

REPORT FROM THE FORUM CONFERENCE 2001

Competence Building and Indigenous Peoples

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PREFACE

The second conference under the headline Forum for Development Cooperation with Indigenous Peoples was arranged in Tromsø, Norway the 15th and 16th of November 2001. Consolidating its role as a meeting place for researchers, development workers, administrators and activists working with indigenous peoples' issues, the Forum was hosted by the University of Tromsø at the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and financed by NORAD and the University of Tromsø.

Focusing on Competence Building and Indigenous Peoples, a major aim was to initiate debates on barriers and incentives for indigenous peoples in different systems of education and competence building, and how this relates to efforts of development cooperation between North and South. The conference program reflected an ambition to focus on the experiences of international partners as well as counterparts in Norway. A special emphasis was put on experiences from Central America and Southern Africa, and representatives from different indigenous groups and organisations in those regions were specially invited.

Exploring the special problems and challenges related to competence building and indigenous peoples, above 100 participants were gathered to share experiences from their personal lives, development projects, and university cooperation programmes. The Saami Parliament and the Saami Council reported from indigenous-to-indigenous cooperation projects, and representatives from NORAD and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sketched some of the strategies and policies they wish to implement regarding indigenous peoples and development cooperation in partner countries.

In this report we have gathered summaries of the speeches at the conference. We have also included a general summary of the major issues that were emphasised and debated during the conference. Some of the speeches are available in full text at the FORUM homepages.

We hope the report will be of interest and of use for the Forum participants as well as other individuals and groups interested in indigenous issues and development issues.

We welcome all of you to join the Forum e-mail list. You may also consult our homepages for information on previous and future Forum Conferences and other activities.

Elisabeth Sandersen
Centre for Sámi Studies

THEMATIC SUMMARIES

The 2001 Forum Conference exposed the experiences of indigenous peoples, researchers and NGO's - from their lives and work in local communities and development projects in Central America and Southern Africa.

Referring to the dangers of myth making often related to indigenous peoples and communities, contributors focused on the diversity of indigenous peoples, living in a wide variety of ecological settings and with different problems and preferences. In the 21st century few indigenous peoples live in small "untouched" communities as hunters and gatherers. Indigenous peoples very often live in multi-ethnic communities, a fact which constitutes a major challenge to the survival of indigenous languages and traditions. It consequently also constitutes a challenge to the international development workers, partners and donors.

Despite all complexities and variations, many indigenous peoples face a common problem of exploitation and discrimination. The speakers reporting from Southern Africa as well as Central America and Norway told stories of how indigenous groups have lost their lands and self-esteem, and ended up in poverty, alcoholism, drug abuse and social decay. Indigenous peoples have been driven away from their lands because of different types of pressure from the majority population: political oppression, hydroelectric power dams, railroads, roads, mining and timber industry and farmers in search for fertile soil. Paradoxically, a very modern threat to indigenous peoples traditional ways of life is the establishment of game- and natural reserves.

The Need for Modern as well as Traditional Education and Capacity Building

The focus on competence building brought forward different kinds of experiences, ranging from the effects of illiteracy and the lack of education in many communities - to the problems facing indigenous children and adults when entering into the modern educational systems. However, reports from the programmes and projects also brought good news about indigenous peoples and competence building. In spite of failures in the past and a continuous need to introduce cultural sensitive educational systems, many projects have succeeded in creating room for indigenous students at different levels.

Emphasising the need for *long-term perspectives* on indigenous peoples and competence building, contributors had experienced the positive *long-term effects* of education and competence building. They presented a wide definition of education, including informal education such as organisational training and awareness rising in addition to formal education. Different speakers at the conference emphasised the importance of multi-linguism and multi-culturalism, and the link between identity, language and self-respect. Acknowledging the extra cost involved they still emphasised the importance of teaching children in their native languages as well as in the regional lingua franca. As a general recommendation, contributors at the Forum suggested the introduction

of more innovative approaches to education, and the employment of indigenous teachers to ensure that cultural knowledge become part of the school curricula.

The Lack of Flexibility in Schools, Universities and University Programmes

When addressing issues related to indigenous peoples and competence building, the lack of flexibility within the educational or developmental institutions was often mentioned as a major obstacle. In Southern Africa, eagerness to develop San groups had made some projects move too fast, not letting the San parents, pupils and communities get accustomed to their new lives. Lack of flexibility from the teachers and rectors added to the problem, as time schedule in some areas seldom made room for children helping their parents with food collection or other traditional and practical chores. Likewise, the entry age of school children should be more flexible in order to suit San children. In Southern Africa as well as in Central America, there was an urgent need to produce more appropriate teaching materials, and to train staff to become more sensitive to indigenous needs and culture.

The lack of flexibility was also a problem for the university programmes. Experiences from the NUFU programmes showed that the NUFU requirements in some cases inhibit the programme coordinators to reach their goals. For example, the most commonly used academic degree in Guatemala (licenciatura) is not recognised as graduate level in Norway and within the NUFU system. Additionally, in Guatemala as well as in Botswana, the partners have had problems with recruiting indigenous students at the required level as very few indigenous students reach graduate level. Both programmes have chosen to bend the rules in order to include more students – and to fit indigenous realities. Experiences from the NUFU programmes and other projects further demonstrate the need to increase assistance to indigenous students at lower levels in order to secure recruitment at the university level.

The NUFU programmes initially had faced problems when introducing ethnic based programmes in Botswana and Guatemala. However, they had maintained the focus on indigenous students and indigenous issues and felt it was a very important step towards securing better access to higher education for the indigenous populations.

The Important Role of Research and Universities

Contributors reporting from the NUFU programmes highlighted to the role of universities and the role of research in the process of emancipation of indigenous peoples. They emphasised that universities may influence policies; national policies as well as educational policies. Moreover, they considered research a very important tool in breaking cultural stereotypes, which keep the minorities in a position of inferiority. Research thus also may constitute an important basis for policymaking and lobbying, as information on the needs and life situation of indigenous peoples make policy makers better armed when dealing and intervening with indigenous matters.

However, the partners saw the need for institutional capacity building, - the need to capacitate the universities to play this important role - and make them contribute more actively to the development of the indigenous peoples and communities. The NUFU programmes also focused

on the advantages of exchanging experiences between the Saami in Northern Scandinavia and the San and Maya experiences in Guatemala and Botswana. Experiences from the University of Tromsø were also considered relevant, as this university has a special obligation related to regional issues, including the relations between the Saami and the Norwegian society.

Recommendations from the San

The Forum participants voiced a general wish to introduce projects that enable indigenous peoples to become in charge of their own lives. Projects should provide them with the necessary tools to define problems and find solutions to improve their own situation - both individually and for the whole groups. Referring more specifically to capacity building, formal education and research among indigenous peoples, speakers and participants developed a series of recommendations.

Some of the main recommendations from Southern Africa and San areas were:

- * San children should be taught in their own environment, and by their own people, - in addition to the modern education. More school facilities should be built closer to where the indigenous people live. They need to be taught in their own languages in addition to the majority language or the lingua franca (bilingual education)
- * Environment and history has to be protected. Without it the San would have nothing to offer the modern world
- * All research done on the San should be made available. No more research before the research is brought back to them
- * Affirmative action is needed to secure that more San get qualified for teaching and other types of jobs, and that the employees actually hire them.

Guidelines for Researchers

The NUFU programme cooperation on San/Basarwa issues between Tromsø and Botswana has developed the following guidelines for the researchers:

- * Apply innovative strategies to promote San access to higher education
- * Identify ways in which research can make positive contribution to San development
- * Promote and further develop research capacity and competence among university staff and students
- * Ensure that capacity is reflected in appropriate teaching in studies within and outside the university
- * Establish a network for San research (North-South as well as South-South, and indigenous-indigenous: San-Saami)

Capacity Building of the Excluders

Many speakers at the conference emphasised the need to introduce indigenous issues to the general public, as indigenous peoples are not the only ones in need of capacity building. There is a need for:

- * Capacity building and introduction of indigenous issues within the educational institutions. Capacity building of teachers as well as of students
- * Capacity building among the majority populations, neighbours of indigenous peoples
- * Capacity building of the excluders. Capacity building must (also) be directed towards the authorities, the decision makers, making them able to realise the resources and the realities of indigenous people. There is likewise a need to capacitate the local authorities and administration, the local private sector and the trans-national companies (and to secure a linkage between the local and international/trans-national companies).
- * Capacity building of development workers and institutions (NORAD, universities and among capacity builders and development NGO's generally).

On Local Basis, Legitimacy and Synergies

The presentations and debates at the conference showed broad experience from different kinds of development cooperation. All emphasised that development projects should reflect the indigenous peoples' needs, wishes and priorities. International projects consequently also need to build on local legitimacy, and to cooperate with local institutions.

In search for synergies, a more flexible attitude towards combining different types of development efforts is required. Projects in Nicaragua had very promising experiences from coordinating efforts on a community and a university level. Cooperation between a development NGO and a university programme made it possible to address current local needs and longer-term research needs at the same time. There is reason to believe that other organisations and institutions could similarly benefit from a closer cooperation between different types of development projects.

On the Norwegian side, NORAD and all the different actors involved in development cooperation could benefit from a closer cooperation with Saami institutions and organisations. The Saami Parliament and the Saami council have gained important experiences through the Barents cooperation and other projects throughout the world. It was noted, however, that in order to facilitate indigenous to indigenous cooperation, there is a need for Norway to help improve its own indigenous (Saami) organisations and institutions so that these can play a more active part in international cooperation with other indigenous peoples.

Rights Based Approaches

Emphasising the need to base the problem-definitions as well as solutions on local interpretations, many of the projects presented at the Forum had adopted an explicit rights-based approach to development. They addressed human and indigenous rights as a significant point of departure when planning and implementing the development projects. Emphasising the crucial role of empowerment within all development efforts, others also stated that cooperation programmes

involving indigenous peoples should be based on notions of equality, democracy building and self-determination.

Representatives from NORAD and others claimed that support must be based on, and contribute to, the international recognition of the basic rights of indigenous people. Several speakers emphasised the need to base all programmes on the ILO convention 169. Projects should strengthen indigenous peoples possibility and capacity for managing their own interests, their national resources and their national and international relations.

It was further stated that the political frameworks of state-to-state cooperation constitute an important basis for promoting basic indigenous rights, including land rights and cultural rights. As part of the inter-state cooperation there is a need capacitate government institutions, to make them sensitive to issues like health and education for indigenous peoples, and to make them internalise basic values and approaches; seeing indigenous peoples as equal human beings with rights, the way it is stated in the Declaration of Human Rights.

Emphasising the need to engage in long-term support of indigenous groups, several speakers expressed that it was time to let the San and other indigenous groups be in charge of the development programmes, and to let them decide on more of the issues and projects without the direct or indirect supervision of NGO's and others. Generally, bottom-up and holistic approaches to development were recommended. Further, projects with indigenous peoples may benefit from existing participatory methods. Recognising the limitation of external intervention, (counting for all development efforts), participants also voiced a need to differentiate between classical service delivery - and the advocacy for the rights of the indigenous peoples.

Mr. Olav Kjørven

State Secretary for International Development, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

On behalf of the Government of Norway, Mr. Olav Kjørven extended a warm welcome to all participants and particularly to the visiting representatives of indigenous peoples from Guatemala, Nicaragua, Botswana and South Africa. Kjørven stated that the promotion and protection of indigenous peoples' rights is an important issue for the newly elected government. Reporting that the government supports the idea of a forum where Norwegian, Saami and international institutions can meet to discuss development issues relating to indigenous peoples, he recalled the history of the Forum, established as part of the Follow-up plan for Development Cooperation with Indigenous Peoples and as recommended in the evaluation report of the Norwegian Programme for Indigenous Peoples. He supported the aims to strengthen the quality of Norwegian development assistance. Recognising that the University of Tromsø has a strong and internationally recognized track record regarding research on indigenous issues, Kjørven further found it appropriate that the university hosted the Forum events.

Emphasising that research institutions as well as development workers and organisations and their international partners contribute to the development of new knowledge and increased understanding of indigenous issues, Kjørven especially emphasised that research and exchange of information on the situation of indigenous peoples is of paramount importance for developing a strategy for sustainable development for indigenous peoples. Commenting on the central topics of the 2001 Forum Conference he stated that competence building is central in the Norwegian development assistance to indigenous peoples. He found that it is of fundamental importance to contribute to education at all levels, and suggested that programs of scholarships may be one way of contributing to this aim.

Kjørven stated that the government wants to work in close cooperation with representatives from the Sámi population, both in developing strategies for economic development for indigenous peoples in Latin America, Africa and Asia, and on human rights issues within the UN. He continued by noting that what most indigenous peoples have in common is that they have been economically and politically marginalized for generations. Pointing to the fact that indigenous people live in a wide variety of natural-ecological settings, Kjørven added that many of them live very close to nature, and are as vulnerable as the ecosystem they depend upon. Kjørven emphasised the importance of protecting Indigenous Knowledge. He considered the perspectives of indigenous peoples a valuable resource when formulating policies to meet the challenges of globalisation. He claimed that indigenous knowledge should be brought into the international processes relating to environmental and development issues. Kjørven further mentioned that management of resources, poverty reduction, and financing of development are core issues in the

international debate prior to the international summit on sustainable development in Johannesburg in September 2002.

Kjørven commented the two concrete aims of the International Decade for the World's Indigenous People.

- To conclude a UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- To establish a Permanent Forum on indigenous issues within the UN

Kjørven welcomed the establishment of a Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues within the UN, and considered it a significant development in the recognition of indigenous peoples' rights. The forum will consist of eight members elected by governments and eight selected from indigenous organizations and groups.

The draft UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples has so far not been approved. But even though fundamental issues like the right to self-determination for indigenous peoples have delayed the work on the declaration, Kjørven emphasised that the Norwegian government aims to reach an agreement before 2004, - before the end of the International Decade for the World's Indigenous People.

The speech is available in full text through the Forum homepages/Foreign Ministry homepages:
<http://www.uit.no/ssweb/forum/>

Mr. Paul Weinberg
Photographer, South Africa

BEYOND THE POST CARD MYTHOLOGY OF THE SAN

South African photographer Paul Weinberg told stories and showed slides from the West Coast of South Africa and Namibia. Trying to reach beyond “the post card mythology”, Weinberg shared his experiences from a period of 12 years “in search of the San”.¹

Weinberg started by criticising the general trend of myth making often related to photographs of “Peoples of the South”. National Geographic and other journals construct a myth of the San living in small “untouched” communities as hunters and gatherers, not telling the story of how many San groups have lost their lands, or how many of them ended up in poverty, alcoholism, drug abuse and social decay.

Highlighting the many ways in which the San has been exploited, Weinberg told the story of the making of the film “The Gods must be crazy”. The main character in the film received around 5000 South African Rands/Norwegian Kroner for his work. The film made a total of 59 million US dollars. Likewise, other San people and communities have been exploited for commercial purposes. Different kinds of San cultural expressions are used in foreign commercials or in the tourist industry, seldom showing respect for the San traditions.

Of a total of approximately 100 000 San in Botswana, Namibia and South Africa, only about 10 % has access to ancestral land. In addition to hunting and gathering, farming, herding and the production of crafts have been important means of income the last decades. Also, quite many San have hold jobs within the military.

Weinberg put a strong emphasis on the problems of land. The San have been driven away by white as well as black settlers. Paradoxically, the focus on environmental issues became another threat to their existence, as the establishment of game reserves and conservation areas meant fencing in the natural environment and removing the people. And even though some authorities changed their views around 1990, and started considering indigenous people *part* of the natural environment, *part* of the benefits and *part* of the conservation plans, San are still threatened with removal from some of the game reserves and other pieces of land.

Many San groups have moved to plural settlements lacking infrastructure and resources. In the new settlements they experience both the difficulties of meeting people with different traditions

¹ During the conference the participants had the opportunity to look at an exhibition called “Once we were hunters” - showing more of Weinberg’s photographs.

and cultures, and the positive sharing of culture, through “cultural rounds”, dances and so on. Some live hard lives working in the diamond mines, others from various crafts and trades, among others agriculture, cash crops, fish, peanuts, pastoralism, tourism, and elephant hunting. According to Weinberg, part of the problems related to poverty and lack of community development, is that a lot of the return from all the different ways to make a living has to be used to cover in costs of infrastructure, - costs and tasks which elsewhere often are considered public or state responsibility. He also pointed to the crisis of values in many San communities, and the need to improve San self-esteem. Weinberg emphasised the vast cultural heritage and the spirituality of the San. He still felt that he had so much more to learn.

Ms. Willemien Le Roux

Working Group for Indigenous Minorities of Southern Africa
(WIMSA), Botswana

EXPERIENCES FROM THE SAN, BOTSWANA

Sharing some of the insights from her vast experience with community work among San children and youth in South Africa and Botswana, Ms. Willemien Le Roux focused on the problems related to San basic education.

Le Roux took as a point of departure the very intense development focus directed at San and other indigenous or minority groups. The pressure to develop has moreover been based on a wish to make everything happen “all in one step”, very far from the western/northern long-term development to reach status quo. Following the eagerness to develop San groups in southern Africa, education has seemed to be the answer to almost any question; poverty, sustainability, organisation, participation.

San Children in the Midst of Different Problems and Forces

However, many of the San communities seemed to reject development. Many children did not attend school at all, and pupils often dropped out at an early age. According to Le Roux, many questions needed to be asked; Why are they rejecting developmental and educational efforts? Why don't they participate? What would they do themselves, if they had a choice?

One of the ways in which the San children's unhappiness with school became obvious was that many of them ran away. This was often explained with reference to teasing among the school children, the lack of uniforms; poverty, the lack of role models; few in their family and neighbourhood have gone to school, and the long road to school. Additionally Le Roux, drawing on her report “Torn apart”, emphasised that the children were in the middle of two strong forces:

- The educators, social workers, government, NGO's on the one hand, and
- Parents, family and community on the other.

She noted that many San parents wanted to become equal citizens and that they and their children be educated, but not assimilated. They did not trust the system, and were reluctant to engage in what they saw as leading to dependency of the suppressors. The present system often resulted in separation of children and parents for months, and thus kept the children out of their own culture and language. A very important problem was that children were not given enough time to practice their puberty rites. They did not receive enough information and easily got confused when facing all the changes in their lives and bodies. The teachers lacked sensitivity and patience with the cultural needs of the San children, for example flexible time schedules so that they could follow

their parents in the felt food collection. Older children saw the poverty of their parents. In an atmosphere of strong peer pressure they also felt that parents more generally were out of tune, and experienced the difference between village and town.

Recommendations

Showing parts of a video, with glimpses from her many field trips, Le Roux showed how some San groups in spite of all the problems had developed a way to tell their own stories through the school, and learnt to cope with the national educational system. Focusing on the need for more holistic approaches, Le Roux mentioned some of the San's own recommendations:

- San children should be taught in their own environment, and by their own people, - in addition to the modern education. More school facilities closer to where they live.
- Environment and history has to be protected. Without it the San would have nothing to offer the modern world
- All research done on the San should be made available. No more research before the research is brought back to them
- Affirmative action is needed to secure that more San get qualified for teaching and other types of jobs, and that the employees actually hire them.

A “regional task force” on San issues had presented an even longer list of recommendations. Le Roux put strong emphasis on the recommendation that any San specific programme would have to take into account all the other ethnic groups in the area. She also valued parents' participation, and the need to strengthen the San community's sense of ownership to their own schools and education. Mother tongue education is an important issue, as well as the fact that flexibility is needed both concerning time schedule and entry age of the children. Special training programmes are needed for the teachers as well as for the students. Le Roux further argued that international agents and aid programmes should allow for more innovative approaches to education, and more flexible criteria for employing teachers in order to secure the introduction of San cultural knowledge in the school.

The most important point, however, was that it was time to let the San be in charge of the development programmes, to let them decide on more issues and projects without the direct or indirect supervision of NGO and others. But this does not mean that the San should be left alone. Le Roux emphasised that they still need others to walk alongside them for a long time.

Some of the newest health and social issues of the modern world, like the HIV/AIDS, represent new challenges for the San, challenges that can't only be addressed in the traditional ways. However there is a problem to make San understand the gravity of the situation. When they have been told so many lies, why should the incredible story of HIV be any different? The example

demonstrates the problem of HIV as well as the gap between the San education and what the rest of the world has achieved.

However, Le Roux equally focussed the many ways in which the San have something to teach modern people;

[modern people] “who has forgotten that school was once about reading the signs and cycles of nature and finding answers to the mysteries of life by creating fables and stories, ...when learning was as natural as breeding as eating, ...when there were no structured hours or venues for that experience.

We have forgotten that the tracks in the sand, or the tracks in the snow, were once the letters that we read, ...the drawings on the rocks were the books about our history, our religion and our interpretations of life. Should we not look into ways in which to bridge the gap towards those forgotten values? ... and could the San help us to bridge that gap?”

More information on the Working Group for Indigenous Minorities of Southern Africa

<http://www.san.org.za/wimsa/home.htm>

<http://www.san.org.za>

Mr. Kuela Kiema

The Kuru Development Trust, Botswana

EXPERIENCES FROM THE SAN, BOTSWANA

Mr. Kuela Kiema, representing the San organisation Kuru Development Trust in Botswana, exemplified the points previously made by Willemien Le Roux, by sharing his own experiences from child- and early adulthood.

Kiema grew up in a small San community in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve. He started school when he was 15 years old. He reported that the main problem in the beginning had been that the teachers did not speak his language, at that he didn't understand any of the languages offered. As a result, he and other San children were punished and beaten. As part of an effort to change everyone into Tswana language and culture, the teachers also disapproved of the San children's behaviour. The teachers perceived the San children as rude and without proper manners, and blamed their parents for giving them inadequate guidance. However, according to the San, Kiema was already a man, old enough to get married - and a skilful hunter. He already had acquired the necessary knowledge of fruits, tubers and animals in the Bush.

As a result of strict teachers and rough treatment from majority group children, half of Kiema's San classmates had left school within the first few years. Under the cover of wanting to do research on the San genetic make up, the teachers at some occasions checked the pupils' hands, feet, and even genitals, to see whether they had washed or not. The pupils obviously got very offended. However, learning different kinds of "self defence", Kiema had fought his way to and through secondary school. He had been the first in the whole area to finish Junior Secondary School.

In addition to the challenges related to schooling, Kiema told stories of a more general repression of the San living in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve. Different types of abuses had been part of the daily life of his family and tribe, but particularly the torturing to death of Kiemas uncle had been a difficult experience. On another occasion, two relatives died "unexplainably" in a truck accident. Further, the issue of land had become increasingly important during the last ten years, and he and his parents were pushed to leave the game reserve. They had started to organise, but in order to avoid the ruthless government and police, Kiema had finally urged the community to leave the game reserve. Kiema expressed the pain and regret he and his relatives had experienced, and the intense sense of loss when obeying the governments' instructions to leave their ancestral territories.

More information on The Kuru Development Trust:

<http://www.kalaharipeoples.org/documents/Kuru-san>

<http://www.san.org.za/kuru/home.htmhtm>

Mr. Tomsen Nore

The !Xun and Khwe Trust, South Africa

EXPERIENCES FROM THE SAN, SOUTH AFRICA

Mr. Tomsen Nore visited Tromsø as a representative of the !Xun and Khwee San Community in South Africa. He contributed to the conference by telling the story of his own community.

The people living in the !Xun and Khwee San Community were relocated from different places in Namibia to South Africa by the South African Defence Force in 1990. The two San groups speak different languages and mostly communicate in Afrikaans. In the schools the children are also taught in Afrikaans. The !Xun and Khwee languages are home languages. According to Nore, there are similarities and differences in regard to their traditions and cultures.

The community was finally established as a formal trust and thus a legal entity in Townsend in 2001. They have established a communal board and a radio broadcasting station. During the first few years in South Africa they have been busy working with housing, pipes and infrastructure, but also developing skills in arts and crafts, among others textiles and ceramics to be sold in shops in Platfontain and Johannesburg. As part of the efforts of creating jobs, a main goal in the near future will be to assess minerals and other resources within the area. Referring to the challenges as a newly established community and as a minority group in South Africa, Nore particularly emphasised the problems of pressure from outside. As a community facilitator, Nore had experienced that many hardships and development failures can be explained by failure to involve the local population and failure to respect the San culture. He emphasised that in all future cooperation and other development efforts, San people need to be *consulted* and *involved*. The language barriers have to be overcome by interpreters, and development workers must make sure that the local population understands the plans, purposes and benefits. He also emphasised the need to give reports on development progresses on a regular basis.

(More information about the The !Xun and Khwe Trust can be obtained from the WIMSA:
<http://www.san.org.za/wimsa/home.htm>)

Ms. Elise Valkeapää
The Saami Council

EXPERIENCES FROM THE SAAMI COUNCIL'S PROJECTS IN GUATEMALA

Representing the Saami Council², Ms. Elise Valkeapää introduced some of her organisation's projects in Guatemala and explained the background related to the peace process and the refugees returning from Mexico after the peace agreement.

Guatemala, the peace process, the Refugees and the Land Rights Issues

When the peace process started, several hundred thousand Guatemalans were internally displaced or in exile. Describing the scale and severity of the refugee problems in Guatemala, Valkeapää focused on some of the challenges in these early stages of the peace process in Guatemala. Most important was the need to demilitarise the surrounding areas of the new settlements and the issue of land rights, the rights to ownership of land.

Valkeapää illustrated the land rights issues with stories from the village of Lupita. Founded by refugees who returned to Guatemala after many years in Mexico, Lupita is a small town with 600 inhabitants, located in the South of Guatemala. Arriving in Lupita, the refugees had to start a new life from scratch. There were no infrastructure or houses, and drinking water and soil was polluted due to previous pesticide treatment of the cotton fields. Most of the children were born in Mexico and had a Mexican accent. Education, language, culture and racism as well as the water and land rights issues were among many challenges. For the inhabitants of Lupita, like many of the other groups of refugees, the purchase of land took a very long time. In some cases it took as long as six years. This slowed down the settlement process and made many of the refugees unsafe and unwilling to farm the land. Some of the former refugees even returned to Mexico.

As a representative from the Saami Council, Valkeapää has worked in Guatemala the last 5 years. Focussing on the implementation of the peace accords, she visited refugee camps and contacted other organisations. She worked and lived with the refugees in Lupita for a whole year. Basing her work on the peace agreement and the ILO convention 169, and with the help and advice from a lawyer, Valkeapää helped to promote and advance the land rights issue in Lupita. In 2000, the local organisations finally made the authorities sign the formal papers. After several meetings and negotiations with the Ministry of Agriculture and other state organs for land and land rights issues, they agreed on a ten year payment plan where each family is to pay Q 1000,- yearly.

² The Saami Council (Samerådet) is a Saami NGO (non-governmental organisation) with members and sub-groups in Russia, Finland, Sweden and Norway. Web-Info: <http://www.saamicouncil.org/>

The Need to promote Multi-linguism and Multi-culturalism

With reference to the Saami's experiences in the Nordic countries, Valkeapää focused on education and language, and the problems of Maya children within the Spanish speaking educational system. In her interaction with other development workers, Valkeapää at times had encountered little understanding when it came to her focus on the need to train all indigenous children in their mother tongue. In a development process, where so many urgent needs have to be taken care of, the extra cost of teaching and training native languages for some development workers seemed unnecessary³. However, relating the issue to her own experiences in Sapmi, Valkeapää emphasised the importance of *multi-linguism and multi-culturalism*, and the link between identity, language and self-respect.

Other Saami Council Projects

Representatives from the Saami Council began working as peace observers in 1994, two years after the first agreement allowing Guatemalan refugees to return from Mexico. Presently, the Saami Council projects in Guatemala include

- Peace observers
- Community work/Capacity building/Culture
- Study on Racism and Discrimination
- Maya Media

Valkeapää especially mentioned the Saami Council cultural project in the town of Comalapa. This is a cooperation project between the Saami College in Jokkmokk, Sweden and an Artist Organisation in Comalapa. Working towards the establishment of a Maya College, Valkeapää emphasised that they plan to create a school where the Mayas are in charge, and where the Maya languages are taught and spoken. In order to develop analytical concepts suitable for the multicultural dynamics of modern Maya society, they further see the need to support research on Maya culture, history and language.

The project called Maya Media includes the establishment of a Maya alternative to the national newspapers in Guatemala, and a children's newspaper. The Saami Council is also about to start supporting a Maya Radio station. Saami Media serving as a role model, the Maya Radio plan to broadcast their programs in Maya language. It is planned to be a public service radio station with news and debates on issues like school, politics, education, health and women's issues. They also intend to broadcast children's and youth programmes, and culture and music. Valkeapää explained the importance of the radio station by referring to the fact that about 60% of the Maya population are illiterate. She further considered a radio station to constitute an important tool:

- to gain freedom of speech,
- to secure the implementation of agreements reached during the peace process, and
- to make the Maya majority more visible in the Guatemalan public.

³ They rather focused on the importance of teaching the lingua franca- in this case Spanish

Indigenous-to-Indigenous Cooperation

Focusing on the specific experiences of the Maya, the Saami Council tries to benefit from the special advantages related to indigenous to indigenous cooperation. Highlighting the need to support the battle of the Mayas to regain self-confidence and self-respect and a stronger sense of human dignity and worth, Valkeapää referred to the lack of support to grass root movements and indigenous organisations as part of the implementation of the peace process.

She wished that foreign countries would focus more on educating women and financing women's projects, and less on development projects run by churches. According to Valkeapää, the most important principle when working with indigenous peoples in Guatemala, is to base development projects on the human rights – and to engage in *long-term* support of the processes of peace and reconciliation. Valkeapää further invited the relevant ministries and NGO's to seek advice from the Saami Council, benefiting from their vast experience with indigenous people in Central America and elsewhere, and the Saami's own experiences in northern Europe. She ended her speech with a warm thanks to all the Mayas she had lived with for several years. These people had succeeded in establishing new settlements in an atmosphere of optimism instead of revenge, and with a remarkable strength they had learned about the UN and human rights issues alongside the theory and practice of chicken-farming, sowing, non-toxic farming, and health - in their spare time and after all their other daily activities.

More information on the Saami Council: <http://www.saamicouncil.org/>

Mr. Oscar Omier

Rama representative, FADCANIC, (Fundacion para la Autonomia y Desarrollo de La Costa Atlantica de Nicaragua), Nicaragua

EXPERIENCES FROM THE RAMAS, NICARAGUA

Presenting some of the relevant indigenous issues in Nicaragua, Mr. Omier focused on the conditions of his own group, the Rama Indians, living in Rama Cay and the surrounding areas on the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua. The Rama constitute one of six recognised ethnic groups in the country. Though constitutionally secured in national law, Omier pointed to the fact that especially the regional and local, but also the national authorities did not adhere to the rights of the minorities. The lack of documentation made it difficult for the Rama to negotiate for territorial rights. Further, they did not have sufficient ways of influencing the mestizo government on issues like railroad building and land use. However, a commission on Indigenous Rights had been established, and according to Omier, it had already been quite successful.

The Rama traditionally used to travel between several locations on the east coast of what is now called Nicaragua. Nowadays, depending on fisheries, many Rama Indians have settled in Rama Cay and surrounding areas. As a director of a primary school, and with university studies on bilingual education at the University of Urracan in Bluefields, Omier was especially concerned with the problems of preserving the Rama language. Influenced by English and Spanish throughout the years after the colonisation, the majority of the Rama no longer speaks their native language. However, there have been several attempts to revive the language. Initiated by Halldis Balto from Karasjok, the last attempt is a project introducing Rama as a second language. Demonstrating a teacher's guide, Omier explained the efforts to develop teaching materials as well as methods of teaching, adjusted to different people and levels. On the levels from preschool to fourth grade they relied heavily on visual aids, like cards with pictures and words.

Omier emphasised that the Rama need help, and that they seek cooperation with foreign people and indigenous people. He found the exchange of experiences of utmost importance, and especially acknowledged the experiences of the Saami and others on how to organise and fight for indigenous rights and for their ancestral territories.

More information about FADCANIC <http://www.fadcanic.org/>

Mr. Atle Sommerfeldt
Norwegian Church Aid

NORWEGIAN CHURCH AID, COMPETENCE BUILDING AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Mr. Atle Sommerfeldt started his intervention by explaining how the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) gradually has developed a more conscious focus on indigenous people. Indigenous issues became increasingly relevant through the general projects concerning marginalized people on all continents. Moreover, he claimed, NCAs work with indigenous people may be understood in light of their work against racism. The organisation's natural connection with the World Council of Churches has been important, and constituted a direct link to the Human Rights Commission in Geneva. It consequently led them to a rights based approach to development, addressing human rights issues generally and indigenous issues more specifically. Additionally, the Saami Church Council has had a major influence on these specific parts of the NCA strategies⁴. Sommerfeldt emphasised that a trend within the NCA as well as development NGO's in general is to focus on the following topics:

- Human Rights
- Conflict Resolution
- Advocacy

The Problems and Critiques of the Development Paradigm

According to Sommerfeldt, there is a need to start with the general and basic questions and critiques of development co-operation, also when addressing competence building and indigenous peoples. Throughout the second half of the last century, the development strategies prescribed by international and foreign power blocks have included top-down approaches, and non-contextual, materialistic solutions - underestimating spirituality, culture and moral values. Sommerfeldt emphasised that such development efforts often strengthens the dominant classes in a given society and contributes to exclusion and marginalisation instead of social change. Further, the development paradigm has made development workers pretend that ethnic differences are non-existent or irrelevant to their basic needs approaches.

However, during the last decades the weaknesses of the top-down strategies have become rather obvious. The critiques of the development paradigm consequently also led the NCA to put emphasis on supporting the capacities of legitimate local organisations that are struggling for basic human rights.

⁴ NCA has as its constituency protestant churches in Norway.

Capacity Building of the Excluders

Sommerfeldt continued by arguing that the indigenous peoples are not the only ones in need of capacity building. He pointed to the fact that indigenous peoples are excluded - *by someone*. As a general point, Sommerfeldt concluded that capacity building must (also) be directed towards the decision makers, making them able to realise the resources and the realities of indigenous people. According to Sommerfeldt, the capacitating of institutions should be a central issue, in NORAD as well as in universities and among capacity builders and development workers generally.

Sommerfeldt observed that the political frameworks of state-to-state cooperation constitute an important basis for securing basic indigenous rights, linked up to land rights and cultural rights. He emphasised the need for the Norwegian government to secure such frameworks.

As part of the inter-state cooperation there is further the mentioned need to capacitate government institutions, making them sensitive to issues like health and education for indigenous peoples. In order to secure a development on the indigenous people's own terms, the administrative personnel likewise have to learn to perceive different kinds of traditional administrative structures.

Sommerfeldt further underlined the importance of capacitating the private sector and the local communities, and the need to secure a linkage between the micro and macro level; the local private sector, the trans-national companies etc.

Sommerfeldt continued to emphasise the "*Capacity Building of the Excluders*" – in order to make them internalise basic values and approaches; seeing indigenous peoples as equal human beings with rights, the way it is stated in the Declaration of Human Rights.

With a bottom-up and holistic approach as a point of departure, he added that projects with indigenous peoples could benefit from existing participatory methods. Recognising the limitation of external intervention, (counting also for NCA and other NGO's, for NORAD, for the universities and the Saami Council), he concluded that for everyone involved in development work with indigenous peoples there is a need to differentiate between classical service delivery – and the advocacy for the rights of the indigenous peoples.

Sommerfeldt ended his intervention by telling the success story of a rural development programme in Peru initiated by the Lutheran World Federation. The programme came about as a response to urgent needs after an earthquake. It continued by building on local knowledge and wisdom on food security, and subsequently developed into a programme on ecological agriculture. It further became the most important educational programme in the area; bicultural and bilingual, and with a school luncheon made from traditional plants. Experiences from the programme have been used to change the whole syllabus in primary education in Peru.

More information about the Norwegian Church Aid on their web pages:

<http://www.nca.no/>

Ms. Ragnhild Nordvik Valverde
The Norwegian Students' and Academics'
International Assistance Fund (SAIH)

SAIH, COMPETENCE BUILDING AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Emphasising the complexities of indigenous and development issues, Valverde started her intervention by presenting the SAIH organisation. SAIH, founded by students 40 years ago, is still an organization for students and academics. It focuses mainly on educational projects; education, training, awareness raising – i.e. competence building. All the projects are developed and implemented by local partners; local organizations or local institutions. SAIH is currently supporting projects in four countries:

- South Africa and Zimbabwe in Southern Africa
- Bolivia and Nicaragua in Latin America.

Wide Definitions and Local Interpretations

The President is writing a note, saying:” We have to educate the masses so they can serve the system”. Then his assistant comes running back, saying: “The masses are educated. Now they want to change the system”. The President shouts: “Stop the education!!”

Elaborating on the SAIH ideas on development cooperation and educational projects, Valverde pointed to the importance of informal as well as formal education, and presented a wide definition of education and competence building, including informal education such as training and awareness raising in addition to formal higher education. According to SAIH, good education is about enabling people to change their own lives, and help them provide the necessary tools to define problems and find the solutions – both individually and for whole groups. Valverde further underlined the need to base the problem-defining and problem-solving on local interpretations. SAIH co-operate with local NGOs and institutions, who are formed by local people and who are in constant contact with the community or the group to ensure that it is constantly reflecting their needs, their wishes and their priorities.

Emphasising the long term effects of supporting higher education, Valverde mentioned several projects in Nicaragua and Bolivia, where indigenous youth are offered relevant education based on their specific reality and on the specific needs of their communities, within nursing, agriculture, and veterinarian studies. In a health project in Nicaragua this policy brought SAIH to support the development of a curriculum for nurse students based on the needs and reality of the people in the region. An investigation of the health situation in the region resulted in a book, high-

lightening the actual needs of people in the communities in question, what they perceive as their biggest problems and challenges, and what they wanted from the local health workers.

Indigenous Focus

Valverde went on mentioning that SAIH has an “indigenous focus” in their projects in Bolivia (indigenous organizations and institutions in the altiplano – the andino highlands) and in Nicaragua (Rama, Atlantic coast/URACCAN). They do not yet have an indigenous focus on their work in Southern Africa.

Commenting the past of the SAIH organisation, Valverde, mentioned that 20 years ago, SAIH was “inspired” by the big changes and national revolutions in the world. Nicaragua became central in SAIH’s development cooperation immediately after the Sandinista revolution in 1979. Today, SAIH focus more on specific underprivileged or marginalized groups, and support organisations within these groups and their fights for rights within the national context. Valverde highlighted two basic points of departure when working with indigenous peoples:

- to support ongoing processes, and
- to base cooperation on the principles of the rights of indigenous groups

Hence, in Nicaragua, the SAIH are supporting the ongoing Autonomy-process. Along with their partners, they believe that the different indigenous groups on the Atlantic coast will strengthen their positions if the Autonomy laws are implemented. Further, they are focusing on educating teachers who can implement a bilingual and multicultural education.

When it comes to Bolivia, there is a strong indigenous movement that arose in the years previous to 1992, with the “Five hundred years of resistance-campaign”. In Bolivia, SAIH is supporting an ongoing democratisation process, which is related to a set of new laws that were passed in the mid-1990s. These are very important laws, establishing the rights of indigenous groups on issues such as land rights, and education reform establishing the right to bilingual education and education in your mother tongue, and laws regarding local participation in decision making.

Two SAIH partners in Bolivia, organizing their activities in very different manners, work with competence building related to the democratisation process. One organisation offers a decentralized university level study in “Local Power and Participation”. An Aymara women’s organization gives informal training through workshops, courses, radio programs etc, to promote the participation of women and youth in decision-making.

Summing up, Valverde repeated SAIH’s main ideas regarding development co-operation, - the need to avoid feeling sorry for people and rather give them the tools they need to change their lives. She emphasised that good education is education that stimulates the student’s self-esteem and self-respect and makes the student able to change her or his situation.

(Valverde’s speech is available in full text on the Forum homepage:

<http://www.uit.no/ssweb/forum/>

More information about SAIH: <http://www.solidaritetshuset.org/saih/hoved/main.htm>)

Ms. Sidsel Saugestad
University of Tromsø, Norway
Ms. Onalenna Selolwane
University of Botswana

EXPERIENCES FROM THE NUFU COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMME FOR SAN (BASARWA) RESEARCH AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Ms. Sidsel Saugestad, from the Department of Social Anthropology at University of Tromsø, presented some of the basic ideas in the NUFU Collaborative Programme for San (Basarwa) Research and Capacity Building. Using her experiences from The Remote Area Development Programme (RAD) in Botswana, Saugestad pointed to the role of universities and the role of research in the process of emancipation of indigenous peoples. Sponsored by NORAD, the RAD programme initially targeted “a poor marginalised section of the people of Botswana”- characterized by the absence of certain characteristics; not living in villages, not speaking the majority language, and with a non-hierarchical power structure. Saugestad suggested that another way to characterise them would be to describe them as the indigenous people, San, Bushmen or Basarwa. The “neutral” term “remote area dwellers” used to identify the target group reflected the government’s insistence of not recognising a minority group according to cultural or ethnic criteria. Additionally, the research connected to the programme consisted of new, rather haphazardly commissioned reports, while all the existing research on the San people were not considered relevant for the implementation of the programme.

Cooperation based on Local Legitimacy and Local Institutions

Turning to the NUFU- financed cooperation programme between Botswana and Tromsø, Saugestad emphasised the need to build on local legitimacy, and to cooperate with local institutions specialised in producing knowledge. Further, these should be institutions with the right connections; enabling the transmitting of knowledge to society as well as interacting with the power structure of the country. In Botswana, and within the NUFU program, the University of Botswana has been such an institution.

According to Saugestad, the collaboration between the University of Tromsø and the University of Botswana is further influenced by the experiences from Tromsø, and from northern Norway. The University of Tromsø has always had a special obligation related to regional issues, and especially relevant to the NUFU programme were the relations between the Saami and the Norwegian Society.

The Importance of Research on Indigenous Issues

Acknowledging the problems of “over-research” and “exoticism”, Saugestad emphasised that the critique of the “excessive” focus on indigenous peoples should not lead to a critique of research as such. She would rather advice the critics to have a closer look at the way in which research is currently undertaken. Saugestad mentioned that she had experienced significant changes at her own university, from being an institution doing research *with* the Saami, to an institution where research *on* the Saami is mainly also done *by* the Saami. Thus, Saugestad concluded, capacity building related to indigenous competence building can be understood as removing the old distinction between researchers and the objects of research and introducing a new situation where all parties are involved in all stages of the process.

For two reasons, Saugestad still found room for representatives from majority populations in indigenous research. Firstly, she argued that if indigenous relations are defined and understood as relationships between a distinct, culturally defined minority and a nation state, there are always at least two parties involved. Each party has some rights and some responsibilities. Secondly, Saugestad generally disliked the idea of research being a monopoly of any one party. In favour of equal access, she argued against replacing one monopoly with another. In her opinion, research should be shared and open for all. Consequently, she also saw the need for affirmative action whenever one group is systematically disadvantaged in access and entry into institutions of higher education.

Saugestad’s counterpart in the NUFU programme, Dr. Onalenna Selolwane from the Institute of Sociology at the University of Botswana, continued the presentation of the cooperation programme. Ms. Selolwane emphasised that the programme has a broad perspective on research, not only academics “finding the information”. Within a human rights context they wanted to view research as bridge building, - between cultures, internally in Botswana as well as North - South. According to Selolwane, research is helpful in breaking cultural stereotypes and bringing about a better understanding of a common humanity, nationally as well as internationally. In the dominant discourse indigenous peoples tend to be looked upon as people without future and people who cannot think for themselves. These are stereotypes, which keep the minorities in a position of inferiority. Selolwane was of the firm opinion that research may in fact show how minority cultural aspects enrich the majority culture. She further saw research as an important basis for policy making and lobbying, as information on the needs and life situation of disadvantaged groups make policy makers better armed when dealing and intervening with these matters.

The Important Role of Universities

Selolwane continued by emphasising the importance of universities, through their vast area of resources and capacity to influence policies, national policies as well as educational policies. She further focused on the universities’ internal policies; *how do they relate to human rights issues and how, and to which extent, do they address minority and indigenous issues?* In relation to these questions, Selolwane expressed interest in the experiences from Saami research in Tromsø, and the role it has had in advancing Saami issues. In order to promote the same development in

Botswana she saw the need for institutional capacity building, and the need to capacitate the University of Botswana to play this important role.

However, Selolwane and other participants in the programme soon had come to realise that capacity building often meant capacitating the majority population, rather than the disadvantaged groups. Within the academic institutions, there was an absence of people of San origin, as well as lack of research on San issues. Consequently, the aims of the Tromsø - Botswana collaborative programme has been extended to empower people of San origin and try to secure that San students are qualified to enter universities, in Botswana or elsewhere. One of the lessons learned is that in order to encourage more San students to qualify, one has to start supporting them at an early stage in their educational career, and much earlier than what is normally considered relevant for university programmes.

Although it is a problem to introduce ethnic based programmes in Botswana, they have also chosen to focus on the University of Botswana's obligation and right to target relevant research interests regarding the San population. Maintaining the moral responsibility to help disadvantaged people catch up with the rest of the nation, the programme also plan to establish a database and has produced an extensive bibliography on the San.

One of the main objectives, according to Selolwane, is to find out where the "glass ceiling" has stopped the San from entering the academic fields. Meanwhile, the NUFU programme is supporting "non-San" students at the university who are interested in indigenous/San issues, guiding them towards a way of research focusing on San issues *with* the San in stead of *on* the San, as Saugestad mentioned from the Saami areas.

Guidelines for Researchers

Based on their experiences, the programme has developed guidelines for the researchers involved in the cooperation on San/Basarwa issues between Tromsø and Botswana;

- Apply innovative strategies to promote San access to higher education
- Identify ways in which research can make positive contribution to San development
- Promote and further develop research capacity and competence among university staff and students
- Ensure that capacity is reflected in appropriate teaching in studies within and outside the university
- Establish a network for San research (North-South as well as South-South, and indigenous-indigenous: San-Saami)

(More Information about the Programme:

<http://www.uit.no/semut/aktiviteter/NUFU/PRO20-96-main.html>

Link to the University of Botswana: <http://www.ub.bw/home.html>)

Ms. Cristel Ruiz Bode
University of San Carlos, Guatemala
Mr. Georges Midré
University of Tromsø, Norway

EXPERIENCES FROM THE NUFU PROGRAMME “MAYA COMPETENCE BUILDING”

Ms. Cristel Ruiz Bode presented the collaboration programme between the University of San Carlos in Guatemala and the University of Tromsø, Norway. Addressing the process of these kinds of collaboration, she saw the initial stages as the *romantic fase* of the project, where the partners make “love promises” by calling upon the moon and the stars, the ideals of harmony, the wish to make a difference to the people, and to produce knowledge and build competence. Some of the promises might be hard to keep. This love promises resulted in the programme “Maya Competence Building”. Basing the programme on the peace agreement, they took as a point of departure the rights of the indigenous peoples as understood in the Peace agreement and internationally (ILO 169, UN etc).

A Need for Flexibility

A main objective of the programme is to establish academic opportunities on a master level for Maya students. However, this objective proved very hard to implement. In Guatemala most Maya students never reach master level at the university. Very few complete their studies at bachelor level, and among the ones continuing their university studies, the most common degree is called “licenciatura”. Consequently, The MCB programme decided that some of the original criteria for entering the programme had to be changed. Ruiz reported that after opening up the programme to meet some of the “realities of Guatemala” it had become a success. Realising that development efforts take time, Ruiz focused on some of the results from the first 4 years of Maya Competence Building. Since 1998, 30 young students have received financial support to do fieldwork and finish their thesis. These 30 have passed their exams at the “licenciatura” level. Two students are on the master level and one on the doctorate level. Three of the students mentioned participated in Tromsø at the Forum. They belong to different ethnic groups. According to Ruiz, the programme has succeeded in building bridges, between ethnic groups and between people from different parts of the country. The project has showed them the importance of working together. In addition to the thesis, the students and researchers involved have produced a total of six books, journals, and films published in different medias. The programme has further been important as a catalyst for the participants’ interests, ambitions and talents, and many of them take part in the political and social life of Guatemala.

Making Room for Maya Students within the University Systems

Many Mayas in Guatemala still face poverty, hunger and discrimination, and Ruiz was very certain that programmes like the Maya Competence Building might change the future for many of the Maya children. The most important was that the programme “make room” for Maya students within the university system. The programme has received support from Norway/NUFU funds for another 5 years, and now they no longer have to convince students to apply. 416 students have applied for 2002. This is a lot more than they will be able to support, but shows that the program has been a success. Ruiz ended by declaring that the romance between the two universities had turned into real love.

Institutional Frameworks for Collaboration

Mr. Georges Midré from the University of Tromsø elaborated on the experiences from the Maya Competence Building programme, and especially focused on the institutional frameworks for the programme. Admitting that they had entered into the cooperation without much knowledge of San Carlos, he now realised that the two universities collaborating could hardly be more different;

- The University of Tromsø, the smallest and newest university in Norway, with 6500 students and a staff of less than 2000,
- The University of San Carlos; one of the oldest and most prestigious universities in Latin America, with more than 120 000 students and a staff of 6000.

Another major difference was the social and political position each of the universities held in their respective society. The University of San Carlos has a more crucial role in the Guatemalan society than any of the Norwegian Universities in Norway. As an example the University Board at San Carlos elects the members to the national boards of the social security institutions, to the Bank of Guatemala and to the higher courts, among others. Consequently, the seats at the university board are prestigious and attractive. Similar to political campaigns, the process before the elections is long and expensive, with strong emphasis on advertisements, meetings, gifts and parties, trying to reach potential supporters.

Beside the rector, the deans are important political actors in the Guatemalan system. Depending on financial support from the outside, not only political parties, but also business firms and individuals on the outside become important allies. According to people in Guatemala, positions within the university system may in some occasions also be given in exchange for contributions prior to university elections. According to Midré, the success of any inter-university cooperation with Guatemala depends on a realistic assessment of these power relations, and knowledge of the subtleties of decision-making. He further thought that one of the factors explaining the relative success of the Maya Competence Building is the political experience of the director, Cristel Ruiz Bode. Another effect of the political system at the San Carlos University is that all the top and medium level leaders are changed together with the rector and deans. Consequently, also some of the Guatemalan partners in the Maya Competence Building may be changed after the next election!

The Internal Challenges of the Programme

Midré went on to mention some of “internal” challenges of the programme. Because of the lack of Maya students at the master level, they had, as Ms Ruiz mentioned, decided to change the MCB requirements a little, and to also include students without Maya background - and at the “Licenciatura” level. Although it is the most “usual” academic degree in Guatemala, it is not recognised as graduate level in Norway, and within the NUFU system. The Maya Competence Building still chose to bend the rules in order to be able to include more students. Midré added that he considered this a success.

Another problem was the specific Maya focus of the programme. Not tolerating discrimination of any kind, public institutions like the San Carlos University initially did not accept ethnic specific grants. Admitting that this might be a sound general principle, Midré thought that the very obvious differences between different ethnic groups in Guatemala, legitimised the positive discrimination of Mayan students. But even though the leaders and bureaucrats tacitly have accepted how the programme works, the main goal of the MCB programme and the regulations of the San Carlos University still are in conflict. They have not found an institutionalised solution to the problem.

Emphasising the general problem of shifting priorities among financing authorities in Norway, and the fact that the MCB was the only NUFU programme to receive continued support in Central America, Midré ended his intervention by focusing on the need for a *long-term perspective* on these kinds of programmes. It takes time to develop infrastructure and experience, and time for the students to get through the university system.

More Information about the Programme:

<http://www.uit.no/semut/aktiviteter/NUFU/PRO05-98-main.htm>

Link to the University of San Carlos: <http://www.usac.edu.gt/2.html>

Ms. Diala Lopez Lau
Urracan University, Nicaragua

EXPERIENCES FROM THE NUFU PROGRAMME “CULTURAL REVITALISATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES OF THE ATLANTIC COAST OF NICARAGUA”

Ms. Diala Lopez reported from a collaborative effort between the University of URACCAN in Nicaragua and the University of Tromsø, Norway. With the IREMADES/IPILC, Bluefields as the executive co-ordinator, the Rama Cay community development project is financed by NUFU – The Norwegian University Council until 2002. The partners hope to obtain new support for the next phase of the project, starting 2003.

Situated on the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua, the Urracan University was established in 1995, aiming to strengthen the autonomy process by providing education to men and women of the different ethnical and indigenous communities in the region. According to Diala Lopez Lau, the NUFU-financed cooperation programme fits well into this agenda. Lopez Lau started her intervention by emphasising that the general objective of the programme is to find effective and sustainable methods for working with indigenous communities like the Rama, and to develop approaches and development models that can later be used in other indigenous communities in the region. Presenting some of the plans for joint research between the Tromsø and Urracan students and faculty members, Lopez Lau mentioned several reasons for choosing a focus on the Rama. First of all, the nearness between the Rama community and Bluefields made it an easy choice. Secondly, the Ramas are loosing their language and have problems with the demarcation of their territory. (One of the current issues is the construction of a railroad passing through Rama territory). Thirdly, the similarities between the Saami and Rama people made the focus on the Rama even more interesting.

Community Based Programme

An important point of departure for the programme has been that research questions should not be developed “from the arm chair” but derive from the inputs that community members make in the planning and implementation phases of the project. What could cultural revitalisation and natural resource conservation and management possibly mean in the case of the Rama? What do the Rama people like to see happen in their community? What are their problems, concerns, hopes and aspirations? Before establishing the NUFU cooperation programme, project and topics were discussed with the community council in Rama Cay. Three main areas of study were agreed upon:

- Use and management of natural resources
- Community development
- Language and culture revitalisation

Additionally, the council would like to give priority to the following projects:

- Building a secondary school
- Support to Rama students attending high school in Bluefields
- (Re)building a “cultural house”

University-NGO Cooperation

These projects were, however, not considered to meet the requirements of NUFU in Norway. Later the partners have been successful in establishing a parallel programme for supporting the development of the Rama Community, financed by the SAIH (The Norwegian Students’ and Academics’ International Assistance Fund). The Urracan projects are thus also examples of how different types of development cooperation can support each other.

Lopez Lau reported that within the setting of the cultural house, the SAIH and the NUFU programme have organised several workshops with a wide variety of topics. (How to build unity among the Ramas, Participatory methodology, Methodology for teaching Rama language and Local Food, Music and dancing, among others). They have also arranged exchange visits between the Ramas and other indigenous groups in the region/Central America. Further, the project has supported the work of Haldis Balto, a Saami women who has produced a series of textbooks in the Rama language for preschool and primary school children. They have also supported Dr. Maria Louisa Costa for her legal assistance to the Ramas in their struggle to defend their territory from external intrusion. Lopez Lau emphasised that these extra activities addressed the pressing needs of the Rama people. Additionally, the community work will benefit from, and give legitimacy to, the core NUFU research projects.

The students and faculty members of the University of Urracan have been invited to participate in the NUFU programme. Lopez Lau reported that different research projects and themes are in process at the bachelor level, at the postgraduate, master level, at the doctorate level. Additionally other faculty members participate in the programme. Some of the projects are:

Bachelor level:

- Experience of the Artesanal Fishery Co-operative Movement.
- The use of fish resources as a development alternative at Rama Cay.
- Teaching Spanish as second language in the Primary School in Rama Cay
- Characterisation of traditional mixed gardening in Dockuno, la Zompopera
- Use of traditional medical plants in La Cruz del Coco y Rama Cay.
- Survival of the Rama language
- A health model for the Rama community
- The agricultural frontier and the Rama communal land
- Leadership and participation in Rama Cay
- Diagnosing forest resources in the Rama territory
- Legal processes involving the Rama’s struggle for the communal land
- Eco-tourism in Rama Cay

Post Graduate level:

- Historical Mapping of the Rama Community

Master level-2000:

- Joint Ventures in Development in Nicaragua's South Atlantic Coast: Challenges and Opportunities.
- Conflict, Development, and Regional Autonomy: A community-based social movement and the Dry Canal Project in the Nicaraguan
- Rama Attitudes towards the Revitalisation of the Rama Language

Lopez Lau also mentioned all the difficulties related to research and assistance projects in small communities like Rama Cay. The community has already experienced a rather long history of NGO's and development projects. Lopez Lau expected these experiences to influence people's views on the new programme. She also expected some people to be a lot less enthusiastic about it than the researchers themselves are. She felt however, that instead of regretting the history, they should consider it another issue begging for research.

Stating that they aim to publish the research findings in a book, and make it available nationally and internationally, Lopez Lau hoped that the research projects could have a positive impact on Rama culture and socio-economic life. Also, she hoped that the programme would make a lasting positive contribution to economic, social and cultural life of the Rama Cay people, and that it would make the Ramas more aware of their rich cultural heritage.

A more detailed report from the programme is available on the FORUM home pages:

<http://www.uit.no/ssweb/forum>

Ms. Heidi Salmi
The Saami Parliament, Norway

THE SAAMI PARLIAMENT AND NORWEGIAN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Addressing the role of the Saami parliament in relation to the Norwegian development strategies towards indigenous peoples, Ms. Heidi Salmi emphasised the Saami Parliament's relevant experiences from local as well as regional and international developmental and organisational efforts.

The Saami Parliament

As the Saami people's national elected body, representing and acting on behalf of the Saami people, the Saami Parliament deals with cases deemed by the parliament to involve Saami people. It is intended to be a focal point of political debate among the Saami, and a driving force on issues affecting the Saami. The Saami Parliament is to act in an advisory capacity for Norway's national authorities. One of the most important roles of the parliament is to help formulate policies and to help define the parameters for the participation of the Saami People in international fora. Another task is to promote indigenous issues on national and international levels. Salmi noted, however, that it still constitutes a major challenge to make the Norwegian authorities recognise Saami competence and experience, in Norway as well as in the framework of international cooperation.

Experiences from the Barents Region

Salmi especially mentioned the experiences gained through the Barents cooperation. As part of the Barents cooperation, the Saami Parliament participates in the Regional Council and the Indigenous Peoples Working Group. The main objectives of these programmes are to improve the living conditions and to help establishing indigenous organisations in the Barents region. Together with the experiences of the Saami Council from international projects, these cross-border activities constitute an important basis for possible international indigenous to indigenous cooperation in the future. Salmi noted, however, that in order to facilitate indigenous to indigenous cooperation, there is a need for Norway to help improve its own indigenous organisations and institutions so that these can more actively participate in international cooperation with other indigenous peoples.

Indigenous Rights and Empowerment

Referring to the Norwegian development policies regarding cooperation with indigenous peoples in development countries, Salmi stressed the need to base all programmes on the ILO convention 169. Emphasising the crucial role of empowerment within all development efforts, Salmi further stated that cooperation programmes including indigenous peoples should be based on notions of equality, democracy building and self-determination. Commenting the continuation of the Programme for Indigenous Peoples in NORAD, the Saami Parliament saw the need to include Asia, Africa and Russia.

Heidi Salmi ended her speech by inviting the Norwegian government to consult the Saami Parliament on how their experiences might be put to use through international development cooperation. She also stated that Norway would benefit from involving and consulting the Saami Parliament when formulating a Norwegian Strategy for development cooperation with indigenous peoples elsewhere.

More information on the Saami Parliament's homepages: <http://www.samediggi.no/>

Ms. Ingunn Klepsvik

The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD)

NORWEGIAN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Focussing on the future plans for the assistance to indigenous people financed by NORAD, Ms. Ingunn Klepsvik started by explaining the division of labour between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and NORAD. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has the overall responsibility for the elaboration and development of strategies and policies regarding all development assistance, including support to indigenous people. NORAD is responsible for planning and implementation of the different types of assistance programmes.

Emphasising the difficulty of producing an exact estimate on how much assistance that goes to indigenous peoples programmes, Klepsvik mentioned the main types of assistance:

- Bilateral assistance (country to country assistance),
- Assistance through Norwegian NGO's and local NGO's,
- Regional Funds
- Special allocations

Additionally, the Ministry supports indigenous people through other channels.

One of the more specific and explicit programmes for development aid to indigenous peoples has been the Indigenous People's Programme. Klepsvik commented that the name could be misleading; it is called "The Indigenous People's Programme" even though it includes only 5 countries in Latin America. Klepsvik continued by quoting parts of the Follow-up Plan for Development Cooperation with Indigenous Peoples:

- Establishment of the Forum for Development Cooperation with Indigenous Peoples
- Relocation of the Indigenous Peoples's programme (from FAFO to NORAD),
- Preparing of guidelines for future support to indigenous peoples,
- Evaluation of the geographical and sectoral orientation of the programme

New Guidelines for Future Support to Indigenous Peoples

Emphasising that Norwegian assistance to indigenous peoples should be based on the ILO convention 169, Klepsvik mentioned a number of documents containing political signals and reflections, which form the basis for elaborating the new guidelines, among others:

- Human Rights Plan of Action – "The White Paper"
- The Guidelines for Democracy Building
- The Plan of Action to fight Poverty
- Guidelines for Support to Civil Society

- Handbook for the Assessment of Human Rights

She further noted that the Follow-up plan stated four areas of vital importance to ensure the interests of the indigenous peoples in the development process in which they are part:

- Democracy development
- Good government/ Responsible government
- Rights in relation to natural resources/ Equity issues
- Basic social services

According to Klepshvik, the ongoing work on the guidelines is aiming at strengthening the competence of NORAD as a responsible directorate through ensuring: *professionalism, a coherent approach, and meaningful organisation of the support*. The working group aims at clarifying the goals and basis for the future NORAD support for indigenous people, by describing the future cooperation and also the geographical and sectoral priorities. Indicating that general principles of development cooperation will constitute the basis for the work, Klepshvik assured that these would constantly be weighed against possible particular issues of specific interest that must be considered, like for instance the rights perspective for indigenous people. The new guidelines will be of relevance to all support to indigenous people, including support through Norwegian or international organisations.

The group will particularly look at the target orientation of the relevant institutions and organisations, and propose a system of *result-oriented management models, good organisation, coherence and coordination, synergy and efficient use of the resources available*. A main objective is to strengthen the services that the indigenous people receive, and to strengthen indigenous peoples organisations. The working group is also geared towards international coherence, and has started reviewing the strategies of other institutions and organisations internationally. Klepshvik also promised that a draft be sent on a hearing round to relevant Norwegian, Saami and international institutions and organisations.

Klepshvik ended her speech by addressing *the issue of classification*; how we are supposed to define whether a development should be considered an indigenous project or not. According to Klepshvik, the criteria should be made clearer. Further, the indigenous peoples themselves must be involved during the elaboration of the goals and the methods to be used. Klepshvik further noted that the support must be based on, and contribute to, the international recognition of the basic rights of indigenous people. The indigenous people's own political and social priorities must be taken into account - and supported. Further, all aid should strengthen indigenous peoples possibility and capacity for managing their own interests, their national resources and their national and international relations. It should also contribute to the participation and influence of indigenous peoples on matters of importance to them, being those of national or international order.

More information on the NORAD homepages: <http://www.norad.no>

Ms. Aili Keskitalo
Saami University College

THE RESOURCE CENTRE OF INDIGENOUS RIGHTS IN GUOVDAGEAIDNU

Ms. Aili Keskitalo started her contribution by presenting the Saami University College in Guovdageaidnu, the youngest and smallest university college in Norway. The college has 150 students and a staff of 50, and was built to strengthen Saami culture. Keskitalo emphasised the importance of programmes of higher education in the Saami language and with a Saami perspective.

The Saami University College constitutes a significant part of the efforts of protecting and developing Saami language, culture and societies. It is a multilingual institution, gathering Saami students attending teacher training programs, journalism, and other courses in the Saami language. The Saami University College, the Nordic Saami Institute and some smaller institutions make Guovdageaidnu a very important centre of Saami research and competence building.

Guovdageaidnu will host the Resource Centre of Indigenous Rights, a collaboration project between The Nordic Saami Institute and the Saami University College. The centre is not to engage in research activities, but will when necessary point to needs of research. The centre will be located at the Nordic Saami Institute with a yearly budget of 3 million Norwegian kroner. The centre receives funds from by The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development.

Acknowledging the lack of understanding of the Saami people's status and rights, the centre's mandate is to increase awareness on indigenous issues. The centre will among other tasks provide information to schools, especially in Northern Norway and in all 4 countries with Saami populations. Focusing on cooperation and networking, Keskitalo emphasised that the resource centre is a supplement to existing institutions and organisations.

More information may be found on the Saami University College homepages:
<http://www.samiskhs.no/>

Ms. Ragnhild Enoksen
Journalist, Norway

REPORT FROM THE WORLD CONFERENCE AGAINST RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA AND RELATED INTOLERANCE IN DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA

Gathering men and women in formal dresses, leisure wear and traditional costumes; diplomats, politicians and representatives from the UN member states and NGOs, 15.000 - 16.000 people from all over the world participated at the conference in Durban. Ms. Enoksen reported from the conference and related the issues and debates to similar debates in Northern Norway.

According to Ms. Enoksen, the final document from the World Conference and the programme of action shows that the United Nations put discrimination against indigenous people in exactly the same category as discrimination against people of African descent, people of Asian descent, migrants - documented and undocumented, refugees and asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons and persons belonging to other vulnerable groups. The conference recognised that racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance often target all these groups, notably on grounds related to language, religion or national or ethnic origin.

Commenting the conference proceedings and background documents, Enoksen mentioned that the UN sees the World Conference in conjunction with the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People. According to the document the Decade presents a unique opportunity to consider the invaluable contributions of indigenous peoples to political, economic, social, cultural and spiritual development throughout the world to our societies, as well as different challenges, including racism and racial discrimination. Stressing that slavery and colonialism was an appalling tragedy in the history of humanity and a crime against humanity, the documents further mentioned the severe consequences particularly for Africans and their descendants and for indigenous peoples.

Further, Enoksen noted that the report mentions that discrimination continues, particularly in penal systems and in the application of law, as well as in the actions and attitudes of institutions and individuals responsible for law enforcement. Certain groups, including indigenous peoples, are over-represented in penal institutions, and in many countries political and legal structures or institutions do not correspond to the multiethnic, pluricultural and plurilingual characteristics of the population. The conference also expressed deep concern that as a consequence of racism, indicators in the field of education, employment, health, housing, infant mortality and life expectancy for the discriminated groups are lower than the average within the national population.

The World Conference against Racism accepted a programme of action. The Programme of action shall be implemented in co-operation with states, regional and international organisations and financial institutions. In order to stop and prevent racism, racial discrimination and exclusion, the programme urges investors always to consult the affected communities. It urges states to work in concert with Indigenous people, and it urges them to consider signing and ratifying international agreements such as the ILO-convention 169 on Indigenous Peoples rights.

Indigenous Issues

Some of the disputed paragraphs in the final declaration and the programme of action were about indigenous people and the right to sovereignty. Indigenous Peoples Working Group rejected these paragraphs. Rigoberta Menchu Tum and others claimed that the World Conference was discriminating against indigenous people because it denied them the right to sovereignty. Toward the end of the conference, the Mexican government proposed an amendment of the disputed paragraphs, and this version was adopted in the last plenary session at the conference. In the programme of action, the World Conference against racism urges the UN to adopt the declaration on Indigenous people before the end of the decade of Indigenous people, in 2005. In the declaration, the question of indigenous sovereignty, or self-determination, is still central.

Enoksen related the lack of support from the Norwegian delegates to the fact that the Norwegian cabinet earlier likewise has shown discomfort with the Saami parliament's demand of Saami sovereignty.

Northern Norway and the accusations of Saami racism

In Norway, Enoksen went back to her daily work as a press reporter in a region where the Saami people and the Norwegian people live close together and where the question of indigenous self-determination is the question of Saami self-determination. It is not a question that makes big headlines in the newspaper, and media don't deal with it very often. But when it comes up, Saami self-determination and related questions are controversial. They make Norwegians accuse the Saami of being racist. It also makes some people think that the Saami people will claim a sovereign Saami state.

The Saami have been able to establish their own elected parliament, and they have obtained influence in cultural matters such as education, language and media. They are working on matters like land rights, but have not yet started debates on economic questions.

At the moment, there is a distance between the Saami and the Norwegian government on the question of self-determination. Enoksen claimed that Saami leaders themselves are unsure of what they shall put into their demand of self-rule. She further argued that Saami sovereignty or self-determination would probably be different to indigenous self-determination on the Salmon Island in the Pacific or to the Nunavuk territory in Canada.

Enoksen had experienced that Norwegians viewed the demands of Saami politicians as violations of the United Nations declaration on human rights and the conventions against racism. Some also argued that the Norwegian government supports racism because they have started to give in to the demands of the Saami. Enoksen ended her intervention by advising the people in question to read UN-papers, including the final papers from the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

Enoksen's lecture is available in full text on the Forum homepages:

<http://www.uit.no/ssweb/forum>

For more information on the World Conference in Durban: <http://www.hri.ca/racism/>