

Chapter 7

STRENGTHENING LOCAL INSTITUTIONS

Introduction

How can we ensure that the endogenous development process will be owned locally and thus become sustainable? What role can local people's institutions play to achieve local ownership? How can we help people to build vibrant local institutions that will take responsibility for endogenous development?

This chapter presents experiences in strengthening local institutions and their role in endogenous development. The emphasis is on strengthening traditional leaders, as individuals, often mandated by the community to perform their leadership role, and the traditional organisations in the endogenous development process. Traditional leaders and traditional organisations have to a large extent been ignored and even de-powered in many development efforts. But the cases also show how this can go hand-in-hand with the creation of new institutional forms or patterns of collaboration. In this, the link with formal local institutions, e.g. the local government, receives special consideration: should it be ignored, involved or integrated?

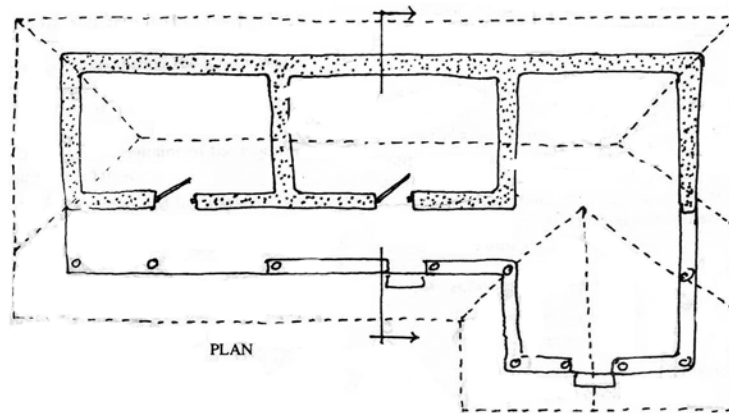
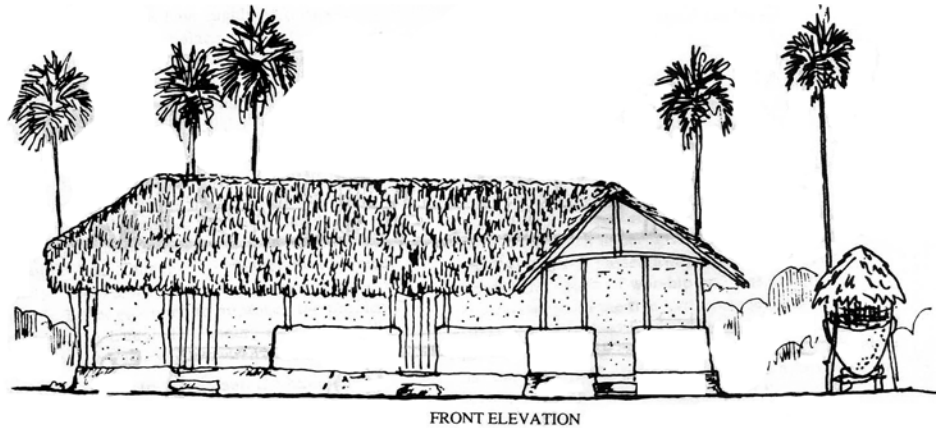
Case 7-1

Building the *vaastu* resource group: strengthening indigenous knowledge and institutions

Traditional architecture in Sri Lanka

BRIT (Biodiversity Research Information and Training Centre) is involved in activities in many remote villages in the Badulla district of Sri Lanka. These activities focus on stimulating biodiversity in home gardens, non-chemical farming, renewable energy, community mobilisation, leadership training for school children, and strengthening of civil society.

Through involvement in Compas, BRIT was challenged to pay more attention to a largely uncharted area of indigenous knowledge: *vaastu*, the traditional science of architecture in Sri Lanka. For BRIT, every step in this still field of activity has been a learning experience: both at community level, with the *vaastu* resource persons, within the BRIT team, and in the interaction with University of Moratuwa's Department of Architecture. The



Ancestral home of the Jaysundera Bandara family – one of the homes in the Vaastu study by BRIT.

creation of a new institution, the *vaastu* resource group, has been one of the main achievements.

Vaastu is a broad field of science, which includes the construction of houses, public and religious buildings, as well as their direct surroundings. *Vaastu* not only encompasses the design and construction of the buildings, but also the design of home gardens, household utensils and agricultural implements. It takes into account the energy flows, human health aspects, and colour combinations that have the best effects on the residents of the house.

Getting started

Although the BRIT team had a general idea about *vaastu*, they needed to become better acquainted with the subject. As a first step, they met with several people well known for their traditional knowledge on a range of subjects, including architecture. During these discussions, the BRIT team gained more insight into the breadth of knowledge embodied within *vaastu*.

The BRIT team visited villages in the area and invited people with traditional knowledge of whatever form (architecture, medicine, handicrafts, food technology) for informal gatherings. During these open discussions, it became clear that a vast wealth of traditional knowledge was still alive among the people. Within the next two months, 48 resource persons identified through these meetings were invited to come to the BRIT training centre for further discussions. Some of the *vaastu* resource persons, though holders of knowledge, were not actively using it. They were enthusiastic that renewed attention was being paid to their experience.

Creating a *vaastu* resource group

The group decided to meet once a month at the BRIT training centre for two days, with the purpose of sharing and documenting knowledge. Several topics related to *vaastu* are discussed at each meeting. The topics are decided on in advance, so that each resource person can prepare him/herself before coming to the workshop. The information shared is thoroughly debated, after which the group decides what should be documented. In this way, the group hopes to compile an inventory of their collective knowledge of *vaastu*. They hope the document will not only be a way of conserving this knowledge, but also a means of popularising it (see Box). The group has sought formal registration with the local authorities and is now known as the Uva Traditional Experts Forum. There are over fifty members of the group, with an executive committee consisting of a president, a secretary and a treasurer.

Activities of the resource group

The *vaastu* resource persons helped BRIT in preparing a checklist of aspects to be covered in a study on *vaastu* through house-to-house visits. Though many of these old houses have now been demolished, several can still be studied. It was decided to identify these houses in the district and to make a short inventory. BRIT's staff, social mobilisers, were given a short training in how to use this checklist to make descriptions of the houses. In total 230 houses were identified and recorded.

Experiences from the Uva Traditional Experts Forum

Coming together as a group has motivated us to share and pass on our knowledge. The lack of recognition for this knowledge has caused the younger generation to move away and lose interest. We hope that this forum can revive this valuable science, and attract young people to practice it again. Each one of us can recall situations due to faulty house constructions. This may be due to bad design, not following the auspicious times, or placing the house on the wrong site or plot of land. As a result, the residents have faced many trials—sickness, unhappiness, and even death. Such ill effects can be avoided if the proper *vaastu* practices are adhered to. People should once again become aware of these practices and we hope to play a role in making this happen.

The *vaastu* group also discussed with BRIT the gradual disappearance of *vaastu* knowledge and the fact that few of the resource persons still had a pupil to teach. In traditional Sri Lankan society, transfer of knowledge usually took place in the form of teacher–pupil transfer or *guru-gola parampara*. The student was an apprentice under the teacher, and learned by watching, listening and doing. A teacher selected a student using a list of criteria which included the time of birth and constellation of stars at time of birth, attitude, lifestyle and habits. Often it was a child from within the family. Due to the lack of interest of the younger generation, this transfer has dwindled, leading to a loss of knowledge whenever a teacher dies without grooming a pupil. Through BRIT’s involvement in the villages and the efforts of the *vaastu* group, a number of young people who were interested in becoming pupils were identified. Members of the forum willing to be teachers were also identified, and one or two students were assigned to each teacher. The whole process was inaugurated with a ceremony in which the teachers pledged to teach their pupils without withholding any knowledge. The pupils promised to do their best to learn and respect their teachers. Although the pupils will not live together with their teachers as was done traditionally, they will meet with each other regularly. In addition the pupils will join the monthly meetings of the forum.

University research to validate *vaastu*

Realising the role that validation by Western science can play in reviving *vaastu* knowledge, BRIT has built up contact with Professor Nimal de Silva at the University of Moratuwa’s Department of Architecture, to discuss possible collaboration. The request was received very positively and a group of postgraduate students from the university visited BRIT to further document *vaastu* practices under the guidance of Professor de Silva. The students lived for several days in the villages with selected families and did a detailed study of 30 households selected from the 230 houses identified by BRIT. Design of houses, instruments and implements, spiritual aspects, traditional furniture, clothing and jewellery were aspects included in the study. The students, *vaastu* resource persons and BRIT staff jointly discussed and analysed the data. The outcome was compiled in a report, which will serve for future learning, teaching and lobbying purposes. Several students from the group have decided to take up postgraduate research on *vaastu* knowledge.

The *vaastu* forum and spreading the message

Another activity undertaken by BRIT and the *vaastu* forum is publishing a newsletter. Members of the forum contribute the articles, while eight of them form the editorial board. One thousand copies of the first 4-page issue have been distributed through various channels, which has increased public interest in the forum and its work. Some of the *vaastu* practitioners have already been contacted by people for advice and consultation on house building. Sharing of experiences with *vaastu* also takes place through local and national NGO networks.

Case 7-2

Strengthening local organisations and institutional structures in India

Introduction

Strengthening village-level organisations and structures is a central element of the approach of Green Foundation, an NGO working in Southern India. In the experience of Green Foundation, community controlled organisations and structures are critical in endogenous development as pillars and movers of the process. A few of the key elements in this institutional strengthening approach are highlighted below.



Women treat traditional seed varieties to enhance germination capacity.

Village-level organisations for sustainability

In the initial stages of its work on agro-biodiversity, Green Foundation distributed seeds from a central seed bank. As the sustainability of this was doubtful, the strategy changed to promoting decentralised systems of seed disbursement. The villagers themselves suggested reviving or starting farmer and local artisan *sanghas*, groups, an old type of village level organisation. Typically, these groups consist of between 15 and 25 members. These groups jointly save, store and manage their seeds through seed banks. Each *sangha* usually has a central storage room, and conserves seeds according to traditional methods. Space for seed storage and purchase of storage devices are contributions made by *sangha* members.

A next step was the development of 'village seed committees', with members from the *sanghas*. These village-level organisations now identify seed requirements for the following year and select and purchase their stock from the savings of *sangha* members.

Green Foundation is aware that it is important to include women in these village-level organisations. Women play a crucial role in agriculture as in all walks of life. When it comes to decision-making and social positioning, however, they are often marginalised. With appropriate strategies (see Box) they are found to be very interested in the biodiversity activities and capable of playing an important role. For example, the Sharada Mahila Sangha, a women farmers' group, now buys and stores seed of different varieties of wetland paddy, dryland paddy, and finger millet. This group also has a savings and credit programme, which does not charge interest.

Getting women involved

When Green Foundation started working with the Irula tribe around 1998, it was quite difficult to bring the women together. In addition to the men's opposition to the women gathering, other reasons were related to shyness, caste feeling, the heavy domestic workload and lack of education of the women themselves. To get women actively involved, Green Foundation used a variety of strategies: village seed processing demonstrations, street theatre, folk songs and slogans, and local seed fairs in which women were encouraged to share their knowledge and experiences.

The impact of these strategies was tremendous. It was recognised that elderly women have tremendous knowledge of conserving and processing seeds, and of the preparation of traditional foods. This helped women of other age groups to learn and develop their skills, and resulted in a change of attitude in both women and men. The women now interact with outsiders without much hesitation, and take part in the village level functions. They now manage the seed banks, which have become centres of transformation in their villages. Women have included savings as one of the seed bank activities, and can borrow money from the groups to meet some of their domestic needs. In this way the women can also initiate other income-generating activities. All these activities have empowered the women, who are gaining a growing degree of economic independence.

Seeing this change in the family, the attitude of men towards women has also changed.

Biodiversity registers

When working with local seeds, other local resources and related local knowledge, Intellectual Property Rights are an important issue in the eyes of Green Foundation. People at the grassroots are rarely aware of this. In order to raise people's awareness and create ownership of these resources while avoiding bio-piracy, the idea of 'biodiversity registers' was introduced in 32 villages of Achubalam Panchayati. Such a register would document relevant local resources and would therefore make it impossible for outsiders to claim rights over any of them.

To create local ownership of these resources, village and sub-village 'biodiversity conservation committees' were formed which included local health practitioners, farmers, cattle grazers, forest guards, school teachers, village elders and other resourceful people. The initial work of the village level committees was to draw a resource map of sacred groves, rivers, fields and forests. In addition, thematic concerns, such as renewable energy resources, traditional healing, traditional artisan skills, medicinal plants and their uses, and traditional farming practices were documented and included in the draft register. These data were consolidated through field visits led by local resource people. At the end of a six-month period the village biodiversity registers were ready to be finalised. Updating and protecting the natural resources in the area is easier now, because this biodiversity document can be used as a frame of reference.

Bio-cultural seed village

'Bio-cultural seed village' is a single market area, and centre for endogenous development. This concept has been developed over the years. Laxmipura was identified as one ideal location, as

it is located in the midst of indigenous communities and tribal groups. The concept implies bringing a range of activities together. These include, e.g. community organisation through local *sanghas*, seed conservation, strengthening health traditions, promoting kitchen gardens, reviving the cultural heritage, children's activities and marketing. A community hall was restored for meetings. Village-level mapping of Laxmipura and surrounding villages has been undertaken and the village-level biodiversity registers were completed and subsequently handed over to the headman of the village in the presence of other villagers.

Source: Vanaja Ramprasad, Green Foundation

Case 7-3

Building a network of tribal leaders and experts in India

The birth of the network

The tribal communities in the Eastern Ghats in India live and work dispersed over a large area. Though they have a lot in common in terms of their cultural and livelihood strategies, they have tended to organise themselves independently, leading to a great variety of locally specific expressions of culture and ways of making a living. Through their work with IDEA, leaders in the various communities have started to realise again not

only what they have in common, but also the benefits of collaborating when organising development efforts, in particular activities to improve their livelihoods. This led them to set-up the Naik Gotna network, the 'Network of Tribal Leaders', in 1998. The major objective of the network is to form a strong group of tribal leaders to support the endogenous development process in their communities. The traditional village institutional functionaries have realised the importance of networking for endogenous development and IDEA has facilitated the process. Naik Gotna has organised several training programmes for tribal youth on endogenous development and has facilitated community experiments on agro-ecological, health and nutritional aspects in the last few years with the support of IDEA. Naik Gotna has also initiated farmers' research stations at community level to support young farmers with on-farm experiments, and to involve them in documentation and exercises to revive traditional knowledge and practices.



Ceremony to open the indigenous Knowledge Fair, presided by traditional tribal leaders of the Naik Gotna Network.

The network expands

From the small group of initiators, the network has now grown and the present Naik Gotna is a state-level federation of different district-level thematic forums (*samakya*) of traditional

THE LOGO OF NAIK GOTNA



Symbol of synthesis, the logo of the Naik Gotna network of tribal leaders. The symbol has been designed by the tribal leaders and depicts the sacred stick and its chain to communicate with the spiritual world, traditional instruments, agricultural fields, the villages, and IDEA – providing support to this tribal organisation.

institutional functionaries. The objective is that different state-level Naik Gotnas will federate at national level to form the Tribal Endogenous Development Network.

The district-level thematic forums are envisaged as informal bodies with independent executive committees and endogenous development programmes. Naik Gotna will be more formal, with an executive committee and statutes. It is in the process of developing its own administrative structures for effective functioning as a community-based network.

Results become clear

The first Indigenous Knowledge Mela in 2001, organised by the Naik-Gotna network, is a clear example of the network's growing strength as it was able to bring together people across the main different communities. For four days, hundreds of representatives exhibited a wide range of traditional practices, medicinal plants and rituals, and several workshops were organised. The major objective of this event was to provide a platform for the tribal communities to exchange and demonstrate their knowledge, practices and experiments. The event created a platform for networking between different tribal communities, but it also provided an opportunity to show the relevance of tribal indigenous knowledge to local policy makers and administrators.

Though the starting point of the IDEA activities in the Eastern Ghats has been natural resources management, Naik Gotna is addressing many other themes, like agricultural innovations, herbal medical practices for humans, animals and crops, and the production and preparation of wild leafy vegetables with high nutritional value. These practices are being tried out within the communities; the results are documented by the IDEA staff and exchanged during meetings.

The increasing strength of Naik Gotna has not gone unnoticed. The traditional leaders themselves experience great satisfaction. Gollori Sadu, one of these leaders, notes: *'We started three or four years ago; it was our own idea based on our own experiences. Now we are very big, some 5000 traditional leaders from 400 villages, from many communities! We want to show everybody who we are and what we know, because we need the cooperation of various organisations.'*

Challenges

Though the Mela was very successful, it was not easy to organise this major event. Gollori Sadu: *'The Indigenous Knowledge Mela has been very good, but it has been difficult to mobilise and handle so many people. Especially to arrange for them to go back to their homes; we have to take care of everyone!'*

Naik Gotna is emerging as a strong community-based regional network through its local thematic forums. The shape that these forums should take is a big challenge to Naik Gotna and IDEA. The thematic forums seek to join hands with the traditional healers in the rural areas for inter-cultural dialogues, exchange of information and exchange on knowledge systems. This is a

dynamic field, where tribals may seek cautious coalitions to promote endogenous development while keeping their cultural identities intact. Modern political elements may enter the forums and Naik Gotna federations in the future, if they are not moulded cautiously and strategically. With sufficient resources Naik Gotna should be able to facilitate the necessary training and provide logistical support. Plans for the mobilisation of resources need to be developed.

Another major challenge for Naik Gotna is to facilitate the thematic forums to codify and theorise their folk knowledge by documenting and doing research. In this way they will be able to standardise their practices.

Source: G. Shankar,
K.S.Prashanth Varma,
IDEA

Case 7-4

Local institutions and conflict transformation in Sudan

Traditional conflict management

Conflict over natural resources between settled farmers and pastoralist groups is not new to the Gawamaa farmers in northern Kordofan, Sudan. But as competition for natural resources increases rapidly, the frequency and severity of these conflicts are rising. Traditionally, a sophisticated system known as *goodiya* is used for resolving conflicts of all types, from domestic disputes to land allocation, drawing heavily on the Koran and the teachings of the Prophet Mohammed. Traditional conventions also conform to religious rules, such as 'you should take care of your neighbour as you would yourself'. Mediators tend to be religious leaders, community leaders, or people of social standing within the communities, and mediation takes place in the house of an independent person. Most mediation begins by saying '*we are gathered here for the goodness of everyone and we do not want any more bloodshed*'. During the meeting, the facts are laid down. The leader will first ask the two parties to forgive each other before going on to discuss the conflict. Mediators also relate the conflict to historical events, such as examples from the Old Testament and events in the life of the Prophet Mohammed, to provide examples of how things may be resolved. The mediator may talk to the parties individually, working on easing the situation between the parties. A mediator respects the two parties by letting them put their own stories forward first before he states his proposed solution. The resolution ends with a recital from the Koran.

No longer enough

This traditional conflict resolution system now faces a rapidly changing institutional and economic environment, however. The existence of both traditional and court systems opens the way for 'institutional shopping' when there is a dispute. Moreover, respect for local leaders as mediators in the traditional system has weakened. The decisions reached may be rejected if one of the parties does not agree, especially when there is no documentation of the process. However, one of the greatest threats to the traditional conflict resolution systems is the growing

severity and frequency of conflicts, caused by decisions of competing authorities over natural resources. Finally, the traditional system is based on forgiveness, with a policy of avoiding digging too deep into the roots of a problem. As one traditional leader put it, *'peeling back the layers of an onion brings tears'* and can make a conflict worse. However, as competition for resources becomes more acute, there is a growing need to find solutions that will deal, at least in part, with the root causes of the problem; forgiveness alone is no longer enough.

Initiating a dialogue

In 1999, SOS Sahel UK started a process to respond to the increasing number of resource-related controversies between the Gawamaa settled farmers and the Sebeihat pastoralist groups, combining traditional conflict resolution mechanisms with some participatory tools. The aim was to facilitate a dialogue between the relevant parties and traditional leaders, and to assist them in finding their own solutions.

First, the SOS Sahel UK project team organised *training workshops* with the Gawamaa traditional leaders, a representative of the Pastoralist Union and government officers, to study ways to combine new participatory methods and skills on conflict management with traditional ones. The group then identified an area in which the new approach would be tested. The next step was to organise a first meeting with Gawamaa farmers, held at Gagrur village, with the village sheikh as the main contact person. During this initial meeting, people were asked to use the usual Participatory Rural Appraisal mode to draw a map of the natural resources available in the village, and to identify the different users. This easily led to discussion about current competition and conflict over resources. A second meeting was held with Sebeihat pastoralists at their camp. The team followed the similar approach to the one used in Gagrur.

Ore olarabal name kule—'war is not milk'—Maasai proverb

Pastoral cosmology arises from everyday necessities. What is it that gives life? Milk gives life but one needs to milk the livestock to obtain this food. The livestock in turn obtain their food and the potential for milk from the environment. Pastoralists assist this food harvest by intelligent herding, while God provides for his people with the gifts of life, rain and other natural resources. The reciprocal chain of life thus begins and ends with God, and the human relationship to God. Right relationships permeate the whole of pastoralist life, among family, clan, people, between peoples, with the environment, and with God. Disputes and violent resolutions are often part of the social fabric in these pastoral drylands. Yet, all of these normal conflicts can be resolved through agreements stemming ultimately from the common cosmology of the people. Traditional societies, rich in oral literature like these pastoralists, offer a wide diversity of peacemaking resources based on the concept of covenantal relationships. Yet, these resources are woefully undervalued and under-utilised by government administrators, non-governmental agencies, and conflict resolution practitioners.

From H.H. Jenner, Pastoralist cosmology as foundation for sustainable peace and development.

Analysis using participatory tools

During a second round of meetings with both groups, the information collected in the first round was confirmed, and built on by the local communities using a range of participatory techniques:

- conflict mapping, which implied going back to the resources map and indicating in more detail contested areas;
- a time-line of events to describe and analyse over time key moments in the history of the development of a conflict;
- the 'conflict tree', which turned out to be one of the most effective tools for analysing a conflict. In this the roots of the tree represent the root causes, the trunk represents the core problem, while the branches represent the effects of the problem, or symptoms. Comparing the trees drawn by different parties in a conflict clearly showed how the perceptions differed.

These tools were well understood by the communities, and made it possible to identify the core conflict and its effects. It also became evident that collaboration was important for both of them.

The negotiation stage

Both parties mentioned the importance of involving a third party, and together elected a four-person team and a chairman to mediate during the negotiation process. The project centre was chosen as a neutral location for the negotiations. Representatives from the two communities were selected during the preparatory meetings, with no project representatives present, on the basis of personal qualities, levels of trust in the community, and position in local public life. All were men. The ground rules were agreed upon: good listening and equal participation without bias from any side. The final agreement was to be practical and acceptable to both parties. The meetings began with the chairman confirming the importance of peace between the groups, and the need to share resources between the different stakeholders. This was followed by a presentation of the outcome of the community meetings within the two groups, to allow both sides to understand both perspectives. Then the negotiation started, in which solutions were proposed and discussed for their feasibility. Throughout this process, the mediation team used religious and cultural customs that call for sharing of resources among relatives and neighbours. Finally an agreement acceptable to both parties was reached, and signed by representatives of the two parties.

Achievements and limitations

Interviews one year later showed that nearly 80% of the population of Gagrur, and nearly 90% of the pastoralists knew about the agreement, and its various articles. Both parties stressed that the agreement had been implemented, though some provisions had been made. The majority

of those who had been involved indicated that the participatory tools had in fact strengthened the indigenous system. The process was perceived as transparent and helpful in analysing the root causes of the problems. According to representatives of the Pastoralists' Union: *'we call the new process the new goodiya'*.

These types of bilateral agreements involve high costs in terms of time and resources, however. Moreover, any pastoral community such as the Sebeihat needs to negotiate access to resources with various farmers' communities, while the agreements need to allow for variability from season to season and year to year. Discussions with local communities therefore indicate that the promotion of 'a culture of peace' by popular awareness-raising may be more effective than small bilateral agreements. Without the support of the government administration and technical departments, however, there is a risk of these institutions undermining the agreements between the groups.

Source: Omer Egeimi, Mohammed Abdel Mahmood and Abdeen Sid Ahmed, SOS Sahel UK, Sudan

Case 7-5 Strengthening the role of traditional female leaders in Ghana

Introduction

Mama Tekke Foliwa II, traditional Queen of the Have, a rural community in the Volta region of Ghana. She was one of the 35 participants who attended the workshop on 'The role of traditional Queens in governance and natural resource management' organised by CIKOD and the University of Cape Coast.



In Southern Ghana a Queen is the female counterpart of a chief and occupies an influential position in society. The status of Queens used to be similar to that of the Chief, representing the female aspects of the Stool (the symbol of the community) and complementing the work of the male chief. In northern Ghana traditional women leaders are known as Pognaa, and are actively involved in the development of their communities.

Women are among the most resource poor in rural Ghana. They are responsible for maintaining their families in a changing social context that encourages the type of individualism that conflicts deeply with communal duties, responsibilities and authority. The negative impact of these changes has meant that communities become unable to mobilise the human resources needed to embrace development interventions and that the poor and socially vulnerable are deprived of the security formerly provided by traditional institutions. In many communities women and children, whose needs and ideas used to be mediated by traditional women leaders, can no longer rely on the Queen to intervene with Chiefs and elders on their behalf. Indigenous practices that have supported domestic and economic activities for generations are rapidly disappearing and traditional women leaders who die are not being replaced.

The need for capacity strengthening

In 2004, the Ghanaian NGO Cikod initiated a programme for stimulating endogenous development by building on the skills of traditional leaders, in cooperation with UCC (University of Cape Coast) and UDS (University for Development Studies) in Ghana. In the view of Cikod, traditional forms of community organisation are often a more effective base for tackling poverty and rural livelihood issues than non-endogenous structures such as community-based organisations, farmer-based organisations, or cooperative societies that depend on unreliable external funding. From the start, part of Cikod's efforts focused on the position of female leaders, Queens, because of their potentially strong position in supporting development work with women.

As the first step towards designing a capacity strengthening programme, three Capacity Assessment Workshops were held, in three locations, to review and assess the capacity of Queens. Participants included both Queens and outsiders and jointly they developed a good understanding of how traditional women leaders interpret their role and the problems they face. These insights were used to compile a Capacity Building training programme.

Preliminary workshops

A programme for stimulating endogenous development by building on the skills of traditional leaders was initiated in 2004 by Cikod, UCC and UDS. As a first step in the design of the programme, a workshop to assess the capacity of Queens was organised by the UCC. Workshops were also held in northern Ghana.

Capacity Assessment Workshops

These were held to perform a diagnosis of the Queens' role in the community, exposing their potential and the challenges they face. The workshops were learner-centred and made use of problem posing, self discovery and analysis in an action-oriented approach. In this approach, the trainers acknowledged and respected the fact that the Queens have expertise and talents of their own which must be given scope for expression and development.

The sessions were designed in such a way as to enhance understanding and were woven around starters such as posters, songs, stories, case studies, role play and experience sharing (e.g. best and worst practices). The starters were developed from the local setting to ensure active participation and clear understanding of the trainees. After initial planning of the starter-based lessons they were consolidated by using question-and-answer techniques, group work and field visits.

Capacity Building: participatory adult learning approach

During the training sessions, capacity building was based on a participatory adult learning approach: learner-centred, problem-focused and action-oriented. The methodology was one

that recognised the many resources these women brought with them: experience, skills and knowledge, as well as personal talents.

Queens shared the stories and proverbs that carry the information essential for preserving identity, cooperation and communal solidarity. Handed down through generations of traditional women leaders, they are still being used to resolve conflicts and deal with practices that limit women's access to natural resources.

Though participants recognised that this training workshop had widened their horizon and encouraged them to organise women in their communities, it emerged during the training that the Queens wanted further capacity building and, particularly, to strengthen their awareness of governance, laws, financial systems and budgetary procedures.

Towards a long-term programme

As a result of the above process, Cikod and two partner universities have designed a long-term training strategy and related activities. Based on discussions with the Queens, it was decided to organise both short focused workshops (non-credited) and a longer-term formally credited

Content of training 'Strengthening the leadership and organisational capacity'

Year One

Governance at the local level

Team Work

- Working with chiefs, elders and the youth.
- Working with formal institutions and officials.

Counselling

- Basic elements in counselling
- Traditional values, norms and practices in reproductive and sexual health counselling with emphasis on HIV/Aids and teenage pregnancies.

Field Visits

- Visit to a Traditional Council and a District Assembly in the Central Region and Northern Ghana

Year Two

Traditional Institutions and Leaderships

Gender and Leadership

Conflict Prevention or management

Team Work, Counselling, and Field Visits

Year Three

Community Resources and Rural Livelihoods.

Advocacy skills for accessing official resources and enhancing accountability

Team Work, Counselling, and Field Visits

programme. The non-credited activities include a one-week training on Strengthening the Leadership and Organisational Capacity of Queens (see Box) and one on Resource Identification and Mobilisation.

The two university partners in this initiative, UCC and UDS, are well positioned to respond to the need for more comprehensive capacity building formally credited. In their response they have design two programmes: a Certificate Programme of 6-8 weeks on: 1) Governance and Development: Traditional and Modern; and 2) Human Resource Development and Management, and a diploma level programme of 6-8 of weeks on 1) Laws and Acts Associated with Governance and 2) The Institution of Chieftaincy.

Source: Cikod, Cecik

Case 7-6 Integrating local wisdom into primary schools in Peru

The challenge of making education meaningful

During the past years, Peru's Ministry of Education has placed greater emphasis on the inter-cultural aspect in formal education, through the National Directorate of Intercultural, Bilingual and Rural Education. It includes an orientation towards curricular diversification, learning Spanish as a second language in bilingual contexts and the role of community participation. Though it is true that the Ministry of Education has placed greater emphasis on inter-culturality, reversing the trend of cultural uprooting in formal education in practice is not an easy task. One of the reasons is that in rural communities the Quechua language is part of an oral tradition and this is an obstacle to introducing written culture. There is also a lack of basic reference texts on the Andean cosmovision for teachers. Another problem is that translating Spanish-language textbooks into native languages does not make the context of the working texts relevant for children in Andean communities. Nor does it ensure that the collective knowledge of these communities is transmitted from generation to generation.



Schoolchildren and parents exhibit traditional food during an exchange activity between communities at the Huita school premises.

What is a school according to our culture?

In the face of this problem, a group of teachers in Cusco, Central Peru, has developed the 'Children and Biodiversity Project'. We perceive the boys and girls from the communities in a different way from many teachers: we do not see them as beings who lack culture, but as

agents of regeneration of local cultural and ecological biodiversity. This led us to define a number of central characteristics of a school according to our culture:

- A school that is kind and culturally diverse, that respects the wisdom of children and elders of the community.
- An education that allows children to know the modern without forgetting and practising their legacy. The local legacy is included in the curriculum, on a 50%–50% basis, together with modern scientific knowledge.
- The teacher assumes the role of cultural mediator.
- Parents participate in the children's learning processes. Spaces must be created for re-learning amongst children, as well as among teens and parents, to include aspects of Andean culture by approaching the community's wisdom. Parents perceive the school place as a space where children are taught to value what they have taught their offspring.
- Helping the children to learn to read and write but at the same time maintaining the knowledge about the signs given to us by nature. Children must be able to learn science and intellectual abstraction without subordinating the possibilities of human development based on tradition and the senses.
- School, children and parents must work together to regenerate biological diversity.

The project is careful not to undermine the knowledges transmitted regularly in schools. Children must be fluent in Spanish if they are to be able to play an active role in contemporary Peruvian society. At the same time, however, the project ensures that children speak their native tongue fluently as well as understanding the wisdom it expresses.

The project began four years ago and is now running in ten schools in rural communities in four provinces. The aim of the project is to create the conditions to incorporate local wisdom in school curricula and counteract the predominant image of the peasant farmer as an illiterate person who is not capable of incorporating himself into the world. We carry out four main activities in the schools: caring for the school and community plot of land, exchanging experiences, teacher training and small initiatives to affirm cultural identity.

Education organised according to the local calendar

One of the ways that we started our inter-cultural educational work was to develop a ritual and agro-festivity calendar of the community, around which the educational processes are organised. Once this is done, each month priorities are set for activities, taking into account the opportunities for the children to participate, the prevalence and importance the activity within community life, and the possibility of rescuing activities that are no longer practised.

Every school has its own field (plots) where children grow a variety of crops in the same rhythm as their parents at home. The parents and the elders support the productive activities carried out in the school plot; in this case, the teachers assume their role as students. Children participate in sowing, clearing the land, cropping and storage of the products. In these activities, reciprocal forms of work are also practised (*ayni*—mutual help and *minka*—payment in produce).

Exchanging experiences

We organise activities such as meetings for community reflection in the school, as well as visits to exchange experiences with other communities. These are spaces for communication, which serve the purpose of reminding, strengthening and recreating the wisdom of the Andean cosmovision. Children and teachers, as well as members and authorities of the community, participate in activities such as the exchange of knowledge, seeds, experiences and traditional foods. We have reached the conclusion that these exchanges have been essential in changing the attitudes of the teachers. During the exchange visits, friendships are created and different knowledges are freely exchanged, while at the same time we rediscover what our grandparents used to do.

Initiatives of cultural affirmation

Children also carry out small cultural projects in the schools, working with weaving, ceramic, music, dancing and food preparation. During these activities, grandparents and parents frequently assume the role of official school teacher. Through these cultural activities, children develop initiative, ease (*facilidad*) and clarity. Children learn to take the initiative to suggest, disagree, and contribute to the realisation of an activity within the community. The children get used to these activities from an early age and do so in an environment of cordiality and confidence, leading to familiarity and therefore to being at ease with them. As a result, both the objectives and the effects of these small initiatives of Andean cultural affirmation become evident to children and their parents (clarity).

Re-training the teachers

When we started, the attitudes and prejudices of the teachers were a serious obstacle to creating schools that are open to the idea of incorporating local knowledge. Their own training has left them very biased towards 'modern' knowledge. Thus, the project had to include activities that lead towards new and creative relationships within the school. We try to develop attitudes of openness within everybody, which help to build an education based on the knowledge that the children bring with them from their homes. We try to make the teachers understand and support the agro-centric knowledge from the communities, so it is they who establish the inter-cultural environment in school. This can be a challenge because many teachers have little respect for traditional knowledge and see it as being inferior to 'modern' knowledge.

The teachers are trained by participating in social, cultural and ritual activities of the communities. This is followed by time and space for reflection on the different forms of learning in the different cosmovisions. These opportunities help us to remember our experiences, and what our parents and grandparents taught us, so that we can regain our cultural roots, value our culture and put it on an equal footing with other cultures.

Experiences of parents, children and teachers

Mr Bonifacio Copara Rojas, a parent: *"Professor Fausto teaches very well. I like it that both languages are taught, Spanish and Quechua, because if they only taught Quechua, the children would have no way of defending themselves when they go to the cities. But if they only spoke Spanish, they would not be able to understand the community. It is also good that the teachers include lessons on the ancient customs. Our young people have forgotten how to practise their customs."*

Lunar Cardeña, a child: *"I can work the land, clear the ground, turn the soil. My father teaches me and I learn just by looking. I also help in the sowing. During carnival we throw potato, corn and bean flowers on our land. Sometimes my mother teaches me to choose the seeds; my father teaches me to turn the soil and plant. I like to work the land and I do it happily."*

Professor Federico Tunque: *"When I began to work as teacher I was a foreigner to the community. When I began to participate in the project, I remembered many experiences from my own childhood and thought that what I did in my school was not a good thing. Now I have learned to be more humble and be like the community folk, to share their food and experiences. After I worked on the school plot with all the local rituals, the parents called me and told me 'now you are invited, because you are doing as we do'. Each time I now need to ask about something I want to teach at school, I go to their houses to ask for help, taking coca or chicha, corn beer, which is how one must ask a favour from community dwellers. I used to just go and order them: 'tomorrow we have work and you must come!'"*

Promising results

So far, the results have been promising and all those involved are positive (see Box). The role of children in the recuperation of the biodiversity is clearly visible in the school grounds as well as in the family plot. Parents are proud of the fact that the schools invited them as teachers, and they ask us more and more for courses that are related to rural living as well as city dwelling. They tell us that they agree with our focus, because it stimulates their children's respect for culture and their parents' way of living.

Teachers—male and female—have reoriented their professional practice. Many of them have found that this project has allowed them to rediscover and appreciate the value of their own roots. The teachers that participate in the project have developed an educational network. The National Board for Rural Bilingual Intercultural Education, which is part of the Ministry of Education, has also shown an interest in our project, and has provided funding support for many activities and for publishing some texts. Little by little, the Children and Biodiversity project is generating contributions that go from the local to the regional level and (why not?) the national educational level.

Source: Elena Pardo and Roció Achahui Quenti, Ceprosi

Reflections on strengthening local institutions

The central perspective of endogenous development is to allow a development process that is owned and managed by communities, based on their own resources, values, strategies and initiatives. Community-led institutions play a critical role in achieving local ownership of activities. They are also the vehicles and tools for people to locate responsibilities for

organisation and management of activities. The cases in this chapter focus on strengthening traditional leadership and local organisations for taking the lead in endogenous development. Not because more modern formal structures are not relevant but because they receive a lot of attention from others while the traditional ones have been ignored and even de-powered in many development efforts.

Working with existing local institutions

In building local institutional capacities, the first option is always to identify and subsequently work with and build on existing institutions rather than creating new ones. In the case of Southern Ghana (Case 7-5), existing local traditional institutions are considered to be the starting point of the endogenous development process. Communities are encouraged to make an inventory of existing institutions and to assess their strengths and weaknesses in terms of their role in endogenous development. The cases show how development efforts can strengthen the functioning of institutions that play an important role in a number of ways:

- **Contribute to increased recognition and revaluing** of the position and role of the relevant leaders, by giving this specific attention, acknowledging of their role, and advocating their case at higher levels;
- **Facilitate interaction** and even network or organisation building among traditional leaders: groups of indigenous knowledge resource persons, network of tribal leaders, a new council of queens.
- **Focused capacity building:** organisation of meetings, workshops, courses, to help leaders to review and assess their past and present role, share experiences among themselves, and learn about modern insights in organisation and management. The Ghana case (7-5) shows how short courses for female leaders developed into a three year university-supported capacity building programme.

Creating new institutions

The cases also give ample evidence of efforts to assist communities to create and build new local institutions to meet present development challenges. The networks and organisations among traditional leaders in Sri Lanka (7-1), India (7-3) and Ghana (7-5) are in fact new forms that build on old ones. The case from India in the next chapter (8-1) is another typical example where traditional village leaders joined hands with others to form a larger democratic and representative formal organisation to strengthen their position for policy lobbying and negotiating with the government.

In other examples, farmers, youth and women are encouraged to form new groups for specific activities or programmes. These can remain relatively informal, ad hoc, and be set up for one activity, or they can gradually develop into more structured organisations leading to the formation of strong associations at a higher level, such as in the case of women's groups in India (7-2). Even in these cases, however, an important question relates to the involvement of or linking of these new groups to traditional governance structures and leaders. Can this help to

improve the position and sustainability of the newly established groups? If so, how can the link be organised? In all cases, development workers may benefit from general guidelines on strengthening of local groups and organisations (see e.g. FAO, 1994).

The principle of self-organisation

All efforts to strengthen local institutions should be based on the principle of self-organisation, the assumption that local people themselves are in the best position to organise themselves in the most effective way if the focus and reach of activities have become clear. A critical role of an outsider can be to help them review and analyse existing institutions for their role in endogenous development and make decisions accordingly. This is the essence of the Community Institutional Mapping approach described in Chapter 4 (Case 4-2). More detailed guidelines for participatory assessment of local organisations and institutions are also available (see e.g. World Neighbors, 2000).

Horizontal and vertical linkages

The cases show that for the endogenous development process to gain momentum, it is critical that communities establish effective and sustainable horizontal and vertical linkages. Horizontal linkages refer to efforts to establish contacts and mechanisms for collaboration between communities and groups for issues of common interest. Development staff can assist villages or communities to start meeting regularly. Such informal or semi-formal inter-village networks may invite collaborating formal institutions to attend.

Strengthening vertical linkages refers to efforts to create direct collaboration between communities and relevant support organisations, such as service providers, government offices, banks and research organisations, and build the capacity of communities to interact with these on an equal basis. In some situations communities' inability to gain access to support and information services may be the single most important constraint faced in their development efforts.

To have an impact, it is important that—depending on the national context and legal or constitutional possibilities—links with formal governmental bodies are fostered and possibly even formalised, for example in a Memorandum of Understanding. Formal government bodies are responsible for making policies that may have a direct impact on the room to strengthen local institutions. In many African countries, for example, traditional institutions are constitutionally recognised, but this recognition is often of a folkloristic nature rather than that the traditional institutions are regarded as a discussion partner in implementing policies.

Dilemmas

The above paragraphs already indicate that working with local institutions involves dilemmas. Conscious decisions and choices have to be made on questions such as:

- Does an endogenous development support process always start with looking at local institutions, their role in endogenous development, and their need for strengthening? Or

does one delay this analysis to a later stage when local conditions are better understood and relationships of trust have been established?

- What about dysfunctional traditional leaders, or ones that cannot be held accountable? Should they be ignored, modernised or acted against? An issue of particular concern raised in the cases in this book is the often limited representation of women and their interests through these institutions.
- Should traditional institutions be given a political role, assuming that in this way there will be greater impact for endogenous development? If the answer is yes, how can a resurgence of 'tribalism' be avoided, as tribalism may lead to a society divided by civil conflict between a myriad small groups?
- How can development organisations working to empower traditional institutions deal with the attitudes of formal government officers who have subtle ways of hindering or sometimes sidelining the development organisations if they feel that their position is threatened?

