

# Endogenous development

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

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

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

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



*A woman collects water (Zimbabwe).  
Photo: Panos Pictures/Hollandse Hoogte*

# Editorial

Globalisation is often regarded as a negative phenomenon that is threatening cultural diversity. Indeed, it is the case that the world is becoming smaller, and dominant cultures often interfere with and lack respect for minority cultures. Much endogenous development work takes place within this field of tension. But is it not over-simplifying matters to state that globalisation is an external threat imposed on unwilling societies? As suggested in the motion for debate in this issue (page 27), changes are also happening within these societies and with the consent of their members. These changes are often a source of tension between those wanting to hold onto traditional values and those eager to embrace new ones. The Dalai Lama not only addresses the question of how to deal with this tension, but also of finding a balance between the new and the traditional, and between economic and non-material developments. Being open to positive and sometimes necessary changes, even if this means that some parts of the existing culture may disappear, is something practitioners of endogenous development are confronted with regularly. Indeed, supporting communities in their assessment of these changes is perhaps one of our major tasks.

On a less controversial note, I would like to mention here one of the positive results of globalisation for the COMPAS network. People from all parts of the world shared their views and opinions in response to the motion in the previous issue of ED-Magazine on the Millennium Development Goals. Remarkably, the opinions were much the same whether they came from Africa, Asia or Europe. We also received a large response to our request to join the 2008 readers' panel. People from all continents gave us their feedback on the new magazine. A selection of these views and opinions are published on pages 25/26, and more can be found on our website. We greatly value these forms of interaction and hope you will continue to share your critical views with all of us.

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