

ENDOGENOUS DEVELOPMENT

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COMPAS

Policy support for
endogenous
development

Seed Diversity
Celebration
in Peru



CHANGE STORIES

effective tools in monitoring change

COMPAS experience in Sri Lanka shows that recording and analysing so-called Change stories enables organisations to complement quantitative Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation systems and get a more in-depth, qualitative understanding of the complex processes of change. Collecting Change stories is a qualitative monitoring tool in which community members of different ages and genders are systematically asked to narrate about the most important changes as a result of project efforts. The COMPAS Sri Lanka network, comprising Future in Our Hands (FIOH), the Biodiversity Research and Information Centre (BRIT) and Gami Seva Sevana (GSS), has worked with Change stories since 2009.



FIOH, an NGO with over 20 years of experience in the Uva province in south-east Sri Lanka, has been working to reduce (the dominant) chemical use among families engaged in dry-land and irrigated rice farming. One of the organisation's aims is to enable farmers to use traditional seed varieties, which requires adaptation of the National Seed Act. By collecting Change stories on a project to facilitate reduced use of chemicals and conversion to cultivation of traditional paddy varieties, FIOH gained new insights.

Traditional paddy farming in Sri Lanka is based on collective action and two fundamental Buddhist concepts: Ahimsa - doing no harm, and Mettha - loving kindness. Under this system pests (or 'unwanted creatures') are driven away with nature-friendly and spiritual techniques that support the Buddhist worldview.

Beyond quantitative indicators

In the early years of its existence FIOH developed a participatory methodology, called "the social mobilisation approach", to facilitate change in community organisation and income generating activities. Under the ETC COMPAS programme, FIOH started with the endogenous development approach in which change is seen as a combination of material, social and spiritual aspects. One of the challenges has been to develop a more holistic way of monitoring the complex processes of change that can capture all these aspects.

Towards this end, in 2007, eight wellbeing indicators for monitoring change in agricultural practices among 250 farming

households had been developed. It was noted, however, that indicators dealing with the spiritual dimension were missing. Therefore, a ninth indicator was added in 2008 (See Box).

The indicators have been used to monitor the impact of an FIOH project to reduce the use of chemicals and support conversion to traditional paddy varieties among targeted and non-targeted families. Though these tangible changes could easily be measured, it was difficult to capture the associated cultural and spiritual empowerment of the communities, in spite of the addition of indicator 9. To report on the more qualitative aspects, FIOH decided to start collecting and analysing Change stories and to conduct an experiment with this method of qualitative monitoring. Between 2009 and 2010 a total of 48 stories per NGO were collected, leading to 144 Change stories.

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Change stories in practice

The main objective of the Change story methodology is to learn how stakeholders have become empowered. For this purpose 24 persons from each community were selected, specifically four from each of six categories (grandfather, grandmother, father, mother, son, and daughter) in order to obtain insights from 'direct' as well as 'indirect' beneficiaries. The field staff asked individuals to narrate the changes that had taken place during the project



The Change stories showed that empowerment was the main outcome of the project efforts, especially for women. These ladies have now become leaders in their village.

intervention period related to traditional organic farming, ecological landscaping or ethno-veterinary practices. The stories were collected by three teams of two persons, including three women. During the regular monitoring meetings of the Sri Lanka COMPAS network, samples of the stories were read and discussed.

Shortcomings in understanding were noted and the most important change stories (24 in all) were selected. These stories were discussed more in-depth with the storytellers again, to ensure that they reflected as accurately as possible the changes brought about by the project as perceived by the community members. The field staff visited the storytellers on average 2-3 times to collect and rewrite the stories. It was a continuous process in which economic, social and spiritual issues

were discussed with community members, both individually and in groups.

Women's empowerment and wellbeing

We found that the most significant change for the majority of women was empowerment. This was expressed through recognizing from the community, leadership positions in community

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organisations, increased decision making at home, and more economic power. This is exemplified by the story of Sunitha (mother): "The most significant change in my life after working with the FIOH-COMPAS program is that I became a seed banker. Nowadays one of the most difficult things in practising traditional agriculture is

lack of seeds. When I wanted to cultivate I had to borrow from my mother. She gave me seeds with a lot of restrictions and advice. Later I thought that I should save seeds for our own use. Now I have about 50-60 varieties of seeds. The majority of them are traditional and endangered. Having a seed bank is not just a matter of building up a collection of seeds; it is like looking after a

family. Seeds are my children. I give seeds to others, which is a *dana* (offering). This earns me great respect in the village. It also helps me to accumulate skills (*karma*) for the betterment of my life."

NGOs adapt their strategies

Collecting the stories is time consuming,

Interacting worldviews in promoting nature-friendly farming

Spiritual

Agricultural practice now in harmony with religious beliefs.

Social

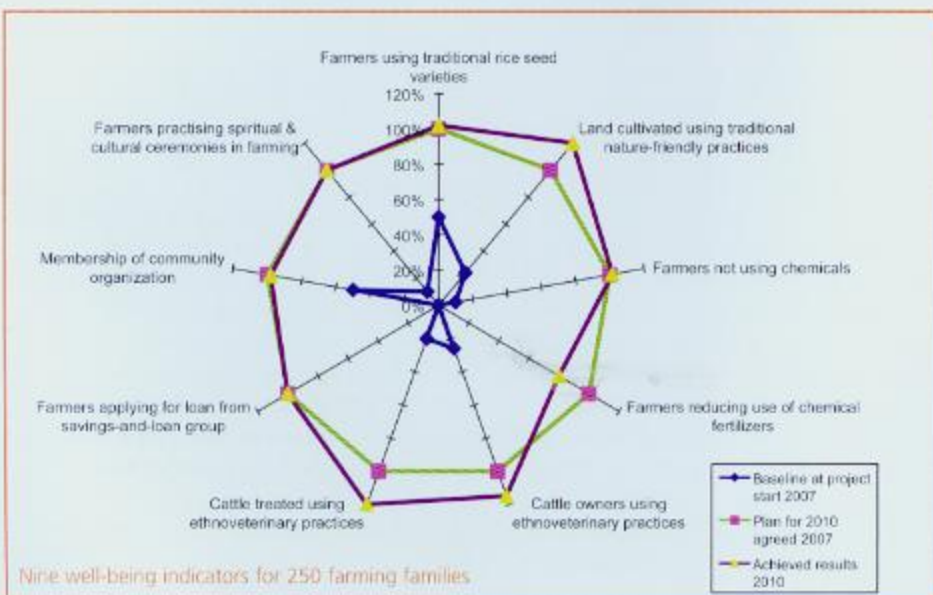
Empowerment of women in community organization.

Material

Reduced production costs and better price for organic products.

but it effectively complements quantitative monitoring tools. NGO staff, field staff as well as community members welcomed the Change stories as an enriching contribution to monitoring results. At the beginning the main constraints were related to the limited recording skills of the field staff. Gradually field staff started to improve their skills.

Based on these stories, the COMPAS partners in Sri Lanka have modified their strategies. For example, they are now promoting 'traditional nature-friendly farming' instead of 'organic farming', as they noted that the younger generation is focusing more and more on nature-friendly lifestyles. In their stories, the young generation also expressed an appreciation of tradition and a willingness to learn from parents and grandparents. This underlines the importance of understanding inter-generational worldviews in agriculture and other livelihood activities.



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See www.compasnet.org for change stories and report on kidney failure