usually appreciate the increase in social and emotional competences, where intuition, empathy, respect and openness are as important as or even more important than reflection. External actors tend to focus more on the cognitive dimension. In order to facilitate an equitable dialogue, the one-sidedness of the different forms of knowledge involved must be overcome.

Enhancing social learning processes therefore requires creating conditions that can meet the different needs of the actors involved. It is important therefore to create platforms that allow local and indigenous people to meet with development workers, researchers, and university staff. These platforms can provide room for collective learning processes that integrate the development of social, emotional, spiritual and cognitive competences.

## An example of social learning: Learning for Sustainability

In order to enhance social learning processes in a more systematic way, the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE) of the University of Bern in Switzerland and its southern partners developed an instrument called 'Learning for Sustainability' (L4S). This focuses on the use of local sustainable resources, how to identify the non-sustainable use of resources, and strategies that aim to promote sustainable development (see Box below).

The training module of learning for sustainability provides a concept and a methodology for creating platforms that foster social learning processes. It is based on a dynamic that is produced by bringing together local and external actors in mixed learning groups in a 'real world' learning environment. This allows horizontal interaction between the group members. The interaction must be intense and last long enough to permit the growth of social and emotional competences, as an integrative part of the processes of exchange of knowledge and joint reflection.

### Structure of Learning for Sustainability training module

- Part I: a basic understanding of 'how sustainable resource use is rooted in a local setting' is developed. Exercises and texts are used to reconstruct, in a systemic perspective, what local and external participants perceive as 'natural resources', 'development', 'actors', 'the socio-political context', and the ways in which these factors are interrelated.
- Part II: focuses on the question of 'how to identify non-sustainable use of natural resources'. Joint reflection and analysis of interconnected ecological and socio-cultural problems and the impacts associated with resource use at the local level.
- Part III: addresses key aspects of 'strategies that aim to promote sustainable development'. The strategies identified are condensed and formulated into community-based development initiatives. After they have been validated in community assemblies, they are often used in communicating with external supporting institutions. This allows the communities to change course and invite external institutions to participate in development initiatives emerging from within.

This training module consists of a 2-3 week-long workshop. The members of the mixed learning group reflect the diversity of local and external actors, including different generations, genders, areas of specialisation, religions, professions and responsibilities. The workshop takes place in a rural village or community and consists of a sequence of interrelated exercises and working sessions, which take into account both local and external conditions and their interrelations. The exercises are mainly based on participatory rural appraisal methods, such as transects, participatory mapping, Venn diagrams, role-playing, story telling. These are elaborated in such a way that the participants collectively reconstruct and interpret life and its context in a systemic perspective.

## Empowering local visions

The moderators of the workshop are responsible for organising how the participants carry out the exercises, which form the main part of the workshop, as well as preventing a retreat into traditional hierarchical patterns of interaction. Only in this way is it possible to examine the different visions actors have, based on their understanding of natural resources, nature, society or culture, and the ways these interact.

The fundamental contrast between this methodology and the conventional participatory rural appraisal procedures is that in this case the focus is not only on the perceptions and visions of local actors, but on those of the external actors as well. The results, systematised according to

### Experiences of a Learning for Sustainability workshop in Bolivia

As a first exercise during a workshop in Bolivia, participants made a transect walk through the community and registered the natural resources they observed and the social actors related to these. Before going out into the community, small mixed groups of farmers and professionals had to determine how they would register the results. While the external actors suggested registering them separately, the farmers argued that this was 'useless'. For them resources are an organic unity, which is also embraced by the earth's mother (Pachamama). In the presentation of the transect results, participants agreed that local people have their own understanding of natural resources. Besides soil, plants, animals, water and so forth, the farmers also registered the clouds, rain, sun, wind, sacred water sources, mountains and caves as important 'natural resources'.

In the plenary session, external participants indicated openly that they were surprised by the degree of holism underlying local visions. A fascinating dialogue emerged, in which external actors explained to each other and to the farmers the limitations of their way of looking at nature and society. The participants debated this experience and came to the following conclusion: 'Interaction between external and local actors often fails because professionals make their own vision prevail and local actors normally do not dare to bring their own views into the discussion.'

This process is a powerful instrument for flattening the often hierarchical relationships between local and external actors and the forms of knowledge they represent. Opening external visions and perceptions to the collective learning process constitutes clear 'de-powerment' of outside actors. At the same time, it represents a visible empowerment of local actors, who are normally not allowed to assess external values and knowledge. This creates room for a more horizontal form of interaction, which is a fundamental requirement for the enhancement of social learning processes.

the different groups of participants, are always fed back in the plenary sessions, where the whole group can identify and reflect on differences, conflicts or common interests. This process leads to intense and highly motivated debate and shared reflection, which is practically identical with social learning (see example in Box on page 50).

## From reflection to action

Experience has shown that, once a mutual learning process has been established among the participants, which usually occurs after some 6 to 8 days, discussions of the current situation automatically lead to plans for concrete action to improve it. Thus the subsequent phase in the learning process implies a move towards the choice of specific actions that will make better

### Water management and the campaign against corruption in Bikanhalli

The Indian NGO Sampak organised an L4S workshop in the village of Bikanhalli that lies in the semi-arid district of northern Karnataka. It soon became clear that people were suffering a severe livelihood crisis, which had been worsened by three years of heavy drought. The problem of water scarcity is central in this part of India. Groundwater is exploited at the individual level by people digging more and more bore-wells. As a consequence the water table has sunk dramatically. Additionally, high-input agriculture, combined with salt water, has caused severe degradation of the soil. People were very aware of the deterioration of their natural and social resources. During the workshop, joint reflection revealed that the families of the village do not think of water as a community asset, nor do they have community meetings to discuss the state of natural resources, or plan to restore them collectively.

By the end of the three-week workshop, local participants wished to maintain the platform that had emerged, because they wanted to overcome their individualistic approach to resource management. Motivated by regular follow-up meetings supported by Sampak, local participants of the workshop formed a farmers' sangha, or group, committed to sustainable land and water management. The sangha made an initial proposal for investment in their land, based on the insights developed during the workshop, and presented it to the Ministry of Rural Development. The government approved only a small portion of the requested funding, and the release of these funds was delayed until payments or bribes to officials had been made.

In a long meeting, the people of the sangha and other village members decided to transform their small rural development proposal into a pilot project which would also address the problem of corruption. Together with Sampak they are now engaged in social mobilisation, claiming their right to the entire amount approved by the government. One participant explained that he had learned in the workshop "that having water without the civil right to get integral public funding – without bribes – is like having a pump without water".

This methodology may be more time consuming than conventional ways of doing rapid participatory appraisals, but has the great advantage of extending participation and making the differences between farmers' and outsiders' interpretation and analysis more visible and accessible. Moreover, it comprises a further step forward towards a more comprehensive form of participation, which opens up horizons for intra- and inter-cultural dialogue practised throughout the process of development. The whole process, ranging from definition of problems and potentials, to analysis of underlying factors and forces, and the implementation and evaluation of activities, becomes an integral part of social learning processes.

use of existing local and external resources. By the end of the workshop participants normally have formulated three or four draft local development initiatives, which are submitted to community members in a final presentation.

Later, the initiatives formulated during the workshop are discussed at regular community meetings, leading to approval, modification or rejection (see Box on previous page). As the example from India shows, the social energies generated through collective learning can trigger important technical, social and political changes, which take into account the multidimensionality of local or endogenous development.

Source: Stephan Rist,  
CDE

## Towards learning forms in endogenous development

Endogenous development implies much more than learning new skills or developing new understandings. It goes beyond the use of the hands and head, and touches people's hearts. It relates to peoples' fundamental views, to their basic attitudes to their fellow humans, and sometimes to their religious feelings. Learning in endogenous development is thus about personal as much as professional development.

The experiences and methods presented in this book do not form a coherent set of tools with one consistent method or approach. They are as diverse as the experiences they are based on. We do not present a blueprint for learning, nor do we offer a set of tested best practices. We do not intend the cases and materials presented in this book to be replicated or copied by others. Rather we see them as a source of information that hopefully will inspire readers to reinvent their own appropriate ways of learning, and to design ways to learn, train and/or teach. Here we present a selection of learning forms we have encountered and used in our work. We hope they are examples that will inspire and encourage reflection.

### 1. Learning about local worldviews

One of the lessons learned in Compas is that a dialogue between cultures can only be effective if a dialogue within the culture has taken place. In other words, intra-cultural dialogue is a precondition for a successful inter-cultural dialogue. In many situations the dominant or modern society has marginalised the knowledge and values of traditional societies, often to the extent that traditional people either identify with the dominant forces, or keep the expression of their traditional ways hidden from outsiders. A first step for building a good relationship with local people is understanding the way worldviews play a role in the daily life of the local or traditional communities, and how they influence the interactions with outside knowledge systems.

## Checklist for learning about worldviews

The Compas partners have developed the following checklist for jointly learning about the worldview and values of people:

- **Cosmovision and concepts of life:** Learn about creation myths; the divine beings that play a role in the society; the role of ancestors, sacred persons, animals, places and objects; the concept of nature; the role of energy, rituals and spiritual technologies; the time concept and relationships of cause and effect; the relationship of mankind to nature and the spiritual world.
- **Indigenous institutions:** Identify and understand the way local institutions regulate community decision making, the management of resources and experimentation with new farming practices; learn about persons who have special knowledge and power and who play a particular role in the community; understand their roles, responsibilities and attitudes in agricultural experimentation and innovations.
- **Indigenous practices and use of knowledge:** What are the important practices relating to the management of natural resources, agriculture and health? What are concepts and explanations for the practices used by the local population? And how do they relate to western explanations and concepts? How do people learn, teach and experiment? What agricultural experiments have taken place and how have they been carried out: subjects, methods, parameters, criteria, indicators? What changes are taking place with respect to the way indigenous knowledge is being used in learning, teaching and experimenting?
- **Interaction:** How do the local or indigenous knowledge systems interact with outside sources of knowledge? What is the focus of general and agricultural education, agricultural research and extension, religion and health? To what extent does the difference in dualistic and non-dualistic notions of learning play a role in the interaction. How can differences be bridged?
- **Changes in the traditional cosmovision of the local communities:** Identify changes that are the result of external influences and changes that are a result of local adjustments to ecological, technological, commercial, political or demographic change. To what extent is experimentation and learning influenced by, or mixed with, the western worldview? What are the contradictions or tensions: erosion of indigenous knowledge and indigenous institutions, creative adaptation, conflicts or parallel systems, underground knowledge?
- **Options that exist for endogenous development amongst the local populations:** How can the local community develop in such a way that cultural identity is maintained and enhanced, local resources are used properly and opportunities for the use of external knowledge are carefully considered?

## Poems as representations of worldview

The poem, We Always Knew by Backson Sibanda, expresses the role of traditional knowledge and values in Africa. We present a shortened version here.

### We always knew

*Lord as I cast my eyes  
Across the African plains  
I see the wild wonder  
as the wildlife wander  
and the elephants in their elegance  
slowly blend into limitless biodiversity.  
The lion wakes again  
as the king of the jungle catches another prey.*

*There is still wilderness and the wilds here  
The beauty of nature and diversity  
Nearly frozen from creation to Eternity  
Until they built that Safari track  
And then came the marrum road  
They called it the dirt dust road  
And finally came civilisation with the motorway.  
Solitude and serenity were broken forever.  
Finally from the cities of the world  
They came in hundreds, thousands  
Oh Lord they came in their millions  
From the bowels of the earth  
They came to seek solitude here.  
From concrete jungles they raced here.  
To seek solitude and serenity.*

*Lord they will never understand  
what this means to us, what they are doing to us.  
Our lives are interwoven into this matrix  
of delicate landscape and biodiversity.*

*Lord they called them National Parks  
We call it home – Mother Africa  
They called it nature reserves, botanical gardens, finally biological diversity.  
For us this will always be life-giving  
Mother Africa, home and not jungle.*

*It is life given in abundance  
 It is not a breath of fresh air  
 But a drink of life – life given in abundance.  
 Now they call our worm infested water  
 Biological Diversity.  
 For us this is just life and we have always known that.*

*The Wilderness is finally gone  
 The wilds and the forest have disappeared.  
 The wildlife no longer roams the African Plains  
 The Elegant Elephant is now trophy  
 The giraffe and the lion are now in the zoo  
 The Titihoya sings no more  
 The eagle flies high no more.  
 Only now do they understand  
 The hand of Creation.*

*We have always known that.*

## 2. Reconnecting with one's own roots

Development workers are often trained in such a way that the links with their own traditional roots are weakened. Primary, secondary and professional or scientific education, formal religions, government programmes, mass media and commercial advertising generally support exogenous development. Therefore, professional development workers in endogenous development need to go through a process of reconnecting with their own roots. This can lead to a better understanding of the role of the traditional worldviews and traditional ways of learning in their own lives, and of the values and limitations of traditional worldviews for the present day communities. This in turn increases understanding of the relationship with the dominant way of knowing and the processes of marginalisation. As a result, sensitivity can be enhanced to the potentials and difficulties for intra-cultural learning and inter-cultural dialogues. David Millar shares his personal experiences in the case below.



Seated on a trunk of a sacred baobab tree, David Millar is listening to an elder in Bongo, who stated: "We will continue our way and hope that you will introduce us to your ways too, so we can interact together in a positive way."

## From Training & Visit to Endogenous Development in Ghana

Twenty years ago, I started work as a government agricultural development worker. At that time, agricultural research had developed a hybrid variety of sorghum. When used in combination with chemical fertilisers, it yielded two or three times the normal returns for Northern Ghana. In order to convince farmers of the advantages of this new variety, the government introduced the Training & Visit system. The extension workers received training twice a month on how to communicate information to farmers. Technical guidelines on land preparation, ploughing, sowing, fertiliser application, transplanting, weeding, top dressing, pest management, harvesting, storage and marketing were determined by headquarters and transferred to farmers by extension workers. The extension staff worked with farmers who were willing to establish demonstration plots on their farms. These farmers were visited every fortnight and were given technical guidelines. The idea was that they would pass this information on to their fellow farmers.

### Turning a problem into an opportunity

Initially this system seemed to work well. Extension staff were motivated and received a motorcycle to do their work. The contact farmers were happy to receive cheap fertilisers and a lot of attention. Yet during the third year of the programme a problem arose. The ship with fertilisers arrived late and fertilisers could not be delivered to the villages before the start of the rains. Because of this the most essential ingredient required by the extension programme was not available to farmers.

After long discussions with the extension staff, it was decided to turn this problem into an opportunity. Instead of going to the farmers with messages of innovation, the extension staff visited the farmers to learn from them, discover what advice they needed and how they were going to manage without fertiliser. The results were revealing. It turned out that the vast majority of the farmers were not too bothered about the absence of fertiliser. They had been farming in the area for centuries with farming techniques such as inter-cropping, combining crops with livestock, using trees for food, fodder, medicines and firewood, practising dry season gardening and raising poultry, goats, sheep and cattle. Production was mainly for home consumption and part was used for sacrifices and ceremonies. We also became increasingly aware of gender differentiation in labour and decision making. In traditional systems, fertiliser that has to be bought with cash plays a very limited role. The farmers' own interests in extension were centred on water management, animal health and making tools.

As a result of this experience, an effort was made to adjust the content of the extension programme to the needs and potential of the farmers. However, it was difficult for a centrally managed government system to manage decentralisation and flexibility.

### Searching for meaningful farmer participation

I decided to continue working in the NGO-sector as manager of a church-based programme, where there was more opportunity to listen to the farmers, adjust to their needs and to focus

on low-external-input agriculture. It became clear that the Training & Visit approach aimed at maximising production for the market and did not make much sense in the eyes of most farmers. We decided to focus on on-farm research, an approach that involves farmers in trying and selecting relevant technologies. However, this appeared to be problematic too if the traditional concepts of farming were not taken into account. For the majority of farmers in Northern Ghana, farming is a combination of agricultural and ritual practices and social activities that take place within the context of their communities. We realised that farmers learn through experience and adjust their practices accordingly.

At that time I noticed that I frequently resorted to executing various key parts of the programme and the action research design in my office, or only with my field staff, far removed from the farmers' environment and active influence. This was because I was unable to get farmers to define important aspects, such as criteria for pursuing the investigative process, the indicators for choice-making, the critical stages for data collection, the replications; and there was also the issue of sustainability.

I had begun to understand however that farmers themselves are researchers, and conduct their experiments based on their own research agenda and experimental models. My problem became therefore, how can we access this model in such a way that we can include these pieces of information? What vocabulary should we use and how can we establish an intellectual dialogue with the rural people, and what techniques are available to enable us to access and support this rich experience? I feel that when such issues are discussed prior to or during the experimental design, the outcome will be greatly enhanced. One needs to establish together with the farmers what data to gather, how to gather it, when it should be gathered, and above all, to base the experiment on the farmers' way of simultaneous data gathering and analysis.

### **Towards supporting endogenous development**

We now looked for ways of building our work on farmers' own experimental concepts and practices and of carrying out on-farm research and participatory technology development, and ended up developing an alternative approach to agricultural development: Empathic Learning and Action. This approach makes explicit and addresses two different perceptions of reality: those of the rural people and those of outsiders who want to work with a rural community. By addressing these two perceptions it is possible to design mutual learning processes that can lead to an improvement of rural peoples' knowledge and more appropriate interventions by outsiders.

Through involvement with Compas I realised that spirituality, peoples' cultures and worldview play a key role in such learning processes. Addressing rural peoples' perceptions in a spirit of open mindedness and in a respectful manner brings to the fore the essence of African knowledges and their spirituality. We are convinced that if we integrate this understanding in our interaction with villagers we will be able to achieve a development process that is truly owned by the communities themselves and thus sustainable. This is, I feel, the essence of endogenous development.

*Source: David Millar,  
CECIK*

### 3. Understanding traditional ways of learning and sharing

How do traditional communities learn and share information and knowledge? This is not an easy question to answer, but knowing this is a necessary step for persons who want to support



Spiritual leaders play a central role in Mayan forms of learning. They must guide children and grandchildren, so they may have a completely fulfilled life.

endogenous development and endogenous learning processes. In many societies there is a wide range of traditional experts: healers, rulers, counsellors, elders, spiritual guides. Each of them may have their own way of learning, of experimenting and sharing knowledge with their peers, their potential successors and with members of the community and outsiders. In some cases knowledge may not be openly shared; it may be uncovered only to certain persons in the community; it may be expressed in codes and

symbols not easily understandable by outsiders.

Understanding the actors and processes involved requires a sensitive process of learning, building relations, showing respect, being curious, and being prepared to overcome prejudices. It may imply participation in rituals and or initiation. It does require the acceptance of the authority of traditional experts in the traditional communities.

It does not imply however that the outsider becomes a member of the local community, or is initiated as one of them. Outsiders provide the opportunity for inter-cultural learning. This inter-cultural learning may need to be preceded by intra-cultural learning.

The example below describes the rules and regulations for the exchange of experiences and knowledge in the Maya community as documented by the Compas partner Oxlajuj Ajpop in Guatemala.

#### Mayan values related to learning

Wisdom is not the property of one person; it is the collective property of the community. For this reason I cannot say, for example, 'I am wise': no one can claim personal wisdom. The old people say: 'We shouldn't say if we know something'. This, however, can be a difficulty when we have to explain aspects of our culture publicly.

There are many things which are sacred and it is not our position to talk about them. As we say in our language 'You are not worthy of getting involved in that discussion'.

When we share experience, we show that it is an experience of many years and many centuries. Normally the old people say: 'Well then, speak, pass it on'. And we say: 'We will borrow your hand, your foot, your mouth, your eyes and your ears to share this experience with others'.

Talking is one thing and living is another. So, before beginning a meeting we generally say: 'For sure and certain, much of what we are going to say we will say with interesting words, but we won't manage to fully realise in our lives'.

A key recommendation for when we want to share our experience is to seek permission to do so from the elders. Because it is important not only to want to do something, but also to know from the elders whether it is your vocation to do so; whether this is what you should do.

Source: Oxlajuj Ajpop,  
Compas Magazine 10

## 4. Dreams, trance and meditation techniques

Receiving information from beyond sensory experiences can take place in many ways. Dreams, trance, or meditation may bring about relevant experiences and or information. Sometimes these experiences can emerge in a state of relaxation, or under the guidance of a traditional expert, and in some cultures music, dance, alcohol or drugs are used to stimulate such experiences. In some cultures dreams are considered irrelevant, but in other cultures, they are seen as messages from the unconscious mind or from the spiritual world. Meditation and trance can also be considered as ways to get in touch with subtle knowledge or extrasensory information. In order to benefit from dreams, one should learn to remember dreams and to understand their significance or message. Meditation or yoga can be learned from local experts, and trances may be experienced as part of a guided exercise. These are unconventional ways of learning and may be exciting and inspiring but can also be associated with uneasiness. If outsiders want to develop their own skills and practices, it is important to get good guidance from local experts or from experts in these domains from their own background.

### The dream of the circular swings

During the first international meeting of Compas partners in 1996, in Capelliani, Bolivia, I had the following dream.

*I saw a long cable hanging between two poles.  
From both ends,  
a swing was rolling over the cable towards the middle.  
In each swing there was a small girl,  
both with enthusiasm and good intentions to enjoy life.  
Coming from different directions and with increasing speed,  
they were approaching each other and I was afraid that they would crash.  
Yet at the moment of contact,  
both made a slight movement to the left and the right,  
by which, instead of a deadly crash,  
they started to make circular movements,  
each in a different direction,  
and with each circle coming closer to each other.  
Finally they touched each other.  
Then the movements started in the opposite direction and were repeated endlessly.*

In symbolic language the dream indicates that Compas stands for a way to deal with differences. Opposing positions can avoid frontal clashes; linear movements can be transformed into circular movements and opponents can gradually come closer together, while maintaining their own identities.

Inter-cultural dialogues and co-evolution of societies and ways of knowing is possible. During the 10 years of experience of Compas we have indeed experienced that the mainstream approaches to development and sciences are becoming increasingly open to exchanges with other ways of knowing, that different cultures are becoming more outspoken in formulating and presenting their cosmovisions and that learning takes place in and between communities through interaction and exchange.

Source: Bertus Haverkort in *Food for Thought*, 1999

## Meditation using a poem

Meditation can be a way of clearing one's mind and preparing for work to be done. The following short poem by the Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore could be used for such a meditation. Make sure you will not be disturbed for about fifteen minutes. Begin by sitting comfortably, cross-legged on the ground, or sitting on a chair with your legs next to each other, and feet on the ground, hands resting on the legs. Close your eyes and become aware of your own breath, breathing gently and evenly, in and out. The person leading the meditation reads out the poem slowly once and then waits about half a minute before saying it once more. Invite the participants to reflect on the poem with their eyes closed for a few minutes more. When the meditation is over, invite the participants to gently come out of the meditation: moving their hands, legs, and finally opening their eyes. If they wish, they can share their thoughts and feelings that arose after doing the meditation.

*In empty, indolent leisure,  
No peace is found.  
Only in truthful work,  
Is peace attained.*

Rabindranath Tagore  
(Bengali writer)

## 5. Art, proverbs, stories, symbols

Some ideas may be better expressed in a story, a metaphor, a picture or poem or in another symbolic form, rather than in a rational argument or discourse. Each culture has its own way of using art, proverbs, stories and symbols. Cultural identity, spiritual connection and values are often expressed in this indirect way. Artists may have the ability to express valuable ideas in symbolic language. Outsiders can learn a lot by trying to understand such symbolic expressions. Therefore it is important to be alert to the meaning of artistic expressions, the proverbs being used, and stories or myths told between adults, to youth and during festivals and rituals.

## Wall painting

This picture is a wall painting made by the women of Sirigu, Ghana. It shows a person with two faces. One face is directed to a chicken, a bird that plays an important role in the ancestral belief system. Fowl are used in traditional sacrifices and communication with the ancestors. The other face is directed to the symbols of Christianity. The picture expresses the dilemma of the people: How to express and experience traditional beliefs in a society where formal religion is dominant.

## Story of the little bird

There was a little bird living in a huge beautiful green forest. The forest contained many other animals, trees and plants.

One day, the forest was set on fire. All the animals fled to the edge of the forest to save their lives. The smallest of all birds went to a small pond and picked a minute droplet of water in its tiny beak and flew back to the fire. The big animals looked strangely at the little bird. "What do you think you can do with such a small droplet?" they asked. But the bird smiled, took another droplet and flew back to the burning forest, saying to the other animals: 'This is all I can do and I should do it'.



Source: SWOPA

Source: Gloria Miranda Zambrano, former COMPAS partner in Peru

## 6. Learning from past experiences, mistakes and difficulties

Some people prefer to hide the mistakes they have made. Making mistakes is sometimes associated with failures, and may reduce the self-respect of the persons concerned. Yet, it is only through experience, through trial and error, that most people really learn. If no mistakes were made, no real learning would take place. Therefore, it is important to try not to make mistakes, but also to accept that everybody does make mistakes at some time. Once mistakes have been made, we can embrace them, learn from them, analyse the context in which they have been made, and search for options to avoid repeating them in the future.

## Moving worldviews by learning from mistakes

I was born in the Netherlands just after the Second World War. In that time we believed that the world could be made better by applying the new scientific insights and technologies. A farmer's son, I received training in agriculture and social sciences, and in the 1970s I started my work as an international development worker in the domain of agriculture and rural development. At that time the Green Revolution approach was widely accepted and I started my work in the Netherlands, Colombia and Ghana. I saw mixed results and gradually learned

that my personal choices and engagement in development cooperation were based on a number of personal, professional and cultural assumptions that were constantly being challenged.

### **Academic knowledge is not superior to practical knowledge**

By working with rural people in Colombia and Ghana I learned that people have developed knowledge and skills that is very appropriate in their own ecological and cultural environment. An important breakthrough was the lesson I learned from farmers in Ghana who practiced farming with agro-forestry, soil and water harvesting, botanical pesticides, integrated pest management, micro-climate management, ethno-veterinary and local health practices. Consulting farmers revealed that farmers indeed have a lot of knowledge and that this knowledge is relevant, appropriate and location specific. It may also have its limitations and therefore it is important that local knowledge is complemented and not being replaced by outside knowledge.

Once we asked about it with interest and respect, farmers were proud to show their knowledge. On the basis of this experience we shifted our work from transfer of technology to participatory development of location-specific technologies, using as far as possible the resources that are available to the farmers in the local area. This experience was an important inspiration for the ILEIA programme ([www.leisa.info](http://www.leisa.info)), in which we documented and systematised farming methods that made use of locally available resources.

Working in the Compas programme, we learned that rural people were also prepared to share more intimate knowledge that had to do with their spiritual life: their cosmovision, beliefs and faith. Here genuine interest and respect was an important condition. My friendship and relationship of confidence with a number of local professionals in different countries and shared interest in and respect for local culture was essential. This brought me into contact with local experts, traditional leaders and persons of wisdom, who helped me to learn new lessons in a broader intercultural context.

### **Material and technological bias of conventional development**

My initial work was aimed at reducing poverty among rural people. We started programmes to increase the efficiency of agriculture, increase production and produce marketable products. In many cases farmers were not interested in these objectives. After getting frustrated it became clear to me that the people labelled as 'rural poor' are often very rich when it comes to their social environment and their well-being derived from their ancestral belief system. In the West, poverty is determined by income in dollars per day; in Bolivia rural people define poverty as 'having no friends' and in Ghana as having no 'ancestral connection', in Sri Lanka as 'being attached to the material world' and in India as 'not being free from vices such as greed, lust, intoxication, power'.

This has led me to understand that poverty has many faces and that poverty alleviation can only be done by taking into account the combination of the material, social and spiritual aspects.

### **Dealing with the diversity of sciences**

The lessons learned so far have made me aware of the strong and weak points of other sciences and their potential for contributing to development. But, in order to make use of the potential diversity of ways of knowing in the globe, we need to revitalise local knowledge and sciences that have been marginalised, and seek ways to encourage a co-evolution of different ways of knowing.

I am very interested in the changes that are happening in the paradigms of Western knowledge and in the way Western knowledge can learn from non-western knowledge. Acceptance of and exploration of a diversity of sciences and approaches to knowing and experiencing is a better option. Intra and inter-scientific dialogues are fascinating and important activities that can contribute to the co-evolution of sciences.

*Source: Bertus Haverkort, Moving Worldviews, 2006*

## **7. Understanding community events and activities**

Local communities often have their specific events that coincide with the calendar, the agricultural season and or the moon phases. Periodic (often weekly) markets are common, as are village fairs and festivals. In the Andes, the agricultural calendar and the ritual calendar are highly related, but in other cultures festivals are also held at specific times of the year to mark harvests, for rain making, for initiation, for inauguration of certain local leaders, for funerals, marriages or birth. These community events and activities provide important opportunities for villagers to exchange ideas and experiences, to negotiate on economic and political affairs and to express their social and spiritual identities. Understanding the functions and effects of these community events is important.

### **Festivals in Ghana**

Action research findings of CIKOD in over 20 pilot communities all across Ghana reveal that there are some indigenous institutions and structures that are pertinent to ensuring effective communication and accountability systems in the society. These have however been neglected and replaced with modern structures that are alien and have therefore not been integrated effectively in Ghanaian society.

One such institution is festivals, which characterise all traditional areas in Ghana. These are occasions that bring together all the chiefs and people as well as the sons and daughters of the area from all over the country. It is a time when differences or conflicts are settled among friends and families, besides the renewal of ties. It is also a time for stocktaking.

These festivals are also occasions for thanksgiving to God or the gods for the good guidance throughout the farming season and the harvest. They take the form of singing and dancing and an exhibition of the culture and traditions as well as the agricultural and industrial potential of the people.

Source: Bern Guri and Wilberforce Laate, CIKOD, 2005

Festivals therefore serve as traditional political spaces where a cross section of the citizenry of the various traditional areas could make demands on the district assembly and other development institutions that operate in the area to give account of their development programme for the area and make suggestions as to how to improve upon their implementation.

## Community activities in Colombia

One of the initiatives that Corpocam has undertaken in the communities of the Provincia Campesina de Entre Ríos-Quindío is to support the use and, where necessary, revival of traditional social activities. With time, the function of these activities may change as people start to use them for additional purposes.

**Lunadas** are meetings with the youth that take place at full moon in a place where it is possible to interact with nature. A lunada always involves the cuentero (story-teller), the sharing of chicha (maize beer), guitar music, and invited guests. These are usually adults and elders interested in passing on traditional knowledge. Many lunadas start with a ritual performed by the yerbatero, a spiritual guide versed in the use of medicinal plants and their energies. The ritual is performed to construct a kind of protective shield around the participants which makes them invisible to armed people and groups in the area so the latter cannot see them together. Young people have been meeting in this way for about a year now and it has convinced them of the value of remaining in the community rather than migrating to towns to avoid the armed conflict in the region.

**Encuentros por la vida** (meetings for life) are meetings at which all the communities in the region come together to reaffirm their promise and commitment to life, food sovereignty and the rejection of war. They are festivals where the best agricultural products are exhibited, as well as local food products. At the same time they provide an opportunity to share creativity, games and artistic expression in the form of dance, poetry and songs. The meeting for life is also used to learn about and exchange knowledge on medicinal plants and their recipes and uses. It is also however a moment for meditation and reflection as a joint ecumenical act is performed combining rituals and different beliefs.

Source: Corpocam, Colombia

## Elders and local experts as teachers in India

The pupils in dormitory schools in India learn the oral traditions from the seniors and also from traditional functionaries. Every elder and traditional functionary has something special to teach, but the key knowledge holders of the village are the indigenous functionaries: the guniya and the gurumayi, the spiritual and herbal medicine men and women; the disari, the astrologers and medicine men, who hold the knowledge on astrology, and also healing and medicines from the forest; the sutrani, the birth attendants who hold the knowledge on maternal health and

childcare; the gowd, the ethno-veterinarians who hold the knowledge on healing animals; the pujari, the community priest and counsellor for the village problems.

Korra Ghasi, 72 years old, is an important member of the Poraja tribe. He lives in Pulikonda, a remote village in Orissa. Though he is by profession a pujari (spiritual leader), Ghasi is extremely knowledgeable about development issues and particularly about mountain land management practices. He is a member of the 'Naik Gotna' (Network of Tribal Traditional Institutional Functionaries, promoted by IDEA) as well. He has taken a lead role in reviving several clan customary mechanisms to regulate mountain land management and shifting cultivation practices. Ghasi regularly provides training on these issues and concepts to local farmers through IDEA's dormitory education programme.

Source: Gowtham Shankar, IDEA

## 8. Understanding the subtle meanings of language

Language matters. Local values, beliefs and the technicalities of certain traditional practices are expressed in local languages with specific expressions and words, the meaning of which cannot simply be translated. They can only be understood as an expression of the worldviews and logic of the local people. Sometimes language is gender specific, certain words or concepts can only be used by a certain caste, class, or other social category. Body language can also contain important information about the way certain information is appreciated. Respect, joy and interest (and their opposites) can often be read through body language, but this can only be understood in its own cultural context. Humour and jokes can be used to express certain sensitive issues in a non-threatening way, and again these can only be understood in the cultural context. In trying to formulate development jargon in local languages we are challenged to reflect on what we really mean by these concepts and how they can be expressed using local concepts.

### Losing language can also mean losing knowledge

On a sunny but crisp winter morning in the Highlands of Chiapas, Mexico, I was standing outside the field clinic in one of the hamlets comprising the Tzeltal Maya municipio of Tenejapa. It was the early 1990s, and I was there to do my doctoral research on Tzeltal ethnopsychiatry – the Tzeltal language of signs and symptoms of illness (Maffi, 1994). As part of this research, I was also interested in issues of culture change: how traditional medical knowledge was being affected by Tenejapan's ever increasing contact with national Mexican society through the rapid expansion of communications with the outside non-indigenous indigenous world, Western media, formal schooling, and access to biomedical care. I had come to this hamlet on the designated day for the periodic visit of the Mexican Health Services pasante (medical trainee) to the field clinic, in order to witness his interactions with Tenejapan patients. I hoped to build my understanding of the local dynamics of medical

systems in contact by engaging some of the patients in casual conversation about their health-seeking attitudes and behaviors.

Long before the clinic opened its doors, Tenejapan men, women, and children had been lining up in wait – an ideal circumstance for striking up conversations. After identifying myself and explaining the purpose of my study, with the aid of my Tzeltal collaborator, the hamlet's *promotor de salud* (health promoter), I started chatting with some of the people in line. Once it was clear to them that I was a student and not related to the Mexican Health Services or other national or state agencies, they did not mind discussing the health reasons that had brought them there. I expected to hear complaints about some of the more serious or uncommon illnesses known to the Tzeltal, many of them imported by colonizers from the Old World, for which the Tzeltal medical tradition had not developed effective treatments. But, to my surprise, the overwhelming majority of complaints referred to some of the most common ailments recorded among the Highland Maya – diarrheas, coughs, colds, skin problems – for which an abundant, efficacious traditional pharmacopoeia (mostly botanical in nature) was readily available (Berlin et al. 1990; Berlin and Berlin 1996).

Perhaps, then – my next assumption was – these people had already tried to treat their ailments the traditional way without success and were now submitting these stubborn syndromes to biomedical attention for treatment with more potent synthetic drugs. I asked the question, but again I was wrong. Prior to coming to the clinic, I was informed, my interlocutors had either self-medicated with drugs purchased at a pharmacy or done nothing at all. I looked around: true, most of the people in line were younger men and women, but by Tzeltal standards they were adults, fully developed and functional members of society, already with family and other customary adult responsibilities; they lived and worked in the village, spoke Tzeltal fluently (if peppered with Spanish words). It could not be that they had not yet acquired the traditional medical knowledge. Could it be that they had not acquired it at all?

I turned to a young man who was carrying in his arms his two-year-old daughter suffering from diarrhea; he had already struck me by telling me he had started out at dawn from his isolated household to get to the clinic – hours of walking, and now hours of waiting, with his sick child in his arms, hours of delay in getting treatment, a delay that might well prove fatal to her. With mounting anguish I asked him whether he knew of any plants or other local remedies for diarrhea, even if he had not tried to administer them to his daughter. He searched his mind, apparently in vain, then looked to another, slightly older man nearby, and started an animated discussion in Tzeltal with him. It became clear that between the two of them they were trying to dredge up and piece together scattered fragments of latent ethnomedical knowledge – knowledge perhaps only imperfectly learned, never concretely used, and now almost forgotten. I heard them question each other: "What's its name, the grasshopper thing?" The "grasshopper thing": *yakan Kulub wamal* 'grasshopper leg herb' (*Verbena litoralis*), one of the commonest diarrhea remedies in the Highlands. They could hardly remember its name, let alone master its use.

The pasante had finally arrived, and people started filing in. I watched the young man walk off with his daughter in his arms, sent my promoter collaborator after him to try and ensure the

man would get the best possible for his daughter out of what I already knew was almost invariably unsympathetic, superficial, culturally (and often even medically) inappropriate biomedical care, and stood there, with a sinking feeling. No doubt, that young man had to have the omnipresent *yakan k'ulub wamal* growing right in his back yard, but perhaps he could not recognize it, or if he did, he clearly did not know how to use it. Or maybe he had actually pulled it out as a weed, as my own collaborator had told me he had unwittingly done with medicinal plants his late father, a traditional healer, once kept in his house garden – only later to become aware of their virtues, paradoxically, through his work with ethnobiologists and other Tzeltal traditional healers.

Source: Maffi, 2001

## 9. Preparing for community entry and building horizontal relations

Field workers or researchers who want to work in local communities need to prepare themselves for this and at the same time invite the community to take the necessary steps to prepare itself. They cannot just assume that the community will accept and automatically have confidence in any outsider who happens to arrive. Many communities have previous experiences where outsiders have used the communities for their own purposes and where little respect has been shown for local values, norms, ownership and belief systems. Many field workers have been trained and have been given a professional position that suggests that their knowledge is superior to that of the communities. They may have an assignment to teach, to educate, to enlighten the community, to transfer knowledge or to involve communities in new ways of land use, farming or health practices. The communities have developed their own way of dealing with outsiders: they can pretend to be polite, or suggest that they accept the messages and commit themselves to the process of cooperation, whereas in reality they seek ways to escape the influences of the outsiders without resorting to conflicts or impoliteness.

Experience shows that cooperation between rural communities and outsiders is only possible if there is a horizontal relationship: where no hierarchy exists between community and outsiders, but where the relations are complementary. The knowledge of both parties has its own strengths and weaknesses and if well combined the two can complement each other. In order to reach this complementarity, both the field worker and the community have to go through a process in which they determine the expectations towards each other, identify the complementarity of the two types of knowledge and formulate conditions for cooperation. This



Meeting with chief and elders to seek permission to work with the community – following traditional protocol.

### Performing a ritual together

Before, when I used to be a *jilakata*, it was always necessary to keep your poncho on, even inside the house. In the old days in Tallija the *alcaldes* used to have to sleep together in one bed, and the *jilakatas* did the same. After one week they would be separated with a ritual. That was also the time of frosts. The potato fields were all sad-looking and black as it had rained so much. Then I went to where my grandmother's husband, the treasurer, had insulted me so much. Together we performed a ritual to ask for rain, and lo and behold! The next day it started to rain, the potato plants turned green again, later they blossomed beautifully and gave a good harvest.

Testimony of Don Facundino de Japo, from Rist, 2002

process is different for every community and cultural context, but needs explicit attention and design. The case of David Millar below shows how this process took place in the village of Bongo, Ghana.

### Cosmovision in fieldwork

My field work for Compas started early 1998 in the village of Bongo, in Northern Ghana. In their culture, religious practices play an important role. During the first meeting in Bongo I introduced myself and tried to find out whether I was welcome. An earth priest, a soothsayer and an elder consulted their ancestral spirits and the gods to find out what to do with me. As a libation was poured, the tendana asked for the guidance of his ancestors. He also asked that both his ancestors and mine would be asked to clear the path and guide our actions so that they would have fruitful results. During our second meeting I was told that the response of the gods and the ancestors had been a positive one. I was welcome to work with the community, especially on farming matters.

Entering the community from the perspective of cosmovision was a new experience for me. As a government extension worker I had learned that you need to ask permission from the village chief when entering a new village. I usually went to greet him, bringing him some small gifts and then I would start my serious work: talking about agriculture and teaching farmers what I had learned. Now I learned that entering a community implies much more than this. Before people will accept you, clearance from the ancestral spirits is sought. Thus, only by accepting and respecting their rules can a relationship of confidence be built up with a community. Involvement does not stop at the 'professional' level; it includes one's own ethnic background and ancestral spirits.

After being accepted by the community and their ancestors, we decided to have a village meeting to discuss the programme of co-operation between us. During this inception workshop I wanted to be very honest about my intentions, my doubts and our commitments. I told the villagers that in my twenty years of experience I had encountered situations where farmers received credit support. When it was time for repayment they frequently declared they had had a poor harvest and were unable to meet payment, although during production and

monitoring information indicated that they would be able to pay back what they had borrowed. Sometimes their inability to repay was blamed on natural and social disasters, which were not reported elsewhere. I asked whether this was the same for their tribe, the Boosi. This question was discussed in the meeting, and after an uncomfortable lull I was told 'It is true that we play games with the government workers. We are sure you would do the same if you were in our place. But, you know, with government agents we do not have a serious relationship. They come uninvited with services that we have not asked for and our ancestors are not involved. When we meet a person in the traditional way and use the name of the ancestors and call them with drinks to be part of our activity, we are really very serious. We know of cases where people have cheated with the name of the ancestors and have lost all their livestock and crops.'

Then I remembered something that had happened in my own youth in the Dagaaba tribe. Before my father died, he had given his animals to his brothers in Burkina Faso so they could be used for future schooling of his children. When I was about to go to secondary school my mother took me to my uncle and asked for the animals. She was told the animals had all died and there was nothing that could be used to pay for my education. Two weeks later a messenger came to tell us that my uncles' cattle had died mysteriously and now my uncle was afraid of dying himself. He therefore sent money for my schooling and enough to perform the necessary sacrifices to my father's spirit. This was done, my uncle survived and I continued my schooling.

The elders listened with great interest and confirmed that this is also how things happen in the Boosi tradition. They went on to say: 'We assure you that the activities we are about to undertake will not suffer the same fate as your fathers' animals or the loans of government agents. We will support and share the plight of one another, provided it is in line with the ancestral laws. We will ensure that things will survive and thrive.' For me, this is what sustainability is all about.

Source: David Millar,  
Compas Magazine 1

## 10. Intra- and inter-cultural exchanges and workshops

Strengthening the way local people learn, experiment and teach can be an important starting point in endogenous development. This implies that outsiders should learn about the dynamics of indigenous knowledge; who the local experts are, what their concepts are, what processes take place. Before outsiders offer their own knowledge as complementary to local knowledge, they could seek ways to strengthen the local processes of learning, experimenting and teaching. A good way would be to bring together local experts and support their mutual exchange. Exchange meetings between villagers and exchange workshops between experts could be organised, local experts could be asked to make their own knowledge explicit, to assess the strong and weak points of their own knowledge and to design experiments to improve the weak points. This is known as intra-cultural learning. Assessing outside knowledge by critical questioning, testing its validity by applying it on a small scale, and exchange about the strong

and weak points of outside knowledge are activities that can be undertaken as part of the inter-cultural learning process.

## **Documenting and validating ethnoveterinary practices in Sri Lanka**

During its work with rural communities, FIOH in Sri Lanka encountered several skilled ethnoveterinary practitioners who had gained their knowledge and skills from their parents and grandparents. It is believed that this knowledge stems from nine saints who lived in ancient times. With modern veterinary science being promoted through the government extension service and private sector providers, this knowledge is becoming threatened. There is no recognition of their knowledge, and as a result local practitioners are slowly losing ground and motivation, and this great wealth of knowledge is heading for extinction. Realising the value of this knowledge and the need to somehow prevent its loss, FIOH is investing time and energy in finding ways to capture and revitalise ethnoveterinary practices and give them due recognition, for example through the creation of an ethnoveterinary practitioners' (EP) forum and holding workshops.

FIOH facilitates workshops, bringing together healers and farmers so that they can exchange experiences. Twenty-four EPs were brought together for the first time during a two-day workshop. The main purpose of the workshop was to present the popular ethnoveterinarian practices and remedies being used by healers and farmers to the EPs and to use their expert knowledge to validate and further detail the remedies and treatment regimes. Each ailment and its treatment mentioned by the livestock farmers was written up on sheets and presented individually to the EPs. The EPs then scrutinised and discussed each practice in turn. It was interesting to note that the differences in treatments for the same ailment were mainly due to ecological differences of the different locations (i.e. plants growing in an area).

The workshop was facilitated by Mr Wijeratne Dutuwewa, who holds a diploma in agriculture and is the manager of a government livestock farm, and Ms Bashini Dissanayka from the Department of Animal Health and Animal Products. Both are personally convinced of the usefulness of EPs. They experiment with these practices on the government farm. Having people in this position as facilitators has helped the EPs to realise that their knowledge is being given respect and attention, and that their knowledge was valued.

One of the problems encountered during this workshop was trying to find standard common names of plants used by the EPs for remedies. In some cases, the same plant was referred to by different names. Since a standard name would be useful, particularly in documenting such ethnoveterinary remedies, it was decided that the EPs would visit a herbarium run by the government body, the Department for Indigenous Medicine. Two trips were organised by FIOH. The EPs, together with the curator of the herbarium, the manager of the plant nursery and the medical officer of the Ministry of Indigenous Medicine, came up with a list of standard names for the most frequently used plants in their treatment. FIOH has also been supported by FRLHT in its validation and documentation of indigenous knowledge.

FIOH started holding workshops in 2003, and has held 6 or 7 each year since then. They also organise workshops to bring EPs in contact with provincial representatives of the Ministry of Indigenous Medicine, practising farmers and allopathic veterinarians. FIOH has now documented over 150 treatments for cattle diseases and continues to update this. It publishes booklets in the local language with inventories of the healers. FIOH is also assisting healers financially to make and therefore build up stocks of medicine, so that they have medicines readily available for farmers seeking treatment for their animals.

*Source: FIOH*

## 11. Questioning development approaches: self reflection and critique as a development practitioner

Endogenous development is a learning opportunity for local communities as well as for development workers and researchers. Development as a professional activity and as a responsibility of government- and non-government organisations has been around for some 50 years now. The overall results of development cooperation leave much to be desired. Global inequality continues to grow and in many countries poverty and ecological and social deterioration is rampant. Cultural diversity is on the decline. The mainstream development approach is dominated by the Millennium Development Goals, formulated at the Millennium Summit in 2000. Poverty Reduction Strategies are now part of most national policies. Yet, the lessons of endogenous development indicate that the notion of poverty is not a simple matter of material deprivation. Poverty has material, but also social and spiritual dimensions. The collective capacity of development professionals to learn from their experiences and to question development as an approach is very important. Hence, for each development situation it is important to identify the relevant indicators for poverty and on that basis to determine the appropriate steps for poverty reduction. Gender equity should be an important aspect of development, but here too, a western bias needs to be avoided. The experiences below illustrate the relevance of these points and provide concrete example of initiatives of women and of a local reaction to a missionary initiative.

### International Council of Grandmothers

In October 2004, an historic event took place at the Menla Center near Woodstock, New York State, United States. Thirteen indigenous Grandmothers, spiritual elders from tribes around the world, were brought together by the Center for Sacred Studies. The inspiration for this meeting came from Bwiti elder, Bernadette Rebienot: 'In Gabon women regularly gather together in the forest to share their visions, and pray for world peace and for the well-being of their people. And when the grandmothers speak, the president listens!'

The meeting began with the lighting of a sacred fire, a ceremony central to all indigenous cultures. For the first three days, the Grandmothers sat in Council with each other. They ranged in age from 51-81, all of them grandmothers, some great-grandmothers. As well as being healers,

The International Council of Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers. The grandmothers range in age between 51 and 81. They have joined in an alliance of prayer, education and healing of our Mother Earth, all her inhabitants, all the children and the seven next generations to come.



tradition-holders and women of prayer, all of them have fulfilled practical leadership roles at local levels. Many are educators, and several travel internationally to do their work. During the Council the Grandmothers talked about their traditions, visions and prophecies, and decided how they wanted to align themselves together to have a voice in the world. Most importantly, they shared their ceremonies and ways of prayer with each other.

They spoke about what their own grandmothers had taught them. They shared their concern that today's children are being wooed away from learning the ancient ways by television and the superficial, materialistic values of modern culture. This ancient wisdom, though it differs in particulars from tribe to tribe, centres on the interrelationship between all life forms and the interaction with the spiritual dimensions of life.

At the heart of all their messages was the belief that the overwhelming problems we are facing today can only be solved by working first on the spiritual level. Each Grandmother had a matter-of-fact connection with the invisible forces of life, with impressive spiritual strength and confidence in the power of prayer, ceremony and intention.

The grandmothers were very much heartened by the prospect of combining their energies in order to create new ways to influence the world. It was decided by the end of the Council that the Grandmothers would form an alliance as an NGO under the non-profit umbrella of the Center for Sacred Studies, in order to publicly address their common goals and particular local issues. They issued the declaration below:

### **The International Council of 13 Indigenous Grandmothers speaks**

'We are thirteen indigenous grandmothers who came together for the first time from October 11 through October 17, 2004, in Phoenicia, New York. We gathered from the four directions in the land of the people of the Iroquois Confederacy. We come here from the Amazon rainforest, the Arctic circle of North America, the great forest of the American northwest, the vast plains of North America, the highlands of Central America, the Black Hills of South Dakota, the mountains of Oaxaca, the desert of the American southwest, the mountains of Tibet and from the rainforest of Central Africa.

Affirming our relations with traditional medicine, peoples and communities throughout the world, we have been brought together by a common vision to form a new global alliance.

We are the International Council of Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers. We have united as one. Ours is an alliance of prayer, education and healing for our Mother Earth, all Her

inhabitants, all the children, and for the next seven generations to come. We are deeply concerned with the unprecedented destruction of our Mother Earth, the contamination of our air, waters and soil, the atrocities of war, the global scourge of poverty, the threat of nuclear weapons and waste, the prevailing culture of materialism, the epidemics which threaten the health of the Earth's peoples, the exploitation of indigenous medicines, and with the destruction of indigenous ways of life.

We, the International Council of Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers, believe that our ancestral ways of prayer, peacemaking and healing are vitally needed today. We come together to nurture, educate and train our children. We come together to uphold the practice of our ceremonies and affirm the right to use our plant medicines free of legal restriction. We come together to protect the lands where our peoples live and upon which our cultures depend, to safeguard the collective heritage of traditional medicines, and to defend the Earth Herself. We believe that the teachings of our ancestors will light our way through an uncertain future.

We join with all those who honor the Creator, and to all who work and pray for our children, for world peace, and for the healing of our Mother Earth.'

Source: Cassia Berman,  
Compas Magazine 9

### A wise chief

The preacher Miguel Brun told me that a few years ago he had visited the Indians of the Paraguayan Chaco. He was part of an evangelizing mission. The missionaries visited a chief who was considered very wise. The chief, a quiet, fat man, listened without blinking to the religious propaganda that they read to him in his own language. When they finished, the missionaries awaited a reaction. The chief took his time, then said:

Source: Eduardo  
Galeano, The Book of  
Embraces, 1989

'That scratches. It scratches hard and it scratches very well.'

And then he added: 'But it scratches where there isn't any itch.'

## 12. Learning from other innovative participatory methods

Effective facilitation of local and endogenous development can only be learned in practice. Staff can be exposed to the tools and methods used in classroom-type training sessions and can use these to reflect on some of the fundamental issues related to development. But these classroom discussions need to be complemented with practical exercises in which these insights and the methods and tools discussed are used. After the practice, there should be systematic reflection on these experiences again. Similarly, staff can benefit from reading about the experiences of innovative and participatory approaches. Endogenous development has not emerged and does not function in isolation. Innovative approaches such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), Participatory Learning and Action (PLA), Participatory Technology Development (PTD), Rapid Appraisal of Agricultural Knowledge Systems (RAAKS), have influenced and contributed to the methods of endogenous development. Participation in active networks such as LEISA, Prolinnova, IIED, Compas and others are important as they provide the opportunity to

build on the learning experiences of others and to assess and exchange the experiences of endogenous development. The Resources appendix provides a list of useful publications, websites and organisations.

## **Inspiration from other training guides and manuals**

Hope and Timmel (1999) describe various learning forms for reflecting on the issue of culture and the complexities that arise when people with different cultural backgrounds interact and collaborate. Their book includes a detailed simulation game that allows participants to experience cultural differences. Several discussion forms are given that encourage participants to share difficulties caused by misunderstanding or ignorance of cultural differences or to define good elements in various cultures that could be combined. The Rainbow metaphor given in the book is a good starting point for a discussion on the potentially positive contributions that all cultures can make. The other volumes of the Training for Transformation series (Hope and Timmel, 1984) are important general sources for inspiration when designing participatory learning events.

Many of the general methods and tools for interacting with communities to help them analyse local situations and opportunities and plan development activities are described in the literature on participatory agricultural development, Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Participatory Learning and Action (PLA). In all of these, the critical skills that field staff need to learn and develop are the ability to listen, to ask questions in a way that encourages critical reflection and to synthesise responses from various people. These are critical skills when facilitating a thinking and planning process by communities or groups. The PLA Trainer's Guide, published by IIED in the UK (Pretty et al, 1995) has a very rich collection of learning forms and ideas that are particularly relevant when discussing local situation analysis, visioning and planning. Local adaptations or locally developed PRA/PLA training guides are now available in many countries.

When it comes to issues related to supporting local learning and action, there are a number of good, more specific training guides. The guide Developing Technology with Farmers: A guide to participatory learning (van Veldhuizen et al, 1997) focuses on participatory development in sustainable agriculture and natural resource management. It has many interesting learning ideas and modules, particularly related to joint experimentation/action research by farmers and support agents, as well as other knowledge-related activities such as cross visits and the use of farmer trainers.

Finally, two guide books with suggestions and examples of how to organise creative, participatory and yet effective training events deserve to be consulted: the book by VSO-Philippines et al. (1998), which presents a great variety of well-described examples and learning forms, and the Resource Book on Sustainable Agriculture Training of Trainers (IIRR, ETC, 2002). The full references for these books are given in the Resources Appendix.

## 13. Making use of mass media forms

New media are becoming available to an increasing number of people. These include internet-based information and communication technology (ICT), distance learning in the form of E-learning, web learning modules, (virtual) discussion groups and forums, electronic newsletters, participatory video, mobile phones, CD-ROMs and DVDs. Endogenous development workers can make use of these new media as a means of enhancing learning and spreading information in a cost effective way. Distance learning can allow students to take part in training, without the need to travel and to attend classes at certain inconvenient times. CD-ROMs can be used to document and to spread relevant information for rural people. Participatory video can play a role in enabling villagers to show outsiders what they find important; internet can play an important role in rural areas, for example in the provision of health services. These new media are external to rural communities in any part of the world and efforts need to be undertaken to enable rural communities to gain access to them. It requires the construction of infrastructure, the development of appropriate software and back-up services as well as training rural people in their use.



Ms Suganya's internet kiosk in Ulagapichampatti, deep in the heart of rural Tamil Nadu, southern India.

### Connecting with rural India: the role of rural internet cafés

For many years, CIKS, the Centre for Indian Knowledge Systems in India, has supported the development efforts of communities in Tamil Nadu. Linking them with new ideas through training has been a central part of its work. It is now trying to make use of new possibilities created by the rapid expansion of the network of internet cafés in rural areas. Can these become ways to effectively reach and support the rural poor in the spirit of endogenous development?

#### Internet kiosks: new opportunities

A typical internet kiosk in rural Tamil Nadu is equipped with a multimedia PC (personal computer), a web-cam and other accessories. The kiosks offer villagers affordable services such as internet access, ATM (Automated Teller Machine) facilities, basic computer training for children and adults, and solutions to basic problems related to agriculture and health.

Internet connectivity opens up new possibilities for rural communities. In the town of Melur in the Madurai district of Tamil Nadu, villagers can access information that saves them a trip to the nearest city. Using a web-cam, farmers can show diseased vegetables to experts at the

Agricultural University, and receive recommendations. An eye hospital in the nearby city of Madurai provides preliminary diagnosis over the internet, and patients can book appointments on-line. Several government departments have made a number of useful documents available for downloading from their web sites.

One of the most promising developments is the success of live chat sessions. These interactive chats usually take the form of question and answer sessions featuring a consultant – a doctor, agriculture expert or government official – during which villagers can get answers on a variety of issues. This software enables several villagers to participate simultaneously in the same session, making it convenient for the consultant to reach a large number of people regularly. These sessions are very well attended, and many have become weekly features.

The high acceptance level among the public is very encouraging. Villagers seem to have adapted rapidly to the concepts of PC and internet usage, e-mail and live chat. While the kiosk operator initially helps out with the PC operation, many users soon begin operating the keyboard and mouse themselves. Local language software is available in various regions, hence eliminating the most significant barrier to PC use by people in the rural areas. Interestingly, even the illiterate seem to have warmed to the idea – using the kiosk operator as an interpreter and enabler, they do not seem to have problems using the facilities.

### **Web-based learning to support endogenous development**

The introduction of internet kiosks in the rural areas has opened up new possibilities for CIKS. It has provided a new channel of communication for exchange and training in rural Tamil Nadu. By using internet-based content, CIKS can now reach farmers through the network of kiosks in districts that are difficult for its field staff to reach.

CIKS is developing a web-based learning system designed to deliver content to a typical rural audience. It has set a number of key design criteria for the system: it should be a simple and user-friendly system with a multimedia content which can be updated regularly.

The system will make available a large amount of information, techniques, practices and reference material on organic farming. This will include three elements: (1) training modules on various aspects of organic farming including best practices, pest and disease management; (2) resources and frequently asked questions related to organic farming; and (3) an on-line community for knowledge sharing. The project is now in an advanced stage of development. A multimedia training module on organic cotton cultivation has already been developed. The module includes detailed instructions for every aspect of cultivation, supplemented by pictures and video demonstrations. It is available in English and Tamil, with an audio version in other local languages.

### **Conclusions**

While live interactions are definitely effective and useful, they depend on the coming together of a consultant and an audience at a given time. An internet-based module has the advantage of

being continuously available, does not require a live session, and can provide relevant information on demand. Used together, multimedia and the internet can be a powerful training platform.

The promise shown by the rapid spread of internet cafés has convinced us that the rural community is ready for multimedia content delivery. The success of the live video chat sessions demonstrate the ability of the audience to relate to a 'talking head' on the screen – which indicates that they will adapt to multimedia learning with relative ease. By making a comprehensive, user-friendly collection of modules available over the internet, we hope to grease the wheels of the spread of organic farming know how.

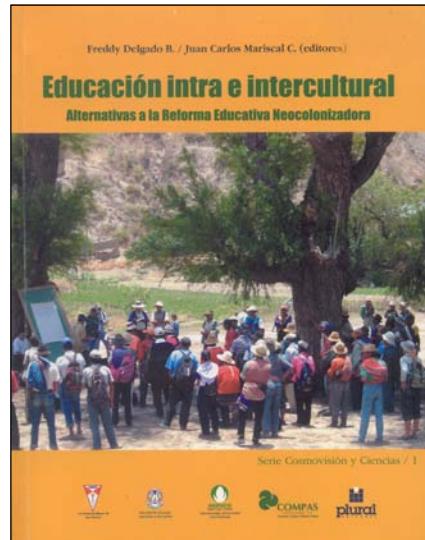
Source: R. Sridevi,  
Anand Ramachandra,  
CIKS

## 14. Designing learning activities in endogenous development

Many training centres, colleges and universities in the South use curricula and teaching materials that are based on or borrowed from mainstream or western sciences and technologies. This is generally justified under the assumption that these sciences and technologies are universally applicable and relevant, irrespective of the economic, socio-cultural or ecological environment in which they will find their application. Yet, increasingly voices from the South as well as from the North express the need for curricula and teaching materials that are addressing the specific needs and potentials of non-western societies and environments.

Knowledge systems from Africa, Latin America and Asia have their own system and logic, and theoretical underpinnings. Hence they can be considered as sciences in their own right. The need for revitalisation of traditional knowledge systems is widely felt and a number of promising initiatives are emerging. There are increasing doubts about the monopoly and alleged universality of western positivistic science with its dualistic perspective. New scientific developments and approaches emerge from quantum physics, ecology, social learning and uncertainty/chaos theory. New paradigms are emerging such as holistic science, transdisciplinarity, post-modern or post-normal science.

Hence, the need has been expressed for curricula, training methods and teaching materials that divide attention, and to the extent that it is possible, combine teaching on conventional science with transdisciplinary science and culture-specific sciences (ethnoscience). This applies to both North and South, but the availability of adequate training materials and curricula is urgent for universities and colleges in Latin America and Africa and Asia (see books in the Compas series of worldviews and sciences).



Book on inter- and intracultural education, which highlights the different ways of knowing within Andean societies. Published by Agruco in 2006.

Neither primary education nor vocational training and teaching at colleges and universities tends to adequately prepare students to use and improve traditional knowledge. This education often has the effect of alienating students from their own cultural roots and does not contribute to the enhancement of the dynamics of the traditional knowledge systems. Modern education often produces students who are ill-prepared for working in traditional environments. Often they are educated to embrace modernity and to reject traditional knowledge. Modern knowledge undoubtedly has its strengths, but it also has its limitations. The way it is handled in educational systems, it generally replaces traditional knowledge rather than complementing it. Traditional knowledge is not systematically subject to innovative processes through innovation, experiments, publications, debates.

The rediscovery of the relevance of traditional knowledge and the realisation of the limits of modern knowledge coincide with a general reawakening of cultural identities and importance attached to endogenous development. The time is now ripe to systematically develop curricula, training methods and education materials that start with and build on local and traditional knowledge, and complement it with knowledges from elsewhere.

## **Training of fieldworkers for endogenous development**

Experiences with endogenous development are based on the contextual and historical patterns of each community. It is therefore difficult to extract directly transferable recipes or packages from them for training fieldworkers elsewhere. The commonality of the experiences lies in the approach used: supporting development that is based on what people already have and know.

The training method of the Agruco team is based on the combination of two elements: on the one hand the practical experience of learning in and from communities, and on the other the results of scientific research in a range of subjects. This implies a combination of both Andean and western ways of knowing. The content of the training programme, therefore, is a practical application of the way in which Andean and western ways of knowing can complement each other.

Our understanding of development as the result of joint action, in which two opposing but complementary ways of knowing play a role, is based on shared experiences between Andean communities and the Agruco team over a period of twenty years. As an outcome of this experience, the main objective of the Agruco training programme of fieldworkers is 'developing the ability to engage in a dialogue between Andean and western ways of knowing, and transform this into practical applications which enhance endogenous development'.

### **Social learning**

Social learning is one of the pillars for initiating this dialogue, and implies a joint learning process between local and external actors about specific themes relating to community development. This requires two preconditions, the first of which is a horizontal relationship between the different actors, especially between members of the community and those who

come from outside. The second condition is that all involved accept that all knowledge is intrinsically valid, without the presupposition that western knowledge (generally possessed by the external actors) is superior to local knowledge.

Once these conditions have been fulfilled, it is important to approach social learning as a process. That is, a particular subject cannot be considered to have been adequately and definitively dealt with, just because the students' time in the community has come to an end. Rather, the participatory research work on a particular topic is considered part of a community process which continues beyond the presence of the external actor involved.

### **Research and reflection**

Social learning implies neither just research, nor just the process of developing a defined project, but the combination of the two. Scientific research on a range of topics, and coordinated by a research programme, is combined with efforts to support and enhance the capacity of the communities to formulate proposals and implement field activities and projects, known as PICADS (Integrated Community Projects for Self-management and Sustainable Development, see Case 4-4).

The training method of the Agruco team thus comprises three elements: theoretical and methodological training at a conceptual level, practical experience, and theoretical reflection. This theoretical reflection is based on the outcomes of both development projects and scientific research.

### **Four fundamental stages**

Endogenous development implies understanding rural reality from the Andean worldview, which includes material, social and spiritual spheres (see Case 3-5).

Based on the Andean worldview with the material, social and spiritual spheres, four stages in social learning within the training programme have been identified. This process is continually enriched by interaction with other actors from within and outside Agruco:

- *two-way sharing of information between outsiders and community members, with outsiders participating in local events;*
- *joint action research based on the knowledge acquired by the community members with the support of the outsiders, aiming at improving local practices based on local criteria;*
- *exchange of experiences between local actors about the improved practices and other lessons learned; and*
- *dissemination of the lessons learned during this process to other organisations.*

### **Difficulties**

The training process within the Agruco team has encountered some important difficulties, which we have gradually been able to overcome. These difficulties include, for example, the team's initial lack of knowledge of the internal rules, communication and responsibilities within the

communities; the felt need to differentiate Agruco from other support organisations; the need to come up with practical and useful outcomes of the research to justify the activities within the communities; and the quest for 'legitimacy' within the faculty of agronomy of which Agruco is a part.

Overcoming these difficulties has been an important element in the training programme of the fieldworkers. To better surmount these difficulties, we also aim to work more in the following areas: coordinating activities with other support organisations working in the communities; establishing better links with spiritual leaders; and strengthening primary education and local communication media in the communities.

### **Personal commitment**

The training for endogenous development can be evaluated as positive when the fieldworkers have developed a personal commitment to working for agro-ecology and endogenous development, as well as sensitivity to the situation of the local population they are working with. This does not finish at the end of the training period. Instead, the main objective of the training implies stimulating the fieldworkers to continue their learning process in a permanent and autonomous way. The key, therefore, lies in awakening the permanent motivation of the fieldworker to be committed to the situation of the local population.

### **Constant reflection**

Reflection and debate – as indicated – are fundamental to the self-training process, not just in academic circles, but also in grass-roots organisations. We also believe that the structure and content of the self-training process is not only for the field professional. Rather, it should be present constantly in all areas of the daily life of all people: in their worldview, their feelings, their thoughts and their presence in the world.

Only through this process of constant reflection and personal development can we make a real contribution to endogenous development in our own community, as well as in the indigenous peasant communities.

*Source: César Escobar,  
Agruco*

# Chapter 3

# APPRECIATING THE DIVERSITY OF WORLDVIEWS

## Introduction

How can development workers appreciate the role of culture and traditional knowledge in development? And how can they help local people to regain trust again in their own culture and traditional knowledge?

The cases included in this chapter show important features of traditional cultures and knowledge systems that illustrate their importance for the well-being of local people. Each culture has its unique worldviews, institutions, knowledge and practices. The cases only show some aspects of a few worldviews and specific knowledge systems, as it is very difficult to capture all aspects of a culture in one short case study.

## Case 3-1

### Classical and folk health systems in India

#### Co-existence of health systems

Understanding people's perceptions of the local resources for their health practices has been essential for FRLHT, the non-governmental Foundation for Revitalisation of Local Health Traditions in southern India. This is the basis upon which FRLHT has built an effective methodology for participatory documentation and assessment of local health traditions, and formulates strategies to promote their use and conservation. The local resources on which the local health practices are based include natural, human and cultural-spiritual elements.

The present public health care system in India is dominated by Western, technology-centred medicine. It is estimated, however, that only about 30 percent of the Indian population is covered by this system, and in rural areas the coverage is even lower. However, India also has its own rich health traditions, consisting of codified



A traditional bonesetter at work in his clinic.

classical systems of medicine with written texts, such as Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani, and folk systems which are transmitted orally among traditional healers, bonesetters and midwives.

## Ayurveda and its fundamental concepts

Traditional Hindu knowledge is recorded in the Vedas, ancient texts that include a collection of hymns, mantras and prayers written in Sanskrit. 'Veda' translates loosely as science, and Ayurveda is therefore the 'science of life'. It has well documented fundamental concepts and philosophies. According to Ayurveda, human beings are a microcosm—a universe within themselves. The human being is a child of the external cosmic forces, the macrocosm. Individual human existence is indivisible from the total cosmic manifestation. The source of all existence is 'cosmic consciousness', which manifests as male and female energy. The universe evolved out of the combined energy of the male (which is formless, colourless and without active part in the manifestation of the universe) and of the female (which has form, colour and attributes: it is awareness with choice).

The female energy manifests itself in what is called 'cosmic intellect', which in turns forms the 'ego'. In looking at the 'ego' Ayurveda distinguishes three central attributes: *sattva* (pure), *rajas* (dynamic) and *tamas* (inert). These three are the foundation of all existence. *Rajas* is the active vital life force in the body, which moves both the organic and the inorganic universes. *Sattva* and *rajas* together produce the 11 'components': the five sense organs (ears, skin, eyes, tongue, nose), the five organs (mouth, hands, feet, reproductive organs, and excretory organs), and the mind. *Tamas* and *rajas* combined contribute to form 5 proto-elements: *aakash* (space), *vaayu* (air), *agni* (fire), *jala* (water), and *prthvi* (earth), of which the entire material world is made up.

Ayurvedic medicine thus recognises that the human being consists of body, mind and spirit. Most disease conditions involve physical, biological and spiritual factors, and therefore the entire human being is treated holistically, and the patient plays an active role. In addition, people are classified into different constitutions: *Vaatha*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*. Each of these characteristics also exists in every living organism and, in health, they are well balanced. A person with a *Vaatha* constitution has a slender and tall body, light in weight, rough and dry skin, and prominent bones. The person with a *Pitta* constitution is medium in size, weight and strength, and has warm and dry characteristics. The *Kapha* constitution refers to plants, animals or humans that are short and bulky, with good strength, which tend to withstand stress better than the other types. It is, however, common to find a person of a combined type, for example the *Vaatha-Pitta* type, or the *Vaatha-Kapha* type.

## Folk health systems

Folk health traditions are particularly widespread in southern India. They are mostly undocumented and oral and probably as old as humankind. These folk medical traditions are extremely diverse, since they are rooted in the natural resources found in the many different eco-systems. It has been estimated that about 8,000 medicinal plant species and more than

200 animal and mineral sources are used in treating health problems in India. In southern India alone, FRLHT found that local healers have developed an estimated 50,000 herbal drug formulations. There are also some 50,000 local names for the approximately 4,800 medicinal plants used in folk medicine. The medicinal plants, animals and minerals have many uses and values attached to them. Some species are sold on the market. Most of these natural resources, however, are used locally for food, medicine, fodder, firewood or dye. Many people thus perceive them as potential elements for developing their human resources, and harnessing their skills and knowledge.

## **Spiritual aspects of healing**

Most folk health traditions consider that in addition to the physical, biological and emotional aspects, every organism also has a spiritual element. Consequently, many local diagnostic and healing practices include spiritual elements, such as prayers, offerings and auspicious timing of the practice. It is common to find that these spiritual practices are considered superstitious, as it is extremely difficult to explain the effect of the local health practices within the framework of mainstream medical science. However, there is a symbiotic relationship between the folk traditions and the classical Indian medical traditions: they draw from each other and are thus enriched.

A study by FRLHT of fifty traditional healers (*vaidyas*) from various parts of southern India revealed that they include strong spiritual aspects in their treatment of patients. All healers ask permission from God in their work. They feel that only through communication with God, and with God's blessing, are they able to cure the patients, and that without devotion to God, they cannot use plants for treatments. Depending on their culture and region, healers carry out different types of personal rituals, prayers and offerings. Some of them pray to the *panchabhutas* (space, air, fire, water, earth) or call up community deities before dispensing the medicine. Many of them make an offering to deities such as *Shiva* or *Ganesha*. Most folk healers also believe that they should lead a pious life, have purity of mind, and be merciful.

The spiritual element in the actual diagnosis and treatment of disease varies considerably. Most of the healers' diagnostic methods consist of checking the pulse in various ways; some diagnose by analysing the body condition and voice of the patient, others analyse more specific symptoms. Certain healers pray and request god to help them to understand the kind of problem the patient has, while verses from the Koran are also used to cure a patient possessed or affected by black magic. A few use astrology for diagnosing a problem.

## **Conclusion**

Identifying the different Indian traditional health concepts, as well as the cultural values implicit in them, can be a good starting point for endogenous development. These can be compared to scientific and cultural concepts in other traditions, such as those in the west or Latin America. Simply comparing different knowledge systems is not enough, however. It is important to also

Source: FRLHT

identify the contradictions, misperceptions and anomalies in terms of domination and control of each knowledge system.

## Case 3-2

### African ways of learning

#### Introduction

Africa is a vast continent with a wide range of peoples, cultures, beliefs and knowledge systems. It is impossible to define ways of learning that are Africa-wide. The two brief cases below, based on personal reflections, highlight two aspects of ways of learning and knowledge sharing that are relevant in many parts of the continent.

#### Story-telling for learning in Zimbabwe

Elders in Zimbabwe use the art of story-telling to impart their knowledge to the young. Story-telling is used as a vehicle to reinforce societal values. Two important figures are involved: the story-teller and the audience. The nature of the audience always influences the mode of story-telling that the elders adopt.

The commonest mode of story-telling is the folk tale (*Ngano*). A folk tale has two important structures, the beginning and ending. The beginning is usually '*Kare-kare zvako*' (Once upon a time), and at the end the audience responds with '*dzepfunde' ndopaperera sarungano*' (This is the end of the story). This structure itself is a fertile ground for teaching the young ones about the existence of the metaphysical world. As they listen, they start to appreciate that there is a mystical world that exists in the realm of their imagination through the use of the words, prompted by '*Kare-kare zvako*'. On hearing this, children are transposed to a distant world where peculiar things occur. We have folk tales which depict men or women being able to change into say lions, frogs, birds or snakes. If children are conditioned to believe in natural and supernatural powers from a young age, it fosters their understanding of the role of spirit

mediums. Through the use of folk tales, children are taught to believe that they are protected from mystical powers such as witchcraft by their ancestral spirits (*vadzimu*).

In the same vein, societal values, such as taking care of those who are weak and disabled, can be taught through folk tales. Usually the story-teller (*Sarungano*) creates a situation where animals like the tortoise and hare, which are powerless in the real animal



Spirit medium in Iganga, Uganda, explains how the flora and fauna influence healing and farming practices.

kingdom, are portrayed as victors and triumph against the evil intentions of the stronger animals such as the lion and hyena.

As boys grow into men, the elders change the art of story-telling to suit their needs, depending on the nature of the audience. The boys learn about the expected leadership roles and the knowledge that constitutes the fabric of society. Historical episodes, which are rich in knowledge of the family roots, ethos and values, are narrated through stories. A story is punctuated with rhetorical questions that help to link different issues. For instance, a story-teller might ask, 'Did you know that your grandfather who was a chief almost died, but traditional healers and herbalists are so helpful?'

A story is told in such a way that it does not seem like a lecture, but nevertheless it may convey clear instructions. I still remember vividly when a certain ritual had to be performed in order to give blessings to each of the grown-up boys in the family. A story was told about how the late father had insisted that at some point in time, when all his male children had come of age, water had to be splashed over each individual's head with accompanying words of blessings.

Story-telling can take the form of song. Usually the elders want to impart the knowledge that certain types of songs enable a person to be possessed by a spirit. The story-teller may also indicate the songs that are suitable for the purposes of asking for rains from the spirits of the land during a beer ritual drinking ceremony. Story-telling plays a significant role in passing endogenous knowledge from generation to generation in my part of Zimbabwe.

*Source: Garcia Duru,  
Zimbabwe*

## Learning through dreams

As an undergraduate student, I was a good Christian who went to the townships on Sundays to 'tell the Africans about the Lord'. During the informal chats before the services, people often told me about dreams they had had during the night. I sensed that the relationship they had to their dreams—which most often was ancestral—had a power and a presence that felt very real to me. And so I ended up spending more and more time asking people about their dreams and less and less time telling them about the Lord. The dreams became the service. I am grateful for the humility of my first dream teachers.

### Dreams as direction

My own dreams have become one of the major guiding forces in my life. I once had an encounter with dolphins after which I began to have panic attacks. I went to a *sangoma* (a practitioner of herbal medicine, divination and counselling) who told me that my ancestors were calling me to change my personal and work life radically and start living according to my purpose. The panic attacks were ways in which my ego was trying to prevent me from going there. The *sangoma* suggested I spend a month in the wilderness, and ask for visions about my future. Before I went, I asked for dreams to give me guidance as to what I should do during this month. I had repeated dreams that my name was no longer appropriate. During the vision quest itself, I got very clear guidance about what my new name is (the name I carry now—

Shakti—which means ‘feminine creative power’). Taking on this name has changed my life radically and has also directed my work as an expression of this name.

Later on I found myself without a home and unsure where to move to. I asked for a dream and got a very clear dream with the name Saasveld written on it. I finally bumped into someone who told me that Saasveld is a forestry station close to George in the Southern Cape. I have subsequently moved to this area. It is very clear to me now that I had to move to this area which I didn’t know at all before. My relationship with the community there has given me a context to deepen my relationship with Spirit considerably.

### How I learn from my dreams

*I ask for them.*

*I listen to them.*

*If I feel myself having a significant dream in the middle of the night, I wake up and write it down.*

*I share my dreams with others.*

*I paint them and express them.*

*I listen to them and follow them.*

*And so the ancestors know they can speak to me through my dreams.*

Source: Shakti Malan,  
South Africa

## Case 3-3

### Abraham Mwadiwa: between Christianity and African spirituality

#### Calling to become a preacher

‘As a child, I grew up in a rural Zimbabwean community with a strong Methodist Christian tradition. I attended church every Sunday and my deeply religious family taught me to pray and read the scriptures. I was baptised into the Methodist community and as an adolescent committed myself to the church in the rite of confirmation. I was still a very young man when, as a youth leader, I felt called to become a preacher. Before the Methodist community accepted me, however, I was put through several rigorous examinations and interviews. I had to explain why I wanted to become a preacher. This required reflection and self searching and in the process I became more aware of why I wanted to commit myself in this way.

#### Encounter

‘As a Methodist preacher, I have served on many local, national and international organisations, including the World Methodist Council, the Christian Council of Zimbabwe and the World

Council of Churches. In 1991, my work for the Social and Community Services brought me in contact with the Association of Zimbabwe Traditional Environmentalists (AZTREC). Suddenly I found myself working with chiefs, spirit mediums and villagers in Masvingo. AZTREC is an association of traditional institutions working to conserve the rich biodiversity of sacred shrines and groves. Its activities are guided by traditional values and rooted in indigenous knowledge and spirituality.

The AZTREC approach to conservation immediately appealed to my heart and to my mind. Like an eager young child I wanted to learn more of this knowledge, with its values and concepts of humanity that were new to me. My experience with AZTREC marked a turning point in my life: the beginning of a conscious process that would lead to an understanding of the essential nature and vitality of endogenous development.

'As I reflected on the impact my contact with traditional ways and thinking were having on me, I became aware that, as a preacher and professional, I had reached a crossroads. I had embarked on a new journey that challenged my strict adherence to Christian principles. I risked losing my position in the church and being separated from the only religious environment I had ever known. But at the same time, I could not ignore these experiences that offered me a more natural learning and living environment. I wanted to resolve the seeming antagonism between Christianity and African religion: did they repel each other or could they strengthen and enrich each other? The moment of truth had come: I am an African. I thus accepted this challenge in the full self awareness of being an African.

## African spirituality

'The gift of life in the African context is celebrated in many rituals and festivals. These vary from family to family, and from clan to clan. God is the spiritual focus and this awareness determines the practice of rites and ceremonies. The spirits of the forefathers form the ancestral domain, the lower gods with whom human beings and the yet unborn interact. In a spiritual sense, human beings are the stewards of the biodiversity found within God's natural universe. As I watched spirit mediums and rainmakers perform rituals, and traditional healers bring the sick back to health, I realised that God was being recognised as the ultimate giver of life, and the source from which we derive our talent for living life to the full.'

'In 1997, I travelled with AZTREC to Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, South Africa and Zambia. I was introduced to many traditional leaders, and observed an overwhelming degree of commonality in religious considerations, structures and practices.'



Abraham Mwadiwa, a minister of the Methodist Christian church from Zimbabwe, is presently the co-ordinator of the Southern African Endogenous Development Programme (SAEDP).

There seemed to be five distinct but overlapping hierarchies bound by an intuitive, instinctive connectivity (see Figure 1).

## Symbiosis between Christ and African ancestry

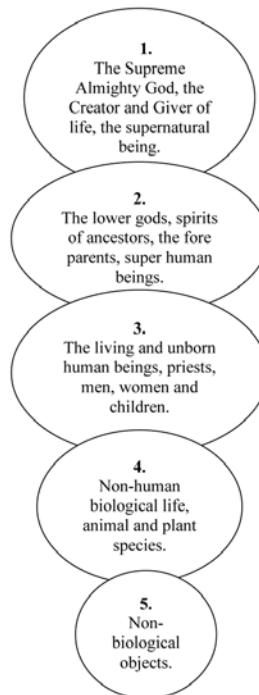
'In the Methodist church, notable changes continue to occur. I am glad to see the traditional practices of African drumming synthesising with calabash rattling, horn-made trumpets and other instruments integrated into acts of worship in church. Africans are a music-loving people. Christianity becomes more relevant when it encompasses the experiential perspective of the African belief.'

'As a Christian originating from my African ancestry, I believe there is a symbiotic relationship between the ancestry and Christ. I realised that the Book of Genesis gives a description of God's creation in the Old Testament similar to the ones I had distilled from traditional leaders. I knew that within Judaism there were examples of God intervening through prophets and priests, who mediated the laws of ancestors such as Abraham and Isaac, when communities were in trouble. In the New Testament, Christ himself refers to his ancestors and uses examples drawn from the cultural and natural world to reach his listeners.'

'Granted this background I argue against the demonisation of African religion and try to explain my position to my wife, my family, my church and my employers. Traditional and religious institutions are the cornerstone of African peoples' humanity and integrity and the carriers of the indigenous knowledge essential to endogenous development.'

Source: Abraham Mwadiwa, SAEDP

Figure 1: Five hierarchies in traditional spirituality. Circles 1 and 2 form the Spiritual worldview. Circle 3 represents the Human worldview. Circles 4 and 5 represent the Natural worldview.



## Case 3-4

### Understanding local institutions in southern Ghana

#### Local traditional institutions as entry points for endogenous development

In Ghana, as in many other parts of Africa, development agencies often encourage local people to form groups or formal organisations to carry activities forward while ignoring existing local indigenous institutions. Unfortunately, many cooperatives and community-based organisations facilitated by external agencies, such as farmers' groups, women's income-generating groups, or business associations, survive only as long as external support is available. At the same time, most village life is organised effectively through existing local institutions, including the chiefs and queen mothers, ceremonies and festivals as well as various indigenous groups and development associations. These serve as important rallying points for community organisation for development. Understanding how communities organise themselves provides a good entry point for harnessing endogenous potential when it comes to sustaining development activities.



Queens from southern Ghana at a training course organised by CIKOD and the University of Cape Coast.

#### Indigenous institutions in the Wasa Fiase Area

In 2002 Cikod made an assessment of indigenous institutions among the Akutuase in the Wasa Fiase Traditional Area in the west of Ghana. The study revealed a vibrant indigenous system around which the people organise their lives and livelihoods. The following traditional institutions are of direct relevance from the point of view of supporting endogenous development.

**Traditional authorities and governance:** The chiefs, queen mothers and the committee of elders create a system for local governance based on well-established leadership positions and consultative structures. The leadership structure is defined from household and clan level to the level of paramount chief, and each level has its own tasks and responsibilities. The youth leader has a special position in the system as he/she is the focal point for mobilising the youth and community at large when it comes to checking abuses of power by the chief and elders, as well as mobilising resources for development. He/she is also important for advocacy and making political demands on government officials.

**Traditional festivals for community needs assessment, planning and M&E:** A number of traditional festivals are used as a platform for assessing the needs of the community, planning local initiatives, mobilising the community's resources and reconciling the present with the past.

The *Afashe* festival is held once a year and is a big event. It is a time when all members of the community, whether living inside or outside the village, come together, remember the ancestors, evaluate the past year's activities and plan for the coming year. The festival takes place over a number of days. Cikod has introduced a forum on the first day, which is an opportunity to present plans and activities to higher external officials from the government. Cikod acts as a facilitator for this. The *Addae* festival takes place every forty days, and is an event where the chief, elders and community representatives meet. Its primary function is for appeasing the ancestors, organising funerals and renewing relations with the ancestors. Cikod introduced the idea of using the festival as an opportunity for monitoring and evaluating developments in the village (social, economic, political) and devising forms of corrective action where necessary. About half to a whole day is taken for these processes, and Cikod plays an intermediary role.

**Asafo for mobilisation of the community:** For various tasks this is in the hands of the well-established Youth Groups (asafo), the former warriors. They play a key role in cases of emergency and security actions and also mobilise people for communal work. They ensure effective communication within the community and with other communities.

**Youth associations for organising livelihood activities:** Various patterns of collaboration exist, such as the Youth and Development associations that are present in almost every community, though with various degree of activity. Less formally organised are the rotating labour sharing groups (*nnoboa*), which are very active in small-scale cocoa farming, and rotating savings and credit groups (*susu*, currently dying out).

**The clan system as social security and support:** The clan is an extension of the extended family system, covering all descendants of the same ancestry. All members of a clan have the same totemic identity and respect the same taboos, which forms the basis for strong cohesion and reciprocity within a clan. Thus the clan provides social security and support to its members.

**Protection and promotion of women's interests:** The queen in every community has the responsibility to ensure peace and harmony. In particular she is responsible for articulating the views of women and children, providing them with a voice in community matters.

## Traditional institutions and local values

Traditional norms and values are part and parcel of all the above institutions. They include the belief in consensus, dialogue, inclusion, reciprocity, fairness and trust. These facilitate cooperation in local self-help initiatives, which therefore do not depend on external prompting and support. On the scale of values of the local communities, great importance is attached to ritual or religious events. Next come social obligations and only then follow the worldly economic activities.

Traditionally, the norms and worldviews of rural communities and their institutions in Ghana have a more socially-oriented perception of organisational development, as opposed to the western concept, geared towards competitiveness, effectiveness and efficiency. Building local institutional development on traditional institutions will allow communities' own endogenous development perspectives to shape the new initiatives.

## The role of the chief

Contrary to what many people expect, the chief still has a wide range of responsibilities covering legislative, executive, judicial and spiritual functions:

**Legislative function:** In the normal course of governance, chiefs, in consultation with their group of elders, make the rules governing the social, economic and political life of the community, including the exploitation of resources. As lawmakers, chiefs can be very important in efforts to reform the traditional land system for sustainable development. This is particularly important as land insecurity has resulted in many conflicts, which has affected productivity and caused loss of life and property.

**Executive function:** Chiefs see to the day-to-day running of communities. They play a significant role in economic activities that involve the use of environmental resources. Chiefs are the first to know when there is water pollution, a bush fire, environmental degradation from the use of chemicals, or conflicts involving the use of natural resources such as forests. Therefore they will also be the first to stop such abuses if they are formally empowered to do so.

**Judicial function:** Chiefs play crucial roles in local-level governance within the community concerning rules and laws governing the social, economic and political life: food security, natural resource management, domestic relations (husband wife). They pass judgement in cases of arbitration, and this community level of governance is faster and nearer to the people than going through official judicial channels for conflict management. The chiefs and traditional elders listen to the cases in the community, following the traditional procedures. Most problems do not go to law courts as they are settled within the communities.

**Spiritual function:** Chiefs are regarded as intermediaries between the living and the dead. Together with fetish priests, the chiefs are powerful symbols of authority who are in a position to evoke sanctions. This works as a mechanism for controlling social behaviour, including moral and family values but also the exploitation of communal resources such as forest and farmlands. For example, the use of forest, water and farmland that have been declared sacred is regulated. The rules concerning their use are often related to sustainable resource management. Through his spiritual authority, the chief also derives economic authority and can mobilise people for communal work.

Although the chiefs' roles have changed, they are still appreciated in many communities and command respect. Thus, they can help in moderating resource use and sustaining the environment. At the same time, it is also clear that in a number of places chiefs are misusing their position for personal gains. They can make use of the fact that their position is ambiguous. A number of tasks and resources are channelled through them without the full system of internal accountability being in place.

## Organisation of chiefs at district level

In Ghana there is a national council or House of Chiefs composed of paramount chiefs from each region. There are also ten regional House of Chiefs (composed of the chiefs of each district in a particular region). Cikod works with these House of Chiefs as they can be a platform

for dialoguing with local government. Traditionally their role is to protect customs and eliminate negative customary rights that were imposed by the government. Cikod has added a function, using the council as a platform for local community representatives to express wishes and demands to the local government. This has a number of advantages. It helps to build trust and reciprocity among the chiefs and therefore the propensity to cooperate. It allows the chiefs to exert a stronger influence on district-level formal government institutions and increases their chances of gaining access to resources for development. The district groups can become a district-level platform to demand accountability from district-level government institutions as well as NGOs. Concerning the position of women, better recognition of queens at district level can be particularly important to help create improved responses to the special needs of women.

## Conclusions

Traditional councils led by the chiefs can complement the role of government institutions in local governance. During the colonial period, chiefs were to some extent 'misused' by the colonial authorities for the purposes of indirect rule. Some chiefs still have a traditional mentality. There are others, however, who are proactively working on behalf of their communities, in the fields of education and the environment for example. These chiefs are regarded as 'modern chiefs' and they can help to promote the notion of customs and traditions as dynamic. A 'modern chief' is one who uses his authority to mobilise his people for development and attract external resources for the development of his community. An example is the Asante king who has established an education foundation for youth. Cikod has started a training programme to encourage chiefs to be more proactive, transparent and accountable to their people. Peer pressure is created by bringing these issues up at platforms during community events such as festivals. Cikod trains chiefs to be accountable by giving accounts of activities they have undertaken for the community. Cikod is also training members of the community to make demands of their leaders, and in doing so it is making use of and reviving traditional customs. For example, taking the sandals of a chief is an indication of removing his authority. Cikod is working with youth leaders and queens to encourage their assertiveness with regard to the chiefs.

Harnessing traditional authorities in the development process should be expanded to include priests and priestesses, medicine men, herbalists and other local experts. These are often people who can facilitate decision-making processes in development at the local level as they are traditionally consulted before decisions are taken.

In endogenous or human-centred development, the community provides and sustains its conditions of development. It is the responsibility of traditional leaders to ensure quality of life. It is also their responsibility to promote freedom of individuals and human dignity among all members of the community.

## Case 3-5

### Andean cosmovision and development concepts

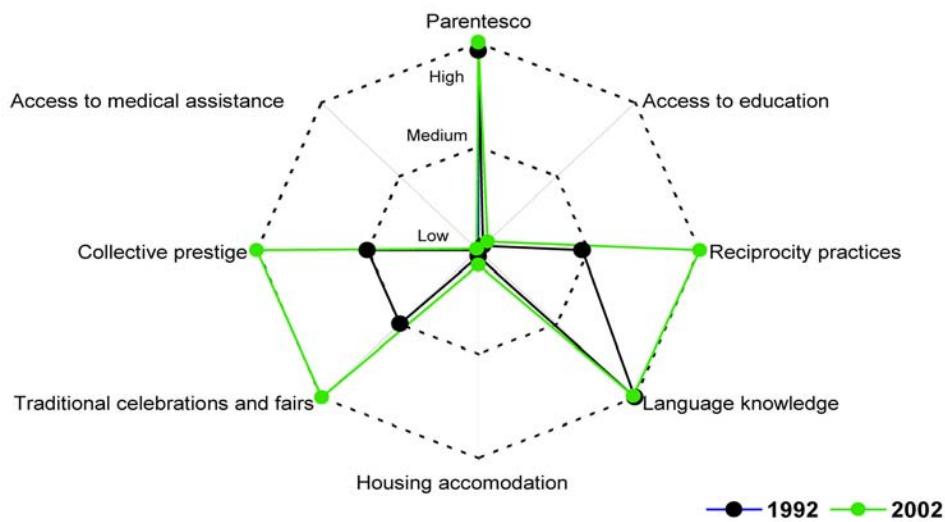
#### Pacha and Pachankiri

The rural communities of the Andes are predominantly farming communities, and their religion has evolved from their agricultural experiences. A central notion in this worldview is *Pacha* (space-time), within which society and nature stand in relationship to each other. Within *Pacha*, three spheres of life interact: spiritual life (*Pachakamak*), the social life (*Pachanka-macha*) and material life (*Pacha-mama*). The first refers to all the invisible forces from the outer cosmos. People cannot exercise direct influence on them, but they exist whether humans are aware of them or not. *Pachamama* refers to the material forces that make life possible, with which living beings are in contact daily. *Pachanka-macha* refers to the society that all people share and which makes life and reproduction possible.

The above three spheres interact to create a fourth one, *Pachankiri* or daily life. Here all the shared practices for the continuity of life take place, as do social, material and spiritual reproduction, whether in agriculture, livestock husbandry, forestry or other activities. That is why in daily life, these activities have social, material and spiritual connotations. This notion of society does not place humans at the centre of the universe; the highest aspiration is the continuous re-creation of harmony between the micro- and the macro-cosmos.

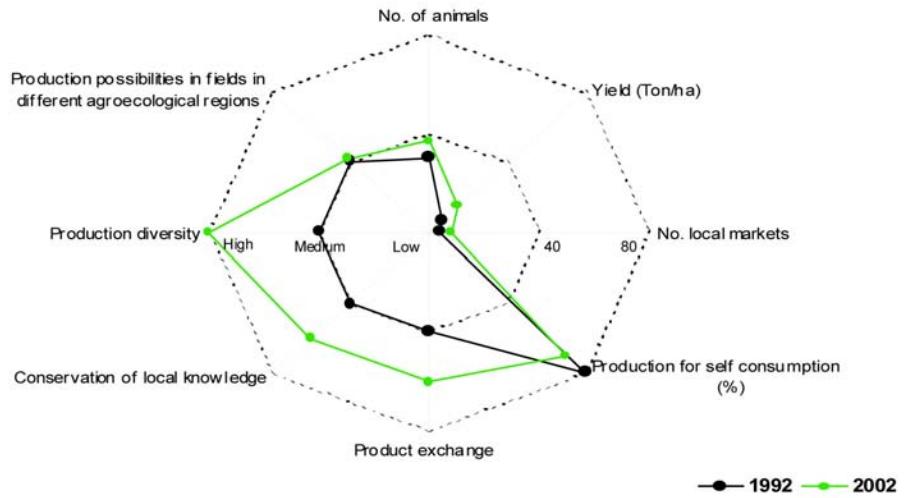
#### Andean concepts of evolution and ‘development’

In the Andean cosmovision evolution of life is seen as a growing spiral, not linear. This spiral notion of time leads to the belief in karma (or destiny) and in reincarnation. ‘Development’ is



According to the local indigenous groups, indicators to measure poverty are mostly qualitative rather than quantitative. Aspects related to social relations are considered extremely important, such as ‘parentesco’ (kinship), reciprocity (exchange) practices, as well as collective prestige.

Local indicators of economic-productive aspects reflect the local perspective of labour and economy. Besides yield and local markets, production diversity, local knowledge and production possibilities in different ecological zones are considered of major importance.



perceived as the 'unrolling' and expansion of the past where only the context of each specific moment changes. This implies that the future is a repetition and expansion of cycles and rhythms. In this notion, development is the movement from the centre to the periphery. The moment obstacles arise, the movement will return to the origin, to the sources of knowledge and survival strategies that have been proven in the past. This is regarded as a phase of envelopment. Once the solutions for the obstacles are found and integrated, the development can continue but now with a renewed potential. Thus in the notion of the Andean people, the future is behind us and the past is in front of us.

## Reciprocity and complementarity

Reciprocity is an important concept in the Andes and influences many aspects of daily life. There are various forms of reciprocity, and several of them are related to agricultural production. The most frequent form is called *compañía* or *al partir*: one farming family owns a plot of land and another family does the work; the profits are shared between the two families. *Ayni* is work exchange practised at family level. In reciprocal relations, a person offers something of his or her own. Accepting a gift in the context of *Pachamama* means accepting something that has a spiritual essence, a soul. Andean logic also includes the concept of *el don*, which refers to moral reciprocity, not only between people, but also between nature and the spiritual world. Rituals and festivals are moments that enable the community to remember their relation with nature. Mostly this is done by giving thanks for the relationship with *Pachamama*, for products that have been received.

Reciprocity is also part and parcel of the cultivation methods used, as there is continuous interaction between all forms of life. Humans grow plants and, in turn, are taken care of by the plants. The inhabitants of the Andean highlands depend on this reciprocity between all forms of life, from humans, plants and animals to hills, rocks and rivers. It is a type of non-compulsory

giving and receiving that involves growing and taking care. Development is therefore seen as 'all being united to live well and better'.

Complementarity is another important concept in traditional Andean life that stems from the non-dominant worldview. Farmers seek a balance between crops and animals and other resources, such as soil, climate and labour. The idea is to achieve multiple agricultural, ecological, economic, culinary and socio-cultural objectives. The way households use crop varieties is dynamic and depends on the family's decision to keep and take care of these varieties. Empathy must exist between the people and the crops they grow. This idea is known as *ispalla* and can be understood as the 'small God of seeds' or 'the Spirit of food'. As a result of this, Andean farmers maintain a high level of biodiversity that helps to reproduce their lives not only socially but also spiritually.

## The role of rituals

In a worldview in which the social, material and spiritual world are inseparable, rituals play a key role as they offer people a way to relate to the spiritual world. A ritual is a spiritual activity carried out to create the positive spiritual conditions for planned material or social events.

Rituals are therefore performed in all important social and productive activities. Because the inhabitants of the Andean communities have been and still are predominantly farmers, many of their rituals evolved around agriculture. For example, the moment farmers begin to create the physical conditions for plant growing (by ploughing), they perform a ritual to ask Mother Earth to contribute to this by creating optimal spiritual conditions. In this view, a good crop, quantitatively and qualitatively, depends not only on the appropriate technologies being used, but also on the accompanying rituals. Even diseases are not just caused by nature, but are the result of a negative encounter with the spiritual world and cannot simply be cured by taking a medicinal preparation. Along with the medical treatment, a ritual is needed to re-create adequate spiritual conditions for a healthy life.

## Local indicators of poverty

The Andean worldview has concrete implications for how Andean farmers to look at, and assess, poverty. Conventional development programmes use quantitative indicators related to agriculture and nutrition to measure rural development: daily income per capita, crop yield, market oriented production, price for main crop and access to credit. Local people's views on what would be good indicators to assess development are quite different (see Figure 2). None of the local indicators are measured in monetary terms. This is because many economic activities in the community are not based on money, but primarily on reciprocity and on exchange practices, which are therefore considered important indicators. The local indicators also reflect a different perspective on labour and agricultural production. Conventional indicators such as 'unemployment' and 'daily income per capita', 'public services' are therefore not directly relevant to the communities.

Source: Stephan Rist,  
CDE, Juan San Martin  
and Nelson Tapia,  
Agruco

It is important for the communities to cultivate a variety of crops and to raise various animals as most of their production is for their own consumption. As a consequence, the local indicators emphasise diversity: 'production diversity', 'yield', 'production possibilities in field in different agro-ecological regions' and 'number of animals' and 'food security'. The local indicator 'conservation of local knowledge' shows the importance communities give to maintaining their own strong knowledge base as a condition for successful and sustainable agricultural production.

## Case 3-6

### Foundations of the Mayan worldview

#### Introduction

The Guatemalan NGO Oxlajuj Ajpop coordinates groups of spiritual leaders and elders who carry the ancestral knowledge of the Mayan culture. It encourages new relationships which



Women play an essential role in Mayan culture and learning. Here candles are offered for the health and well-being of the community. Rituals permit community members to meet spiritually as well as socially.

foster peaceful coexistence and collective development in a multicultural society. For the Mayan leaders who form part of Oxlajuj Ajpop, it is important that the people of all cultures in the world work to re-evaluate, promote and disseminate ancient wisdom, and seek mechanisms to influence the decision-making processes in our countries and continents. One of the main objectives of Oxlajuj Ajpop is to facilitate education relating to sustainable development that is

based on Mayan ways of learning and the principles and values imbedded in these as highlighted below. This implies a recognition of our spiritual, historical, scientific riches, our natural and productive resources, and own organisations for true sovereignty and free determination for our peoples.

#### Mayan principles and values

In the Mayan cosmovision, of all the elements in the universe, human beings are the most lowly, the little brothers. The big brothers are those that were created first: the mountains, forests, volcanoes, caves, ravines, birds, animals, rivers, lakes and seas.

The main elements that give life to all the animals, birds, nature and human beings are the sacred fire, earth, water and air. Without these elements there would be no life, and for this reason it is important to revere them by making sacred offerings according to the special days indicated in the Mayan calendar. All elements within creation are alive, have a reason for being

and interact with each other continuously. For equilibrium to be maintained, it is necessary to respect this natural and sacred law.

**The mission of human beings:** Each human being should listen, obey and put into practice the wise advice of the ancestors to ensure good health, well-being in the home, a useful existence and a full life. The date of conception and birth of a person indicates his or her particular mission to serve the family, community, people and nation. Happiness lies in knowing the role or roles one is intended to undertake in life.

**Daily testimony:** The family and community recognise and acknowledge the honour, humility, service and good example of a person who carries out his or her mission in life. It is important to emphasise this because nobody should boast about themselves, or their gifts or special qualities; rather it is through their way of life and service that the roles they are to undertake within the community become clear.

**Diversity of roles:** The calendar shows us the various fields, specialisations and roles that people can take on and develop according to their date of birth, their education, dedication and livelihood. These include *ajq'ij* (spiritual minister), *ajkun* (traditional doctor/healer), *ajpop* (social authority), *alaxik* (lineage authority), *atjch'umil* (astronomer), *ajtzib'* (writer), *ajtikonej* (sower of crops), *ajilanel* (mathematician), *ajxojoj* (dancer), *ajq'ojom* (musician), *nojnel chomnel* (thinker).

**Ethical norms to live by:** All human groups, cultures and nations establish ethical norms and morals that give order to life. Once again, it is the Mayan calendar that serves as a guide in how to live one's life at different moments, and in different situations that occur throughout life. There are twenty days in the Mayan calendar that indicate the path that a person should follow if (s)he is to know what (s)he should be and do, and what not.

## Finding one's vocation

The historical, cultural and spiritual circumstances in which the descendants of the Maya nation currently live do not make it easy to find one's vocation. It is difficult to ensure a systematic and thorough upbringing, to take up one's vocation and serve the community. The main impediments to progress are the influence of state education and its western vision, the Christian religion which has been imposed, and the type of authority recognised by the state. Nevertheless we have experiences of Maya customs that indicate life and hope. We mention a few examples here:

- When a child is born the spiritual leader (*ajq'ij*) is consulted about the day of birth, to understand its potentials and limitations, and the rites that should be performed to ensure that the child grows and will take up its roles when it reaches adulthood.
- Pregnant women are guided by a traditional doctor (*ajkun*) throughout the pregnancy and also after the birth.
- The elders are the most important people when it comes to guiding their children and grandchildren to ensure that they lead a fulfilling life. The elder, whose mission is to accompany the newborn, performs rites, both during the pregnancy and on the day of

## The Mayan calendar as a guide

The Mayan calendar has been built up comprehensively and systematically over many generations. It is a calendar which synthesises different fields of ancient science with those of the present and the future. It is also a guide which has information about spirituality, mathematics, astronomy, medical treatments and the prevention and resolution of conflicts, and it predicts natural and supernatural phenomena. In other words it is a document that must be read, interpreted and applied in the life of those men and women who aim to discover their vocation in life and to do good towards others. The calendar is thus an instrument which guides people from the day of their birth and throughout the whole of their existence.

- When a young couple decide to set up a household together, their parents request the *ajq'ij* who is in charge of the calendar to consult with the ancestors, the earth and the divine to ascertain whether the signs of the two people who are planning to marry are compatible. Respecting the recommendation made by the elder is important for the stability of the new family.
- To determine the date for their wedding, a couple chooses the *B'atz* day in the Mayan calendar so that the marriage will last and be fulfilled.
- There are special rituals to prevent lack of understanding within families, illnesses and conflicts. The calendar indicates moments, places, types of sacred materials and the person who should carry out the rituals.
- There are special days indicated for asking for the life of children, women, men, ancestors and for making offerings to Mother Earth.
- The Mayan calendar indicates who the people are whose mission it is to be a spiritual or social authority and how they should carry out these tasks within the community.
- Every day in the Mayan calendar is assigned special rituals for particular purposes, but above all for preserving respect and balance in order to live as brothers and sisters on this sacred earth.
- The calendar indicates which days are propitious for performing rites to select seeds, preparing the earth, praying for rain, sowing and gathering the harvest.
- The calendar is a guide to psychological preparation for attending to the necessities of the people.

The Mayan calendar is one of the greatest contributions of Mayan science to humanity, and dates from over five thousand years ago. The calendar consists of two separate pairs of wheels, together known as the Calendar Round, both tied to a linear count of days, called the Long Count, whose zero point is an unknown mythical event that occurred on August 13, 3114 BC. The first wheel or calendar round sequence, the *Tzolk'in*, is formed by combining two cycles: one of 13 day numbers, and one of the 20 gods (or day names). In this way, every day is represented by a combination of a number and a god. This 260-day *Tzolk'in* period is still of great ritual significance in the Guatemalan highlands.

The second calendar round sequence, the year or *Haab*, is 365 days long and consists of 18 months of 20 days each. In this calendar, time is not linear but evolves in a somewhat spiral motion around the activities of humans and gods. It details important events, ceremonies past, present and future. At the end of the 18 months, there is a period of five unlucky days, which may precipitate danger, death and bad luck. The full Calendar Round for a particular day is the combination of the two: the *Tzolk'in* sacred calendar of 260 days, with a solar *Haab* calendar of 365 days, containing a number-name combination. The reoccurrence of this combination occurs every 52 years.

The ancestors established periods and cycles of one year, twenty years, forty and fifty-two years with considerable precision. They did not need modern equipment or technology to do this. Instead, they lived and respected the norms of life posited by the sacred calendar.

the birth, to ask for the baby's health, fulfilment and well-being in life. The rituals are performed on altars, mountain tops, volcano summits, or other ceremonial locations with cosmic energy.

- The guidance of children and grandchildren begins at a very early age, so that they discover their gifts and qualities, and are educated for the role they must undertake in their personal and community life. The elders give advice on personal and collective responsibilities, to ensure the future of their children and grandchildren. This includes lessons: do not disturb the balance and complementarity that exists between humans, nature, the cosmos and the spirits; do not destroy natural resources because they are a fundamental element of life; listen to and respect adults; fulfil the mission or role that you have been given in life and safeguard the future of the generations to come.

We end with a translation from Spanish of a passage from the Maya sacred book Pop Wuj:

After completing their mission the first mothers and fathers said: "Our children, we are departing now, we are returning, we have completed our mission. We leave you wise counsel and sensible advice. And to those who come from our faraway country, our wives, they said farewell to each one of them. We are returning to where we came from, it is shown in the heavens, we are going to return, we have fulfilled our mission, our days have finished. Think of us, do not erase us from your memory, do not forget us, so you will return to see our homes, our mountains, settle there and let it be so: continue our path and see again the place we come from."

Source: Felipe Gómez Gómez, Oxlajuj Ajpop

## Case 3-7

### Worldviews in rural Europe: two examples

#### Introduction

When people from the North interact with communities in southern countries, culture and worldviews are easily identified as playing an important role. The two cases of this chapter, however, show that worldview, local culture and value systems can be equally critical in determining rural innovation initiatives in Europe.

#### Pioneering young sheep farmers in Italy

The Abruzzo is a mountainous region with rich biodiversity in central Italy, where traditionally sheep and goat raising were the main livelihood. Failure of government interventions left the regional economy so weak that farmers started to migrate away. Newly arrived



The herbs of the mountain forage are the basis of the different cheese varieties. By moving the herd and varying the period of grazing, this Italian shepherd can influence the flavour of his milk and cheese.

### Sources of inspiration for pioneering farmers in Italy

- A shared dream, rooted in a passion for nature, social commitment, a strong connection with their own rural background, respect for local traditions, as well as an urge for self-realisation. This dream triggered their desire to re-vitalise the area and to stop the loss of biodiversity, traditional landscapes and local culture.
- Social commitment to local villagers; the pioneers felt challenged to stop unemployment and depopulation.
- The pioneering spirit: expressed by a continuous search for new products and services, as well as methods of production, processing and marketing. At the same time, they searched for institutions and policies to support them.
- The pioneers shared the view that they needed to work with—instead of trying to overcome—the local ecosystem. This approach to nature is generally referred to as ‘stewardship’.
- Openness to learning about the knowledge and experiences of old shepherds.
- Self-esteem and creativity.
- A strong wish for autonomy, to become independent from the dominant agricultural regime, opposing mainstream policies that promoted specialised intensive farming.
- Open to cooperation with farmers in the area. This required an attitude change among the farmers as cooperation was not a value embedded in the local farmers’ culture. The successful teamwork of the two pioneering farms convinced the other farmers of the value of cooperation.
- Interest in strategic alliances with different societal groups, environmental movements, consumers’ organisations, scientists and politicians.

young sheep farmers, however, believed that sheep breeding in mountainous areas could be a profitable and sustainable activity if it involved a ‘multifunctional approach’. They tried to reconnect with their own resources, differentiate their use, and diversify production, with a focus on high-quality products. They built new relationships among the farmers themselves, and between farmers, their institutional environment and consumers. Gradually the partnership evolved into an interregional network with a range of high-quality regional products.

The sources of inspiration for the young farmers include a set of motivations, values and views, outlined in the box above.

### Dairy farmers in the Netherlands

The VEL-VANLA cooperatives of dairy farmers in the north of the Netherlands are described in Case 1-6. The success of this movement is due to a number of factors, one of which is the presence of knowledgeable farmers in the area who acted as pioneers and leaders, thereby motivating and activating other farmers. Equally important, however, are the worldview and shared social values, such as the sense of ‘belonging to the same community’. The farming families had felt unjustly treated by the introduction of central government policies related to dairy farming, and considered that their farms and livelihood were at stake. This touched upon their shared history: the huge sacrifices of their ancestors to found farms on these poor soils would have all been for nothing. The motto that echoes their sense of belonging is ‘Nobody can just take away our farms’. The farmers share basic principles when it comes to farming, two of which, ‘farming gently’ and ‘stewardship’, are described in the boxes below.

## Farming gently

The concept of *kreas buorkjen*, or 'farming gently', contains five social indications of what is considered to be good farming:

- Using one's own experiences and intuition in decision-making about farm management and development.
- Establishing a balance between the ecological and economic sides of farming; farming with minimal levels of pollution.
- Farming as a free enterprise, not overburdened with debts, as self-reliant as possible.
- Certain indicators of a well-looked-after farm: colour of the grassland, the condition of the cattle, the condition of farm buildings and farmhouse, and the appearance of the yard and garden.
- The farm needs to be well balanced, in line with its environment, and present a clean, 'aesthetic' exterior.

Farming gently is thus a direct reflection of the social coherence amongst the farmers and their notions of 'autonomy' (from the state), 'reliability' (on each other) and 'pioneering spirit'. This feeds into the integrated process: the natural, social, human and economic resources are combined in a new way, creating a more effective balance.

## Stewardship

The concept of 'stewardship' is closely related to 'farming gently'. The Friesian farmers understand stewardship, or 'taking care of nature', in different ways:

- For most of these predominantly Christian farmers, stewardship has a religious connotation: what God has given must be handled carefully, and passed on to the next generation. Some farmers link this concept explicitly to the soil: their main concern is to reduce the nitrogen levels, in order to prevent groundwater pollution and to improve soil quality.
- For other farmers, protecting the wild plants and meadow birds are important elements in stewardship. There is much traditional local knowledge built up by generations of farmers for whom the hedgerows and alder trees were an inherent part of their farm. The environmental co-operatives took advantage of this knowledge and designed a system to further disseminate it among other farmers.

Stewardship is thus translated into more biodiversity and enriched landscapes, which then emerge as new income opportunities.

Source: Sabine de Rooij, ENED

## Case 3-8

### The medicine wheel of North American Indians

#### The old structures

Medicine wheels are stone structures built by the native peoples of North America for various spiritual and ritual purposes. Most are found in the province of Alberta in Canada. They incorporate a number of central concepts of the worldview of the native people. The Four Worlds Centre for Development Learning, based in Alberta Canada, has based its model for

community development practice on this indigenous concept (see Case 4-6). Although their original purpose is not fully known, archaeologists believe they had ceremonial or astronomical significance. They are still used today in Native American spirituality.

Medicine wheels were built by laying out stones in circular pattern that often looked like a wagon wheel lying on its side, up to 25 metres in diameter (see Figure 1). They have a central pile of stones (a cairn), surrounded by an outer ring of stones. There are 'spokes', or lines of stones, radiating out from the cairn to the outer ring. Almost all medicine wheels have at least two of the three elements mentioned above (the central cairn, the outer ring, and the spokes), but beyond that there are many variations on this basic design, and every wheel found is unique and has its own style and eccentricities. There were about 20,000 medicine wheels in Northern America before the Europeans came.

### The underlying concepts

The term 'medicine' in North American tribal tradition refers to any substance, process, teaching, song, story or symbol that helps to restore balance in human beings and their communities. Medicine wheels are regarded as places for energy and healing, teaching and understanding. The stones in a medicine wheel represent all aspects of creation: humans, animals, birds, fish, insects, trees, the sun, moon and earth. Each stone tells part of a story. The circle represents all of the cycles of nature: day and night, seasons, life cycles and orbits of the moon and planets (Rouge Foundation, 2005). The circle concept is used to visualise many complex issues in a simple manner (see Box).

### Fourness as a structuring concept

A medicine wheel is often seen as being divided into four parts. Seeing things in 'fourness' is a common way of dividing up the world around us. It is used to show how, within whatever

#### The circle as a central concept

At a midsummer gathering of Indian nations held in British Columbia, Canada in 1986, a distinguished Yankton Sioux elder was talking to a large gathering of tribal people representing over thirty-five different tribes and nations. He held a stick in his hand, and with it he drew a circle in the sand. 'Our people used the circle to explain many things,' he said. 'For instance, the circle represents the hoop of the people. All of the people are part. No one is excluded. The hurt of one is the hurt of all. The honour of one is the honour of all.' In this way he explained a very simple idea that has very complex implications. The circle means that everything is connected to everything else in life. Nothing can happen to any one part of the circle without affecting all the other parts. 'The human people are not the only people in the circle,' the old man went on to explain. 'The mineral people, the plant people, those that crawl, those that walk, those that fly, the four legged, even the air itself and the water and the stars and planets beyond number—all of these are part of the circle, and so are you, and so am I. What happens to any part of the circle happens to all of us.'

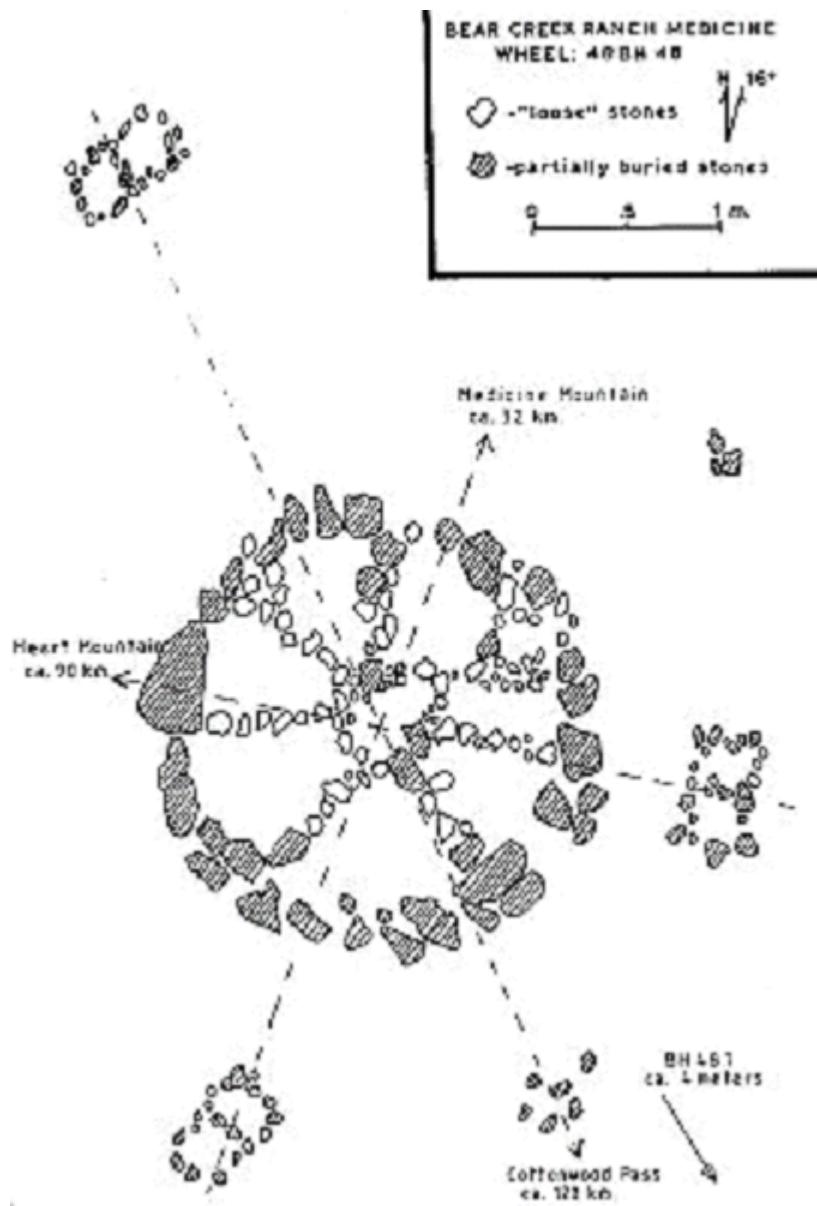


Figure 1: A plan of the stones of Bear Creek Ranch Medicine Wheel.

Source: 1987 Spath, C.D. Bear Creek Ranch Medicine Wheel, Site #48BH48/Big Horn County. National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form on file with the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office. Cheyenne, Wyoming.

whole we are talking about (person, family, community, etc.) there are dimensions or parts which make up the whole and which are related with each other.

For example, the life cycle of an individual can be divided into four stages: birth and childhood, youth, adulthood and eldership.

### **The medicine wheel becomes a development model**

Four Worlds uses the medicine wheel as a model or framework for understanding in the interaction among and with the native people. This helps to hold, organise and work with a relatively complex set of development ideas and concepts. For example, when discussing the nature of human beings, a medicine wheel is used to focus on the four inter-related aspects of the potential that each human being has: the mental, the emotional, the physical and the spiritual. Our well-being depends on balance and health in each of these areas. Human beings do not grow and develop in isolation, however. They live within the womb of their family, which also has four dimensions: the family's power relationships and thinking patterns, its physical and economic life, its social life, and its spiritual-cultural life as shown in the medicine model.

### **Reflections on the diversity of worldviews**

There are thousands of different cultures in the world. This wide diversity makes it very difficult to make general statements on cultures and their worldviews, institutions, knowledge and practices. Still, to increase appreciation and spark interest in finding out more, some general observations can be made.

#### **Material, social and spiritual dimensions of life**

It is important to be aware that most Western-based development work focuses on what we see and do in the natural world. However, the cases emphasise that many non-western cultures regard the material dimension of life (nature, landscape, earth, climate, soil, water, etc) as inseparable from the social dimension (family, society, how people work together, etc) and the spiritual world (spiritual beings and forces, rituals, etc). In some cultures life and death are inseparable and the ancestors play central roles in the organisation of society. In other cultures the reciprocal relations with the life forces, which make life and its reproduction possible (symbolised by Mother Earth), strongly shape daily life.

Development therefore is not simply about developing new knowledge and skills to survive materially, but also includes improving how people live together socially and being better tuned in to the spiritual world. In this view, a good crop, both quantitatively and qualitatively, depends not only on the appropriate technologies and how people work together but also on the accompanying rituals. Traditional healers do not just use local herbs but attend to the spiritual and moral aspect as well. Plants and animals have souls too, and therefore deserve respect in their management, which is often expressed through specific rituals.

**Sources:** Four Worlds  
Centre for Development  
Learning, Wikipedia,  
Royal Alberta Museum,  
Rouge Valley  
Foundation, Alberta,  
Canada

### Reciprocity and complementarity

The interactions and interdependence between the natural, spiritual and social world mean that reciprocity and complementarity are central principles in most activities undertaken by communities. Ensuring reciprocal relations is fundamental to the reproduction and continuity of families as well as communities. As the Andean case (3-5) states: humans grow plants and, in turn, are tended by the plants. Humans, plants and animals depend on the hills, rocks and rivers and vice versa. This leads to non-compulsory giving and receiving that involves growing and caring. Ensuring that the community at large as well as the individuals are 'in balance' internally as well as with the wider environment and the gods is important. Reciprocity is evident in many activities in life, for example where one farming family owns a plot of land and another family does the work, while the profits are shared. It is also evident in rituals that celebrate the link between nature and the spiritual world.

Complementarity is aimed at, to provide for all the natural, social and spiritual needs of the community of life (people, plants, animals, earth, wind, water, spiritual beings, etc.) and to maintain harmony. Farmers grow many different crops, keep different animal species and conserve the wild flora and fauna to satisfy all their subsistence needs. The resulting high level of biodiversity is important in the reproduction of their lives, not only socially but also spiritually.

### Cultures are dynamic systems

Cultures, and their worldviews, institutions and practices, are not static, although change may not always be visible to outsiders. New insights may come from the ancestors or other divine beings, from direct observation or from other cultures. Each culture has its own ways of knowing and criteria that need to be fulfilled before a piece of experience is admitted to the fold of 'valid knowledge'.

Influences from outside can have different effects; they may replace local knowledge, merge with the local knowledge system, function parallel to local knowledge in separate domains or may be rejected. Currently, western and international cultural influences originating from the globalisation of the free market economy, the consumer culture and 'modern science' are dominating or even replacing traditional and local visions, customs and products, especially in the economic domain. For endogenous development it is important to understand how the local culture is being influenced or dominated by other cultures and what implications this has for the local culture. For example, how do imported consumer goods affect the local production system and the relations with the natural and spiritual world? Such external influences on how people live together or interact with nature and the spiritual world and also other changing conditions, e.g. climate change, may disturb the inner balance of the local culture. This creates problems for which traditional knowledge may not always provide ready answers.

### Traditional and modern knowledge

Traditional knowledge necessarily fitted the local situation and supported sustainable but dynamic local practices. But colonialism and materially-oriented development approaches have often disrupted the cultural adaptation and innovation processes and replaced local knowledge

with foreign knowledge. This may have raised income and the standard of living of certain sectors of the population, but has also often created problems related to poverty, as the external knowledge and practices were not well adapted to the local situation and did not aim at sustaining life. Also traditional customs and institutions have sometimes become distorted due to misuse of power and limited (materially-oriented) vision on the future. This has created many problems. Development programmes have tried to resolve these problems with more external knowledge and practices, but often without real success. Modern science is creating a lot of detailed knowledge and practical solutions, and hence has its strengths. But as it is limited to the social and material aspects of life and mainly focused on the needs of the rich in commercialised fossil-energy driven societies, it does not satisfy the needs of poor people in marginalised regions with a more traditional holistic perspective on life for whom sustainability is a necessity.

In endogenous development people reconsider traditional culture, its values, knowledge, practices and institutions. However, conditions have changed, and in some cases traditional knowledge creation has stagnated or got lost. A new élan in knowledge creation and problem solving is therefore needed. An élan which builds on traditional values, knowledge and institutions used by once sustainable localised societies, where what is available and appropriate is complemented by modern scientific insights and practices. These may not necessarily aim at maximising economic profit but at satisfying and balancing the social-economic, natural and spiritual needs of the local (and global) community of life (the natural, human and spiritual world) to enhance well-being as defined by the local communities.

### **Appreciating the value of culture again**

As people lost confidence in their own culture, worldview and knowledge, due to colonisation or material-based development approaches, they often looked to the outside for (western) development to come. However, currently there is a growing awareness that in many places this (western) development might never come or if it does, it will bring many economic, social and ecological problems. This is accompanied by the understanding that for their development, people still mainly depend on their own resources, insights and creativity. As a result, people start to appreciate their own culture again and look for ways to reintegrate traditional faith, values, knowledge and institutions in daily life. Their own personal development path often leads them to the challenge how to merge traditional and modern scientific knowledge to improve local livelihoods. David Millar from Ghana (Chapter 2, learning forms 2 and 9) and Abraham Mwadiwa from Zimbabwe (Case 3-3) explain their personal way to endogenous development.

The resulting mental switch generally generates enormous enthusiasm and motivation among rural people to work on their own solutions to improve their well-being and to express their cultural identity.

## Controversies

There are, of course, also dilemmas that arise in following the above road. First of all, villages in any part of the world may be composed of various groups which not only may have different interests as argued in Chapter 1, but also very different socio-cultural roots, traditions and belief systems. Some followers of the world's major monotheistic religions, for example, may be very much against certain traditional ritual practices. In other cases, people may be afraid of increased dominance of one group over others. Development agents should be aware of stumbling unintentionally into arenas of conflict as a result of ignorance or insensitivity to local conditions.

The position of women may also be a focus of controversies if they are marginalised in several respects. For example, in one society husbands may take care of the gods on behalf of their wives. The women therefore may have little or no link to the spiritual sphere unless they establish spirit mediums of their own. In other societies traditional authority is handed down from father to son, and most traditional leaders are therefore male. Some local governance systems do not allow women to own land, which is a great setback to them in gaining control over their lives. Moreover, due to their poor economic status, many women are unable to procure land or other inputs. Sometimes other socio-cultural constraints can be equally restrictive. Crops grown for commercial purposes may be branded 'male' crops, preventing women from engaging in large-scale production.

As culture and even faith are not static, however, controversial customs may be changed by the community through discussion of the issues in a search for solutions.



# Chapter 4

# VISIONING AND PLANNING

## Introduction

How can we prepare ourselves for endogenous development? How to enter and build up relationships with new communities and groups? How to raise awareness about the potential of traditional knowledge and how to make people feel proud again of their own culture? How to motivate people for their own endogenous development process? How can we help local people to make an analysis of their own situation, create a vision on how they would like their future to be and make realistic plans for their development activities? The cases in this chapter present approaches which may provide inspiration to develop situation-specific answers to these questions, and the reflection builds on these approaches.

### Case 4-1

#### Transforming a hunting ceremony for natural resource management in India

##### Introduction

In the Eastern Ghats of India there are 60 tribal communities with about ten million people, many of whom still engage in their traditional hunting, gathering and shifting cultivation practices. Despite influences of modernity, many tribal societies still observe community social and ecological controls in making use of their natural resources, based on their totems and the associated taboos. For example, they conserve the species and surroundings of their clan totem, such as the peacock or the barking deer. The Indian non-governmental organisation IDEA (see Case 1-2) uses these cultural practices as an important starting point in the search for ways to halt the degeneration of both the environment and the tribals' way of life.



In all tribal communities in the Eastern Ghats, the ecosystem is inseparable from the beliefs and social organisation of the community members. IDEA has worked with them to transform a yearly hunting ceremony into a festival of natural resource celebration and protection.

## A hunting ceremony transformed

The tribals traditionally hold a ceremonial hunting festival once a year. In some clans this occasion is known as *Ittukala Panduga*. The men go hunting for three days while the women and elders prepare a festival that lasts for several days. During the festival the people eat what the hunters have caught. However, this festival has created an image of the tribal people as ones who destroy the forests and indiscriminately kill animals.

IDEA started an environmental project based on Environmental Protection and Development Groups (EPDGs). These groups developed a strategy based on discussions with traditional leaders and older tribals. During a meeting the participants identified the declining number of plants and animals and the deteriorating environmental situation, as well as the generation gap that affects the care and knowledge of the natural environment. It was during this meeting that the idea grew that the traditional hunting ceremony *Ittukala Panduga* could be transformed into a celebration of natural resources. The decision was made jointly to try and do this with the overall aim of protecting nature and of perpetuating the customary living style.

First, courses were organised to exchange views on the traditional environmental protection system. The ancient practice of celebrating hunting was then transformed into a collective exercise in environmental observation and protection of the forest region around the villages. At the start in 1988, 40 villages took part, now more than 1000 villages in 4 states participate. The membership of the EPDGs has risen from a small number of families to 35,000 families. While the executive committees in each village are responsible for this activity, IDEA assists in recording and documenting the information.

## Resource inventories as part of the new ceremony

The villagers divide themselves into four subgroups based on age, sex and vocation. At the usual time of the ceremony, each group spends two or three days in the forest making detailed studies of the availability and location of wildlife, herbal plants, fruit bearing trees, drinking water sources, medicinal herbs and edible tubers. Children between 10 and 15 years record the status and number of each variety of fruit-bearing trees, bird, small game, and note the footprints of animals and common medicinal plants. The principal intention is to prepare them for the complex environmental issues they are likely to meet in the future.

Groups of villagers between 16 and 35 years of age survey tree species, observing their qualities for construction, agricultural implements and as sources of income. Grasses, wildlife, sources of water and wastelands are also recorded. Youth acquainted with the village economy and the resources required for the material well-being of the village, observe and record findings. Older members of the community, over the age of 36, survey more complex aspects such as the pattern of shifting cultivation, wastelands, social forest activity and the progress and survival of trees of timber value.

Finally, a group consisting of traditional leaders and tribal medicine men survey the number and status of plants with medicinal properties. Every group has a leader, selected from among

its members. Each member's findings are discussed by the group and observations are recorded systematically.

## Rituals, sharing and planning

On the third day of *Ittukala Panduga*, all the groups assemble in the village and a ritual is performed in front of the goddess *Sanku Devatha*. Each group tells what it has found out about the changes taking place in the environment and the ecology of their village. Together they identify the plants and animal species that are disappearing and that require protection. They note which resources are becoming scarce and try to understand the factors responsible. This sharing of knowledge works like a sort of seminar on the situation of the flora and fauna of the region. Elders often provide information about the state of particular species when they were young. In this way a rough idea is formed of how much plant and wildlife has dwindled over the years.

This practice, culminating in a village status report, is better than a modern survey done by scientists. It assesses the exact strength of natural resources and the state of biosphere as well as the position of flora, fauna, minerals and water resources. The tribals' knowledge of the lives of animals and plants, the medicinal use of herbs and the nutritional value of plants is amazing. The Environmental Protection and Development Groups also decide on future activities. There has been considerable improvement in the status of the 50 species on the endangered list. Enforcement of conservation measures is effective since the norms have community support and sanction.

### **Song for *Ittukala Panduga* (Environmental festival)**

*Welcome –welcome–welcome–welcome  
tribal festival–our festival  
let us celebrate–to give respect to the forests and the goddess  
|| welcome ||*

*Our relation with nature is age old  
our clans and community names are all borne in the wild  
The gift of our mother nature  
|| welcome ||*

*The jungle fowl clans protect their totem,  
let the peacock clan protect and worship peacock  
and let the picus clan worship the picus tree. These are our totems  
-The symbols of our clans.  
|| welcome ||*

*Let the barking deer clan protect its totemic clan.  
The deer–deer let us together protect our mother nature  
and clan totems–let us pledge.  
|| welcome ||*

IDEA's work has led to the resource inventory concept being revived as a customary practice, where tribals have re-embraced the idea of assessing natural resources and sustainable harvesting practices during the ceremonial hunting. The attitude of tribal youth has changed towards natural resource assessment and away from hunting of wild animals. Although hunting has not completely stopped, the protection of clan totems has now been substantially revived.

Source: IDEA

## Case 4-2

### Community Institutional Mapping as an entry point in Ghana

#### Relevance of traditional institutions



The traditional governance system and the local government system are both present in rural areas. Traditional leaders during a CIKOD training session.

In targeting the rural poor, many development agents use western concepts when characterising rural communities and identifying institutions that may play a role in development initiatives. They tend to identify exogenous forms of institutions such as community-based organisations, faith-based organisations or co-operatives as a precondition for external support. These may be regarded as a form of coercion as they are formed for externally originating reasons. For example, a group may be formed to

receive funds for an externally funded project, and might not be based on endogenous forms of organisation. These groups tend to be politically oriented and do not involve the members of the community that need development the most. Most of the time, these organisations survive as long as the external support is available but disappear when this diminishes. In addition, such 'formal' rural organisations usually tend to exclude the real poor in the community, can be easily influenced and politicised, and have a weak endogenous base.

Traditional authorities and institutions have always existed in Ghanaian societies, and they have sustained these societies despite the years of external control in the form of national state institutions. In the post-colonial era, however, traditional leaders have been relegated to the status of mere custodians of the traditions and customs of their subjects. Their role in the socio-economic development of their communities is minimal, since the nation state has taken this role upon itself, and they have also been marginalised politically, having no status in party politics. Two NGOs, Cecik and Cikod, have been working with traditional institutions as an entry point for endogenous development. They try to strengthen local organisations for development based on the communities' own worldviews and institutions. Community Institutional Mapping is a central, culturally sensitive, participatory approach in this.

In the process of Community Institutional mapping (CIM), communities are guided through action research to expose the various endogenous and formal, exogenous institutions and their functional relationship within the community as well as their potentials and challenges for facilitating development. This helps to make clear the various development domains in the community so that the community can start to prioritise them. But before initiating this process, external development practitioners need to prepare themselves. Development practitioners tend to disregard traditional protocols when entering a community for the first time. Communities will find it difficult to relate to a practitioner who behaves in this way, and this is an obstacle to creating the necessary rapport for effective and honest interaction. For Cecik and Cikod, the

## Preparation of the self

### Psychological preparation

A number of questions can guide a practitioner at the individual level: What are you going to do? What is your working reality and what is the reality of the community? Who do you need to work with? What resources are needed? What do you have, in terms of human, social, cultural and economic resources?

- Prepare to humble yourself, show respect for community norms. A useful preparation is to hold a preliminary meeting with a community member to learn about the basic norms and value system of the target community.
- Prepare to accept and work with the community's way of spiritual preparation even if this does not coincide with your own beliefs.
- Prepare for re-schooling and de-schooling. Be ready to put aside Western knowledge and worldviews, and learn and appreciate the worldviews of the target community.

Preparation can also be done together with colleagues or partners, and involves reflecting together on critical issues relating to endogenous development. For example, what is knowledge, science, a worldview? Sensitivity to the complexities of local livelihoods is important, as well as to the spiritual and cultural dimensions of indigenous knowledge. It is important to consider what can be accepted and what can be challenged concerning a community's institutions.

### Socio-cultural preparation

As part of the preparation of the self, the facilitator should have thorough prior knowledge of the target community and how to comport oneself in the community. The following steps can help to achieve this:

- Identify a credible person of good standing in the community to lead you into the community and introduce you to the chief and elders. This could be the village teacher, unit committee member or a known opinion leader living in the community.
- Find out about community protocols, customs and traditions from the contact person. This may require that the facilitator makes a preliminary visit to the elders to introduce the CIM concept and seeks their approval and support for organising a community forum at a later date.
- Do a self-reflection on how to achieve participation. This may entail rehearsing how to present the CIM process. This can be done through role-play.
- The facilitator should have a good understanding of the checklist for CIM and be able to translate the technical concepts into the local language. The facilitator should practice first, translating all the terms used in the checklist.
- Agree on what to give the community as a protocol gift and how to present it at the end of the exercise.

preparation of the self before entering a community to undertake CIM involves two aspects: psychological and socio-cultural preparation (see Box).

## Community Institutional Mapping in practice

The CIM approach was used in Kalbeo in Northern Ghana, where the local chief invited Cecik to support the community during the exercise. Although Cecik has worked extensively with local communities in the area, Kalbeo was a new community with which to start working towards endogenous development. The process actually started with a Resource Analysis Survey conducted by the community and staff of Cecik and Cikod. The resource analysis led to the idea of possibilities for action towards endogenous development. But to ensure that the endogenous development efforts were actually owned and managed by the people themselves, it was felt that a Community Institutional Mapping exercise was needed to understand what institutions existed, which would fit best for which activity, and the capacity within the community to manage such activities.

In implementing the CIM, the following activities were undertaken:

- 1: Open discussion with whole community about their institutions—structures—organisations
- 2: Community walk to these institutions—structures—organisations, to see their areas of operation
- 3: Mapping of institutions and organisations, showing their various locations and niches
- 4: Analysis of the ‘flow relationships’ between organisations and institutions
- 5: Family unit studies—stratified group / focus group discussion: a gender sensitive ‘three generational analysis’ (grandfather, father, son and grandmother, mother, daughter) conducted through interview
- 6: Structured interview with key informants in the community: chief, medicine man, women’s leader, priest, youth leader, soothsayer, war leader, women’s leader

The community started by making a diagram of the local institutions and provided information on important developments and the functioning of the various authorities, groups and structures. A number of key questions are used to guide and inspire this analysis (see Box). The community forum, group discussions, and interviews all helped the community itself to better understand the functioning of their own local authorities and other community

### Summary of key questions from CIM checklist

- Which indigenous and which external institutions/organisations are active in the village and what is their main field of activity and authority?
- For each: Its history, its present level of activity, achievements and failures. Lessons learnt?
- Systems of accountability: How are leaders selected? How often is the leadership changed? What are the mechanisms for seeking redress? Are those mechanisms working?
- What are the links between the different institutions and the traditional authorities?
- What are the implications of this for the role of the institutions in development activities?

institutions. From the information gathered, a map was made of the indigenous community institutions and the structural, external, institutions.

## Conclusion

Community Institutional Mapping proves to be a useful tool for getting a clearer picture of the internal communication, revealing controversies, and starting discussions within the community. In conducting it, we realised that some of the traditional institutions, especially some of the ritual institutions, had become moribund, e.g. the puberty rites, the adulthood rites, and the institutions responsible for the punishment of spiritual crimes. Other institutions needed to be completely reconstructed, but could be revived for development purposes. Examples are the functional institutions for environmental management, the self-support systems for indigenous livelihoods, and the institutions for defence. Other institutions, especially the structural institutions such as the youth groups, the women's groups and the clan support systems, are quite vibrant and can be the central entry point for endogenous development.

The Community Institutional Mapping also shows the interaction with and interference from modernity, religion and the state. The youth believe that the institutions have outgrown their usefulness; formal churches often equate traditional spiritual leaders with superstition, while the government is introducing new functionaries who have usurped the roles of traditional community leadership. These elements have created a lot of controversies, which have weakened the strength and effectiveness of the traditional institutions. There are therefore a lot of challenges in getting traditional institutions to re-assert themselves. The challenges include (re)construction, opening them up to the demands of modern times, and incorporation of genuine concerns such as gender sensitivity.

Source: Cecik, Cikod

## Case 4-3

### Using traditional festivals for planning, monitoring and evaluation in Ghana

#### Expanding the functions of festivals

Celebration of festivals in Ghana is an ancient practice. Generally these were associated with planting and harvest time or with honouring the ancestors. The festivals serve for thanksgiving to the Supreme Being (God), and pacification of the gods as well as the ancestors, an occasion for strengthening people spiritually.

The occasion also offers citizens of the area who now live elsewhere the opportunity to visit home and join their families. In the course of these visits, outstanding disputes and misunderstandings can be settled. Culturally, the festival helps to transmit, conserve, and project the culture of the traditional area. The occasion is also used to teach the traditional dances,

Women have a central role in music making through hand-clapping, song and dance. Girls from a cultural group in Bongo dance during a community gathering.



songs, drumming, and art of the area. Festivals attract tourists into the community and may earn some income for local development of the traditional area.

Politically, chiefs use the festivals as a means to achieve the principle of governance by consent. This they do by giving accounts of the events of the previous year and making projections for the coming year. It allows the people of a community the chance to

correct past mistakes and to plan the future. The festivals are an opportunity for subjects and sub-chiefs to pay homage to, and renew their loyalty to the paramount chief. Chiefs and their people also use them to appeal for funds for development projects. In some cases festivals have also become the place to fight about chieftaincy disputes or political issues.

The above insights into the functions and dynamics of festivals have inspired the Ghanaian NGO Cikod to try and add a more participatory planning and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) function to the festivals, combining traditional and modern approaches. This would allow this kind of planning to really become part of the local system and thus contribute to endogenous development.

### The case of the Kobine Festival

The Kobine festival is celebrated among the *dagaabas* in the Lawra Traditional area of Northern Ghana. *Kobine* literally means, 'Farming Dance'. The festival takes place every year between September and October and involves 17 communities. It is generally celebrated to thank the ancestors for guiding the community to the end of the farming season. The timing of the festival therefore coincides with the end of farming activities for the season. By this time all farmers should have reshaped their mounds and weeded their farms. It is believed that during this period if a farmer is bitten by a chameleon on the farm, he will die. Therefore, no one should do farm work: irrespective of whether the farm work is complete or not, the rest must be left undone.

Prior to the festival, dancing groups can be seen practising in the different villages. A song for the festival is composed in each village by a man and a woman, two days prior to the rehearsals. The song usually covers historical events, socio-cultural and political events and other discoveries. It also praises those who have done good in the community and rebukes those who have done bad things. All preparations for the actual festival take place under the leadership of the paramount chief of the Lawra traditional area. Committees made up of sub-chiefs, clan heads and representatives of youth leaders are assigned various tasks. Every

divisional chief is required to provide a cow and a specific amount of money, and citizens of the traditional area now living in other parts of the region are also required to contribute.

### **Celebration of the festival**

In the past, the festival had no proper official opening, but in the 1970s the traditional council of Lawra and some prominent citizens saw the need to do this after discussing how to give the festival national recognition and wider publicity. The festival now officially starts on a selected market day and once under way, it continues for three days:

Day one marks the arrival of the various dance groups which may include a visiting dance group from Burkina Faso.

Day two is the climax: the competition among the various dancing groups. The dancing groups wear colourful costumes. Music accompanies their dances. The flute and horn are blown in praise of the ancestors, the chiefs, clan heads and great men and women of the community.

Day three marks the end of the festival. Until recently, this day was characterised by eating and drinking. Now, however, the day is also used for a development forum.

### **From festival to development forum**

Cikod's idea is to use the festival beyond its spiritual values for creating a development forum: using a traditional platform for a development forum. On the initiative of Cikod, an extra day has been added to the start of the festival which is used to hold a development forum. In this forum, various actors in the development field (traditional authorities, youth representatives, government workers, NGO representatives and politicians) can come together to deliberate on development issues in the Traditional Area. Cikod's intervention towards this end takes place at two levels: preparation of the forum and forum facilitation.

The preparation is the crucial part. First of all the envisaged participants, particularly those that who did not usually attend the festival's third day, need to be informed, invited and motivated to join. Their main motivation may be the opportunity to present their own development initiatives to a wide audience. The forum gives chiefs and elders the opportunity to re-assert themselves over their subjects, government representatives and NGOs give presentations of their activities in the area, and there is feedback from the community. Another important part of the preparation takes place at the level of the communities which are encouraged to review development activities in their community and prepare issues, concerns and plans for discussion at the forum.

While the forum part of the festival takes place under the authority of the paramount chief, Cikod ensures that people are found to actually facilitate the forum, preferably not its own staff but experienced facilitators of some of the local organisations. The flow of the forum allows for presentations on development plans and programmes, for advocacy lobbying on those and

Action plan for the Lawra Kobine Festival, 2005			
Issue	Strategy Person/ Organisation	Responsible	Notes
<b>Rural Bank</b>	Operationalise by the end of 2005; Mobilisation of Capital; Selling of shares.	LAYDA executive Accra and Lawra branches, Mobilisation Committee of LARUB (Lawra Executive)	
<b>Education Fund— LATEF</b>	Collection of 5000 cedis per adult members;  Appeal for help to NGOs Follow up President Pledge (200 million cedis to support the fund); Operationalise the fund.	LAYDA branches in Lawra and surrounding villages;  LAYDA Accra branch	It has to be made clear that the 5000 cedis is only the minimum, Members can contribute more, and a receipt has to be given.
			Discussion is still ongoing on as to whether to include GES and Lawra TC as responsible org.
<b>Education</b>	Operationalise the existent structures at school level: management committee, PTA, Establishing TRC (Teacher Resource Centre).	Local Branches, Chiefs and Assembly men, GES (Circuit Supervisors) GES, DA, Teachers, Local Branches	Every school should have a management committee.
	Supporting EQUALL (Education Quality for ALL)	Lawra branch	It has been pointed out that sustainability is the key point. DA should put the TRC in the medium term plan as a permanent issue in education matters.
<b>Irrigation Projects</b>	Identification of potential area for small scale irrigation dams.	DA, LAYDA Lawra branch (Mr. Gordian)	Many documents already existent, DA has already done some research.
<b>Small Ruminants</b>	Improvement of housing for the animals.	Agric Department, MOFA	
<b>Traditional Authorities</b>	Filling of vacant chiefs' stools.	Communities	
<b>Tourism and Cultural Village</b>	Finding of existent documentation on tourist sites in the Lawra area, Promotion and Advertisement of the tourist attractions.	District Cultural Committee in LAYDA	Possibility of gathering all the documentation in the Lawra cultural centre.
Acronyms:			
DA	District Assembly	LARUB	Lawra Area Rural Bank
GES	Ghana Education Service	MOFA	Ministry Of Food and Agriculture
LAYDA	Lawra Area Youth and Development Association	TC	Traditional Council
LATEF	Lawra Traditional area Education Fund		

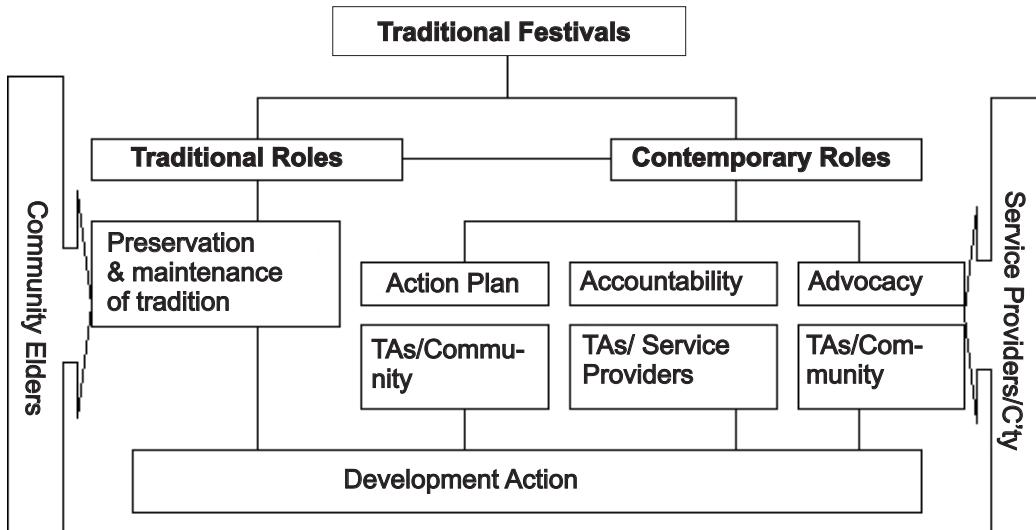


Fig. 1 Traditional and contemporary roles of festivals

related issues, and for discussing community action plans. It also provides an opportunity to look back at how issues on development have been managed over the years. The forum concludes with an all-round action plan for the traditional area as a measure of the extent of development in the traditional area to be discussed in the successive year (Table 1). In a most advanced mode, an action plan outline may be prepared prior to the festival with inputs from communities and service providers. The festival then provides a forum for discussing, modifying and operationalising it.

## Conclusion

With the development forum, the role of festivals has been expanded and now includes both a traditional and contemporary one (Figure 1). The festivals continue to preserve elements of local cultures. Elders and community leaders continue to use them to enhance the perpetuation of values and belief systems and also to pass on folklore to the younger generations. At present, they are starting to become consciously planned celebrations with concrete action plans emerging at the end of the celebrations.

Source: Cikod

## Case 4-4

### PICADS and supporting community planning in Bolivia

#### Introduction

Agruco, a university-based centre in Cochabamba, Bolivia, has among its programmes the Integrated Community Programme for Self-management and Sustainable Development (PICADS).

The training for endogenous development needs to awaken a personal commitment to the situation of the local population, as well as sensitivity to practices and worldviews other than one's own.



The PICADS process supports rural organisations and their knowledge base and leads to the formulation of concrete project proposals to be implemented in the context of existing Bolivian local government frameworks. The PICADS process, for example, links up to the process of participatory land-use planning and helps communities draw up annual operative plans (POAs) under the Bolivian government's Popular Participation Act.

The PICADS planning process distinguishes itself from the usual participatory planning approaches in taking local worldviews and expressions of these more seriously, and this is clear in the case described below. As a result, the logic of traditional rural economy is given as much weight in these proposals as the interventions based on the monetary economy, and they allow people to reassert their cultural identity.

## PICADS in the communities of the Jatun Mayu watershed

In 1998, Agruco started activities in four communities in the Jatun Mayu watershed near Cochabamba. Together they form the subcentre '8 de Agosto' in the Sipe Sipe municipality. The PICADS process involved three main steps: orientation, consolidation and transfer.

**Orientation:** The main emphasis is on understanding the natural, social and spiritual world and their interrelations by means of a 'participatory community diagnosis'. This leads to the formulation of action plans which are then fine-tuned in the context of the whole watershed.

**Consolidation:** The emphasis is on capacity building and motivation and it involves supporting and participating in indigenous research activities, generally in the field of irrigation or production.

**Transfer:** Wider implementation and support to production, with Agruco providing only follow-up support and training in the management of small projects which lead to self-management.

## Participatory community diagnosis

Drawing on its experience in supporting endogenous development, Agruco modified the participatory analysis and planning methodology so that it is based on Andean logic and rationality. In all activities it considers material, social and spiritual dimensions. The interest is in obtaining an integrated understanding of the needs, problems and potentials in the community. Community diagnosis is a joint social learning process between local actors and external actors who participate in the diagnosis.

In this sense the joint community diagnosis is not merely about collecting information to determine or define possible strengths and weaknesses within the community. Rather, the main aim is to strengthen the processes of social learning so that the management of natural resources can become a process of local development based on the management of community resources and knowledge.

The first step of the diagnosis process is to identify, together with the rural communities, their ideas, principles and objectives for endogenous development. The participatory techniques and community diagnoses used include transects, participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, community workshops, joint visualisation and oral histories. The instruments used include agricultural calendars, seasonal schemes, Venn and flow diagrams. A community diagnosis is carried out with the participation of both community members and Agruco technicians, with a monthly community meeting where matters are discussed. In this process of conducting a community diagnosis the participation of various key representatives of the community is important: traditional authorities, syndicate representatives and community representatives. Together with the Agruco technicians, they can determine the range and purposes of the diagnosis. On the basis of this, certain field techniques are defined and selected for use during the diagnosis; community members tend to favour community workshops and transects. Applying this methodology enables Agruco to systematise the results of the diagnosis and present them in a clear form, whether in academic circles, to local authorities or within the communities themselves.

The second step of the diagnosis is to determine the strategy for endogenous development, based on the available local resources. This step includes a diagnosis of the natural, human, produced, economic-financial, social and cultural resources. Much of the diagnosis is devoted to participatory gathering of information on land use and water use within the watershed, crops and plants grown, including indigenous varieties, and spatial organisation, including the different local and institutional forms of access to land. Land use maps can be drawn from this, and a calendar prepared of the community's activities, indicating crops, grazing, migration, but also fairs, fiestas and craft activities throughout the year. The social dimension is covered by including information on the kinship and wider social relations within the community as well as on language, customs and religious beliefs.

The third step of the community diagnosis is the creation of a local 'platform for endogenous development', which is a strategic alliance between the community and outside—governmental and non-governmental—support institutions. For example: the rural municipalities where operational plans and development activities are agreed upon in accordance with the needs and requirements of local development planned by the communities as a result of the diagnosis.

## Results

The PICADS process made the farmers in Jatun Mayu keenly interested in learning how to develop projects for their communities and how to improve their relationships with the

municipalities, who, due to the Popular Participation Act, now control government funds for local activities. The reflection between the communities and their partners has resulted in a strategic vision for the development of the river basin, which is now gaining importance in the annual plans of operation of the Sipe Sipe municipality. Community members increasingly submit their problems and requests to the appropriate authorities, such as the municipality, and express their opinions about possible solutions.

At present, the PICADS has been implemented in the municipalities of Sipe Sipe and Tapacar and a number of smaller communities, with encouraging results. The impact of PICADS is not only limited to the rural communities involved. It encourages local organisations to work with government organisations as well as with non-governmental and financial entities. This opens the eyes of the relevant technicians to local realities and contributes to building their capacity in the sense of being able to support endogenous development.

Source: Agruco

## Case 4-5 From planning to collective self-learning in Colombia

### Context

The Zenu territory in the Caribbean region of Colombia has a rich biodiversity which forms the basis of the livelihoods of the community members. Zenu community members show their local maize varieties during a Meeting for Life about local culture and agro-ecology.



The current situation in the rural areas of Colombia is a reflection of the policies of exclusion and plundering to which the inhabitants have been subjected for centuries, including the imposition of mono-cropping, use of large quantities of pesticides, indiscriminate tree felling and the loss of native seed varieties, all part of the technological packages introduced by the green revolution on the assumption that economic growth is the same as development. The result today is that 65% of

the population lives in poverty with consequences such as chronic infant malnutrition and the return of diseases that had been wiped out such as cholera, smallpox and tuberculosis.

This economic model in which the fate of millions of people lies in the hands of the market and the caprices of the stock market, where multinational investors and their money are above national sovereignty and constitutions, is ruling Colombia, accompanied by more recent reforms such as TLC and laws on water and forest.

The region where the Provincia Campesina de Entre Ríos-Quindío is located has potentials and limitations which are typical of many parts of the world: aside from a great diversity of abundant natural resources, it possesses an indigenous peasant population with ancient

knowledge and wisdom that seeks to achieve, despite the many internal and external constraints, forms of livelihood based on principles of sustainability.

The main problems they face are the armed conflict in the country and the weakness of the local organisations. In addition, the people's development efforts are frustrated by the neo-liberal model of economic development that promotes the values of the consumer society, devaluing the values of the indigenous peasant society.

In the face of this loss of territorial autonomy, the inhabitants of Entreríos decided to appropriate the land through a form that is not designated in the constitution of Colombia and is not regulated in any formal way. It is referred to as La Provincia Campesina, an area that transcends the legislative framework, and is based on the construction of environmental, social, cultural and economic relations.

## Challenges

The work of Compas in Colombia is the fruit of collaboration between three NGOs (Grupo Semillas, Surcos Comunitarios and Corporación Campesina, or Corpocam) and a public institution of higher education, the Universidad del Quindío. This combination has led to a vision of endogenous development that is enriched by having four particular visions.

Corpocam, the peasant corporation for sustainable development of the Provincia Campesina de Entreríos regards its fundamental objective as creating a model of sustainable economic, social, cultural and political development, with permanent incorporation of the environmental component. The NGO Surcos Comunitarios supports the generation of specific programmes for integrated sustainable development, agro-ecology and local management. The programme of social and community development of the University of Quindío has a view of social community work that is oriented towards improving human beings and conditions within which they live through action that is collective, autonomous, coordinated and with various levels of organisation. Therefore there are four organisations working within one area, constructing their own experience of endogenous development.

The main objective of our method of social support is the search for autonomy and respect; during the meetings and other field activities (e.g. *mingas*, making products from medicinal plants, cultural meetings) the interventions of the accompanying NGOs are limited to a very small amount of time in which reflection on various themes generates opinions and controversies that are later converted into initiatives for change or actions to support endogenous development based on the recovery of the values of rural peasant society. Texts may be used and vary from popular Colombian songs to prayers from various religions.

In this context endogenous development faces a number of challenges. Through a process of self-diagnosis the following challenges have been identified:

- How can we strengthen control over the land when land is being lost as a result of displacement, land purchases, economic interests of large-scale projects in the region, and privatisation of protected areas?
- How can we deal with the increased planting of coniferous trees in the region?

- How can we exert influence on government policies and laws that affect the indigenous peasant communities, e.g. the Forest Management Law and the Water Management Law?
- How can we defend our resources effectively in the face of the privatisation of life and traditional knowledge?
- How can we contribute to strengthening local production and commercialisation processes that are based on a solidarity economy in the face of the global economy?

## Mutual and collective self-learning

Our strategy of endogenous development does not follow a predefined path, but is rather the result of a creative and joint process of generating knowledge. A central theme is to revalue our land, territory and space, and the related economic, social, cultural and environmental reality. We need this to formulate our aspirations, and re-establish feelings of belonging and social identity so that we can become actors who are aware of the reality we face.

### Methodological elements

The methodology used in the processes of self-learning is based on the following pillars:

- Awareness raising and motivating groups about the importance of recovering and systematising traditional peasant/indigenous knowledge;
- Participatory community diagnosis of our territory, as starting point for the process of self-learning;
- Participatory action research;
- Documentation and systematisation of the results arising from the process of self-learning;
- Building strategic alliances with individuals and institutions to support the processes of endogenous development.

In practice, and for each pillar, we combine a number of methods in a flexible way. These include, e.g., community workshops, *mingas* (collective work), *lunadas*, organic markets, the festivals called *encuentros por la vida*, field observation, dialogue with key persons and with focus groups, training and support of work groups, participatory mapping, interviews and surveys using questionnaires.

We elaborate here on two of these methods to provide more detail on how we work:

**Mingas** (work carried out collectively in exchange for food) come from the indigenous tradition of collective work carried out in exchange for food. A group comes together for joint productive work while at the same time exchanging harvested products and native seeds, learning about each other's needs and hardships, talking about and recovering the history of the community and discussing development ideas and plans. Progress of the crops that were planted during previous *mingas* is also assessed. Each week, a different plot of land is visited until all fields of those in the group have been visited—generally about 5-7 families. It has been adapted by the community to be a space in which work and production in agriculture in the

### Reflection spoken before starting a *minga*

May the earth give us the wisdom we need to make our children and grandchildren understand that happiness is not to be found where the money or luxury is. It is here where we are the owners of our dreams, our knowledge, our land, and where we know the meaning of sharing, of solidarity, of honesty, of looking after the animals and plants, not only to feed ourselves, but also to feed our loved one and further to nourish the truth so that that continues to be important so that our children and grandchildren will dream of living beside a river, with flowers and a garden and growing their own food.

This is our promise and commitment, to leave them a good and living legacy—that of our values, principles and knowledge.

province is planned. In a weekly meeting the members plan the productive activities. It has also led to the creation of new spaces for groups of women, children and youths.

**Mercados por la vida** (markets for life) are based on recovering traditional structures that peasants had for meeting, selling their products, exchanging seed, experiences and food. Now they focus on the marketing of agricultural food products that do not contain chemicals. These markets are supported by neighbourhood associations in towns identifying with organic farming and the added cultural value that goes with it. The markets strengthen solidarity between rural and urban communities and enable the trading of agricultural produce at fair prices. Cultural traditions are also reinforced at the markets as artisan products are exchanged and sold and traditional regional dances are performed. In this way these markets not only have a monetary worth but a more intangible value as well. See Chapter 2, Learning Form 7 for other activities.

### Main achievements

The envisioning, diagnosis and planning process by and with communities has led to the strengthening of peasant organisations and institutions such as women and youth groups, and the farmers' encounter group. Revitalising the *mingas* is probably the most important achievement of the overall process. Natural resources and the importance of traditional peasant knowledge are also increasingly recognised, even in primary and secondary schools. They have also obtained a higher profile in the local and regional political arena. The process is finally leading to a gradual expansion of the alternative production and marketing system.

### The future

It is important that in all our work we reflect continuously on our vision of the future: to achieve the recognition of the local community as a rural peasant society that seeks to achieve endogenous development based on the four main themes mentioned: documentation and systematisation of local knowledge, organisational strengthening, productive activities and local alternatives for marketing.

Source: Stephan Rist,  
CDE; Francia Mejía,  
Corpocam

## Case 4-6

### Community Story Framework for visioning in Canada

#### Building on a traditional concept



Laughter and play during a healing and community development workshop in Sagamok.

In 2001, Sagamok, a small rural community of Native Americans, received funding from Canada's Aboriginal Healing Foundation to address the legacy of residential schooling, which had traumatised so many of Canada's Indigenous people. At this point, the Chief and Council of the community asked Four Worlds, a Canadian NGO, to assist them in building a long-term community development and nation-building plan, and in developing the capacity to carry it out. Four Worlds used the Community Story Framework in assisting this community. This participatory needs assessment and planning tool encourages people to tell the story of their lives in such a way that it builds their understanding, their vision, and their collective will to take action. The approach is based on the medicine wheel, a traditional concept and tool of native Americans that represents their worldview (see Case 3-8).

#### The framework

The Community Story Framework is a series of guiding questions, and a method for using the information gathered when people draw on these questions to share their experiences, analyses, hopes and dreams. The questions are built around the levels of the medicine wheel.

**The past:** What was life like for our people in the long ago past, and in the recent past? What was it like for children, youth, adult women, adult men, and elders? What was it like politically, culturally, economically, socially? What sorts of changes occurred over the years in these areas? What brought about the changes? How have the changes affected our people today? What can we learn from the past to help us build a better future?

**The present:** What is life like now (mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually) for our children, youth, adult women, adult men, and elders? What is our political, social, cultural, and economic reality? What are the key issues or problems we face; opportunities; challenges?

**The future:** What would life be like if it was good and if the highest hopes for the healing and development of our people were to be fulfilled? What would a healthy person be like (mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually) when they are children, youth, adults, and elders? What is a healthy community – politically, culturally, socially and economically?

We can think of the medicine wheel as a tool for exploring *what* dimensions and aspects of life need to be transformed in order to build healthier, more prosperous individuals, families and communities. In participatory development practice, *how* we go about building health and prosperity is equally important, however. Principles are a way to distil essential guidelines concerning the ways in which we must work and relate to each other if we are to achieve our goals.

## Using the framework

The first step in this work was the facilitation of a Community Story process which brought together approximately two hundred Sagamok people. Together they explored and identified what needed to be healed, built and learned, who must take on this work, and how an ever-widening circle of people could be engaged in the process. This consultation produced very valuable information and insights. It also consolidated the cultural foundation for the work ahead.

A Community Story document was produced and circulated throughout the community. This document, based firmly on the community's own analysis, examined the current conditions of children, youth, women, men, elders and families as well as the social, economic, political and cultural realities of community life. It looked at the strengths of the Sagamok Anishnawbek culture and what could be learned from the traditional past. It articulated a vision of the future to which the Sagamok nation is committed, and identified a pathway for building that future.

After a period of reflection on the implications of the Sagamok Community Story and what needed to be done in a systematic way to rebuild their Nation, a Ten-Year Action Plan for Healing and Community Development was produced and adopted.

*Source: Four Worlds  
Centre for Development  
Learning*

## Reflections on visioning and planning

### Preparation for endogenous development

As endogenous development is different from more conventional participatory development practice, it is very important that development agents are well prepared before they start to work with the communities. This needs even more attention if they have a different cultural background from the people and/or a Western education. It is, for example, important to learn and appreciate the worldviews of the target community, to put aside all preconceptions or prejudices concerning spiritual practices, to learn how to switch between the perspectives of different cultures and how to facilitate intercultural learning. The first Box in Case 4-2 provides many suggestions for reflection and further preparation of the self.

### Healing and re-valuing

Healing or emotional integration can be a very important element of endogenous development, which can have emotional, spiritual, social, physical and environmental dimensions. The cases

from Canada (4-6) and India (1-2) show this in the most extreme form, where local communities have been traumatised by dominant Euro-American norms, values and previous development efforts. Individual and community 'healing' are required as a first step in the broader process of regaining unity, self-esteem, self-confidence and motivation.

In a less extreme form, all cases show how local people appreciate the fact that their own knowledge and experiences, including cultural and spiritual aspects, are taken seriously by development agencies. Re-valuing and re-vitalisation of these contributes to strengthening local confidence as a driving force in endogenous development.

### Central concepts of visioning and planning

The overall goal of these activities is to facilitate communities in making, improving and updating their analysis of the actual situation, and to develop or sharpen their development vision. This provides the foundation for planning further activities. The visioning and planning also provides a 'base-line' for all those involved to monitor and evaluate the impact of actions implemented.

Although the cases illustrate very different contexts, they all emphasise a number of common key features of this group of activities:

- They go beyond conventional analysis of development constraints, prevent an over-focus on problem diagnosis but rather look at and mobilise local visions, resources and development opportunities.
- They acknowledge that local communities do analyse, vision and plan, also when outsiders are not there. This may happen during informal or formal gatherings, cultural events, even rituals. Support agents look for a complementary and supportive role.
- They acknowledge that any initial analysis is often partial, focused on 'priority' aspects, and subsequent rounds will lead to a fuller picture.
- They enhance the dialogue and learning within the community, and between the community and external actors.
- They position vision and planning as an iterative process of communication that continues throughout the development interaction.

### Understanding local resources

Analysing the local resource base is an important aspect, as it often addresses questions such as:

- How do people live with, make use of and perceive their local resources?
- What are the processes involved in their use, are they improving or deteriorating, and why?
- Who has access to resources and who benefits from their use?
- What are the different power positions and benefits obtained from each resource?
- To what extent is current resource use sustainable and how does it affect wealth, social relations and cultural values in the communities?

- What are the outside influences on the way local people manage their resources, and how do these influence knowledge and values?
- What strategy could modify the use of local and external resources, to better serve the needs of the community and other actors involved?

The notion 'resources' is in itself a difficult one and subject to cultural interpretation. In conventional development jargon, resources are considered to be 'available means to reach a development objective'. A distinction is often made between **natural resources**, such as water, forest, soil, and climate, for example, and five other types of resources: **human resources** (e.g. knowledge, ways of learning, good health), **social resources** (e.g. family structure, social organisation, leadership), **cultural-spiritual resources** (e.g. beliefs, norms, language, rituals), **produced resources** (e.g. roads, irrigation, transport, communication) and **economic-financial** resources (e.g. property, markets, credit). This is similar to the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework developed in the UK and many of its tools and formats are useful sources of ideas ([www.livelihoods.org](http://www.livelihoods.org)).

As the cases in this chapter show, for local people resources may have strong cultural and spiritual connotations and the objective of development may be much broader than the purely economic, combining other 'spheres of life'. Most indigenous knowledge systems comprehend the living world as being made up of three 'worlds': the human world, the natural world and the spiritual world. They perceive the (natural) resources as having distinct social and spiritual dimensions. It is not difficult to see that the six types of resources above are part and parcel of the three 'worlds'. In working with local communities we need to be aware of different understandings of resources and we do not just look at the six different types of resources separately but are aware of their interconnectedness.

### Participatory methodologies

There is no single blue-print for supporting community visioning and planning, as there are many different entry-points for enhancing endogenous development. A large number of participatory tools are available for understanding local realities, such as transects, mapping, Venn diagrams, different ways of interviewing, role playing and story telling. These are part of what is called the Participatory Learning and Action approach (Pretty et al. 1995). The cases of this chapter, however, emphasise a number of critical additional dimensions important for facilitating endogenous development:

First of all, the way development agents first enter new villages for visioning and planning activities is critical. **Following the proper local protocols**, bringing the right type of introduction symbols, both for the formal as well as the informal or traditional systems, ensures that the process is situated from the start within local norms and values (see Box in case 4-2).

While endogenous development integrates local knowledge with that of support agents, specific attention is given to **mobilising local knowledge and experiences**. The cases show many examples of how participatory methods are used to this end. Local people may have their own valuable ways of expressing their knowledge, experiences, aspirations and visions in

language, symbols and rituals. Poems, local stories, songs, dance and decoration can be very relevant sources of knowledge. The community story-telling tool and the use of the indigenous 'medicine wheel' symbol in the Canadian case (see Cases 3-8 and 4-6) are examples of this. In many of the cases, specific attention is given to **traditional knowledge holders**. Efforts are undertaken to identify these, not just to obtain the relevant information but also to mobilise them and involve them in relevant development activities.

Involving people who fulfil a bridge function between the material and spiritual world, such as spiritual leaders, healers, spirit mediums or shamans, in the process implies involving the spiritual world. Communication with spiritual beings may play a crucial role locally in receiving guidance and knowledge from god(s), ancestors or other spiritual beings, understanding the present situation, and assessing the possibilities for innovation in agriculture, technology, health, the economy etc.

Without vision there is no future. It is therefore very important that communities reflect upon their future, their cultural perception of how life ideally should be and what results they hope to achieve with their development activities (see Case 4-6).

### Traditional institutions

In the visioning and planning process, traditional institutions and leadership are given specific consideration. These can play an important role to ensure that development is owned and managed by the community. Participatory methodologies can be used to identify, interact with, and analyse these institutions, as clearly shown in the Community Institutional Mapping approach in the case of Cikod, Ghana (4-2). This approach reveals many social and political tensions, for example between traditional and state institutions, between younger and older generations, between men and women, and between the Catholic Church and the traditional religions. It also gives a clear understanding of internal community communication, while opening up the space for discussions and planning for endogenous development activities.

### Planning

The results of the situation analysis and visioning are used in the participatory planning process, to help formulate 'plans' for development activities in the widest sense of the word. This can take various forms as the cases illustrate:

- Integration into traditional local planning processes, e.g. councils of elders, where these are still active and/or have been revitalised;
- Combining formal planning tools with the use of specific local planning concepts or planning events such as medicine wheel, local festivals;
- Formalised development planning which can, for example, be presented for funding to local governments and donor organisations.

### Dilemmas or challenges

As mentioned in Chapter 1, not all individuals within a community have the same views and interests. In the same way, outside influences may be viewed as opportunities by one person or group and as threats by others. Moreover, cross-cutting differences in vision, interest and access to resources and knowledge, e.g. between different gender, class, professional and age groups are important (e.g. Case 4-5). This requires an approach in which different groups have an opportunity to express their own ideas. In other cases, development agents focus their support on specific marginalised groups, while taking care that this does not estrange them from the wider community and ensuring that more influential groups or people at least do not oppose activities undertaken. The Tamale Institute of Cross-Cultural Studies (TICCS) in Ghana has developed the 'culture drama methodology' to increase transparency in inter-cultural relations, and to resolve inter-cultural tensions between tribes in a peaceful way (see Resources appendix). This methodology enables the community to 'heal' themselves by first recognising, then accepting and finally changing their own hidden cultural assumptions and practices.

### Continuous process

Endogenous development is an empowering process of the community, in which cultural awakening, creation of unity, community assessment, and participatory action are important elements. Visioning and planning form a *continuous process of communication*, and a central element in endogenous development. They can take various forms, but should be kept going once the dialogue with the people has been established. For this, building up a relationship of confidence between the local community and the outside development agent is a necessary condition. When it comes to translating the insights gained into plans to face the future, the strategies may also vary and include activities that go beyond improving the technical and economic situation of the people involved to address the healing of cultural traumas, conflict management and dealing with influences from the outside world.



# Chapter 5

# **SUPPORTING LOCAL LEARNING**

## **Introduction**

How can we make sure that relevant knowledge, ideas, information, skills and practices are mobilised or improved to enable local development initiatives? How can traditional knowledge be effectively combined with outside knowledge and that of development agents? Is the role of development agents only to provide training and knowledge from outside, or can they support the way people are learning in the traditional societies themselves? How can we encourage learning from farmer to farmer, from healer to healer?

Supporting local learning starts with understanding traditional learning. It is followed by building learning activities around this. As a lot of indigenous knowledge is becoming eroded, and sometimes even secret or hidden, building horizontal relationships between community members and development agents is essential for both parties to gain trust in each other and enter into a joint learning process. Systematic documentation and analysis of indigenous knowledge and local innovation can support genuine mutual learning and revitalisation. As part of the revitalisation, indigenous knowledge experts play a central role. Support may be needed to help revive indigenous knowledge and bring confidence among indigenous knowledge experts. The cases show that development organisations can support indigenous knowledge experts by organising them, and that they have a strong impact on their revival by facilitating networking among them.

How can communities themselves access various sources of knowledge, and compare and assess these for their local relevance? Local experimentation and action research by communities can play a key role in this.

## **Case 5-1**

### **Facilitating learning among snakebite healers in Sri Lanka**

#### **Responding to a need**

Friends of Lanka (FOL) is a rural development organisation in Sri Lanka involved in a broad range of activities for rural development, with a special interest in traditional knowledge. According to FOL, many people in rural villages still die of snakebites, whilst traditional snakebite healers are moving away from active practice due to lack of formal recognition. Knowledge of plants traditionally used to treat snakebites is gradually being lost. As a response, FOL initiated a series of activities to strengthen the position and capacities of snakebite healers and build a focused argument with sufficient evidence for policy

Daughter of a healer learns to prepare herbal medicine for snakebite treatment, while Buddhist mantras are recited by an experienced healer.



dialogue towards recognition of traditional healing. The FOL team decided to start small, in just one divisional area, Kegalle. This way it could work closely with the community and learn from the experience before spreading to other areas.

### **Identification of snakebite healers and initiation of a forum**

To find and identify active snakebite healers, FOL staff consulted with traditional healers

(not only snakebite healers) with whom they already had contact, as well as with members of the communities and community-based organisations. They were surprised that with only a little effort they got the names of 75 snakebite healers, all active in an area with a population of 80,000 people. Although the major focus is on the treatment of snakebites, most healers also deal with all other types of poisonous insects and reptiles such as scorpions, tarantulas, lizards, wasps etc.

FOL decided to call a meeting of the healers to review information collected and discuss possible areas of further activities. Of the 75 invitations sent out by FOL, 45 snakebite healers from 15 different villages came to the first meeting. FOL raised the issues of learning more about the topic, conserving indigenous knowledge on the subject and restoring recognition of snakebite treatment at all levels. The healers introduced themselves, and it emerged that many had other occupations, such as farming, carpentry, masonry, etc., and only did healing on a part-time basis or when the need arose. The healers were pleased to see that their knowledge was being given some recognition and felt that coming together as a group could be a start to a beneficial collaboration and to a more receptive attitude to their knowledge. The group decided to meet on a monthly basis and to formalise the group in the form of an association. They appointed a committee consisting of a president, a secretary and a treasurer.

### **Monthly meetings for sharing and learning**

The snakebite healers' group now holds monthly workshops to discuss topic(s) agreed on in advance. These are held at FOL and facilitated by FOL. During the meetings, the healers take turns in sharing the knowledge they have on that topic, mainly in the form of mantras (chants), prescriptions etc. Very lively discussion follows each presentation: questions are posed, disagreements are put forward, and clarifications are made. Important data is recorded by one of the group members present. To further facilitate knowledge exchange, each healer started to write down in advance whatever mantras or prescriptions are related to the topic and bring these to the meeting. FOL collates the information and is compiling it into a database. These

write-ups are photocopied and distributed to the rest of the group. In this way, each healer has collected about 300 mantras for specific instances of snakebite treatment, over 90 different forms of treatment or proscriptions (*nasna*) have been recorded, and about 750 medicinal preparations have been described. Workshops are also used to ensure that continuous monitoring and evaluation takes place. As healers come together, they identify common problems and pool their knowledge and resources, for example for making a particular medicine that requires plants that are in short supply. Generally, the group interactions are highly appreciated by the healers (see Box 1).

Another aspect that is given attention during these meetings is medicinal herbs and plants. With the loss of biodiversity and healers moving away from active practice, many of the herbs and plants needed for snakebite treatment are gradually disappearing. The older generation of healers still has a vast amount of knowledge on plants (wild and cultivated) and the need to conserve this knowledge and share it with others has become clear. Healers started bringing samples of plants to the meetings and discussing their medicinal characteristics. This has also helped to increase the healers' knowledge on treatments considerably, and much of this has been recorded. In addition, many of them are trying to propagate the plants in their home gardens to build up small herbal gardens.

The exchanges that take place and coming together as a group have allowed the preparation of several medicines, which many of the healers could not afford to undertake on their own due to various reasons—lack of finances, inability to get the necessary medicinal plants as raw material, not being aware of the spiritual aspects (mantras) required for the preparation. The healer who prepared the medication invited others interested to join him in this process and learn from it. The medicines have been shared among the whole group, and this is seen as a great benefit.

## Expanding the learning network

FOL contacts with the wider Compas network enabled the group of healers to get in touch with healers elsewhere, e.g. in Naula (in Sri Lanka) and South India. Naula in North Central Sri Lanka is considered to be the seat of traditional knowledge in many sciences including medicine. Therefore, the healers were very interested to meet their counterparts in Naula. The trip was organised by FOL and provided an opportunity for the healers to share experiences in snakebite treatment. In addition, they were also very interested to learn more about the spiritual aspects used in Naula for protecting crops from elephants and other wild animals. They identified areas in which they could exchange experiences in the future.

FOL invited people from government organisations and NGOs twice to raise awareness on the importance of traditional snakebite healing. The two main issues on the agenda were the need to conserve biodiversity, particularly of medicinal plants, and to give traditional healers due recognition for their knowledge and skills. Five healers from the association participated at these meetings and presented first-hand experience. One of the points that captured the

attention of the participants was the success rates mentioned by these healers. Events like these contribute to changing the attitudes of government officials and NGO staff to the importance of indigenous (IK) knowledge in development.

To further strengthen the capacities of the healers, bring them in contact with insights from the formal sector, and increase the credibility of their approach, FOL has sought collaboration with a university. One of the constraints faced in trying to establish contacts was finding the right person. In FOL's experience most university staff look down on IK and are not yet ready for open discussion and dialogue on the subject. Yet, FOL realises the need to undertake research that is credible and therefore also at university level. While individual university professors have expressed interest in working with the healers, the local university is not yet ready for collaboration. A collaborative effort with the university would result in jointly designing and conducting a research study on 'Social services through snakebite healers' that would lend academic credibility to the undertaking. Data for the study are already being collected through household interviews by FOL volunteers, and the results will be processed by FOL staff and reviewed by Professor Nimal Fonseka of the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Peradeniya.

## Need for registration of snakebite healers?

According to national regulations, any person who is involved in alternative medicine is required to be registered with the Indigenous Medicine Ministry. Unlike practitioners of Ayurveda and Siddha, the criteria laid down by the government make it difficult for traditional healers to receive such registration as the knowledge has been gained 'informally' and not through a recognised institution. In such cases, the healer is interviewed by an evaluator of the Indigenous Medicine Ministry in Colombo, who then gives a recommendation for or against registration. The social acceptance gained through registration is valued by traditional healers.

This issue has been discussed quite extensively in the snakebite healers group. FOL initially felt that the healers did not need to seek registration, but should build up sufficient confidence and social recognition by strengthening their group and making known their record of success (according to data collected from the group, approximately 33,000 persons have sought treatment and no fatalities have been reported). However, some of the healers in the group are strongly motivated to seek registration. The president of the association has arranged for a

### Feedback from a healer

Mrs Podimenike from Kankeeriya is a traditional healer who learned from her father. She treats people whenever they come to her. She said: I am very happy about this association. Actually, I had more or less given up on active practice as I felt that traditional healers were not recognised. But now I am encouraged to continue and start active practice again. I have learned a lot from the more experienced healers at the meetings. Access to the medicinal herbal oils and pills is a great advantage as I would not have been able to prepare these on my own. I have started to propagate some medicinal plants and hope to have a small herbal patch of my own.

Ministry evaluator to visit the group and conduct the interviews. By consolidating local knowledge, FOL is in a position to inform policy makers so that the practices can be strengthened and spread. Formal registration is not necessarily needed, but community recognition is made clearer.

Source: FOL

## Case 5-2

### Documentation and participatory rapid assessment of local health traditions in India

#### The need for participatory rapid assessment

There is a need to incorporate effective traditional health practices based on local resources and local knowledge into the existing public health care system. Identifying effective practices through elaborate pharmacological and clinical trials is a time-consuming task, though. To validate a single practice may involve several years of laboratory research and huge capital investments. FRLHT, the Foundation for the Revitalisation of Local Health Traditions based in Bangalore, India, has started to validate health practices in an alternative way, by developing a methodology for documentation and participatory rapid assessment, which does not involve detailed laboratory and clinical studies. The case presents the experiences of FRLHT in using the approach in its work on local health traditions in the states of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

#### The documentation process

This starts with the *selection of field collaborators*. As an experimental model, FRLHT organised a meeting with 13 local NGOs. These agencies had already been involved in activities on the conservation of medicinal plants and traditional health care, and had established good relationships with the local communities. Operational details and responsibilities were agreed upon: NGO staff would be trained and community level support committees established. Local communities were fully involved in the revitalisation activities.

A series of *training workshops* was held to orient the field staff in the methodology of documenting local health traditions. In these, the following modules were covered: the splendours of cultural diversity and cosmovisions; the documentation of local health traditions and the worldview in which these practices are embedded; finding effective health practices through participatory



Community members exchange views on a traditional herbal remedy with experts from other Indian medical systems, during a workshop to evaluate local health traditions.

rural appraisal; rapid assessment of local health traditions. Appropriate tools for documenting these practices as well as describing prevalent health conditions were discussed.

A *pilot study* was carried out in four field locations prior to the actual documentation process. Questionnaires to record the knowledge, resources and socio-cultural aspects of health traditions were field-tested. In order to record different levels of knowledge and practice, five subsets of questionnaires for folk healers were designed: for veterinary practitioners, for healers treating poisonous bites, for traditional birth attendants; for traditional bonesetters and for those healers who treat more general health conditions. The questionnaires included sections on the concepts of health and disease, disease management, the availability of natural resources for the remedies, and what people thought about traditional health practices. The household questionnaires focused on home remedies as well as food practices and the health-related aspects of the daily routine.

Actual *data collection and processing* involved interviewing 1048 healers, around 80% of the folk healers in the area. Moreover, the practices of 1800 knowledgeable households, 6-8 in each hamlet of 100-200 families, were collected and documented. In three survey areas in Tamil Nadu, 106 health conditions that were commonly treated at household level were documented. The resources used in the household health care practices range from 84 to 127 items. The materials used in these remedies were of plant origin in 44% of the cases, the other remedies were of animal or mineral origin. The resources used in the practices were also subjected to literature searches for further evidence of their use.

## Prioritising health conditions

In order to find priorities for next steps, i.e. the actual participatory assessment of traditional practices, participatory rural appraisals were done with groups of 35 community members to find which of the prevailing health conditions were thought to be most critical. This exercise was basically a matrix ranking one with four steps:

- Listing the health conditions prevalent in the community
- Establishing the criteria to prioritise the health conditions
- Developing a matrix with criteria and health conditions
- Ranking or scoring the conditions based on each criterion.

Twenty health conditions with the highest scores were thus selected for the assessment procedures. The communities' understanding of these health conditions, e.g. causes, symptoms and stages, was also discussed and documented during the exercise.

The selected health conditions were then screened to see what home remedies were available to prevent or cure them, and whether the health condition or remedies were repeatedly mentioned during the interviews. The accessibility of the natural resources, their affordability and the effort required to prepare the remedies were also considered. Based on this, 96 health practices were selected for further analysis in the participatory assessment workshops in the second phase.

## Rapid assessment of local health traditions

Rapid Assessment of Local Health Traditions (RALHT) is essentially a participatory method of assessment which involves all relevant stakeholders. The exercise is called 'rapid' because it does not involve detailed laboratory or clinical studies.

The central element in RALHT is the assessment workshops that include community members, folk healers, practitioners of Western medicine and the Indian system of medicine, field botanists, pharmacologists, researchers, facilitators, NGO staff, reporters and FRLHT staff. These community-based workshops are aimed at selecting the best home remedies for their promotion in primary health care. The references for the selected plants, animal parts or minerals collected from the literature search of Indian classical medicine traditions and modern pharmacology help the participants to comment on the local health practices under review.

During the workshops, small groups were formed to comment on a specific health condition and its remedies. NGO staff assisted by facilitating and reporting on the process. The natural resources used in the remedies were identified by the community through demonstrations and documented in a voucher specimen collection. Missing data were added and cross-checked. The discussions and individual comments were also documented. In the plenary sessions, each group presented its conclusions on the remedies, and commented on their efficacy. Any differences of opinion were clarified and a common understanding was developed. In five workshops, about 50 remedies were assessed for 20 health conditions.

Remedies with strong empirical evidence from the community and the folk healers are now promoted, irrespective of whether they receive support from other medical systems. Distorted practices are discouraged. Remedies with strong positive empirical evidence from the communities, but negative assessment from the other medical systems, are subjected to further research among the communities. This category is referred to as 'data-deficient'. The remedies which have been selected positively are subjected to rapid pre-clinical trials in the rural locality, with the active involvement of folk healers, community and representatives from different medical traditions.

## Some learning points

We learned that great emphasis should be given to selecting and orienting local healers and medical experts of different backgrounds before the actual assessing exercise starts. Moreover, their experience in health care in the local area and with the local language should be considered. This maximises the interaction with the community members.

The process does require time. During the process of prioritising health conditions and remedies to be discussed during the assessment workshop, more detailed data should be collected. This could be done through pre-workshop exercises, in which the prioritised conditions are discussed with folk healers. This helps to ensure that both literature research and assessment workshops are carried out as effectively as possible.

The number of health conditions and remedies to be assessed per day should be limited, in order to facilitate a complete and comprehensive discussion and understanding of each local health practice. We found it difficult to manage more than six health conditions in a one-day workshop.

### Recording the results

Two databases are being compiled from this work. The first database systematises the local health traditions of the selected area. As the contents are the intellectual property of the local people, the documented data was returned to the respective communities in the form of People's Biodiversity Registers. This is housed in the respective NGOs, where it can be accessed by other organisations and local communities. This is part of an extensive programme to protect local knowledge from being pirated for commercial purposes without proper consent of the local communities or equitable benefit sharing.

The second database consists of reference literature, providing evidence of pharmacological and clinical studies based on Indian classical medicine systems and modern science for local health practices. This data base housed in FRLHT office in Bangalore is accessible for firms and NGOs that operate in line with the Convention on Biodiversity.

### The way forward

The rapid assessment method is a platform for cross-cultural dialogue which results in more complete data, the removal of distorted practices and the encouragement of positive local health traditions. These elements are essential for the growth of a culture. This platform also gives the community an opportunity to assess their own practices and experiences. Moreover, the methodology can be replicated in other areas and in other fields.

Source: P. Unnikrishnan,  
FRLHT

### Case 5-3

#### Reviving traditional dormitory education in India

##### Dormitory education

Indigenous knowledge among tribal people in Central India is preserved in the form of songs, dances, music, proverbs, folk tales, mythical and historical stories, rituals, festivals, ceremonies, symbols, customary practices, regulations and social control, practical demonstration and experimentation. Young children and adolescents observe and imitate their parents and other elders in daily life and around the campfire. Traditionally, once they are 13-14 years, they take part in dormitory education (*gothul*) in the community hall. However, this form of education is on the edge of extinction and only traces are found in some parts of Chattisgarh and Orissa in tribal communities. The system has been revived by IDEA, a local NGO, which has set up new

forms of dormitory training and education 'schools'. In these schools, indigenous functionaries and elders stay with the young people for a few days and take turns to teach them their knowledge and skills on subjects that are relevant to tribal life like hunting, farming, ecology, health care, etc. They learn not only about hunting and food gathering, but also about many other things like spacing of crops, making herbal medicinal paste and chanting mantras while collecting the honey. In addition, education on marital life is taken care of, as well as social regulatory measures related to pre-conjugal relations and inter-caste marriages.

The schools are organised in the villages and at the IDEA training centre. In the villages, the young people attending stay in the dormitory school during the night and during the day they return to their homes. At the institutional level, they stay full-time at the centre, which looks like a tribal village. Sometimes education is only for boys or only for girls, sometimes they learn together. During most of the year, the dormitory education is not compulsory but for those who are interested. In the farming season, however, it is compulsory for all the youth as they have to learn many things. At the village-level dormitory schools, the young people attend until they marry, for a minimum of three to four years. Once married, tradition states that they are no longer allowed to come to the dormitory.

## **Elders and local experts as teachers**

IDEA has built a dormitory school which serves as a resource centre and looks like a tribal village. There youngsters can also learn under a tree or in a cave. In the centre, there are modern facilities like audiovisuals, slides, posters and a garden for experimentation in farming. There is also a conservation centre where the pupils can see all the plants necessary for survival, some of which even the gurus have forgotten. There we help them to identify the plants, including their vernacular names. The teaching in the centre is supported with modern tools. In the forest and villages they learn from nature. The pupils learn the oral traditions from the seniors and also from traditional functionaries (see Chapter 2, Learning Form 7). In addition, resource persons from government and development organisations and institutions are invited to contribute to the dormitory education.

## **Holistic curricula**

In the dormitory education 'schools' everything is discussed that has a direct bearing on daily life and work in the villages. Though there is ample attention to the practical skills required in



Before they start their learning in the dormitory education programme, students participate in a ritual with spiritual leaders and give offerings to the Supreme Devine Being called 'Boddevta', to receive her blessing.

### Topics covered in a dormitory education programme

Phase	Main theme	Examples of topics
1	Socio-agoeco-cultural identity	History of tribes and clans Tribal customs and beliefs Tribal culture, agriculture and the environment
2	Sustainable development and traditional agro-ecocultural knowledge and practices	Sustainable agriculture Forest protection and nature conservation Herbal medicines and nutrition Traditional leaders and their functions Astrology
3	In-depth group discussions	Ancestral spirits and family welfare Importance and meaning of dances, songs Validation of beliefs, of the power of symbols, of rain making, sacred ring Clan totems in managing the environment Rationale for ceremonial hunting Role and freedom for women
4	Putting into practice	Experiments by youth on reviving or enhancing traditional practices: pest control, crops, organic manure, land and water management techniques etc.

hunting, planting, and health care, socio-cultural and historical issues are not forgotten, and are often integrated in the other topics. The Box above shows a typical list of topics for a dormitory training for local youth on indigenous knowledge and local worldviews.

### Learning through songs and dances

Dormitory education makes use of a great variety of learning methods. Field exposures form an important part. The youth are encouraged to try things out and undertake experiments, as part of the education. Traditional learning methods feature strongly when learning takes place 'indirectly' through songs, dances and stories. Dance contains several meanings, as do music and songs. For example, *dhimsa* is a dance with about 17 steps, which all have specific meaning. One such step is: go to the forest with your father to learn about trees, caves, habitat of tiger and other animals, and also edible fruits and berries. Mother sings a song: *There is a tiger with two cubs. Tiger teaches her cubs how to hunt the prey. Similar to the tiger I also train you how to go in the forest and come back safely. When the cubs try to go out from the cave, they sometimes lose their way. Tiger shows them how to come back. Similarly you have to know the way, please collect some fruits, there is a small bush and there are yellow fruits, fully matured. When you go to the tree there is a bush, when you continue, there is a tree. Don't disturb the second tree.* The dance shows where the tiger is. The song teaches

them not to disturb nature, and how to go in the forest and find resources. Other songs have other messages: do not kill sick animals; do not kill blind animals; do not kill pregnant animals; follow sustainable harvest practices. As many songs have died out, IDEA has worked with the communities and traditional leaders to document and reconstruct them and made up new songs.

## Complementing modern education

Modern schooling is important for learning to read, write and count on paper. However, for tribal people, who depend on the natural environment, the first priority is to learn the tribal way of life, how to survive in the natural environment. Tribal people live in remote areas where there are no allopathic medicines available or chemical fertilisers for farming. In the tribal villages, there is often much debate on the relevance of modern education. 'What they learn through reading and writing will all get blown away in the wind!' Nevertheless, people believe that their children should be exposed to both the formal system of education and the tribal way of education from the elders through dormitory methodologies. The IDEA's dormitory school and training concept is trying to bridge this gap.

Initially it was difficult to explain this new concept to outsiders and even to the government functionaries, as they thought that we were guiding tribal people backwards in time. But slowly they have realised the way we have encouraged tribal people to revive and revitalise their indigenous knowledge and worldviews and how this new concept is helping them to maintain stability, sustainability and equity and achieve self-reliance and empowerment, and also helping them to integrate into mainstream society while retaining their cultural identity. Slowly the attitude and interest of the government has changed: they understand that we are trying to integrate tradition with modernity and make an alliance between the two, achieving and achieve a beautiful marriage.

Source: Gowtham Shankar, IDEA

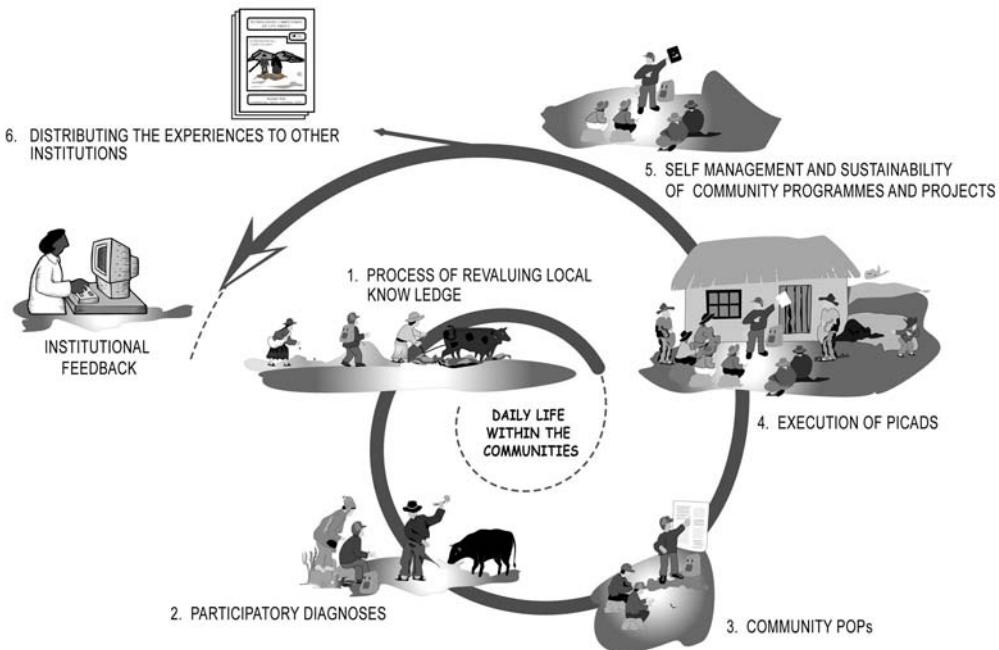
## Case 5-4

### Mobilising indigenous knowledge in Bolivia

#### Relevance of indigenous techniques

Agricultural sustainability is threatened by the erosion of peasant knowledge. Extension workers and Andean peasants in Bolivia are reversing this trend by learning from each other through joint creation of 'handbills', or information sheets, on local agricultural knowledge under the guidance of Agruco (see Case 1-4). Through its participatory research and extension programme, Agruco has learned that local knowledge is based on a profound understanding of the local ecology. The indigenous techniques used in cropping and animal husbandry are living examples of sustainable agriculture. They are also part of the local social-economic-cultural context, in which there is a dynamic harmony between these different components.

Steps to incorporate local experience into the wider context.



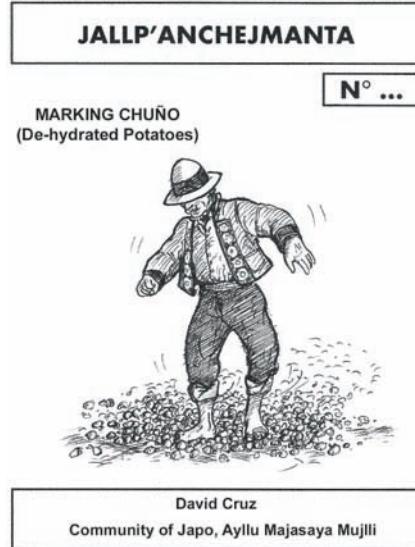
Examples include techniques for crop rotation, the use of organic fertilisers (manure), mixed cropping, minimum tillage in dry areas, and use of weather-forecasting indicators before ploughing.

### Are traditional techniques truly modern?

Many of these techniques are traditional and, at the same time, they can be regarded as modern in the sense of a sustainable agriculture. Academics in the Bolivian universities have often ignored not only the concepts of sustainable agriculture but also the value of local knowledge. The professionals in rural development institutions even regard indigenous knowledge as an obstacle to real development and are doing everything possible to replace it with 'modern' high-input technologies such as improved seed, mechanisation, chemical fertilisers and pesticides, in combination with credit. The results of practically all studies show, however, that this green revolution concept does not work in the Andes. The steady deterioration in the ecological as well as the economic situation is proof of the urgent need to seek sustainable forms of agriculture. Another consequence of the attempt to introduce high-input technology into Bolivia is an accelerated erosion of local knowledge, which further threatens an ecological and socio-economic balance.

## Learning from each other

To reverse this trend, an effective method is urgently needed that allows a technician to get to know the world of farmers, permitting communication on an equal basis between peasant farmers and extension workers, and making possible a genuinely mutual learning for sustainable agriculture. The 'handbill' process is such a method. It has two objectives: to allow peasants to teach extension workers their traditional knowledge about sustainable agriculture; and to contribute to revitalising indigenous techniques, thus averting the erosion process. The starting point for developing the mutual learning process is a change of attitude, mainly in the professionals. They must become aware that the peasant is managing a knowledge system that must be revitalised so as to conserve and strengthen it.



Example of farmers' knowledge info sheet on traditional methods of making dehydrated potatoes.

## The 'handbill' method

The process of preparing 'handbills' consists of seven steps. It is based on direct participation of the technician in rural life (Figure 1). The first step consists of observing the relevant activity such as sowing, storage or reciprocal relations (see Cases 1-4, 3-5 and 6-7), as well as the community organisation around the activity such as the appointment and function of the local authorities, feasts and rituals. The technician then talks with the peasants about this activity or technology, carefully registering all the details. The technician proceeds to draw up the handbill by first describing the geographical, ecological and social characteristics of the community, then writing an introduction which puts the technology in its context. This is followed by a description of the technology itself, using the peasants' own terminology as much as possible. The technician concludes the handbill with some personal observations such as education level of the informant, how widely the technology is used, or other information that seems pertinent for understanding the technology better. The handbill can be enriched by a sketch of the location of the community and/or some illustrations of the contents (Figure 2).

The next, very important step is presenting the handbill to the peasants, preferably at a meeting with all community members. Ideally, the informant or the technician presents the contents of the handbill, initiating a discussion to validate the information. Any correction, comment or addition is noted carefully so that it can be included in the final handbill. After drawing up the final version, the handbill must be returned to the community by distributing it to the local authorities and other interested peasants and teachers. It is also important that this final version is presented and discussed during staff meetings, so that the staff can integrate this knowledge into their future activities.

## A handbill in use: weather forecasting as an example

The value of the handbill process is shown clearly in the weather forecasting example. The crop growing period in the Andes is relatively short, and the weather conditions are subject to extreme changes. Temperatures fall rapidly after the rains start, thus there is danger of frost damage to crops. Therefore, it is of vital importance that the crops are sown several weeks before the rains start. This means it is important for the peasant to be able to predict the weather, so as to synchronise the sowing date with the expected growing period. To this end, the farmers make use of a wide range of biological, climatic and symbolic indicators. Under the influence of 'modern' techniques and concepts, this type of weather forecasting has been classified as superstitious, so younger peasants had stopped making use of this knowledge. An extension worker, though, was able to draw up a handbill together with a few old farmers. He then arranged with the young peasants to test their grandfathers' knowledge by doing an experiment, comparing planting according to the old knowledge with planting one week later.

The experiment showed, at least in that year, that the old weather forecasting was very useful as the yield from the plot sown according to the indications of the old peasants was twice as high as that of the 'modern' peasant's plot. The seeds sown on the appropriate date were able to profit from the first rain at the end of October, as the plants had already sprouted. The other seeds sprouted one week later, which coincided with the relative dryness in early November, and only developed slowly right from the start. In the 'traditional' plot, the development was much faster, so that the growth was nearly completed by the time the rains ended and the frost started, whereas the plants in the other plot were only in the middle of their growth phase. This experiment led to an intensive discussion within the community, awakening the interest of the young peasants in the knowledge of their fathers and grandfathers. At the same time, the weather forecasting indicators offered excellent teaching material, which did not come from outside but formed a document of the community's own knowledge.

## Handbill not an end in itself

Making handbills is a good way to gradually make the technicians familiar with the reality that the peasants face. At the same time, discussing the handbill with the community initiates a process of reflection among the peasants regarding the value of their technologies. It is also a way of producing teaching material in a participatory way that can be used in training at all levels, e.g. with engineers, technicians, students, extension workers and peasant farmers (see Chapter 2, Learning Form 13.). The technologies that become known through this method also serve as a base for documenting local reality, thus helping in the search for solutions to many problems. This revitalising and documenting of local knowledge can help reduce the erosion of traditional Andean technology, which has survived surprisingly well in some regions, but has nearly disappeared in others. It is therefore of vital importance that this knowledge be made known, not only in the local area, but also on a regional, national and international basis.

Source: Freddy  
Delgado, Nelson Tapia  
and Gilberto  
Lisperguer, Agruco

## Case 5-5

### Supporting intercultural learning among the Mapuche in Chile

#### Introduction

Activities that aim to support local intra- and inter-cultural learning as part of endogenous development need to prevent external support from causing indigenous populations to lose their own cultural identity (acculturation). We need participatory methodologies that allow us to get away from the inadequacies of approaches that are based on 'capacitating' those who are regarded as 'incapacitated', such as literacy programmes. In this case from Chile a central strategy is the use of methodologies that create opportunities for examining and expressing all aspects of the communities' own cultures, feelings, reflection and collective learning (*interaprendizaje*). Only in this way can we ensure that support to endogenous development will have more effective and sustainable long-term results.



Fieldworker participating in ceremony with local Mapuche leaders, which is performed before a joint activity is taking place. During the ritual good results for all participants and all Mapuche people is asked for. This creates an atmosphere of respect and dialogue.

#### Understanding the Mapuche's own ways

The Institute of Indigenous Studies of the Universidad de la Frontera and the NGO Fundecam (Fundación de Desarrollo Campesino, Fundecam) have developed a process they call accompaniment (*acompañamiento*) in their work with Mapuche communities in the south of Chile. Their work has led to changes in conventional participatory methods for strengthening

#### An account of the *llellipun* ritual

Our ancestors knew how to pray to Chaw Ngenechén (supreme god of the Mapuche universe), from the bottom of their *piwke* (heart), because they were able to address the divine being without fear in the way they chose but with utmost respect. This is something the *wingka* (non-Mapuche person) does not do or even know how to do. At best, the *wingka* can repeat parrot fashion the words taught by a priest. We have to return to our roots, to this essential communication with Chaw Ngenechén; it will make us more dignified and improve our standing with our ancestors as well as with the *wingkas*. *Wenu mapu nuke* (our immortal fathers) and *wenu mapu chaw* (he who gives strength) see us and listen to us. We have to continue performing *guillatún* (rituals) and our medicine men must continue to play an active role in them. *Ngenechén* lives and dreams in the hearts of our people, we only need to awaken him. We should also say that while our women and old people sleep, the soul of the Mapuche people lives on (the *pewma* is sacred).

Peñi José Antonio Cayunao Curillán, Institute of Mapuche Kimwe Culture

endogenous development, as they now include methods used by the indigenous communities themselves.

The Mapuche's development and learning methods are not regarded as being about certain people teaching others, but rather as processes of community support that accompany the various stages of life, including interaction with outside actors. In these moments of shared feeling, reflection and deliberation, the aim is to socialise, analyse, and recreate and make visible existing knowledge and incorporate new perspectives on the processes of mutual learning, rather than a 'transfer of knowledge or technology'.

The Mapuche communities that Fundecam has accompanied have incorporated a ceremony known as *llellipun* (rogation or petition) in their collaborative work (see Box 1). This takes place outside and is to ask Chaw Ngenechén to ensure that an action has good results for all participants and for the Mapuche people. This ritual is performed before starting an activity and creates an atmosphere of respect as well as promoting dialogue (see Box 1).

Another example is the *trawun*, a big reunion attended by Mapuche families, where they bring food to share. These occasions bring members of the community together: traditional authorities, the elderly, young people, children and women. The meetings are an opportunity to contribute and exchange information upon which collective decisions can be made.

These indigenous methods are complemented by conventional participatory techniques (participatory workshops, ethnographic techniques, participatory mapping) and the respectful participation of a technical assistance team in the rituals of the community.

## Choosing the theme for external support

The issue of choosing the main themes for support and training is of critical importance. The partners in Southern Chile have learned that the indigenous communities themselves have to define the theme and that those offering external support have to offer the best they can from their scientific field. It is important that external actors have an open attitude in particular when dealing with the aspects of scientific knowledge that may or may not contradict basic principles or tenets held by the indigenous population.

An example is the way in which the Mapuche conceptualise their territory: this is based on its meaning as ritual space. Fundecam accompanied members of the Mapuche community in the Toltén zone (Araucanía in southern Chile) in a process of making visible the way they organise their territory. Indigenous leaders made a diagnosis of local resources after collecting information from members of the community on what they regarded as resources and how to defend their territory. By using the information to draw a diagram of the Mapuche territory, it became clear that the Mapuche vision is very different from the way in which the area where they live is divided up for administrative purposes. Administrative boundaries cut across the communities (*rehue*) that come together for the *guillatun* ritual, led by traditional leaders. These communities are linked by historical, economic, social and ritual ties along kinship lines. Using

the insights and unity gained in this ritual, a joint plan for territorial organisation has been drawn up.

The community leaders say that this work strengthens their cultural identity and their own organisations. The reconstruction of the Mapuche vision of their territory has been fundamental in initiating a dialogue that promotes their own development, opening the way to valuing the material, spiritual and social dimensions of the territory. This has been important for the Mapuche community in its dealings with outside authorities in a number of cases: there are plans to construct a highway, which has not been agreed to by the indigenous community, as well as plans to build a commercial port that go against the Mapuche's religious relationship with the sea.

## Conclusion

Incorporating collective methods of learning used by the Mapuche people must not become an instrument purely for 'selling themselves better', which might be the aim of an externally initiated approach. By integrating oneself in the community's sense of time and space, one opens oneself up to being evaluated as people, professionals and organisations not only by the Mapuche, but also by the same cosmic forces that animate everyday life. It is important to take this aspect into account, as by ignoring it one avoids making the necessary efforts to interact with the indigenous communities in their own expressions of feeling, reflection and decision making.

Source: Jaime Soto, Fundecam; Stephan Rist, CDE

## Case 5-6

### Creating space for change: farmers' learning groups in the Netherlands

#### Farmer study groups: an old Dutch tradition

There is a long tradition of farmer study groups in the Netherlands. In the late nineteenth century, it was popular for farmers to meet in the pub after the church service on Sundays, where they would sit together and exchange news. This was the way maize growing was introduced in the Netherlands. Some farmers experimented with the new crop and then told their fellow farmers about the advantages.

Groups were formed locally around new techniques, such as the use of fertilisers, improved ploughs and animal breeds. In the 1970s and 1980s,



Pieter Boons, a participant in the Bioveem project, in the winter housing for his organically raised dairy cattle.

### Looking for colleague farmers to share with

Pieter Boons has farmed his 66-hectare farm organically since 1990, and now has 76 dairy cattle and grows maize. Pieter finds it important to have a fellow farmer with whom he can discuss farming matters. For a long time, he worked together with his cousin and learned a lot from him. Five years ago, however, his cousin moved away from the area to work on a different farm. Pieter really missed having someone to discuss his work with and talk about decisions that need to be made. Pieter has now found a valuable new sparring partner, from the same area. He is also a dairy farmer, but does not farm organically. His farm is highly mechanised and the cattle stay indoors all year. Still the two learn a great deal from each other. Farmers who think alike tend not to ask each other that many questions because they think they already know the answers. Someone who has a different approach to farming and an inquisitive nature can ask interesting questions that give his colleague something to think about. Pieter: 'This way we keep each other on our toes. We farm in almost opposite ways, but at a personal level, we get on very well with each other. I can recommend this to any farmer.'

Dutch agriculture developed well thanks to the free flow of information between growers. Study groups generated knowledge and information faster than formal research institutions. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, small as well as larger farmers' groups are still popular, not only as spontaneous self-organised gatherings (see Box above), but also ones organised by agricultural advisors and researchers as an efficient way to reach farmers.

### The Bioveem project

Bioveem is a project in the Netherlands for improving organic dairy farming. It started in 2000, and is built around a core group of 17 innovative farmers and a support group of advisors and researchers. Each of the core group farmers is encouraged to share his/her experiences in one or more outreach (farmer) groups.

The project focuses on innovations and knowledge generation, exchange of experiences and adaptive management<sup>1</sup>. Bioveem believes in a participatory way of going about training, sharing of experiences and research. This is different from many other projects, in which researchers and advisors bring their ideas for innovation to farmers' groups. In the conventional view, it is assumed that researchers generate 'good knowledge' because their research provides 'solid evidence' upon which innovations can be based. Agricultural advisors are expected to be masters of 'skilful discussions' so that they get their message across. However, this 'conventional' approach ignores the social issues that play a far more dominant role in processes of innovation than technical knowledge does.

Bioveem, in contrast, uses a methodology called the 'novelty approach'. This is a methodology based on experiential learning, in which patterns are identified in farmers' practices and then made explicit, thereby bringing farmers' empirical knowledge into the open. Bioveem translates farmers' questions into thematic activities for interested farmers and

<sup>1</sup>Adaptive management is a step-wise process that attempts to improve local farming systems and natural resources management through experimental actions and joint learning by all involved.

participatory on-farm research, where either a problem that has occurred or something new that is of interest to the whole group can be explored further.

Important characteristics of the project are that farmer study groups, both those with core group members only and the outreach groups, form the basis of all activities, rather than researchers' ideas. The research that is done takes place mostly on the farms of the participating farmers. Research themes are identified through conversations with farmers, researchers and advisors. A large element of the project consists of communication with other farmers in the sector and with the farming community at large. This is done through meetings, organising work and farm visits, and through a website where short descriptions of farmers' experiences and experiments are posted.

## **Facilitating farmers' learning groups**

Farmer study groups form a key component of Bioveem. There are five thematic groups, to which the core group farmers can belong. Each participant in these thematic groups takes ideas and experiences of Bioveem to a great variety of outreach groups with non-core group farmers, both organic and conventional. The farmer outreach group in the southeast of the Netherlands is a particularly exciting example of the effectiveness of the participatory 'novelty' approach. This success can be partly explained by the perfect match between some of the advisors involved and the farmers involved.

Farmers participating in the project and their neighbouring farmers welcomed information from researchers, but in their own way. They used it to test the validity of their own findings and to support their own ideas. In the beginning, they were not particularly interested in the information that was presented on the project website, but the farmers did use the website to keep track of what formal research was up to and to have a benchmark for their own information resources.

With the start of the group meetings, they started to share information that they had obtained from various sources. Pooling this information gave them better insight into what was available and useful. It would have taken too much time for each farmer to search individually for information. In this way, they made good use of the contacts that other group members had.

Instead of preparing a presentation with slides for farmer meetings, the advisor brought his laptop computer, on which he had data from the project. However, he replaced some of the figures and tables from the project with pictures of the farmers in the group, providing points of recognition and also setting the context clearly. He also coupled official farming data tables with data from the participating farms.

It was not the advisor but the group members who set the agenda for the meeting. Following the line of their conversation, the advisor then produced the information the farmers asked for. Instead of overloading farmers with information, he condensed information from formal sources and linked it to their realities. Themes that were particularly important to the farmers, such as whether it was possible to use 100% organic feed for the animals, were introduced using data based on an imaginary farmer, Peter Producer.

The group also introduced 'the talk of the day'. At each meeting, it was the turn of one of the participants to talk about one aspect of his or her farm for which the results were better than the group's average. This is a way of building trust between the farmers, and also their confidence. The advisor prepared this talk beforehand together with the farmer and they made a visual presentation as well, based on the farmer's ideas.

This may all seem like a time-consuming approach, but after a while participants started to take part actively, asking a lot of questions and sharing lively discussions. Over time, this group established an atmosphere of openness towards one another, building up their knowledge together, especially knowledge adapted to their farming business, and as a result learning faster. The advisor did an extremely good job of changing his working routines, which in turn gave him more satisfaction. The Box below summarises some of the lessons learned from working with farmer groups. A few colleagues from research institutes were not so impressed and could not appreciate this approach despite the good results. It needs more time to involve all parties in this communication approach and to replace old routines.

## Farmer-led research

The farmer study groups also play a key role in the Bioveem research component. Within their thematic groups, the core farmers discussed with research and extension staff the development possibilities for their farm, for instance related to animal health or to farming near a nature conservation area. They then planned the steps to be taken towards a new system that works. In many cases, this was inspired not by an intensive analysis of specific priority problems, but by following up interesting ideas and experiences from one of the farmers or from other sources. The farmers themselves defined the goals of the changes, for instance reduced costs of production, reduced demand for labour or growing crops to make their own silage to feed

### Lessons learned in making best use of farmers' groups

For groups to be effective, a set of 'basics' has to be taken into account. The group should not be too big: 12–15 members is a good size. The composition of the group works best if there is heterogeneity, i.e. not all farmers practise the same methods, or they grow different crops, or have different sized farms. Meetings must be easy to attend, and therefore held close to the farmers, even on the farm of one of the participants if possible. It is important to keep a balance between meeting regularly to ensure continuity of the group, but not so often that there is nothing new to discuss. The coordination should be done by the farmers themselves and meetings should be facilitated by someone who has volunteered to do so. Activities can be miscellaneous, like trips to experimental farms, visiting each other's farm, inviting advisors or other experts, information evenings, comparative analysis of farm results, experimentation and research. Participants report that they like the groups for various reasons, for instance the way topics are discussed, the informal atmosphere, moral support from colleagues, testing of ideas and opinions, as well as the alibi function—group meetings provide an alibi for visiting other people's farms and viewing interesting and sometimes controversial examples of innovation.

their animals. The effectiveness of relevant new practices would then be studied and monitored in farmer-controlled on-farm research, with support from researchers and advisors.

In the outreach groups, farmer-led research continued to find out if the innovation or the set of innovations could also be applied on other farms, and under different circumstances. It was important that on these other farms, the innovations should lead to a system that works. It is important to realise that just copying what one sees successfully applied at a colleague's farm is not necessarily a guarantee for success on one's own farm. So understanding what the other did and why is important so that the new ideas can be fine-tuned for one's own use. The farmer groups have shown to be an excellent forum for this, where colleagues can advise each other. The Bioveem example shows the usefulness of this kind of inquiry and dialogue, together with involvement.

*Source: Jet Proost*

## Reflections on supporting local learning

### The central challenge

Knowledge and learning play a crucial role in development. In endogenous development, the central challenge is first to revitalise traditional learning and secondly to realise effective synergy and interaction between existing local knowledge systems and those from outside. The case from IDEA, working with the tribals of Orissa, India (case 5-3), is a strong example of how an organisation has revitalised the traditional dormitory education system. Revitalising this traditional learning system has contributed to sustainability, empowerment and self-reliance of the tribals and also helped them to integrate in mainstream society while maintaining their cultural identity.

This way of looking at learning and training contrasts with that of many conventional interventions, which assume that development is triggered by a one-sided introduction of new ideas and practices into local realities.

In Chapter 2 Learning in endogenous development, four major lessons with respect to learning are elaborated on:

- Different cultures have different understandings, methods and contents of learning.
- Mainstream (or dualistic) ways of learning separate the learner from his or her environment.
- Endogenous development builds on existing practices for learning.
- Endogenous development is a process of social learning among communities, development workers and researchers.

Here we summarise the main strategies that emerge from the cases in this chapter.

Endogenous development itself is a continuous social learning process. Throughout the various activities involved, local communities as well as support organisations try to better understand local realities, the most important constraints to development and the best ways to deal with these. This is the learning process. Building horizontal relationships is crucial to social learning

processes, in which it is acknowledged that there is a close interrelationship between the development of cognitive competences (such as technical knowledge and skills) and the social, spiritual and emotional competences.

### **Mental switch**

Different learning forms have been identified in the Compas network, and a selection of these is presented in Chapter 2. Most Compas partner organisations have spent several years on appreciating and understanding the local worldviews and for most of us it is a life-long process of understanding more and more. In Chapter 3 we have seen that material-based development is not the only aspect that counts for an increasing number of people and organisations who face economic, social and ecological problems. For their development most people still mainly depend on their own natural resources, social structures, culture, religion and spirituality to deal with the pressures.

In the search for ways of dealing with the polycrisis, development workers interested in endogenous development start to appreciate their own culture again. They look for ways to reintegrate traditional faith, values, knowledge and institutions in their own professional and personal life and thus change the ways things are done in the communities they work with. Their own personal development path often leads them to the following challenge: how to merge traditional and modern scientific knowledge to improve local livelihoods? David Millar from Ghana (Chapter 2, Learning Form 2) and Abraham Mwadiwa from Zimbabwe (Case 3-3) describe their personal way to endogenous development. The resulting mental switch of the development worker generally generates enormous enthusiasm and motivation among rural people to work on their own solutions to improve their well-being and to express their cultural identity.

Reconnecting to one's own roots is an individual process occurring across continents and cultures. Sharing these insights is one of the motivating factors for individuals and organisations to be engaged in the Compas network.

Engaging in endogenous development also requires attitudes and skills with which to critically reflect on and address controversies surrounding traditional knowledge. Cultural relativism, where all cultural practices are legitimised because a culture is fully accepted as being 'valid', is not a good basis for endogenous development.

Development workers may find it difficult to deal with justification of traditional phenomena such as imbalances and misuse of power, gender and caste imbalances, use of violence or ecological destruction.

Learning to have 'empathy' appears to be a key quality here. Empathy can help to identify traditional ways of dealing with controversies. When development workers feel it is necessary, they should be able to respectfully disagree with practices that they find difficult to deal with. If the trust relationship is strong enough, the community should either be able to clarify the controversy or else engage in a dialogue on how to address the controversy. It is important that the development worker learns to engage in respectful disagreement only when he or she has

tried to view the controversy from the perspective of the local community and its worldview as far as possible and is capable of presenting the critical points in a constructive way.

It is clear that most development workers are trained in the modern materialistic worldview in which matter is regarded as the basis of all life forms. Many traditional sciences and newly emerging insights from post-modern science seem to suggest that consciousness is the basis of all life forms. Hopefully in coming decades the new scientific insights of quantum physics will also enable development workers to accept the legitimacy of traditional worldviews. This in turn will enable them to be confident in re-integrating traditional worldviews with their modern worldviews (see *Moving Worldviews*, 2006).

### Systematic documentation

Development workers can also support local learning by working with communities to systematically document and analyse local knowledge. In endogenous development, there is interest not only in knowledge handed down from previous generations but also in new knowledge, ideas and innovations developed by local people themselves that may form a good entry point for development activities.

Systematic documentation of local knowledge and local innovation serves multiple purposes:

- It increases awareness in the community of the existence of local knowledge;
- It prevents relevant knowledge from being lost with the passing away of elder generations;
- It provides a platform for discussing the potential and limitations of such knowledge in the present context;
- It generates materials that enable the knowledge to be spread more widely to other farmers and to agencies.

There is a distinct danger, however, that the last purpose may dominate the other three, and that the documentation process becomes extractive: outside workers do the studies and prepare the documentation for wider sharing. While this may be useful in certain situations, in endogenous development the focus is on the first three purposes, which are concerned with mobilising relevant knowledge to support development by the people involved.

Documentation can take many forms: easily accessible printed statements, brochures, handbills in the case of Bolivia, and/or photographs or videos using low-cost digital cameras. Communities may have their own ways of documentation and may make use of songs or dances to preserve and spread information.

The case of FRLHT in India (Case 5-2) shows the value of systematic documentation and assessment of local health traditions. First of all, it has increased confidence among the healers. The revitalisation work of FRLHT contributed to the formulation of a policy statement by the Government of India that local health traditions are an important component of the country's health care and that they should be strengthened. Now local NGOs are coming forward to take up the work of documentation, assessment and promotion, as are healers' networks in different states of India. Also resources are being mobilised by NGOs and the government to implement

documentation, assessment and related revitalisation programmes. Training modules have been translated into seven languages by the effort of these nodal NGOs. Similarly, diversified fund support for the activity is being generated.

### Re-valuing local knowledge and local experts

Taking local knowledge seriously not only contributes practically to improved learning at community level, but the cases also give evidence of impact at the psycho-social level, in the sense that people feel they are taken seriously. The fact that development agents pay attention to all dimensions of local knowledge and 'publish' about these leads to a re-valuing, including by local people themselves. This is particularly true for those within communities who are carriers of such knowledge, referred to as 'local experts'. These include people with knowledge of local herbs, traditional healers, experts in finding water or managing trees, traditional birth attendants and local vets. In quite a few cases their knowledge combines biophysical, cultural and spiritual elements. These forms of knowledge may be less accessible for development workers who often shy away from the non-biophysical. Yet, these local experts play an important role in ensuring local livelihoods. Being aware of their existence, finding and encouraging them to be part of or support development activities can be important strategies in endogenous development, as some of the cases show.

The case of the Mapuche (case 5-5) shows how the development worker integrated himself in the community's time and space through participating in Mapuche learning methods, including rituals, led by traditional indigenous leaders. This enabled him to open up to being evaluated, as a person and as a representative of his profession and organisation, both by the Mapuche and by the cosmic forces that animate everyday life in that area.

### Strengthening local-level knowledge sharing and expert-to-expert learning

The cases show the potential of horizontal learning at local level. This can take many forms, including:

- Re-strengthening of elder-youth learning forms, as in the case of India (5-3) in this chapter.
- Facilitating exchanges between local experts in specific areas to improve quality of services given. Local experts are often prepared to share their 'secrets' with others, especially if this is for the greater welfare of society. An example is farmer-to-farmer training in which experienced farmers in one field provide training to other farmers, as in the case from the Netherlands (5-6). Farmer-to-farmer learning can take the form of formal farmer-led training sessions, open field days on the farm, or of exchange visits between groups of farmers.

Farmer-to-farmer training and learning is not unique to endogenous development. The challenge is to adapt it, make use of it, or fit it into existing learning and knowledge exchange patterns in order to ensure its longer term continuity. Part of this challenge is to arrive at clarity about who 'facilitates' these learning activities, or feels responsible for them at the local level.

These may be existing traditional leaders or institutions if the form chosen fits their domain; or the local government if the form chosen links to activities such as farmer field days under their responsibility. In other situations newly formed groups or committees may provide leadership.

### **Encouraging local experimentation and research**

In most cases there are no simple short-cuts to improve local livelihoods. Revived local knowledge or relevant ideas and practices from outside need to be tested and tried out, to assess their effectiveness and relevance. They may have to be modified or rejected if they are found not to be relevant. Development agents can play an important role in supporting local learning by encouraging experimentation and action research by local people and communities. This is often not a new concept for them. Farmers and land users in all parts of the world innovate in order to improve their lives or to face new challenges, and undertake small-scale experiments in their own way as part of this innovation process to reduce risks. Supporting this process of local experimentation and learning and building local capacities to this end are a key part of endogenous development. The case of the Netherlands (5-6) provides a concrete example of this. The approach of strengthening local innovation and experimentation is documented as Participatory Technology Development (PTD) or Participatory Innovation development (PID, see Van Veldhuizen et al, 1997).



# Chapter 6

# **SUPPORTING LOCAL INITIATIVES**

## **Introduction**

How can local problems be resolved by building on traditional concepts and practices? How to deal with cultural and spiritual concepts in research and development? How can traditional practices be improved? Can traditional practices be strengthened with modern scientific insights? How to experiment and innovate to create new solutions? How can traditional markets be strengthened? How can market opportunities be used for local products? How can promising solutions be spread to other potential users? The various cases in this chapter, and in several other chapters of this book, may provide answers or at least entry-points for discussion on these issues.

### **Case 6-1**

#### **Action research on grain storage in Nepal**

##### **Grain storage interventions often fail**

In Nepal, post-harvest losses are serious and threaten food security. Generally, reducing these is seen as a technical activity. Much of the research focuses on technology development, with little understanding of the socio-cultural system. Farmers' values, beliefs, spirituality and cosmovision are not considered. Farmers therefore often reject technology introduced by extension workers or development programmes. The latter ignore the fact that farmers do follow their own strategies to prevent storage losses, strategies that merit further understanding before improvements can be considered.

##### **Social and spiritual dimensions of indigenous grain storage**

Local storage strategies include important social and spiritual components. The numerous rules, rituals and festivities reflect farmers' awe of nature and their gratitude for food. The idea that grain itself contains supernatural qualities is common, and most farmers speak of *saha*, the 'grain soul' or 'corn spirit'. *Saha* must be acquired through ritual. It is only found in grain produced on one's own land. Sufficient *saha* acts as a multiplying and replenishing force in the storeroom. *Saha* is capable of leaving the commodity, and, once lost, even a large amount of grain will be finished within a short period.

One of the most common *saha*-conserving practices is called *dumo*, whereby some handfuls of grain are kept in the container, sacred, even during times of acute food deficit. When only a

small amount remains, the farmer assumes that the grain soul is now dwelling in this last stock in higher concentration. If this were consumed, the grain soul would have no place to dwell and would thus disappear.

Many of the storage-related rituals and practices do not seem to have a direct effect on crop storability. A few, however, seem to conflict with scientific recommendations. The small amount of grain remaining in the *dumo* container may be heavily infested and present a potential source of infestation. The privacy surrounding storage management implies that grain storage and the means of controlling stored products are rarely discussed. Storing the harvested grain hidden on the upper floor prevents outsiders from inspecting technologies and practices. Most of the beliefs of farmers have an internal logic, however. In all cases, we acknowledged and respected local systems and beliefs as an important and implicit part of farmers' reality and incorporated these in our action research.

## Initiating participatory action research

This information about the farmers' perceptions of grain losses and their knowledge of storage pest management were collected during a survey in the first year of our programme.

Communities visited could then decide whether they wanted to participate in a Participatory Action Research activity to improve grain storage. Interest was shown by a group of 15 women farmers in Gobardiha.

Experimenting as a way of learning is not new to the women. Farmers in Gobardiha experiment, but with great caution, particularly when it comes to seed storage. If it fails, they may not have quality seed the following season. Therefore, it is important that farmers decide how much risk to take, even though this might conflict with the paradigm of scientific research. Thus, to supplement the farmers' experiments with scientifically sound data, we conducted a set of on-farm experiments ourselves in the same village. The setting up of farmer-controlled and scientist-controlled experiments in the same location facilitated information exchange and motivated the participants.

## Agreeing jointly on what to try

The participants' initial discussion on how to improve the local storage system reflected their concern for household food security. They rejected ideas that (i) were entirely new and incomprehensible (e.g. mixing chaff with grain), (ii) involved monetary costs (e.g. recycled oil containers, incorporating metal sheets, pottery), (iii) required collaboration with others (organising material from the market), and (iv) required equipment or time on a regular basis (e.g. temperature monitoring). They accepted ideas (i) they were familiar with (e.g. mixing botanicals), (ii) that were based on local practices (sand, smoking, plastering, incorporating foreign materials in bin wall), (iii) that allowed independence, and (iv) promised immediate results so that they could justify their actions to the family. High labour costs were not a reason for rejection (e.g. for sieving grain that was mixed with sand).

## The experiments

The decision was thus made to undertake 12 experiments, two of which are described here.

The first experiment involved testing the efficacy of using sand to protect grain from pest infestation. In the farmers' experiment they stored grain between two 10 cm layers of sand. The scientists stored grain in three ways: between two layers of sand, mixed with sand, and stored without sand. At the end of the storage period, pests were virtually absent in the grain stored between layers of sand. Untreated seed and seed mixed with sand was highly infested. Storing between sand layers turned out to be an abandoned traditional practice. Only one participant experimented with sand in the first year, but in the second year, the use of sand for pest control was re-adopted by almost all participants and many other villagers.

Another experiment was concerned with checking grain during storage. During the first year of on-farm experiments the participating women farmers had been told that the traditional clay-bins used for wheat storage should be opened and checked after 140 days of storage, at the end of the rainy season. Drying the wheat at this time would preserve the seed until the end of the storage period. However, although the farmers could visualise this scientific finding when it was explained to them, they did not follow the recommendation, due to their belief that opening the vessels is harmful, as the air entering triggers pest infestation and spoilage. Thus, most of the bins remained sealed for the entire storage period. The challenge then was how to monitor the saved grains without opening the bin. The answer was simple, yet required close collaboration between scientists and farmers: with a window. A piece of glass inserted at the foot of the bin allowed monitoring from outside. Once insects were detected, the farmers did not hesitate to remove the grain for sun-drying. If no insect activity was observed, opening was unnecessary. This 'improved bin with a view' was highly successful. Windows are now also incorporated in larger vessels containing food grain.



Woman proudly showing a 'bin with a view', which allows insects in stored grains to be detected.

## Lessons learned

This work with the women farmers showed that they are well aware of storage losses and able to acquire and use skills for setting up and analysing experiments. Given some guidance, they are able to solve storage-related problems and to improve their storage systems. A few points should be kept in mind:

**Science and common sense:** As farmers need the benefit more than they need proof, it is incomprehensible to them that a part of the grain remains untreated as control. Hence, about

half of the participants decided to make the control vessels very small to minimise the expected loss of untreated seed.

**Flexibility:** Storage activities are not planned, but are often performed when the opportunity arises. Times, varieties, structures and practices are highly individual so that group work needs to be complemented by individual visits and guidance.

**Data gaps:** The time span between setting up and analysing experiments is long. Consequently, there is a high chance of missing some relevant data, rendering the database unsuitable for scientific purposes.

**Individual and group work:** Group work is indispensable for motivating and encouraging the participants and for exchanging information. But farmers did not agree to conduct experiments together or to use methods that made them dependent on others.

**The need for scientific experiments:** If scientific data is required, scientist-controlled experiments need to complement farmer experiments.

**Reliable technology disseminates itself:** Reliable, acceptable and affordable technologies spread without any external initiative, as in the case of storing grain between sand layers.

Source: Astrid Björnsen Gurung

## Case 6-2

### Addressing saving problems of women in India

#### Introduction

The Indian non-government organisation IDEA (Integrated Development through Environmental Awakening) has worked among the tribes of the Eastern Ghats in India for more than two decades. In its participatory approach to development it builds on local values, customs, practices, resources and institutions. The women's savings programme, as narrated below by two members of the women's group, is a good example of how the understanding and integration of cultural and spiritual realities has helped to strengthen development efforts.

#### Experiences of a women's group

"We, the women's groups, have tried to address our problem related to the loss of our savings. Hitherto, when we tried to keep some small savings in our house, they were mostly taken away by the male members. Our hard-earned money used to disappear! That is why women's savings programmes have failed in many villages. In 2002, all the women's groups came together to review and analyse this situation. Members of the Naik Gotna (the network of tribal leaders) were also present at the meeting. We sought their help and advice on how to solve this problem of women's savings going missing.

"A suggestion came from the Poojari (priests) and Dhisari (local healer): 'Keep your savings in front of your Ghoror Nisani (ancestral spirits in the house). Your money will be safe, since it is a

very serious taboo to touch any belonging of the ancestral spirits. So your money will not be touched by anyone in the house.'

"But then the question arose: how can we then touch the monthly savings kept in front of our Ghoror Nisani to be able to use them? Then another Poojari, by the name of Anandarao, solved this problem by saying 'When we break a coconut to the god we leave one piece with the god and take the rest for our own consumption. Similarly, when you are in need of your savings in front of a god, you can leave some token amount, like 50 paise or 1 rupee, and take the rest of the money to the bank or use it to meet your emergency needs.'

"This seemed very sensible to us. We decided to do an experiment with women from 12 villages. IDEA provided us with savings pots, and training. We started this programme on an experimental basis, which we named Nisani Donn (money of the divine beings and women). After celebrating a ritual to worship our village goddess Sanku Devath, all our women's group members, men and children gathered for the launch of the programme. Since then we have kept our savings pots in front of our Ghoror Nisani located either in the centre or in the corner of the house."



Women preparing botanical pesticides according to a traditional formula in a training and experimentation programme.

## Results

"When we started in 2001 the average monthly saving of each member of the groups was around 20 rupees, but by the end of the month the women were usually finally left with less than 10% of these savings. After the first month of the experiment, the savings had reached more than 35 rupees per woman, and nobody had touched it. Within months, the saving programme started accelerating. In the second year, ten more villages joined in this experiment, and the savings had gone up to an average of 43 rupees per woman every month. In this way the modern concept of a savings programme was combined with our own customs and beliefs. No male members or children ever tried to touch this money again!"

Source: Muvvala Muthai and Madala Yeeramma

## Case 6-3 A mango competition in India

### Introduction

Traditional Indian food is highly diversified; an ordinary lunch consists of many vegetables, grains and herbs. There are many dishes and any one particular dish can be prepared in many

During a mango competition organised by KPP the mango varieties are judged by local criteria like flavour, shape and sap content.



different ways. Pickle is an indispensable side-dish in traditional Indian food. There are many kinds, including tender mango pickle, lime pickle and vegetable pickle. Pickle made from the tender mango is famous for its taste in southern India. Besides being used for food and timber, the tender mango tree is also used in specific rituals. Leaves are tied around the house and in front of doors. People believe that this will protect the house from the pollutants in the atmosphere. The tender leaves of mango and jack fruit are also used in *Kalasa*, a sacred copper pot filled with water. The mango leaves energise the *Thirtha* or holy water in the *Kalasa*. Five tender leaves of mango and jackfruit are placed with their petiole immersed in the water. A coconut is placed above these leaves and worshipped.

Krishi Prayoga Pariwara (KPP), a farmers' organisation, works in the Shimoga district in Karnataka the Western Ghats,

where the flora and fauna are rich and diverse. The main crops are the areca nut, paddy and coconut. There are medicinal herbs, shrubs, trees, vines and fruit yielding trees like mango and jackfruit. One of the main goals of KPP is to link organic agriculture and health with the local environment.

Two elements surprised KPP about the use of tender mango, which led to further study in 1999. First, a large number of varieties of tender mango were found in the vegetable market in Sagara, the main town of one of the taluks (an administrative unit) in Shimoga district. They differed in size, shape, flavour and juice content. This made KPP wonder about the mango varieties in the region and the quality criteria used by the local population. Second, local sellers harvested the tender mangoes by cutting down the big branches. The mangoes were then transported by lorry to big cities such as Shimoga, Bangalore and Chennai to be processed as industrial pickle. Why were farmers involved in such unhealthy harvesting practices?

Another finding was that employment and income from processing the mangoes takes place in the cities and not in the small villages. Moreover, due to industrial pickling, the technology and know-how of local pickle preparation was being lost. The younger generation is not interested in learning about it because they can buy pickle on the market. Social relations are also affected: the younger generation no longer interacts with the older generation in the process of pickle making. People have lost the habit of offering a gift of homemade pickle when visiting friends or relatives. Even during community gatherings industrial pickle is now commonly used.

KPP organised a competition to find answers to the following questions. To what extent are villagers involved with the tender mango crop? Why are these tender mangoes being exported out of the region? How many pickle industries are flourishing? What is the state of the local technology of pickle preparation today? What is the effect of the presence of industrial pickle on the market?

### Steps in the tender mango competition

- Preparing a small group of local people to conduct the survey.
- The team and KPP workers developed a questionnaire to collect information on the varieties of mango trees. Questions included the local name, the age of the tree, its fruiting pattern, yield and propagation.
- The local team conducted the survey and collected mango tree varieties.
- The mango tree varieties were judged by two farmers and two housewives experienced in pickle preparation and tender mango selection. They judged according to eight local criteria: size, shape, flavour, texture, stalk length and girth, sap content, thickness of skin and seed. During the competition nearly 100 entries were exhibited in different classes, including raw tender mango, tender mango in brine and ready-made pickle.
- Long, well-flavoured tender mangoes with high sap content and a thin skin are more in demand on the market. Generally the villagers prefer tender mangoes from their own locality. Tender mangoes with 70 to 80 per cent of the desired qualities are in particular demand. Only a few varieties meet this standard and most varieties fall below the 50 per cent line. Nearly ten varieties of high quality were selected during the competition.

### Some reactions

Nearly 150 local people, the KPP team and officials of the Government Forest Department attended the ceremony. Local leaders and writers were also present. There were many questions and comments from the participants regarding the status and future of tender mango. KPP staff felt that this was just the beginning. After this programme, local government departments in agriculture, horticulture and forestry showed interest in conserving some of the noted varieties. The forestry department has distributed more than 100,000 grafted seedlings of these varieties. Farmer members of KPP have also conserved their local varieties of tender mango. Staff from the University of Agricultural Sciences in Dharwad have conducted a few research studies on the tender mango varieties.

*Source: A.S. Anand,  
V.K. Aruna Kumara,  
KPP*

## Case 6-4

### Local concepts and the design of joint experiments in Ghana

#### The need for local concepts

The Empathic Learning and Action framework makes explicit and addresses two different perceptions of the local reality: those of the rural people and those of outsiders who want to work with a rural community. These two can fruitfully interact if joint learning processes are created whereby rural people's knowledge and those of outsiders interact. This can take the shape of joint experimentation. Cecik, a Ghanaian NGO, has struggled to try and help design such experimentation in a way that makes sense to the villagers. How can we prevent, or make

Village meeting in Bongo. Project staff, farmers and earthpriests exchange views.



relevant, formal concepts such as experimental design, objective of the activity, and criteria for assessment? Cecik has found the 'footpath analogy' very effective. The approach has been used to address a number of issues including food crop concerns and efforts to combat the weed striga. The example here shows how it has been used in the design of vetiver grass production in the village of Kalbeo in northern Ghana.

## Getting started

Cecik realises that entering the village from the perspective of the local cosmovision influences the effect and outcome of the project activities. In this particular community, basket weaving is a tradition that has been passed down from generation to generation. The entire community (elders, younger men and women, youth and even children) all weave, and the heritage is reflected in local folklore.

Cecik had already been working in Kalbeo for two years when the women of the community raised the issue of the need for grass to weave hats and baskets, a major year-round income earning activity for them. The income is most important during the dry season when there are no farming activities taking place.

The women raised the issue during a discussion on the on-going tree-planting programme that focused on the regeneration of sacred groves and shrines, and traditionally protected lands; general natural regeneration; tree planning in woodlots and fruit tree planting as an economic activity. The issue of grass therefore fitted well within the Cecik environmental rehabilitation programme.

## Looking for things to try

The members of the community and CECIK field staff analysed the current situation of lack of grass for weaving. One of the problems was that people had to travel to southern Ghana to buy grass. Alternatively, they bought it at the local market, but at exorbitant prices. Together we discussed the causes and effects, and actions that they might be able to undertake to mitigate the situation. We also discussed how other organisations had dealt with similar problems and compared these with the situation in Kalbeo. The discussion led to ideas about 'things that could be tried' in order to increase productivity and ultimately improve women's livelihoods in particular. The discussion centred on issues of production, processing and marketing of woven products.

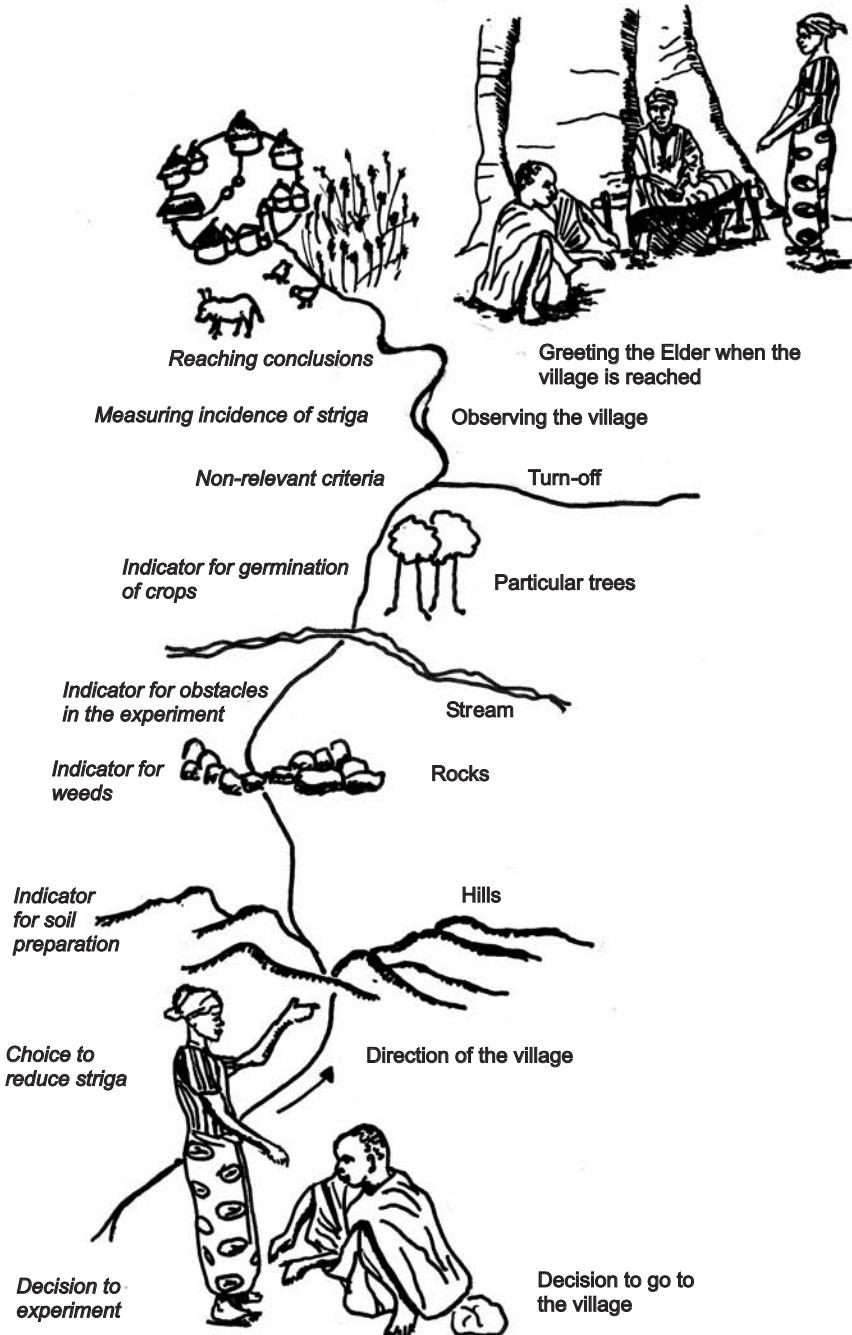


Figure 1: The analogy between farmer's experimental design and the footpath to the village

## Footpath analysis

After we had analysed together with the farmers the possibilities for cultivating vetiver grass locally, we realised that they had better ideas than the project staff. An experiment to try these ideas out seemed to be called for. This is where the footpath analogy came in.

The footpath analysis is a methodology based on the analogy between a footpath and the design of an experiment (Figure 1). Among rural communities in northern Ghana, the footpath has great socio-cultural significance. In the local Dagaare language it is called *sor-le*. A path brings both strangers and locals into the community, and takes them out again. It brings evil and it brings good. To guide a stranger into their communities, people describe the entry path in detail, indicating every significant feature or landmark. CECIK thought that by asking the farmers to describe the path from the town to their community, and then asking them to equate this with how they investigate a new idea, it might arrive at ways to get farmers to lead the designing of the experiments.

## Drawing the footpath

We formed three separate groups of ten people and asked them to describe in detail—on the ground—how to get from the town to their village. We asked them to include as many details of the landscape as they possibly could. Obstacles like streams, rocks, bushes, bends in the path and trees were identified. Also easy parts, like gentle slopes, clear areas, hard ground and straight stretches of road were pointed out using objects on the ground.

The three designs were brought together and the next challenge was to combine them into one. We noted the similarities, differences and complementarities. The discussions became intense, and there was plenty of fun and mockery when inaccuracies and omissions were discovered. At this point, Cecik staff facilitated the process of obtaining relevant outcomes: starting point, ending point, the choices and judgements that a stranger has to make in order to reach the village.

## Designing the experiment

Using this exercise as an entry point, we then challenged the different groups to redraw their first paths, but now included the critical features of the intended vetiver experiment. It was easier this time to follow the same process with a new idea, and an intricate research path started to emerge. From their work, it was possible to make a preliminary list of investigation criteria, such as indicators for choice, critical stages for data collection and some issues of sustainability.

Along the footpath, the decision to go to the village stood for 'determining the experimental objective'. In the vetiver experiment, the objective was to rejuvenate the environment and also to provide grass for weaving. The direction of the village stood for the 'direction to be taken with

the vetiver grass production'. After considering various methods for undertaking action, the farmers decided on two things:

- To start a revolving loan scheme, which they could use to buy grass from southern Ghana, and stockpile it for use.
- Cultivate a piece of land to plant vetiver grass. They had not done this before and were not sure whether the grass, when transplanted, would grow in their area. They decided that they required Service Provider support from the department of Forestry and Agriculture to do the experiment.

## **Taking the analogy further**

The analogy of the footpath and the experimental design was also used to highlight other possible outcomes. Narrow or broad paths, and bare or grassy paths, were symbolic of the rate of progress; streams or other obstacles stood for the obstacles encountered in the experiment. The farms and livestock that appear when nearing human settlements were equated with the criteria used for judging whether the desired outcome was being achieved.

The distribution of crop fields, grazing lands and fallow represented the layout of the experiment. The analogy here was whether the experimental plot was located near the village or in the bush, on the hill or in the valley, on an old farm plot or a new one. Reaching or missing the village symbolised whether or not the experiment outcomes had been achieved.

## **The progress indicators**

The community also used the footpath analogy to further identify progress indicators. Landmarks such as particular trees, rocks and hills became analogies for indicators such as land preparation, transplanting the grass, competition with weeds. The farmers also defined the indicators to monitor the performance, including the grass population before and after the experiment, and the time needed before harvesting. In this way we were able to highlight how soon the crop matured, what happened during the seasonal moisture stress period, and the size, colour and height of the grass.

The farmers decided to evaluate the harvest in terms of harvesting time, quantity and quality of the harvest, suitability for weaving, and savings resulting from not having to buy.

## **Outcome**

The loan scheme has been started and is running, and has provided large quantities of grass from outside the village for weaving this year. The vetiver grass has been planted but not yet harvested. Farmers realise that they can cultivate vetiver themselves and now put energy into protecting the crop from wildfire and livestock damage. A neighbouring community has seen what has been going on, and is interested. If Cecik goes into the second village it will also use the *sor le* approach.

## Our lessons

It must be said that the final outcome of working with the footpath analysis is not a uniform procedure for designing experiments, but a rich heterogeneity of designs with detailed modifications. Such an outcome is problematic for our conventional concept of uniformity and up-scaling of experiments. It leads, though, to two major things: on the one hand it strengthens the farmers' capacity to experiment. The footpath analogy has motivated the communities to experiment within their own cultural context and, in this way, has moved participation a step forward. On the other hand, Cecik has built up institutional capacity, enabling it to go beyond conventional experimentation with farmers, and even beyond NGO experimentation. It has provided us with new ideas about 'the process of farmer experimentation'. In our quest for endogenous development this process can be adapted and the basic principles be replicated beyond the villages of Northern Ghana.

Source: Cecik

## Case 6-5

### Sirigu Women's Organization of Pottery and Art in Ghana

#### The village of Sirigu

The village of Sirigu is located in the Upper East Region in Ghana and inhabited by subsistence farmers. It is well known for its traditional architecture, pottery and wall designs. The traditional wall decorations are particularly impressive, a unique expression of the cultural identity of Sirigu. Natural and local materials are used to make the black, red and white paint. Women do the decorations to make the home beautiful and to make their husbands and themselves feel happy. It used to be a social activity, not meant to generate any income. Visitors would come, however, and take photos, but there was no real acknowledgement of the work that the women had done to make the wall decorations.

In Sirigu, income generation activities tend to be organised at an individual level, especially pottery and basket weaving. People come from all the villages nearby for the pottery made in

Sirigu; it is the main way of earning money. Many women are involved in pottery making: it is traditionally women's work. Marketing of the pottery is complicated, however.

Middlemen and women were buying pottery from Sirigu to exchange it for food items or for money. Women would take pottery to the market, and at the end of the day they would sell their pots at a much lower price than they were worth. An additional complication is that in the local culture women cannot get a

A woman from the Sirigu Women's Organization of Pottery and Art (SWOPA) painting traditional designs on canvas.



loan facility, as they do not have property: in the local dowry system a woman and her children belong to the husband. The pottery is hers, however. A woman can take it to the market, and the money earned this way is hers.

## Starting SWOPA

The idea to form SWOPA, the Sirigu Women's Organization for Pottery and Art, grew in the village when Melanie Kasise retired to her village after working for many years in education and with the local radio. Being the first woman from the village to be educated and make a career, she had a lot of prestige among the villagers and many saw her as a role model for local women seeking to become independent. Discussing the pottery marketing problems with her aunt, it seemed that the best way forward would be to set up a local organisation to try and get a better price. Initially a group of about 54 women was formed, mostly older women who were not nursing any children.

### Melanie Kasise relates what happened

'In 1997 we got in touch with the National Board for Small Scale Industries and invited someone to speak about starting up a project. A young lady came and gave a workshop for four days, especially on 'how to cost the pots'. We went through the whole process of making the pots and came to the conclusion that the price we used to ask for them was far too low. As a result we started to increase the price, and to our surprise people still came to buy. After this meeting we also registered SWOPA as an organisation and chose our executives. Getting loan facilities is easy now, because we are members of an identifiable group.'

## Expanding activities

The initial experiences in commercialising pottery were not very positive. Pottery is a heavy and breakable product, transport is difficult and the prices are relatively low. Therefore, the idea was put forward to diversify production and to include tourist development and painting. At the time, the traditional wall painting was gradually losing people's interest. It involves a lot of work, whereas the labour burden of women was increasing, because more men were migrating away from the village. This traditional art expression was attracting tourists, but in a way that did not lead to income or other benefits for the people. As no one in the village had experience in tourism, a team of expatriate and local experts was asked to make a feasibility study on the potential for activities in this field. SWOPA was able to mobilise the support of a group of expatriate friends of Sirigu, who had lived in the area. They also assisted in raising funds. The study team concluded that the traditional art did have a good potential for tourism, provided that some basic facilities were created. They also concluded that the traditional art, applied on walls, could possibly be applied on canvas. This would allow the villagers to commercialise their art, through selling their paintings. To realise this, an initial grant was needed and subsequently used to build the physical infrastructure and to train local people in tourism,

commercialisation and management. The business plan indicated that in the course of 4 to 6 years the group would become economically independent and would be able to raise income for a substantial number of women.

SWOPA subsequently established a tourist centre and the village now attracts increasing numbers of visitors who enjoy the traditional architecture and wall designs. Visitors can stay in a guesthouse built in the traditional style. An art shop exhibits and sells the pottery and paintings. Tourist guides have been trained to show visitors the cultural and natural beauties of the village. SWOPA presently employs five persons for tourist services, sales and support of the production.

Though the women are very gifted in using the traditional colours and symbols, and in shaping their craftswomanship and artistic skills, they are continuously improving through training so that they can be successful in painting on canvas. Painting walls is a group activity in which there is a division of labour: some make designs; others plaster, fill in colours, and yet others make music or prepare food. Making paintings on canvas is an individual activity that requires different techniques and skills. It also raised questions about the symbolism used in the paintings, the kinds of colours used, the development of individual styles and their relationship to the traditional style. Training was provided by expatriate and local art teachers. Capacity-building support was also necessary in other areas new to the women such as organisation of exhibitions and even developing a website ([www.swopa.org](http://www.swopa.org)).

## Traditions continue to inspire development

In search of inspiration, the Sirigu women artists decided to do research on the history of their own village. Lucy Akanboyuure, the director of SWOPA, set out a strategy to get information on the foundation of the village and on art history. She identified the *tendana* (the land priest) and the experienced musicians as the true bearers of history. The artists visited the elders. The *tendana* informed the women about the history of the land, while the musicians related the story of the village through the history of their instruments. Thus the women unravelled the story of the foundation of their village. One of the drums, the *longná*, plays a crucial role in the story of the foundation of Sirigu. The women thus discovered that not only their musical tradition is centuries old, but also their own arts of pottery and mural decoration. This was an absolute eye-opener to the artists. It made them feel proud of their village and of their own history. The new information was immediately transferred into very innovative art designs on canvas.

## Results

The group has grown now to almost 150 members. The paintings and pottery of Sirigu are now sold not only in the village but also in both the district and national capital art galleries. SWOPA has also taken part in art exhibitions in the Netherlands and the US. The individual artists get a fair share of the sales. Since 2002 SWOPA has received several national awards for

its outstanding tourist services and quality art work. Sirigu women have painted a wall decoration in the traditional style in a restaurant in Bolgatanga, as well as in the swimming area in the Golden Tulip hotel in Accra. This first class hotel has also asked SWOPA women to produce 50 paintings for the hotel rooms. With the additional income from tourist services and the sales of art, the women can spend more money on food, health and the education of their children. But it also strengthens the position of the women in the household and society. The contribution of women in decision making in the households has improved and the percentage of girls in primary and secondary education has increased.

SWOPA did receive important support from Ghanaian and foreign organisations. One important form of support has been funding: the grant for making initial investments in infrastructure and training. But capacity-building support has also been important: training in various technical areas but also business development support. Moral support was experienced from the appreciation of outsiders of the value of the traditional culture and art. They helped to draw attention to the women's potential for creating income and strengthening their cultural identity. Identifying niches in tourism and art is difficult for local people, as they have no previous experience in this. Developing these as income earning activities required a very intensive dialogue between expatriates, local experts and the villagers, while ensuring that local people remained the owner of the process. Forms of tourism were developed in which visitors are really received in the traditional way, art styles were developed that were in line with the traditional style, but also allowed innovations and individual developments. While outside support was highly appreciated, the women of SWOPA have continued to work towards independence in both management and finance.

*Source: SWOPA*

## **Case 6-6**

### **The real sheep of the Tzotzil in Mexico**

#### **Women shepherdesses**

The Tzotzil Indians are of Mayan origin and live in the central highland region of Chiapas in southern Mexico. Over the centuries Tzotzil shepherdesses have gathered a rich empirical knowledge about their sheep. This knowledge has formed the basis of a combined effort between Tzotzil women and the Institute of Indigenous Studies at the University of Chiapas. Together, they have worked on the genetic improvement of the local breed of sheep, the 'real sheep', on the basis of the shepherdesses' own criteria and needs.

More than 200,000 Tzotzil Indians live in scattered communities all over the Chiapas highlands, an isolated mountainous area approximately 2,200 m above sea level. The Tzotzil are very different from the rest of the Mexicans: they speak their own language, live in isolated pockets and dress in traditional garments made from sheep's wool. Small-scale agriculture plays a central role in their society. The women are responsible for the family for a large part of the year, when male members of the family travel to the temperate areas to grow maize on

Tzotzil shepherdesses selecting sheep of the local Chiapas breed on basis of their wool quality criteria. They are at the farm of the Institute of Indigenous Studies, University of Chiapas.



rented land. They take care of domestic animals, mostly sheep and poultry. The flocks are small, usually fewer than ten sheep, but this is sufficient to make up over a third of the family income, which is earned by selling the animals themselves, the wool, woollen garments and handicrafts, and manure for fertiliser. Shepherding is done exclusively by the women and they develop a special relationship with every single one of their sheep.

## Sheep improvement fails

In the highlands of Chiapas there are many sheep, and of course extension workers came who thought that it would be easy to increase the production of wool in this area. They introduced exotic Rambouillet sheep that produce several kilos of fine wool every year to slowly replace the native sheep that scarcely produce one kilo in the same time span. Unfortunately, the exotic animals did not adapt to the mountainous climate, could not thrive on the poor forage or fight off parasitic illnesses without a commercial food supplement. Even worse was that the women could not process the 'bad quality' wool of these animals, because it was too short, too thin and broke easily during the hand weaving processes. The short, thin, white wool, which is considered good quality wool by industrial standards, is exactly the opposite of what the Tzotzil women require.

The animals were also very different from the indigenous breed, physically and in their character traits: they were bigger and they did not know how to obey. The women named them 'Mexican sheep' as they considered them foreign, unlike their own breed, the 'real sheep'. The Tzotzil shepherdesses soon forgot about these Mexican sheep. The technicians, however, insisted and made repeated attempts with different exotic breeds, but always ended up with the same result.

## Reasons for failure: ignoring local realities

In these attempts to bring in foreign breeds the field workers communicated mainly with the men in the Tzotzil communities. The men speak Spanish and work collectively. What the outsiders did not take into account was that, among the Tzotzil people, only the women are responsible for the sheep and that taking care of them is not done collectively. An added difficulty is that the women speak only Tzotzil, their native language.

Moreover, the technicians had very little interest in the local traditions and in the characteristics of the local breed of sheep, the ones that the Tzotzil women call 'real sheep'. Nor were they aware that these sheep are part of the family, like 'ritual children', each with their own

name. As a result they did not understand why the sheep were reprimanded if they didn't take good care of their offspring, or why the rams for breeding were selected not only on their wool quality, but also on their character, especially on being obedient to the shepherdess and gentle with the lambs.

## **Understanding local knowledge**

Anthropologists and veterinarians from the Institute for Indigenous Studies of the University of Chiapas (UNACH) started an investigation into the traditional sheep-keeping strategies of the Tzotzil communities. The first studies confirmed that traditional animal husbandry made sense, and was based on very useful empirical knowledge. The shepherdesses were not only able to keep the animals alive in the adverse environment, but could also make them breed and produce reasonable quantities of wool. Subsequently, traditional sheep breeding systems were studied in more detail. The methodology of this study was radically new: it took the knowledge of the Tzotzil women as the point of departure, thus accepting their expertise in the husbandry of sheep.

## **Women's own criteria for breeding**

The interaction with the women as shepherdesses and weavers has led to a deepened understanding of their criteria for good wool-producing animals. Not only the colour and the cleanliness of the fleece, but also the size of the animal, the length of the locks, the volume of the clipped wool and its suitability for textile processing are taken into account. The women also brought up the importance of respecting the feelings and soul of the sheep (see Box), which they consider crucial for conserving health and production. This proved to be the key to the programme of genetic improvement: understanding that elements related to traditions and culture are as important as aspects related to the animals and their wool.

## **Participatory breeding**

For the past ten years staff of the institute and Tzotzil shepherdesses have worked hand in hand in a participatory programme for the genetic improvement of the Chiapas sheep. Sheep selected by the women on their own criteria have been taken to the farm of the University of Chiapas to be evaluated for their characteristics related to wool production. The women return to the university farm every six months, usually the week before shearing their sheep. This participatory breeding has resulted in a process of mutual learning. The researchers have learned to look for more specific details related to wool quality. The women, on the other hand have come to realise that even though the people in charge of the improvement programme speak Spanish, are mainly men and are not shepherds, they still feel affection for the animals. They write the names of the sheep, in numbered form and hang it as at a pendant around the

### The importance of respecting the soul of the sheep

On the university farm, the women were in charge of selecting the best animals in terms of wool and character. In an attempt to speed up the selection of the animals, several groups of women were asked to help identify the sheep that produced bad quality wool, so as to eliminate them from the flock. The women entered the yards, checked the animals and said: 'The sheep are all fine, they all produce good wool.' This was very confusing, because there were sheep in the yards that were clearly below the standards of quality that the women themselves had established.

During the break, the university staff asked the Tzotzil interpreter what was going on and she finally explained. 'The women cannot do what you ask. Animals have a soul and feelings, and if they were to hear that the shepherdesses are criticising them or the wool they produce, or the young that they give birth to, their hearts would fill with sadness and they would fall ill and die.'

After some deliberation, the women were asked to choose the three best animals in the yard, their registration numbers were taken down and the animals were moved to a different yard. Then the next best three were chosen and so on until all the sheep had been evaluated. In this way, the quality of the sheep was evaluated without hurting the feelings of the animals.

necks of the animals; they treat the animals with respect and care, even if there are many in the flock.

One part of the combined efforts concentrates on 'translating' the local empirical system of classifying wool quality into a more quantitative system, which has resulted in a more precise selection process of the Chiapas sheep. The quality of the wool is measured by the length in centimetres, the 'volume' of the wool in kilograms and the 'textile aptitude', which is the relation between coarse fibres and fine fibres of locks from different parts of the body.

### Improved sheep accepted as 'real sheep'

Through the collaborative selection and breeding of the sheep on the farm of the institute, it has been possible to return rams of the 'improved Chiapas sheep', to the communities. Their return is planned carefully with the Tzotzil women. As a result, the animals that leave the university farm have adapted fast to the life of the family flocks, learning just as fast to recognise and obey their shepherdesses. The women are happy in their hearts, because they consider these animals to be 'real sheep' that produce long and thick good quality wool, and have lambs that are just as lovely.

The experience with the 'real sheep' of the Tzotzil shepherdesses teaches us that reality is complex. We can no longer ignore the experiences and the cosmovision of the people who live in the communities, and it is time to adapt what is being taught at all institutes of higher education.

Source: Tona Gomez, Hilda Castro and Raul Perezgrovas, The Institute for Indigenous Studies, Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas

## Case 6-7

### Strengthening local markets in Bolivia

#### Introduction

The Seventh Friday Fair takes place on the seventh Friday after Easter, in the town of Sipe Sipe, Bolivia. Sipe Sipe is a small town of approximately 2,000 inhabitants, located at an altitude of 2,500 metres.

Early in the morning, several hundred farmers from the 35 villages in the surrounding area start to gather together. Farmers from the highlands bring various varieties of potatoes and of other local tubers, like *oca* and *papalisa*. Farmers from the valleys bring local varieties of corn. The colourful fair visually reflects local biodiversity but underneath this there is the indigenous solidarity, forming a strong basis for development efforts.



Local markets and fairs reflect abundant diversity from different agricultural ecosystems. Besides monetary exchange, indigenous forms of solidarity and exchange form the basis of local marketing strategies at these fairs.

#### The traditional market process

At the early stages of the market, products from the highlands are shown to the people from the valleys, who arrive from neighbouring communities. Then the *cambiacuy*, the informal exchange, begins which uses verbal agreements between acquaintances, relatives and friends. The *cambiacuy* is the most important form of exchange and is based on affinity rather than on direct gains: a large basket of *papalisa* for a measure of corn, or a *chimpu* or bag of potatoes for the same amount of good quality maize.

Initially the exchange is mainly of tubers and corn, but at a certain hour the diversity of exchanged products is extended to include fruits, vegetables, baskets and clay pots. Around noon, the fair starts to take on a different character, as transactions with money are now included. A second economic logic enters the fair. Merchants arrive from nearby towns. The farming families from the highlands and the valleys also begin to exhibit their products for sale and carry out some necessary purchases.

Finally, by mid-afternoon, the families begin the *ch'alla*, or blessing, of the products that have been exchanged, to ask that the next year may provide enough food for all participating families. The participants assess the results of the fair in terms of products sold or products obtained, but also in terms of friendship, possible new spiritual familial ties, and future marriages.

## Understanding the importance of local fairs

Agruco, a university based centre in Cochabamba, has been present during these fairs for many years and has used this presence to study their role and relevance. These fairs were found to be of strategic importance for urban and rural societies, especially in times of crisis, when cash flows are restricted. They show how in the local calendars, agrarian production is strongly interlinked with the celebration of rituals and fairs. Communities' food security and other needs are secured without the exclusive presence of money. They also show evidence of the joy of sharing life based on the principle of reciprocity. Farmers not only simply search for the materials needed to cover their protein, carbohydrate, vitamin and mineral requirements but also look for the vital energy, which the farmers call *ispalla*, the 'food for the spirit, the mind and the body'.

## Strengthening the fairs

The Seventh Friday Fair, like other indigenous fairs and festivities in Bolivia, has been losing ground over the last decades due to the influence of religious sects and increased consumption of agro-industrial foods, such as sugar, rice and noodles. These factors have also led to a reduced production of Andean crops. To counter this trend Agruco joined farming families in several rural communities in the highlands of Sipe Sipe to initiate a project to strengthen the Seventh Friday Fair.

The most important components of the project were the following:

- Joint reflection took place between the communities and Agruco on the importance of maintaining links of reciprocity between peasants from different ecosystems; the importance of non-monetary strategies to obtain agricultural products and the relevance for cultural identity of preserving fairs and festivals of Andean origin.
- Families were assisted in selecting tubers for exchange; incentives were provided for producing the tubers in the form of community seed funds, and where necessary there was collaboration to ensure transport of the tubers to the fair.
- A survey was made of the opportunities and limitations of the fair, and the results were published within the community with the aim of reaching the young people in particular.

After the project had been implemented, changes were noted: peasants from the altiplano communities became much more actively involved, and this in turn led to an increase in the participation of peasants from the valleys. Agruco first confined its participation in the fairs to observation for about ten years, and in the last five years has been more active, as described above.

The process of strengthening the fairs has been broadened to include the active participation of the municipality of Sipe-Sipe. This project aims to stimulate fairs and festivities like the Seventh Friday Fair, to increase the access to Andean foods, strengthen indigenous

cultural identity, and to educate the urban and rural population about Andean cultural practices. The involvement of the municipality was a new project that was aimed at placing the organisation of the market in the hands of the local government. This meant locating the fair in the main square in the centre of the village of Sipe Sipe, getting the fair included in the village's calendar of festivals, and organising jointly with Agruco open conferences on the economic, social and ritual connotations of reciprocity. The participation of the local government of the Sipe Sipe municipality has been a positive experience for getting the fair revitalised and institutionalised. Before the involvement of the municipality the event had been a marginal affair primarily attended by urban dwellers in the community.

## Ways forward

The support to the festivities and fairs allows for reflection between Agruco and new generations of farmers, in search of effective approaches to endogenous development. The participation of students in the rural fairs and festivities (through Agruco) contributes towards their university education where course content is based on local contexts. But, most importantly, the support given to these indigenous activities shows new ways to reactivate the production of Andean crops and support indigenous forms of solidarity. These may well be viable alternatives to some of the problems that the Bolivian rural population faces.

Source: Freddy Delgado, Dora Ponce, Agruco

## Reflections on supporting local initiatives

### Dealing with cultural and spiritual concepts in research and development

Many cases, especially in Chapter 4, illustrate that the local reality of people comprises social, natural and spiritual dimensions. Acknowledging and respecting local systems and beliefs can be a way to build sufficient trust between the population and the development agent so that it is possible to work together, also on sensitive issues such as beliefs and spiritual practices. As it can be difficult for outsiders with a different cultural background to understand local concepts and the sensitive issues involved (for example respecting the soul of sheep, Case 6-6), it is important that the population takes the lead in indigenous action research. Supporting documentation, exchange and assessment of traditional practices is very important (see Chapter 5) for rural communities to regain trust in their effectiveness and to enhance their renewed use. Adaptation, improvement and innovation of these practices is a next step in the process of revitalisation.

### Experimentation for innovation

Experimentation in which the population and development agents work closely together to create solutions for local problems is now increasingly accepted. Members of the community decide on the design of the process, the choice of what to test and how, and the criteria for evaluating the results. Most of the Compas partners work with this kind of approach and have

designed several methods for facilitating the learning and action process. The footpath analogy developed by Cecik in Ghana (Case 6-4) is one of these approaches. PICADS – developed by AGRUCO in Bolivia (Case 4-4) – is another. In some of the cases (2-8, 4-4, 6-1, 6-4, 6-6) the experimentation process is highlighted. Case 6-1 shows what type of ideas for experimenting with better seed storage were acceptable to the women involved: ideas they were familiar with (e.g. mixing botanicals), that were based on local practices (sand, smoking, plastering), that allowed independence, and promised immediate results. All these ideas were compatible with the spiritual practices around seed storage.

### **Building on the traditional economy**

Strengthening the local economy is an important objective of experimentation. For this it is important to look first at the traditional economic strategies and how these might be improved. Most traditional economies necessarily depended on what could be produced or exchanged locally for subsistence use within the community. Some economies in geographically more favourable positions specialised more in trade. Hence most traditional economies were local economies which mainly depended on the locally available natural, human and spiritual resources. In addition, the specific biophysical characteristics of their region moulded these economies in co-evolution with the local culture of which they were an integrated part. The traditional economy was shaped to reproduce the human community and its territory (land, soil, plants and animals) and to communicate and pay respect to the divine world through rituals, offers and dwelling places. Hence it provided for the natural, social and spiritual needs of the community. Traditional cultures and their economies were centred on interaction with the divine world: their god or gods, Mother Earth (Pacha Mama) or their ancestors. Spiritual protection, social reciprocity and solidarity, complementarity, local varieties and breeds and other strategies to increase resilience were very important for survival of the community. People respected nature and cooperated with it in a more or less sustainable way, whether by way of hunting, collecting, pastoralism, shifting cultivation or sedentary integrated agriculture. Local markets and fairs played an important role in the exchange of products between people with specialised skills or localities. Money often had a limited role in local barter processes, but was important in regional and national trade. Barter and trade were often combined as separate strategies.

Currently, most economies have been integrated at least partly in the national, international and global market. Many economies however, especially those in areas with difficult ecological conditions or far away from main markets and those of conservative cultures, are still quite traditional. Subsistence, barter and market strategies are followed in different, complementary combinations. Revitalising and improving traditional agriculture (Chapter 2, Learning Form 10, Cases, 6-6, 8-2) and traditional health practices (Cases 3-1, 4-1), among others, help to strengthen the local economy. Supporting traditional markets and fairs, as Agruco is doing in Bolivia (Case 6-7), can also be important.

## Principles and examples of enhancing local economies

### Make best use of local resources

- Plug the leaks by using local renewable rather than externally sourced resources.
- Build resilience and spread risks, among others by diversifying the production system.
- Recycle financial resources within the system of producing / buying local goods and services.
- Add value to local produce before it is exported.
- Connect people and institutions to build trust, new linkages and more exchange.

### Exchange with other economies

- Make use of external opportunities to attract external resources, especially money, information, skills, and new technologies.

## Strengthening the local economy

Local economies can be compared with a leaking bucket. Goods and services are produced, exchanged and used within the local economy, but also sold to the outside for money. Money is also used to buy goods and services from inside or outside the local economy. Money from other sources (government, projects, transfers, etc.) flows in and money in the form of taxes flows out. In this way local economies interact with the national and the global economy.

To create economic growth it is often recommended that the local economy be opened up and that investments are made in export-oriented production. If the local economy succeeds in producing competitively, money starts to flow into the local economy and becomes available for further use and accumulation of capital assets. In practice, however, many local economies do not succeed in creating a positive trade balance with the national and global economy. Money and other (natural, human, social) capital assets are depleted and the local economy stagnates (NEF, 2002). To prevent weak local economies from becoming drained of their assets, they need to be localised by plugging their leaks, enhancing internal exchanges and making the best of available resources first. To do so, Pretty (1998) recommends the principles presented in the box below. Several of the cases (e.g. 6.5 and 6.6) in this book present examples of such strategies.

### Make best use of local resources

As external inputs and market opportunities often were not available, traditional economies depended on best use of local resources to satisfy the local needs in such a way that the natural capital did not get lost. Especially in marginal economic conditions, it is therefore important to start from revitalising the local traditional agriculture, health care and other natural resource use practices before introducing modern practices. But as conditions and needs have changed, adaptation and innovation of the traditional practices may be needed. For this, where affordable and acceptable, scientific knowledge may complement the local or traditional knowledge.

### Exchange with other economies

Traditional products can be made attractive for urbanised and foreign consumers as well. By adapting them to the demands of potential consumers and by commercialising, it is often possible to raise the value of traditional products such as herbal medicines, local food specialties, organic agricultural products, handicrafts and art. Eco-cultural tourism may be a way to harvest additional income as well, although local culture may be put at risk. In this way it is possible to strengthen the local economy in new ways. However, commercialisation of local products and services should not be at the cost of food security, social solidarity or ecological sustainability.

### Finding balances

These alternative approaches to local economies should seek a better balance between optimal functioning of the local production system (in the economic, ecological and social senses) and opening up to the national and global market; in other words, between localisation and globalisation—a process in which the community protects its own resources but does not fence itself off from the global world completely. Instead it connects to the global economy in such a way that local qualities (such as food self-sufficiency, cultural identity, ecological sustainability, biodiversity) and values (such as respect for the spiritual world, social reciprocity and solidarity) remain, or become the point of reference. The process of 'localisation' implies a process in which the rules of interaction between the local and the global are increasingly controlled by the local actors (see for example Case 8-7, where olive farming cooperatives have created local selling points).

### Challenges

A central challenge remains the reconciliation of practices recommended by development agents based on western-scientific understanding with local practices based on traditional understanding. The case from Nepal (6-1), for example, presents the practical concerns and questions that development workers had about local grain storage practices, which have a strong religious dimension. The mismatch often caused the introduction of so-called improved practices to fail. It was only after understanding the social-religious dimensions that an effective dialogue was established to develop locally effective and acceptable solutions.

The cases included in this chapter are still experimental and small scale. Their impact is not only economic, but also social, cultural and ecological. Results may therefore not always be easy to measure. Nevertheless, these experiences may be very useful to convince development workers, researchers and policy makers to look in a different way at local development. The challenge now is to design strategies for local action which can be implemented on a large scale and with relatively little effort. Chapters 7 and 8 on strengthening local institutions and creating an enabling environment are important in this respect.

## Chapter 7

# STRENGTHENING LOCAL INSTITUTIONS

## Introduction

How can we ensure that the endogenous development process will be owned locally and thus become sustainable? What role can local people's institutions play to achieve local ownership? How can we help people to build vibrant local institutions that will take responsibility for endogenous development?

This chapter presents experiences in strengthening local institutions and their role in endogenous development. The emphasis is on strengthening traditional leaders, as individuals, often mandated by the community to perform their leadership role, and the traditional organisations in the endogenous development process. Traditional leaders and traditional organisations have to a large extent been ignored and even de-powered in many development efforts. But the cases also show how this can go hand-in-hand with the creation of new institutional forms or patterns of collaboration. In this, the link with formal local institutions, e.g. the local government, receives special consideration: should it be ignored, involved or integrated?

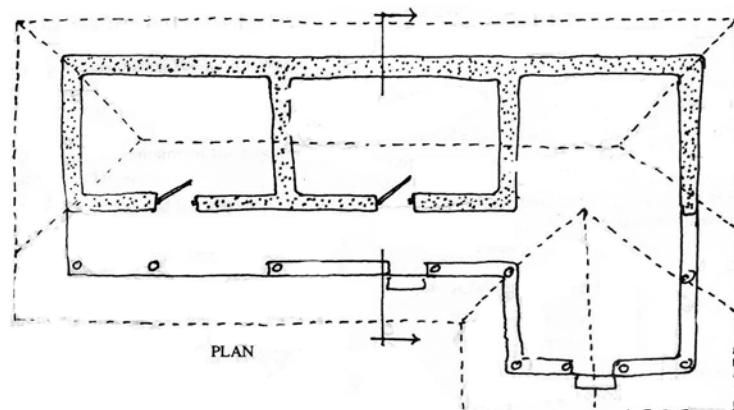
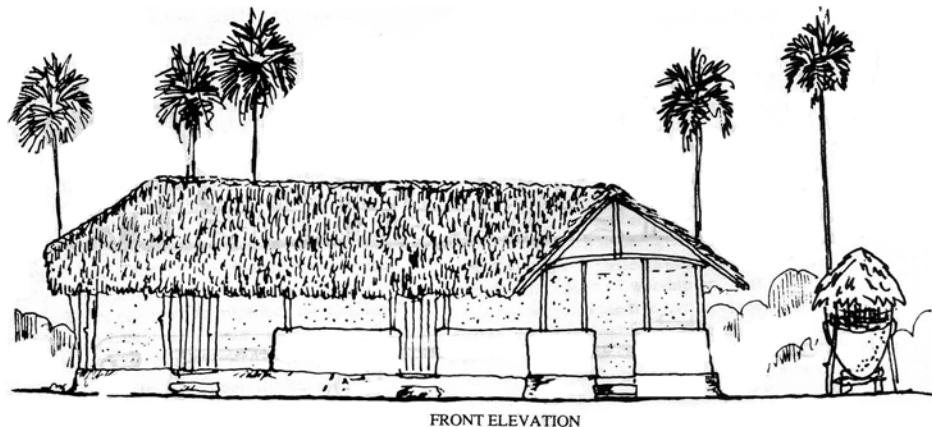
## Case 7-1

### Building the *vaastu* resource group: strengthening indigenous knowledge and institutions

#### Traditional architecture in Sri Lanka

BRIT (Biodiversity Research Information and Training Centre) is involved in activities in many remote villages in the Badulla district of Sri Lanka. These activities focus on stimulating biodiversity in home gardens, non-chemical farming, renewable energy, community mobilisation, leadership training for school children, and strengthening of civil society.

Through involvement in Compas, BRIT was challenged to pay more attention to a largely uncharted area of indigenous knowledge: *vaastu*, the traditional science of architecture in Sri Lanka. For BRIT, every step in this still field of activity has been a learning experience: both at community level, with the *vaastu* resource persons, within the BRIT team, and in the interaction with University of Moratuwa's Department of Architecture. The



Ancestral home of the Jayasundera Bandara family – one of the homes in the Vaastu study by BRIT.

creation of a new institution, the *vaastu* resource group, has been one of the main achievements.

*Vaastu* is a broad field of science, which includes the construction of houses, public and religious buildings, as well as their direct surroundings. *Vaastu* not only encompasses the design and construction of the buildings, but also the design of home gardens, household utensils and agricultural implements. It takes into account the energy flows, human health aspects, and colour combinations that have the best effects on the residents of the house.

## Getting started

Although the BRIT team had a general idea about *vaastu*, they needed to become better acquainted with the subject. As a first step, they met with several people well known for their traditional knowledge on a range of subjects, including architecture. During these discussions, the BRIT team gained more insight into the breadth of knowledge embodied within *vaastu*.

The BRIT team visited villages in the area and invited people with traditional knowledge of whatever form (architecture, medicine, handicrafts, food technology) for informal gatherings. During these open discussions, it became clear that a vast wealth of traditional knowledge was still alive among the people. Within the next two months, 48 resource persons identified through these meetings were invited to come to the BRIT training centre for further discussions. Some of the *vaastu* resource persons, though holders of knowledge, were not actively using it. They were enthusiastic that renewed attention was being paid to their experience.

### **Creating a *vaastu* resource group**

The group decided to meet once a month at the BRIT training centre for two days, with the purpose of sharing and documenting knowledge. Several topics related to *vaastu* are discussed at each meeting. The topics are decided on in advance, so that each resource person can prepare him/herself before coming to the workshop. The information shared is thoroughly debated, after which the group decides what should be documented. In this way, the group hopes to compile an inventory of their collective knowledge of *vaastu*. They hope the document will not only be a way of conserving this knowledge, but also a means of popularising it (see Box). The group has sought formal registration with the local authorities and is now known as the Uva Traditional Experts Forum. There are over fifty members of the group, with an executive committee consisting of a president, a secretary and a treasurer.

### **Activities of the resource group**

The *vaastu* resource persons helped BRIT in preparing a checklist of aspects to be covered in a study on *vaastu* through house-to-house visits. Though many of these old houses have now been demolished, several can still be studied. It was decided to identify these houses in the district and to make a short inventory. BRIT's staff, social mobilisers, were given a short training in how to use this checklist to make descriptions of the houses. In total 230 houses were identified and recorded.

#### **Experiences from the Uva Traditional Experts Forum**

Coming together as a group has motivated us to share and pass on our knowledge. The lack of recognition for this knowledge has caused the younger generation to move away and lose interest. We hope that this forum can revive this valuable science, and attract young people to practice it again. Each one of us can recall situations due to faulty house constructions. This may be due to bad design, not following the auspicious times, or placing the house on the wrong site or plot of land. As a result, the residents have faced many trials—sickness, unhappiness, and even death. Such ill effects can be avoided if the proper *vaastu* practices are adhered to. People should once again become aware of these practices and we hope to play a role in making this happen.

The *vaastu* group also discussed with BRIT the gradual disappearance of *vaastu* knowledge and the fact that few of the resource persons still had a pupil to teach. In traditional Sri Lankan society, transfer of knowledge usually took place in the form of teacher–pupil transfer or *guru-gola parampara*. The student was an apprentice under the teacher, and learned by watching, listening and doing. A teacher selected a student using a list of criteria which included the time of birth and constellation of stars at time of birth, attitude, lifestyle and habits. Often it was a child from within the family. Due to the lack of interest of the younger generation, this transfer has dwindled, leading to a loss of knowledge whenever a teacher dies without grooming a pupil. Through BRIT's involvement in the villages and the efforts of the *vaastu* group, a number of young people who were interested in becoming pupils were identified. Members of the forum willing to be teachers were also identified, and one or two students were assigned to each teacher. The whole process was inaugurated with a ceremony in which the teachers pledged to teach their pupils without withholding any knowledge. The pupils promised to do their best to learn and respect their teachers. Although the pupils will not live together with their teachers as was done traditionally, they will meet with each other regularly. In addition the pupils will join the monthly meetings of the forum.

### **University research to validate *vaastu***

Realising the role that validation by Western science can play in reviving *vaastu* knowledge, BRIT has built up contact with Professor Nimal de Silva at the University of Moratuwa's Department of Architecture, to discuss possible collaboration. The request was received very positively and a group of postgraduate students from the university visited BRIT to further document *vaastu* practices under the guidance of Professor de Silva. The students lived for several days in the villages with selected families and did a detailed study of 30 households selected from the 230 houses identified by BRIT. Design of houses, instruments and implements, spiritual aspects, traditional furniture, clothing and jewellery were aspects included in the study. The students, *vaastu* resource persons and BRIT staff jointly discussed and analysed the data. The outcome was compiled in a report, which will serve for future learning, teaching and lobbying purposes. Several students from the group have decided to take up postgraduate research on *vaastu* knowledge.

### **The *vaastu* forum and spreading the message**

Another activity undertaken by BRIT and the *vaastu* forum is publishing a newsletter. Members of the forum contribute the articles, while eight of them form the editorial board. One thousand copies of the first 4-page issue have been distributed through various channels, which has increased public interest in the forum and its work. Some of the *vaastu* practitioners have already been contacted by people for advice and consultation on house building. Sharing of experiences with *vaastu* also takes place through local and national NGO networks.

## Case 7-2

### Strengthening local organisations and institutional structures in India

#### Introduction

Strengthening village-level organisations and structures is a central element of the approach of Green Foundation, an NGO working in Southern India. In the experience of Green Foundation, community controlled organisations and structures are critical in endogenous development as pillars and movers of the process. A few of the key elements in this institutional strengthening approach are highlighted below.



Women treat traditional seed varieties to enhance germination capacity.

#### Village-level organisations for sustainability

In the initial stages of its work on agro-biodiversity, Green Foundation distributed seeds from a central seed bank. As the sustainability of this was doubtful, the strategy changed to promoting decentralised systems of seed disbursement. The villagers themselves suggested reviving or starting farmer and local artisan *sanghas*, groups, an old type of village level organisation. Typically, these groups consist of between 15 and 25 members. These groups jointly save, store and manage their seeds through seed banks. Each *sangha* usually has a central storage room, and conserves seeds according to traditional methods. Space for seed storage and purchase of storage devices are contributions made by *sangha* members.

A next step was the development of 'village seed committees', with members from the *sanghas*. These village-level organisations now identify seed requirements for the following year and select and purchase their stock from the savings of *sangha* members.

Green Foundation is aware that it is important to include women in these village-level organisations. Women play a crucial role in agriculture as in all walks of life. When it comes to decision-making and social positioning, however, they are often marginalised. With appropriate strategies (see Box) they are found to be very interested in the biodiversity activities and capable of playing an important role. For example, the Sharada Mahila Sangha, a women farmers' group, now buys and stores seed of different varieties of wetland paddy, dryland paddy, and finger millet. This group also has a savings and credit programme, which does not charge interest.

### Getting women involved

When Green Foundation started working with the Irula tribe around 1998, it was quite difficult to bring the women together. In addition to the men's opposition to the women gathering, other reasons were related to shyness, caste feeling, the heavy domestic workload and lack of education of the women themselves. To get women actively involved, Green Foundation used a variety of strategies: village seed processing demonstrations, street theatre, folk songs and slogans, and local seed fairs in which women were encouraged to share their knowledge and experiences.

The impact of these strategies was tremendous. It was recognised that elderly women have tremendous knowledge of conserving and processing seeds, and of the preparation of traditional foods. This helped women of other age groups to learn and develop their skills, and resulted in a change of attitude in both women and men. The women now interact with outsiders without much hesitation, and take part in the village level functions. They now manage the seed banks, which have become centres of transformation in their villages. Women have included savings as one of the seed bank activities, and can borrow money from the groups to meet some of their domestic needs. In this way the women can also initiate other income-generating activities. All these activities have empowered the women, who are gaining a growing degree of economic independence.

Seeing this change in the family, the attitude of men towards women has also changed.

### Biodiversity registers

When working with local seeds, other local resources and related local knowledge, Intellectual Property Rights are an important issue in the eyes of Green Foundation. People at the grassroots are rarely aware of this. In order to raise people's awareness and create ownership of these resources while avoiding bio-piracy, the idea of 'biodiversity registers' was introduced in 32 villages of Achubalam Panchayati. Such a register would document relevant local resources and would therefore make it impossible for outsiders to claim rights over any of them.

To create local ownership of these resources, village and sub-village 'biodiversity conservation committees' were formed which included local health practitioners, farmers, cattle grazers, forest guards, school teachers, village elders and other resourceful people. The initial work of the village level committees was to draw a resource map of sacred groves, rivers, fields and forests. In addition, thematic concerns, such as renewable energy resources, traditional healing, traditional artisan skills, medicinal plants and their uses, and traditional farming practices were documented and included in the draft register. These data were consolidated through field visits led by local resource people. At the end of a six-month period the village biodiversity registers were ready to be finalised. Updating and protecting the natural resources in the area is easier now, because this biodiversity document can be used as a frame of reference.

### Bio-cultural seed village

'Bio-cultural seed village' is a single market area, and centre for endogenous development. This concept has been developed over the years. Laxmipura was identified as one ideal location, as

it is located in the midst of indigenous communities and tribal groups. The concept implies bringing a range of activities together. These include, e.g. community organisation through local *sanghas*, seed conservation, strengthening health traditions, promoting kitchen gardens, reviving the cultural heritage, children's activities and marketing. A community hall was restored for meetings. Village-level mapping of Laxmipura and surrounding villages has been undertaken and the village-level biodiversity registers were completed and subsequently handed over to the headman of the village in the presence of other villagers.

Source: Vanaja Ramprasad, Green Foundation

## Case 7-3

### Building a network of tribal leaders and experts in India

#### The birth of the network

The tribal communities in the Eastern Ghats in India live and work dispersed over a large area. Though they have a lot in common in terms of their cultural and livelihood strategies, they have tended to organise themselves independently, leading to a great variety of locally specific expressions of culture and ways of making a living. Through their work with IDEA, leaders in the various communities have started to realise again not only what they have in common, but also the benefits of collaborating when organising development efforts, in particular activities to improve their livelihoods. This led them to set-up the Naik Gotna network, the 'Network of Tribal Leaders', in 1998. The major objective of the network is to form a strong group of tribal leaders to support the endogenous development process in their communities. The traditional village institutional functionaries have realised the importance of networking for endogenous development and IDEA has facilitated the process. Naik Gotna has organised several training programmes for tribal youth on endogenous development and has facilitated community experiments on agro-ecological, health and nutritional aspects in the last few years with the support of IDEA. Naik Gotna has also initiated farmers' research stations at community level to support young farmers with on-farm experiments, and to involve them in documentation and exercises to revive traditional knowledge and practices.



Ceremony to open the indigenous Knowledge Fair, presided by traditional tribal leaders of the Naik Gotna Network.

#### The network expands

From the small group of initiators, the network has now grown and the present Naik Gotna is a state-level federation of different district-level thematic forums (*samakya*) of traditional

THE LOGO OF NAIK GOTNA



Symbol of synthesis, the logo of the Naik Gotna network of tribal leaders. The symbol has been designed by the tribal leaders and depicts the sacred stick and its chain to communicate with the spiritual world, traditional instruments, agricultural fields, the villages, and IDEA – providing support to this tribal organisation.

institutional functionaries. The objective is that different state-level Naik Gotnas will federate at national level to form the Tribal Endogenous Development Network.

The district-level thematic forums are envisaged as informal bodies with independent executive committees and endogenous development programmes. Naik Gotna will be more formal, with an executive committee and statutes. It is in the process of developing its own administrative structures for effective functioning as a community-based network.

## Results become clear

The first Indigenous Knowledge Mela in 2001, organised by the Naik-Gotna network, is a clear example of the network's growing strength as it was able to bring together people across the main different communities. For four days, hundreds of representatives exhibited a wide range of traditional practices, medicinal plants and rituals, and several workshops were organised. The major objective of this event was to provide a platform for the tribal communities to exchange and demonstrate their knowledge, practices and experiments. The event created a platform for networking between different tribal communities, but it also provided an opportunity to show the relevance of tribal indigenous knowledge to local policy makers and administrators.

Though the starting point of the IDEA activities in the Eastern Ghats has been natural resources management, Naik Gotna is addressing many other themes, like agricultural innovations, herbal medical practices for humans, animals and crops, and the production and preparation of wild leafy vegetables with high nutritional value. These practices are being tried out within the communities; the results are documented by the IDEA staff and exchanged during meetings.

The increasing strength of Naik Gotna has not gone unnoticed. The traditional leaders themselves experience great satisfaction. Gollori Sadu, one of these leaders, notes: *'We started three or four years ago; it was our own idea based on our own experiences. Now we are very big, some 5000 traditional leaders from 400 villages, from many communities! We want to show everybody who we are and what we know, because we need the cooperation of various organisations.'*

## Challenges

Though the Mela was very successful, it was not easy to organise this major event. Gollori Sadu: *'The Indigenous Knowledge Mela has been very good, but it has been difficult to mobilise and handle so many people. Especially to arrange for them to go back to their homes; we have to take care of everyone!'*

Naik Gotna is emerging as a strong community-based regional network through its local thematic forums. The shape that these forums should take is a big challenge to Naik Gotna and IDEA. The thematic forums seek to join hands with the traditional healers in the rural areas for inter-cultural dialogues, exchange of information and exchange on knowledge systems. This is a

dynamic field, where tribals may seek cautious coalitions to promote endogenous development while keeping their cultural identities intact. Modern political elements may enter the forums and Naik Gotna federations in the future, if they are not moulded cautiously and strategically. With sufficient resources Naik Gotna should be able to facilitate the necessary training and provide logistical support. Plans for the mobilisation of resources need to be developed.

Another major challenge for Naik Gotna is to facilitate the thematic forums to codify and theorise their folk knowledge by documenting and doing research. In this way they will be able to standardise their practices.

*Source: G. Shankar,  
K.S. Prashanth Varma,  
IDEA*

## **Case 7-4**

### **Local institutions and conflict transformation in Sudan**

#### **Traditional conflict management**

Conflict over natural resources between settled farmers and pastoralist groups is not new to the Gawamaa farmers in northern Kordofan, Sudan. But as competition for natural resources increases rapidly, the frequency and severity of these conflicts are rising. Traditionally, a sophisticated system known as *goodiya* is used for resolving conflicts of all types, from domestic disputes to land allocation, drawing heavily on the Koran and the teachings of the Prophet Mohammed. Traditional conventions also conform to religious rules, such as 'you should take care of your neighbour as you would yourself'. Mediators tend to be religious leaders, community leaders, or people of social standing within the communities, and mediation takes place in the house of an independent person. Most mediation begins by saying '*we are gathered here for the goodness of everyone and we do not want any more bloodshed*'. During the meeting, the facts are laid down. The leader will first ask the two parties to forgive each other before going on to discuss the conflict. Mediators also relate the conflict to historical events, such as examples from the Old Testament and events in the life of the Prophet Mohammed, to provide examples of how things may be resolved. The mediator may talk to the parties individually, working on easing the situation between the parties. A mediator respects the two parties by letting them put their own stories forward first before he states his proposed solution. The resolution ends with a recital from the Koran.

#### **No longer enough**

This traditional conflict resolution system now faces a rapidly changing institutional and economic environment, however. The existence of both traditional and court systems opens the way for 'institutional shopping' when there is a dispute. Moreover, respect for local leaders as mediators in the traditional system has weakened. The decisions reached may be rejected if one of the parties does not agree, especially when there is no documentation of the process. However, one of the greatest threats to the traditional conflict resolution systems is the growing

severity and frequency of conflicts, caused by decisions of competing authorities over natural resources. Finally, the traditional system is based on forgiveness, with a policy of avoiding digging too deep into the roots of a problem. As one traditional leader put it, *'peeling back the layers of an onion brings tears'* and can make a conflict worse. However, as competition for resources becomes more acute, there is a growing need to find solutions that will deal, at least in part, with the root causes of the problem; forgiveness alone is no longer enough.

## Initiating a dialogue

In 1999, SOS Sahel UK started a process to respond to the increasing number of resource-related controversies between the Gawamaa settled farmers and the Sebeihat pastoralist groups, combining traditional conflict resolution mechanisms with some participatory tools. The aim was to facilitate a dialogue between the relevant parties and traditional leaders, and to assist them in finding their own solutions.

First, the SOS Sahel UK project team organised *training workshops* with the Gawamaa traditional leaders, a representative of the Pastoralist Union and government officers, to study ways to combine new participatory methods and skills on conflict management with traditional ones. The group then identified an area in which the new approach would be tested. The next step was to organise a first meeting with Gawamaa farmers, held at Gagrur village, with the village sheikh as the main contact person. During this initial meeting, people were asked to use the usual Participatory Rural Appraisal mode to draw a map of the natural resources available in the village, and to identify the different users. This easily led to discussion about current competition and conflict over resources. A second meeting was held with Sebeihat pastoralists at their camp. The team followed the similar approach to the one used in Gagrur.

### ***Ore olarabal name kule*—‘war is not milk’—Maasai proverb**

Pastoral cosmology arises from everyday necessities. What is it that gives life? Milk gives life but one needs to milk the livestock to obtain this food. The livestock in turn obtain their food and the potential for milk from the environment. Pastoralists assist this food harvest by intelligent herding, while God provides for his people with the gifts of life, rain and other natural resources. The reciprocal chain of life thus begins and ends with God, and the human relationship to God. Right relationships permeate the whole of pastoralist life, among family, clan, people, between peoples, with the environment, and with God. Disputes and violent resolutions are often part of the social fabric in these pastoral drylands. Yet, all of these normal conflicts can be resolved through agreements stemming ultimately from the common cosmology of the people. Traditional societies, rich in oral literature like these pastoralists, offer a wide diversity of peacemaking resources based on the concept of covenantal relationships. Yet, these resources are woefully undervalued and under-utilised by government administrators, non-governmental agencies, and conflict resolution practitioners.

From H.H. Jenner, Pastoralist cosmology as foundation for sustainable peace and development.

## Analysis using participatory tools

During a second round of meetings with both groups, the information collected in the first round was confirmed, and built on by the local communities using a range of participatory techniques:

- conflict mapping, which implied going back to the resources map and indicating in more detail contested areas;
- a time-line of events to describe and analyse over time key moments in the history of the development of a conflict;
- the 'conflict tree', which turned out to be one of the most effective tools for analysing a conflict. In this the roots of the tree represent the root causes, the trunk represents the core problem, while the branches represent the effects of the problem, or symptoms. Comparing the trees drawn by different parties in a conflict clearly showed how the perceptions differed.

These tools were well understood by the communities, and made it possible to identify the core conflict and its effects. It also became evident that collaboration was important for both of them.

## The negotiation stage

Both parties mentioned the importance of involving a third party, and together elected a four-person team and a chairman to mediate during the negotiation process. The project centre was chosen as a neutral location for the negotiations. Representatives from the two communities were selected during the preparatory meetings, with no project representatives present, on the basis of personal qualities, levels of trust in the community, and position in local public life. All were men. The ground rules were agreed upon: good listening and equal participation without bias from any side. The final agreement was to be practical and acceptable to both parties. The meetings began with the chairman confirming the importance of peace between the groups, and the need to share resources between the different stakeholders. This was followed by a presentation of the outcome of the community meetings within the two groups, to allow both sides to understand both perspectives. Then the negotiation started, in which solutions were proposed and discussed for their feasibility. Throughout this process, the mediation team used religious and cultural customs that call for sharing of resources among relatives and neighbours. Finally an agreement acceptable to both parties was reached, and signed by representatives of the two parties.

## Achievements and limitations

Interviews one year later showed that nearly 80% of the population of Gagrur, and nearly 90% of the pastoralists knew about the agreement, and its various articles. Both parties stressed that the agreement had been implemented, though some provisions had been made. The majority

of those who had been involved indicated that the participatory tools had in fact strengthened the indigenous system. The process was perceived as transparent and helpful in analysing the root causes of the problems. According to representatives of the Pastoralists' Union: 'we call the new process *the new goodiya*'.

These types of bilateral agreements involve high costs in terms of time and resources, however. Moreover, any pastoral community such as the Sebeihat needs to negotiate access to resources with various farmers' communities, while the agreements need to allow for variability from season to season and year to year. Discussions with local communities therefore indicate that the promotion of 'a culture of peace' by popular awareness-raising may be more effective than small bilateral agreements. Without the support of the government administration and technical departments, however, there is a risk of these institutions undermining the agreements between the groups.

Source: Omer Egeimi,  
Mohammed Abdel  
Mahmood and Abdeen  
Sid Ahmed, SOS Sahel  
UK, Sudan

## Case 7-5 Strengthening the role of traditional female leaders in Ghana

### Introduction

Mama Tekke Foliwa II, traditional Queen of the Have, a rural community in the Volta region of Ghana. She was one of the 35 participants who attended the workshop on 'The role of traditional Queens in governance and natural resource management' organised by CIKOD and the University of Cape Coast.



In Southern Ghana a Queen is the female counterpart of a chief and occupies an influential position in society. The status of Queens used to be similar to that of the Chief, representing the female aspects of the Stool (the symbol of the community) and complementing the work of the male chief. In northern Ghana traditional women leaders are known as Pognaa, and are actively involved in the development of their communities.

Women are among the most resource poor in rural Ghana. They are responsible for maintaining their families in a changing social context that encourages the type of individualism that conflicts deeply with communal duties, responsibilities and authority. The negative impact of these changes has meant that communities become unable to mobilise the human resources needed to embrace development interventions and that the poor and socially vulnerable are deprived of the security formerly provided by traditional institutions. In many communities women and children, whose needs and ideas used to be mediated by traditional women leaders, can no longer rely on the Queen to intervene with Chiefs and elders on their behalf. Indigenous practices that have supported domestic and economic activities for generations are rapidly disappearing and traditional women leaders who die are not being replaced.

## The need for capacity strengthening

In 2004, the Ghanaian NGO Cikod initiated a programme for stimulating endogenous development by building on the skills of traditional leaders, in cooperation with UCC (University of Cape Coast) and UDS (University for Development Studies) in Ghana. In the view of Cikod, traditional forms of community organisation are often a more effective base for tackling poverty and rural livelihood issues than non-endogenous structures such as community-based organisations, farmer-based organisations, or cooperative societies that depend on unreliable external funding. From the start, part of Cikod's efforts focused on the position of female leaders, Queens, because of their potentially strong position in supporting development work with women.

As the first step towards designing a capacity strengthening programme, three Capacity Assessment Workshops were held, in three locations, to review and assess the capacity of Queens. Participants included both Queens and outsiders and jointly they developed a good understanding of how traditional women leaders interpret their role and the problems they face. These insights were used to compile a Capacity Building training programme.

## Preliminary workshops

A programme for stimulating endogenous development by building on the skills of traditional leaders was initiated in 2004 by Cikod, UCC and UDS. As a first step in the design of the programme, a workshop to assess the capacity of Queens was organised by the UCC. Workshops were also held in northern Ghana.

## Capacity Assessment Workshops

These were held to perform a diagnosis of the Queens' role in the community, exposing their potential and the challenges they face. The workshops were learner-centred and made use of problem posing, self discovery and analysis in an action-oriented approach. In this approach, the trainers acknowledged and respected the fact that the Queens have expertise and talents of their own which must be given scope for expression and development.

The sessions were designed in such a way as to enhance understanding and were woven around starters such as posters, songs, stories, case studies, role play and experience sharing (e.g. best and worst practices). The starters were developed from the local setting to ensure active participation and clear understanding of the trainees. After initial planning of the starter-based lessons they were consolidated by using question-and-answer techniques, group work and field visits.

## Capacity Building: participatory adult learning approach

During the training sessions, capacity building was based on a participatory adult learning approach: learner-centred, problem-focused and action-oriented. The methodology was one

that recognised the many resources these women brought with them: experience, skills and knowledge, as well as personal talents.

Queens shared the stories and proverbs that carry the information essential for preserving identity, cooperation and communal solidarity. Handed down through generations of traditional women leaders, they are still being used to resolve conflicts and deal with practices that limit women's access to natural resources.

Though participants recognised that this training workshop had widened their horizon and encouraged them to organise women in their communities, it emerged during the training that the Queens wanted further capacity building and, particularly, to strengthen their awareness of governance, laws, financial systems and budgetary procedures.

## **Towards a long-term programme**

As a result of the above process, Cikod and two partner universities have designed a long-term training strategy and related activities. Based on discussions with the Queens, it was decided to organise both short focused workshops (non-credited) and a longer-term formally credited

### **Content of training 'Strengthening the leadership and organisational capacity'**

#### **Year One**

##### **Governance at the local level**

###### **Team Work**

- Working with chiefs, elders and the youth.
- Working with formal institutions and officials.

###### **Counselling**

- Basic elements in counselling
- Traditional values, norms and practices in reproductive and sexual health counselling with emphasis on HIV/Aids and teenage pregnancies.

###### **Field Visits**

- Visit to a Traditional Council and a District Assembly in the Central Region and Northern Ghana

#### **Year Two**

##### **Traditional Institutions and Leadership**

##### **Gender and Leadership**

##### **Conflict Prevention or management**

Team Work, Counselling, and Field Visits

#### **Year Three**

##### **Community Resources and Rural Livelihoods.**

##### **Advocacy skills for accessing official resources and enhancing accountability**

Team Work, Counselling, and Field Visits

programme. The non-credited activities include a one-week training on Strengthening the Leadership and Organisational Capacity of Queens (see Box) and one on Resource Identification and Mobilisation.

The two university partners in this initiative, UCC and UDS, are well positioned to respond to the need for more comprehensive capacity building formally credited. In their response they have designed two programmes: a Certificate Programme of 6-8 weeks on: 1) Governance and Development: Traditional and Modern; and 2) Human Resource Development and Management, and a diploma level programme of 6-8 weeks on 1) Laws and Acts Associated with Governance and 2) The Institution of Chieftaincy.

Source: Cikod, Cecik

## Case 7–6

### Integrating local wisdom into primary schools in Peru

#### The challenge of making education meaningful

During the past years, Peru's Ministry of Education has placed greater emphasis on the intercultural aspect in formal education, through the National Directorate of Intercultural, Bilingual and Rural Education. It includes an orientation towards curricular diversification, learning Spanish as a second language in bilingual contexts and the role of community participation. Though it is true that the Ministry of Education has placed greater emphasis on inter-culturality, reversing the trend of cultural uprooting in formal education in practice is not an easy task. One of the reasons is that in rural communities the

Quechua language is part of an oral tradition and this is an obstacle to introducing written culture. There is also a lack of basic reference texts on the Andean cosmovision for teachers. Another problem is that translating Spanish-language textbooks into native languages does not make the context of the working texts relevant for children in Andean communities. Nor does it ensure that the collective knowledge of these communities is transmitted from generation to generation.



Schoolchildren and parents exhibit traditional food during an exchange activity between communities at the Huita school premises.

#### What is a school according to our culture?

In the face of this problem, a group of teachers in Cusco, Central Peru, has developed the 'Children and Biodiversity Project'. We perceive the boys and girls from the communities in a different way from many teachers: we do not see them as beings who lack culture, but as

agents of regeneration of local cultural and ecological biodiversity. This led us to define a number of central characteristics of a school according to our culture:

- A school that is kind and culturally diverse, that respects the wisdom of children and elders of the community.
- An education that allows children to know the modern without forgetting and practising their legacy. The local legacy is included in the curriculum, on a 50%–50% basis, together with modern scientific knowledge.
- The teacher assumes the role of cultural mediator.
- Parents participate in the children's learning processes. Spaces must be created for re-learning amongst children, as well as among teens and parents, to include aspects of Andean culture by approaching the community's wisdom. Parents perceive the school place as a space where children are taught to value what they have taught their offspring.
- Helping the children to learn to read and write but at the same time maintaining the knowledge about the signs given to us by nature. Children must be able to learn science and intellectual abstraction without subordinating the possibilities of human development based on tradition and the senses.
- School, children and parents must work together to regenerate biological diversity.

The project is careful not to undermine the knowledges transmitted regularly in schools. Children must be fluent in Spanish if they are to be able to play an active role in contemporary Peruvian society. At the same time, however, the project ensures that children speak their native tongue fluently as well as understanding the wisdom it expresses.

The project began four years ago and is now running in ten schools in rural communities in four provinces. The aim of the project is to create the conditions to incorporate local wisdom in school curricula and counteract the predominant image of the peasant farmer as an illiterate person who is not capable of incorporating himself into the world. We carry out four main activities in the schools: caring for the school and community plot of land, exchanging experiences, teacher training and small initiatives to affirm cultural identity.

## **Education organised according to the local calendar**

One of the ways that we started our inter-cultural educational work was to develop a ritual and agro-festivity calendar of the community, around which the educational processes are organised. Once this is done, each month priorities are set for activities, taking into account the opportunities for the children to participate, the prevalence and importance the activity within community life, and the possibility of rescuing activities that are no longer practised.

Every school has its own field (plots) where children grow a variety of crops in the same rhythm as their parents at home. The parents and the elders support the productive activities carried out in the school plot; in this case, the teachers assume their role as students. Children participate in sowing, clearing the land, cropping and storage of the products. In these activities, reciprocal forms of work are also practised (*ayni*—mutual help and *minka*—payment in produce).

## Exchanging experiences

We organise activities such as meetings for community reflection in the school, as well as visits to exchange experiences with other communities. These are spaces for communication, which serve the purpose of reminding, strengthening and recreating the wisdom of the Andean cosmovision. Children and teachers, as well as members and authorities of the community, participate in activities such as the exchange of knowledge, seeds, experiences and traditional foods. We have reached the conclusion that these exchanges have been essential in changing the attitudes of the teachers. During the exchange visits, friendships are created and different knowledges are freely exchanged, while at the same time we rediscover what our grandparents used to do.

## Initiatives of cultural affirmation

Children also carry out small cultural projects in the schools, working with weaving, ceramic, music, dancing and food preparation. During these activities, grandparents and parents frequently assume the role of official school teacher. Through these cultural activities, children develop initiative, ease (*facilidad*) and clarity. Children learn to take the initiative to suggest, disagree, and contribute to the realisation of an activity within the community. The children get used to these activities from an early age and do so in an environment of cordiality and confidence, leading to familiarity and therefore to being at ease with them. As a result, both the objectives and the effects of these small initiatives of Andean cultural affirmation become evident to children and their parents (clarity).

## Re-training the teachers

When we started, the attitudes and prejudices of the teachers were a serious obstacle to creating schools that are open to the idea of incorporating local knowledge. Their own training has left them very biased towards 'modern' knowledge. Thus, the project had to include activities that lead towards new and creative relationships within the school. We try to develop attitudes of openness within everybody, which help to build an education based on the knowledge that the children bring with them from their homes. We try to make the teachers understand and support the agro-centric knowledge from the communities, so it is they who establish the inter-cultural environment in school. This can be a challenge because many teachers have little respect for traditional knowledge and see it as being inferior to 'modern' knowledge.

The teachers are trained by participating in social, cultural and ritual activities of the communities. This is followed by time and space for reflection on the different forms of learning in the different cosmovisions. These opportunities help us to remember our experiences, and what our parents and grandparents taught us, so that we can regain our cultural roots, value our culture and put it on an equal footing with other cultures.

### Experiences of parents, children and teachers

Mr Bonifacio Copara Rojos, a parent: "Professor Fausto teaches very well. I like it that both languages are taught, Spanish and Quechua, because if they only taught Quechua, the children would have no way of defending themselves when they go to the cities. But if they only spoke Spanish, they would not be able to understand the community. It is also good that the teachers include lessons on the ancient customs. Our young people have forgotten how to practise their customs."

Lunar Cardeña, a child : "I can work the land, clear the ground, turn the soil. My father teaches me and I learn just by looking. I also help in the sowing. During carnival we throw potato, corn and bean flowers on our land. Sometimes my mother teaches me to choose the seeds; my father teaches me to turn the soil and plant. I like to work the land and I do it happily."

Professor Federico Tunque: "When I began to work as teacher I was a foreigner to the community. When I began to participate in the project, I remembered many experiences from my own childhood and thought that what I did in my school was not a good thing. Now I have learned to be more humble and be like the community folk, to share their food and experiences. After I worked on the school plot with all the local rituals, the parents called me and told me 'now you are invited, because you are doing as we do'. Each time I now need to ask about something I want to teach at school, I go to their houses to ask for help, taking coca or chicha, corn beer, which is how one must ask a favour from community dwellers. I used to just go and order them: 'tomorrow we have work and you must come'"

### Promising results

So far, the results have been promising and all those involved are positive (see Box). The role of children in the recuperation of the biodiversity is clearly visible in the school grounds as well as in the family plot. Parents are proud of the fact that the schools invited them as teachers, and they ask us more and more for courses that are related to rural living as well as city dwelling. They tell us that they agree with our focus, because it stimulates their children's respect for culture and their parents' way of living.

Teachers—male and female—have reoriented their professional practice. Many of them have found that this project has allowed them to rediscover and appreciate the value of their own roots. The teachers that participate in the project have developed an educational network. The National Board for Rural Bilingual Intercultural Education, which is part of the Ministry of Education, has also shown an interest in our project, and has provided funding support for many activities and for publishing some texts. Little by little, the Children and Biodiversity project is generating contributions that go from the local to the regional level and (why not?) the national educational level.

### Reflections on strengthening local institutions

The central perspective of endogenous development is to allow a development process that is owned and managed by communities, based on their own resources, values, strategies and initiatives. Community-led institutions play a critical role in achieving local ownership of activities. They are also the vehicles and tools for people to locate responsibilities for

Source: Elena Pardo  
and Rocío Achahui  
Quenti, Ceprosi

organisation and management of activities. The cases in this chapter focus on strengthening traditional leadership and local organisations for taking the lead in endogenous development. Not because more modern formal structures are not relevant but because they receive a lot of attention from others while the traditional ones have been ignored and even de-powered in many development efforts.

### Working with existing local institutions

In building local institutional capacities, the first option is always to identify and subsequently work with and build on existing institutions rather than creating new ones. In the case of Southern Ghana (Case 7-5), existing local traditional institutions are considered to be the starting point of the endogenous development process. Communities are encouraged to make an inventory of existing institutions and to assess their strengths and weaknesses in terms of their role in endogenous development. The cases show how development efforts can strengthen the functioning of institutions that play an important role in a number of ways:

- **Contribute to increased recognition and revaluing** of the position and role of the relevant leaders, by giving this specific attention, acknowledging of their role, and advocating their case at higher levels;
- **Facilitate interaction** and even network or organisation building among traditional leaders: groups of indigenous knowledge resource persons, network of tribal leaders, a new council of queens.
- **Focused capacity building**: organisation of meetings, workshops, courses, to help leaders to review and assess their past and present role, share experiences among themselves, and learn about modern insights in organisation and management. The Ghana case (7-5) shows how short courses for female leaders developed into a three year university-supported capacity building programme.

### Creating new institutions

The cases also give ample evidence of efforts to assist communities to create and build new local institutions to meet present development challenges. The networks and organisations among traditional leaders in Sri Lanka (7-1), India (7-3) and Ghana (7-5) are in fact new forms that build on old ones. The case from India in the next chapter (8-1) is another typical example where traditional village leaders joined hands with others to form a larger democratic and representative formal organisation to strengthen their position for policy lobbying and negotiating with the government.

In other examples, farmers, youth and women are encouraged to form new groups for specific activities or programmes. These can remain relatively informal, ad hoc, and be set up for one activity, or they can gradually develop into more structured organisations leading to the formation of strong associations at a higher level, such as in the case of women's groups in India (7-2). Even in these cases, however, an important question relates to the involvement of or linking of these new groups to traditional governance structures and leaders. Can this help to

improve the position and sustainability of the newly established groups? If so, how can the link be organised? In all cases, development workers may benefit from general guidelines on strengthening of local groups and organisations (see e.g. FAO, 1994).

### **The principle of self-organisation**

All efforts to strengthen local institutions should be based on the principle of self-organisation, the assumption that local people themselves are in the best position to organise themselves in the most effective way if the focus and reach of activities have become clear. A critical role of an outsider can be to help them review and analyse existing institutions for their role in endogenous development and make decisions accordingly. This is the essence of the Community Institutional Mapping approach described in Chapter 4 (Case 4-2). More detailed guidelines for participatory assessment of local organisations and institutions are also available (see e.g. World Neighbors, 2000).

### **Horizontal and vertical linkages**

The cases show that for the endogenous development process to gain momentum, it is critical that communities establish effective and sustainable horizontal and vertical linkages. Horizontal linkages refer to efforts to establish contacts and mechanisms for collaboration between communities and groups for issues of common interest. Development staff can assist villages or communities to start meeting regularly. Such informal or semi-formal inter-village networks may invite collaborating formal institutions to attend.

Strengthening vertical linkages refers to efforts to create direct collaboration between communities and relevant support organisations, such as service providers, government offices, banks and research organisations, and build the capacity of communities to interact with these on an equal basis. In some situations communities' inability to gain access to support and information services may be the single most important constraint faced in their development efforts.

To have an impact, it is important that—depending on the national context and legal or constitutional possibilities—links with formal governmental bodies are fostered and possibly even formalised, for example in a Memorandum of Understanding. Formal government bodies are responsible for making policies that may have a direct impact on the room to strengthen local institutions. In many African countries, for example, traditional institutions are constitutionally recognised, but this recognition is often of a folkloristic nature rather than that the traditional institutions are regarded as a discussion partner in implementing policies.

### **Dilemmas**

The above paragraphs already indicate that working with local institutions involves dilemmas. Conscious decisions and choices have to be made on questions such as:

- Does an endogenous development support process always start with looking at local institutions, their role in endogenous development, and their need for strengthening? Or

does one delay this analysis to a later stage when local conditions are better understood and relationships of trust have been established?

- What about dysfunctional traditional leaders, or ones that cannot be held accountable? Should they be ignored, modernised or acted against? An issue of particular concern raised in the cases in this book is the often limited representation of women and their interests through these institutions.
- Should traditional institutions be given a political role, assuming that in this way there will be greater impact for endogenous development? If the answer is yes, how can a resurgence of 'tribalism' be avoided, as tribalism may lead to a society divided by civil conflict between a myriad small groups?
- How can development organisations working to empower traditional institutions deal with the attitudes of formal government officers who have subtle ways of hindering or sometimes sidelining the development organisations if they feel that their position is threatened?



# Chapter 8

# CREATING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

## Introduction

What can we do to make sure that our local endogenous development efforts are not frustrated by 'external' factors? What are the key strategic areas that we need to look into if we want to create a supportive environment? What are the challenges when mainstreaming the approach of endogenous development?

The cases in this chapter describe the joint efforts of communities, development workers and their organisations to address factors beyond the direct local influence but with a major impact at the local level. These factors are part of the 'wider environment' in which endogenous development takes place. The cases specifically show efforts in the field of policy advocacy and policy research, addressing resource rights and regulations, educational reform, and building wider economic linkages. Together these create the conditions for further up-scaling of successful local initiatives.

### Case 8-1

#### Transforming traditional leaders into effective lobbyists in India

##### The need for policy lobby

In Prakasam District of Andhra Pradesh in India there are 37 Pattapu villages, called *Pattapupalems*, located along the coast. The total population of these villages is around 17,000. Although they are Hindus and follow Hindu culture, these people have their own customs, traditions and beliefs, which differ considerably from the present day Hindu traditions. Their traditional livelihood system, which is based on fishing and subsistence agriculture, is seriously threatened. Fish catches have been declining in fact since 1975. There are a number of reasons,



Three traditional leaders (kapus) of the Pattapu Community near the bay of Bengal, southern India. Through support to these traditional leaders the advocacy capacity of the communities was increased, in order to restore the local governance of the coastal ecosystem.

including the increased presence of larger fishing boats with high-tech equipment in the area; the building of shrimp farms, which led to the destruction of mangrove habitats, and the collection of shrimp fry in the fish breeding areas. Another major threat is the government plan to introduce a ship-breaking yard for dismantling oil tankers, which will seriously affect the natural resources in the coastal areas.

Even though there is legislation that in theory protects traditional fishermen, such as the Marine Regulation Act, the Coastal Regeneration Zone Bill, and the Aqua Culture Bill, these acts are not enforced. Lack of effective development incentives, such as price subsidies for diesel, insurance for traditional crafts and equipment, marketing linkages, cold storage facilities, and resolution of gender specific problems in fish selling, presents further hurdles in the development of these fisherfolk communities. These threats can only be addressed if existing government policies are really implemented in practice. The Society for National Integration through Rural Development (SNIRD), a local NGO, is therefore supporting local communities in their lobbying efforts. This they do by enhancing the advocacy capacities of the traditional community leaders, empowering the organisation of the community, and restoring local governance of the ecosystem.

## The roles of traditional leaders

The Pattapu villages have traditional leaders, called *kapu*—which means ‘protector of the village’. Each village can have three different *kapus*, the *Pedha Kapu*, *Nadu Kapu* and *Chinna Kapu*, who together form the village committee. These traditional leaders have administrative power, are responsible for social control, the economic affairs of the village, and conflict resolution. Women have traditionally had little access to *kapu* activities. Although the government has installed an official administrative and juridical system, the *kapu* leadership still functions in many of the Pattapu hamlets. Due to the westernisation of Indian society, however, the *kapu* traditional leadership structure is losing influence among the fisherfolk communities. This is partly due to the media, who often question the *kapus’* decisions, while changing attitudes towards the elders and a liking for official court procedures are starting to influence the younger generation. The local political parties also have an adverse impact on the functioning of the *kapu*. If a *kapu* supports a particular political party, the supporters of the opposition may antagonise the *kapu* administration at village level. Overt confrontations between the traditional and the government system, however, are rare in the Pattapu communities.

## Groundwork: community organisation and gender

In 1992 SNIRD initiated the ‘Organisation of Marine Fisherfolk for Sustainable Resource Utilisation’ project in 45 villages in Prakasam District. Its mission is to facilitate the collective advocacy capacity of the target groups by empowering traditional leadership, and to facilitate sustainable development at macro-scale. All activities have a gender focus. Initially (1992-1995), SNIRD focused on strengthening the participation of women, by promoting women’s *sangams*,

groups. Then village action committees were formed, composed of representatives from traditional leaders, youth *sangams* and women *sangams*. SNIRD organised regular training sessions and meetings for the village action committees. Initially, the *kapus* treated women as inferior participants but after a while the *kapus* started to accept the women's participation, and they received equal recognition.

The youth and women *sangam* meetings were used to identify development interventions that needed to be discussed in the village action committee meetings. After they had obtained the *kapus'* permission and had agreed upon a course of action, the youth and women *sangams* lobbied the government department. In this way the *kapus* were involved as the decision makers, whereas the youth and women *sangams* were the implementers of the development interventions under the guidance of the *kapus*.

## Setting up the Fish Workers Union

Starting in 2000, SNIRD initiated a macro-level organisation in an effort to increase the bargaining power of the communities. This started with *kapu* leaders from 45 villages making an exposure trip to Kerala and Tamil Nadu, to look at various development interventions that had taken place there. On their return they organised a press meeting to highlight the way the state policies were hampering the future of the fisherfolk communities. To make the community aware of the unionisation process, the leaders organised a cycle rally covering all the fisherfolk villages in Prakasam District. After the rally, the leaders organised two '*kapu* conventions' to further plan the macro-level organisation, which would involve all the community leaders. After a series of executive body meetings, the Seaside Dwellers Fish Workers Union (locally known as STMKU), was set up and registered under the Trade Union Act of 1998.

The general meetings of the STMKU are organised every six months at village level, while the executive body meets every three months at district level. All members, both men and women, who have paid their membership fee, can participate in these meetings. About 34% of the membership of STMKU consists of women.

## Focus on policy lobbying

One of the main functions of STMKU is to lobby the authorities to enforce the implementation of existing legislation, and to influence policy making in favour of the fisherfolk community. For example, the STMKU has presented the issue of the ship-breaking yard to the relevant authorities at various levels. The STMKU became aware that the ship-breaking project would pollute the coastal ecosystem and also destroy livelihoods due to depletion of marine resources. The STMKU formed a cultural team from their own community and organised cultural programmes in each fisherfolk village in the Prakasam and Nellore Districts and made the community aware of the problem. The STMKU prepared information and education materials about the adverse effects of the project and made the general public aware of the magnitude of the issue.

While the awareness campaign was going on, the government gave orders to vacate an area surrounding three fisherfolk hamlets so that the project could be implemented, giving a deadline of two weeks. When the day arrived almost 3000 fisherfolk from neighbouring hamlets gathered in the proposed project area. Representatives of the construction company arrived and tensions rose, culminating in the arrest of the General Secretary of the STMKU. The STMKU members held a rally and prepared a representation to submit to the District administration, appealing for the release of the General Secretary, a copy of which was also faxed to the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh. The action was effective, as the STMKU general secretary was released a day later.

As part of the STMKU strategy, the union leaders prepared a detailed report highlighting the problem, accompanied by a request to halt the project. This was sent to the President of India, the Prime Minister and the relevant Indian government Ministers. A postcard campaign was initiated, whereby all the coastal villages in the Prakasam and Nellore Districts sent postcards to the Prime Minister asking him to withdraw the ship-breaking yard project. STMKU also conducted a signature campaign, collecting 10,000 signatures on a petition sent to the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh. In addition, STMKU lobbied with the Regional Pollution Board and environmental research institutes. As a result, three scientists from the national Institute of Oceanography visited the project area, conducted an in-depth project viability study, talked with leaders, the villagers and the general public and prepared a report which they submitted to the Government in which they stated that the project would endanger the coastal environment.

After six months' struggle, STMKU succeeded in procuring a High Court order to halt any construction activity in the project site. This has been a major relief for the local communities who would have been affected by this project.

Regarding the negative effects of the shrimp culture, similar lobbying activities have also been undertaken. As many of the shrimp farms fall within coastal regulated zones where shrimp culture is forbidden, the STMKU gave presentations to district, state and national administrators, to get the Coastal Regeneration Zone Bill actively enforced. As a result of their action, the shrimp farms in Gundamala village, which had occupied and destroyed mangrove areas, were removed, and the bill has now been implemented. Moreover, the *kapus* of all the fisherfolk villages have ordered the community to stop the collection of shrimp fry in breeding areas, so that fish resources can be regenerated.

## Going beyond strengthening traditional structures

Influences from outside pose a serious threat to the survival of the Pattapu coastal communities. The experiences of SNIRD show that the newly created democratic bodies, which build on traditional leadership and administrative systems, can be effective ways of enforcing conservation of the ecosystem. Hence, development efforts and policies are needed that promote endogenous development not just through involving the communities, but also their traditional leadership structures.

Nevertheless, only re-enforcing traditional leadership systems is not enough. Special efforts may be needed to enhance participation of women in decision-making, e.g. through the formation of new groups, such as the women's *sangam*, and the village action committees (Grama Sangam). The *kapu* convention, which is held once in a year at district level, is also a new institution that brings harmony and strengthens the *kapu* administration. The more formally organised STMKU Fish Workers Union was needed to strengthen the lobbying capacity of the traditional leadership structures.

For us it has become clear that basing development activities on traditional leadership systems, and facilitating traditional leaders' capacity for lobbying, can alter the negative cycle of events that threaten the existence of these fisher communities.

Source: J. K. Newport and G. P. Godfrey, SNIRD

## Case 8-2

### Up-scaling traditional organic agriculture in Sri Lanka

#### Introduction

ECO's involvement in organic and traditional farming in Sri Lanka goes back to the early 1980s when it started training in organic agriculture, gradually moving into traditional<sup>1</sup> agriculture. The ECO residential training facility has seen hundreds of farmers and agricultural workers from government organisations and from NGOs pass through, inspired by the need to reverse the negative effects of modern farming on the environment and people's health and livelihoods. Over the years ECO, and in particular its founder, have had a major impact in the country in terms of Indigenous Knowledge (IK).

In the past two to three years, ECO's strategy for working towards endogenous development has shifted to include up-scaling and mainstreaming traditional farming practices. This is done through education and conservation, research and extension, with policy lobbying taking place in each of these fields when appropriate. Through each of these, the goal is to influence people on a small-scale in a large geographical area, thus building up critical mass and pressure to make changes.

#### Creating training capacity

In the early years of ECO, training was done exclusively by its founder. It often took the form of a 3-5 day residential training course at the ECO centre, and teaching was of a practical, hands-on nature. However, as the demand for training increased and training programmes were conducted at other locations, there was a need for more trainers.



Improved traditional rice cultivation includes sowing according to monsoon winds and lunar cycles before the onset of the monsoon rains, minimal tillage and traditional crop protection measures. This form of rice cultivation requires half of the irrigation water normally needed and gives good yields.

Potential individuals were selected from the trainees at the training programmes, and they were given on-the-job training. Two major criteria in selecting these candidates were that they had had higher education in (modern) agriculture and had a strong affinity with traditional agriculture. Another important point is that trainers should be able to demonstrate what they teach, and believe in it, whether it is making compost or chanting a mantra to ward off pest attacks. The trainers were given freedom to select the aspects of agriculture that most interested them. None of these trainers works full time for ECO, but are invited to join training programmes as and when the need arises. These are called the second generation of trainers in IK and traditional agriculture.

ECO is now in the phase of building the third generation of trainers. These trainers are selected from the staff of NGOs and government organisations who have undergone ECO training. This way, their organisations will have the capacity to offer in-house training and also to offer training to others. This contributes to strengthening capacity at national level. This has already started and it is envisaged that this trend will gain momentum. Recent training that ECO has provided has been for the Department of Export Agriculture as part of their in-service training programme for agricultural staff, and for an NGO involved in national land and agricultural reform, which intends to offer a five-day residential training course in IK-related farming practices to staff members of nearly 500 NGOs throughout Sri Lanka.

## Step-wise training approach

When an organisation approaches ECO with a request for staff training, ECO responds by asking the organisation to organise a one-day seminar for at least one hundred participants to start with. For this, ECO only charges for its own staff's travel, food and accommodation costs. After this initial seminar, around 15 individuals are identified for a five-day intensive residential training programme in IK/traditional agriculture. ECO does not have a set curriculum for these training programmes, thus maintaining flexibility to adjust the programme to the needs of the participants during the course of training. However, there are two areas that are always covered:

- Modern agricultural practices and the effects of these practices (human, environmental, social, etc.);
- Alternatives in the form of traditional agriculture adapted to the current situation: bio-physical (organic); spiritual (*yantra, kem, pirith*); astrological/cosmic (auspicious days, times, periods).
- Whenever possible, ECO tries to conduct at least two follow-up visits to see how the trainers are faring in the field.

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<sup>1</sup> Traditional farming refers to the package of indigenous practices, ecological, spiritual, and astrological, as used in ancient Sri Lanka and now adapted to the current situation.

## Getting IK into university curricula

ECO's involvement with universities started when the founder invited a group of university academics to become involved with guiding ECO in its work. This happened in the mid 1990s when ECO had become part of a broader international network of organisations involved in endogenous development (Compas). This inspired ECO to form a group called the Compas Consultative Body (CCB), consisting of six or seven people from universities and research institutes. This group met twice a year on average.

Since then, some of the members of this group have become actively involved in doing research on different aspects of IK in agriculture, mainly with the purpose of validating IK. Other university and research people got involved in these experiments later. Examples include field experiments on *nawa kekulama* (an adapted version of traditional *kekulama* rice cultivation, developed by ECO), research on ancient water cleaning methods, and research to compare *nawa kekulama* with conventional methods. Their involvement in this research and the results obtained motivated the scientists to incorporate short courses in IK/organic agriculture into some of the universities' educational programmes. For example, the University of Ruhuna in Matara conducts a course on sustainable agriculture for which ECO teaches the part on integrated agriculture. The Peradeniya University in Kandy has run a course on IK in pest control. In this way, IK-related aspects of agriculture are gradually being incorporated into university curricula.

The Centre for Endogenous Research and Development, a recently established NGO, could be considered a step further in imbedding IK aspects in the university sector. Key posts in this NGO are held by former CCB members.

## Moving up to policy level

Closely linked to the work with the universities, ECO is trying to influence the thinking and practice at policy level in the country. Its main strategy to this end is the organisation of high-level seminars and workshops. For these events, ECO calls upon the university staff and government representatives collaborating in its programmes to give presentations and share experiences. Press coverage of the events contributes to a wider awareness raising on the relevance and impact of ECO's approach to agriculture development.

Source: G.K. Upawansa, ECO

## Case 8-3

### Influencing wildfire management policy in Ghana

#### The problem

Fire has always been a tool for land management and plays a central role in the maintenance of many natural ecosystems, as well as in the practice of agriculture and rangeland

management in Ghana. Communities use fire for small-scale land clearance and elimination of debris in their traditional slash and burn agriculture, taking advantage of the annual dry season. Fires are used not only for farming activities but also for hunting, pasture management and cultural practices.

With increases in population, these traditional farming practices are no longer able to provide sustainable farming systems. Particularly after the severe drought in 1982/3, wildfire became a major cause of forest and land degradation. Now wildfire threatens the promotion of timber plantation development, biodiversity conservation, agricultural production, watershed management and the maintenance of environmental quality. It is the poor who are particularly at risk because they depend directly on land for their livelihood and often live in fragile ecosystems.

### **The failure of top-down policy development**

The Ghanaian government has long recognised the need to control wildfires, the first legislation being passed in 1934, with various additions during the 1980s and 1990s. Experience has shown, however, that wildfires cannot be controlled through legislation, by-laws and annual educational campaigns all of which emanate from the central government level.

In 2003 Cecik, an NGO based in northern Ghana, supported the drawing up of a new Wildfire Management Policy document through an alternative bottom-up process, the three-tier approach, building on its years of experiences in supporting endogenous development in the communities. The challenge was to formulate a national policy that would give direction and influence people's attitudes while incorporating and building on local people's perceptions, experiences and needs, as well as government and donor interests.

### **The policy process: the Three-Tier Approach**

In bringing together stakeholders to discuss and inform the bushfire management in northern Ghana, a three-tier approach was used to allow discussion at each level, with each interest group using its own communications tools and any language that enhances sharing and cross-fertilisation.

The first stage involved only community representatives who discussed their experience and field level investigations. During this discussion the communities nominated representatives to represent them at the next level (Institutional/Organisational) forum. At the end of two days' deliberation the communities arrived at a statement of purpose, which the representatives were prepared to present.

The second stage involved mainly NGOs, as well as government ministries, departments and agencies, with a few representatives from the communities. Presentations were made on behalf of the various institutions, as well as a statement of purpose by community representatives. During the next two days there were discussions, which culminated in a statement of purpose

to be presented to the policy makers. At this level also, representatives were nominated to the next level (policy level) forum.

The final stage was made up of policy makers as the majority with Institution and Community representatives as Ambassadors. This session took one day. The communities presented their position paper, followed by the institutions. The policy makers also presented their speeches, after which a discussion followed.

After this process the representatives reported back and actions were taken, along with the planning of a follow-up review.

## The results

This process has led to a policy document with a truly holistic framework. Though stakeholders brought a variety of ideas into the process, the concept of endogenous development shows through in many paragraphs (see Box). The three-tier structure is also being used for disseminating the Food & Agriculture Sector Development Policy (FASDEP) by the Ghana government, and the University for Development Studies (UDS) is using it for teaching policy-planning and review in postgraduate courses.

### Statement three of Wildfire Management Policy

Sustaining wildfire prevention and control will be pursued by developing the appropriate *traditional structures and systems* to allow the full involvement of all stakeholders in decision-making, resource mobilisation and implementation of wildfire programmes. Strategies include:

- Institutionalisation of participatory approaches in wildfire management at all levels, and *empowering traditional authorities and community leaders* to take responsibility for the prevention and control of wildfires at community and village levels.
- Development of appropriate capacities of all stakeholders in wildfire management.
- Establishment of a National Wildfire Management Fund and a district-based insurance scheme to ensure sustainable participation of all stakeholders.
- Institution of incentive, reward and benefit-sharing schemes for communities, individuals and institutions that distinguish themselves in wildfire management.
- Ensuring that basic schools, Agriculture and Forestry Institutions of higher learning incorporate courses in wildfire management in their curricula.
- Promoting and sustaining public awareness, training and environmental education campaigns at all levels of governance to prevent wildfires, particularly among communities in high- to medium-risk fire areas.

It is envisaged that all relevant institutions and stakeholders will develop their own specific individual policy actions to achieve the overall policy objectives. This includes not only ministerial representatives but also that traditional authorities take a lead role in community mobilisation and support the enactment and enforcement of by-laws at community level. Non-governmental organisations have roles in awareness creation, community mobilisation and logistical support.

Source: Cecik and Care International, Ghana Office

## Case 8-4

### Intra- and inter-cultural education and university reform in Bolivia

#### Introduction

Bolivia needs professionals who are able to do joint action research together with farmers, based on local resources and local knowledge.



In many parts of Latin America the modernisation-based development model has not been able to help reduce poverty. The indigenous population in particular experiences increased material poverty as this development approach ignores many fundamental aspects of their lives and is thus not able to generate viable alternatives.

At the same time, higher education in Latin America contains a contradiction: although universities and countries in general have a population of mixed cultural background

including a large portion of indigenous people, the curriculum content only encompasses modern western knowledge and related worldviews. Knowledge generated in the university is limited by the exclusion of knowledge inherent in native cultures.

Agruco, based at the San Simon Municipal University (UMSS) in Cochabamba, Bolivia, realised that this education model has little relevance to the social and economic problems of the local communities. Their poverty crisis cannot be resolved through a university-business paradigm, nor by means of a conceptual model which prioritises the market economy. Agruco is, therefore, now transforming the university education so that it is based on both western scientific knowledge and the wisdom of the native people. It aims at future graduates developing the skills necessary to further the endogenous development process of the increasingly impoverished population.

#### Key concepts in the new education paradigm

**Inter-culturality:** The re-evaluation of local knowledge systems, especially the wisdom of native indigenous peoples, through exchange and dialogue between knowledge systems.

**Intra-culturality:** The first indispensable step in the process of strengthening cultural identity and transforming the knowledge system within the university.

**Transdisciplinarity:** A process of education and applied research based on the complexity of every situation, which transcends the knowledge of individual disciplines by using a range of methodologies. See also the Glossary on page 235.

## Towards inter- and intra-cultural education

For its work within the UMSS, Agruco has formulated its principal objective as 'to identify and implement actions for change within Latin American public universities, which rebuild the educative process through the inclusion of a new paradigm—re-evaluating the cultures of the native peoples and the dialogue between the knowledge systems involved (South-South, South-North), from an intra- and inter-cultural and transdisciplinary perspective' (see Box). Through their links with Compas, universities from Bolivia, Chile, Colombia and Guatemala are also participating in this effort.

## The process of change

Agruco's experience in trying to initiate change in the education has been a difficult path. Summarising, it has consisted of the following steps:

- Developing an own experience of university education and research based on dialogue between western scientific knowledge and the wisdom of the original indigenous peoples. This process started about fifteen years ago and continues today in the fields of agroecology and municipal management at undergraduate and postgraduate level.
- About ten workshops and conferences have been organised within UMSS in which Agruco has shared and socialised its field experience. Other institutions and universities in Latin America have been invited and have shared their similar experiences.
- Various meetings and workshops have been held with the university authorities and student leaders that are committed to the need to implement changes and reform in higher education.
- Proposals have been formulated together with those involved about ways in which Agruco's specific experience can be translated to other areas and disciplines within university training.

## Linking the university to local realities

The education system of UMSS, principally through the faculty of agriculture and Agruco, has now changed to include a continuous interaction between university and the various social elements around it. This includes, for example, joint undertakings with the Cochabamba peasant workers trade union, with 44 town councils within Cochabamba department, and with small businesses, neighbourhood councils and the Cochabamba federation of private businessmen.

All undergraduate training programs, programs of research and development, and postgraduate projects, are also now linked to actual integrated community development, through pilot projects. These projects are in areas such as agro-ecology, agroforestry, fodder and forest crops, agricultural mechanisation, protected areas, inter-culturality, municipal administration and government processes.

The research and social interaction have generated important lessons, which have in turn fed back into the undergraduate academic education, thus transforming it.

## The research and education approach

If students are to gain an interdisciplinary understanding and interpretation of the rural situation, so that they can support sustainable solutions for the rural poor, their interaction with communities as part of their research projects needs to have a combination of three main components:

**Understand the situation** Field studies, which include the vision of development from the perspective of the peasant farmer. Analyse the technologies and customs of the community and its members in everyday life—with its material, social and spiritual elements—as it is seen from within the community itself.

**Strengthen and rebuild local knowledge** by means of participatory documentation: produce records of 'The Re-evaluation of Local Knowledge for Sustainable Development' which may then be returned to the community and passed on to other communities and organisations.

**Formulate projects** with the communities based on the technologies compiled, for the sustainable management of natural resources and the re-invigoration of local knowledge. The projects are elaborated in conjunction with the communities and submitted to municipal programmes for financing.

In all components, the research approach is active and participatory, with emphasis on methodologies from different scientific disciplines. Requests for research and integrated development need to arise from participatory community studies. The outcome of these studies makes a significant contribution to municipal development plans.

## Changing the institution itself

Experiences show that use of the new, participatory educational approach with its strong linkages to many organisations outside the university leads to changes in the organic structure of the universities and their decision-making bodies.

For example, the Honourable University Council (HCU) currently upholds the principles of autonomy and joint-government, with the participation of student and staff representatives. There has also been a proposal to create a People's Participation Council with representatives of peasant workers' organisations, the federation of private business, and the regional government. This council is to be responsible for proposing university policies and strategies to meet the social, cultural, economic and political needs of society.

Likewise, a proposal has been formulated to create a 'Council of the Wise', who will advise on the elaboration of university programmes for education, scientific research and social interaction. Participants in this council will be individuals of high standing from civil society, including leaders from native indigenous peoples and academia.

University centres fulfil educational functions in the areas of postgraduate courses, scientific research and social interaction. The role of these centres is to actively promote greater participation by the general population and they have arisen from pilot schemes conducted with civil society and international cooperation. To date five UMSS centres have been accredited within Mercosur as centres of excellence.

## Consolidating the efforts

This experience of transforming education has inspired the UMSS and the Ministry of Agriculture to collaborate in the setting up of a new research fund 'to develop general guidelines for an intra-cultural, inter-cultural and transdisciplinary reform in public universities of Bolivia and Latin America'. Partners from Switzerland and the Netherlands are supporting these efforts.

The fund aims to promote active, participatory, transdisciplinary and intra- and inter-cultural research in the different faculties of the UMSS. It also aims at the establishment of intra- and inter-cultural training programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level (diploma, masters and doctorate). Furthermore, 300 lecturers will specialise in participatory, transdisciplinary and intra- and intercultural research. Undergraduate and postgraduate training programmes will be modified with flexible curriculum matrices which encompass both modern western scientific knowledge and the wisdom of the native peoples.

In this way UMSS continues its process of change to fulfil its mission to be a multicultural and multilingual public university at the service of all the Bolivian population. Intra- and interculturality, and transdisciplinary and participatory research for an endogenous sustainable development are the basis for this university reform. A university education based on the two fundamental pillars—scientific western knowledge and the wisdom of the native peoples—will produce motivated professionals, with the skills required to support endogenous development.

Source: Franz Vargas and Freddy Delgado, Agruco

## Case 8-5

### Recognising the contribution of the Maya juridical system to the state of Guatemala

#### Introduction

The traditional authorities of the Maya K'iche Nation can be regarded as key examples in the debate surrounding the exclusionary state judicial system in Guatemala. The traditional authorities have devoted efforts to indicating the deficiencies and the state of crisis and collapse of the Guatemalan state, which has now started to recognise the indigenous juridical system of the Maya nation. The Maya authorities have suggested to the state that it is important to recognise the existence of the Maya juridical system, the traditional authorities,

Traditional leaders and government representatives participate in the dialogue on the role of Mayan juridical systems for the prevention and solution of conflicts, during a conference organised by Oxlajuj Ajpop.



support institutional and local strengthening. A large proportion of the effort has gone towards the process of research, clarification and systematisation that has been undertaken by the elders to understand the foundations of the traditional Maya system.

### **Step one: establishing the foundations**

During the first years, exchanges and consultations took place and agreements were reached on the steps that needed to be taken to reconstruct the organisation of the traditional authorities, and revitalise knowledge and indigenous forms of applying justice and sensitisation. The communities came to learn the importance of these for their own well-being. The elder members of Oxlajuj Ajpop carried out these first steps, with technical support from the central office.

### **Step two: identification, systematisation and diffusion of the sources and foundations of the Maya juridical system**

Maya Law is based on the Maya cosmovision, which integrates the spiritual, social, philosophical, moral and ethical spheres. Authority is a mission to which some are born, later on discovering this and taking it up to serve the community (see Case 3-6).

### **Step three: profiles of the authorities**

In the Maya culture both men and women may be elected to a position of authority, and both must fulfil the same requirements. They have to know the history of their culture, obey the wise advice of the ancestors, and be able to use the sacred calendar. A person of authority must have spiritual experience of the ancestors, be without vices, of good history, honourable, and respected by the community. He or she has to be able to defend the land and natural resources of the community and be capable of working for his or her community.

### **Step four: how authorities are elected**

According to the Maya cosmovision and calendar, no person can elect him or herself to a position of authority in the community, people or nation. An authority is elected by the

methods of prevention and resolution of conflicts in communities and their contribution to social cohesion. At the same time, the need is recognised to revitalise the indigenous organisation of the traditional authorities so that it has the capacity to participate more fully in a process of transformation of the juridical system in Guatemala.

Compas partner Oxlajuj Ajpop has been involved in this process since 2000 within a project for juridical pluralism, supported by the United Nations PASOC-PNUD, designed to

community because the community needs a person to act as a guide, to look after and guide it. This is a profound mission and requires strong spiritual experience to be able to carry it out.

- The authorities of the Alaxik lineage are chosen within the family.
- Various lineages within the community elect an authority for the community.
- The community authorities elect the authority of the Maya people (Pueblo)

The election involves special rites and consultations with the ancestors through the sacred 'envoltorio', the Tz'ite'. All those proposed must be consulted to see whether they have the capacities required to assume the mission of being an authority.

### **Step five: investiture of the authority**

The person elected is invested as an authority in the Oxlajuj Kej (thirteen deer) according to the Maya calendar, a special event for the whole community. A special staff and ceremonial robes of authority are prepared for the elected person, special altars are assigned for the ceremonial rites in accordance with the Maya calendar and the elders' advice is presented. The investiture involves sacred ceremonies, dances, meals and speeches.

### **Step six: the mission of the traditional authority**

Persons of authority in the Maya nation have to listen to their people, devote themselves to defending the community's resources, strengthening social and spiritual organisation, promote native foods, spread values and science, celebrate special rites. A traditional authority is a prophet of the people. The person represents the community to the state authorities and religions of other cultures.

### **Step seven: using national and international laws to support the exercise of Maya authority**

In order to recognise the legitimacy of the spiritual, medicinal, territorial rights and the indigenous system of justice, Oxlajuj Ajpop is active in promoting the spread of legal instruments for defending these rights within the communities. One of these instruments is Convention 169 of the ILO which recognises the rights of indigenous peoples, and *Ley Marco de los Acuerdos de Paz* that recognises some aspects of the rights of indigenous peoples. The laws in general contain contradictions and always have opportunities and limitations. The use of the instruments obliges the state judiciaries to adopt a flexible stance in the face of the demands of the communities.

### **Final step: proposal for transforming the state judicial system into one of juridical pluralism in Guatemala**

The traditional authorities propose to the State judicial system that it recognises the indigenous systems of the Maya, Xinca and Garifuna nations to reflect the cultural reality in Guatemala. This is still at a preliminary stage: much work still needs to be done to formulate a proposal that will be supported by all sectors of civil society.

## Conclusion

The Maya judicial system possesses authority, procedures and norms based on the Maya cosmovision. It is an efficient system that solves problems in an integral manner. It could contribute big economic and time savings to the state system in Guatemala. It orients, corrects and transforms people. State recognition is urged in order to transform the current dysfunctional justice system.

Source: Felipe Gómez Gómez, Oxlajuj Ajpop

## Case 8-6 Marching for policy change in Nicaragua

### Introduction



The school ecological brigade participates in the March of the Chorotega. These young students are trained in nature- and biodiversity management.

The Totogalpa area in Northern Nicaragua was severely affected by hurricane Mitch in 1998. The NGO INPRHU initiated emergency reconstruction efforts with the native Chorotega people, focusing on housing and the productive system. From the start these efforts were based on local techniques and knowledge, and the reintroduction of traditional crops that had largely been abandoned in the 1970s. Learning with the people, the approach used evolved over the years towards supporting endogenous

development. When local policies governing access to forest resources and their implementation were found to be the main bottleneck for such development, the endogenous development process had strengthened the capacities of the Chorotega communities to the extent that they were able to address these policy issues successfully.

### Development of the collaboration

INPRHU first supported the community in better understanding its own history. Workshops with elders aimed at activating the oral history and comparing this with the 'official history' were held. Through this it became evident that for centuries the Chorotega had faced many difficulties, and had been forced to endure harsh conditions. But they also realised that they possessed an energy that helped them to resist the strong forces that stripped them of most of their lands, rights and wealth.

In our further support we resorted principally to the following methods and approaches:

- Meetings for reflection, evening talks by candlelight, visits to family in the evenings, social dramas and plays, stories and legends, illustrated histories of the community, families and other.
- Diagnosis using Participatory Action Research, with different participatory tools.
- Training to promote local human resources.
- Training through workshops, field visits and talks.
- Visits and trips to exchange experiences elsewhere.
- Participatory community planning.

However, the tools themselves are not as important as is their combined use within the framework of a strategy of self-education based on recovering a community's own culture.

## Community organisation

One important step in building local community strength was the participation of two members of the Chorotega native community in the newly formed Municipal Development Committee. Together with the also newly formed Local Development Committees composed of inhabitants of the micro regions, these created opportunities for the communities to influence the municipality's strategic plans.

In 2002, the next crucial step was the creation of the overall Council of Elders, with men and women from the Chorotega community, PICTHTAC. Ancestral symbols were chosen for its logo and flag. Local councils were subsequently created in each of the communities. PICTHTAC started to play an increasingly important role. It created the 'Chorotega coordination unit' including Chorotega people from other municipalities: Cusmapa, San Lucas, Telpaneca and Mozonte. The organisation collaborates with the Ministry of Education in organising Ecological School Brigades. The students in these brigades are trained in sustainable management of natural resources and biodiversity, as part of the Chorotega Educational System. International exchanges within the context of the COMPAS programme further helped to build the capacity of the organisation.

## The march

The Chorotega people depend for their livelihood on access to forest resources. They were not, however, able to influence their use and management. Municipal officials had declared that there were no native people living in the Totogalpa area and that unrestricted use of the forests could be made. With this they tried to circumvent international (ILO Article 169) and national laws protecting the resources and identities of indigenous people. In 2004, PICTHTAC and its allies therefore decided to organise a massive mobilisation, a march to the public authorities in Totogalpa demanding the official recognition of the Chorotega native people and thus their right to manage the relevant resources.

Chorotega people of 40 communities participated in a march to their municipality under the motto: 'The Community Present in the Rescue of our Roots'. They decided to bring to the authorities' attention the existence of the native Chorotega people, and to demand custody of their forests.



Earlier in the year, several strategic alliances had been established that proved very critical to the success of the mobilisation, e.g. with the religious order of the Tertiary Capuchin Sisters of the Holy Family and with the Ministry of Education, partner in the School Ecological Brigade programme. The support of the local media was also important in building popular participation. In each of the 40 communities the existing local groups assumed the task of actually organising the people.

On September 12, 2004, 2000 people marched to Totogalpa. They had an outdoor mass service in the municipal stadium and then publicly presented their requests to the authorities to acknowledge the native Chorotega people of Totogalpa. In addition, they requested that the municipality's forests be declared protected areas, with the Indigenous Chorotega People of Totogalpa in Community Action (PICHTAC) as the formal custodians.

## Results achieved

The march was a success. Already on the day of the March, the mayor of Totogalpa read a declaration acknowledging PICHTAC and the Chorotega traditional authorities. She declared the Totogalpa municipality a native Chorotega territory, and stated that this event should be commemorated on 12 September each year. The local and national media covered the event, taking this historic news to every corner of Nicaragua.

After the event, the municipality granted PICHTAC space to set up a small office for two years, and donated land to build a permanent office and an artisan centre. In 2005, a building for holding native people assemblies was built on a property located in Las Chilcas, which was donated by one of the members of the council of elders, Don Porfirio López Mejía. Two young Chorotega women have been trained as communication professionals. Every Saturday they broadcast on Segovia Radio giving an account of the situation of the Chorotega and other native peoples. News of events, achievements and PICHTAC activities is broadcast, together with music by local groups.

## Still a long way to go

In December of 2004, representatives of the various local communities came together to evaluate the activities and the process of change. Quite a few difficulties were brought up. Some people are still ashamed of being natives, and not all community directives are working efficiently. Especially the young do not always appreciate the importance of PICHTAC. Further work needs to be done with them to help create awareness. Without a doubt, the Chorotega

no longer face a situation of exclusion. The most important transformation has been the unification, organisation and mobilisation of the indigenous Chorotega communities, which has restored their dignity as human beings with rights and duties.

Source: INPRHU,  
Stephan Rist, CDE

## Case 8-7

### Regional cooperatives bridge the gap between policy and practice in Spain

#### Natural resources under threat

Olive trees are more or less synonymous with the Mediterranean area, and there are some that are more than 1000 years old in the province of Castellón in eastern Spain. Since 2001, astute merchants have been buying, uprooting and shipping them to France and Italy and even as far as China, where they are planted as unusual landmarks in natural parks and gardens. This natural resource and cultural heritage has thus come under serious threat.

The mountainous areas of Castellón are not very wealthy. Farming consists mainly of rain-dependent olive, wine and dried fruit production. Even these activities have declined, with many people migrating to the richer coastal area, where irrigated citrus farming takes place and tourism is on the rise, leaving partially abandoned villages behind. Under these circumstances it is perhaps not surprising that the owners of such old olive trees have succumbed to the increasingly high prices being offered for their prize possessions. Amounts of around € 3,000 are not unusual and on one occasion € 24,000 was paid for a 1,800-year-old tree.

However, some farmers in the area of Cloth d'en Simó realised that what was happening amounted to the 'theft' of an important part of their cultural heritage. They developed a strategy not only to influence policies so that the olive trees could be retained, but also to develop this cultural heritage for the benefit of the region. This was done with support from a regional cooperative.



Ancient olive tree in eastern Spain.

#### The cooperative strength in the region

Spain has a long tradition of organising agricultural production through cooperatives. Virtually all villages have their own cooperative. Of all cooperatives in the provinces of Castellón, Alicante and Valencia some 227 cooperatives are federated in a second-level cooperative

called InterCoop, which has a total of 80,000 farmer members. These cooperatives are federated in a second-level cooperative called InterCoop. Founded in 2000, InterCoop aims to create competitive advantages in sales, marketing, processing and to provide services to its members. Even though its annual turnover amounts to € 62 million, it is a fairly small cooperative compared to other Spanish second-grade cooperatives. Nevertheless, it distinguishes itself by its relatively high level of farmer participation in cooperative development and management.

The cooperative goes beyond simply defending farmers' immediate interests (e.g. securing subsidies to support the survival of agriculture) and has started a whole spectrum of rural development activities. In order to preserve agriculture in the area, InterCoop feels it must engage with socio-cultural issues as well: 'Our villages are our future'. InterCoop has an extensive social base in the region and is strong in delivering concrete results for rural people. It receives a small annual contribution from the provincial authorities for strengthening rural development in the ways it considers best.

InterCoop formed four regional cooperatives (*co-operativas comarcals*) in the province of Castellón, each consisting of first-level cooperatives that together constitute a region with a shared socio-cultural identity and similar or complementary agricultural activities. These regional cooperatives can take the lead in developing and implementing integrated regional development plans. One of the regional cooperatives, the Regional Cooperative of Cloth d'en Simó, is in the area where the olive trees were uprooted. It has 9 members: 8 first-level local cooperatives—all of them specialising in olive oil production—and InterCoop itself. All nine members invest capital (about € 30,000 each) and unite some 2,750 farmer members. This regional cooperative has successfully addressed the issue of the olive trees and used it as a focal point for economic development and strengthening the regional identity.

### Position of the regional cooperative between top and bottom / practice and policy

<i>Geographical level</i>	<i>Operating Organisation</i>	<i>Output</i>
Comunidad Autónoma (3 provinces: Valencia, Castellón and Alicante)	InterCoop (Second-grade cooperative)	Joint processing, sales, marketing of agricultural production and provision of services. Strategic and innovative power.
Province of Castellón	Fundación Penyagolosa	Lobbying, networking, policy alignment, strategy formulation.
THE GAP	Regional / territorial Cooperative (of which <i>Cloth d'en Simó</i> is one)	Integrated Territorial Development plans and action.
Municipalities	First-grade cooperatives	Joint processing of agricultural production, smallest socio-economic unit.

## Seeking formal recognition of the value of the olive trees

The first thing the members did was to survey and document the millennium trees. The farmers participated in the survey of their trees, and InterCoop supplied an expert who identified the tree varieties. Of an estimated thousand trees, about 250 olive trees have now been described and documented botanically as being over 1000 years old. A lobby campaign was carried out and in June 2006 a law was passed prohibiting the uprooting of monumental olive trees.

The successful passing of the law is also due to the Fundación Penyagolosa. This Foundation was initiated by InterCoop and is a broad coalition composed of representatives from the Province, the Chamber of Commerce, a rural bank, the University of Castellón, some farmers' associations, a cooperative for Associated Labour and InterCoop. It provides a strategic lobbying opportunity to ally people at the top-end with ambitions and initiatives arising locally. The fact that the provincial representative is a politician responsible for agriculture gave weight to the motion on monumental olive trees. The Foundation is also instrumental in generating vision and coherence among the agricultural policies existing at the level of Castellón province and the wider Valencia region.

## Creating economic benefits

The old trees still produce olives, and with technical support from InterCoop the olives from these trees are now collected separately, following procedures so that the origin of the olives can be guaranteed. The oil is bottled in a luxury edition, fetching 3 to 6 times the price of regular olive oil. While this direct income from the trees through this special oil is not very high because of the limited quantity, it serves as a 'flagship' product, attracting attention to the area. Research with InterCoop also showed that the old trees were of the Farga variety. Fruits of this not-so-common ancient variety have a balance of fatty acids which makes them very suitable for long storage. This is perhaps not so surprising, given that ancient cultures had no modern forms of cool storage. This discovery has led to recent replanting of olive trees of the Farga variety.

The trees are also used in more indirect ways to create economic benefits. They form one of the greatest tourist attractions together with the picturesque villages and attractive scenery in an area with a rich cultural, historical and spiritual tradition. Under the banner of InterCoop, a network of local shops has been established throughout Castellón where local quality products are sold. The Regional Cooperative of Cloth d'en Simó has bought a local petrol station and converted it into a tourist spot with a shop and a restaurant to entice tourists who are mainly based on the coast, to venture inland. Finally, the Regional Cooperative has also created the Association of Friends of the Olive Tree. All non-farmers who wish to contribute to the development of this local resource can become members by making a small financial donation. The association is a strategic instrument that is able to attract attention and support from other parts of society—including well known members of the public and the business community. Through their contacts, the Friends of the Olive Tree are trying to achieve Unesco world heritage

Source: Gaston Remmers, Bureau Buitenkans

status, with the aim of enhancing the image of the area and generating more possibilities for creating added value: another policy process ahead.

## Case 8-8

### Building the Rural Parliament: structured policy dialogue in the Netherlands

#### The need for an increased policy dialogue

In the Netherlands, rural areas face many challenges, including the liveability of the countryside, the decrease in farming opportunities and profitability, nature conservation, land-use planning of the very limited area available, domination of the rural areas by the city, and degradation of social and other facilities. There are many organisations and initiatives dealing with these issues. Many are sector specific and therefore look at sub-interests only. Others are collaborative efforts of local communities with other actors to try and address their issues in a more holistic and participatory way. Often these receive support through the innovative European Union programme for Rural Development (Leader). In all cases, rural issues and concerns attract little policy attention at the national level and local or regional initiatives are constrained by higher level frameworks. Rural people and organisations find it difficult to reach the national level with their concerns, except for a few large single-interest groups. The Rural Parliament is the first initiative in the Netherlands to bridge this gap, and started in 2005.

A rural parliament is an event for structured debate on rural issues: a debate between rural citizens and members of the national parliament. The focus is on implications at the national level. The Rural Parliament promotes the interests of rural areas and aims to catalyse change.

#### The first Rural Parliament

The inspiration for the first rural parliament came from Sweden, Hungary and Estonia where rural parliaments are organised regularly with success. This inspired the Association of Small Villages, an NGO of people supporting local and regional development and the team of the National Network for Rural Development, an independent network, to initiate the first rural parliament in the Netherlands.

The first step was to agree on subjects to be discussed. What are the concerns of the people and what do they want to raise with the national government? During the first Rural Parliament, this input was generated by giving all rural citizens the opportunity to submit subjects by post or e-mail. The initiators clustered these around nine themes. These formed the main topics for the nine discussion groups at the Rural Parliament.

The parliament lasted for one day and nearly 330 people participated. Apart from the discussion groups, there was a project market with ten interesting and inspiring rural development projects, representing 10 out of the 12 regions in the Netherlands. Here people

exchanged information about good practices on project implementation. The participants of the Rural Parliament could thus choose between 'talking' in a discussion group or 'doing' at the market. National politicians participated actively in the discussion group as well at the project market.

In the afternoon, all participants (rural inhabitants and politicians) debated the most important conclusions of the nine discussion groups. Conclusions were formulated using an open voting procedure on key issues. During this debate, agreements and commitments were made where possible.

## **Participants**

A Rural Parliament can only be a success if enough members of the national government participate. At the 2005 event, twelve members of the national parliament were present, which was very positive. These members of parliament had to be willing to invest in better contact and decision-making with citizens. The twelve politicians represented a variety of political parties as the organisers tried to have all parties involved.

The other three hundred participants were all inhabitants of rural areas, which is central to the concept of the Rural Parliament. We purposely targeted the inhabitants of the rural areas in the Netherlands as individuals. They were not there to represent a special interest group, but participated because they are committed to their rural livelihoods. They could be volunteers who are active in rural development initiatives as well as committed rural citizens. Most people attending the first Rural Parliament were members of village councils and members of Leader groups or programmes.

## **Understanding the Rural Parliament**

The Rural Parliament is an effort to improve the communication between rural citizens and the national government. Practice and policy meet each other during a session. Governments benefit as they need to have clear feedback from practice to adapt policies or create new ones. Moreover, the members of the national government are not always aware of the main problems in the countryside. On the other hand, citizens are often sceptical about anything that is organised by the national government. Due to the direct presence of the members of the national government, both parties understand each other better. The Rural Parliament is intended to influence policies, but it can also be seen as an opportunity for the administrative level to check and test ideas against the perceptions and ideas at a practical level. After all, it is at the administrative level that decisions are made and actual policies, rules and regulations are formulated, implemented and monitored. The Rural Parliament has no ambition to operate at this level.

However, there is more to the Rural Parliament. It is also a place where citizens demonstrate their own responsibility and initiatives and how the government can react to these. It is about

change and exchange. And it creates a platform for improving the expertise and competence of rural citizens in rural affairs.

Finally, the Rural Parliament should be seen as a movement, not as a static event. We aim to organise the Rural Parliament once every two years while the time in between will be used for improving expertise, lobbying for implementation of agreements made and information sharing on rural affairs.

## Results and way forward

The first Dutch national Rural Parliament has been a successful pilot. Several important agreements and commitments were made. The national government agreed to partly finance the Rural Parliament every year, an indication of how seriously it takes the Rural Parliament. Other commitments made include those on driver's licences for volunteer taxi drivers, free public transport for the young and the elderly, and more room in rural areas for entrepreneurs. Monitoring and following-up these agreements and commitments is of course a critical task. At this stage, the two main initiators of the first Rural Parliament, the Association of Small Villages and the team of the National Network for Rural Development have taken responsibility for this.

In the coming year we want to involve many more organisations in the organisation and management of the Rural Parliament. These will be organisations and networks, who serve the common interest of the countryside, including rural women's organisations, youth organisations, nature conservation organisation and farmers' organisations. In order to involve these groups a 'platform for Rural Parliament partners' has recently been established. These partners are expected to subscribe to the principles of the Rural Parliament. They will bring with them a broad series of perspectives and strengthen the follow-up of the Rural Parliament with their respective lobbying.

The first national rural parliament in the Netherlands was such a success that three *regional* Rural Parliaments were organised in 2006. In these regional Rural Parliaments rural people interacted in the same way with their regional provincial government in the Netherlands. The idea is now to organise a national Rural Parliament every two years and regional Rural Parliaments in the years in between. The regional Rural Parliaments will then generate the input, the issues, for the national one.

To keep everyone informed, a website has been established for the Rural Parliament where the latest news on the agreements and the new Rural Parliaments can be found. This is also the place where digital information can be obtained that can help improve the expertise and competence of the rural citizens in rural affairs.

The ambition of the Rural Parliament is to become a regular phenomenon in the rural areas/sector: a platform seen by both sides (citizens and politicians) as an important movement for dealing with rural affairs.

Source: Marieke Koot,  
National Network Unit  
for Rural Development  
in the Netherlands

## Reflections on creating an enabling environment

### The need to look beyond the local level

Success and failure of local endogenous development activities such as those described in the previous chapters are often determined by factors beyond direct local influence, the wider 'environment' in which endogenous development takes place. The cases in this chapter describe the joint efforts of communities, development workers and their organisations to address these 'external' factors. Their experiences are summarised below, zooming in on four areas: policy advocacy and policy research; resource rights and regulations; educational reform; and creating wider economic linkages. Together these create important conditions for further up-scaling of successful local initiatives.

### Policy research and lobbying

Government policies may support or frustrate local development initiatives. Three groups of policy areas appear to be most relevant:

**Policies with direct impact on indigenous knowledge, institutions and practices:** These are national policies, for example on the rights of indigenous people, on the role of traditional institutions and leaders and their relationship with formal (e.g. state-based) organisations, on the position of traditional laws within legislation, on mechanisms to protect the use of traditional knowledge, Intellectual Property Rights, policies or mechanisms to protect or improve gender rights and or relations between classes and castes.

Several international policies and declarations—and international human rights standards in particular—that are consistent with indigenous protocols and values can be referred to in policy dialogues. Examples are the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the ILO

### Kari-Oca Declaration

We, the Indigenous Peoples, walk to the future in the footprints of our ancestors. From the smallest to the largest living being, from the four directions, from the air, the land, and the mountains, the Creator has placed us, the Indigenous Peoples, upon our Mother the Earth. The footprints of our ancestors are permanently etched upon the land of our peoples. We, the Indigenous Peoples, maintain our inherent rights to self-determination. We have always had the right to decide our own forms of government, to use our own laws to raise and educate our children, to our own cultural identity without interference. We continue to maintain our rights as peoples despite centuries of deprivation, assimilation, and genocide. We maintain our inalienable rights to our lands and territories, to all our resources—above and below—and to our waters. We assert our ongoing responsibility to pass these on to the future generations. We cannot be removed from our lands. We, the Indigenous Peoples, are connected by the circle of life to our land and environments. We, the Indigenous Peoples, walk to the future in the footprints of our ancestors.

Signed at Kari-Oca, Brazil, on the 30th day of May, 1992.

169 convention. The Kari-Oca Declaration endorsed by representatives of indigenous peoples already in 1992 (see Box) can be referred to by indigenous peoples to get more policy support.

**Policies relevant for implementation of specific development activities:** These may be policies related to management of a specific natural resource (e.g. land, water or trees), environmental management, agricultural research and extension policies or health sector policies.

**Policies that regulate the economy:** These include policies to create price mechanisms for local products and stem competition from imported goods, policies that set quality development standards for local food items, organise marketing and product development of regional products, etc.

Efforts to address policy issues can also start with policy research. This research not only aims at finding relevant policy statements and examining their content, but also at collecting evidence on whether they are implemented or not. Another major task is generating evidence of the effectiveness and relevance of the endogenous development approach and the specific activities undertaken, upon which to base further policy dialogue. Good case studies with reliable data can be convincing. Short summary statements, policy briefs that formulate the main policy implications in terms and concepts relevant for policy makers can be equally useful.

But gathering and creating evidence is rarely enough to change policies. Several case studies describe efforts in actual policy lobbying. Common instruments like rallies, press conferences, petitions and even legal action can be part of this. From an endogenous development point of view the central question remains: how can development organisations empower communities and their leaders to take ownership of and lead this lobby process? Strengthening local leadership and combining it with the formation of larger representative organisations are major avenues for achieving this (see also Chapter 7). Development organisations can support this by providing capacity building in policy research and lobbying, facilitating linkages with like-minded organisations, and helping build coalitions.

### Resource rights and regulations

While endogenous development builds on and enhances local systems for resource use and management, communities are often confronted with formal rules and regulations that prevent them from using available resources effectively. This refers to access and use of natural resources such as land, water or trees. However, it is equally relevant for human, socio-cultural and even spiritual resources when rules and regulations discourage or prevent traditional knowledge practices, leaders or values from being given a serious role in the development process. The case studies in this book show how development agencies and communities jointly try to address the rights issues:

**Rights on the use of local knowledge, safeguarding intellectual property rights:** In the case of genetic materials a number of organisations have helped to create 'Village Biodiversity Registers' (Chapter 7, Case 7-2). Description of local plants and their uses in a register prevents outsiders from patenting these for their own commercial use. Equally important are efforts to

link up with Intellectual Property Rights issues at the international level and to support lobbies at the level of the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement.

**Territory and land rights:** The cosmovisions of most indigenous and rural peoples define territory and land as a totality, where human beings, spiritual beings and their reciprocity with animals and plants form a dynamic whole. These cosmovisions are in danger because of the implementation of development policies which have by-passed the traditional vision on territory, for example by privatising natural resources such as land or water. When governments discuss development policies, international and national conventions on the territorial rights of the indigenous people should be taken into account. They also have to be informed by indigenous peoples' cosmovisions and seek their consent before a decision can be taken.

**Right to use own legal system:** in the case of Guatemala (Case 8-5) in this chapter, communities and their support organisation have worked systematically towards the recognition of and right to use their own Maya legal system as the basis for governing many aspects of local development.

The bottom line of most activities in this field is the effort to understand and help document existing traditional systems for resource use and management, their strengths and weaknesses in the past and their present potential within an endogenous development context. This can form a foundation upon which to base lobbying efforts for approaches that are rooted in a fundamental respect for those rights and seek ways to give them a best possible place.

As case 5-5 on the Mapuche in Chile shows, it is important that traditional concepts of land and territory are appreciated and understood by development actors and made visible through intercultural learning and documentation.

### **Educational reform**

These insights and documents are also important to inspire educational systems at primary, secondary and university level. It is of fundamental importance that the new generations now being educated have a broader vision of life. In such a broad vision, the biological and cultural diversity of the earth is understood as richness that must be taken care of to ensure the survival of natural species, human species and the spirituality of the peoples.

The need to look at the educational system, from primary to university level is therefore evident. In many countries, the system tends to reproduce professionals, from development workers, researchers, to managers and politicians, who not only do not understand endogenous development but who frustrate local development efforts by ignoring local realities and designing and implementing unsustainable interventions. Formal education has often alienated students from their own cultural roots. Several organisations are therefore working towards changes in the educational system to ensure that the graduates are supportive of endogenous development.

Experiences in working with primary schools in Peru (Chapter 7, Case 7-6) have led teachers to define the critical characteristics of a school that is supportive of endogenous development:

- Culturally diverse, respects the wisdom of children and elders of the community;

- Provides education that allows children to know the modern without forgetting their legacy, knowledge from their parents, the community's wisdom;
- The teacher assumes a role as cultural mediator;
- Parents participate in the learning processes as co-teachers;
- There is harmony between what children are taught at school and what parents have taught their offspring;
- Helps the children to learn to read and write but at the same time maintain the knowledge about the signs given to us by nature;
- And where children learn science and intellectual abstraction without subordinating the possibilities of human development based on tradition and the senses;
- Organising the school curriculum around the main agro-cultural calendar, the use of a school plot to learn traditional and modern agricultural practices, exchange visits to communities and involving parents and elders in certain classes are the main instruments to realise such schools.

It is probably an even greater challenge to change the educational system and the curricula at the level of institutes of higher learning, the centres of 'science'. In most cases these institutes limit themselves to a conventional approach to science, in which there is little room for traditional forms of knowing and learning. Yet, in order to become relevant for supporting endogenous development, they need to be able to combine teaching on conventional science with transdisciplinary science and culture-specific traditional systems of knowing (epistemologies).

Although experiences so far are limited to a few universities, it is clear that it is not enough to introduce endogenous-friendly topics or content into the curriculum. One needs to go beyond lecturing on the relevance of farmer knowledge and practices, the concept of science vis-à-vis such local knowledge, the role of traditional leaders, and the endogenous approach itself. These efforts will not be effective unless the educational process, the *organisation and education methods* are also changed. Options mentioned in the cases to realise this include:

- Well-structured exposure of students to the realities of local communities, often through participatory research assignments;
- Incorporating a study of local knowledge, beliefs and institutions into the research assignments;
- Sharing of outcomes of participatory research assignments with communities for feedback;
- Organising education as social learning processes, in which all actors are as much students as they are teachers and where there is a close interrelationship between the development of cognitive, social, spiritual and emotional competences, and the relation these have to values and ethics (see chapter 2). Skills such as (group) facilitation and mobilising actors in stakeholder platforms are important for students to prepare for their role in supporting endogenous development.

It is clear that a university needs, either on its own or through field-based partners, good links with communities to be able to implement this over a longer period of time.

### **Creating wider economic opportunities and linkages**

In Chapter 5, reflections on the local economy indicate that the first challenge is to make the best use of local resources. Especially where marginal economic conditions prevail, it is therefore important to start from revitalising the local traditional agriculture, health care and other natural resource use practices before introducing modern practices.

Traditional products can be made attractive for urbanised and foreign consumers as well. By adapting them to the demands of potential consumers and by commercialising, it is often possible to raise the value of traditional products such as herbal medicines, local food specialties, organic agricultural products, handicrafts and art. Commercialisation of local products and services, however, should not be at the cost of food security, social solidarity or ecological sustainability.

The next challenge is to design strategies which balance localisation and globalisation, a process in which the rules of interaction between the local and the global are to an increasing extent controlled by the local actors (see for example Case 8-7, where olive farming cooperatives have created local selling points). Local communities connect to the global economy in such a way that local qualities (such as food self-sufficiency, cultural identity, ecological sustainability, biodiversity) and values (such as respect for the spiritual world, social reciprocity and solidarity) remain, or become the point of reference.

Up-scaling still poses a major challenge for many organisations supporting endogenous development. Several cases in this book refer to some of these activities (e.g. marketing of pottery and paintings in the case of SWOPA, Ghana, Chapter 6, Case 6-5) and as the endogenous development approach matures, activities in this area are expected to become more prominent.



# GLOSSARY

**Biodiversity:** the variety, distribution and abundance of different plants, animals and micro-organisms, the ecological functions and processes they perform, and the genetic resources they contain in a certain locality, region or landscape.

**Bio-cultural diversity:** The variety and distribution of the combination of biological and cultural phenomena. In addition to the biological elements, it includes phenomena such as worldviews, knowledge, values, religion, social and economic organisation, languages, food production, health systems, art and artefacts. It suggests a process of mutual reinforcement between cultural and biological diversity and the importance of resilient and sustainable human-environment relationships.

**Dualist notion of learning:** in this notion of learning, a separation is made between subject and object, for example: the learner and its environment, humankind and nature, mind and matter, me and the other. New knowledge is only accepted as true if it is the result of quantifiable and objectively verifiable perception by the senses. This notion of learning is used in formal schooling and sciences.

**Non-dualist notion of learning:** assumes that the learner is an inseparable part of a greater whole, e.g. of nature and/or the divine world. Learning results from communication with other human beings, nature and the divine world. Connection may be sought with supra-natural sources of knowing, for example by way of intuition, contemplation or meditation. It is often the basis of knowing in traditional societies.

**Endogenous development:** development based mainly, though not exclusively, on locally available resources, local knowledge, culture and leadership, with openness to integrating traditional as well as outside knowledges and practices. It has mechanisms for local learning and experimenting, building local economies and retaining of benefits in the local area.

**Globalisation:** the growing economic, social and political interdependence of countries worldwide through increasing volume and variety of cross-border transactions in goods and services, international capital flows, and more rapid and widespread diffusion of technology and communication systems.

**Indigenous or local knowledge:** knowledge generated, used and developed by people in a certain area. It is not limited to indigenous peoples and can include knowledge originating from elsewhere that has been internalised by local people through local processes of learning, testing and adaptation. It forms the basis of the art of identifying,

combining, unfolding and protecting local resources. It is rooted in and stems from local practices, hence it is specific to the local context and often gender specific.

**Traditional knowledge:** a cumulative body of knowledge, know-how, practices and representations, maintained and developed by peoples with extended histories and often transmitted orally. It encompasses understandings, interpretation, classification systems and language, is based on a worldview with its logic and values, and has mechanisms for learning, experimenting and adaptation. It is not necessarily being practised anymore.

**Inter-cultural dialogue or learning:** exchange of experiences, ideas and values by representatives of different cultures and knowledge systems, with the aim of mutual learning and re-evaluating knowledge and wisdom of peoples from different cultural backgrounds.

**Intra-cultural dialogue or learning:** exchange of experiences, ideas and values by persons within a particular culture, with the aim of mutual learning, strengthening cultural identity, and transforming the knowledge system within the community.

**Learning:** the process of acquiring knowledge, skills and/or values that causes a change of behaviour, attitudes or self-image. Learning can take place through copying behaviour, study, introspection, reasoning, experience or teaching.

**Social learning:** learning resulting from deliberate interaction between social groups, for example: farmers, researchers and policy makers.

**Paradigm:** a compact outline of the major concepts, assumptions, theories, methods, procedures and propositions used in a particular scientific school.

**Participatory Action Research:** research which involves different relevant parties in actively examining together current action in order to change and improve it. They do this by critically reflecting on the historical, political, cultural, economic, geographical and other contexts, and by designing and testing methods of development and development support.

**Transdisciplinarity:** a process of education and research, which transcends the knowledge of individual disciplines by using a range of methodologies.

**Worldview:** (or cosmovision) the way a certain population perceives the world (or cosmos). It includes assumed relationships between the human world, the natural world and the spiritual world. It describes the perceived role of supernatural powers, the relationship between humans and nature, and the way natural processes take place. It embodies the premises on which people organise themselves, and determines the moral and scientific basis for intervention in nature.

# RESOURCES

## I Compas organisations with cases in this book

### **AGRUCO**, Agroecología Universidad Cochabamba

AGRUCO is a university centre for research, training and social interaction, which proposes alternatives for sustainable human development in rural areas. It takes into consideration the relationship between the urban and the rural areas based on the revaluation of local knowledge and agroecology. AGRUCO cooperates within the University of Cochabamba (UMSS).

*Agruco*

*v. Petrolera km 4 1/2, Casilla 3392*

*Cochabamba, Bolivia*

*agrupo@agrupo.org*

*www.agrupo.org*

### **BRIT**, Bio Diversity Research Information and Training Centre

*BRIT*

*Water Tank Road*

*Hindagoda, Badulla, Sri Lanka*

*brit@slt.net.lk*

### **CECIK**, Centre for Cosmovision and Indigenous Knowledge

CECIK is a non-governmental organisation and its vision is to see cosmovision-based endogenous development (development embedded in the indigenous knowledge, the spirituality, and astrology of the people) grow and become sustainable in northern Ghana.

*CECIK*

*P.O. Box 607*

*Bolgatanga, U.E.R.*

*Ghana*

*cecik@africaonline.com.gh*

### **CEPROSI**

*Ceprosi*

*Av. Oswaldo Baca No. 309, Urb. Magisterio*

*Cusco, Peru*

*ceprosi@terra.com.pe*

**CIKOD**, Centre for Indigenous Knowledge for Organisational Development

CIKOD is spearheading activities to inventory and support indigenous institutions in southern Ghana—political, social, economic, religious, etc.—around which communities are organised as a basis for identifying strategies for supporting these indigenous institutions in their organisational development.

*CIKOD*

*P.O. Box MD 68*

*Madina, Accra, Ghana*

*cikod2000@yahoo.co.uk*

**CIKS**, Centre of Indian Knowledge Systems

CIKS is an organisation devoted to exploring and developing the contemporary relevance and applications of traditional Indian knowledge systems—with the focus areas being agriculture and health care. The key aim is to strengthen and revitalise indigenous sciences and practices by creating a new awareness among the general public about their relevance in today's world.

*CIKS*

*30, Gandhi Mandapam Road, Kotturpuram*

*600 085, Chennai, India*

*info@ciks.org*

*www.ciks.org*

**FIOH**, Future in Our Hands Development Fund

FIOH is a NGO operating in Uva Province Sri Lanka. It was formed in 1985, and registered as a social services organisation in 1989. FIOH represents the most vulnerable areas in Uva province, particularly Mahiyangana and Moneragala Dry Zone. FIOH is trying to start a truly participatory development approach, with a self-help concept as the main strategy.

*FIOH*

*325/A/3, Kanupelella, Badulla*

*Sri Lanka*

*fiohfund@slt.net.lk/future@wow.lk*

**FOL**, Friends of Lanka

*FOL*

*Hondenikanda, Hettimulla, Kegalle,*

*Sri Lanka*

*flink@slt.net.lk*

**FRLHT**, Foundation for Revitalisation of Local Health Traditions

FRLHT believes that revitalisation of the Indian medical heritage holds two promises for India, namely self-reliance in primary health care for millions of households and original contributions to the world of medicine. FRLHT holds the view that in an era of globalisation, India should

make fuller use of her rich and diverse medicinal plant knowledge for her own needs and confidently share, on fair terms with the rest of the world, products and services based on her heritage.

*FRLHT*

*74/2 Jarakbande, Kaval, Yelahanka BG, via Attur P.O.  
560 064 Bangalore, India  
darshan.shankar@frlht.org.in*

**Fundecam**, Fundación de Desarrollo Campesino

Fundecam, the foundation for Mapuche peasant development, works and promotes socio-cultural strengthening and sustained agricultural development. In 1994, it came to a working agreement to develop its activities with La Frontera University Institute of Indigenous Studies.

*Fundecam*

*General Mackenna 080  
Temuco, Chile  
fundecam@telsur.cl, jasoto@infro.cl*

**Grupo Semillas**

Grupos Semillas is a Colombian NGO established in 1999, working in the fields of environment, agroecology, sustainable management of biodiversity, genetic resources, traditional knowledge, and public policies affecting local communities. At national level, Semillas works together with peasant, indigenous, black and academic organisations among others, in different regions in the country. At national and international level, Semillas promotes campaigns and action in defence of biodiversity, traditional agriculture, food sovereignty, privatisation of life and transgenic crops.

*Semillas*

*Diagonal 27 N 15-31, Oficina 202  
A.A.241 662, Bogota, Colombia  
semillas@semillas.org.co*

**IDEA**, Integrated Development through Environmental Awakening

IDEA is a non-government research and development organisation, established in 1981 in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, India. IDEA firmly believes in an alternative development strategy and emphasises the need to integrate indigenous and traditional knowledge systems, worldviews and customary practices with modern knowledge systems and institutions. IDEA has selected the tribal belts in the North Eastern Ghats, focusing on agro-ecological, socio-economic, health and nutritional aspects.

*IDEA*

*Flat No. 4c, Maharaja Towers, R.K. Mission Road  
530 003, Visakhapatnam, India  
gowtham\_shankar@hotmail.com  
www.idealind.org*

**KPP**, Krishi Prayoga Pariwara

KPP has some 5,000 members in 60 farming communities in Karnataka State of India. The members operate in groups and meet regularly. The major activities include popularisation of organic farming, on-farm trials based on indigenous agricultural technologies collected from ancient texts and/or documented village knowledge, and direct producer and consumer linkage programmes.

*KPP*

*Krishi Nivasa, Kuruvalli  
Thirthahalli—577 432  
Shimoga district,  
Karnataka State, India  
Aruna\_kpp@yahoo.com*

**Oxlajuj Ajpop**

Oxlajuj Ajpop is a civil association that includes seven *Ajq'jab's* (Maya priests) organisations, from various linguistic areas of the country. Around 1100 elderly members put together their knowledge in the process of reconstructing social relationships in the Maya communities, attempting to create harmony between humanity, divinity, nature and cosmos to evolve mutual respect, thus allowing for collective development in a society with various languages and cultures.

*Oxlajuj Ajpop*

*7 calle 2-47 zona 1  
Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala  
oxlajujajpop@intellnett.com*

**SAEDP**, Southern African Endogenous Development Programme

Founded in May 2004, SAEDP is a legally registered autonomous community-owned non-governmental organisation of Traditional Institutions (spirit mediums, chiefs and their rural communities) collaborating with universities. Currently, the SADC countries participating in the programme are Lesotho, South Africa and Zimbabwe. The focus is on agriculture, health delivery, technology, nature conservation, languages, with culture and cosmovision cross-cutting all activities.

*SAEDP*

*C/o University of Zululand  
P. Bag X 1001  
Kwadlangezwa  
3886 South Africa  
amwadiwa@pan.uzulu.ac.za  
rtivafir@pan.uzulu.ac.za*

**ENED** European Network for Endogenous Development

*ENED*

*C/o ETC Advisory Group Netherlands and Compas*

*Kastanjelaan 5*

*3830 AB Leusden, Netherlands*

*g.remmers@bureau-buitenkans.nl*

*adviesgroep@etcnl.nl, compas@etcnl.nl*

### **National Network Unit for Rural Development**

*National Network Unit for Rural Development in the Netherlands*

*Postbus 64*

*3830 AB Leusden, The Netherlands*

*leadernetwerk@etcnl.nl*

## **II Other Compas organisations**

**MVIWATA**, Tanzanian Network of Farmers' Groups

MVIWATA is a national umbrella network of Tanzanian farmers' groups. It was founded in 1993 and registered in 1995. MVIWATA operates through networks of grassroots farmer groups, at present some 150 networks in 19 regions of both mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar, bringing together 50,000 men and women farmers and 5,000 individual members

*Mviwata-Monduli*

*P.O. Box 474, Sokoine Road*

*Moshi*

*TANZANIA*

*ricmasandika@yahoo.com*

**NRDF**, Naula Rural Development Foundation

*NRDF*

*No. 3, Education Office Road*

*Naula, Sri Lanka*

**PFARD**, Peasant Farmers' Association for Rural Development

PFARD is a rural-based development organisation started in 1989 by people with diverse cultural and professional backgrounds. It is based in Iganga and Mayuge Districts of Eastern Uganda. The organisation works with traditional healers, herbalists, spirit medium, musicians and small-scale rural peasant farmers and assists them in conducting community resource diagnosis, develop local innovations in agriculture, health, environmental protection and social cultural development.

*PFARD*  
P.O. Box 508  
256.43.24 Inganga, Uganda  
[pfard2002@yahoo.com](mailto:pfard2002@yahoo.com)

### **III Other organisations and individuals working from an endogenous development perspective with cases in this book**

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Schiblerstrasse 48  
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**Four Worlds Centre for Development Learning**  
*Four Worlds Centre for Development Learning*  
Box 395,  
Cochrane, Alberta,  
Canada T4C 1A6  
[anyone@fourworlds.ca](mailto:anyone@fourworlds.ca)  
[www.fourworlds.ca](http://www.fourworlds.ca)

**GREEN Foundation**  
*GREEN Foundation*  
P.O. Box No. 7651,  
No. 570/1, 'Padmashri Nilaya',  
3rd Main, 4th Cross, N.S. Palya, BTM 2<sup>nd</sup> Stage  
560 076 Bangalore, India  
[greenfound@vsnl.net](mailto:greenfound@vsnl.net)  
[www.greencoconserve.com](http://www.greencoconserve.com)

**INPRHU**  
*INPRHU*  
Parque Central 1C. Al Oeste  
Somoto, Departamento de Madriz  
Nicaragua  
[gcaceres@inprhu.com](mailto:gcaceres@inprhu.com)  
[www.inprhu.com](http://www.inprhu.com)

**Institute for Indigenous Studies***Institute for Indigenous Studies**Centro Universitario Campus III**San Cristobal de Las Casas**29264 Chiapas, Mexico**rgrovas@montebello.unach.mx***SNIRD***SNIRD**P.O. Box 24**Railpet, Ongole**523 001 Andhra Pradesh, India***SOS Sahel UK***SOS Sahel UK**P.O. Box 1387**Khartoum, Sudan**mohammedmam@netscape.net***SWOPA**, Sirigu Woman Organization of Pottery and Art

SWOPA

P.O. Box 550

Bolgatanga, Ghana

[siriguart@yahoo.com](mailto:siriguart@yahoo.com)[www.swopa.org](http://www.swopa.org)**IV Compas publications***Food for Thought: Ancient visions and new experiments of rural people*. Haverkort, B. and Hiemstra, W. (eds), 1999. Compas / Books for Change / ZED Books. ISBN 1 85649 722.*Ancient Roots New Shoots: Endogenous Development in Practice*. Haverkort, B., 't Hooft van, K. and Hiemstra, W. (eds). 2002. Compas / ZED Books. ISBN 1 84277 335 6.*Educación Intra e Intercultural: Alternativas a la Reforma Educativa Neocolonizadora*. Delgado, F.B. and Mariscal, J.C.C. (eds). 2006. Edition Plural, La Paz, Bolivia.*Diálogo Intercultural e Interscientífico para el Fortalecimiento de las Ciencias de los Pueblos Indígenas Originarios*. Delgado, F.B. and Escobar, C.V. (eds). 2006. Edition Plural, La Paz, Bolivia.*African Knowledges and Sciences: Understanding and supporting the ways of knowing in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Millar, D., Kendie, S.B., Apusigah, A.A. and Haverkort, B. Compas series on Worldviews and Sciences 3. 2006. Compas, Leusden, The Netherlands.

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## VI Websites of organisations working on endogenous development

[www.iucn.org](http://www.iucn.org) International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

[www.ikssa.org.za](http://www.ikssa.org.za) Indigenous Knowledge Systems in South Africa (IKSSA) Mission: To facilitate the protection and promotion of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and their practitioners. Vision Empowerment of communities through regulation and management of Indigenous Knowledge Systems processes.

[www.prolinnova.net](http://www.prolinnova.net) Promoting local innovation in ecologically-oriented agriculture and natural resources management.

[www.agri-history.org](http://www.agri-history.org) Asian Agri-History Foundation have brought out a series of publications on Vrkshayurveda (traditional Indian plant science). Their quarterly journal, Asian Agri-History is a source of excellent information on traditional agriculture.

[www.justchangeindia.com](http://www.justchangeindia.com) Just Change is an initiative whose objective is to establish an alternative trading mechanism that will benefit poor communities. We try to achieve this by directly linking poor communities and encouraging them to trade among themselves.

[www.villageherbs.com](http://www.villageherbs.com) The Villageherbs label, owned by Gram Mooligai Company Limited (GMCL), is an attempt to make simple, economical herbal remedies accessible to both rural and urban consumers. The Company's business model provides not just health security, but also economic security to the rural communities that have preserved this traditional knowledge. Self-help groups of village cultivators and gatherers who work with GMCL become shareholders in the company, thus ensuring that those who have nurtured Nature receive its benefits.

[www.chetnaindia.org](http://www.chetnaindia.org) CHETNA means 'awareness' in several Indian languages and is an acronym for Centre for Health Education, Training and Nutrition Awareness. CHETNA is a support organisation based in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India. Activities are in the field of nutrition, health, education and development from a 'rights' perspective. The activities reach out to disadvantaged and marginalised children, adolescents and women from rural, tribal and urban areas of Gujarat, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

[www.ccd.org.in](http://www.ccd.org.in) The Covenant Centre of Development (CCD) is a development organisation active in the drought-prone areas of four southern districts of the state of Tamil Nadu in Southern India. CCD focuses on promoting community-based organisations for addressing the issues of urban migration and the evils attached to it by capitalising on local resources and traditional skills.

[www.gandepam.org](http://www.gandepam.org) Gandepam is an NGO based in Tamil Nadu, India. It provides low cost and accessible Siddha medical treatment, especially to poor and rural families, including people with HIV/Aids. Gandepam also provides healthcare training in Siddha medicine, development

of micro-enterprises to boost family income, and has programmes to promote women's development and to eliminate child labour.

[www.sambandh.org](http://www.sambandh.org) Sambandh is a resource organisation based in Orissa, India. Its mission is to strengthen a collaborative network towards sustaining the lives and livelihood of the resource poor by means of sustainable livelihoods through management of natural resources, empowerment of women through self-help movement, community health based on indigenous knowledge and traditional practices, and strengthened decentralised governance.

[www.jjvs.org](http://www.jjvs.org) Jagran Jan Vikas Samiti (JJVS) is a grassroots organisation working in the field of traditional health systems and integrated rural development. Based in Udaipur, Rajasthan, India, it focuses its efforts on solutions that provide direct socio-economic improvements to marginalised populations, including the rural poor and tribal communities who have been neglected the most.

[www.ruchin.org](http://www.ruchin.org) The Rural Centre for Human Interests (RUCHI) is a non-political, non-profit making organisation committed to development of rural India. We believe strongly that participatory collective action is required for sustainable and balanced community development.

[www.neweconomics.org](http://www.neweconomics.org) New Economic Foundation (NEF) is an independent think-and-do tank that inspires and demonstrates real economic well-being. We aim to improve quality of life by promoting innovative solutions that challenge mainstream thinking on economic, environment and social issues. We work in partnership and put people and the planet first.

[www.ser.org/iprn](http://www.ser.org/iprn) Indigenous Peoples' Restoration Network. The IPNR Resource Center endeavours to become the comprehensive portal for traditional environmental knowledge references on the web (books, articles, documents, statements, discussion papers, journals, magazines, sources, databases, and listservers) as well as links to training and assistance, education and outreach and university programmes.

[www.leisa.info](http://www.leisa.info) ILEIA's website on Low-External-Input and Sustainable Agriculture provides access to all back issues of LEISA Magazine and its regional editions: LEISA India; LEISA revista de agroecología; Revista AGRICULTURAS, experiencias in agroecología; SALAM, Majalah Pertanian Berkelanjutan; AGRIDAPE, Revue sur l'agriculture durable à faible apports externs.

## VII Other relevant publications suggested by contributing organisations

**Towards local peace:** SOS Sahel's experience of conflict transformation between pastoralists and farmers, at El Ain, North Kordofan State, Sudan by Omer Egemi, Ohammed Abdel Mahmoud and Abdeen Mohamed. Published by the IIED under the series of Securing the Commons No. 5. April 2003.

**Working with Conflicts:** (in French: Cheminer Avec Le Conflict), a book published by Responding to Conflict (RTC) Institute and the IIED, 2004.

**Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule:** Mahatma Gandhi, Navjeevan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, India. 1971, 1995 Reprint.

**Challenging the Indian Medical Heritage:** Darshan Shankar and Unnikrishnan, P.M., Foundation books, New Delhi, India. 2004.

**The Organic Farming Sourcebook:** Claude Alvares (ed), The Other India Publications, Mapusa, Goa. Website: [www.otherindiabookstore.com](http://www.otherindiabookstore.com) An excellent book that includes interviews, articles, listings of farmers, organisations etc., and is full of information on traditional agriculture.

**Dying Wisdom:** Anil Agarwal and Sunita Narain, published by Centre for Science and Environment, 41, Tughlakabad Institutional Area, New Delhi 110 062, India.

Website: [www.cseindia.org](http://www.cseindia.org) A compilation of various aspects of traditional irrigation and water management practices of India.

**Honey Bee:** Edited by Anil K Gupta and published by Sristi Innovations, B-4, Ravi Niketan, Nehru Park, Vastrapur, Ahmedabad 380 015, India. [www.sristi.org](http://www.sristi.org) A pioneering effort in which practices relating to agriculture from various parts of India (and to some extent other parts of the developing world) are reported, discussed and commented upon.

**Indian Journal of Traditional Knowledge:** National Institute of Science, Communication and Information Resources, CSIR, Dr. K. S. Krishnan Marg, New Delhi 110 012, India. [www.niscair.res.in](http://www.niscair.res.in) A journal that carries papers on various aspects of traditional knowledge with a focus largely on health, agriculture and natural resources management.

# Learning Endogenous Development

## Building on Bio-cultural Diversity

Endogenous development is a process of change that places the major importance in working with local communities and on using people's own resources, strategies, and initiatives as the basis for their development. It considers not only the material, but also the socio-cultural and the spiritual resources of people, in order to broaden options when formulating appropriate development paths, without romanticizing people's traditional worldviews and practices. The process highlights the problems that many rural people experience when engaging with Western-based approaches that adopt a narrow materialistic and essentially economic vision of development.

With ideas, guidelines, and examples of how to put endogenous development into practice, the book shows how field staff can be helped to learn, and how training or learning activities can best be organized, to support endogenous development. Many case studies derived from ten years of action research around the world are provided to illustrate the issues discussed. This book will be of interest to anyone concerned with issues of participatory development and cultural diversity, especially practitioners and students of international development.

### COMPAS

Compas is a collaborative network of development organisations in 11 different countries in South America, Africa, Asia and Europe working since 1996 to reach a better understanding of farmers' worldviews and knowledge concepts in order to strengthen the learning capacity of rural people and to enable a dialogue between development organisations that share a concern for endogenous development.