

Mr. Jorge Ishizawa (Peru): ISKAY YACHAY / PAYA YATIWI (TWO KINDS OF KNOWLEDGE) IN THE RURAL SCHOOLS OF THE CENTRAL ANDES OF PERU

The Children and Biodiversity Program

The 'Children and Biodiversity' project is aimed at helping Andean Amazonian communities to nurture their schools and incorporate local knowledge into the curriculum that promotes biodiversity and community well-being. It highlighted the contribution of the children in rural communities to the nurturance of agro-biodiversity through their multiple activities as members of their families and their community. After an exploratory phase, the three and a half-year second phase started in 2005 in six places in the Andean highlands (Ancash, Huancavelica, Ayacucho, Cusco, Apurímac and Puno). The project included a component on rural education, but in the second phase, the educational component has become more important and the involvement of rural teachers in the implementation of the project has been crucial.

This project was given seed-money for a year in 2000 through a European Community block grant. It was then funded as a three-year project from 2002 under the auspices of the German Ministry for Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the German international NGO tdh-Germany. It was coordinated by PRATEC with the participation of seven Nuclei for Andean Cultural Affirmation (NACA), small community-based organisations (CBOs).

Project rationale

Traditional authorities in the Andean communities attribute the present difficulties and lack of well-being in their communities to a generalized loss of respect among all beings in their *pacha* or local world. This loss of respect is not only found within the human community but can be seen in the loss of respect shown by humans towards their deities and natural entities. In our view, this is one of the consequences of the modern secularist ideology of progress and poverty eradication in the rural areas, that was embodied in the 'development' ethos of the past half century.

According to the communities' traditional authorities, one of the major contributors to this situation is the rural school. However, they are not ready to accept the state's proposals for educational reform. Nor do they want a separate educational system, as some activists are proposing. They, and the children's parents, realize that the present educational system does not prepare young people for life and it is based on an obsolete 'educational pact' with the state. The new educational pact with the state that these rural communities want takes the form of what in the Aymara language spoken in the Altiplano area of Puno is expressed as Paya Yatiwi and in the Quechua language as Iskay Yachay. The phrase means 'two kinds of knowledge' and expresses the demand of the Andean Amazonian rural communities for the 'two kinds of knowledge' to be taught in school: their own and the modern project of literacy, science and technology. Paya Yatiwi / Iskay Yachay has three interrelated components: a) the recovery of respect in the community (towards their deities, nature and among the community members themselves); b) learning to read and write

respecting and valuing their oral tradition; and c) teaching the 'seven skills' that allow people to 'pass life', that is, to live a good life.

The demand that the two kinds of knowledge be taught at school poses a radical challenge to the current system because it links a school promoting cultural diversity to the community's educational culture oriented to 'passing life'. The school thus makes an incremental contribution to the community's educational culture.

Project results

a. A methodology for the incorporation of local knowledge into the school curriculum has been developed and applied by rural teachers based on the community's agrofestive calendar. This methodology builds on the collection of the community's traditional practices in agriculture, husbandry, and forestry. Special emphasis is given to the conservation of biodiversity, which constitutes an important part of the Andean communities' ICH.

b. Respect in the community is promoted as the school integrates its activities with the community's agrofestive calendar. The school takes part in the traditional authority system by participating in the community's rituals.

c. The parents are taking an active role in the school by sharing their ICH in the student's learning of the 'seven skills' that allow a full community member to 'pass life.'

d. Respect for the local languages has been promoted in the school because the reading and writing curriculum now takes into account the fact that Andean languages are essentially oral.