

# 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.



Techiman paramount chief and his elders in Ghana  
Photo: ©Peter Lowe

# Editorial

Traditional leaders and indigenous organisations continue to play an important role in many societies around the world. Decisions in agriculture, health or conflict resolution are often taken under the guidance of traditional authorities. But in what way can we understand how traditional leadership functions and how this relates to their way of seeing the world? The COMPAS network believes it is important to understand these matters to be able to support traditional authorities so they can assume developmental roles, for example in conserving natural resources. What are the gender dimensions of traditional knowledge systems? How can we support communities to conserve biodiversity while building on cultural values? These are some of the key challenges for endogenous development: building on tradition to meet the challenges of the future. We devote this issue of the Endogenous Development Magazine to methodologies: how have support organisations understood the worldviews of the people they work? What steps have been taken?

Yet, traditional knowledge is eroding in many societies. Many young people for example regard traditional medicine as less efficacious than modern medicine. How can the traditional knowledge of their grandparents be made more appealing to the younger generation? Within the COMPAS network, we are trying to understand how beneficiaries are empowered across gender and generation by documenting most significant change stories. The motion for debate in this edition (page 32) also addresses the issue of kindling the interest of young people in their traditions.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition of the Endogenous Development Magazine and welcome your comments.

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