

3 THE COMPAS APPROACH TO SUPPORT ENDOGENOUS DEVELOPMENT

The Compas programme is an international network of field-based organisations that support endogenous development. It has learned that enhancing endogenous development implies a number of requirements, such as building on local resources and complementing them with appropriate external resources, maximising local control, enhancing the dynamics of local knowledge systems, and retention of benefits in the local areas. This process also implies networking and lobbying for policy reforms, training of staff and theoretical reflections on the lessons learned. The Compas partners have agreed on a code of conduct, which aims at minimising the risks related to working on the basis of indigenous knowledge.

The ongoing process of globalisation involves the entrenchment of western modern knowledge systems and technologies throughout the world. The dominant education and research systems are based on western knowledge and value systems. As a result, development activities have tended to enhance technologies with international standards, rather than support the needs of specific regions or populations. In agriculture, the use of external inputs has increased due to extension and subsidy policies. In health, western bio-medicine has reached out to all corners of the globe. Although these efforts have led to definite improvements, awareness related to the problems of this approach is increasing. Environmental pollution is a major problem, while privatisation and liberalisation have put health services and agricultural external inputs beyond the reach of large groups of rural people. Many young people are leaving rural areas in search of greener pastures. These processes strain local economies as well as the social and cultural inheritance of the local communities.

Globalisation at local level

At local level, many rural communities are experiencing a change in market opportunities. In their quest to access a share of the market, they are not only confronted with cheap subsidised products from elsewhere, but also with changing patterns of local consumption. Under the influence of mass media and education, a general 'westernisation' of taste and consumption is taking place. Urban consumers increasingly prefer western (fast) food and drinks to traditional food items. As western practices continue to be adopted, the confidence in traditional human and animal health practices is declining. Moreover, as the strength of local cultures and traditional authority structures is undermined, social cohesion and local conflict resolution mechanisms are being endangered. But evidence in Europe shows that the real impact of globalisation depends on the responses developed at the grassroots. Though the modernisation model was well internalised by many regions and groups of farmers, it was also deconstructed and reshaped by others. Some groups of farmers in Europe have taken distance from what appears to be a dominant blueprint, thus contributing to the heterogeneity of European agriculture [van der Ploeg et al., 2002].

The same phenomenon can be observed in tropical areas too. Despite the apparent

acceptance of dominant technologies, a number of indigenous institutions have survived and a wealth of indigenous knowledge still exists. It is consistently observed by the Compas partner organisations, that, although under threat, there is still substantial indigenous knowledge, cosmovision and traditional leadership. These still form the basis for the decisions made by the majority of rural people. Therefore, for development organisations to be effective in supporting endogenous development, they need to understand the basic characteristics of the indigenous knowledge systems, and the worldviews that they are founded on. This, in fact, should be the starting point of development.

As indicated in chapter 2, indigenous knowledge and practices cannot provide all the answers to the present day challenges faced by rural people. The limitations and setbacks need to be analysed and taken into account. Indigenous knowledge and leadership need to be taken seriously, while ensuring that these are not romanticised.

Compas and endogenous development

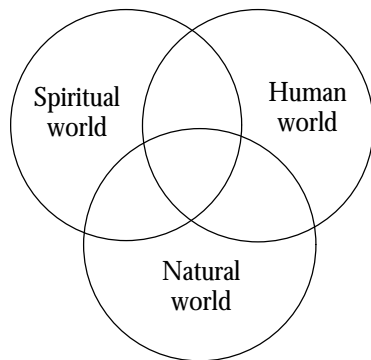
The Compas partner organisations have ongoing programmes in the domains of poverty reduction based on participatory development, local management of natural resources, low-external-input and sustainable agriculture, biodiversity, local health systems, indigenous knowledge, and cultural diversity. Based on their experiences the partners have concluded that the conventional approach to support development, consisting of the transfer of technologies from the 'modern' to the 'underdeveloped' world, needs to be revised. They are of the opinion that traditional knowledge with its technical, social and spiritual dimensions needs to be accepted as the starting point for development.

Endogenous development refers to development that is mainly, though not exclusively, based on locally available resources and the way people have organised themselves. External knowledge and resources are often used to complement these local resources. Endogenous development, therefore, does not imply isolation; nor does it limit its attention to local processes. It actively uses the opportunities provided by globalisation. The approach of the Compas programme can be described as 'action-research on endogenous development'. It attempts to be complementary to the many organisations that have a similar focus but often restrict themselves to research or to the technical aspects of indigenous knowledge. It thus hopes to support the growing movement towards endogenous development.

Indigenous worldviews. The Compas partners realized that most indigenous knowledge systems are based on the understanding that the living world is made up of three worlds: the human world, the natural world and the spiritual world (see box 3a). The human (social) world implies the social life of the people in all its dimensions, such as community life, family ties, ethnic groups, and traditional leadership and organisation. The natural (material) world includes nature in all its forms, including agriculture, as well as the natural phenomena. The spiritual world can be composed of different spirits, ancestral spirits, or Gods, often with different functions and tasks. In reality these worlds are interrelated: certain natural places are considered sacred, as sites where spiritual forces can communicate with humans through animals and habitats.

Together these notions form the worldview or cosmovision that describes the role of the supernatural powers, the perceived relationship between the humans and nature, and the way natural processes take explained. On the basis of these perceptions people organise themselves and determine their interventions in nature as well as their religious activities.

Box 3a Indigenous worldviews



Local use of resources. To a large extent the local capacities to use the local resources is thus determined by this worldview. Recent insights have drawn the attention to the capacities and opportunities of rural people to improve their livelihoods in a systematic way based on their local resources. It was learned that the more successful rural livelihoods are characterised by relatively successful efforts to get access to resources such as credit, land, skills, labour, and the opportunities to turn these resources into livelihood enhancement. Examples are accessing labour- or product markets, and better terms in transactions, by renegotiating power relations. Access to kin and ethnic network, social organisations, intermediate state and NGOs and markets are

important means for rural people to strengthen their negotiation power [Bebbington, 1999].

This analysis distinguishes six different types of resources: Natural resources (land, ecosystem, climate, plants animals); Human resources (knowledge and skills, local concepts, ways of learning, teaching and experimenting); Produced or human-made resources (buildings, infrastructure and equipment); Economic-financial resources (markets, incomes, ownerships, price relations, credit); Social resources (family, ethnic organisations, social institutions and leadership); and Cultural resources (beliefs, norms, values, festivals and rituals, art, language, lifestyle). This division is an elaboration of the concept of the three worlds, as used in the Compas approach.

Endogenous development, development defined by the choices and opportunities of the local people, implies a process of identifying, getting access to, and making good use of these resources. Rural people have developed their own mechanisms to get access to each of these resources, to claim, defend, and transform them. Individuals, households and organisations, that have gained access and control over these assets, can interact with the state organisations, civil society or market, and use them for the improvement of their livelihoods. A balanced development process includes all these types of local resources.

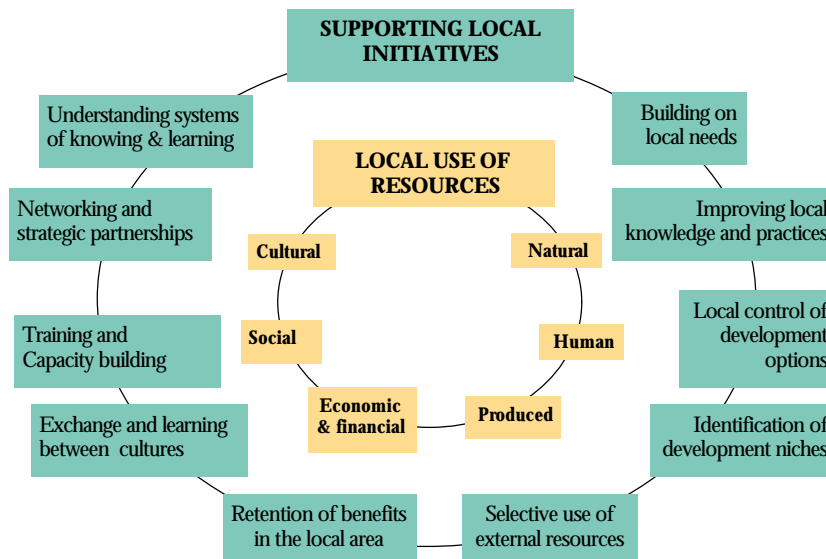
Field work for enhancing endogenous development

The Compas partners started their work by systematically learning with and from rural people about their knowledge, practices and worldviews. Hereby they gained insights into

the local ways of reasoning, the methods of experimentation, and the systems of learning and communication on which they are based. This meant that field staff participated in local activities with an open mind, in order to understand the concepts used and the values behind them.

Subsequently, a participatory diagnosis on the actual situation, the changes taking place and the risks involved was made. On the basis of the findings, development options to improve the situation of the different population groups were chosen. These options were then tested in a systematic way. Initiatives were taken to test and improve traditional practices and to find innovative development niches for income generation. Networking and training was done and a number of workshops and publications have led to a further systematising of the experiences. The efforts of local people to use their resources can thus be supported by development organisations. The support activities carried out by the Compas partners could be divided into 10 different activities as indicated in the diagramme below.

Box 3b Activities in supporting endogenous development



1. Building on local needs. Generally, increased economic growth or income generation is the primary objective of conventional development approaches. For rural people in many cultures of the world, however, the level of income is not the only parameter for defining their well-being. Other aspects, such as social cohesion, health, children, natural resources, and harmonious relations with the spiritual world, may be of equal importance in their development decisions. Therefore, the general goals for endogenous development may vary and include a combination of aspects, such as poverty reduction, diminished ecological exploitation, increased equity and justice, as well as cultural and spiritual goals. These aspects often vary according to sex, social position and age groups. The process of gaining insight into the diversity of needs of the different population groups, overcoming

contradictions, and finding common acceptance of the development goals requires time, but is a crucial step for sustained development.

2. Improving local knowledge and practices. Endogenous development aims at enhancing in situ development of indigenous knowledge and practices, to support people in adapting their practices to meet today's challenges. Local resources are not static, but are dynamically transformed on a day to day basis by the people who depend on them. This implies that people carry out experiments with local resources, and with combinations of local and external resources, in adapting to the ever-changing circumstances and opportunities. The outcome of these experiments vary to a great extent, according to the perceptions and circumstances of each person, family, community, and culture, but are invariably based on the peoples' own experiences and ways of explaining reality. This methodology respects, but also challenges both tradition and modernity. The Compas partner organisations have developed several innovative methodologies for the in situ development of local knowledge and practices.

The capacities of rural people to make observations, to explain certain situations, to design and test possible innovations, to exchange experiences, as well as to teach them to younger generations, are crucial elements for success. Therefore, enhancing the support of local knowledge systems is important. Rural people and development workers can do this by combining the outcome of experiments with possibilities to improve the processes of learning, teaching and experimentation.

3. Local control of development options. Conventional development models have the tendency of introducing externally developed innovations to local communities. Endogenous development, in contrast, aims at local control and decision-making, and implies that members of the communities use their own mechanisms to make decisions regarding control. Traditional authorities play an important role in this process, while the community itself manages internal power conflicts, and comes to grips with gender balances and leadership systems. Acceptance or rejection of external support and practices will be a decision of the community.

This 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. In some cases rural people themselves consider the use of local knowledge and resources as a step backwards. They fear that this will deny them the opportunities represented by external resources. Decades of development rhetoric and commercial influence have created a strong association between 'development' and the use of western style development alternatives. Nevertheless, 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 is to facilitate the community's role in decision making, monitoring and evaluation of the activities. Empowering local communities and local leadership can, however, lead to leadership tensions or go against the implicit politics of national governments. Governments and formal religious establishments have

often considered traditional leadership a hindrance to the development of local communities. Re-valuing the role and experience of the traditional leaders is therefore an activity that requires careful negotiation and strategic choices.

4. Identification of new development niches. Many conventional development approaches consider rural families as potential producers of a variety of products. Local farmers are stimulated to produce agricultural products that can be processed and commercialised in a uniform way for the (inter)national market. Endogenous development looks at ways of generating additional income based on specific ecological and cultural local resources. Stimulating the production, processing and marketing of region-specific products opens a reservoir of untapped local opportunities. New development niches may include local food items, traditional crafts, crops, and domestic animal breeds, as well as locally managed tourism. Identifying and opening market possibilities for these local resources are important activities.

5. Selective use of external resources. It is obvious that in many cases local knowledge and resources have their limitations, and can benefit from the combination of specific external inputs. A local system can benefit, for example, by the use of cement, a bicycle, a pump, transport systems, electricity, fertilisers, seeds, chemical pesticides, or drugs. Loan facilities may provide the financial means for obtaining the external inputs, while external advisors can be useful when the local community does not have the required expertise, for example in marketing. Most rural families experiment with combining local and external inputs to utilise their land and other local resources more efficiently. But selecting the appropriate external resources is crucial. A good example is the great number of farmers who have lost their land due to their inability to repay the loans provided for fertilisers, or other external inputs. A tractor may appear to be a very beneficial, but without the necessary spare parts it may bring more disillusion than benefits.

Therefore, the first questions to be asked in the endogenous development process are: is it feasible to solve the identified problem by using local resources, and what are the advantages and risks of using solutions from outside? What possibilities exist for building up the local capacity to reproduce the external technology? And what experiences can be found in other communities, regions, or cultures, for solving the identified problem?

6. Retention of benefits in the local area. Development initiatives are often taken by outsiders who, consciously or unconsciously, aim at their own benefit and may extract knowledge and resources from the community. Patenting the property rights related to certain species of medical plants is, of course, one of the most flagrant examples of such extraction. But more subtle extraction of benefits also take place, for example through conventional tourism activities, which do not take the local community into account. Activities to protect intellectual property rights, eco-tourism in which the community plays a definite role, and enhancing the production, processing and marketing of local foods, are examples of keeping benefits in the local area.

Prices for local produce may vary greatly throughout the year. In many subsistence economies food prices fluctuate and producers have to sell part of their produce at low

prices just after the harvest. In times of food deficit they often have to buy back the same food at much higher prices. Therefore, enhancing storage facilities as well as credit to buy food items during the cheap post-harvest period often result in increased local benefits and food security. In the process of searching and building up new development niches, the opportunities for retaining the benefits of the activities within the local area need to be continually assessed.

7. Exchange and learning between cultures. The exchange of experiences and world-views between different cultures is part of the current Compas programme. Comparing the concepts behind the local health traditions in various cultures, for example, has resulted in finding striking similarities, which has enhanced the self-esteem and dynamics of the often marginalised local health practitioners. In this process representatives of marginalised traditional health systems have been able to learn from the experiences and insights of the more privileged traditional health systems. In general, the sharing between rural people, farmers, field staff, managers and researchers leads to cross cultural exchange, learning and co-operation.

8. Training and capacity building. The way pupils and students are schooled or taught differs according to each country and culture. Despite the many years that have passed since decolonisation, western concepts of education still play a dominant role in the teaching curricula in many 'developing' countries, while local knowledge and practices are not given attention as study objects. This is stronger in the universities than in the primary and secondary schools, but even in the latter, mathematics, physics, economy and religion are often taught according to the western value system. This is further eroding the local knowledge systems.

As a result, most development workers are trained in methods of transferring knowledge, rather than in ways of learning from and with the rural people. They are usually better equipped in technical subjects than in social processes, or in methods to enhance the dynamics of local knowledge and culture. Therefore, a systematic training and possibly de-schooling process needs to be considered for all field staff involved in endogenous development.

9. Networking and strategic partnership. Endogenous development acknowledges the importance of linking regional, national and international processes, while looking for synergy between the different knowledge systems and practices. Local market opportunities are often influenced by international trade relations, while national policies and research priorities may be largely determined by international conventions and agreements. Endogenous development at local level can, therefore, only thrive with a positive political environment. Networking, co-operation and advocacy can enhance the establishment of such a political environment. Examples of activities in this domain include: linking with likeminded NGOs, establishing strategic alliances with government agencies, presenting experiences at (international) fora, approaching funders, suggesting changes for policy or research programmes, and building up partnerships with commercial, political or religious organisations.

10. Understanding systems of knowing and learning. All traditional knowledge systems use different paradigms, which manifest themselves in the knowledge of everyday life, in the way this knowledge is used and changed and in the philosophy of science [Mouton, 2001]. The Ayurvedic, Andean, Mayan, Chinese and African medical practices, for example, have their unique ways of perceiving health and disease. The same applies to agriculture, nature and to socio-spiritual practices. These ways of knowing have been achieved within a specific worldview and by using a specific research methodology. As a result of different theories, concepts and definitions, striking differences in the notion of time, the relationships between cause and effect, or the importance of quantification, intuition and conscience in the experimental process, can be observed. This can easily lead to controversies in the collection and interpretation of data.

Understanding the basic concepts of the various indigenous knowledge systems, therefore, is important for international co-operation and research. The western knowledge system has gone a long way to develop powerful technologies. But its limitations are also obvious, and other knowledge systems may provide important elements for solving the major problems the world is facing today.

Box 3c A code of conduct for enhancing endogenous development

Experience has learned that the work with indigenous practices and knowledge as an outsider implies certain risks, such as disturbing the status-quo at community level, extracting local knowledge for purposes not in the interest of the rural people, domination of local processes by outsiders, prying too much into people's private matters, or the introduction of lifestyles that are not consistent with local values. Therefore, in their work with the rural people the Compas partners have agreed to:

- Accept the idea that local communities have indigenous knowledge systems with its own rationale and logic, and will be prepared to learn from them.
- Commit to work in the interest of the local communities. Programmes will only be implemented after approval of the local community and its leaders.
- Accept the rules and regulations set by the local community for attending and receiving visitors, and respect the limitations set by local leaders.
- Accept and seek complementarity between external knowledge and the local knowledge systems. Avoid the domination of external over the local knowledge and value systems.
- Accept the fact that in many cases new methods will have to be developed, as the conventional approaches for research and development may not be the most appropriate.
- Pay attention to the attitudinal changes that may be required for staff and accept that all involved are students with the local people, leaders and experts as their tutors.
- Learn empathetically from the local knowledge systems, analyse it and enter into a respectful and constructive dialogue about the positive and negative aspects, the possibilities for improvement, as well as the epistemologies and paradigms.
- Accept the guidance of local leaders to ensure that the information collected will be used in the interest of the community, thus respecting traditional Intellectual Property Rights.
- Accept the importance of exchange of experiences within and between rural communities. Publish experiences for other audiences only after approval of the communities involved.

