

ENDOGENOUS DEVELOPMENT

M A G A Z I N E

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COMPAS

Biodiversity education helps
indigenous communities in India

SMALL GRAINS to fight
FOOD SHORTAGES



Endogenous development

Endogenous development is based on local people's criteria for development and takes into account their material, social and spiritual well-being.

The importance of participatory approaches and of integrating local knowledge into development interventions has become broadly recognised. However, many of these approaches experience difficulties in overcoming an implicit materialistic bias. Endogenous development seeks to overcome this bias by making peoples' worldviews and livelihood strategies the starting point for development. Many of these worldviews and livelihood strategies reflect sustainable development as a balance between material, social and spiritual well-being. This balance is illustrated in each article with a box containing the three interacting worlds (see also p.3). The main difference between endogenous development and other participatory approaches is its emphasis on including spiritual aspects in the development process, in addition to the ecological, social and economic aspects.

Endogenous development is mainly based on local strategies, values, institutions and resources. Therefore priorities, needs and criteria for development may differ in each community and may not always be the same as those of the development worker. Key concepts within endogenous development are: local control of the development process; taking cultural values seriously; appreciating worldviews; and finding a balance between local and external resources.

The aim of endogenous development is to empower local communities to take control of their own development process. While revitalising ancestral and local knowledge, endogenous development helps local people select those external resources that best fit the local conditions. Endogenous development leads to increased biodiversity and cultural diversity, reduced environmental degradation, and a self-sustaining local and regional exchange.

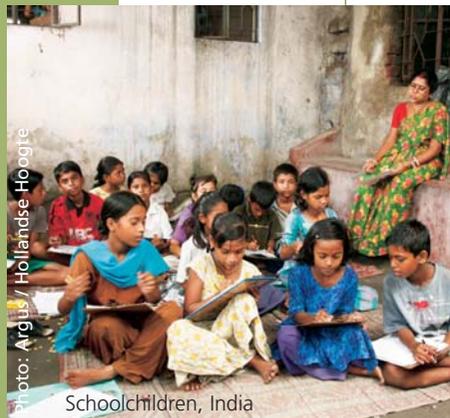


photo: Argjis / Hollandse Hoopje

Schoolchildren, India

Editorial

Much of the world has been rocked in recent months by the financial crisis. Many governments and citizens wonder whether the levels of growth they have become accustomed to can be maintained. As the global financial system wavers, more and more people are starting to question the sustainability of an economic system that is based to a large extent on short-term material gains. Yet, is economic growth the only factor that determines our well-being? Times are changing and it would seem to be a great opportunity for endogenous development to flourish.

In this third edition of the ED-Magazine we present some inspiring examples of endogenous development undertaken by partners within the COMPAS network and by other organisations. A point made by a number of the authors is that it is often a question of looking beyond the symptoms, if we are to understand and be able to deal with the root causes of socio-cultural, material or spiritual poverty. The article on using culture to address problems caused by the HIV/AIDS crisis is one such example. Culture is so often regarded as an intangible phenomenon that is difficult to harness in a concrete way. The article shows clearly, however, how working with a traditional institution such as male clan leaders can enhance gender sensitivity and improve the position of AIDS widows and orphans.

In the first three editions of the ED-Magazine our aim was to present a good overview of what endogenous development entails. From EDM-4 on, we want to take the magazine a step further, so that it also becomes a platform for critical discussion on endogenous development. We therefore encourage you to voice your opinions, both positive and critical, in the spirit of constructive dialogue.

Sara van Otterloo-Butler
Acting editor



The spiritual, social and material dimensions of life are **inseparable** in endogenous development.



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SMALL GRAINS

effective against food shortages

Farmers become self sufficient in seed

Recurrent droughts in southern Africa often result in food shortages. In Zimbabwe the food crisis has been aggravated, as processed food which used to be available in the shops is disappearing because of the political sanctions. Farmers who used to grow maize as a staple crop are responding to the crisis by returning to the cultivation of drought-tolerant indigenous small-grain crops.

The Southern African Endogenous Development Programme (SAEDP) is a community-owned non-governmental organisation led by chiefs and their rural communities in Lesotho, South Africa and Zimbabwe. A major objective of the programme is to alleviate poverty by producing adequate food at household level using indigenous knowledge practices. SAEDP does not engage in politics - instead it emphasises that African values such as *ubuntu* should be recognised and adhered to. *Ubuntu* means: 'we affirm our humanity by acknowledging that of others.' Food security and community-based bio-cultural diversity management are top priorities in the action plans of all the communities working with SAEDP.

SAEDP collaborates with government ministries of agriculture and health, and universities, to merge modern expertise with indigenous knowledge practices. According to traditional African worldviews, the spiritual world guides communities through spirit mediums. Chiefs, traditionally the administrators of the land, play an important administrative and governance role in enforcing improved food security and bio-cultural diversity management. They are advised by the spirit mediums who they consult regularly.

Small-grains programme

In Zimbabwe, SAEDP works in partnership with a number of groups, including the Marange community in Manicaland Province. After doing a community resource diagnosis in 2006, which gave an indication of the impending food crisis, this community decided to give priority to small-grain production. At the

Products made from small grains are used to communicate with the ancestors

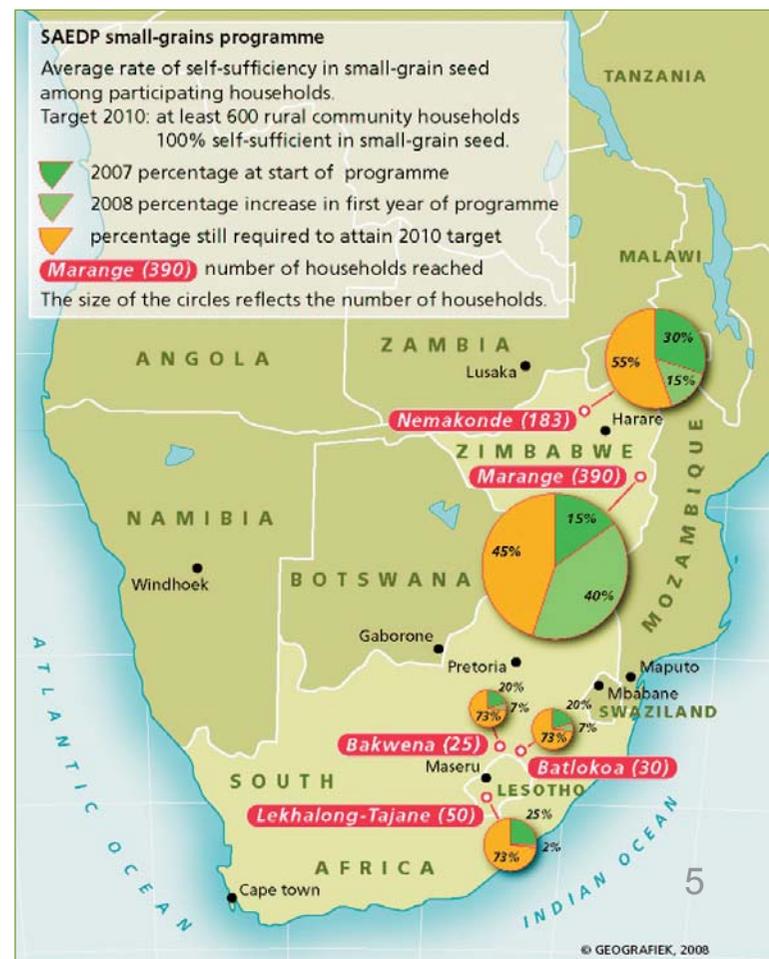
start of the 2007-08 cropping season, SAEDP purchased four tonnes of small-grain seed (finger millet, bulrush millet and sorghum) from traditional farmers in neighbouring communities to start the small-grains programme. Seed was distributed among 400 (of a total of about 24,000) farmers in Marange, each of whom received 10 kg seed. Most farmers in the community had stopped growing small grains many years ago and therefore did not have seed themselves.

The farmers participating in the programme have an average of 12 hectares of crop land, of which 20% is now used for maize, 70% for small grains and 10% for other crops such as groundnuts, round nuts and cow peas. These households have thus substantially increased their acreage under small-grain production.

The season started off very well with good rains, but as it progressed the situation deteriorated. The maize crop dried up, resulting in almost no yield. The drought tolerant finger millet, bulrush millet and sorghum provided salvation: the Marange farmers harvested an average of 750 kg per hectare. In the tradition of *ubuntu*, the farmers passed seed for the 2008-09 cropping

cycle on to another 400 farmers in the community. Farmers now share their knowledge on these traditional crops through community meetings, seed fairs, farmer-to-farmer exchange visits and seasonal agricultural rituals.

In all the communities in Southern Africa where SAEDP stimulates small-grain production (see map), a total of 688 farmers have harvested small grains. In



In southern Africa, governments now promote the production of indigenous crops to ensure that alternative staple foods besides maize are available

principle, each of the farmers who had a satisfactory harvest is expected to pass seed on to at least one other farmer.

This means that $688 \times 2 = 1376$ farmers will be able to grow small grains in the 2008-09 cropping season. If yields are then sufficient the procedure can be repeated again in the 2009-10 season so that about 2744 farmers would then have seed.

Spiritual values and health

The Marange community held their annual rainmaking ceremonies before the start of the rains in September 2007 to appeal to the spirits for adequate rains and good harvests. These ceremonies are presided over and guided by the spirit mediums. Beer brewing and other preparatory activities are carried out by the spiritually chosen women elders, who are celibate, and young girls, who have not yet started menstruation. Often, after a rainmaking ceremony and before people return home, the rain starts pounding the ground as a sign of acceptance by the spiritual world.

The chiefs, rainmakers and spirit mediums emphasise that finger millet, bulrush millet and sorghum are an

integral part of Zimbabwean culture. Nutritious food and special products are made from these crops, such as the traditional beer. These products are used to communicate with the ancestors, and represent a channel for spiritual communication between the human and the spiritual worlds. Millet and sorghum also contain nutrients and vitamins that are essential for growth and prevention of disease and sickness. Traditional medical practitioners and local elders give sick people finger-millet porridge mixed with herbs and medicine to cure diseases. For example, finger millet provides proteins required by people suffering from HIV/AIDS.

Lessons learned

In response to the problem of food shortages, the governments of Lesotho, South Africa and Zimbabwe have started to promote the production of indigenous crops for subsistence and commerce to ensure that alternative staple foods are available besides maize. The SAEDP small-grains programme has served as a pilot and proved convincingly that rural communities can secure their own food security. Most of the participating farmers have welcomed the support of their governments. In Zimbabwe the Ministry of Agriculture and local chiefs now distribute small grains seed to the farmers.

Interacting worldviews for food security

Spiritual

Spirit mediums are recognised as a source of knowledge, culture and blessings during times of natural crises.

Social

According to the principle of *ubuntu*, farmers share seed that they harvest with other farmers, to use for planting the following season.

Material

The SAEDP small-grains programme has shown how rural communities can secure their own food security.

A number of crucial lessons have been learned from the small-grains programme. SAEDP and the farmers have realised that it is necessary to make seeds available before the start of the following growing season so that farmers can plant early. Looking to the future, it is clear that a granary system is needed, as well as community seed banks. And the most important lesson: it is essential to respect the spiritual world as a source of knowledge, culture and blessings during times of natural crises.



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Leah Mwangi (centre of photo) is project coordinator for the Kenyan organisation Kijabe Environment Volunteers (KENVO). She was present at the 9th Conference of Parties (COP 9) of the Convention on Biological Diversity held in May 2008 in Bonn, Germany.

Who is Leah Mwangi?

'I was born in Nyeri District in Central Kenya, and grew up on the slopes of Mt Kenya in a semi-arid area. At a young age I saw the local forest being destroyed, as charcoal burning was a way of earning a living. The harsh climate meant there were regular famines and drought. This sparked my interest in environmental conservation. While working as a teacher in a local high school I came across KENVO in 2001. By 2005 I had stopped teaching and started working full-time for KENVO, first as a project officer and now as project coordinator. My work has enabled me to understand the linkages between conservation and livelihoods: I have become a defender of community interests and rights.'

Leah Mwangi, defender of community interests and rights:

'Local communities have the potential to achieve conservation and livelihood goals'

Why were you attending COP 9?

'I attended the conference as a representative of a grassroots organisation that works with the local community to address environmental issues and poverty alleviation. My objective was to convey the message that local communities have the potential to achieve conservation and livelihood goals. It was an opportunity to share the experience I have gained working with KENVO and the local impact we have had. I particularly wanted to highlight the role of women in natural resource management.'

'KENVO is a member of the Community Knowledge Service (CKS), set up by the UN Equator Initiative, which supports community efforts to link sustainable economic development and income generation with the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. COP 9 was a great opportunity to meet and talk with other members of the CKS.'

'COP urges parties to promote effective participation of indigenous and local communities when applying the ecosystems approach to agriculture and to strengthen dialogue with farmers.' How can these objectives be realised?

'First, we need to ensure that local and indigenous communities are aware of these statements. Second, actions need to reflect the wishes of these communities. Third, governments and the donor community have to be committed to passing information generated at high-level meetings on to local and indigenous

communities. I believe that strengthening public-private partnerships can help realise this, especially in Africa. In addition, we need more representation of local and indigenous communities at these meetings. One example of this is the Community Dialogue Space created by UNDP and its partners.'

In your view, how do government representatives deal with the sacred and cultural values attached to natural resources by local and indigenous communities?

'Law and policy makers are in a position to influence the government so that it passes laws protecting the rights and values of indigenous and local communities. However, things move slowly. There are laws in Kenya that attempt to protect sacred and cultural values. For example, the Kaya Forest in the coastal region is a sacred place used by the Giriama community for religious practices, and it is now protected by law. The Forest Act recognises the importance of respecting cultural and religious practices of forest communities. However, enforcing this law is a problem. This leads to situations in which groups of people use the forest as a legitimate, sacred place, while at the same time others exploit it illegally. And they even get away with it - that's asking for trouble.'

For more information:
www.kenvokenya.com





SACRED NATURAL SITES connect people, nature and spirituality

Putting endogenous development on the conservation agenda

Over the last decade, cultural and spiritual values have come to be recognised as crucial elements in nature conservation. Today, the major nature conservation agencies all work with representatives of faiths and spiritualities. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is at the forefront of these developments, with several commissions working on the cultural and spiritual values attributed to nature, and collaborating with local and indigenous peoples on conservation issues. This work is gradually getting endogenous development onto the conservation agenda.

The IUCN defines sacred natural sites as 'areas of land or water having special spiritual significance to peoples and communities'. Examples include mountains, groves of trees, springs and caves. In addition, sacred natural sites are often safe havens for biological and cultural diversity, and represent long-standing relationships between human beings and nature. They offer examples of how people connect to nature in meaningful and often spiritual ways. Sacred natural sites are found all over the world, and many are located in protected areas of nature (which represent 12% of the world surface area), biodiversity hotspots (1.4%), indigenous lands (20%) and wilderness areas (40%). Many sacred sites are of course located outside protected areas, in eco-agricultural systems, community forests, semi-urban areas and even city centres.

Improving management of sacred sites

The creation of protected areas has often led to the exclusion of local people whose sacred sites fall within the boundaries of these areas. Nature conservation organisations are starting to recognise that strategies are needed that reconcile biodiversity and livelihood values. The

In our globalising world, we can grow ... certainly in terms of spirituality and cultural diversity

IUCN's Task Force on Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas (CSVPA) has brought attention to the role of sacred sites and landscapes and their custodians in biodiversity conservation.

Sacred natural sites: IUCN Guidelines for Protected Area Managers

- Recognise sacred natural sites already located in protected areas.
- Integrate sacred natural sites located in protected areas into planning processes and management processes.
- Promote stakeholder consent, participation, inclusion and collaboration.
- Encourage improved knowledge and understanding of sacred natural sites.
- Protect sacred natural sites while providing appropriate management access and use.
- Respect the rights of sacred natural site custodians within an appropriate framework of national policy.

Download the guidelines:

<http://data.iucn.org/dbtw-wpd/edocs/PAG-016.pdf>

Endogenous development approaches can offer solutions for conservation and protection of both cultural and biological diversity at these sacred sites, both inside and outside protected areas.

Central to the CSVPA Task Force's work is the notion that most biodiversity conservation management is in fact closely linked to 'people's management':

adequately empowering local people and site custodians so that they can maintain their relationships with the places that are special and sacred to them. This is of crucial importance. The CSVPA is

developing ways of conserving biological diversity by fostering the deep and dynamic cultural connections that communities have with elements in their landscape. One tool for facilitating protection and conservation of sacred sites is the new Guidelines for Protected Area Managers (see box), which were released at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Barcelona in October 2008. The guidelines can be used as a planning tool for developing conservation approaches that include peoples' worldviews and are flexible enough to adapt to changing cultural values.

Achieving recognition of sacred sites

In its work on endogenous development, the COMPAS network has encountered many cases of sacred natural sites playing an important role in people's livelihoods. Latin American COMPAS partners describe some of these experiences in a chapter in the forthcoming book *Precious Earth, Nature, Culture and the Sacred: Conserving nature and culture at Sacred Natural Sites during times of change and uncertainty*. The COMPAS contribution describes the relations between sacred sites, biodiversity and 'well-being' as defined by indigenous communities.

The chapter includes an example from Guatemala, where sacred sites are regarded by the indigenous Maya people as having a mythical origin. Sacred sites are defined by the Maya as natural or constructed spaces where cosmic energy is channelled for communication with the ancestors. The sites are used for spiritual and practical education, philosophy, science, technology and art. Sacred sites



Maya celebration of *Wajxaqib' B'atz'*, the lunar calendar, at Santa Cruz del Quiché, Guatemala.

play a crucial role in the Maya people's reaffirmation of their identity. However, many have been expropriated by the state for the construction of roads, housing and the development of tourism.

Therefore, Mayan community and spiritual leaders, united in the Oxlajuj Ajpop organisation, have formulated a 'Legislative proposal for a law on indigenous people's sacred sites'. The aim of getting the law passed is to achieve respect for, access to and recognition, use and conservation of Mayan sacred sites. It is also proposed that administration of sacred sites should be in the hands of the indigenous people, but with state support through a ministry. The law, currently under discussion in the Guatemalan parliament, is not simply

aiming at a new administrative arrangement. It also expresses many elements of well-being and Mayan cosmovision. Once passed by the government, the law will be a precedent for other themes such as education and health, as well as rebuilding the State and legal system, so that they are rooted in Mayan identity.

In addition to developing the legislative proposal, Oxlajuj Ajpop works as a COMPAS partner to strengthen Maya identity by revitalising traditional Maya medicine, supporting the conservation of biodiversity and working towards food safety. At regional level, a COMPAS network has been created in which over twenty community-based organisations,

Interacting worldviews and sacred natural sites

Spiritual: Reciprocity with plants and animals shows deep respect for nature and the spiritual.

Social: Sacred natural sites can strengthen social cohesion and improve well-being.

Material: Custodians of sacred natural sites can play a role in practical conservation measures.

NGOs, governmental organisations, educational and religious institutions are represented in the Municipalities of Momostenango and Quetzaltenango.

Source of inspiration

As you contemplate the relevance of sacred sites to your own work please remember that, in this globalising world, we can grow almost endlessly, perhaps not beyond the limitations of ecosystems, but certainly in terms of spirituality and cultural diversity. In the midst of rapid biodiversity loss, we can learn how nature inspires people all around the world and find out how it is held sacred as a life-support system upon which the diversity of cultures and our well-being ultimately depend.



Bas Verschuuren is the coordinator of the Cultural Values and Nature Initiative (www.culturalvalues.org) facilitated by EarthCollective, and Deputy Leader of the IUCN Task Force on Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas. He can be contacted at: verschuuren@earthcollective.net

ABORIGINAL rock paintings

Representations of the ancestors' spiritual energy



Aboriginal rock paintings in Australia are the world's oldest continuous painting tradition, and represent the spiritual relationships between Aboriginal people, their ancestors and the lands where they live.

Many rock paintings depict creation stories that have been handed down from one generation to the next. Although they formed the basis of ancient trading routes, the stories themselves were the most important item of trade, becoming a mechanism for upholding cultural protocol (law) and maintaining social relations. Most paintings and stories are associated with specific dances and rituals.

Repainting or retouching the rock paintings is a sacred act done in remembrance of and to deepen people's relationships with the ancestors, animals and the land. Ceremonies are held near rock paintings to mark social events such as initiation, birth and death.

The age of the Aboriginal rock painting tradition which has come to be known as 'X-ray' painting is debated. Archaeologists have suggested origins ranging from 50,000 to around 8000 years ago, but the latter date is regarded as most likely. As the name suggests, the X-ray style depicts animals or human figures in which the internal organs and bone structures are clearly visible. These paintings



Photo: Bas Veeschuuren

occur primarily in the shallow caves and rock shelters in the western part of Arnhem Land in northern Australia, and contemporary Aboriginal artists continue to create works in this tradition.

Today, traditional and contemporary indigenous Aboriginal art has become a respected art form featured in galleries and

museums around the world. The demand for indigenous art not only means that Aboriginal artworks command a considerable economic price - they also represent a form of cultural transmission at the global level, highlighting the threat to survival that many indigenous peoples face.





First intercultural hospital combines **MAPUCHE & WESTERN MEDICINE**

Creating a dialogue between two different health systems

The Mapuche are the indigenous people of southern Chile and Argentina. The COMPAS-Chile network is supporting Mapuche organisations to base management of their lands on indigenous visions of territory and to obtain formal recognition of their indigenous health system. An important achievement of the Mapuche organisations is the construction of an intercultural health centre in the region. Opened in 2006, it is the first hospital in Chile designed to include facilities for both western and Mapuche medicine.

The Mapuche system of health has existed for centuries. It is still used despite violent discrimination against it and its loss of prestige since the Spanish invasion and the subsequent imposition of a western health system. However, western medicine is unable to provide a satisfactory response to a growing number of illnesses. Victor Caniullán, traditional doctor (*machi*) and guide on health matters of the COMPAS-Chile network, explains: 'A number of illnesses are indigenous to the Mapuche culture, caused by spiritual, mental and social imbalance. Traditional doctors know how to diagnose and treat these complaints. One of the aims of the Nueva

There is a trend toward openness and acceptance of Mapuche traditions

Imperial Intercultural Health Centre is to create a dialogue between the Mapuche and western systems of medicine. Each system functions independently, but with mutual respect, and recognising that they can complement each other.'

Dynamic system of health

In the Mapuche cosmovision good health or well-being (*küme felen*) is directly related to the spiritual, psychological, socio-cultural and physical aspects of life. The *wallmapu* is the universe or cosmos, comprising the material and immaterial, tangible and intangible, a combination of elements and energies. This cosmos is peopled by powers (*nepen*). Each person belongs to a particular *nepen*, from which he or she traces territorial kinship. The *wallmapu*, alive and always changing, consists of four spaces: the Upper Land, the Middle Land, the space where human beings live and the Under World. As human beings, we are also connected to our ancestors through blood: ancestral kinship. The different *wallmapu* spaces communicate with each other through places like swamps, bushes, hills and rivers. Thus, humans and ecosystems are woven together in a dynamic system of health and well-being (see illustration).

Benefits

Victor Caniullán talks about his work in the intercultural hospital: 'I work two days a week in the Centre for Mapuche Medicine in the hospital. Patients, Mapuche and non-Mapuche, come from the rural areas and the city. One of the

Cosmovision in the hospital design

The construction of the Intercultural Hospital complies with the design and functional requirements of the Ministry of Health, as well as those arising from the Mapuche cosmovision. Particular attention was paid to the orientation of the building. For the Mapuche the east signifies life, and this has been incorporated into the hospital by making sure that all entrances face east as do the bed-heads in the hospital wards. The west is associated with death and therefore the pathology department is located in the western part of the building. Near the entrance of the hospital there is a ceremonial patio, with a Mapuche religious symbol, the *rewe*, in the centre. The *rewe* is a wooden sculpture around which prayers and ceremonies are held to communicate with the divine energies and forces and ask for favours, or simply to give thanks for life.

great benefits of this centre is that the diagnosis, treatment and the remedies are covered by the national health insurance scheme, Fonasa.

'Another advantage is that the centre is easy to reach. It is new and modern and, even though it is located in the city, I can still perform the prayers which enable me to call on forces of nature, and carry out rituals. I diagnose my patients from their first morning urine.

'Our traditional health system uses medicinal plants for remedies. I search for these and prepare them at home. Each day



Victor Caniullán (left) holds a consultation with a patient at the intercultural health centre.

at the medical centre I prescribe about 240 litres of different remedies. Preparing such large quantities requires huge amounts of plants which have to be found and collected. Big forestry companies are invading and threatening our indigenous areas - native forests are declining and ecosystems are being destroyed. We have lost many of our medicinal plants so they are not easy to find, but we now support a group of traditional doctors in the Comuna de Lumaco who have an agreement, allowing them to collect medicinal plants and herbs from a protected forest.

'Patients can be hospitalised for a few days if necessary and they can also receive western medicine. About 70 percent of

our patients live in rural areas, the rest come from urban and semi-urban areas. About 40 percent of the patients are non-Mapuche.

'Many patients seek help from both systems of medicine, although they often do not tell a western doctor that they have also consulted a *machí*. This is because of the historical discrimination against Mapuche medicine, but there is a trend toward openness and acceptance of our traditions. We have recently started a process of mutual learning and understanding of both systems, so that it will eventually be considered normal to make use of both medical systems. It is slow, but we are making progress.

Interacting worldviews in an intercultural health centre

Spiritual

The hospital has special areas where Mapuche ceremonies can be held.

Social

The COMPAS-Chile network is working on a proposal for legislation to recognise the Mapuche system of health.

Material

Patients can be hospitalised if necessary, and can combine western and Mapuche forms of medical care.

We have to create new referral forms and find solutions for legal issues.'

Challenges

The intercultural hospital project has received widespread interest from the Mapuche and non-Mapuche world. The COMPAS-Chile Network includes five local organisations representing Mapuche communities located in different ecological niches; the Faculties of Education and Humanities, and Agronomy, Universidad de la Frontera in Temuco; Mapuche community schools and one secondary school; Fundecam and other professional rural development associations. This network is currently working on a legislative proposal to gain recognition of the Mapuche system of health by the National Congress and the Chilean Ministry of Health.



Jaime Soto, anthropologist and coordinator of the COMPAS-Chile Network and Victor Caniullán, Mapuche *machí* (healer), Temuco, Chile. For more information: compaschile@gmail.com



What characterises GRAIN?

GRAIN is a small international non-profit organisation that supports movements in their struggles against privatisation and corporate control in the area of food, biodiversity and agriculture, and for true community controlled and biodiversity based alternatives. Diversity is key to sustainable food and farming systems. For thousands of years, local communities have nurtured and developed an incredible wealth of seeds and breeds, farming systems and cultural traditions that are not only a precious heritage but also the only basis upon which we can continue to feed, clothe, house and heal ourselves. Yet that diversity is being monopolised and destroyed by an increasingly global industrial food production and trade system, and by the corporations behind it. Our fight, therefore, is one for truly sustainable food and farming systems, based on people's control over their own livelihoods.



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

Our work revolves around independent research and analysis, information services and direct support to people's strategies and struggles. GRAIN works both internationally as well as with groups at the national and regional levels. We have an active presence in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Being a small, autonomous organisation with a big agenda, GRAIN works very much in collaboration with others, respecting people's autonomy and building new experiences in international solidarity.

We currently focus on two main programme areas:

Biodiversity, corporations and the international food system, which brings together those aspects of GRAIN's work that deal with the increasing corporate control over biodiversity and the international food system.

Communities first: the fight for food sovereignty pulls together GRAIN's work to support people's movements, moving towards more bio-diverse and socially just food and agricultural systems - often referred to as food sovereignty.



Photos: GRAIN

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

The main threat to biodiversity, small farmers and local knowledge - and indeed to the future of our planet - is the current neo-liberal process of economic globalisation that puts corporate profits before everything, and destroys local livelihoods and the environment in the process. We draw our strength and inspiration from the thousands of local organisations that fight against this and are coming up with people-centred, community-based and environmentally sound alternatives.

GRAIN produces a number of regular information outputs, such as our quarterly magazine 'Seedling', and other publications which are freely available from our website and by post.



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Drawing on culture to protect AIDS widows and orphans

Old habits die hard, but change is possible

A cultural approach can open up opportunities to tackle the HIV/AIDS crisis. So far, few initiatives have gone beyond using culture as a communication vehicle to confront the pandemic and its consequences. The Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda (CCFU) has documented some successful examples of local non-governmental organisations that are drawing on culture to improve the position of the most vulnerable groups affected by HIV/AIDS. One of these is the experience of Vision TERUDO (VT).

Located in eastern Uganda, the people living in the Teso area experienced instability and insecurity for over a quarter of a century. Insurgency engulfed the region in the late 1980s when local people took up arms to fight the government. As security worsened, 80% of the population was forced to move into 'protected' camps or to other districts. People only felt secure enough to return to their homes in 1993. A decade later, in 2003, the conflict with the Lord's Resistance Army brought renewed unrest. There was indiscriminate killing, children were abducted and many people were once again displaced, ending up in squalid camps. This is the background to an alarming 25% incidence rate of HIV/AIDS in the camps of Teso at the time.

Cultural context

The Teso culture is male-dominated: men have most power, as well as access to and

ownership of resources in the community. Population displacement eroded the extended family system and undermined cultural practices; early marriages (prompted by a desire to 'sell' daughters for income) and increased individualism started to replace old systems of solidarity and sharing. Male cultural leaders saw their prestige and responsibilities diminish and their decisions no longer respected.

Traditionally, women had no right to own (and thus inherit) property because they were considered men's property. Many assets, including land, were owned communally. In the event of a man's death, the clan had the right to find a suitable guardian for his 'property', which included the widow and children. This led to widespread abuses such as land 'grabbing', inheritance of widows, child neglect, exclusion from decisions, denial of certain

foods, and a degrading initiation ceremony into the husband's clan. The only areas where adult women thrived and derived respect were teaching cultural values and taboos, traditional healing, foretelling, bringing up children and managing the home.

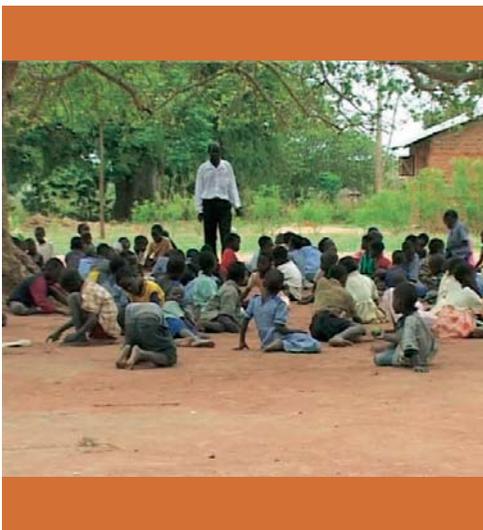
However, belonging to a clan is a central way in which people identify themselves and define their rights and responsibilities.

What does it take to make a cultural approach work?

A cultural approach to dealing with the HIV/AIDS pandemic and its consequences is premised on a number of pre-conditions:

- A strong belief in cultural heritage, and appreciating both its positive and negative aspects.
- Research in culturally specific contexts, e.g. recognising that traditional legal systems may have a higher degree of legitimacy than the 'official ones'.
- Considering culture as 'living' rather than 'frozen' in traditions.
- The ability to question oneself.
- Working with others and focusing on influential leaders.





Cultural resources, judiciously put to use, have resulted in behaviour change, and reduced stigma and discrimination

Even today, these are vested in the clan, despite the challenges and insecurity described above. Clan leaders play an important role in handling disputes, where the emphasis is on resolving problems, rather than punishing culprits. Alongside the traditional legal system, the official system manifests itself through the local councils, the police, magistrate courts and chiefs. But the official system is perceived locally as constrained by bureaucracy, delays, cost, and corruption.

Looking for the right approach

The Vision Teso Rural Development Organisation, or Vision Terudo (VT) for short, is a local Ugandan NGO that works with cultural leaders to enhance women's and children's rights. VT's initial efforts were based on relief and child sponsorship. However, this approach created dependency and the interventions were not sustainable. VT then decided to adopt a 'rights-based approach' in 2003.

In a rights-based approach, poverty eradication is only possible when all stakeholders are aware of their rights. These rights can be demanded so that protection is afforded, while the duty bearers take responsibility to fulfil them. But this approach did not work well: poverty and human rights abuse continued to increase in Teso. VT realised that the rights-based approach focused on criminalising the child abuser, without tracing the causes of mistreatment, such as early marriages and sexual abuse. Similarly, the approach did not address the

roots of gender imbalance, such as boys being favoured when it came to access to education and property ownership. The approach also focused on punishment, rather than reconciliation.

Towards a cultural approach

In 2005, VT shifted to a 'cultural approach'. The organisation decided to conduct sensitisation meetings to discuss the local culture, its limitations and its potential: male cultural leaders became involved in identifying solutions and decision-making. VT recognised that belonging to a clan is crucial to people, as it is through this membership that they identify themselves and define their rights and responsibilities.

In the course of their work, VT staff had also found that many cases of assault, domestic violence and problems concerning property had been reported to the police, the sub-county administration and to the local councils, but without any form of redress. This was a further reason for involving clan leaders. After sensitisation on their traditional role of protecting and promoting women and children's rights, clan leaders joined local committees.

A framework for handling disputes and protection of rights was also developed, by combining the local council by-laws on compensation and the clan dispute resolution system, which focuses on rehabilitation and reconciliation. The clan leaders thus became more active co-managers and protectors of the rights of vulnerable people. Later, this

system became a kind of 'community police force' to protect the rights of orphans and women.

These interventions resulted in fewer incidences of property grabbing, forceful inheritance of widows and other forms of domestic violence. A form of redress was received in many cases, and those of a criminal nature (such as rape and defilement) were referred to the police. Many men and women have also been encouraged to write wills so that, in the event of death, the family is not left in confusion. It became easier for cases to be heard directly in 'community courts' presided over by the clan leaders. This has offered opportunities for fair justice: the local fine for adultery, for instance, is corporal punishment plus payment in cattle, yet the legal fine for this is only 200 Ugandan shillings (USD 0.12). Some committees have also helped in settling widows and orphans in the community.

Challenges persist

In the light of the experiences of VT and the other NGOs, CCFU recognises that, despite the achievements, the adoption of a cultural approach remains problematic in several respects. Cultural values are not necessarily progressive, and this is particularly evident when tackling gender inequities. VT found that the community attitude towards women often remained negative, and women continued to suffer marginalisation. In response, women were trained to approach leaders in the manner reminiscent of clan law and code of conduct. Having their ideas and plans adopted, women became better able to defend their rights, and some became role models in the community.

When it comes to documentation and monitoring mechanisms, assessment of the impact of using a cultural approach in the fight against AIDS often remains anecdotal. In particular, monitoring must look beyond behavioural change.

Has the cultural approach made a difference?

Looking at the diverse cases documented by CCFU, while it is acknowledged that attribution is often difficult to establish, the indications are that, in some of these cases, cultural resources, judiciously put to use, have resulted in behaviour change, and reduced stigma and discrimination. In others, it has led to questioning of harmful traditional practices, increased voluntary testing and disclosure, or helping to tackle opportunistic infections related to AIDS. And, where the cultural approach has made a difference, this is also likely to be widespread, accessible and sustainable.

Interacting worldviews in a cultural approach

Spiritual
Respect for cultural heritage.

Social
Rehabilitation and reconciliation of citizens.

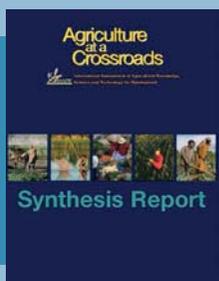
Material
Improvements in property rights for widows and orphans.



This article is based on Drawing on Culture to Fight HIV/AIDS. Six Ugandan Stories, published by CCFU. www.crossculturalfoundation.or.ug
ccfu@crossculturalfoundation.or.ug

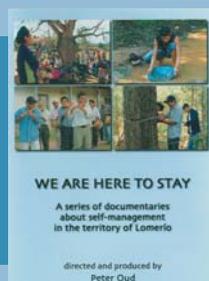


P U B L I C A T I O N S



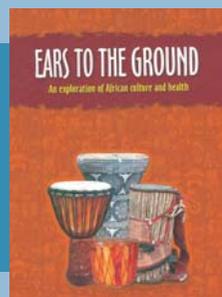
Agriculture at a Crossroads
Synthesis report and summary on
Johannesburg meeting, April 2008

The final plenary session of the International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) was held in April 2008 in Johannesburg. *'There are some major challenges, but we believe that by combining local and traditional knowledge with formal knowledge these challenges can be met'*, Prof. R. Watson, Director IAASTD. The IAASTD is a World Bank and FAO initiative to evaluate the role of agricultural knowledge, science and technology in reducing poverty, improving livelihoods of rural communities and supporting the sustainable development of environment, society and economy. Executive summary and detailed reports can be downloaded from www.agassessment.org.



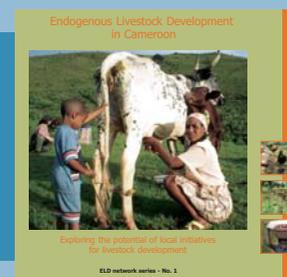
We are here to stay
DVD series about self-management
in the Bolivian lowlands

Four documentaries present the experiences of the Chiquitano people living in the territory of Lomerío in the Bolivian lowlands, as they struggle to improve their standard of living without going against the essential values of their culture. Themes covered in the films include sustainable forest management, the right to exploit mineral resources, the recovery of the Chiquitano language, changes in the position of women, relations between an indigenous organisation and the municipal authorities, and local participation in the national political debate. In Spanish and local languages with English subtitles, the DVDs provide material for discussion and reflection for those interested in the development of indigenous self-management. Information: r.hulsman@hivos.nl, info@peteroud.nl



Ears to the Ground
An exploration of African
culture and health

The Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH) partnered with the Ford Foundation in 2000 to set up the Culture and Health Grants Program for Africa (CHAPS). CHAPS' goal was to improve health, well-being and gender relations of communities by identifying, revising and promoting cultural practices and beliefs through a small grants programme. Individuals and community groups were supported to revive positive cultural practices and to influence and change practices that have a negative impact on health, driven by the recognition that communities derive their energies and identities from culture and local knowledge. Ears to the Ground showcases some of the projects that were supported. Information: www.path.org

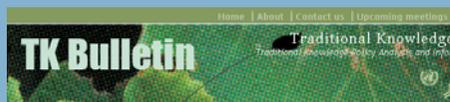


**Endogenous Livestock
Development in Cameroon**
Exploring potential initiatives

The result of collaboration between farmers and extension workers in Cameroon and international consultants, this book provides an introduction to Endogenous Livestock Development. This approach acknowledges the multi-faceted role of livestock, including the social and spiritual components. Livestock keepers' ways of learning and organising themselves are the starting point for development. The book is accompanied by a DVD. Together they can be used to generate debates about dependency, and stimulate a re-interpretation of local values and potential in livestock development efforts.

The book can be ordered from Agromisa, cost € 17.50 incl. p&p. www.agromisa.org

WEBSITES



Traditional Knowledge Information Service

The Traditional Knowledge (TK) Bulletin provides information for indigenous communities and other relevant stakeholders on TK-related discussions at international forums. The TK Bulletin is offered by the United Nations University Institute of Advanced Studies as a pilot activity of the Traditional Knowledge Institute (TKI).

The TK Bulletin provides a **weekly review** of TK issues in the international news (updated every Tuesday) and postings on issues of relevance to TK at a global level, such as processes within United Nations organisations, the World Bank and regional development banks, initiatives such as the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and the International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology.

www.unu.edu/tk



Equator Prize winners selected

Twenty-five initiatives were awarded the Equator Prize in September 2008, from a total pool of 310 nominations from 70 nations. The selection criteria included *Impact*, reducing poverty through conservation of biodiversity; *Partnerships*, linking many stakeholders; *Sustainability*, at least 3 years of successful and lasting socio-economic changes; *Innovation*, new and adaptable approaches implemented; *Leadership and Community Empowerment*, leadership that has inspired action and change; *Gender Equality*, where social and cultural diversity and gender equality has been incorporated.

Two of the 2008 prize winners: In Sri Lanka, the **Community Development Centre** conserves nearly 60 indigenous varieties of roots and yams to generate income for over 300 households.

In Ecuador, the **Union of Farming and Indigenous Organizations of Cotacachi**, an organisation of 3,225 Quichua families, focuses on the re-introduction of traditional crops and medicinal plants and the maintenance of traditional cultural practices. As a result, incomes have risen substantially. www.equatorinitiative.org



New on www.compasnet.org:

Why is organic farming not spreading faster? A report by CIKS, India combines results from four district level brainstorming sessions. This was followed up by a state-level brainstorming session with stakeholders in Tamil Nadu.

On the COMPAS Latin America website the following publications are now available: ***Aprendiendo el Desarrollo Endógeno Sostenible. Construyendo La Diversidad Bio-Cultural*** is the title of the translation of the book '***Learning Endogenous Development***'.

The Endogenous Development Magazine is also now available in Spanish. See www.compasla.org

Diagnosing Poverty in northern Ghana: Institutional versus Community Views. A paper by Agnes Apusigah from the University of Development Studies in Ghana www.compasnet.org

Culture in development in Uganda. Experiences and Prospects. Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda. Can be downloaded from the website: www.crossculturalfoundation.or.ug



BIODIVERSITY EDUCATION helps indigenous communities in India

Combining sustainable harvesting and market links



Photo: Prashanth NS, BR Hills, India

In southern India, a small-scale educational programme teaches biodiversity concepts to the Soliga tribal communities. Supported by the Centre for Environment Education in Bangalore, Vivekananda Girijana Kalyana Kendra (VGKK), a local NGO, runs a residential school at Biligiri Rangan Hills, where many Soliga people live. Due to their strong cultural, ecological, social and spiritual beliefs, the programme has become a successful endogenous development experience.

The Soliga communities believe that their forefathers originated from Bamboo. They are semi-nomadic and live in settlements called *podu*, consisting of 10-50 huts. Their livelihood consists of food gathering and shifting cultivation. Soliga people also collect and sell non-timber forest products available in the surrounding forests, which cover an area of about 550 square kilometres. The forests contain a rich biodiversity, supporting 18 types of mammals, 145 types of birds, and 87 types of butterflies. The plant wealth is equally diverse, and scientists have described over 233 species of plants in the region.

Understanding the local wildlife

Soliga children's knowledge of the local flora and fauna is remarkable. A 12-year-old can identify as many as 260 plants. Climbing trees, swimming and trekking in the forest are skills at which Soliga teenagers are very adept. These skills are essential for their survival and self-reliance in the dense forests. However, even though the Soliga have a good understanding of the local flora and fauna, before the project started they were less

The students indicate that the programme has helped the Soliga community to better understand biological diversity, resulting in conservation plans and measures

aware of the value of non-timber forest products in the modern world and they lacked sustainable harvesting skills.

VGKK has undertaken various activities with the Soliga community to improve

What do the teachers think of the programme?

In an assessment of the programme all seven teachers responded to a questionnaire:

- Four had no earlier experience in using similar methods to teach the biodiversity concepts; all agreed that they had benefited from the programme.
- Four said that participating in this type of field-oriented studies had helped them to develop their own communication skills and self confidence.
- Five said that they would introduce similar methods on their own, even if they were transferred to another school.
- Five felt that the programme had helped them to get the students to understand biodiversity concepts.
- Three confirmed that it helped students to realise the importance of biodiversity for the community.
- Five stated that the students had benefited academically.
- Four felt that the students' workload had increased.

their socio-economic conditions. To this end a school and hospital have been opened and various infrastructural facilities provided. After assessing the need for education on biodiversity conservation

among the Soliga community, a Strategy for Biodiversity Education was prepared, the aim of which is to improve the community's quality of life through education. A community-specific biodiversity education programme was

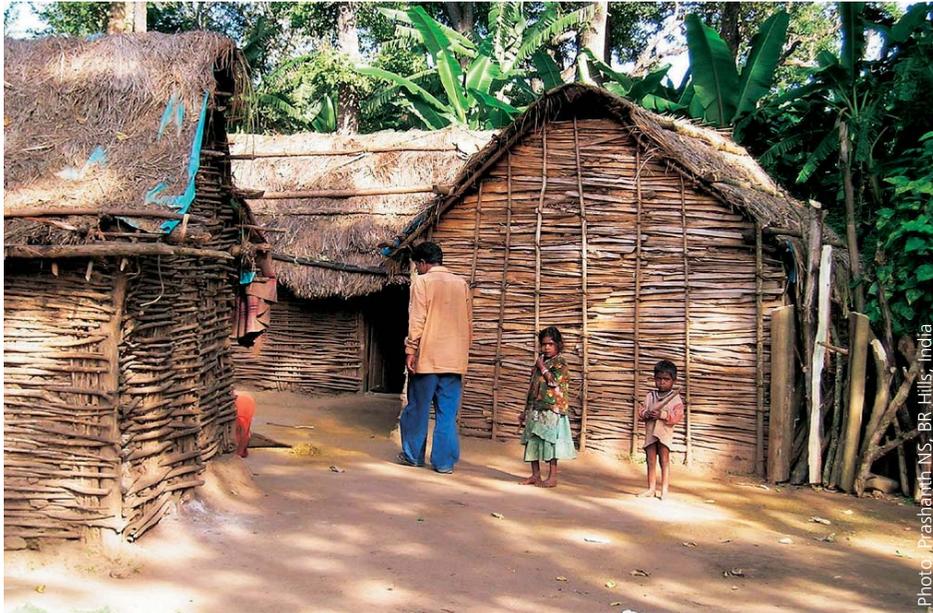
drawn up for the teachers working in residential schools. For example, the Soliga harvest gooseberries (*Phyllanthus emblica*). In the biodiversity education, students learn how to harvest gooseberries sustainably, about their market value and how to develop market links.

Teaching the teachers

Biodiversity education was introduced in 1997, at the start of the residential school's academic year. Booklets and educational concepts were introduced and have been used ever since. The programme was implemented by the seven teachers who work with over two thousand Soliga children at the residential school in Biligiri Rangan Hills, Chamarajnar District, Karnataka, India. The teachers integrated biodiversity concepts into their teaching activities in languages, science, maths and social sciences.

A five-day workshop was organised to familiarise the teachers with innovative approaches in biodiversity education, including experiential learning methods. These included field methods to assess biological diversity. The teachers also received training on teaching concepts of biological diversity and preparing locally specific biodiversity education materials. The teachers had sufficient knowledge about the tribal students, their community and the biological diversity of the area.





Soliga community in Bilgiri Rangan Hills.

By the end of the workshop, the teacher groups had compiled drafts of biodiversity education materials suitable for the different levels (primary, higher primary and secondary education) at BR Hills school.

The trained teachers became the key actors in implementing the programme with students in the school. The classroom sessions are used to explain the theoretical concepts of biodiversity, for systematic documentation of biological resources and for briefing on field methods to assess biological diversity. Field sessions take place in the mornings and weekends. The information collected in the field is then assessed in the classrooms. A biodiversity register is now kept in the school, documenting the biological resources of the local forest.

Results of the programme

The project embraces the concepts of endogenous development, for it harnesses cultural, ecological and socio-economic aspects that are closely linked with the spiritual beliefs of the Soliga. The community has strong spiritual values when it comes to conserving their natural resources. The Soliga worship many of the biodiversity components, for example the champak tree (*Michelia champaca*), which yields fragrant flowers. The community understands the importance of conserving the tree, and issues like this are included in the children's school curriculum.

About 95 percent of the students indicate that the programme has helped the Soliga community to gain a better understanding of biological diversity, resulting in conservation plans and measures.

Interacting worldviews in biodiversity education

Spiritual

Educational materials describe species that are of spiritual importance to the Soliga.

Social

The programme makes use of skills that Soliga children possess, such as tree climbing and swimming and of their respect for their natural habitat.

Material

Children have learned about the value of non-timber forest products in the modern world, both in terms of sustainable harvesting techniques and market links.

The main constraints faced by many of the teachers are time and increased workload as a result of the introduction of the biodiversity booklets. They overcame this problem by integrating the teaching of biodiversity concepts into the existing curriculum.

The small-scale educational programme is unique, as it is tailor made for an indigenous community in a tribal residential school. Even though it has not yet been recognised by the government, it would be possible to replicate the approach in similar environmental and socio-cultural situations.



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NCHENE: An effective traditional mentoring tool

Many cultures have long traditions of mentorship: an informal tool for educating young people in ways that formal institutionalised systems are not able to. In northern Ghana an old system, *Nchene*, is practised among Dagaaba women. *Nchene* is derived from two Dagaare words: *n* meaning 'my' and *chene* meaning 'friend'. *Nchene* therefore means 'my friend'. *Chena* refers to relationships between and among women or females. The appeal of the *chena* system lies in its facilitation of inter-generational mentoring relationships among women who are related by virtue of marriage to the same household, family or community.

An elderly woman devotes time and energy to socialising a new wife in the community into which she has married. It begins with an attraction to a young woman, often due to

Mentoring can be a critical tool for probing issues

perceived vulnerability, moral sense or sheer instinct. The older woman courts the friendship of the younger woman by offering greetings, lending a helping hand or even food, until connections are made and the relationship is formalised.

The relationship is then nurtured through support, protection, coaching and sharing.

Mutual support

The two women exchange gifts and render services to each other. During happy and sorrowful times *chena* is a source of mutual support. Both women play leading roles during special occasions such as festivals, funerals,

farming, harvesting and beer brewing. Where the two women do not live on the same compound, they pay each other regular visits, the younger woman taking water, the local beer or firewood, the older woman perhaps taking soup ingredients or spices.

More importantly, the older woman supports the younger woman in times of difficulty. She becomes the confidante of the younger woman, who can call upon her elder at any time to share her thoughts and worries, and seek advice.

When she notices or hears anything unusual, especially if it is derogatory, the older woman takes the lead in calling on and advising her younger friend. Such support and teaching ensure that the younger woman is well socialised regarding her roles and responsibilities.

Tool for micro-credit support

The Sontaa Nontaa Agroforestry Organisation working with community-based women's groups in the Upper West Region of Ghana has applied *chena* as a tool for micro-credit support, enabling women to build up small businesses. The women's groups have also become involved in tree planting, a new activity for women.



Photo: Berry Fine

Where useful traditional wisdom and knowledge is being lost, *chena* offers a semi-formal avenue through which to preserve knowledge. It is also useful for motivating young women to participate and support community development interventions.

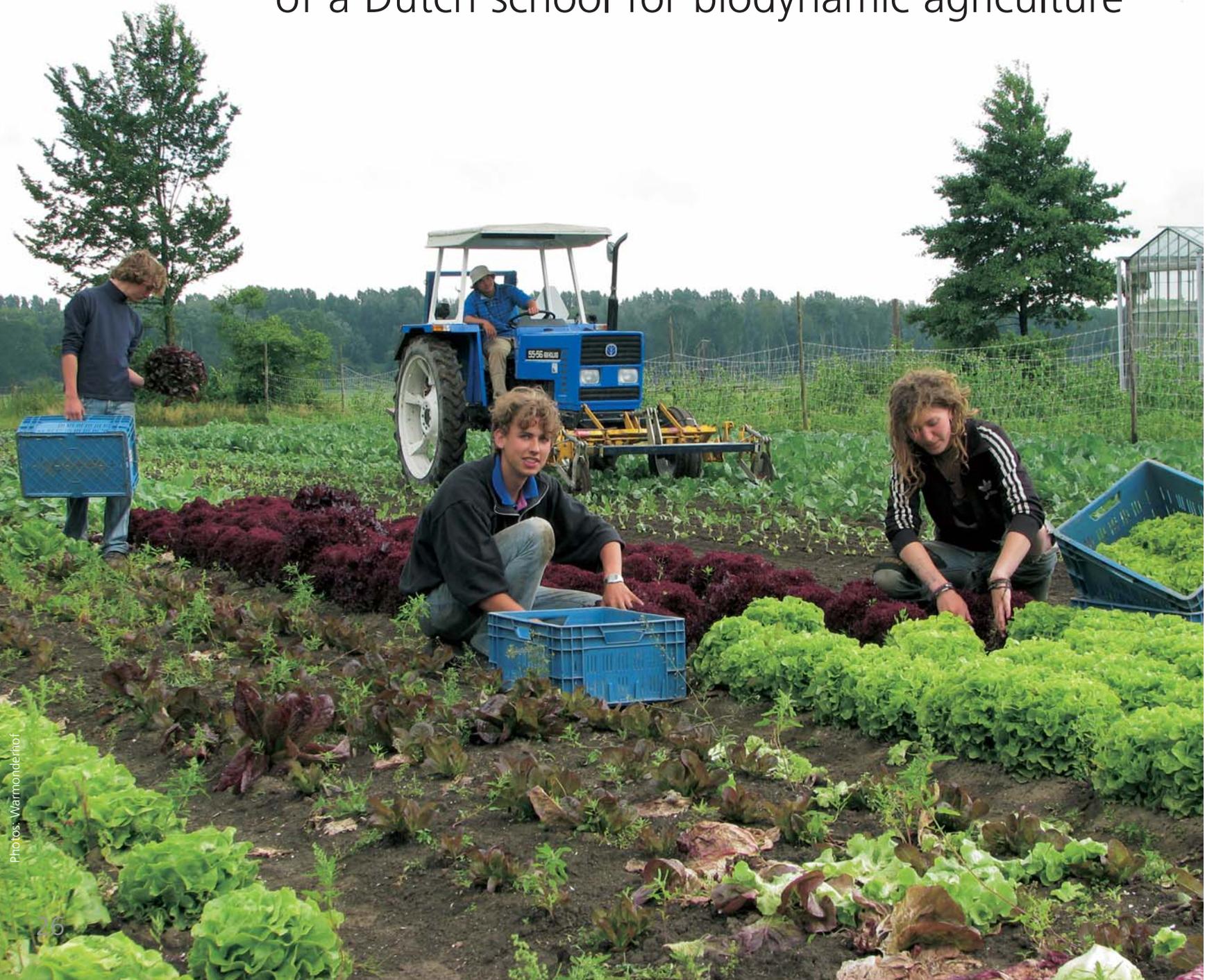
Relationships of trust are not only important contexts through which younger women learn; they can also form a basis from which to challenge traditional notions of femininity and masculinity, and outmoded traditions and customs that are harmful to women. Mentoring can thus become a critical tool for probing issues in a free, cordial and open atmosphere. It opens up possibilities for engaging in critical dialogue, for example addressing gender issues in a changing world.



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An African's view

of a Dutch school for biodynamic agriculture



Augustin Kouevi works for an NGO that promotes organic farming in Benin. He recently visited the Warmonderhof, a working farm and agricultural college in Flevoland province in the Netherlands. It is a unique school that provides live-in training on biodynamic organic farming to about 90 students from several countries. EDM asked Augustin about his impressions of the Warmonderhof, in particular how appropriate the practices he encountered would be for his home country.

The Warmonderhof consists of two parts. Teachers come every morning to the agricultural college and give lessons to the students in the theory of biodynamic agriculture. The other, practical, side of the Warmonderhof is run by four farmers who

experiential way. I was struck by what I thought was a calabash hanging in front of a greenhouse (see photo). In fact it was a deer bladder filled with herbs, which is prepared and hung up to capture cosmic energy. Once ready, the herbs are added to

The Warmonderhof stands for an integrated approach that involves 'living, working and learning'

lease land from the college and support themselves by selling their produce: vegetables, arable crops, livestock and fruit. In the afternoons the students work on the farms, putting into practice what they have learned during the morning. This integrated approach to learning by doing incorporates all aspects of 'living, working and learning', making the Warmonderhof a unique example of experiential learning.

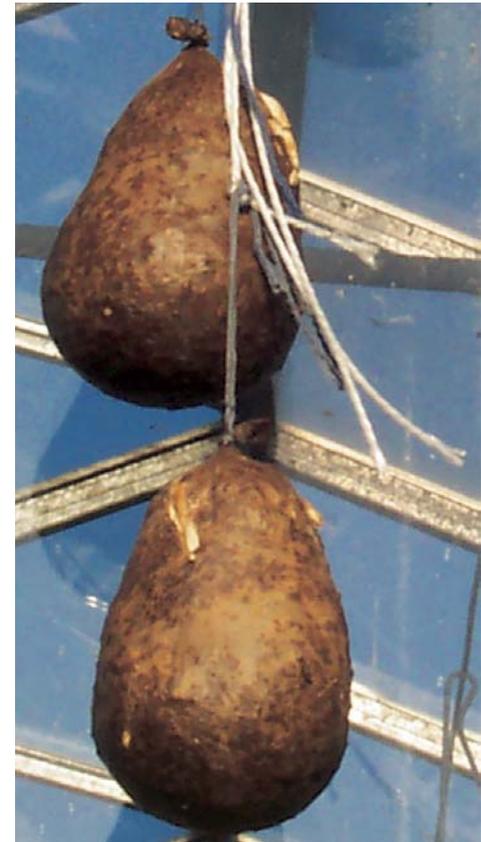
What is your impression of the Warmonderhof as an agricultural training institute?

'I appreciated my visit in several senses. It is a learning centre where spiritual, technical, social and economic issues are integrated and taught to students in an

compost and applied to the soil to make it more receptive to cosmic energy and encourage plant growth.'

Another way in which spiritual aspects of life are incorporated into the school's activities is through the opening ceremony, which is held at the start of each week. Students are involved in organising this activity: the first-year students are responsible for setting out the chairs, while the second-years take turns to chair the meeting itself and say the *weekspreek*, a kind of prayer.

On the working farm, students learn how to recycle agricultural and animal waste into valuable compost for organic



Deer bladder filled with herbs are suspended to capture cosmic energy.

production. In the social and economic areas, they learn how to organise themselves in cooperatives and to live and work together in an efficient and sustainable way.

The dairy cattle housing is also interesting: it's a deep litter stall with feeding, manure and resting places all in the same building. Cow urine is collected separately and drained through a canal to be recycled as green fertiliser on the fields. Pastures



Students weed onions by hand, lying on a weeding machine.

where the cows graze also form part of the same farming system.

Did you notice similarities between the Warmonderhof and training institutes in Africa?

'I have not yet encountered an institute like this in Africa; I am not aware of any colleges in Benin that teach organic farming. Some farmers work organically,

but no teaching curricula have been developed in official agricultural colleges. Some NGOs and centres organise training for farmers and others who are interested. These do make use of discovery learning approaches, but they differ in the equipment and methods they use (no classrooms but training rooms, no greenhouses but learning in the field), and they place less emphasis on recycling

We need to reconsider the present trend that regards farmers' experiences as backward and not usable for development

Discovery learning is a way of learning based on students' own innate curiosity. At the Warmonderhof students participate once a week in a workgroup. They can bring in their own ideas, but the activities must in some way be of service to the community. A few years ago a group decided it wanted to learn about using horses for pulling ploughs. People who still possess traditional ploughing skills came and taught the students, who learnt how different it is to plough the land walking behind a horse instead of sitting on a tractor. The school now has two horses itself and teaches a course on animal traction.

Biodynamic agriculture is a method of organic farming based on a spiritual worldview. The aim of biodynamic farming and gardening is to revitalise nature, grow nourishing food and advance the physical and spiritual health of humanity. Each biodynamic farm or garden is conceived of as an organism with its own individual qualities and diversity of life. Reliance on home-produced compost, manures and animal feeds is a key objective and external inputs are kept to a minimum. Methods unique to the biodynamic approach include the use of fermented herbal and mineral preparations as compost additives and field sprays, and the use of an astronomical sowing and planting calendar.



The Warmonderhof, Dronten, the Netherlands.

livestock farming waste for crop production. Also, these organisations do not address cosmovision issues.'

To what extent can the teaching methods and subjects be adapted to the African context?

'I think the teaching approaches could be used in Africa. Where I come from in Benin, integrating agriculture and livestock is not common, so lands and farmers are becoming poorer. In my view, these issues need to be introduced both in agricultural colleges and on farms. Using experiential learning would be a good method to use for this, although it is not yet widely used in our agricultural colleges.'

Why might young people be interested in agricultural colleges and farms, using experiential learning methods?

'Financial and economic issues seem to influence young people's decision-making everywhere. There is growing interest in

organic products: a market is developing for these products, so growing organically may provide farmers with a better income source. This could sharpen young people's interest in getting training on organic farming, so they can create their own organic enterprises or work as facilitators of organic farming processes.'

Did your visit change your views?

'This visit did not change my view of my work in Benin and Africa, but it did confirm what I have been thinking for a long time, based on reading and experiences in organic farming in Benin: my conviction of the need to reinforce the discovery-learning aspects of our teaching approach. I also feel that the present trend, which regards farmers' experiences as backward and not usable for development, needs to be reconsidered. Contrary to many scientists, I believe that almost all experiences are useful: you just need to study them scientifically.'

Interacting worldviews at the Warmonderhof

Spiritual

Special preparations are made on particular days in the annual cycle of festivals, e.g. the feast of St Michael.

Social

Students from different countries exchange opinions and experiences based on discovery learning.

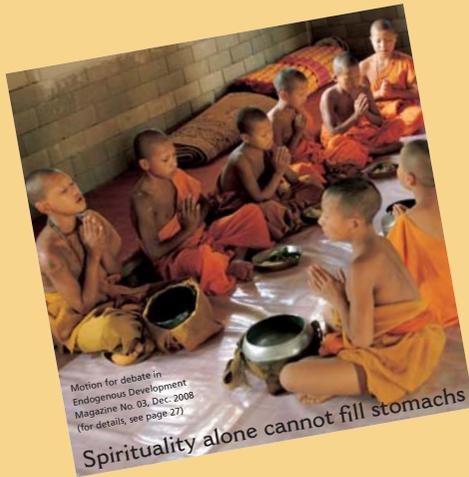
Material

The students engage in farming activities every day, putting into practice what they have learned.



Augustin Kouevi is an agronomist at the NGO Organisation Beninoise pour la Promotion Agricole (OBEPAB) in Benin, which promotes organic farming, mainly organic cotton production in Benin. He is currently doing PhD research on facilitating water resource management in rural Benin. www.obepab.bj
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interacting



Reactions from most major world religions:

Spirituality alone cannot fill stomachs

The motion on spirituality in EDM2 struck a chord with several readers, and most of the major world religions are represented among the responses. There was no clear outcome in favour or against the motion, which is perhaps not surprising given the complexity of the subject. We print a selection of the responses here.

Spirituality includes worldly activities for catering to the needs of food, clothing, shelter, medicine, etc. The Vedic injunction 'Annam Bahu Kurveeta' means 'Increase food production'. There should be a harmonious balance between purely spiritual activity and purely material activity. Filling the stomach cannot be the end and aim of life.

Swami Krishnananda, India

As more and more churches and mosques continue to spring-up in Nigeria, so more and more Nigerians continue to be physiologically and psychologically lazy, pinning all their hopes on spirituality. This is why 'in the name of Jesus' and 'in the name of Allah' could not put rice on Nigerians' table when the 'Asian tigers' refused to export rice to Nigeria as a result of the global food recession. Indeed, one wonders whether Nigerians still believe in 'manna from heaven' rather than hard work. It is a case of naive spirituality at the expense of pragmatic spirituality which eventually leads to perpetual hunger and poverty.

Adetoro Rasheed, Nigeria

The scriptures say that man can not live by bread alone. The element of work and success is central in all spiritual aspects of every society. ...Spiritual richness leads to wisdom that is essential for living a successful life on earth... Extreme poverty is not lack of material possessions such as mobile phones or private vehicles, but rather lack of basic needs like food, housing, health services and education. In Islam we believe that Allah is the provider of

There should be a harmonious balance between purely spiritual and purely material activity

everything. The Quran does not approve monasticism because it was not prescribed by Allah (verse 57:27). To this end therefore I oppose the motion.

Imran Ahimbisibwe, Uganda

In the Buddhist belief, suffering stems from 'desire'. In today's richer countries, desire has become available to the masses in the form of consumerism. In modern terms, suffering comes from greed - people wanting more than they need. Spirituality can be an antidote to greed, by offering alternative goals in life, for example meditation practice. However, people who follow

a spiritual path can still be infected by greed. A spiritual tradition will not protect people from the greed of others. Native American societies might have continued to exist, but they could not defend themselves against invaders who were not able to share land.

Milton Takei, United States

There can be no doubt that religion has a major role to play in any society. However, the recent

trend shows religious institutions aiming at breaking people's self-confidence and willpower, thereby rendering them dependent on various 'Godmen' and religious establishments. The aim of religions should be to help the individual to attain a happy peaceful life, in harmony with society and the environment and not a life entirely dedicated to religion, turning a blind eye to the misery of fellow human beings.

Merlin Franco, India

All reactions are posted on the COMPAS website: www.compasnet.org

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Western notions of democracy stand in the way of endogenous development

Motion for debate in Endogenous Development Magazine No 4, June 2009



Explanation of the motion

Democracy (meaning rule of the people in Greek) as a concept in the west stems from a tradition that includes political pluralism, equality before the law, the right to petition, civil liberties and human rights.

The current government in Bolivia, headed by Evo Morales (see photo), presents itself as 'indigenous' and therefore different from western democracies. COMPAS partner Cesar Escobar elaborates: 'In the case of the Morales government, the proposed new constitution would enable indigenous peoples to exercise forms of governance in accordance with their own customs at the local level. Nevertheless, at national level western-style democracy will continue to predominate. At present, indigenous and western forms of democracy merely coexist.'

COMPAS partner David Millar reflects: 'In my view, 'good governance' is what we need to focus on. This is about good decision-making and above all loyalty and accountability. I wonder

whether in Africa our formal governments make good decisions and, more importantly, whether they hold themselves accountable for the decisions they make. Traditional institutions appear to be doing quite well (at least on the loyalty part), but how do these institutions maintain their credibility? Endogenous development offers us the opportunity to study traditional institutions, systems and structures and how they operate in their complexities.'

COMPAS partner Agnes Apusigah adds: 'What I see in Africa is a shady approximation of the traditional systems at the national level: democracy brewed in the Africa Pot, perhaps. But whose interests does it serve? Can we talk of a true African system of democratic governance in our time? One that has not been misappropriated to serve interests other than those originally intended! I am optimistic that when we mature in our efforts to Africanise, the product will better serve African interests.' **Do endogenous forms of governance have the potential for greater accountability and loyalty?**

Join the debate

We invite readers to respond to the motion *Western notions of democracy stand in the way of endogenous development*. Contributions from Compas partners are already on the website, and a selection of the responses will be published in the ED-Magazine 4. Please restrict your contribution to not more than 200 words.

Post your views on www.compasnet.org or send an email to compas@etcnl.nl



Motion for debate in
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(for details see page 31)

Western notions of democracy stand in the way of
endogenous development