

INTRODUCTION

Endogenous development

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

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

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

Compas and the challenge to join the experiments

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

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

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

The users of this book

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

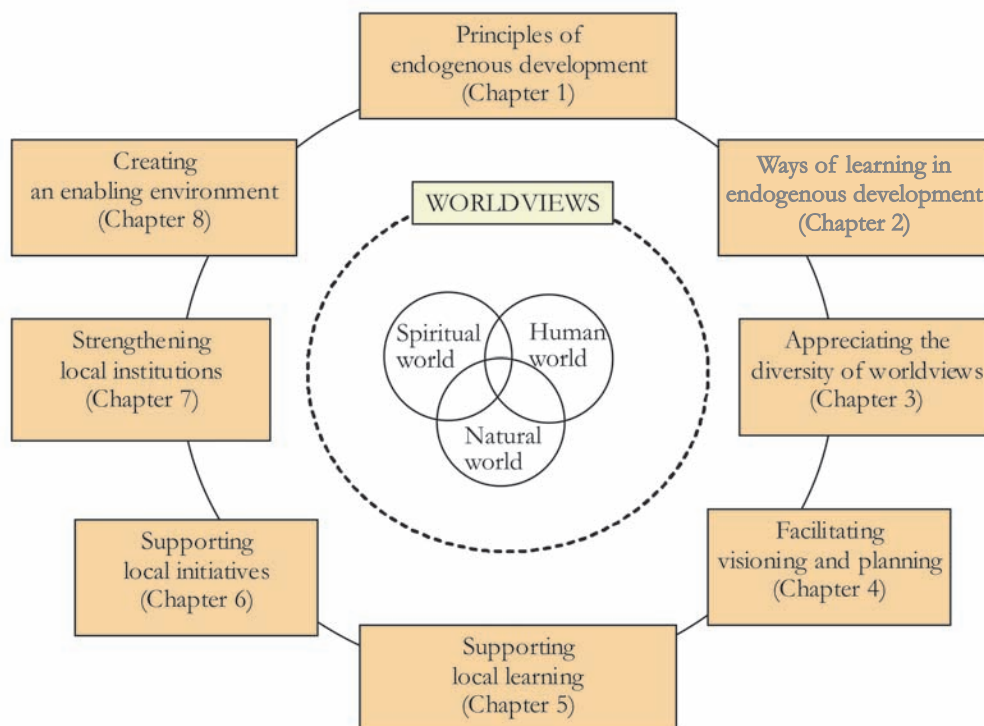
In addition, this book may provide ideas and challenges to those who are responsible for supporting field staff as they learn this new approach. We refer to these as 'trainers', although subsequent chapters will make it clear that learning this approach may require more and/or other learning pathways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

The structure of the book

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

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

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



Framework for Learning in Endogenous Development

4 LEARNING ENDOGENOUS DEVELOPMENT

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

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