

Intercultural dialogue

In the first semester of 1999, several meetings took place in the context of the Compas Programme. In March a workshop between old and new Latin American Compas partners was held in Huancayo, Peru. In April, a sharing workshop was held in Bangalore, India, for Asian Compas partners. Furthermore, workshops were organised in Indonesia and Nepal to share experiences and discuss findings. In September workshops were held in Ghana and Zimbabwe for enhancing indigenous knowledge in agriculture (ENIAKA project). A general African ENIAKA workshop will be held in December '99.

Platform for Andean cosmovision, Peru



In the Peruvian Mantaro valley several NGOs are interested in working with Andean cosmovision. Talpuy has considerable experience and has been a Compas partner since 1995. GIAREC is a working group consisting of three NGOs, one university and one research institute. CEAR is a NGO working on sustainable agriculture. Talpuy, GIAREC and CEAR have worked in a participatory way with farmers and now want to include the cosmovision dimension more systematically in their work.

A workshop was organised in March 1999 to compare different participatory method-

ologies with the methodology of Compas. As a result the 'Platform for Andean Cosmovision' was set up. The workshop established trust and working relations between the partners in Huancayo. Through this platform, the Andean cosmovision in Mantaro Valley can be understood from various practical entry points: animal husbandry (GIAREC), nutrition and traditional medicine (Talpuy), and sustainable agriculture (CEAR). Moreover, participatory methodologies can be compared as well as the gains and pains of working together at an institutional level.

AGRUCO, the Bolivian Compas partner, also participated in the workshop. This enabled the Peruvian partners to look beyond their borders and compare their experience with those of organisations and farmers in Bolivia. For AGRUCO, it was a chance to renew the relations with the Peruvian partner Talpuy and become aware of the work and methodologies of the new Compas partners, GIAREC and CEAR.



Drawings: Edgar Sanabria G.

Traditional drawing of the way the Sant ago Festival in Peru is celebrated to honour the animals with music and dance.

Ancient roots and new shoots, India

The Compas Asia-level workshop was held between 7 Compas partners in April 1999 near Bangalore, India. The objective was to share experiences after one year of field activities with endogenous development and cosmovision. The title of the workshop 'Ancient roots and new shoots' underlines that the ancient roots of wisdom are already there. Within Compas we try to water it, so that new shoots are produced to which will feed us in the future.

The Compas partners from India, Sri Lanka and Nepal were present at this workshop; unfortunately the partner from

Timor was unable to attend. During the workshop the organisations presented their experiences on issues such as documentation, training and experimentation. The discussions that followed included appropriate ways of information sharing, the pros and cons of the People's Biodiversity Register and the marketing of organic products. An interesting discussion on culture took place: "Is culture a mixed bag of good and bad and who are we to judge what is good and what not?"

The meeting concluded that rituals have their meaning and impact at different levels, often in an indirect way. We

have to understand the context of a culture, but it seems wrong to romanticise everything. The workshop also included field visits to the different partner organisations, where the participants could interact directly with the farmers. On the last day discussions took place on how experiments can be carried out in a cosmovision perspective. Mr. Balusubramanian from CIKS agreed to take up the role of Asia-level Compas co-ordinator. Moreover, plans for the future were discussed, including the need for more exchange between the Compas partners.

Protecting sacred forests, Indonesia

As the Compas partner TIRD was not able to participate in the Asia-level workshop in India, a separate workshop was held in June 1999 in Kefamenanu, West Timor (Indonesia). The 5 NGOs, working together as a consortium in TIRD, wanted to deepen last year's experiences with cosmovision and endogenous development.

An interesting video made by one member, Timor Membangun, showed one of the learning experiences related to the sacred forest near the village of Teakas. The cave in the sacred forest is a source of drinking water for the village and different clans claimed ownership of the forest. Trees were cut, medicinal plants and nests were stolen, and the place deteriorated. The video shows how a banning

ceremony came about, which included reading of organs of sacrificed animals to see whether ancestors had heard the prayers. Approximately 10 ha of land are now a protected area. The role of the NGO was not only to mediate in the conflict, but also introduce a discussion on why the sacred forest and *adat*, the traditional customs and cosmovision, are important.

Mr. Balasubramania, the regional Compas co-ordinator, was invited to participate in this workshop in West Timor. In his report he states: "It is interesting to compare the cosmovision and indigenous knowledge of India and other countries in Asia. The concept of hot and cold, for example, is often present in the people's

thinking with regard to agriculture. But in contrast to other parts of Asia, like India and Sri Lanka, we see in this region that the traditional practices have been preserved only in oral tradition. There does not appear to be much textual literature except for the writings from the last century or so. The stay in the village of Luniup was extremely interesting. It was amazing to see the similarity between West Timor and India in the use of plants for medicine, food and dyes. In discussions with the village elders I heard that women are active participants in all stages of agriculture, but at the same time are forbidden to participate in any agricultural activity, particularly touching seeds, during the days of menstruation. This is exactly

Gurau enthusiastic, Nepal

Since 1998 ECOS has been working in the context of the Compas programme with three different ethnic groups in Dibya Nagar area: Hindu, Buddhist and Tharu. There is a lot of mixing of culture and cosmovision among the indigenous Tharu and settled Hindu and Buddhist communities. In this complex situation ECOS has concentrated on the value of traditional knowledge and organic agriculture, rather than on cosmovision and experimentation with indigenous practices.

A workshop was organised in August 1999 to reflect on these experiences. A representative of the Indian Compas partner IDEA also participated in this workshop. IDEA shared the findings and the approach to eco-development and cosmovision developed in the work with tribals in the Eastern Ghats, India. Interestingly Sikkha Gurau, the spiritual leader of 22 Tharu villages, participated in the workshop and the village meetings. He is concerned about farmers losing their confidence in traditional practices and is very supportive of carrying out experi-



Gowhtam Shankar of IDEA, India shares experiences of tribals with farmers of Dibya Nagar, Nepal

ments with rituals. Plans were made to focus more on the indigenous Tharu people and to do experiments involving spiri-

tual leaders. A network of Goraus will also be initiated to trace and document ancient wisdom and exchange experiences

ENIAKA in Ghana and Zimbabwe

As part of the CTA-sponsored programme Enhancing Indigenous Agricultural Knowledge in Africa (ENIAKA), the Compas partners Cecik and Aztrec have made an inventory of available literature on indigenous practices in agriculture in Ghana and Zimbabwe. More than 200 different documents could be found and were summarised according to a consistent format. During regional workshops in September 1999, a number of gaps in this docu-

mented knowledge were identified and steps were formulated to bridge these gaps. In-depth field studies were planned to complement the existing database.

The Compas staff in The Netherlands did an on-line search in the major databases in the North and found more than 1000 titles on indigenous knowledge. During the last five years there is a sharp increase in the number of publications on this subject. A reader was produced with

relevant case studies on African belief systems, soil and water management, crops, and animal husbandry. During the upcoming African workshop in Masvingo, Zimbabwe (13-17 December 1999) resource persons will assess the findings and formulate proposals to enhance indigenous agricultural knowledge in Africa. Topics to be discussed are: initiatives for replication of national inventories in other African countries, in-depth