

Theatre for Peace



**CPS work in Cameroon, DR Congo, Nepal,
Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Sudan
and Uganda**

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**Brot
für die Welt**



Theatre
for
Peace



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DR Congo, Nepal, Rwanda,
Sierra Leone, South Sudan
and Uganda**

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Introduction

by *Flaubert Djateng and Christiane Kayser*

In Africa — and elsewhere in the world —, there are various modes of expression and social exchange that we cultivate quite naturally in our daily lives. These include public speaking, story-telling, mimicry, proclamation, the stories and songs of the *griot*, evenings around the campfire. They may employ various forms of language (verbal, gestural or collective), narration, etc. We do not necessarily link these forms of communication and education to what is commonly placed under the concept of theatre. In African villages and towns in general there are no stages, costumes and props, written scripts or predetermined plots, and yet theatre mode is a very real part of people's day-to-day lives. Of course there are African dramatic artists. To mention but two examples: the plays of the Nigerian Nobel Prize Winner Wole Soyinka have become classics, and stage directors such as the Senegalese Sembene Ousmane have used drama and film to showcase questions of governance.

The second educational manual we are publishing alongside the *Building peace* series places the spotlight on theatre as an instrument for promoting peace, but also for educating the young generations. Professionals and lovers of the dramatic arts working in the Great Lakes countries (DR Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and Sudan), in Sierra Leone, Cameroon and Nepal present the discipline for us as a technique that can open up multiple horizons in child and adult alike at the level of expression and the development of artistic skills. They also show how it can be thought-provoking and question our prejudices and values. This is a critical first step towards societal change. Theatre is also the stage, the audience and its reaction and interactions with the theme. To speak of theatre for peace means conceiving a communication project that leads to a performance in which adults and young people actively participate and learn to become actors on behalf of their own future.

As this manual goes to print the epidemic of Ebola fever is severely challenging the populations in West African countries such as Liberia and Sierra Leone where Bread for the World works with local partners and peace workers in the programmes of the Civil Peace Service (CPS). This situation is in large part related to the failure of the health systems in countries that are emerging from deadly civil wars and creates hysteria in the West that is hard to control. Even in the countries concerned there is a great danger of the population being excluded and margin-

alised, and the solidarities and the social fabric necessary for survival being destroyed. And yet our local colleagues on the ground show us that we must not become despondent, we must do everything possible to raise awareness and arm the population against this terrible disease which often arouses superstition and nasty rumours in the popular imagination. It is a question of finding ambitious and original channels of expression to publicise the risks, and create the reflexes necessary for survival in everyone concerned. Of finding new ways of doing things, attitudes and behaviours that will block the progress of the disease and make it possible to stem and conquer it over the long term.

This manual is an opportunity for the CPS networks to share the experiences of some of the people and organisations who use theatre as a tool for communication, change and peace. You will find theoretical bases, concrete examples related to the contents and some techniques and methods we would like to make available to as wide an audience as possible. While the goal is not to turn you into professional entertainers, you will find techniques, tips, and other people's hands-on experience in the discipline. The purpose of this manual is to de-dramatise the art of the sketch, the role play, the theatre and add it to the toolkit of the CPS peace workers.

This is theatre practice as a tool for reflection and communication, for expressing emotions and points of view, be they diametrically opposed, which can open a chink in apparently sealed situations weighed down in dead ends or which seem to be impossible to resolve and let some light into conflicts between people and communities.

All the experiences described in this manual have been developed in a community-based way with the help of experienced peace workers and African *artistes*. We would like to thank Charlie Haffner, Jeanne Medom, Claus Schrowange, Silvia Stroh and our colleagues of the GIZ CPS in Nepal for their enlightening and enriching contributions. These articles are amply illustrated with beautiful photographs that give a real glimpse of the emotions and epiphanies that happen in front of and among the audience. We also hope this publication will help to strengthen the contacts and exchanges between the different actors who promote this approach in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

October 2014

What is Forum Theatre for APRED-RGL?

by Reverend Kasereka Lusenge Joshua*

The African Great Lakes sub-region is blessed by cultural diversity, natural beauty and rich resources. But for decades the sub-region has been plagued by political instability and armed conflict. Struggles for power and tensions over natural resources are recurrent, leading to humanitarian crises and poverty. Millions of people have been killed, many are displaced or refugees, and thousands of women have been raped. Many people have lost hope.

Much of the violent conflict in Burundi, Rwanda and DR Congo over the past decades has originated from discrimination – and political, social and economic exclusion. People have been excluded or even killed for their identity. In the worst cases the extreme intolerance towards people of a different ethnic group has ended in massacres and genocide.

Rumour, prejudice, stereotypes and myths amongst the people of the sub-region lead to discrimination, exclusion, hatred which fuel violence. There is a high level of mistrust between the various ethnic communities and nationalities in the sub-region. “Ethnic identity” is founded on interpretations of one’s own group regarding other groups. People belonging to other groups are judged on the basis of clichés and generalizations. For example, as a Congolese living and working in Rwanda I am somehow directly affected. I sometimes hear ‘Congomani!’ behind my back, some people talking negatively about me, others are suspicious when meeting me. I have experienced intolerance and discrimination, and the same thing happens again and again to Rwandans in my country.

Rumour flourishes in times of increased tension, enemy images are created... Political propaganda sometimes supports this, polarizing between ‘self’ and ‘others’, portraying the other as ‘the reason why’, as ‘a threat’.

The work of APRED-RGL (Actions pour la promotion de la Paix, la Réconciliation et le Développement durable dans la Sous-région des Grands Lacs) takes place in this complicated context. We are building local capacities for peace and sustainable development in Rwanda, Burundi and DR Congo, facilitating inter-

cultural learning and reconciliation, promoting social, local and trans-border cohesion, tolerance and solidarity, and we aim to contribute to giving hope to the people.

Since August 2013 we have been using forum theatre as a tool to work on the prejudice, rumour, stereotypes and myths that divide the people in the Great Lakes region. Forum theatre helps to identify root causes of conflicts and to learn how conflicts can be resolved peacefully. The process of reconciliation does not only happen on the cognitive level, but also very strongly involves the emotional level. In our experience, this is where theatre plays an important role.

Peaceful cohabitation cannot be achieved by a forum theatre programme of a few hours, but it can be a first step and prepare the basis for the future development of the personality, to understand the other, develop empathy and tolerance. Often we notice participants changing their attitude during the forum theatre programme.

Forum theatre opens avenues for reconciliation and heals open wounds so that people in the Great Lakes Region who were affected by many violent conflicts can live better with the burden of the past.

Our target groups appreciate our theatre troupe ‘Badilika’ and the method we use. The participation is usually very active. Badilika as such is becoming a strong symbol of peace, uniting young Congolese and Rwandan actors that share our values and are doing their work with commitment and passion.

The forum theatre activities do not stand alone. The activities are embedded in our peace & reconciliation programme.

Often our local groups on the ground organize the venue, mobilize the people, do follow up on action plans etc. Badilika is perceived as “their own theatre troupe”, not something imposed on them from the outside. And they identify themselves with it.

We not only use forum theatre in churches, market places, town halls or perform in schools, the method is also helpful during conferences and workshops, either to introduce the situation in the region or to intensify discussions on the conflicts affecting us.

Last but not least, the forum theatre activities have also made our initiative better known. With this specific tool, we now are able to reach out to new areas, and many people are becoming increasingly interested in our work.

We thank our esteemed partners, friends and the audiences of our forum theatre programmes for their support and cooperation.

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* APRED-RGL Coordinator

** Founded in 2008, APRED-RGL is an initiative of the Community of Baptist Churches in the Centre of Africa (CBCA) in Eastern DR Congo, the Presbyterian Church of Rwanda and four dioceses of the Anglican Church of Rwanda. In 2013, the Union of Baptist Churches of Burundi joined the initiative.



Interaction with spectators during the play

Forum Theatre for peace

Experiences in Uganda, Rwanda, DR Congo and South Sudan

by Claus Schrowange

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1. Introduction

In 2009 I attended the World Forum Theatre festival in Graz. Forum theatre troupes from Asia, Europe and South America were presenting their work. Workshops during the day, performances in the evening. Three performances touched me especially. Actors from the London-based group Cardboard Citizens created an emotional link with the audience¹ by just being themselves. The actors were homeless people, playing their real life experiences on the streets of London. Through the authenticity of their way of acting they became believable. The audience felt with them and for them. This immediately broke the barrier between spectators and actors.

The second group which left a lasting impression was Jana Sanskriti from India. Their style of forum theatre includes dance, movement, images and a lot of symbols that leave a space for personal interpretation and imagination, and are both artistic and educational. Jana Sanskriti is working mainly on Gender Based Violence in India.

Finally, there was TO-Tehran, a University affiliated Iranian theatre group, using forum theatre against oppressive systems. With simple black T-shirts and with just a few symbolic items they were acting injustice and misuse of power in a serious as well as absurd manner, speaking out the truth while making the audience simultaneously laugh and reflect on the issues presented.

What was missing in Graz was a group from Africa. This fact and the visually powerful impact of some performances motivated me to integrate forum theatre into my practice and explore its opportunities for peace work.

My theatre background is more or less an alternative one. I was trained by Gabor Csetneki, a Hungarian theatre master, who has an actor-centred approach, where theatre becomes a discovery and expression of “body, heart and soul”, rather than the classical approach where actors repeat some sentences others have written. I also had the chance to meet and be trained by Keith Johnstone, the inventor of improvisation theatre. Harald Hahn — a German TO-practitioner — introduced me to Augusto Boal’s methods.

I started in November 2009 to work for EAIGCM² in Kampala, Uganda. It was a contract within the framework of the Civil Peace Service³. In January 2010 I gathered 12 students and young graduates of Music, Dance & Drama from Mak-

¹ ‘Spect-actors’ as Augusto Boal, the founder of forum theatre, calls them.

² East African Institute of Governance and Conflict Management, Kampala

³ <http://www.ziviler-friedensdienst.org/en>



Promoting peace and reconciliation through forum theatre

erere University, Kampala, all of them hungry to apply what they had studied. Rafiki Theatre was born. During the next four years we explored the possibilities of participatory theatre for the promotion of peace, human rights and sustainable development. We developed our own style — an emotional and provocative, authentic and believable way of acting; integrating music, dance, movements, images and symbols.

Productions on various topics were designed, and then hundreds of performances were given in Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda and South Sudan. Seven forum theatre troupes in Uganda and one in South Sudan were trained using our approach. We developed plays with them and supervised their work. We participated in festivals and larger campaigns, did street theatre as well as indoor performances. We did forum theatre with illiterate people in the remotest places as well as with the intellectual city elite. The style we developed became known and experiences were shared at universities and during various workshops.

2013 I left Uganda for Rwanda, where I started as UEM⁴ Co-worker for APRED-RGL⁵, a regional peace initiative hosted by protestant churches from

⁴ United Evangelical Mission, an international organisation of 34 protestant churches from 3 continents.

⁵ APRED-RGL was founded in 2008 by three member churches of the United Evangelical Mission. For more info: www.apred-rgl.org

Rwanda, DR Congo and Burundi. APRED-RGL is trying to bring people in the Great Lakes Region together, in order to foster a mutual understanding and facilitate reconciliation. It aims to build local capacities for peaceful coexistence in a region that has been plagued by decades of instability and armed conflicts, leaving behind humanitarian crisis, poverty and deep-rooted hatred against the perceived “enemy”.

In August 2013 I found myself in Goma, (DRC) in a not yet completed, dusty small building of the CBCA⁶, together with the youth group “Jeunesse en Action”. We did a forum theatre workshop while 7 grenades were exploding, one less than a kilometre away as the crow flies. The local people were blaming Rwandans for being behind the attack. The atmosphere was tense. Despite this we decided to continue, developed some scenes where we integrated the fears of actors into the piece and finally performed to 200 people in a CBCA church. The play was about the hatred of the people of Goma for the people of Rwanda. I saw that the “Rafiki style” could add value to the Programme of APRED-RGL.

Together with the Rwandan youth centre “Vision Jeunesse Nouvelle” we formed Badilika (“Change”), a Rwandan-Congolese Forum Theatre troupe. Badilika works on the prejudices, stereotypes, myths and rumours that divide the people in Africa’s Great Lakes Region. After some performances in the border towns of Gisenyi and Goma we toured around for 3 weeks in July and August 2014, entering into conflict-affected communities in Rwanda and DR Congo. 28 performances were done, reaching out to more than 3,700 people.

In this article I propose to describe the forum theatre approach developed by Rafiki Theatre in Uganda and South Sudan, and the experiences of Badilika with this approach in Rwanda and the DRC. I will conclude with a chapter about the trauma-healing effect of theatre and some remarks about the opportunities and limitations of forum theatre in peace work.

⁶ Communauté Baptiste au Centre de l’Afrique (CBCA) is one of the three churches that founded APRED-RGL. It is mainly active in the Kivu-Region in DR Congo. The other member churches of APRED-RGL are the Presbyterian Church of Rwanda, the Anglican Church of Rwanda and since 2013 the Union of Baptist Churches of Burundi.

2. Why theatre and what is ‘Forum Theatre’?

“Theatre is a form of knowledge: It should and can also be a means of transforming society. Theatre can help us build our future, rather than just waiting for it.”⁷

Theatre can strengthen the emotional and psychological appeal of messages and provides a believable and interesting way to explore sensitive issues. It can change the way a person thinks and acts. Theatre can engage the audience, it focuses the attention of the spectators and actively involves them in a vivid and touching experience. Active involvement means that the emotions of the spectators, and not just intellectual or cognitive skills, are affected. It is this ability to touch the heart and soul that allows theatre to influence attitudes in ways that traditional instruction cannot.

Since January 2010 I have been working with interactive theatre methods such as Image Theatre, Forum Theatre, Debate Theatre and Invisible Theatre. These methods were developed by the Brazilian Augusto Boal and used in many parts of the world to transfer knowledge and enhance dialogue. Augusto Boal established the “Theatre of the Oppressed” in Brazil in the early 1970s. It is a form of participatory theatre that fosters interaction among participants. Augusto Boal began his experimentations in participatory theatre in the 1950s and 60s while he was artistic director of the Arena Theatre in Rio de Janeiro. He went beyond the stage and organized performances with the Arena troupe in the streets, factories, unions, churches where they could reach the people of the favelas or slums of Rio. Boal discovered how theatre can be used as a mirror that reflects the defects in a society.

Augusto Boal was influenced by the educator Paulo Freire, author of the acclaimed Pedagogy of the Oppressed. The interactive Theatre of the Oppressed is rooted in the four ‘liberation’ principles developed by Paulo Freire:

1. To make the situation lived by the people visible;
2. To analyze the root causes of the situation, including both internal and external sources of it;
3. To explore individual as well as group solutions to these problems;
4. To act for change following the precepts of social justice.⁸

⁷ Augusto Boal, ‘Games for Actors and Non-Actors’, 1992, page xxxi.

⁸ <http://brechtforum.org/abouttop>



Audience intervention during forum theatre in Rwanda

Boal's explorations were all efforts to transform the "monologue" of the traditional performance into a "dialogue" between the audience and the stage. He believed that dialogue is the most common and healthy dynamic between humans, and that all humans desire and are capable of participating in dialogue. He developed methods whereby members of the audience could stop a performance and suggest different actions for the actors who in turn carried out the audience suggestions — thus giving the spectators themselves an opportunity to come up with their own solutions to their collective problems. This was the beginning of Forum Theatre.

Forum theatre is the most commonly used method of the Theatre of the Oppressed. In what Augusto Boal calls "Forum Theatre," the actors begin with a dramatic situation from everyday life — parents trying to help a child addicted to drugs, a neighbour who is being evicted from his home, an individual confronting racial or gender discrimination. The play proceeds to a sad ending, with the "protagonist(s)" being abused, oppressed, maltreated by the antagonist(s)⁹. After the first performance, the content is discussed with the audience, some scenes are repeated with one crucial difference: the spectators become "spect-actors" and can

⁹ Oppressor, rights-abuser, perpetrator etc., while the victims are called 'protagonists' by Augusto Boal.

at any point replace an actor to attempt to change the situation portrayed. In this participatory process anyone can speak and anyone can act.

During the re-play of the situation, audience members are urged to intervene by stopping the action, coming on stage to replace actors, and enacting their own ideas in order to find solutions, while the other actors remain in their character. The audience realizes, as in life, if they don't intervene, nothing will change. And change needs to be done strategically. The people acting as perpetrators of direct, psychological or structural violence on stage will maintain their positions of power until they are convincingly stopped — and just like in life, changing someone's attitude and behaviour isn't easy.

Role-playing serves as a vehicle for analysing power, stimulating public debate and searching for solutions. Participants explore the complexity of the individual/group relations at a variety of levels of human exchange. They are invited to map out: a) the dynamics of power within and between groups; b) the experience and the fear of powerlessness within the individual; and c) rigid patterns of perception that generate miscommunication and conflict, as well as ways of transforming them. The aim of the forum is not to find an ideal solution, but to invent new ways of con-



Giving people in Uganda a voice through forum theatre

fronting problems. Following each intervention, audience members discuss the solution offered. The experience has been called a “rehearsal for life.”¹⁰

The actors interact with the audience, based on real problems that people face in their daily lives. The play then presented to the audience, thus becomes a mirror of the problems experienced in the community. Forum theatre provides an opportunity for the public to observe, think, talk and ask questions about the performed situation. The audience is encouraged to propose a nonviolent approach that could address the problem presented. It thus becomes a laboratory to experiment upon the possible ways to address problems and conflicts. New behaviours and new kinds of relationships can be exercised and learned.

By taking part in this transformative process the spectators experience the possibility of change and realize their potential to influence other people’s behaviour in a positive way. The audience becomes empowered to imagine changes, practice the changes, reflect collectively on the suggestions made and become empowered to generate social change.

“When does a session of *The Theatre of the Oppressed* end? Never — since the objective is not to close a cycle, to generate a catharsis, or to end a development. On the contrary, its objective is to encourage autonomous activity, to set a process in motion, to stimulate transformative creativity, to change spectators into protagonists. And it is precisely for these reasons that the *Theatre of the Oppressed* should be the initiator of changes...”¹¹

A Forum Theatre event usually lasts 2 to 3 hours, guided by a moderator, called ‘Joker’ by Augusto Boal. The Joker is a specific figure within Forum Theatre, whose function is to moderate and facilitate the event, mediate between actors and spectators and in all ways possible assist the latter’s participation. His/her task is to guide the audience through the process. It is important that a safe place is created where people feel free to exchange their stories and look for solutions to their collective problems.¹²

After the welcoming, introduction and explanation of ground rules by the moderator, the play is presented. The play portrays a conflict or problem with a negative ending. It is based on real problems people face in their daily lives. At the end of the play the audience is asked by the moderator to share or comment upon what they have observed during the play, what the play is all about. After this the reality check is done, by asking the audience, whether these situations are really happening. Spectators are invited to share their own experiences and stories. To-

¹⁰ <http://brechtforum.org/aboutforum>

¹¹ Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, Page 245.

¹² Because the term is not easy to understand and may cause some unnecessary confusion, we use the word ‘moderator’. We decided not to use the term ‘facilitator’ either, because in our context this term is mainly used in workshop-settings.

gether possible root causes of the problem are explored and discussed. A short input from a resource person is possible at this point, if necessary. Then the moderator shifts the attention back to the concrete situations that were shown in the play and asks if any of the characters could have acted differently in a way that would then have changed positively the end of the play. Scenes are re-played. This time, however, members of the audience have the opportunity to replace a character on stage to demonstrate their ideas for positive change. The ideas and changes are analysed together.



Audience intervention during the re-play

The aim hereby is not to solve the problem or conflict immediately, which is unrealistic, but to at least slightly influence the attitude and behaviour of the antagonist(s). With these small transformations a process towards problem solving/conflict resolution has started. At the end strategies are designed to use the knowledge to actually make improvements as individuals or groups. Working groups are sometimes formed and concrete action plans can evolve out of it.

Forum Theatre is a way through which people may build an understanding of their own situation and explore in a creative and constructive way their needs and potential solutions to their problems. It enhances the capacity to analyse local problems. It teaches critical thinking, interrogates one’s own assumptions, exercises social imagination and creative problem solving, whilst simultaneously holding in mind one’s immediate interests and the larger interests of the community as a whole. It helps to unite people. This togetherness is a basis for deeper involvement in community life. It offers the possibility to communicate more effectively, to see things in a new way, it also liberates from stereotypes, promotes equality and offers the possibility to create a common vision.

Theatre can become an aesthetic tool for change. It is art and should always remain as such. Art can provide food for thought, motivate, stimulate, provoke, hence make the emotional and cognitive human machinery run to its limits. To put it in the words of the German author Günter Grass: “*Art is accusation, expression, passion. [...] Art is uncompromising and life is full of compromises*”.¹³

¹³ http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/g/gunter_grass.html

3. The way we do Forum Theatre

3.1 The framework

The ideal forum theatre performance is indoor with 20 to 100 spectators, in a hall of the size of one to three classrooms. The larger the audience, the less intense the programme. In a large audience, many people who would like to contribute don't get the chance. The exchange and discussions become less intense.

The emotional connection to the audience is important. A piece of authentic, emotional, believable acting will make the audience not only reflect — their heart is also attached. They will recognize the play as a real life situation, they will put themselves in the shoes of actors and try to understand their feelings. Outdoors it is much more difficult to create this emotional link. The voice, emotions, energy disappear. Nevertheless, at venues without a hall or larger room, you may not have a choice. For outdoor performances, we usually try to locate a sidewall of a building that we use as a stage background to avoid having an audience at all 4 angles. If there are no buildings, a big tree could also do it. It is also good to put barrier tape to demarcate the stage. It can be easily done with ropes and sticks. When identifying the right place to use as a stage for an open air performance, remember that the audience should not face the sun, that the actors have to double the volume of their voice and leave more space in between them. Outdoor performances generally require more actors to be visible during the scenes. We usually keep an actor after a scene as a frozen image on stage, who can “wake up” at any moment to continue actively during the play. Having more than one actor on stage creates a stronger energy that is needed for street theatre.

Actors should not use microphones, not even during open air performances. Microphones destroy the natural voice which is necessary to project emotions to the audience. It is better to limit the number of spectators, and help actors to develop their voices. The use of microphones also hinders the actor to carry out spontaneous movements. Microphones should only be used during the moderation before and after the play, preferably using at least two wireless microphones¹⁴, one for the moderator and another one to pass around in the audience.

¹⁴ Don't forget spare batteries!



Stage setting of an open air performance

3.2 Stage scenery and costumes

The artistic approach we use requires only a minimum of stage equipment and costumes.

Masks and extravagant costumes just attract unnecessary attention. What counts more is the actors' facial expression, the gesture, words and movements. Our actors usually only wear uniform T-shirts, most of the time only in two colours — black and white, with black trousers or skirt¹⁵. They remove wristwatches, earrings and any other unnecessary items. In order to open the senses and energy flow and make better use of their body they always perform barefoot.

We are not working within the logic of classical theatre where the stage creates an artificial distance between actors and spectators; actors thereby become unreachable.

When arriving in a hall we usually chose an empty wall as background for the performance. If there are photos, posters, or anything else attached at the wall, we remove them so that they do not become part of the play. If there are windows in

¹⁵ In some parts we performed it was inappropriate for a woman to wear trousers. It is important to get information about the cultural context beforehand, in order to avoid confusing people unnecessarily.



Scene of Badilika using a projector and candle light

the hall, we often cover them with curtains or blankets. We set up our stage in a way, that the audience is facing the stage in a half circle seating arrangement. To avoid taller members of the audience from blocking the view of others, we sometimes put mats in the front where people can sit, with rows of chair behind, and tables to sit on for the last row. Sometimes we ask the audience to leave the hall before the performance starts and line up outside according to their height without speaking. It's a nice warm-up exercise and allows the smaller ones to sit in front and the taller ones behind or at the back.

If there is electricity we often use portable spotlights. This adds extra emphasis on the faces of the actors and also has an artistic effect through the shadows projected on the wall. We also use torches and sometimes fire to create light effects.

The stage can be designed with items found around when arriving at a performance venue, from pieces of wood, plants and trees, to rusty iron boxes, stones or photos¹⁶. Any such item can add value to the artistic stage scenery.

The entire space is used by the actors. This means the actors don't limit themselves to a stage. They can appear out of the audience, or hide in a tree and jump from it during an open air performance. We often place actors among the audience, who then suddenly stand up, shout or create any other surprise effect. We have had moments where the audience didn't recognize that it was an actor in the drama and they have started to confront the person for misbehaviour. Any surprise effect keeps the attention of the audience. They remain attached to the play, their senses alert.

Before a performance starts the actors should "energize" the stage and get used to the space. Walking through the space with eye contact, with rhythm changes, symmetric and asymmetric body movements, and use of voice warms the actors up for the performance, releases the inner tensions and helps them to become familiar with the venue.

¹⁶ Badilika in DRC and Rwanda is often using old materials thrown away and transform them into an artistic stage scenery. We took this idea from the Kampala based artist group "Garbage collectors Africa".

To enhance dialogue on sensitive and taboo topics it can help to create an atmosphere where the audience feel comfortable, not disturbed. In DR Congo and Rwanda we close the doors and windows, once a performance has started, and even cover the windows with curtains and blankets. Through this action we avoid any outside disturbance and make the audience feel that they are in a trustworthy closed space. It helps them to speak out.

3.3 The Forum Theatre play

The play is the heart of the activity. Our goal is to leave the audience astonished, inspired, confused and enlightened at the same time, to motivate them to become active in their daily lives and within their limited means and powers to act against all kinds of injustice, violence and Human Rights abuses.

It is not enough to demand insight and informative images of reality from the



The ideal atmosphere for forum theatre

*theatre. Our theatre must stimulate a desire for understanding, a delight in changing reality.*¹⁷

Many people in Africa's Great Lakes Region know theatre only as mere entertainment. Comedies are popular, where often funnily dressed people overplay and exaggerate their character — as it is often seen in the popular Nigerian soap operas on TV. People are not used to watching serious theatre performances, and for many it may be the first time ever. But this should be seen as an opportunity rather than a challenge. Something new increases the curiosity and may make the audience more attentive.

Our forum theatre productions usually take 30 minutes to 50 minutes, with a variety of elements put together. In short plays of less than 30 minutes the suspense created is often not so intense, and the artistic expression is also limited.

We include emotional monologues and dialogues in our productions. In emotional monologues an actor is narrating a story in an emotional state, for example angry, polemic/sarcastic or sad. Sad monologues may be followed by a song or poem to increase the emotions. The dialogues mainly portray opposing views, often expressed by an antagonist and a protagonist. These can be in a form of a quarrel usually with an uneven power relationship between the characters. The antagonist uses his power to oppress the views of the protagonist.

Instead of using ready-made scripts the actors will choose their own words and have space for improvisation. The actors don't need to be experts in theatre, but they have to be open to discover themselves and share their real emotions on stage. Actors should act in the language they are using in their own daily life. This helps them to express themselves in a more authentic and believable manner, the words will then flow naturally.

The words themselves should be simple and easy to understand; words that the people also use in their daily lives. Nonverbal expression is as important — if not even more important — than the verbal expression. Body language, the expression of emotions, symbols and so on help to pass key messages in a multi-linguistic context.

In cases where some of the spectators do not fully understand the language of the actors, we have experimented with stopping the play to summarize what has been said. But the cut in the play had an adverse impact on the energy flow and suspense. The more often a play is cut, the weaker the emotional link with the audience. Also, if some audience members who don't understand the language of the play, sit together with someone who translates simultaneously, this shifts away the attention of the audience from the actors to the translator. Again, the perception and emotional link weaken.

¹⁷ <http://quotes.dictionary.com/author/Bertolt+Brecht?page=2>



Authentic emotional acting

The lesson we learnt is, that it is better to summarize the entire play after the performance, and then do the re-play of scenes with translation during the intervention process.

The ideal situation is when the actors speak the language of the spectators. When this is not the case the importance of non-verbal expression increases. Body language, facial expression, images, symbols, movements and music can pass key messages without using spoken words.

We train our actors to authentically express emotions on stage and employ music, poems, proverbs, symbols, life-painting, human sculptures (images), movements, acrobatics and dance to make our performances lively and artistic. Just a variety and a change of rhythm can keep the attention of the audience, from a slow, intense, sad scene — where an actor may even just be on stage as an image for minutes, staring at the audience — to a vibrant dance and movement scene to Capoeira music.

Authentic emotional acting

It is crucial for our artistic approach that the audience believes the actor. This demands an authentic way of acting. Actors open themselves, show their inside, don't hide or cover anything.

Acting is a discovery for the actors. We help our actors to show emotions and (re-)feel situations. Different techniques help them to do this. Our actors keep their real name. Being called by their real name supports them to be themselves on stage. Apart from a short poem or proverb (chosen by the group members themselves), our actors always use their own words. We never work with complete scripts where actors learn the lines by heart, which were formulated by a scriptwriter. Using their own way of verbally expressing things allows the actors to enter fully into their characters.

We often use real life experiences of the actors and include them in a scene. The actor narrates as a character what has happened to him or her. And while narrating, he or she re-feels the situation. Often the actor bursts into tears of sorrow or anger, leaving the audience astonished, breathless, especially when the scene is something familiar to them, mirroring their own reality. It is important to never try to convince or manipulate an actor to do so. The director of the play can propose it, but the actor is the one who decides if he or she is ready to re-live a situation on stage and share it with others. Forum theatre at this moment becomes psychodrama, which can have a healing effect on traumatized actors.¹⁸

But it is also possible to train an actor to act out an invented story while thinking at the same time about a real situation that happened to him or her. During our training sessions we give space to the participants to think about and re-feel both good and bad moments of their lives, and share them with the others.

Sometimes personal items can assist the actor to re-feel situations. During a sad monologue, Cathy, an actress of Rafiki Theatre, used the photo of her sister who had died at a young age. The audience did not know this. Looking at the photo always put Cathy in a sad mood, shedding tears. It became a kind of ritual for her. In her mind, she was saying good-bye to her sister.¹⁹

Music

Music adds value to any theatre performance. We often let an actor compose and sing a song about suffering and pain after a sad monologue, or after being maltreated by others. The strongest impact is reached when it is sung a Capella by the person that composed it.

Instrumental songs can be used to accompany images, symbolic rituals, movement or dance. They can either be played live with instruments, if group members know to use them, or from CD with a sound system. Vocal music from a CD can

¹⁸ Examples of actors who can better cope with the burden of the past since they started to do theatre can be found in chapter 5.

¹⁹ For more examples of authentic emotional acting see below and chapters 4 and 5.



Stage setting, Badilika performance

also add an emotional layer. Performing in Africa does not oblige you to use African music only. On the contrary — your group members might be interested in new sounds and melodies. For example, I often used music by Marie Boine, a Norwegian Sami Musician. The music impacts on one's feelings even if one doesn't understand the language.

An emotional a Capella song should have a simple, harmonious melody, with a refrain which is easy to remember. Singing in an emotional state is as important as the words sung.

Anybody can act, but not everybody has a voice which is sufficiently well developed to sing a solo. Theatre should remain art. During voice training exercises, when singing well known songs together, it is easy to identify someone with a well-developed voice. The female voice is often more suitable for a sad a Capella song. Male voices are stronger when accompanied by instruments, e.g. a guitar. If there is nobody in the group with sufficient vocal capacity to sing alone, let 3 or 4 persons sing a Capella, together and/or if there is a musician in the group, let him or her accompany the singers with an instrument (guitar, flute, violin, accordion, etc.).

Instrumental songs can be used to accompany images, movements and symbolic expressions. Guitar, accordion, violin, flute or local string instruments can be used to increase emotions. I would avoid electronic instruments like e-guitar



Dance scene of Badilika

or keyboards which sound artificial. We often use African drums to accompany a dance or a physical theatre scene, or just to interlude between two scenes.

If there is electricity and the performance is indoor, various types of recorded music can be used to add an emotional layer to images, symbolic acts or to accompany movement and dance. Involve your group members in the choice of music.

Bear in mind that using music with a sound system with mixer etc. requires some technical skills to install and operate the system, and you have the risk of a power cut, a faulty cable or any other unforeseen problem.

The national anthem sung by actors or together with the audience can also be used in the play.²⁰

Physical theatre elements and dance choreographies

In physical theatre stories are ‘told’ through primarily physical motions of the actors, through gestures, mime, symmetric and asymmetric movements of the body, while a dance choreography is a coordinated, symmetric, trained corporal expres-

²⁰ See below ‘abstract and symbolic expressions on stage’.

sion. In dance, music is used. Physical or movement theatre works with or without music. If it is used with music, the actor gets inspired by the music to show corporal expressions, whilst in a dance choreography actors dance the rhythm and sound in a coordinated and in a more or less pre-organized manner. Physical theatre can also work without music. Actors can create rhythmic movements on their own, which can be combined with short verbal expressions.

In a scene of a forum theatre play by Rafiki Theatre on energy saving and environmental protection, large cooking pots, yellow jerrycans and big wooden spoons were used to make rhythmic sounds to accompany the movements’ of the performers.

In South Sudan Toposa warriors²¹ have a special traditional war dance, with special symbolic fight movements, words and sounds. The dance is well known. We used it with our local forum theatre troupe Nyakica in a play highlighting the problem of cattle raiding and related armed violence. The audience could easily identify with the scene. Since over 99% of the audience members had never attended any school it helped them to immediately become attached to the content of the play. The dancing group was led by John Lokai, a young man in his mid-twenties, who was attacked together with his uncle whilst taking care of their cows. His uncle was shot dead in front of his eyes, while he narrowly escaped death. John became the key person in our forum theatre troupe and he also became the moderator.

Dance choreographies and physical theatre elements also help the actors to release tensions and calm down after emotional acting. Four young actresses of Badilika created a short choreography to the rhythm of a drum, that was performed shortly after singing the national anthem and a sad monologue with an actress in tears.

Finally, creating and rehearsing a choreography or a physical theatre scene is usually fun, and it adds a layer to the variety and increases the artistic value of the play, keeps the attention of an audience and makes a play interesting to look at.

²¹ The Toposa are an ethnic group in the southeast of South Sudan. Most men are herdsman. The armed herdsman protecting the cattle are called “warriors”. Cattle raiding is very common. One reason is dowry. A man has to pay 50 or more cows to get a woman. This led to armed conflicts between different ethnic groups like the Toposa and Jie. Therefore the Toposa call the Jie their “enemies” and vice-versa.



Dancing scene with light effects

Poems and proverbs

Short poems with easy words can be integrated in plays. Instead of a song, a poem may end a monologue and so add an additional emotional layer. An actress playing the role of the victim of rape used to say after her sad monologue:

*I want to live my life,
I want to be alive,
So, take away the memory from me
And bury it deep down in the sea
So that it's not mine to carry.*

Many African countries have a rich repertoire of proverbs well known to many people. Using popular proverbs can help to create a link with the audience and help them to identify with the scenes presented. For example, in a play about gender roles, a man defended his position with the Baganda²² proverb: “An antelope cannot wear the shoes of an elephant.”

We often let the actors first recite the proverb in their original local language and immediately afterwards repeat it in English or French. Sometimes we transform a proverb to suit our content. For example the proverb: “*In Africa not all the roads are asphalted, when a person passes he leaves marks behind.*” was transformed to “*In Congo not all the roads are asphalted, when the Rwandans pass they leave marks behind.*”

Images

Actors can create an image during the play and keep it for some time. In an image the actors are immobile and express with their body attitudes and emotions. They create a kind of human sculpture that spreads a message that is more or less clear, but yet leaves some space for interpretation. The image will remain longer in the mind of a spectator rather than a moving scene, and “a picture is worth a thousand words”. We often use an image on stage as background while a monologue is done. Or an image is created and music is played in the background or sang live by an actor to add another emotional layer to a scene. A human sculpture can become ‘a poem without words’.

We usually end our plays with a final image involving as many actors as possible, at least some antagonists and protagonists. The spectators later have the opportunity, during the moderation process, to transform the final image.

²² Largest ethnic group in Uganda.

Image theatre exercise

During training sessions we work with image theatre exercises. Actors are asked to move around in the space, move all parts of their body, use the floor, the walls and vary the speed of their movements. Whenever the trainer claps his hands, together the actors “freeze in”, become immediately immobile. Nothing is moving, not even an eyelid. Through controlled slow breathing and putting their weight in the centre of their bodies (just above the navel) they can practise holding a position for some time.

The next step is to add emotions to the image. The actors are asked to walk in the space, the way they walk in their daily life. After doing this for some moments, the trainer now asks them to continue walking, but think at the same time of a situation in their life. A hand clap again calls immediately for immobility. The trainer may use different emotional situations: a) a very funny moment in your life, b) a moment you were angry, c) a moment you were jealous, d) a moment you were treated unfairly, e) a moment you were frustrated, f) a moment you were surprised, g) the saddest moment in your life, h) the happiest moment in your life, etc.

Actors are invited to share the moment in their life that they were thinking about later on. It helps the trainer to get to know the actors better and also to generate ideas for real life experiences that could be included in the play. During the exercise the trainer also gets a hint of who has a strong facial expression of emotions that could add value to the play. The actors learn during this exercise to put themselves into an emotional state.

It is important to create a secure space when doing this exercise — a closed room, undisturbed by anybody. During this exercise some actors “open themselves” and share their inside feelings. This exercise should not be done in the beginning of a training workshop, but later when some trust has already been built among the actors and the trainer(s). The trainer should never push someone to express his internal thoughts and feelings, but only invite them to share them. The actor has to decide, if and what he wishes to share. Often tears are flowing whilst doing this exercise, and some horrible stories are shared. Allow the tears to flow and give ample time for sharing. Sharing in a secure theatre workshop setting helps a traumatized person to deal with the burden of the past. The trainer should remind the group members that anything shared should remain within the group.



Theatre training in Karamoja, Uganda

Abstract and concrete symbolic expressions on stage

Different items can be placed on stage or directly used by actors to express something symbolically. Anything used on stage, the smallest item, automatically spreads a message to the spectator. It stimulates the audience to reflect and find an interpretation of it. It later on provides a tool for the moderator to enhance a dialogue on the key messages passed through the item. The moderator assures during the moderation process that people have interpreted the scene correctly.

In Uganda, for a play on Gender-based Violence we used two black scarves, that two men dressed in black used to gag two women dressed in white. The idea was to symbolically express the fact that many men deny women a voice. In a second scene, the same men came back to blindfold the women with the scarves, turned them around until they slightly lost their orientation and then forced them to hold a wooden stick with one finger, while the men held the other end with their fists. The couple started a 'stick-dance' to the rhythm of a drum, whereby the women were struggling not to fall and were pushed about and directed by the men.²³ The message was clear: male dominance.

²³ It demanded some training and help of physical theatre exercises for the actresses to get the sensibility to move the entire body when stimulated through the finger by the stick.

Rafiki Theatre as well as Badilika sometimes uses body paint during performances. Rafiki did it in an abstract manner during a play at a conference for theatre for peace practitioners in Kisumu, Kenya. Two actresses dressed in black were taking white paint out of a box to rhythmic electronic music and smearing it over their shirts, with desperate, frustrated mimicry. Light effects, both white and red lights with a torch was added. This scene came after three monologues, a sad, an angry and a sarcastic one. One of the actresses in tears shared how poverty affects her and her child, how it feels not being able to afford medicine when your child is sick, how children in school laugh about her boy because he is wearing old, spoiled shoes. A performer from Karamoja described in his angry monologue how desperate it is to live in a marginalized region affected by extreme poverty and being perceived as backward by the rest of the country²⁴. And a third actress provoked the theatre for development experts in the audience with words like "... and you believe you can change anything with a theatre play. You are here in this nice hotel, pretending to be important, do nice speeches and enjoying good food while people out there are starving". The provocative monologues were followed by the abstract body-painting scene, that left space for interpretation. We wanted to portray in this scene contradictions in an abstract manner. The discussions afterwards were intense.



Stick dance with blindfolded woman

²⁴ Both were true real life stories.



Grace doing her “ritual”

In Amudat in Karamoja, a region affected by cattle-raiding and related armed violence that harmed and cost the lives of many people, we put a wooden coffin on stage. During the play, Joyce, an actress of our local forum theatre troupe, was sitting in front of the coffin, and over a period of 5 minutes threw stones one by one into it, each time causing a loud, deep wooden sound. After throwing a stone into the coffin, Joyce said the name of a person who was killed during the violent conflict. The victims were known to most people in the audience.

Natural elements like water, fire and soil are ideal to use in a play. For example Anderson, an actor of Badillika opens a water bottle and, saying “*Water is life!*”, pours water on the ground, while looking at the audience, and then shouting “*5 million Congolese have lost their lives in violent conflicts since 1996. But who cares whether a Congolese is dead or alive!*”. He ends by pressing the water bottle in his hand and throwing it violently on the ground.²⁵

Grace is an elderly lady. She acts in ‘Kongasis’, one of the two forum theatre troupes, Rafiki Theatre has established in the Mount Elgon region of Uganda, to work on Gender-based violence. Grace is well over fifty. She was unable to have children. When her husband died, the family of her husband took all her land and property away, leaving her with nothing. During the play she narrates her story, holding a clay-pot filled with soil. She slowly takes the soil out of the pot and lets it trickle through her fingers on the ground, with the words: “*You can take away my soil, but not my soul.*”

In the Kenyan city of Kisumu we acted out a short play by just drawing live the

²⁵ See chapter 4

map of Africa, sprinkling it with red paint, citing figures and facts about the problems the continent faces, including bad governance and the role of the international community. After this an actress entered slowly onto the stage, lighting a candle and burning the painting, tears rolling down her cheek, while a guitarist played sad tunes in the background.²⁶

In a play against sexual abuse in schools, two drawings were used. The touching drawings were done by victims of sexual abuse. An actress showed them during a sad monologue narrating how she was raped. This also increased her emotions and most people in the audience believed that the story narrated really happened to her.

National flags and anthems have strong symbolic meanings for people that can be explored in the play. I often let actors sing the anthem and others question the lines sung. This usually has a strong impact on the audience. For example an actress was interrupting the ones singing the Ugandan anthem, to question the line “*united free for liberty...*” in a play against ethnic discrimination. Or the line “*oh Uganda, the land that feeds us...*” was used by an actor to talk about corruption and how it increases poverty rather than “feeding the people”.

National anthems can also have an emotional aspect. People in the region learn their anthem by heart in school, singing it sometimes on a daily basis till they finish secondary school. The anthem has more importance than it may have in Germany for example. In South Sudan and DR Congo I asked some actors to sing the anthem whilst thinking at the same time of examples of concrete suffering of the people in the country. They did it and some of them had tears in their eyes while singing, visible for the audience. The emotional link with the spectators was immediately created.

You can also use and interpret the colours and symbols of the national flags in theatre scenes.²⁷

²⁶ Politicians and diplomats were in the audience – some listening carefully, others not amused, and a security guard asked us to stop during the play. But the message had already been passed, food for thought was provided.

²⁷ See chapter 4



Drawings of victims of sexual abuse used on stage



Body paint for symbolic expression

Improvisation

Forum theatre demands from the actors the ability to improvise during the re-play interventions. They never know what a spectator who comes onto stage to replace an actor may do. Especially the antagonist(s) must be able to remain as believable as possible in the character during an intervention.

We work with semi-structured plays. A scene is vaguely described, for example a husband coming home, frustrated, quarrelling with his wife and the situation escalates and he leaves the stage very annoyed. The actors are free to develop the scene, fill the elements with content, use their words, and spontaneously add elements to the scene. They can improvise and adapt the scene to the context in which the play is performed. When playing in a remote village the husband may be a charcoal maker or a farmer, while he may be a night guard of a rich family in an urban context. The actor playing the husband decided to come on stage sometimes carrying a goat, sometimes a child, sometimes riding a bicycle, or carrying a hoe. He was free to choose. When playing with Badilika in a hall in Gisenyi, many old chairs and tables were at one corner of the hall, in disorder, and our actress shifted

the attention of the spectators spontaneously to the corner, saying “*our country is not in order, it is just like the chairs and tables you see over there.*” Improvising makes a role always challenging and prevents acting from becoming routine.

Improvisation exercise

To develop improvisation skills we often use “theatre-sport” exercises during training sessions.²⁸ One, two or more actors are asked to enter the stage, while the other group members sit down and become spectators. Anybody from amongst the spectators can shout out a topic and the actors on stage start immediately to act the scene out for some minutes, improvising without any preparation. The actors are asked at some point to find an ending to their scene or the trainer stops it when the energy is decreasing, and invites the next people on stage. Any kind of topic is possible, from “two former classmates meeting in the waiting room of a dentist” to serious ones like “the burial of a child”, or absurd ones like “Waking up in the morning after your death”. These exercises train creativity and enable the actors to enter spontaneously in different roles without thoughts on what to do and to say. They train also to keep the attention of the audience and learn to end when the attention and suspense decreases. When improvising it is important that actors don’t look for a quick reaction from the audience (laughter e.g.), but rather develop a story in a monologue or dialogue, increasing the attention and suspense.

Interaction with the audience during the play

The spectators can become involved during the initial forum theatre performance and not only during the re-play of scenes. Here again improvisation skills are needed to cope with any kind of reaction from the spectators. During the play an actor can approach the audience, look at a spectator and ask questions, for example “*Can you live on only 50 Dollars a month?*”, “*Am I not right?*”, “*My friend — do you understand me? I only want harmony in our family. How can I allow my wife to do this?*”, “*Do you believe I am a bad person?*”

It is better that the actor asks closed questions here and not to have deep discussions starting at this point. If he doesn’t like an answer or the audience member does not reply the actor can shift to another person.

It is also possible to gently take the hand of a spectator and kindly ask him or

²⁸ A method developed by Keith Johnstone, explained in his two books “*Impro*” and “*Impro for Story-tellers*”.

her to come on stage to demonstrate something, for example “*Look at this woman, how decently she is dressed. In our culture women do not expose their body with narrow trousers!*”²⁹

In some performances of *Badilika*, an actress looked for a baby or small child in the audience, and carried it on stage, asking the antagonist, how the future of the next generation will be, if the hatred and violence continues.

Developing a Forum Theatre play step by step

1. Chose a topic
2. Gather information and define key messages
3. Recruit actors (ideally 8 to 12 persons, different age groups, gender balanced)
4. Intensive theatre workshop with
 - a) Basic acting training: space, senses, body, voice, emotions;
 - b) Group-building and trust-building exercises (e.g. walking around in pairs, with one person blindfolded);
 - c) Relaxation exercises (we use for example metamorphic massage³⁰, Qi Gong³¹ and meditation exercises);
 - d) Topic-specific work with the actors to internalize the key messages (let them read about it, do interviews in the community and express their own views through drawing, writing short stories, poems...)
5. Develop scenes: a) Identify characters; b) Create dialogues, emotional monologues; c) Compose songs and decide on music to use; d) Develop dance and physical theatre scenes and images
6. Put the scenes together and decide on entrances and exits for each scene
7. Collect ideas for stage scenery and effects
8. Let the actors chose a name for the play and a name for the theatre troupe
9. Train a moderator
10. Do try-out performances for an invited audience to get a feedback.

Once the initial play is designed, perform it as often as possible. With each performance the troupe learns and improves. A theatre play should never be something static. It should develop further with each performance done. Remain flexible: add, adjust, change and adapt!

²⁹ During a Gender-Based Violence play in Uganda. Traditionally women do not wear trousers in the culture of the Baganda – the biggest ethnic group in Uganda. During riots in Kampala in 2009 traditionalists were beating any woman they found wearing trousers.

³⁰ See chapter 5

³¹ See chapter 5

3.4 The moderation process

The role of the “Joker” or moderator is a tricky one. It is easy to leave the audience with false optimism about what can work, or to run out of time before everyone is satisfied with what has been attempted. For instance, we were twice obliged to stop a very good and intense discussion during a programme in Goma, because our Rwandan actors had to cross the border before it closed³².

The moderator must make many small decisions during the moderation process, whether or not to give the voice to more people or go a step further, whether or not to add interventions upon other interventions, when to stop an intervention when it’s not going any further, and so on.

The moderator should have a certain natural authority, to be easily accepted and respected by the audience, and have a gentle, not harsh communication style when interacting with people. And he or she must be trained and gain experience — the more often he or she moderates the better he or she will become. Sometimes it may help to have two moderators, preferably a man and a woman, that can jointly facilitate the process.

Most of the time we are using actors of the forum theatre groups as our moderators, and we give them a separate training. Through this approach more ownership is given to the group. Apart from this, a moderator learns important life skills, such as active listening, self-control, tolerance, and so on.

Because of the double burden it is better that the moderator does not have a key role in the play. The moderator should never be the antagonist, since he or she can’t be challenged by a member of the audience and moderate the process at the same time.

The moderation starts with a welcoming remark, an opening prayer (depending on the context), and explanations of the forum theatre process and ground rules. Even if important local authorities are invited, the introductory part should be as short as possible. It is better to give the invited authority the closing remarks at the end of the programme. This also assures that he or she remains attentive. The more you feed the audience during the introduction with words the faster they will lose concentration and attention during the performance. An introduction should not exceed 5 to 10 minutes.

For most people in the audience it might be the very first time that they have attended a forum theatre programme. Therefore, it is important to inform them that the programme doesn’t end after the performance of the play. It is also important to remind them to switch off phones, avoid movements and noise during the play. Invite them to be attentive — because their opinion counts later on!

³² The border between Goma and Gisenyi closes for security reasons at 6pm. This affects the Congolese-Rwandan exchange.



Involving spectators on stage during the play

Our plays usually end with a final image, most of the time accompanied by a touching song (live a Capella or an instrumental song played by a musician, or classical instrumental or vocal music from a CD).

The actors keep the image and the suspense for one, two minutes after the song, for the audience to internalize and digest it. The moderator should allow some time for this to happen before declaring the end of the play. After this, he or she invites the audience to share what they have observed in the play for some minutes. During this time all the actors take a place on the stage, so that they are visible throughout the moderation session. This allows the moderator to refer to a character at any point.

After giving two, three persons the opportunity to summarize what they have observed (to assure that all key messages of the play were transferred), the moderator then does the so-called “reality-check”. He or she asks the audience, if the portrayed situations really happened or if they were just a play. People are invited to share their experiences. This part should take some time, because our provocative performance style usually generates emotions and awakens memories, so that people have a desire to share what has happened to them or stories they have heard from others.

Next comes the “why” question. At this point the root causes of problems, of

violence and conflicts are identified and discussed, until the majority agrees. If the audience is pointing too many fingers in one direction, for example, only blaming the government, the moderator can ask “who else is involved and causing the problem?”

After this, scenes are re-played³³ and the audience interventions take place. The moderator refers to the play and asks the audience what they would have done differently if they were one of the characters. It is helpful to mention a character and point at him or her.

The antagonist cannot be replaced, only the protagonist or a third person, for instance a passive passer-by. Therefore, it is good to include a passive, hesitant bystander in the play, who obviously does not have the courage to confront an antagonist. The audience will think “Why in hell is he or she not doing anything?” and someone may be motivated to replace the passer-by and try to do it better.

A new character can also be created by the audience. The moderator may ask, for example: “If you were a neighbour witnessing this scene of violence, how would you react?”

The protagonists should be the type of character that all or most of the people in the audience can identify with, so that when they intervene, they are rehearsing in a way their own reality. The point is not to show what we think other people should do. We don’t give solutions and advice. We only facilitate a process whereby people discover what they are able to do.

After an intervention, the moderator evaluates the intervention together with the audience by asking “Did this work?”, “What has changed?”, “Was this realistic?”, or “What would be the likely consequence of this approach?”

The moderator can motivate a spectator to become a spect-actor by asking kindly “Please come forward. We are so curious to see your intervention.” Call for applause for anybody who has the courage to come on stage. If a spectator is too scared to step forward and act his or her idea out, respect it! The moderator can invite him or her to just explain the idea.

Usually not more than 8 interventions are done, including the change of the final image.

Sometimes it might be necessary to have two separate rooms or two separate outside spaces, in order to split the audience during the moderation process. For example, at a very male-dominated venue, where women are not used to expressing themselves in public, two moderation sessions could be done simultaneously, with a female moderator for the women and a male moderator for the men.³⁴

³³ Usually dialogues between an antagonist and protagonist, sometimes with a passive passer-by.

³⁴ We did this for example with Rafiki Theatre in army barracks in Uganda, when working on Gender-Based Violence.

The moderation process in a nutshell

Before the play:

1. Welcome remarks, explanation of the forum theatre process and ground rules

After the play:

2. What have you observed? (Sharing with the neighbour, before collecting answers)
3. Reality check: does it really happen or was it just a play? Who has a real life experience to share?
4. Why does it happen? What are the root causes of it?
5. If you were one of the characters, what would you have done differently? (Audience interventions)
6. Imagine you are a person passing by and witnessing the situation, how would you react? (Audience interventions)
7. What can you do as an individual to address the root causes and bring about change?
8. What can you do as a community to address the root causes and bring about change?
What does “an ideal community” look like? (Change of final image by spectators)
9. A final ceremony together with the audience (song, vow, prayer, symbolic act...).

Change of final image and final ceremony

Our plays usually end with a final image, expressing a negative situation. Audience members have the chance during the moderation process to change this image. Most of the time we do it at the end of the moderation process, but sometimes after the first discussions, before the re-play of scenes. In this case the actors keep the image while the discussion is going on, and as a result provoke more contributions. Then the moderator can always refer to the image during the interaction with the audience.

The moderator looks for a volunteer from the audience to transform the image to a better, ideal one, without using words. The actors become like clay that can be modelled into a kind of static physical image. The new image can portray anything concrete or abstract, an act or a feeling. Also the facial expressions can be changed and items on stage replaced or shifted.



Change of image

After the change of image, the moderator asks the “designer” to explain his or her new image. The moderator asks the audience if they can identify with this ideal image, or if they have another idea for an ‘ideal community’. It is also possible that audience members include themselves or other persons in the final image.

The process of changing an image allows the audience to express ideas aesthetically and to creatively produce something positive together. The images can help to create group solutions to concrete problems.

Usually we end a forum theatre programme with a joint symbolic act for peace. It can be a simple peace song that everybody can easily sing together. Or it can be a vow to stop a negative behaviour or attitude, whereby the moderator or an actor will recite the vow and the audience repeats it line by line. If the performance is in a church, a common prayer for peace could round up the programme. In DR Congo during some programmes we asked for volunteers to burn a drawing about scenes of violence and destruction, to symbolically express the common desire to end violence in the region. Another idea is planting a tree together in front of the performance venue to symbolically express the change process that was “planted” during the programme.

3.5 Forum Theatre as action research

During a forum theatre programme a lot of data and information is gathered. People share their experiences, analyse a situation, generate a solution. Take care that you are not losing all the information. We usually have actors taking notes during the moderation process, taking photos, film or recording audience contributions. Filming has two adverse effects on people. Some may become motivated when a camera is focused on them and put in even more effort, others may feel uncomfortable. It is important that the moderator informs the public before the performance starts, that photos and video shots are to be taken, and gives people the option to say 'no' to it. The same with voice-recorders.

Some people are not ready to express their views publicly in front of everybody. Therefore, our actors often do individual or small group interviews after the performance and moderation session. This allows people to privately express their opinions and more information and stories are then shared.

Before developing a forum theatre play it is necessary to gather information on the topic. A simple questionnaire can be designed and the actors can conduct interviews of randomly chosen community members, and afterwards include information and stories gathered in the play. This helps to guarantee that the play is a mirror of the reality of the people.

In 2011 we got the contract with Rafiki Theatre to develop a play about the prejudices and stereotypes Kampala inhabitants hold against people from Karamoja. We decided to integrate actors from one of our local sister troupes in Karamoja. Some of them travelled for the first time to the capital, saw for the first time a traffic jam, an elevator, a shopping mall, etc. We put them in pairs — one Rafiki member together with an actor from Karamoja — and they conducted interviews on the streets of Kampala, with the Rafiki member interviewing randomly chosen persons with the simple question “*What comes to your mind when you hear 'Karamoja'?*”. Most people interviewed did not know and recognize that the counterpart of the interviewer was from Karamoja. All the ugly prejudices against people from this remote and marginalized part of Uganda came out, expressed by university students, businessmen up to motorbike-taxi drivers. People from Karamoja were described as naïve, backward, uncivilized, aggressive, violent, primitive, lazy and so on. At the end of the day, the actors from Karamoja were shocked, some even wanted to leave immediately. We motivated them to see the outcome of the interviews as an opportunity rather than a challenge. Together we decided to develop a play based upon the negative and destructive opinions gathered. The actors from Karamoja went an extra mile during the next three days, strongly motivated to influence people's attitude. At the end, we made a strong impact with a play titled “Full Moon over Karamoja”, which not only portrayed

the prejudices, but also the political and social-cultural reasons why the region is left behind.³⁵

Even if it is time-consuming and demands some extra resources, all data collected should be analysed, compared and compiled into reports. It helps the theatre troupe members to understand the situation better and the information collected first hand may serve as an important reference for others.

³⁵ We also produced and distributed T-shirts with the slogan: “My friend is from Karamoja – all different, all equal, all Ugandan.”

4. Touring with Badilika in DR Congo and Rwanda



Thérèse during the opening scene

A Sunday afternoon in the Rwandan border town of Gisenyi. The 28th and last performance of our forum theatre tour in Rwanda and DRC with Badilika³⁶. During the last three weeks we had reached out to more than 3,700 people.

It is dark and quiet. Classical music is playing. Thérèse slowly enters the stage, tears in her eyes. Photos of child soldiers, FDLR and M23 rebels as well as MONUSCO soldiers are projected on the stage, they are so large, that not only the wall but the floor is also covered by the projected photos.³⁷ Thérèse crosses the

³⁶ Badilika is the forum theatre troupe of APRED-RGL and Vison Jeunesse Nouvelle. The project is financially supported by GIZ and the United Evangelical Mission/Bread for the World.

³⁷ M23 is the March 23 movement, that had occupied Goma in November 2012 and was defeated by the Congolese army end of 2013. FDLR (Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda) is a rebel group



Anderson during Badilika performance

stage, part of the photo becoming visible on her black clothes. She lights 8 candles that are placed all over the stage. Other items can be seen on stage: a cairn, old charred bottles, a small wooden coffin, pieces of wood, a drum, a large gravestone-like stone, two baskets, a piece of paper attached to the wall.³⁸

The day before Badilika had performed in the CBCA-church³⁹ in Buturande, a quarter in Kiwanja. Kiwanja is a small Congolese town just a few kilometres from Rutshuru in North-Kivu. Around 200 people attended the public performance.

“I hate the Congolese!” Pie suddenly shouts and jumps out of the audience that has just finished singing the Congolese anthem. All eyes turn to the Rwandan actor, wearing black like all Rwandans in the play, while the Congolese actors are dressed in white T-shirts. *“My uncle fled during the genocide to Masisi. Instead of welcoming him, people targeted his valuables. A cow was bought for less than the value of a goat. This is how the Congolese are!”* Pie brings forward examples of how Congolese are not keeping promises, not standing by contracts signed, cases that show that they dislike Rwanda and Rwandans to the extent, that they celebrated

formed by the Interhamwe who are responsible for the Genocide against the Tutsis in 1994 in Rwanda. Despite disarmament efforts the FDLR still comprises of approximately 1000 fighters, often without uniform infiltrated in the local communities. MONUSCO is the UN-peacekeeping mission in DR Congo.

³⁸ The stage scenery changed from performance to performance. We were mainly using items we found in and around the performance venues, from stones, pieces of wood, leaves, glass to metal and iron materials.

³⁹ Communauté Baptiste dans le Centre d’Afrique

on the streets of Goma when a message was spread on Twitter, that the Rwandan President Paul Kagame had died. He blames the Congolese for supporting the Interhamwe, now operating as the FDLR. At the end he shares a real life experience: *“I did my studies in Goma, fell in love with a Congolese woman. Under pressure of her family, she dropped me — why? Because I am a Rwandan!”*

Badilika-Tour in Rwanda

Rubavu district
Musanze district
Muhanga
Remera-Rukoma (Kamonyi)
Kigali
Ruzizi

Badilika-Tour in DRC

Goma
Sake
Bukavu
(Bukavu-)Bagira
Kiwanja (Rutshuru)

“I left Congo for Rwanda because of war. Once in Rwanda I immediately felt I was not welcome. The authorities treated me badly, so did the people. I was glad when I could go back. I found a job in Goma. But my boss is from Rwanda. He is arrogant, treats me like a dog.”

The university student from Goma then symbolically spills water on the ground.⁴⁰ The water symbolizes for him all the innocent lives wasted in the Kivu-region of DRC in the last two decades. When he later on ends the theatre play with his self-composed anti-war song, it is clear, that it is not just a song for him.

“Congolese are strange people, not honest, not trustworthy; they are naive, superstitious, lazy and not serious; they talk a lot and do nothing; they are soft, easily getting annoyed, but without courage. Congolese women are cheap; they like to give away their body to the Whites....” Vicky’s words mirror the mind-set of many Rwandans.⁴¹

Later on, the moderator asks the audience if they agree with Vicky. Approximately one third of the people during our performances in Rwanda replied “yes”.

“Rotten Tomatoes” is the name of the 45-minute theatre play that I developed together with some young adults from DR Congo and Rwanda. A student from Bujumbura joined us later in the process to add the Burundian dimension to the play. The play is about everyday life in Africa’s Great Lakes region, where prejudices, stereotypes, myths and rumours divide the people, create hatred and provoke violence. The relationship between the neighbouring countries DR Congo,

⁴⁰ See Chapter 3, abstract and concrete symbolic expressions on stage.

⁴¹ The prejudices mentioned are from the study “Words that kill!” of International Alert, as well as from contributions from spectators during former performances in Rwanda.



Scene of “Rotten Tomatoes”

Rwanda and Burundi is still tense, wars and bloody conflicts have left their marks behind. Politicians often misuse the “open wounds” to spread hate-propaganda, further dividing the people.

Rwandans are facing hostility in DR Congo, Congolese are confronted with hostility in Rwanda. Both call the other an enemy. Both blame the other of being guilty. This was confirmed during our tour.

In the scene the title of the play is taken from, a Rwandan woman slowly enters the stage, holding two big red ripe tomatoes in each hand. She stops, looking at the audience. One after the other three Congolese actors, two men and a woman, enter the stage, walking slowly around her, their eyes fixed on her, threatening. Suddenly they all lift up the left arm, point the finger at her. They walk faster, the tension increases. No words — only movements and gestures. Their mimicry shows hatred, the Rwandan woman is fearful. “Go!” The five Congolese threaten the tomato seller at the same time. “Go!...Leave our country!...Go!...Leave our country!...Go!...” They shout — each time a with more aggression and louder while still walking finger-pointing around her. The last “Go!” is a horrible scream, and they become immobile, a brutal image. The Rwandan woman squeezes the tomatoes in her hands, red liquid splashing on her black dress. The tomatoes drop to the ground. Her face expresses her suffering, the shock visible, tears in her eyes. The



Kenge using the Rwandan flag

three Congolese are motionless, their fingers still pointing at her. She bends down slowly and picks up one by one what is remaining from her tomatoes, looks desperately to the audience and walks away. A strong suspense is created through her silence.

This scene is not new to some in the audience. At a market in the small Rwandan town of Rukoko, Rubavu District, a woman stood up, sharing that exactly the same story had happened to her while selling vegetables in Goma. A group of people, including some Congolese police men, chased her away and took all her goods.

Kenge points out the symbol of the sun on the Rwandan flag. *“The sun always rises in Rwanda, and the rainfall usually starts in Rwanda. And all the wars affecting us come from Rwanda! We welcomed them with open arms after the Genocide. Our hospitality has been betrayed!”*

Nadine — a young journalist from Goma — confronts him: *“We have to stop blaming Rwanda for all the bad things happening in Congo. Our own house is not in order!”* The two of them quarrel for several minutes, portraying the opposing views of the people as well as some of the political propaganda. Their statements are harsh, provoking the audience. *“I am ashamed for you”*, says Nadine with disgust, leaving the stage.

“Kenge is right!” Liesse appears suddenly. *“Rwandans are arrogant and dominant. They want to control the entire region. They believe they are the only ones suffering from Genocide. But what about us in Burundi?”* She narrates the invented story of her father who disappeared without leaving any sign of life. Music interludes and Kenge and Liesse leave the stage.

The audience is provoked by the scene. In the re-play 30 minutes later people get the chance to intervene, replace Nadine or come in as a neutral passer-by to challenge Kenge⁴².

A young Muslim confronts Kenge in Gisenyi. *“If a soldier or rebel speaks Kinyarwanda. Does it mean he is from Rwanda. I speak Swahili. But I am not a Congolese. I speak French, but I am not from France.”*

“My father is from Congo, but my mother is Rwandan. Who am I? Do I belong



Audience intervention in Rwanda

⁴² The Burundian dimension was only included in five performances, twice in Kigali, in Remera-Rukoma, Muhanga and at the opening performance in Goma. When it was included, Liesse was also challenged by the audience.

to you, am I part of your “enemies”? If you hate Rwandans, go on and start by attacking me!”, intervenes a young man in Goma.

“Imagine two houses. In one house somebody kills many people. The killer then seeks refuge in the neighbour’s house. People in the neighbour’s house welcome him and integrate him, despite knowing the atrocities he has committed”, says an angry young man in a Rwandan village in Musanze district, referring to the Interhamwe, who still operate as FDLR in the DR Congo.

“Nyiragongo⁴³ is a Kinyarwanda word. Many places in the Kivu have a Kinyarwanda name. In the past, we were together. We should trace what has divided us and find a way to reconnect.”, offers a man in Rubavu.

“It is not our (Rwanda’s) fault, that you don’t have roads in Congo.”

“The war is not ours — it is a political war. But we can avoid participating in it.”

“If you say that you don’t want the war in Congo, why are Congolese participating in it — even if the war might have been brought by Rwanda?”, challenge Rwandan secondary school students Kenge.

“Am I ugly? Do you feel disgust when you see me? No? Let us join hands, just the two of us, Kenge, and we can convince others, that the Rwandan and Congolese can live together in peace”, approaches a Rwandan woman Kenge in Ruzizi.

“If you want to kill a Minister in Kigali — can you go there without the help of a Rwandan. No! The same in Congo. Bad Rwandans are cooperating with bad Congolese to do their things.”, a Congolese woman in Bukavu tells him.

“Your country is in disorder, and this affects us in Rwanda as well. Your government needs to provide security, but constantly fails,” said a female student in a secondary school in Busasamana, Rubavu District.⁴⁴

Kenge usually resists for some time, as in real life, you can’t change attitudes and behaviours easily. If a spectator is blaming him in an aggressive manner, he blocks and his answers become more radical. If somebody shows empathy, is trying to understand his view, Kenge opens up. After each intervention, the moderator asks for a feedback from the audience. Like this, each intervention becomes a learning experience for the intervener, the observing audience and for Kenge himself.

Nadine re-enters from one angle of the stage while a German actress dressed

in olive colours enters from the opposite angle. Dramatic classical instrumental music is playing. Both have eye contact and a strong mimicry, looking desperate, one searching for help the other knows she can’t give. Nadine steps into the middle of the stage, in front of her a traditional pot with Rwandan national colours. The pot is covered with a top. Suddenly the music changes to a strong threatening electronic sound and Steven, a Rwandan actor, descends from the ceiling acrobatically, using a long rope. He steps behind the Congolese actress and starts to make Karate fighting movements.⁴⁵ The speed of the music increases and so do the aggressive motions Steven directs at the young woman. Her arms and shoulders are down in an apathetic desperation, her face is terribly sad, sorrowful, injured. A light effect has now been added. We had placed a 1000W spotlight on the floor, some 5 meters in front of Steven, projecting his shadow behind Nadine. Nadine, with tears in her eyes, opens the pot slowly. She puts her hands inside. Her hands re-appear, full of blood-red paint that was hidden inside the pot. She looks at her hands for a moment before fixing the audience with her eyes. With a slow and determined movement Nadine smears the paint in a form of an X on her white T-shirt. After this she becomes immobile. Steven continues his diabolical dance. The German actress remains standing in the corner, observing without interfering. The scene is oppressive without words.

Often the audience interprets this scene as a woman being raped, since masses of women were brutally raped during the last two decades of violent conflicts in the region. Others interpret it as aggression, a violent attack, involving fighters from Rwanda. The white actress is often perceived as the international community, the MONUSCO or development agencies, and their role in armed conflicts is discussed with the audience.

The scene provokes emotional reactions from the audience — and this is what we are aiming at!

Many real life stories have been shared during the interaction with the audience, that often lasted between 1½ to 2 hours. There wasn’t really much difference between the reactions of Rwandans and Congolese. The Rwandans, often described as reserved, calm and introverted were as lively, open and emotional as the Congolese. One spectator made the comment, that “we make the Rwandans talk” — a remark, we received gladly as it indicated to us that we have met our objective.

⁴³ A volcano not far from Goma. The word means “volcano” in Kinyarwanda.

⁴⁴ The school, that is close to the border, had to be evacuated in June 2014, when Congolese and Rwandan soldiers clashed.

⁴⁵ Depending on the venue he appears from an upper position, a roof-top, ceiling, ladder etc., where he was a frozen image since the beginning of the play.

Some examples of real life experiences shared by people in DRC

The Rwandans came and burnt our house, while my mother and father were inside. They died. (Man in Kiwanja)

On my way to Bunagama, Rwandan M23 rebels stopped me. They were five. One wanted to kill me immediately, but two others stopped him from doing so and helped me to escape. Not all Rwandans are bad. (Man in Kiwanja)

We appreciate your coming here and the messages for peace you spread. But nevertheless, all wars are planned in Rwanda and we know that soon another one will start... One day the Rwandan soldiers entered our house, killed my mother and took my younger brother, accusing him of being part of the Mai Mai rebels. Up to now he has not come back. But despite this I accept that not all Rwandans are bad. (Man in Kiwanja)

In my hometown Binja the Nande are in conflict with the Rwandans. Every day people are killed. You should make your program there. Things need to change! (Woman in Kiwanja)

A Tutsi-woman supported me while I was in school. Without her support I would not have been able to complete school. I am what I am thanks to her. (Young man in Kiwanja)

The Rwandan soldiers came to my house. They tortured me, cut one of my fingers. Watching Rwandans doing theatre for peace makes me realize that there are also good Rwandans that condemn violence. (An elderly woman in Kiwanja)

Rebels who speak Kinyarwanda rape our girls and women. They insult us as “Ibicucu”⁴⁶, as people of no value. (Man in Kiwanja)

Rwandan soldiers entered my house, asking for money. I was hiding in the bedroom and heard my husband screaming. We gave them all we had. (Woman in Bakavu-Bagira)

Tutsis came to our house and killed my husband. I am left alone with eight children. The church helps me to survive and I have started to forgive those that killed my husband. (Woman in Bukavu-Bagira)

Tutsis took me and 11 others. They kept us in a small house and maltreated us. Four of us were lucky to escape. (Man in Bukavu-Bagira)

We had nothing to eat. So we went searching for something. We asked people speaking Kinyarwanda, but they insulted us saying that Congolese are not intelligent. They made fun of us. (Man in Bukavu-Bagira)

I have a Rwandan neighbour and I am astonished about the way she behaves towards me. She likes me, she likes my children, she accompanies me when I need her. (Woman in Bukavu-Bagira)

46 ‘Idiot’ in Kinyarwanda.



Emotional contributions from the audience

I was kidnapped and maltreated by Rwandan rebels. They took all my belongings and forced me to work for them. (Man in Bukavu)

We took a refugee from Rwanda after the Genocide. He is still part of our family. Whenever I go to Rwanda now, I have a place to stay, a home away from home. (Woman in Bukavu)

Once I was in Rwanda with 5 friends and we arrived too late at the border. The border had already closed. A Rwandan woman offered us help. We could stay in her house. At first I was scared. “Impossible to sleep in the house of a Rwandan”, I thought. But in the end, we were feeling welcomed and they really cared for us. (Young woman in Bukavu)

The Congolese soldiers who are supposed to protect us are raping our women. Many women can witness this. (Man in Bukavu)

In 2009 our Minister of Sport, who is a Rwandan, supported the win of the Congolese national team in the Africa Cup of Nations. You can’t generalize and say all Rwandans are bad. (Man in Bukavu)

In Sake it is exactly how you portrayed it in your play. A Hunde can never marry a Tutsi. They can’t understand each other. They hate each other. (Old man in Sake)

I have protected Rwandan refugees in '94. I spent a lot of money to help them. (Man in Sake)

My son married a Rwandan. They have children together. (Woman in Sake)

Rwandan soldiers came to our house in '94. They took a child and threw it into the fire. After this, other Tutsi soldiers came and asked who killed the child. They shot their own soldiers for doing it. Later on a Tutsi soldier married my daughter. Not all Rwandans are bad. (Woman in Sake)

When I took the bus in Bukavu, an old Rwandan woman was harassed. Some passengers wanted her to leave the bus, telling her that the bus is for Congolese only. Three other passengers immediately supported the Rwandan woman, saying that if she leaves, they will also leave. With some courage we can overcome discrimination! (Young man in Goma)

Examples of real life experiences shared by people in Rwanda

Congolese soldiers accused a Rwandan of being a rebel of M23. They burned him alive. It happened on the Congolese side of the border. (Pupil of ESG, Gisenyi)

During the M23 insurgency anybody looking like a Rwandan was maltreated by the Congolese soldiers and police at the border. It is the war of the politicians and we are paying the price for it. (Teacher at TTC, Gisenyi)

After fleeing to DRC during the Genocide, a Congolese gave us a piece of land for free. There are bad and good people everywhere. (Teacher at TTC, Gisenyi)

The Congolese are thieves. I have been once to DRC and my money was stolen. (Old man in Ryabizige, Rubavu District)

I went to DRC at the time of confrontations between Rwandan and Congolese soldiers some weeks ago. I was stopped by the police, when they heard that I speak Kinyarwanda. The police took my money and mobile phone and put me in a police cell, saying that Rwandans are dangerous. I was there for four days and tried to talk to the police. After some time my family found out where I was and got me free after paying some money. I didn't get my money or phone back. (Young man in Ryabizige, Rubavu District)

In Goma I was insulted and abused. I was told that I am a "Tutsi of Kagame" and that I should leave the country. (Old woman in Rukoko Market, Rubavu District)

I grew up in DRC and never had any bad experiences. I always lived peacefully with my Congolese neighbours. (An old woman at Rukoko Market, Rubavu District)

I was in Goma with two friends. Congolese told me to go back, because they hate all Rwandans. They told me that Rwandans are bad people who love to combat and love war. (Pupil of TTC, Gisenyi)

Once I was in Bukavu and a Congolese woman was screaming that Rwandans had beaten her up. People wanted to revenge and attacked me. (Young man in Ruzizi)

During the time of the M23, I was selling tomatoes in Bukavu. People attacked me. An old man protected me. He took me to his house and helped me to return safely. (Woman in Ruzizi)

My father was born in Congo, I grew up in Congo and have many friends there. The same with the rebel groups. Some rebels may speak Kinyarwanda, but grew up in Congo and are Congolese. (Man in Kigali)

I could never go to Congo. I am too scared. People are saying, when you go there as a Rwandan, you will never return. (Old man in Kinigi, Ruhengeri District)

The root-causes of the conflicts between DRC and Rwanda that were identified were almost identical in Congo and in Rwanda.

Some examples of the root causes of violent conflicts mentioned by Rwandan secondary school pupils in Rubavu District were:

- "Politicians are role-models for the people. If you steal something and you carry your child on your back, your child sees what you do and imitates it."
- "Politicians take advantage of war, not us. Bad governance divides the people."
- "Children and adolescents are taught violence-glorifying ideologies by their parents, friends and even sometimes by teachers in school."
- The main reason for the violence is the negative image of "the other" and the desire for revenge.
- The problem is that the "small people" in the society always accept the ideas of the "big people".

Bad governance and political interests were overwhelmingly identified as root-cause Number One on both sides. Apart from the political will, the will of the people was also questioned. "It would be good to take a survey to see if the Rwandans are really ready and willing to make peace with the Congolese", said a man in Bukavu.

The indiscipline in the Congolese Army was also mentioned as a key problem, as well as greedy rich businessmen involved in the exploitation of natural resources. "The 'big bellies' are never getting enough, always wanting to become more



A canon left behind from the M23

and more rich to the disadvantage of others”, said a teacher in Busasamana, Rubavu District.

Market women brought the language problem up. *“When the Congolese notice that you don’t know how to speak Swahili, they take advantage of it and betray you.”*

Sometimes fingers were pointed at the international community. *“The Whites are bringing the guns to us. They later on observe how we use them, see the bloody effects, without doing anything”*, said a young man in Sake.

The presence of the Interhamwe in DR Congo was also mentioned as a key reason for the persistent tensions between the two nations. *“The Hutu-rebels should go back to Rwanda, so that the war in Congo ends!”*

The 26th performance in Gisenyi. We were just coming back from Kiwanja. We had to pass several army posts on the way and we had to give some US-Dollars to begging Congolese soldiers “for cigarettes”, before reaching Goma. We were on the same road the M23 rebel group had taken in November 2012, when occupying Goma for two weeks. At the roadside along the way there was a cannon the M23 had left behind, when they were defeated in 2013. Now it has become a toy for children.

Approximately 30 youths from Gisenyi attended the performance. From the beginning of the play David has been drawing a war painting: weapons, burning

houses, a portrait of a crying woman, the shape of a destroyed plane⁴⁷ ... each time we perform his painting changes. David expresses his internal thoughts about the violence that has affected the Eastern DR Congo for the last 20 years.

In the last scene of the play David silently presents his work. Thérèse and two Rwandan actresses enter ceremoniously with candles and flowers, now wearing white T-shirts with a blood-red X-cross⁴⁸. They become immobile next to a one meter tall tower we had constructed with bricks.

*“When we were performing in Kiwanja yesterday, people said that only a dead Tutsi is a good Tutsi, that we should burn down the Memorial in Kigali, that they will follow the Interhamwe back to Rwanda to help them complete their work, starting with the newborns.”*⁴⁹ Thérèse is crying while speaking, her words leaving the audience astonished. *“I have seen all this before. I don’t want it again”*, she suddenly bursts out. She pulls a brick out of the tower. The tower falls apart with a loud sound.



Final scene of Badilika

⁴⁷ Inspired by the remains of the plane that crashed with President Habyarimana in 1994, displayed in the Presidential Museum in Kigali.

⁴⁸ We were using Nadine’s T-shirts from former performances. This helped the actresses to get the emotional state.

⁴⁹ While acting she used the word ‘Rwandan’ instead of ‘Tutsi’, because as a Rwandan she was taught to avoid ethnic distinction and is hesitant to do the contrary.

Thérèse lights a candle, so do the other two. I switch off the light. Thérèse sets fire to David's painting⁵⁰. The flames shine in the darkness. Instrumental music from a war movie is playing in the background. Thérèse puts the flowers one by one next to the ashes. Only candle light remains. Complete silence in the audience, apart from the sound of the crying actresses.

Thérèse's words are the sad truth, evidencing that a lot still needs to be done on the way towards peaceful coexistence of the people in Africa's Great Lakes region. The area in North-Kivu was and is still affected by armed conflicts, involving the M23, FDLR, the Mai Mai⁵¹ and the Congolese army supported by the MONUSCO. Killers, rapists, plunderers often spoke Kinyarwanda in the past, creating the conviction of the populace, that Rwanda is behind the crisis. The wounds are still open today, the burden of the past heavy, the anger alive. Of course not all spectators spread hate propaganda in Kiwanja. Some were immediately opposing it.

What we experienced in Kiwanja is a sad reality, but also an opportunity. Our Rwandan actors were shocked. They did not expect this. But instead of giving up they were pleading to stay longer, to perform and talk to people, to prove that Rwandans are not the way some believe they are. The next day we took some actors to a local radio station, did a one-hour live programme, promoting peaceful coexistence. Anderson's anti-war song was recorded and aired. We were thus able to leave some footmarks behind.

During the same performance in Kiwanja a man shared his own story, how he narrowly escaped death, but lost one leg during a fight between M23 and FARDC. He blames Rwanda for being responsible. He repeats some of the hate propaganda that others said. During the moderation process, he contributes two more times, each time becoming a bit softer in his position. At the end he is the first to volunteer when the moderator is looking for someone to symbolically destroy the violence in the region. It takes time before he arrives with his walking sticks. He lights a candle and burns a second painting of David, that was hidden somewhere during the play, while "We shall overcome" of Joan Baez is playing in the background.⁵²

The final image of the play is a shocking one. Up to 5 actors are wearing white T-shirts with blood-red paint on the front side of them, in the form of an X.⁵³ David is looking down at the ashes, the remnants of the drawing he did. Thérèse is kneeling besides the ashes, the flowers surrounding them. 3 other women are

50 During open-air performances we splashed some kerosene on the painting to ensure that it burns.

51 Mai Mai are armed local militia groups. Traditionally the Mai Mai warriors were believed to have a spiritual protection, that makes them invincible.

52 We recognized that many persons in Kiwanja were able to speak English, due to the contact with UN-soldiers and other foreigners.

53 We have several versions of the play, where from one actress up to 5 actors are wearing a former T-shirt used by Nadine during the play, when she smeared a blood-red cross on it while attacked.



Final image of Badilika play

immobile, tears still running down their cheeks, holding candles in their hands. Chantal is kneeling somewhere in the background, still facing the audience and holding the remains of her tomatoes in her hands. Anderson leans on the wall, his guitar still in his hand; next to him is the drum on which he played an angry solo during the play. The white actress is standing at the far end of one corner of the stage and, still immobile, is observing the situation.

The audience is then invited to come on stage to change the image. This offers them an opportunity to express ideas without words. The moderator tries to choose from the candidates someone, that has not contributed a lot during the discussions. The new images were similar: people removed the "bloody" T-shirts from the actors — a strong act as such. Some cleaned Nadine's hands. Many times the actors were placed together in a circular form, hand in hand as a sign of unity, sometimes the hands put into the air, or together holding a candle. The actors' faces were touched and gently massaged until they smiled. The smashed tomatoes were sometimes shared among them. After changing the image the "designer" had to explain the new image. And with the last message of the last designer — which was always a positive, peace-promoting one we moved on to the final ceremony.

The audience is asked to come forward, to form a big circle⁵⁴ and together we sing a peace song in French and Kinyarwanda.

*Nous disons non à la guerre
Car elle détruit nos pays*

54 If they are too many, several circles can be formed – a bigger outside, and others inside.

*Révoltons-nous sans peur
Et chassons la guerre parmi nous,
Congo, Rwanda, Ouganda, Burundi
Main dans la main, cultivons la paix
Dans notre région.⁵⁵*

During some performances we added a second “ritual”, asking for a volunteer to step forward and burn a second drawing of David, showing once again scenes of violence. Together with the audience, we burnt the drawing to symbolically express an end to violence.

The dynamic during the programme was somehow similar during each performance. The play provoked the audience, and some were spontaneously agreeing with the presented prejudices and stereotypes. Often we could hear a “Yes” or “It’s true” in the audience during the play. When life stories were shared, some felt confirmed that the “others” are bad and a “threat”, but the positive examples also impacted on people. During the further process of the moderation, when root-causes were discussed, interventions done, and the final image transformed, the dynamic changed gradually. More and more peace messages were voiced, until the almost entire audience was united for peace and expressed this during the final ceremony.

Individual or small group interviews were conducted at the end of 10 of the 28 performances. Our actors were asking four questions:

1. What was our play all about?
2. Is it the reality, or just a play? If it is reality, can you share an experience from your own life or that of another person?
3. Why do the problems between Rwanda and DR Congo exist?
4. What do you think could be done to change the situation to a better one?

Opinions, ideas, testimonies were shared. The provocative nature of the play left many people with the need to share their feelings and what they think about the situation between the two countries. During the moderation process most of the time, so many hands were up, that our moderator had to make a choice. Many people that didn’t get a chance to talk were therefore glad to be interviewed after the programme.

A Rwandan woman in her forties shared her story during an interview in Ruzizi: *I am married to a Congolese man. We have 3 children. During the Genocide in Rwanda we fled to Burundi. But life was very hard there. Therefore, my husband decided to go back to Kasai, where he comes from. He hoped to find a job. He informed his family, that he married a Rwandan, something, he had hidden from them. He*

⁵⁵ We say no more war! Because war destroys our nations. Let’s stand up! Don’t be afraid! We throw the war out! Congo, Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi. Hand in hand let’s cultivate peace in our region.



Final ceremony of Badilika in Rwanda

wanted to prepare the ground, so that I and the children could join him without any problem. He left and never returned, leaving me and the children behind. I never heard from him again. I don’t know, if he is dead or alive. I joined my mother who was living in Goma at that time and found some means to survive. When arriving in Goma, I was suspicious towards everybody. Due to the story with my husband, I had started to hate Congolese. Even if somebody did me a favour, did something good to me, I could not show any affection for the Congolese. But with time things changed. People were nice, caring, tolerant and respectful... and if somebody does you good every day, your heart opens. Today I am still living in Congo, well integrated with my children. I like the country and its people. There are no differences between Rwandans and Congolese.

A Congolese woman, also in her forties, shared her own story in Bukavu-Bagira: *I am married, with 6 children. I had nice neighbours from Rwanda. We became friends. Before the war in Congo they returned to Rwanda. One evening I was at home with my children when someone knocked on the door. Armed men entered, took my husband and my oldest son. One of them wanted to kill us all, the other only my husband. Then I heard a well-known voice. It was my former Rwandan neighbour. He was part of the rebels. I went out and started crying when I saw him. I tried to talk to him, I was pleading, but all in vain. They took my husband and*

firstborn, and 3 years later I got to know that my son was killed. Up to now I don't know what happened to my husband. Because of Rwandans, my life was destroyed. We ended up in extreme poverty. Two of my children are living on the street, I try my best to survive day by day with the other three. I hate all Rwandans, young and old, and nobody can ever convince me to like a Rwandan.

In Bukavu, Béatrice, a young Congolese student, agreed to be interviewed in front of the camera. She was born and raised in DR Congo. At the moment she is living in Bukavu. Béatrice is Munyamulenge. The Banyamulenge are not integrated she points out, despite living in Congo for generations. People perceive them as Rwandans and whenever there is a conflict between both nations, the Banyamulenge pay the price. Béatrice has experienced this intolerance and hatred herself. One day she was attacked in Bukavu by angry youths, beaten until her eyes were swollen and bleeding. She lost consciousness and narrowly survived. On another day when she wanted to enter a minibus, passengers stopped her from entering, telling her to go back to Rwanda. Moments she will never forget. *"I didn't choose to be born as a Munyamulenge. Why can't we just accept each other!"* One can see the release in her when she talks about herself, shares her bad experiences and her hopes for a better future. Sharing her story helps her to cope with the burden.

During the 3 weeks of the tour, the actors of Badilika as well as the moderator became better and better in their roles. They gained expertise in the forum theatre methodology and are now very able to apply it.⁵⁶ Apart from this the group has grown as a strong family-like community. The way we do theatre — where every person involved removes the invisible mask, he or she carries in order to master daily life, where every person opens up and shares his or her internal thoughts and empathetically listens to the other, where together people go beyond their limits with love and idealism to influence others — this creates strong relationships between the individual actors. The group has become an important part of the lives of its members and wherever we appear, people can feel this togetherness.

More performances are planned and a new play will be developed in 2015.

⁵⁶ A short documentary can be found on YouTube.

5. Trauma-healing through theatre

Suzan, an actress in 'Agethe', one of our forum theatre troupes in Karamoja, lost her front teeth when she was beaten by her husband, just a few weeks before she joined the theatre troupe. In the play we developed she is narrating the story, with strong emotions, not crying, but claiming her rights and pleading for an end of violence against women. With each performance her self-esteem increased. She later separated from her husband, started to stand on her own and make her own life.

Paul, actor in 'Abelebelekuma', another forum theatre troupe Rafiki Theatre formed in Karamoja, worked on his alcohol problem. He narrates on stage the main reason why he drinks; the desire to forget the traumatic events he went through. Paul ends with: *"Don't call me a drunkard. Ask yourself, why I drink!"*

Tony is in his early 50s. He is blind. He lost his eyesight when soldiers tortured him with barbed wire during the conflict in Northern Uganda. Tony got a guitar and learnt to use it. He joined Rafiki Theatre, using his guitar to sing some touching songs about his suffering and the suffering of his people, or otherwise just to accompany scenes with the guitar sound.

Sarah was in a serious life crisis. Her husband oppressed her for many years. She became depressive, started to see various psychologists in vain. Sarah is over 60. When she joined Rafiki Theatre her life took on a new meaning and she changed completely. Today she is full of confidence, has a role in a popular TV series and a harmonious relationship with her husband. When her husband noticed the change in her he also changed.

Achilla lives at the bottom of society. The former prisoner is addicted to alcohol. He lives in the small town of Moroto in Karamoja. Achilla earns his living by collecting firewood in the mountains and selling it for a little money in order to survive. He might be 40 years old, but looks much older. He was in prison for cattle-raiding and related armed violence, like most of the actors of 'Etuko', the forum theatre troupe of ex-prisoners we formed and developed with Rafiki Theatre. During 20 minutes Achilla sits on stage in one corner, holding a bottle of local alcohol in his hands, immobile as an image. Suddenly he stands up slowly and crosses the stage, his eyes fixed on the audience in desperation. He walks through the audience and exits without saying a word. The moment is touching, stronger than any words

could be, and the moderator uses this scene later on to enhance dialogue on re-integration of ex-prisoners in the society.

Emmanuel was only 14 years old when we formed 'Nyakica', a forum theatre troupe in Kuron in Eastern Equatoria, South Sudan. He is among the 120 privileged youth in Kuron, who can go to the only school in the region. The region is one of the least developed parts of the world. Ethnic conflicts between heavily armed herdsmen affect the region. Emmanuel lost his brother in one of these violent conflicts. His brother was like a father to him, taking care of most of his basic needs. The loss of his brother was the most traumatic event of his life. During the play he narrates the moment when his brother was killed. He starts crying and so do some others in the audience.

In the same forum theatre troupe, but in a different play, Hannah, a 15 year old girl, is acting out her true story. One day two of her brothers came to the school and took her away to marry her to an old man, who was willing to pay a high dowry. Hannah started screaming and cried at home until the family decided to reverse the decision. She could return to school. When Hannah performed her story on stage, two actors were playing the role of her brothers, one of them her younger brother, who was not himself involved in the act of taking her out of school.

Giving away a young woman to an old man is common among the Toposa, the ethnic group Hannah belongs to. Many young women commit suicide later on out of desperation, by climbing a high tree and jumping down. Any woman who runs away and is caught is punished by the community. Her arms are bound behind her back and wooden sticks are fixed on her calf-bones so that whenever she tries to walk it causes pain. Like this, she is exposed to the entire community. We used this practice in our play. After playing her real life story, ending with the words "I would rather die than marry this old man", Hannah re-enters stage with the stick-installation at her calf-bones and hands bound, fixing the audience with a look of anger and hatred, while Manal — another young actress — sings a self-composed song about the suffering of Toposa-women.

Therese is shocked after the performance with Badilika in Kiwanja, a small town in North Kivu in the DRC. Some audience contributions which are full of hatred against Rwandan Tutsis remind her of the Genocide 20 years ago and the traumatic events she had experienced in her own life. Two days later, Therese uses the hate propaganda she has heard in Kiwanja in her monologue on stage during a performance in the Rwandan border town of Gisenyi, while two other actresses stand next to her as an image with candles in their hands. The three are in tears, there is complete silence in the audience.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ A short documentary can be found on YouTube.

Suzan, Paul, Tony, Sarah, Achilla, Emmanuel, Hannah and Therese all have one thing in common; acting in a theatre play is helping them to deal with their respective burdens from the past. Reliving situations on stage is an important part of a trauma-healing process which the actors are undergoing. When a person is faced with a really traumatic memory, he or she often pushes it aside because the mind doesn't know how to deal with it. By accessing that memory using a monologue in a theatre play or singing a song in it, the person distances him- or herself from the problem. And by telling that story through acting or singing it over and over again, it becomes less threatening, less dangerous and so less of a problem. This helps traumatized persons. And the awareness that they are able to cope with it better and at the same time doing something good by passing positive messages to others, boosts their self-esteem and confidence.

Being embedded in a group and supported by it is very crucial. The group becomes an important pillar for the individual. Laughing together, sharing good moments, listening to and helping each other is important in order to digest the re-lived past situations, the fears, anger and sadness experienced on stage. As an additional support, we use different relaxation methods such as metamorphic massage or Qi Gong exercises to decrease the tensions and inner blockages and achieve an inner balance.



Metamorphic massage

Metamorphic massage

Metamorphic massage is a massage of the spinal reflex points on the feet, the hands and the head. These zones are subjected to massage in order to free the person's life energy. It aims to release psycho-energetic blockages that keep us from moving, changing and building our lives. Past traumatic events are still alive within us and are locked into the body structure. We can loosen up the body structure using massage and free the person's life energy. This enables the person to transform and release whatever pain from the past that is blocking him or her. It is the self-healing ability of the person that is awakened and activated. This massage technique has no restrictions and can be applied by anyone and to anyone.⁵⁸

The big tree Qi Gong exercise

Qi Gong is an ancient Chinese (movement) meditation method to regain energy and find inner balance.

'The big tree' is a Qi Gong exercise where a person holds an upright standing posture called 'big tree' for at least 30 minutes.

Bend the knees slightly, let the tip of the tongue touch the upper palate. Raise your arms in front of you, as if holding a big sphere in front of you. Relax and breathe slowly. Try to quieten your mind, not to think of daily worries.

The aim is to experience deeper levels of relaxation that increase energy and vitality, build confidence and self-esteem, reduce fear, strengthen trust in self and in life.⁵⁹

We also use art therapy methods in our work, for example the drawing of traumatic moments, future hopes and dreams. This is not only an opportunity for the actors in our groups to express their feelings and desires, but is also a new experience for most of them, since many schools in the region are not equipped to offer art classes.



Art therapy exercises

⁵⁸ <http://www.positivehealth.com/article/bodywork/metamorphic-technique-for-transformation>

⁵⁹ <http://en.dzendo.org/index.php?load=stat&cat=17>

6. Conclusion

As peace and human rights workers, we are most of the time addressing and confronting the social norms that provoke violence and rights abuses. Any individual is embedded in a web of relations of different natures (family, friends, colleagues, media, spiritual mentors, ideologies etc.), that will affect his/her decisions. Social norms are present in almost every aspect of our daily actions. These norms mark attitudes, practices and behaviours that cannot be easily changed. Let us consider the case of ethnic conflicts in the Great Lakes region. If behaviours and attitudes are guided by certain norms, it is quite clear that individual behavioural changes cannot occur easily, no matter the frequency or type of dialogue engaged in, the channel used or even how well-crafted the message is. For example, if a Congolese family marries their daughter to a Rwandan man in a community where that is not the norm, and which has suffered during the last 20 years from violent conflicts, where Rwanda was involved; not only will their daughter most likely be marginalized and detested by other community members, but she will also possibly move away with her husband. Social norms not only prescribe behaviours, but also condemn deviation from those behaviours. Social pressure and expectations from the group influence actions.

A collective approach is needed to directly address social and cultural norms. Change occurs only if two principles are in place. The first is to avoid a top-down approach, telling people what is wrong and right and instead working with the communities in an interactive mode until they decide themselves that a harmful behaviour should be stopped. The second key factor leading to change is the broader focus on addressing collective rather than individual behaviour, fully recognizing that no one will stop a behaviour unless they think that others are going to make the same decision.

Understanding the social and cultural context is a must for anybody trying to create a process of change. Development practitioners, human rights advocates and peace workers must go the extra mile and not only understand how norms work, but also comprehend how they can be abolished, changed or recreated in order to achieve the intended result. Norms can never be changed from outside of a given group or social system. This implies that external interveners can only serve as catalysts or facilitators of change, and that dialogue is the key approach in influencing or facilitating any behavioural or attitudinal change.

Forum theatre is an excellent tool to enhance dialogue, especially but not only in remote and low-literacy communities. Through theatre you can create an emotional link to people. If a play mirrors their realities they easily identify with the characters on stage, feel with them, share their anger, frustration, sadness and joy. This link will help them to open up, express their feelings and needs, share experiences and ideas. Thus we have horizontal communication lines, honest and 'real' dialogue, no top down, spoon-fed information giving, but sharing and learning from each other.

Dialogue on its own is not enough. But it is the first step in a change in people's process.

Change demands a long-term, multi-level and multi-sectorial approach, and an understanding of the root causes of violent systems, attitudes and behaviours. To measure the impact of it is very tricky.

Too often peace workers claim that their activities have led to change people's behaviour. Under pressure from donors they write it in their project reports, knowing that it is not true. How can we believe it is possible to change in a one, two or three-year project that which took decades and even centuries to evolve? How can we claim the sole ownership of change? Many factors influence individual changes of attitude and behaviour.

But what we are capable of (and this is worth it!), is to create a process and contribute to it from all angles, using all experiences, knowledge, methods and tools we have. And forum theatre is among the tools that have proven to be effective.

Forum theatre generates solutions. It works to the extent that it prepares participants to intervene critically in their own lives. It supports critical thinking and change processes.

In May 2013 I was working with our local forum theatre troupe in Kuron, South Sudan. A rebel group was threatening the region, trying to fight the deployed national army. People were living in constant fear. The Jie, one of the ethnic groups, were attacked by the rebels, running away and seeking refuge with the Toposas, their traditional enemies. A peace talk was organized between the two groups and our local forum theatre troupe was used to facilitate the dialogue. 100 Toposa herdsmen, most of them carrying a gun, were facing 20 Jie, with 30 metres space between the two groups. Our troupe performed in the middle of it. When Emmanuel did his monologue in tears⁶⁰, accusing the warriors⁶¹ of both sides, I saw three of them wiping tears from their eyes. After the performance they agreed to sit together, a first step in the right direction. After four hours of discussion, both sides had emptied their hearts, blaming the other for stealing and killing. First practical decisions were taken, for example, who should compensate whom with how many cows or goats etc. And they decided together to share one territory



Emotional link with the audience during performance in South Sudan

for the period of insecurity. The elders and chiefs took the responsibility to calm down and control the young warriors. They agreed to act together in case of any attack by the rebels and to cooperate with the national army.

On this occasion the forum theatre programme contributed to the conflict management, no more and no less. But this contribution alone is a success story in my view and a reason to support the use of forum theatre in peace work.

Last but not least, the hundreds of performances done by Badilika, Rafiki Theatre and its sister troupes have promoted 'art for peace' in the region, and a theatre that goes far beyond comedy and mere entertainment.

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The community based theatrical approach of Freetong Players international (FPI) theatre of Sierra Leone

by Charlie Haffner*

Introduction

The Freetong Players international theatre of Sierra Leone have participated in many conferences, symposia, training workshops, festivals and done presentations in relation to arts on a good number of disciplines ranging from Pan Africanism, peace and conflict transformation, health education including safe motherhood, child survival, development protection and environmental healing, to do-



Music performance "Peace at Home", Kenema

* Director General

mestic violence, youth entrepreneurship, anti corruption, football, children, women, human rights, gender equity and ... you name it; the Freetong players 'have been there, done it and worn the t-shirts'.

We have always been engaged in non formal education through the use of the skills we possess in community participatory dramatic arts as a tool for information, communication, education and social mobilization. Or better still — combining education and entertainment to sensitizing the wider, rural, poor, illiterate communities on any issue “under the sun”. Hundreds of teachers, adult educators, health workers, traditional entertainers, dramatists, musicians and community animators are benefiting from our education and training programs.

Having been made aware of the concept of theatre for development by the institute of Adult Education, University of Sierra Leone, moved by the accapella singing of SWAPO's school going refugees in Sierra Leone 1980s, touched by the operations of the travelling theatres of Nigeria and Zambia especially, inspired by August Baol's concept of peoples' theatre in his book “Theatre of the Oppressed”, Out of a long history of interaction with experts and practitioners in the field, and our long, daring experiment and venture in this most neglected occupation, we have over the years come up with a method that we are calling the “FPI method”.

FPI Model

Efforts to communicate development messages usually do not achieve the desired results because communicators do not give adequate consideration to or frankly ignore the beliefs and social factors that determine Sierra Leoneans' behavior and that is usually where the problems of acceptance and change arise.

No doubt, Drama, dance, storytelling, town crying, fables, traditional games and music are all firmly rooted in the cultural and artistic expressions of many communities in Sierra Leone as in other parts of Africa. It is difficult to imagine a community that has completely forgotten any of these forms of collective participation and entertainment.

Freetong Players APPROACH therefore combines traditional and modern participatory arts — music, theatre, storytelling, etc, in disseminating messages, raising awareness, creating consciousness, mobilizing communities to take positive action. Like “Troubadours”, with beautiful soothing music and dramatic charm the Freetong Players have traversed the entire country — village to village, town to town, market places, schools, offices, conferences, churches, mosques, shanty communities, chiefs court, Presidential lodges, senior citizens' home, hospital wards and visitors waiting rooms, street corners and homes of ordinary people, promoting whatever the community and national issues that were at stake at the time.

For the Freetong Players, theatre for development follows distinct steps from start to finish or as the Director, Charlie Haffner puts it, 'from conception to actualization and evaluation'. If these steps are not adhered to and completed, the result would be like a failed malaria patient who did not complete the full dosage of his prescribed drugs, leading to a relapse and body succumbing to a renewed power of the seemingly refreshed/replenished and invigorated parasites.

Let me say that the National NGO approaches FPI to disseminate messages and educate a particular community or the entire country of fourteen administrative districts. Messages may be meant for rural illiterate mothers whose children were dying of tuberculosis, measles, tuberculosis, polio before their 1st birthday, and for suckling mothers needing information on pre and neonatal tetanus, STDs HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancy, safe motherhood and family planning.



Theatre performance, Makeni



Discussion with audience



Theatre performance, Kenema



Theatre performance, St. Anthony Hall, Freetown



Drama "Peace at Home"

Apart from healthcare and reproductive health it could well be, early marriage, teenage pregnancy, school, domestic violence, gender, children, women, human rights, democracy and good governance, voter education, family planning, business-development, as well as peace-building and conflict transformation. The Fpi approach follows the following steps:

1. Information Data collection & Analysis

Whatever the issue, the first stage is the collection of detailed information on the target community and the issue at hand, from all available sources including the NGO's communication unit and resource persons. It is very important to know before hand what percentage are aware of the issue in question and what percentage should be aware after a set period/duration of time. If that is not enough, interviews were conducted and complimented by group discussions sometimes.

2. Pre-visit

The second step took the planning team, an advance team, of not more than five, to the target community, to meet with community leaders and stakeholders, sell them the idea, objectives, expectations and benefits, solicit their support and put together a small committee to plan the oncoming activities. Back at base we put logistics and all mechanisms in place for the workshop and community concert that will follow.



Music performance, Makeni

3. Material production and training workshops activities

Participants in the usually two to five day material production and training workshop included actors youths, religious, women leaders, town criers, teachers, pastors/imams, traditional male/female leaders, entertainers and in many cases, children in and out of school.

This stage is the material production and training workshop, mostly starting with a grand or low key opening ceremony, where the goals and objectives were spelt out, speeches made, statements delivered by key stakeholders and commitments made. After an opening ceremony the sessions always began with instructional lectures and presentations on all that participants needed to know about the issues to be dealt with as well as the art of community group dynamics.

Then key messages were developed and standardized, taking into consideration similarities and differences in cultural beliefs and traditional practices, as one community's "meat could be another's poison". What mattered in a provincial district at a particular time might not be the same as what mattered in the urbanized Freetown capital. Participants were then trained in the creation and production of message bearing music, songs, and dramas in the dominant language of the target community and how to perform them.

4. Post Workshop activities

Once the workshop is over, material produced, actors cast and rehearsed, performances could then take place through any one, two or all three channels: 1. Live on stage, 2. radio broadcast or 3. community video and TV broadcasts.

5. Community performances

Stage performances can take place anywhere — at a school, street corner, in an office conference hall, a church, an abandoned community, at a chief's court baray/compound as the case may be. It can also be at a senior citizenz home, hospital wards and visitors waiting rooms. Sometimes several performances are staged at different venues making sure the messages reach as far and wide as possible.

6. Interactive sessions

At the end of each performance there were interactive sessions where the audience posed questions, raised and discussed the issues in the dramas; how they affected them and what their role should be as regards the way forward. This satge of audience participation is very vital because It is a time for stock taking for the producers as it revealed whether or not the audience undersood the drama and the issues it contained. interactive exercises usually concluded with resolutions on the way forward. Sometimes Task Forces were formed to monitor and implement post workshop activities.

7. Monitoring Evaluation & Reporting

As stated above the FPI approach does not end at performances and interaction but monitoring and evaluation mechanisms were the conclusive stages. Thus FPI

worked with monitoring teams of stake holders and community Task Forces to closely monitor community performances, broadcasts, challenges, public opinions, ratings, and effectiveness or otherwise of the project Interviews, questionnaires and person to person, media SMS messages and phone-ins are collectively employed to find out what percentage of the target public would have become aware and joined in the campaign. Reporting was usually done monthly, quarterly and at the end of project.

Conclusion

This is the concept of community that has come out of direct experiences and which the Players themselves have dubbed: theatre of di people, with di people, for di people". This approach is also vital because people, according to experience, are more likely to trust information and act on it if: they hear it repeatedly from many different sources; the person delivering it is well known and trusted; they understand how it can help themselves and their families, it is communicated in familiar language, and they are encouraged to discuss and ask questions to clarify their understanding of what needs to be done, when and why. Its is a gauranteed process which can be shared with other African countries because it can work as it has across Sierra Leone and elsewhere. FPI has taken its creative rhythms and artistic expertise to the USA (1992), Scotland, Denmark, Venezuela (1995), England, Puerto Rico (1996), Taiwan, China, (1999), Canada (2002 & 2003), Poland (2004) and communities throughout Africa including Ghana, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Guinea, The Gambia, Senegal and Zambia.



Welcoming the audience



Audience emotional response



Audience discussion after the performance



Performance, Clock Tower, Freetown

Communicating through theatre for peace

by Reverend Dr Jean Blaise Kenmogne*

“We can’t not communicate”. Whether we like it or not, whether we speak or not, everything is communication. Our gestures, our posture, our mimics, the way we are, the way we talk, the way we don’t say certain things, the way we do or don’t do things, all these things *“speak”* to our receiver and *“addresses them”*. Exactly as in the theatre.

*“Our words reflect our thoughts and perceptions, and define the world around us. It’s through the intermediary of our words that we are known, for they tell the story of our thoughts and our inner being. The way we express ourselves can open doors or close them, can heal or wound, create joy or pain, and finally determine the level of our well-being.”*¹ There are many ways of communicating. People used to communicate with sounds and gestures.

In their interactions with others, they use tamtams, shouting, fire, smoke signals and other codes such as drawings.

In Africa, there is still a major tradition of using parables and proverbs. Parables and proverbs show the wisdom of the ancestors and often have a very deep significance. Each culture has developed its own way of communicating, and this is part of its social wealth that the dramatic arts consciously use today to convey messages and contribute to social well-being.

Communicate comes from the Latin *“communicare”*, meaning quite simply to be in relation with, join with, share. To improve the quality of your communication and by extension of your relations, you must also be very attentive to your gestures and attitudes for they account for approximately 90% of the message that we want to convey. What could be more appropriate than the dramatic arts to give communication its full force of persuasion? Communication through theatre has the vocation, on a playful or dramatic mode, oral and gestural, to touch the hearts and minds of the audience to win them over to a just cause. In this sense, it is eminently educational. Because it aims to institute healthy relations between sender and receiver, to eliminate the *“noise”* that usually obstructs them and creates misunderstandings, it is essentially a tool at the service of peace.

* Director General of CIPCRE

¹ Parler de paix p.11

The reader will find below an example of good practice in terms of theatre for peace. Not completely theoretical and not totally practice-oriented, this brochure is a theoretical example, a reflection on theatre practice as a tool of social transformation. The merit of the author of this work resides in the blending of experiences on the ground and reminiscences of the training she has received in the dramatic arts. The CIPCRE will have been the laboratory of the extraordinary intuition she had to capitalise on her work as a whole. Beyond this framework of the birth of this tool, all the civil society organisations are implicitly invited to experiment with it and use it as an instrument for facilitation on the ground. We may say that this brochure will have achieved its goal if it encourages people to reflect, if it inspires all those who accompany groups devoted to improving the standard of living of the population on the ground, and continuously feeds the practice of social transformation. When authentic communication shows itself through the angle of dramatic art, each boosts the power of the other to contribute to building peace in this era of profound social change.



Young people from interdenominational dialogue in front of the audience



Performance with dancing and singing

I would like to thank my colleagues at CIPCRE, especially Jeanne Medom, Brice Ngou and Eugène Fonssi for their contribution to the drafting of this work, Agnes Sander for her Manual on facilitation methods, and Evelyne Tchonang for proof-reading this text.

Theatre for peace

Contents and methods

CPS work in Cameroon

by Silvia Stroh

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PART I: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1. The theatre: a didactic tool

Theatre is a universal language. It is a combination of verbal and corporal expression, of song and music. It is also a way of breathing life into history and individual stories, of discovering the souls behind the words.

Globally, the theatre has three dimensions. First of all, there is a theatre whose aim is pleasure and entertainment. The audience want to be entertained and enjoy themselves. They are interested in seeing how a fascinating tale evolves. They need these exceptional moments, to be touched by the stories being told on the stage. This can be done through scenes that are shocking, enlightening or full of joy.

Next, there is theatre as art. In this sense, it is not an exact copy of reality. It is the creation of a new world, taking the spectator by the hand or, more precisely, by the heart and leading them into this world, transporting them to distant moments that are at the same time close to their lives and feelings. To achieve this, the theatre makes use of a set of artifices: costumes, masks and make-up, light and



A dream of peace



Teacher training introduction

props. Added to this are singing, movement, dance and music. A show is always part artifice; that is to say, it always creates a distance between our daily lives and the time depicted on the stage. And to achieve a certain quality, reality should be overcome, for example through the use of silence, choreography or dialogues with the audience.

In any case, the rules of the stage must be respected. The audience want to see stories with a message. So it should be able to understand the scenes, maybe not with reason or intelligence but in any case with its feelings. There is nothing more boring than things that are “well done”, seeing talented actors doing things that unfortunately do not touch the audience. We don’t want characters who recite the story. If that were the case, we may as well read a play. The actors are ordinary people but who find themselves in situations that are not completely ordinary. Their acting gives them possibilities of managing situations with varying degrees of success. In any case, they deploy themselves during the telling of the story and they are in relation with the other players and their audience. To achieve this, the actor should be capable of living on the stage. And there are tools that have to be managed, the actor’s body, language and voice. They must be comprehensible and visible. But above all, they must have the courage to perform in front of an audience with all the feelings they have in these exceptional situations. They should be attentive to the personality they present on the stage, to the situations the role leads them into.

Furthermore, in the second dimension of the theatre, we can mention the actors (their own personalities), the work of the actors (their acting), and the work with the actors (the stage director/drama teacher). Regarding the actor’s own per-

sonality, it is of no interest whatsoever to know what mood the actor is in. Their only duty is to relate to the other actors and concentrate on the story to be performed. Often, the actor may have the impression that their acting is very good or very poor. But in reality, these are only their own personal impressions and have nothing to do with the success of the play. When they walk on stage, they forget their own personal behaviour and become a character in the play. It is important, for this type of work, to know that we do not need “stars”, that is to say people who make a reputation for themselves on the backs of other people. There is a very harsh word to describe this attitude in German: “*Rampensau*” — limelight hog.

As for the **acting**, the actor’s duty is to behave on the stage to perform the play for the audience. The actor must understand the message of the play, but it is not their duty to explain it.

This attitude would be superfluous and would be of no advantage to the spectator. Seeing how a character tries to impose an idea or feelings is always boring to the audience. As a spectator, we want to see how the characters behave, how the story unfolds. And this takes place scene after scene. Dancers and musicians don’t try to play feelings in their movements or in the music. They use their instrument or their body, and they trust the score or the choreography. This is how it is when a play has been written and also when we are developing our own play or scenes. We must know what we want to convey and find a concrete situation to express the message. Furthermore, the actor should be able to speak audibly and comprehensibly. This requires good pronunciation, speaking at the right speed, the right volume and with the right gestures.

As already explained, acting in front of an audience requires courage in the first instance. We have nothing but our own presence, the other actors and the text. It is necessary to respond and interact quickly, not to be ashamed of your own ideas, your own behaviour in the situation created by the script. In the cases where you have to develop your own play, the same attitude is required. You must not start wondering whether or not you are “doing well”. Or “will the audience like me?” You have a duty: act and respond in the situation, rely on the script and trust the other actors.

As for the work of the **stage director or drama teacher**, within the framework of the theatre for peace, we are mainly dealing with amateurs. Our work is therefore more educational. We are facilitators who have the opportunity to train people in a field that can offer them immense possibilities. Theatre requires courage, truth, spontaneity, fantasy, joy, playing, facility, but also commitment, respect for others, trust and dependability. And the most important thing is that we should enjoy it and find it fulfilling. Who wouldn’t like to act and devise imaginary sketches using pure imagination? The difficulty resides in the fact that you are acting in front of

an audience. Our work as facilitators or trainers is to help amateurs to succeed, to lend them all our knowledge and skills to boost their abilities. And this has to be done without forgetting that the performance of a play is always a work of art, never just a presentation of an educational exercise. It is the duty of the stage director to take responsibility for the staging up to the moment of the first performance. They chose the way the script is to be interpreted. They make the necessary decisions and adjustments. They have to make sure the message reaches the audience.

Lastly, the third dimension of theatre consists in considering the dramatic art as a vehicle for messages intended for all human beings. This is achieved through the acting, but also through the script. There are classic works which encapsulate all the profound truths about life. We also find problems that have been relevant for centuries. But for the staging, it is important to understand the message we want to get across; especially when we are developing our own play or sketches. What is the message conveyed by the script and the acting? Does the message I want to convey reach the audience? Being determined to do well is not enough. You also have to know how. The message transmitted may also incite discussions and questions which can bring change to the lives and ambitions of both actors and audience.



Pupils as fascinated spectators

2. Theatre for peace

I have been doing theatre work for more than 30 years. I am an actress, stage director and drama teacher. I started off studying to be a social worker, then I trained as a facilitator and then as an actress. Combining these courses helped me to find the job I really enjoy. During my first acting role at the “Young people’s Theatre” in Dortmund, I noticed that I wanted to gain a better understanding of the young people in the audience. I wanted to find out who I was acting for, how the message of the plays came across to them. I wanted to understand their situation, their lives. I felt isolated in my profession as an actress, always with colleagues whose sole motivation was often glory and personal success. This is how I started my work as a drama teacher. I visited schools, I acted with the pupils, and I prepared them for watching theatre performances. Afterwards, I discussed the different themes of the plays with them and the impact they could have in their lives. Lastly, I started to train young people in a theatre troupe I started. And I understood that this was my vocation.

During the years that followed, I worked in various theatres and schools. I staged several plays, from the classics to original works conceived with the troupes I got together each time. In doing so, I was able to see that this work was always immensely enriching for the people involved. It was a pleasure to see how the young people, but also the adults, learnt to get to know one another better, to see how they could free themselves of their inhibitions, how they could succeed in having more confidence in themselves, in others and in life. One of the most important moments for me was when a 17 year-old girl came to my house after a breathing and movement exercise² to tell me that, for the first time in her life, she felt really free.

Furthermore, this progress was just as visible in children and young disabled people as in people with psychological problems. Even for these traumatised children, the theatre was an opportunity to work with others, to find images for their wounds and to be able to be proud of themselves after a successful performance.

For me, theatre is a job, but it is also a passion. I’m a teacher, but at the same time I’m an artist. That is to say, on the one hand I like to see the progress people make, see how the actors push back their limits, and I like to provide people with support to enable them to optimise their capacities. Theatre work gives them the

opportunity to perform, increase their self-confidence, discover themselves, and discover other people as well as new situations and different characters. And what is more, all this has to be performed before an audience. For a show to be successful, people have to work together. You never perform for yourself. Even if you are alone on stage, you are constantly interacting with the audience. That is to say, we really need to form a team.

All this gives the participant tools to gain a better understanding of their situation, to boost their capacities and manage them better once in contact with others. This gives them the opportunity to live in peace with themselves and with other people. In this way, I began to use theatre to promote peace and manage conflicts within the framework of intercultural dialogue. In Germany, there are many problems between young immigrants and young Germans. It is not always easy for young immigrants with different cultural roots to feel accepted and to thrive in German society. During the intercultural dialogue workshops, the “*was guckst du*”³ (what are you looking at), using theatre, we created spaces for exchange through which we could present the different sets of problem issues related to immigration.

For almost three years now, I have been working in Cameroon, in central Africa. Here, there is more of an oral tradition in society than written. Its history is based on narrative, souvenirs, rites and “*grandes palabres*”, and still bears the stamp of orality today. The Cameroonians like to act, to tell stories, express themselves with their bodies (gesture, dancing) and sing. So theatre seemed to me to be the perfect tool to allow them to bring to life their thoughts, fears and hopes. And with the staging of the conflict situations, the theatre highlights the causes of the conflicts and injustices, inequalities and frustrations they engender, the poor management that results and finally the proposals for peaceful solutions.



Silvia Stroh

² For all the exercises see chapter 8

³ Interkulturelles Training 2005–2008 Friedrich Ebert Stiftung /Bonn

3. My work in the peace service in Cameroon

According to the United Nations definition, “a culture of peace [...] consists of values, attitudes and behaviours that [...] reject violence and endeavour to prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation between individuals, groups and States”.⁴ Thus, for peace and non-violence to prevail, we must be guided by the following objectives:

- promote sustainable economic and social development;
- ensure equality between women and men;
- encourage democratic participation;
- foster comprehension, tolerance and solidarity;
- support participatory communication and the free-circulation of information and knowledge.

3.1 The objectives of my work

I work within the framework of the NGO CIPCRE based in Bafoussam. Its “Theatre for peace” project pursues these objectives. The overall aim is to contribute to building peace in Cameroon by promoting the theatre as a tool for facilitation, education and communication for the use of CIPCRE and its partners. The specific aims are as follows:

- Train the partners of the CIPCRE in theatre for facilitating, educating and awareness raising in various domains related to peace.
- Support CIPCRE’s awareness raising campaigns through the creation and deployment of a mobile theatre intervention troupe.

There are two dimensions to my work. On the one hand, drama training for the partners of CIPCRE for facilitation, education and awareness raising in the various domains related to peace and its creation and, secondly, the running of a Mobile Theatre Troupe (MIT) to support the CIPCRE’s awareness raising campaigns through performances in front of our target groups. To achieve this, we had to di-

⁴ United Nations Resolutions A/RES/52/13: a culture of peace and A/53/243: Declaration and Programme of action for a culture of peace

vide the conflict situations up by topic, seek the means to solve them, and create a space to develop situations of peace, the individuals and collective dreams of a life of peace, given that “wars begin in the minds of men, so it is in the minds of men that we must build the defences of peace...”⁵.

The problem issues surrounding peace are topical in Cameroon. Despite the absence of armed conflict, several situations are of a nature to threaten a peace that many describe as “relative”. The divide between rich and poor continues to widen, women are always the first victims of these inequalities through practices that are dehumanising and discriminatory against them; qualified young people remain stuck in the mesh of generalised unemployment with no prospects of work. Among these young people, there are children who, through lack of prospects, become vagrants and most often end up caught up with drug dealers; corruption, embezzlement, favouritism and nepotism are gangrene that prevent the smooth running of the public administration.

There are approximately 8 million young people seeking food, education and employment in a country marked by growing poverty. A large proportion of well-educated youths try to leave the country to find jobs in Europe or the United States.



Performing a scene in Maroua-coaches from the training centre act for their students...

⁵ Constitutive Act of UNESCO, 1945

This situation represents a real threat for Cameroon, for the country needs these young people, who could drive development. Peace is made even more fragile with the crisis of confidence between parents and children.

To remedy this, social work players must be capable of taking cognisance of the problems, expressing their needs, analysing the conflicts and seeking alternative solutions without violence. For all this, the work on theatre offers vast possibilities.

3.2 The International Circle for the Promotion of Creation (CIPCRE)

Identity

The International Circle for the Promotion of Creation is a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) under Cameroon law founded in 1990; an NGO in the field of the environment and sustainable development and a space for the promotion of social, ecumenical and interdenominational dialogue.

Strategic axes

The CIPCRE articulates its work around four (4) strategic axes:

- Axis 1: Self-determination of the population;
- Axis 2: Preservation of the environment;
- Axis 3: Peace and conflict prevention;
- Axis 4: Democratic culture of human rights.

3.3 The activities in relation to peace and conflict prevention

The *theatre for peace* consists in work in favour of non-violence. This means that each person reconsiders their place, their role in society starting from the principle of respecting and accepting others. This work assumes we must:

- Advocate and raise awareness on the socio-cultural obstacles that favour the legitimisation and legalisation of certain forms and types of violence;
- Understand that violence does not solve violence;
- Promote the culture of dialogue and authority in the sense of being capable of taking care of others and not of imposing behaviour on them...



Performing widowhood rites

Within the framework of my work for peace in Cameroon, I have worked with young people and adults. They have all been able to follow the same training courses. The only condition was that the participants be open to discovering the didactic tool that is theatre practice. The commitment and enthusiasm of the participants have been a real source of pleasure for me.

When I arrived at the CIPCRE, I did a “tour of the units” — the work units. I accompanied colleagues in these units during their work on the ground to find out about what their jobs involved and make contact with their target groups. I was able to understand that the different units of the CIPCRE carry out in-depth work to manage conflicts, improve living conditions and support individual and collective initiatives.

I received visits from a number of Civil Peace Service (CPS)⁶ partner organisations interested in the concept of *theatre for peace* who wanted to incorporate it into their activities. On the one hand, there were people grouped together according to their domain of activities and who were benefiting from the support of the CIPCRE facilitators within the framework of the resolution of their problems

⁶ The CPS network combines partners organisations and the peace workers of Bread for the World and AGEH in Cameroon. It works across sectors throughout the country. See also the list of CPS partners on page 142

and conflicts. These were human rights committees, partners in interdenominational dialogue and partners from rural zones. In addition, I worked with the partners of the CIPCRE and the CPS who needed training for facilitators. That is to say they wanted to receive tools to supervise their members and work with them, using the theatre as a tool for facilitation, education, training and awareness raising.

The groups I worked with were really very different. I worked on questions of widowhood rites, relations between religions, conflicts between livestock breeders and farmers. I was asked to provide support for developing scenes in relation to their situation and their framework of activities. With the *theatre for peace*, I noticed an improvement in the relations between the participants and a stabilisation of the groups. The theatre also gave each member of this training an opportunity for personal development and to exhibit their gifts and talents for the others.

With the participants in the schools and the partners of the Civil Peace Service (CPS) network in Cameroon, I tried to show the scenes in relation to the difficulties experienced in daily life. To the question of which factors are likely to destroy peace, they quoted, among other things, social injustice, bad governance, the eco-



Scene development phase during training of Protestant and Catholic youths from DIJPSC in Fombot in the tools and techniques of theatre for peace



Discussions about the scenes during a secondary teacher's training session

omic crisis. Faced with these problems, they are impotent. This is why, through *theatre for peace*, we insist on the intermittent problems they can resolve at their own level. This is necessarily achieved through a change in attitude, the values of tolerance, and respect for others.

As a member of the CIPCRE's "Youth and Citizen Unit", I have dealt with young people who played a crucial role in my work. In Cameroon, the future is uncertain because the unemployment rate is high and young people are straddling two different cultures. Hence the problem of acculturation, which is favoured by the new information and communication technologies. In a perpetually changing world, Cameroon is in the swing of things. Thus a crucial problem is posed regarding training and equipping the young generation to become actors in social change, to build a society of justice and peace. This cannot be done without a reconstruction of the system of confidence in order to take advantage of the relay of the ruling class.

Furthermore, the adults I have worked with were happy to have the possibility of feeling free of pressure, of being free to play a part, and rediscover their Youth. Between the young people and the adults, there were very often problems of generation conflicts. Between the young people tied to modernism and the older people attached to tradition, the problems arise from misunderstandings and intolerance from all sides. The aim of this work was therefore to give support to each participant so that they could individually find their path to achieve sustainable peace with themselves, with other people, with their environment and to be able to share experiences with others.

4. Trainers training in theatre for peace

The teaching goals in terms of the training in theatre for peace are the following:

- Lead the trainers/supervisors to find out what peace is and what it implies in our environment (family, work, school, etc.);
- Lead the trainers to an awareness of the different factors/elements of their daily lives that destroy or could destroy peace;
- Lead the trainers to an awareness of the different factors that preserve or are likely to favour peace;
- Develop scenes in relation to their own dreams of peace in order to find the means to realise them;
- Give trainers/supervisors the necessary tools for understanding and enhancing the quality of the communication and their interpersonal relation within their educational community;
- Train the trainers/supervisors in techniques of analysis, development, staging and directing of scenes, sketches, situations or stories for the awareness raising, education and information of their pupils in particular;
- Give them tools to choose, develop and represent a piece of theatre in relation to questions of peace.

The courses are designed in levels. While one course can allow the participants to more or less use drama tools in general, attending all three levels provides them with all the support they need to accompany their students/groups to make effective use of the different possibilities theatre affords them.

The first course is the basis of the work on the *theatre for peace*. It comprises the most important elements, which are how to:

- Begin personal development,
- Found a troupe,
- Instil confidence and support among the members of the troupe,
- Take care of problems related to peace,
- Develop scenes that encapsulate dreams of peace,
- Develop sketches that can be performed.

The second course deals with the development of personal resources, the basic tools of the actor and the development of a full play related to peace topics;

The third course provides the tools for choosing and staging a work of theatre in relation to the important topics surrounding the establishing of peace and conflict resolution/prevention.

While it is not easy to create a one-hour performance in a three-day training course, it is practically impossible to stage a work of theatre in the same space of time. These training courses only give elements for working with *Theatre for peace*.

If we were able to create and perform a sixty-minute play during the training course of the MEPC⁷ students, it is because they had already been trained in theatre techniques and had experience.



Scene about sexual discrimination in the family

⁷ Movement of Protestant students of Cameroon under the aegis of the CEPCA (council of Protestant churches of Cameroon)

PART II: THE PRACTICAL PHASE

5. The courses

Before each training course, there are preliminaries which are the:

- choice of target;
- choice of date and duration;
- choice of venue;
- invitation of the participants and organisations;
- planning of the event with timing, people in charge, tools
- preparation of the tools (instruments, films, flip-charts, notebooks, pens, paper, markers in different colours ..., questions for the exercises, etc.)

All these courses are generally subdivided into five phases:

- introduction;
- development;
- stage direction;
- performance;
- evaluation and follow-up.

N.B.: If this is possible, during a three-day workshop, it would be a good idea to include a **cultural evening** and show a film related to the subject of peace. The participants could perform songs, sketches, poems, and we could also do group improvisations. This would help to create a relaxed atmosphere which is very fruitful.

5.1 Training course I: basic work

This training course is designed to last two days. But it can also cover three days, which gives the possibility of including elements from the second or third parts, or working more in-depth on certain points.

- The introduction
- Generally, each training course starts with the introduction of the facilitators and a presentation of the programme. The participants should know

who they are going to be working with and what they are going to do during the two or three days.

- Then, the first point of a course is the start-up. To do this, a serene atmosphere of understanding needs to be created. We begin with the initial contact with the place and the participants. Each environment has an influence on us. To open up, we need knowledge of and trust in our leaders, environment and colleagues. To achieve this, we use introductory exercises.
- Then we have to define the rules in the groups. These rules should allow the training course to run smoothly. It is desirable to formulate them in advance and leave space for proposals from the participants. As time management is often problematic, we have to choose a “Time-keeper” to make sure the schedule is followed.
- Since different opinions and problems have to be shared and solutions found, communication stands out as a crucial dimension of our work. Let us not forget that the major part of our communication is non-verbal: our bodies, gestures and unconscious minds react and communicate at the same time as our conscious minds and our words. To prepare the verbal discussion on the topic, we first of all do non-verbal theatre exercises. With these exercises, we also deepen trust and support in ourselves and others.



Trust exercise

Speaking of the expression of the different opinions on the topic, first of all we must start to “Walk the line”. This is an exercise which is used to gather the participants’ impressions and points of view related to the topic. It makes it possible to facilitate exchanges on sensitive questions and to open a discussion in order to give each person the opportunity to express their point of view freely. The facilitators must prepare questions in relation to the topic. Each having had the possibility of taking a stance without there having been discussions, the different opinions are then collected. It is possible to speak about it directly, but it is often preferable to continue with the debate on the topic in small groups and with prepared questions.

N.B. : Don’t forget to set aside some time in the schedule to discuss the different points of view.

Regarding the discussions on the topic, the participants form groups of four. With sheets prepared beforehand on different subjects related to peace, each group provides arguments. After all these exercises, we can begin to develop scenes.

N.B.: Allow for breaks between the activities

Developing scenes

Generally, we should start with scenes of conflicts. It is easier to manage negative emotions first before taking care of beautiful dreams. The atmosphere of the workshop will be the lighter for this. To develop the scenes, it is important that the ideas come from the participants and that they are problems in their daily lives that they are capable of dealing with, and also personal dreams of a life of peace. These dreams should not be judged. The group chooses the scenes to be developed. The duty of the facilitator is only to give support if necessary. All the groups will prepare their scenes at the same time. If there is no room, the groups will all work in the same space.

For support, the facilitator explains the basic rules for developing a scene. In particular, you should choose the:

- characters of the different actors;
- place the scene occurs;
- plot;
- unfolding of the story;
- dénouement or outcome.



it's good to relax

Conflict scenes

At the beginning, it is good to start with the “yes and no” exercise which can be done in pairs. On the basis of this exercise, we develop the conflict scenes in small groups of four. It is preferable to stay in the pairs from the exercise. Each group takes five minutes to choose a situation from their daily lives. Afterwards, they will have fifteen minutes to stage it. The facilitator should accompany the groups while they are choosing and insist on the importance of sketching the scene and only developing it through the acting. Otherwise, the participants might try to write it and learn the script and will not be able to act. Each scene is then performed in front of the others. After the performance, each individual can give their impressions.

Important: Do not judge, do not try to push your own ideas. You have to ask what has not been understood and give “feedback”. The facilitator then adds corrections, explains the rules of the stage directing as follows:

- Place the props in such a way as to help the actor be visible (e.g. Use diagonal lines for installing chairs and tables);
- Make sure during conversations that the audience sees you at least in profile;
- Speak clearly and audibly;
- Do not recite the script anonymously (this is theatre, it is acting = action);
- Make the audience interested;
- Stay in character (do not give attention to the spectators or the stage director);
- Do not give instructions to the other actors during the scene you are acting;
- Always be in contact with the other actors on the stage.

After the corrections and explanations of the facilitator who intervenes after each performance, we act the scenes again but this time without the words. But beforehand each group will have prepared the scene to be staged. The facilitator will make any necessary corrections. We notice that these scenes are always shorter and that the players must use gesture to explain the situations. Lastly, we concentrate on staging the scenes with the script.

Scenes of peace

As an introduction, we do a peace exercise. Then we develop scenes in which the ideals of peace are expressed. The path is the same as that described for the scenes of conflicts.



Follow-up with teachers in a school

Stage direction

After the scenes have been developed, we choose two scenes of conflict and two scenes of peace to be staged and performed at the end of the training course. For the staging, the stage director should make sure each participant has a role. We begin by rehearsing the scenes in each group. If there are new players in the groups, the scenes are re-developed. Then each group is obliged to perform its scene. The spectators/participants are invited to give their opinions or “feedback” to help the actors improve their acting and the play. But the stage director decides in the end how to change the performance to achieve the goal of the workshop, and convey the message of peace. It is important to come up with attractive names for the scenes, to establish a timeline, appoint someone to be in charge of props, someone to change the décor from one scene to another, someone to be the narrator if needs be, etc. Each scene must be rehearsed at least two or three times. During the first and second rehearsals, the stage director will interrupt the scenes to correct any errors. At the end, there is an uninterrupted dress rehearsal. The actors must be able to play the scenes without the support of the facilitators or other participants.

Performance

If possible, an outside audience should be invited. Otherwise, the scenes can be performed in front of the actors of the other scenes. The time available should be

kept in mind, as well as the auditorium and the type of stage to be used, and the technical aspects related to changes in scenery. You must make sure everything required is available before the start of the performance.

Before the performance, one or two exercises can be done to reduce stage fright and create a space for concentration.

Evaluation and follow-up

After the performance, you should gather the impressions of the participants. There are several exercises for evaluating a workshop. You will find a number of them in the guide. This stage is the place for planning follow-up. If you have the possibility, go into the field to visit the participants and watch their work and give them your support.

NB: At the end of each stage or each break, the transition phase is managed by an “Energizer”. Make sure each phase of discussion/reflection is followed by a phase of movement.

5.2 Course II: Developing a play

This course can be done in two days but it is preferable to take three days. For the development of a play, the stages are the following:

- introduction
- development of the scenes and the scenario;
- stage direction and working on the script
- performance
- evaluation and follow-up.

The introduction

This phase comprises five steps:

1.—3. For the introduction, refer to the basic work in **course I** up to point **3**. You can choose different “energizers”, but it is wise to repeat the exercises from the first course to memorise them.

4. When working with a troupe that has already done the basic training, it is necessary to exchange experiences within the framework of *theatre for peace*. Split into small groups of four and present the report. In this way, we can find out the different uses that the training has been put to since the first course. In addition,

as facilitator, these exchanges allow you to identify the type of support they require.

5. “Brainstorming” on the theme of peace. It may be on a specific topic chosen in advance or a topic to be developed after the “brainstorming”.

Development of the scenes and the scenario

As it is a question of developing a play in relation to a peace topic, we begin with the development of a conflict scene that presents the principal subject of the play.

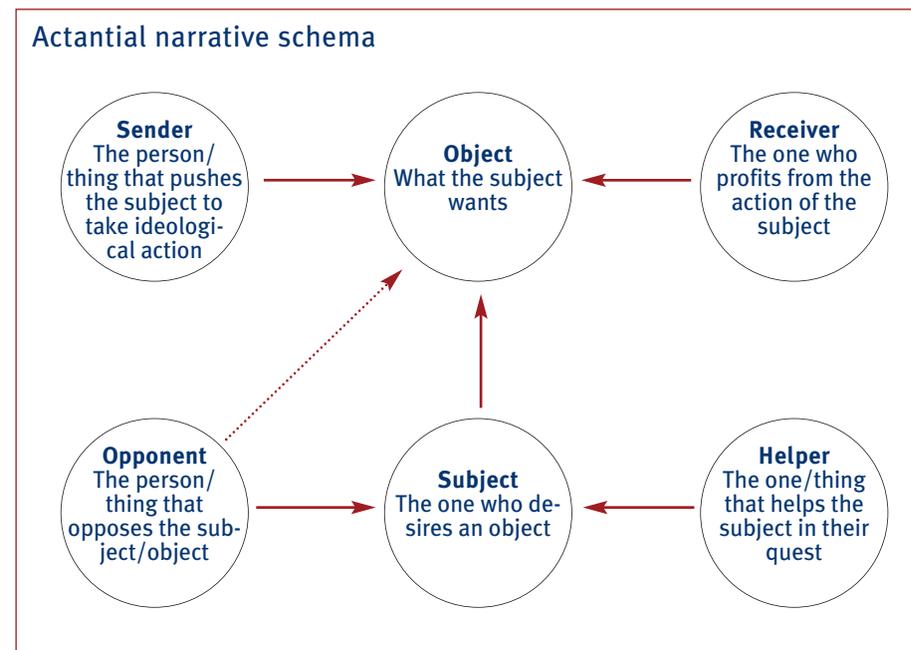
1. We follow the same procedure as for the development of scenes explained in point 2.1. of the basic training. This time we only work on conflict scenes because they offer several possibilities for developing scenarios. Note that we will work in groups of six people maximum, that each of the groups will develop a conflict scene that will lead to a script.

2. Here we bring in the “forum theatre”. The actors in a given group perform their scene, and the spectators watch and then give their opinion. The latter can then take over a role or add a new one.

3. For the last stage in the development of a play, with groups of six people, we focus on imagining the outlines of a scenario. The facilitators will explain the timeline of a play, that is to say an initial situation, transformations and a final situation. In the initial situation, you have to set the scene (the main characters, the place and time). The situation may be in a stable (peace) or unstable (conflict) state. It opens the way for transformation. Transformation requires a trigger that justifies a series of actions (deterioration or improvement of a situation). The final situation presents the outcome, the situation of the different characters. The *dénouement* can be happy or sad, a “happy ending” is therefore not systematic. While it is true that the message of peace should be conveyed each time, it is also true that the theatre is not the right place for major theoretical explanations. A story that ends in disaster may push us, all the same, to think about better solutions. On this basis, the different scenarios will be written, performed in a plenary session and enhancements made. The schema below helps to establish the relations/roles between the different characters/actors. It is the Greimas actantial model: (page 105)

Staging and work on the text

For the staging, we begin with a global performance and without the words of the script. On a more practical level, the work on the text consists in writing the various dialogues in the different scenes. To do this, we can use the “statements” exercise and the presentation of a song.



As we know, a play is composed of scenes. And for the development of the play, we make use of the major guiding ideas of the different scenes. To do this, refer to points 2 and 3 of the basic work. After a certain number of rehearsals, it is clear that the actors have already developed their scenarios. Now you have to ask them to write down a key scene from each scenario. The facilitator’s duty is to correct these texts and make sure all the actions and information necessary is included for the message to be clearly understood. Once the major lines of the scenarios have been written, the scenes developed, the messages clarified, then the play can be performed in front of an audience. It is clear that this work cannot be done in a workshop lasting three days. For in order to develop a play, you must work permanently and continuously with the troupes, which then makes it possible to return to the preliminaries of the writing of a play, which are: the stage directions and details of the characters, the place of action, the time and the gestures, that the play can be divided into acts, tableaus or sequences, that it can deal with subjects that are amusing, symbolic or referential, that there are several possibilities of dramatic style (comedy, tragedy, tragi-comedy). Generally, the characters interact through dialogues. However, there can be monologues, asides or characters who address the audience directly. The situations must be interesting; they must offer possible developments to the characters and spectators.

The performance

This consists in submitting the work for the appreciation of an audience. A presenter can be chosen to announce the play. Note that this performance will be without the words; nonetheless the scenes for which the scripts have been written will also be shown during this performance.

Evaluation and follow-up

At the end of each training course, there must be an evaluation and planning of the follow-up activities.

5.3 Course III: staging a dramatic work

This training course is designed to last three days. The preparation is somewhat different from the previous ones because you must choose a play in advance, ask the participants to obtain a copy of it and read it prior to the training course. From this play, the facilitators will choose a key scene and use it for the work with a written script. It is recommended to take a short scene containing between two and four characters. Then, we ask the women to learn the parts of the female characters and the men the parts of the male characters. However, those participants who have not done this preparation will take a moment to bring themselves up to speed.

This training should take place according to the following schema:

- introduction;
- the choice of the play;
- an example of development of a scene;
- stage direction;
- performance;
- evaluation and follow-up.

The **introduction phase** is the same as in the previous courses.

The choice of the play

1) Even if the play to be used has been chosen in advance, it is still important to share the selection criteria. You should:

- read the play and make sure the text conveys a message of peace;
- ask yourself if you want to stage it and if it offers ideas and fantasies;
- make sure the play is related to the needs of our target;
- look at the impact the play could have on the daily lives of the spectators and the actors;
- ask yourselves if it is interesting enough to appeal to the actors and the target audience;
- make sure there is enough time to stage the play before the date of the performance;
- make sure the human and financial resources are available;
- make sure the play is not too long, and, if it is, can any scenes/dialogue be deleted without altering the message;
- make sure the performance will not last more than an hour and a half;

2) Since we work with people from a range of different backgrounds, it is important to exchange with those participants who have already worked on the stage direction of a work of theatre. Take advantage of them to note down any difficulties and useful tips on a flipchart.

3) In the schools, we can stage a play being studied in class with the literature teachers. First of all you should make sure it matches all the above-mentioned selection criteria. Otherwise, you would do better to choose another play to be staged.

4) Once the prerequisites have been established, we can begin to work on the chosen play. In small groups of four to six people, we share the story of the play, discuss the characters, their story, the message and whether or not the play is topical. The different opinions are noted in keywords and presented in plenary session.

For the development of a piece of theatre, there are several options. The one shown here is recommended for working with amateurs and gives the actors the opportunity to find a personal, individual approach, far from the clichés inspired by the text.

To do this, we work in three stages, which are:

- the development of the scene;
- the development of the character;
- mastery of the script.

The results of this work are like the pieces of a puzzle. By putting the pieces together, we create the play.



Scene without words

Remember that the key scene is known in advance. We work in groups each member of which plays a character from the chosen scene. For example, in the training course we conducted, the scene chosen had two characters. And so we worked in pairs.

1 — To act a scene, you first have to understand it. Then you have to find “the need”, that is to say what the actors need to be able to act. It may be a question of feelings to be expressed, the mental posture to be adopted, or the gestures and actions. Lastly, you have to seek a situation inspired by daily experience and that the character will play without words. This scene will be repeated until the facilitators and the actors are sure it matches the message they want to get across.

2 — Starting from the play, we draw up a curriculum vitae of the character being played. Each participant does this for the character they are playing and performs it in front of the others like a personal story. Example: my name is ..., I live ..., I am... etc. The others ask questions and provide contributions to be added, details that were maybe forgotten.

3 — The last aspect consists in working with the text. This work is done on two levels:

— **At the level of the expression**

As a warm up, we use relaxation, voice and breathing exercises to become aware of the power and possibilities afforded by our voice. The breathing exercises are important for the actor for they allow him to improve the intensity and volume of

his voice so the audience hear and understand him better. To feel free in the role, it is important for the actor to learn their lines by heart. Exercises with a ball can be used to master the text without taking account of the meaning.

— **At the level of comprehension**

You should find the “turning points” in the scene. In all stories, there are reversals of situations. These can be introduced by people, things or ideas. The changes in the behaviour or ideas/ideologies of the characters who are acting are the result of developments that are often invisible. They nonetheless have an incontrovertible effect on the plot and the fate of the character.

Stage direction

After all these preparations, we can start with the stage direction. This means adding lines to the scene that was performed without the words. This process requires readjustments. In addition, although we learn the lines by heart, anyone can forget them momentarily in the heat of the moment. But if we have prepared the script as described above, it will be easy to navigate these blank passages. For the staging of a play, in a theatre with professional actors, trained and paid, we need at least six weeks work. And for all the other aspects of the performance, we benefit from the aid of the professionals. If we work with an amateur troupe, all these aspects must be taken into account. We must remember the different occupations in the theatre. If possible, you should avoid fragmenting/personalising the various jobs. In this way, each actor becomes involved in the acting and the staging, as well as in the technical preparation (the building of scenery, setting the stage, the sound and light system, sticking up posters). However, some people prefer to take care of the technical aspects only. So why not let them do so?! In addition, collaboration with other disciplines such as dance or painting is always enriching for stage direction. To conduct the staging, see the basic training course.

Performance

The groups perform the whole play once more silently, except for the developed scene which is acted with the script.

Evaluation

Refer to the basic training course.

6. Training a theatre troupe: the example of the mobile intervention troupe (MIT)⁸

First of all, it must be said that each person is a potential actor. But there are all sorts of barriers. To choose the young people for the MIT, I held a casting. Within the framework of the work for peace, I wanted the troupe to be a “melting pot”. So I invited young people from a catholic parish, a protestant parish, a mosque and from the secondary schools — public, private religious and secular. During this casting, we did group exercises, small presentations of songs and we acted some scenes in small groups. My goal was to see if they were able to cooperate with each other, to act in a scene and imagine situations. Of the initial 40 candidates, we retained, after training, 16 candidates — 8 girls/young women and 8 boys/young men aged 14—24. The selection criteria concerned their behaviour in a group, their commitment, the respect of the rules, assiduity and punctuality. It often hap-



The MIT 2014

⁸ This troupe was founded as a tool for information and awareness raising on the themes of the CIPCRE



Scene about sexual exploitation

pens that good actors are unable to keep their egocentricity under control. But in a theatre troupe, there is no need for “stars”. We need people above all who want to act and work together to perform successful plays in front of an audience and, within the framework of the *Theatre for peace*, we need actors who are committed to living and sharing the message of peace.

In a theatre troupe that already exists, we observe the same rules and the same exercises as in the intermittent courses on theatre. But since there are fewer time constraints, it is possible to provide in-depth training for actors and facilitators to achieve a level that is at least semi-professional. These young people when trained will also be capable of using their knowledge to train other young people, create troupes and stage the performance of plays. In their groups and in the groups of all the participants of all the training courses, the same rules apply: the participant is free in their acting. But as a facilitator, I must be able to guide them, allow them to go very far, even along unbeaten paths. I must create an atmosphere of security and of confidence between the participants and myself, and between the participants of the group. A person who is ashamed to play certain degrading scenes, or to call themselves into question is not capable of giving themselves freely, of sharing their strengths and weaknesses. In addition, pressure and fear are a handicap, while enthusiasm and pleasure act as incentives. This does not mean there will be no difficulties, problems or bottlenecks. But if everyone takes the work seriously,



Scene from the play “Our daughter shall not marry”

with the support of the troupe and the educator, they can be overcome. During the first year, I worked on the running of the troupe and the training of the actors. The actors developed a feeling of mutual confidence, they lost their inhibitions, developed and improved their stage presence/acting skills by working on their voices and expression. They became a family in the sense that each individual can count on all the others. The work with a troupe is a bit like a puzzle. You start with the basic work, the exercises, we do the different preparations and at the end, we put all these parts together to create scenes to be performed in relation to the subject. To develop them, the young people were well informed about the problems broached and they made use of their own experience.

During the second year, I staged, along with the TIM, a play called *Our daughter will not get married*, by the Cameroonian playwright Guillaume Oyono Mbia, which deals with the generation gap. There were weekly, two-hour meetings with the MIT. However, it became necessary to organise intensive work sessions of from two — four days. These made it possible to identify peoples’ weaknesses, correct them and make all the necessary adjustments relative to the performance.

The MIT interns had the opportunity to learn how to manage conflicts using a peaceful method and also how and why we must accept differences. Here, we followed the same approach as in the training workshops. The time leading up to the performance of a play is always very busy and stressful. It is not easy to change this situation. But we must be very attentive not to frustrate the participants and be frustrated oneself. When the time comes for the performance, the applause from the audience and the reactions to the work will confirm their feeling that they have succeeded and that they are on the right path.

7. A good theatre facilitator

First of all, to be a good facilitator there are a few basic rules that must be applied. Running a seminar or a workshop may sometimes seem easy, but there is a lot of work and preparation behind it. Working in the broad field of education always means we want to pass something on. We want our words and also our thoughts to be conveyed. To do this, we need some basic notions of group dynamics, communication and also to be able to think about the role of facilitator. To properly manage a group and build its capacities optimally, a trainer should have certain skills. It is the trainer’s duty to develop skills in relation to the topic/contents (knowledge of the subject) and social skills. On the psychosocial level, they should create relations and also maintain them; on the technical level, they should communicate the theme, the methods, etc. The trainer is a moderator of the work of the group and of the work on the subject. It is also their responsibility to adjust the schedule and the programme if they realise that the various objectives are not going to be met. In addition, a theatre facilitator should have drama skills, skills in stage direction and be endowed with the tools of an actor.

As I already stated, the most important thing in theatre work is to create an atmosphere of real confidence to trigger the process through which the participants evolve and change their attitude. There is no point in trying to force change. It is much wiser to carefully observe the participants, motivate them, but at the same time, take responsibility for the development of the scenes and the actors. Don’t be afraid to make well-founded decisions demanded by the quality of the performance even if they go against the opinion of the participants. However, courtesy dictates that you explain to them the reasons behind your decision. During the process of creating a play/scene, you should take into account the needs of the participants as well as those of the audience during the performance. During the work, the facilitator also has an opportunity for learning. It is good to be able to open up, accept the fact that we make mistakes and correct them with the support of the others. This is why the evaluations, and the self-assessments, are important.

8. Methods and games

8.1 Methods

Forum Theatre

The forum theatre is one of the techniques of the “Theatre of the oppressed” created by Augusto Boal in the 1960s, to support communities in their desire to transform unfair systems.

How a Forum Theatre session takes place

- The original script: actors perform an “ordinary story”, inspired by real events, that specifically ends badly: hurt, resentment, guilt, hatred...
- The forum: the facilitator invites people to discuss to allow feelings, interpretations and proposals for change to emerge.
- The forum theatre: a spectator comes to replace a character to test an idea. The scene is performed again. The spectators discuss the changes they noticed and the actors express what they felt. Other ideas emerge and enrich the discussions and new proposals are performed.
- In this sense, we can also develop the story around the scene, the start of the conflict, the development and the solution.

Evaluation methods

The train

Chairs are placed in three places that symbolise the three vehicles: motorcycle, train and airplane. Each vehicle designates a feeling related to the course. The motorcycle means that I don't feel ready yet, I still need something further to be able to set up a group on the theme of the seminar, that I am still right at the beginning.

The train refers to the fact that I already feel at ease with the subject, that I am not yet quite ready to organise and carry out a training course myself, but I am well on the way.

The airplane means I feel completely ready, well trained and prepared to organise my own workshop.

The participants each choose a vehicle and we can understand how they feel on completion of the workshop. The facilitator will ask each person the reasons for their choice and what they still need to be able to progress.

Sheets

Prepare sheets with the following headings:

What I liked: What I didn't like:

What I felt was missing: What I want more of:

What I learnt that will help in my job

What I learnt that will help in my personal development

The participants will fill in these sheets. At the end, everyone discusses them in a plenary session.

Ball of wool

Form a circle. The facilitator takes a ball of wool, holds the end of the strand of wool and throws the ball to a participant, while at the same time making a statement about what they felt and observed during the training. The next person keeps the wool and throws the ball in the same way to another person. At the end, the result is a web representing the relations between the participants.



the web — evaluation exercise

Circle

All the participants, including the facilitators, stand in a circle. One person stands in the centre and expresses their opinion. The others move closer if they agree with the opinion and stay where they are if they do not agree. Afterwards, everyone goes back to their place in the circle. Each person can stand in the middle of the circle more than once.

Peaks

This evaluation only takes into account the impressions of the participants at the end of the training. Stick a sheet to the wall or draw a line on the floor. Designate two opposite poles: positive and negative. Between these poles, the participants place their peaks.

8.2 Theatre exercises

To open up and conquer your nerves in front of others and the audience, it is important to have the support of the group you are working with and to have trust in its members.

All the exercises and games are part of the preparation for working in a theatre group. We often work with music and rhythm.

1. Familiarise yourself with the place, the work space and the other people

1.1. My path

Each person finds a place on the wall of the room. They fix a point on the wall. On a given signal, they go straight to this point and everyone does the same at the same time. You must not change your path and you must not touch anyone else. When you reach the point, you must immediately take a new decision, choose a new point and continue on your way. From there, we use the rhythm of the music as support. Each person follows their path. Afterwards, there are five things to do, one after the other: look at the others, direct a brief glance to different people, pause briefly in front of a different person each time, greet different people with a gesture and lastly start to talk with a different partner each time.

1.2. My position

Stop the music and everyone closes their eyes. Now we use our other senses. Find a place where you feel at ease. Stop and try to imagine your position in the space. Where are the walls? The ceiling? The others? Open your eyes and discover your position. Do this several times. To end, with your eyes closed, there are two possibilities:

- a) Either take the hand of the person nearest to you and continue the work in pairs (see 1.5)
- b) Or join hands with two people to form a circle (see 1.3 and 1.4).

1.3. My name

- Exercise of paying attention to others. Change places using: 1. Name, 2. Gesture, 3. Glance
- Open your eyes. Let your hands drop by your sides; remain in the circle. Fix someone opposite you, point them out clearly with your hand and say their name. Change places with them in the circle and continue the same scenario with

other people. Afterwards, do it with two seekers at the same time, then three and then four.

- Then, with the circle still intact, work with gesture only without saying the names (point someone out with your hand, change places).
- To end, still in the circle, make contact with someone with your eyes only and continue the process of swapping places.
- Memory exercise

Presentation with a specific gesture followed by the name. Your neighbour in the circle repeats the gesture and the name, then adds their own gesture and name. The exercise continues thus with all the members of the circle. NB: the last member should repeat all the names and gestures of the previous members.

1.4. Interview

In pairs, ask each other questions related to our concerns, the subject of the training (peace) and theatre. Afterwards, each person introduces their partner based on the information they received. It is possible to lie but always remain polite. Then the person described introduces their self and is applauded. The facilitator then asks the others to guess what was a lie.

2. Communication techniques

Finding support and having confidence in oneself and others.

2.1. Non-verbal activities

2.1.1 Chewing-Gum

People are seated on chairs. An imaginary chewing-gum goes round the circle. Each person must chew it. You can use it however you like. There are no taboos, except violence. It is important that the actors do not take too much time to introduce themselves. Form a good circle, otherwise you will not see your neighbours.

2.1.2 The guide

- a) This exercise is done in pairs. First of all, place the palms of your hands on your partner's hands without holding them. The pair moves around the room and one of them leads, the other follows. After a few minutes, the facilitator gives the signal and the partners change roles. The person who was leading now follows. All the pairs do the same thing at the same time. NB: the leader is responsible for the follower. This exercise can be done with music.



“The guide” exercise

b) Then, the follower closes their eyes. After a few minutes, on the facilitator’s signal, the leader leads their partner to another guide. This partner’s eyes are closed and they no longer know who their leader is. On a second signal, you stop and the person with their eyes closed tries to recognise their guide without speaking (using smell and touch). Open your eyes and after a brief exchange of impressions, change roles and start the exercise again.

c) Group relations:

Put on some music. The partners change roles, still without words. It is important to show clearly who is the leader by pressing the palm of the hand. You must be open and allow yourself to be guided. Afterwards, 2 pairs form a group of four and do the same exercise. Then you change to 4 pairs, that is to say 8 people and continue until all the participants are united in a single dancing group.

2.1.3 Gifts

1st stage: Facing the spectators composed of the members of the group, one person goes on stage and gives an imaginary package to another participant who opens it and shows the contents to the audience. The gift should be obvious for everyone. To do this, the person who receives the gift should have the audience guess the contents by means of very precise gestures. Afterwards, they call a member of the group to the stage and give them the imaginary gift.

2nd stage: Imagine a scenario based on the different gifts received and perform it. NB: Words can be used.

2.1.4 The mirror

Work in pairs, seated facing each other. One begins a movement, very slowly and the other immediately follows. If the gestures are too rapid, the partner will not have the possibility of reacting like a mirror. After a certain time, change places. The pair can stand up and move around the room. They can start a movement and execute it together on the same rhythm. They let themselves be guided by steps, handclaps and/or sounds. If the pair is in phase, the facilitator can associate two other couples with them. In the beginning, each couple keeps its own rhythm and movement. Then they gradually allow themselves to follow a new rhythm and a new movement. Continue in this way to assemble groups of eight and in the end, all the participants build a group that obeys the same rhythm and the same movement.

2.1.5 The circle of trust

The group forms a circle. One person stands in the middle. They should stand straight. Then they close their eyes and let themselves fall against the others. The latter receive them and push them in another direction. This exercise can also be done with three participants. One is in the middle and the other two push them between them. NB: make sure the circle stays closed and the person is not pushed too fast or too hard.

2.1.6 Carried on hands

One person lies on the floor. Six to eight people are all around: two to three people on each side, one person at their feet and one at their head. Then, each person places a finger from each hand under the person lying down and they lift the person and move around the room with them.

Note that these exercises can be used to introduce and develop the theme of peace.

3. Verbal exercises

3.1. Improvisations on conflict

— **Exercise: yes and no**

Work in pairs, facing each other. One of the members says only yes, the other only no. After 3 minutes, change roles.

NB: you can move all round the room, touch each other, keeping in contact with voice. Do not be aggressive towards your partner. It's a game!

— **Introducing pairs**

The pairs are introduced one after the other to the audience in front of whom they repeat the yes and no exercise. Then the audience should answer the following questions posed by the facilitator: who would have something to gain from a conflict? How did the audience influence the actors? Did they use the same tone? Was there a change, did the actors' performance evolve?

— **Improvisation in groups** of 4—6 members:

Imagine a conflict situation close to daily life and stage it.

— **Performance of the scenes and discussion**

3.2. Improvisations on peace

— **Exercise: my spot**

Work in pairs, facing each other. One member closes their eyes and is led by their partner to a spot through a story. It may be a dangerous or pleasant spot, in a big adventure, a foreign land, a fantastic or marvellous world... Afterwards, change roles. For the preparation of the scenes on peace, ask the participants to choose a spot where they would like to live and where they feel at peace. Their duty is to convey the feelings this place arouses by sharing this haven of peace with their partner. It is important that the other has the possibility of touching, tasting, smelling the scents and hearing the sounds of this spot and that they be accompanied with intuition and tenderness.

N.B.: both play the game, that is to say, the person who tells the story and the person it is being described to both enter fully into the situation at the same time.

3.3. "Statements" word game

The facilitator offers a small bag full of statements. A participant takes a piece of paper and reads it in silence. They then face the group and say what was written on the paper. If the spectators feel touched, they applaud, otherwise the person should try again, but they only have three chances. Each of the participants does the exercise and draws at least two different statements. When everyone has



Improvisation on conflict



During a training session for interdenominational dialogue

drawn, form groups of three or four members and let them communicate using only the statements drawn.

Examples of statements:

I am the most attractive; I am rich; Money has no smell; I'm my mother's favourite; I drive a BMW; Do you still live with your parents?; You're the guilty one; Don't touch my spouse; That stinks; I hate you; I won a hundred million; If I see you once more; I love you all; Don't touch me; I am crazy about you; What do you want from me this time; Take your belongings; You are my ray of sunshine; What would I do without you; You are everything I need; Would you like to go with me?; You are a coward; I adore you; Life is beautiful; I am so in love; I'm afraid; What's happening; Do you want my number; You are my sweetie; You are my honey bunch; This is not my day; I am marvellous; You are magnificent; You have a beautiful smile; I like you; I am the most intelligent; I don't understand a thing; I'm a little lamb; I'm looking for a soul mate; I am afraid of you; I feel ill at ease; I want you; You are everything to me; I am alpha and omega; I am the most elegant; You are idiots; Lie down; Go away; Give me peace; Go to hell; I'm sexy; I am a sweet for young girls; Do you still love me; I love you; I can't live without you; What do you want?

3.4. Free improvisations

Two people commence a small scene. You must be receptive and let yourself be carried along by your partner. At a given time, one of the spectators claps their hands or cries "stop" and the two players stop their movements immediately (freeze). The spectator now takes the position of one of the two players. The latter leaves the stage and the new actor starts a completely different story and the other follows it to be able to develop it. Let yourself be inspired by gesture and/or body position, to find a new story.

4. Work on topics

4.1. Walk the line

On the ground, trace a long line with scotch tape. At the end of the line, on each side, there are two opposite poles. The facilitator presents the different situations and the participants position themselves according to their point of view.

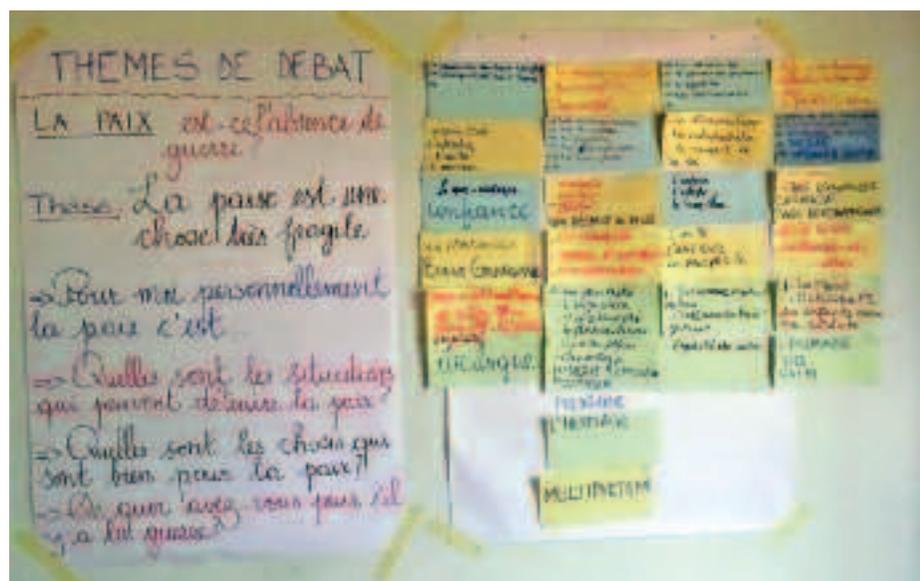
Is it normal or is it a case of violence when a:

- child is hit by her father when she misbehaves?
- teacher tells a pupil they are stupid?
- street child is hungry and forced to steal bread from a baker?
- woman is insulted in the street because people know she is HIV-positive?
- husband tries to sleep with his wife even though she has already said "no"?
- woman is blamed by her husband, because she has not finished making the meal when he comes home?
- petty thief is beaten by the crowd?
- girl doesn't have the right to go to school?
- small child has to work all day long?
- teacher slaps a pupil who is not paying attention to the lesson?
- young girl is aggressed because she is wearing sexy clothes?
- a girl is married before she becomes an adolescent?
- headmaster scolds a teacher in front of the pupils?

There are other possible examples, to be chosen depending on the theme

Note that those who have a nuanced opinion position themselves on the line. It is important to say at the start that we must respect each others' opinions. Once everyone has positioned themselves on the line, the facilitator asks two or three people to explain why they have chosen their positioning. There are no discussions during this phase. Each person has the possibility of freely explaining their point of view without receiving objections. With this exercise, we can show that violence has several facets and we are always ready to perpetrate violence for one or two reasons. Similarly, we note that usage and custom, in a word the social and cultural and sometimes even legal context contribute to rationalising, legitimising or even legalising certain forms of violence. And lastly, we can note that as a victim, we recognise this quickly but as perpetrator, we don't even realise it.

After this first phase, the group can engage in discussions.



4.2. Discussions on the theme

Form groups of 4—6 members to discuss the following hypotheses and problem issues:

- Is peace the absence of war?
- Peace is a very fragile thing.
- Why are you afraid of war?
- What are the situations that can destroy peace?
- What are the elements that maintain peace?
- What does peace mean for me personally, for you personally?

During this phase in each group, the keywords will be written on cards and stuck on the board. Each group will present a summary of its work, justifying its keywords and a discussion will follow.

4.3. Brainstorming

The facilitator clearly presents the theme on the flipchart. Then they ask the participants to think quickly and express the ideas it brings to mind. The facilitator lists all the ideas with keywords on the flipchart. This gives a preview of what the participants think and know about the theme and this can be used as a basis to start. Once the different ideas have been ordered, we can see sub-topics emerge that will be the subject of discussions between the participants.

5. Developing scenes

5.1. First presentations on the different themes

Following the warm up exercises (exercises 2 and 3), we can begin to develop the scenes in relation to the topic. Form groups of 4—6 people. Each group has 15 minutes to prepare and develop the scenes. It is important to choose:

1. The character, the role, 2. The place, 3. What generates conflict/instills peace,
4. How the story unfolds 5. How the story ends.

You must take advantage of the 15 minutes to effectively develop the scenes. This means performing them! For the development of the scenes, it is important to perform with the words, without the words and again with the words. Without words, we only remember the facts that are really useful for the story. The scene must be short, clear, comprehensible and audible.

5.2. Developing scenes

Here, the facilitator should act as stage director and give instructions for the scenes to be successful. The work on the scenes aims to give the actors more mastery over their role and to act well (action and reaction) together. The actors must live the situation and at the same time take the audience into account. You should speak distinctly.

Fixing the text: this presupposes that you have to write the lines of each person, correct the message and make sure the parts are learned by heart.

Find props and costumes.

It is important to always be in relation with the other actors on the stage.

We don't need soloists, we work in a team and in synergy.

5.3. Feedback

This is a question of giving your opinion and support after a verbal or non verbal performance. We do not judge the opinions expressed. We can, however, ask for more explanation on the points we have not clearly understood, but we don't impose our own hypotheses. The feedback should be tactful and polite. If information is given with proper arguments to back it, all the participants will be more receptive and will accept it more easily. In addition, when a person is able to externalise their feelings in this way, they may receive constructive feedback for a possible change in their behaviour. This is why feedback should be structured and easy to understand. The effectiveness of the feedback greatly depends on the trust between the people. The information of the feedback can be given in several ways. This can be conscious or unconscious, in a verbal or non-verbal language, orally or in writing.

6. Voice and breathing

In our daily lives, we breathe with our chests. A baby, however, breathes with its belly and diaphragm. The pelvis is the source of our strength. This is why it is necessary to recover this abdominal breathing. The belly rises when you breathe in and falls when you breathe out.

6.1. Relaxation exercises

Lying on a rug or mat, follow the instructions given by the facilitator:

- Eyes closed, let yourself be guided by your imagination.
- Lying on your back, you should feel every part of the body that is in contact with the floor.
- Bring all your thoughts to the base of your spine.
- Breathe in, drawing your breath from this base and fill your body from the tips of your toes to the roots of your hair.
- Breathe out slowly and let your breath out at the level of the base of your spine
- Bring your attention back to the parts of your body mentioned by the facilitator (head, neck, right shoulder, right arm, right hand, left shoulder, left arm, left hand, chest, stomach, back, pelvis, right leg, right foot, left



Teachers relaxed

leg, left foot and lastly the whole body) repeating 3 times: “my ... is heavy, warm and relaxed

- Let yourself be carried away by the story told by the facilitator:

“You are lying on a beach, the sand beneath your body is nice and warm, a gentle breeze surrounds you, you can hear the sound of the waves, with your eyes closed, you imagine a blue sky and a small white cloud. You feel completely calm and relaxed, you feel really great. You imagine that behind you there is a tree. You become that tree. You sit on the ground, your body is the trunk, and from the base of your spine you take root in the earth from where your inspiration comes. As you breathe in, your breath rises like the sap of the tree right to the top of your head and then when you breathe out it comes back down again to the earth.”

6.2. Breathing exercise

We imagine that when we breathe in the breath comes from below and rises to fill the body. As we breathe out, we let the breath descend again. As we breathe in, your belly expands, when you breathe out it relaxes. You must breathe out fully and breathe in naturally without forcing.

6.3. Voice exercise

Sitting on the floor, your back straight, imagine you are drawing your breath from the earth. It rises in your legs, body, arms, and head, into your hair. Afterwards, let it flow back down to the earth. Do this several times. Then we begin to imagine a small point in the middle of the pelvis. This is the point the vocalises start from.

- U— Begin to sing very softly and low with the mouth open. Imagine a ball that grows bigger and with this image, the voice also grows bigger until the ball is “as big as the world” and so is the tone. If the tone has reached its strongest point, we slowly shrink the ball in our imagination and lower the tone. We do the same thing with the other vowels:

- O — at the centre of the abdomen
- A — at the centre of the chest
- E — in the throat
- I — in the centre of the head.



Working on text with the ball

6.4. Language and text exercises

1. Words in a circle:
the participants form a circle. One person pronounces an exclamatory phrase accompanied with an expressive gesture (e.g. I can't cope anymore, I am frustrated, I am happy, I love you...) All the others repeat the phrase and the gesture together.
2. Exercises with a ball:
 - Stand in a circle. One person throws a ball to another person with a phrase. You have to throw it so that the recipient can catch it. If the other person cannot catch the ball or if the phrase does not arrive properly, the ball is thrown back to the sender who starts again. The theme of this exercise can be related to the play or a situation of any kind.
 - In the same position, repeat the exercise, but this time, using phrases from the script of the play. Each person can choose who to send it to.
 - In small groups, we work on the role of the members in a scene from the play. As we chose only one scene for the training courses to develop it as an example, several people play the same character. In this case, we set up groups with the same characters twice. Now, we start with the lines from the script. One of the actors throws the ball with a phrase or a small part of the text to a recipient. The recipient sends it back to the sender with no comment, other than the lines they have to say in response in the scene.

6.5. “Energizers”

6.5.1 “Fair weather”

Stand behind your partner, guide them and tell them a story:

- *It is warm and the sun is shining* — gently touch their back, bottom, legs, arms
- *a storm comes, the first drops of rain fall on my back* — tap their body with your fingers.
- *the rain is falling heavier and heavier* — tap with the palms of your hands
- *thunder is rumbling* — tap with your closed fists, without touching their head or spine
- *there is also lightning* — tap with the sides of your hands.
- *afterwards, the storm has passed, the sun is shining again and it warms you* — gently touch your partner as in the beginning. Change places.

6.5.2 “Making faces”

Make faces accompanied by sounds.

NB: Don't be afraid to look silly.

6.5.3 “Back to back”

We dance back to back and rub up against one another.

6.5.4 “Following the leader”

Dance in a circle, with each person dancing in the middle once. The others imitate their movements.

7. “The chase”

The troupe decides without words to chase someone. They try to escape. When they have had enough, they turn to the troupe and cry “no” or “stop”. Then we start again running alone and look for a new victim.

8. “Help”

We run around in the room. One person tries to catch another who, when they are caught, tries to catch another. If you are in a pair, you can't be caught. But normally we run alone. When you are being chased, you need the “help” from the hand of a partner. Also try to help the others.

9. “Handicap”

Run around the room. One person tries to touch another who should, when touched, place their hand on the spot they were touched. In this position, they should try to touch another person. After being touched a second time, you keep your hands on the spots where you were touched. With two hands immobilised, we can't use them for touching someone else. So you have to use the other parts of the body (feet, head, shoulders, bottom, etc.). If you are touched a third time, you are eliminated.

10. “Trip to Jerusalem”

You must always have one chair less than the number of people. Arrange the chairs at random or in a line. Put on music. All the participants dance around the chairs. When the music stops, find a chair to sit on (only one person on a chair at a time). Those left standing when the music stops are eliminated and remain apart as spectators. Gradually reduce the number of chairs and repeat the process. Find a winner at the end (and why not two or three winners depending on the time available to you).

11. “The sun shines on...”

Sit in a circle. One person says: the sun shines on all those who are wearing (for example) trousers, necklaces, the colour red, etc. Those who feel concerned must change places. The person who has no seat goes into the middle and starts the game again.

12. “Who is the leader”

Stand in a circle. One person leaves the room. The others choose a person as a leader. Using music, the leader makes movements that everyone else follows. The person who was outside enters the circle and then has to guess who the leader is.

NB: the members of the circle must not stare at the leader.

13. “The Titanic shipwreck”

It is the last night on the Titanic. We are in the ballroom and we're having a great time. Suddenly, we hear a noise, the Titanic has hit an iceberg. The captain asks people to get into the lifeboats. But there has to be a precise number of passengers in each boat. If the boat is supposed to be for three people, it should not carry more than three people. If the boat is overcrowded, it sinks and all the people are eliminated. Same thing for the boats that are not completely full. Continue with the game until there are only 2 passengers left.

14. “Dance with instructions”

Everyone dances and the facilitator gives directives: take as much space as possible, dance closed in on yourselves, pick French apples from the trees, pick potatoes from the ground, sow seeds in the field with big steps, dance like butterflies, tigers, elephants, monsters. You are in a nightclub and you are the best-looking, the most intelligent; you are shy; you are flirting with the others, etc.

15. “Cat and mouse”

This is a chase. Choose 2 people as cat and mouse. The others scatter around the room. Work in pairs: one member sits behind the other on the floor. The cat tries to catch the mouse. When the mouse tries to escape, it sits behind a couple and the partner who is seated in front then becomes the cat. The other cat becomes the mouse and runs away to escape, chased by the new cat.

16. “The magician”

Dance with music on in the room. The facilitator stops the music, the dancers freeze like statues. A magician (in this case the facilitator) comes and transforms the others into princesses, animals, monsters, flowers, etc. After a certain amount of time, they choose the 3 they like best and let them introduce themselves. Then, they designate the next magician and start to dance again. The new magician can now also stop the music and continue the game.

8. “The gordian knot”

Form a circle. We hold hands to form a chain. Now, one person starts to cross the other hands, going over or under. All the others follow without releasing their hands. After a certain time, we can no longer move, the knot is tight. One person on the edge leaves their place and the others close the chain again. The latter now tries to unravel the knot by directing people without opening the chain.

18. “The serpent”

In this chase, one person starts to catch the others. If they touch someone, both continue together. Variation 1: continue until all the players are in a chain. Variation 2: if the chain has 4 members, the group divides in 2 and 2 groups do the chasing.

19. “Statuettes”

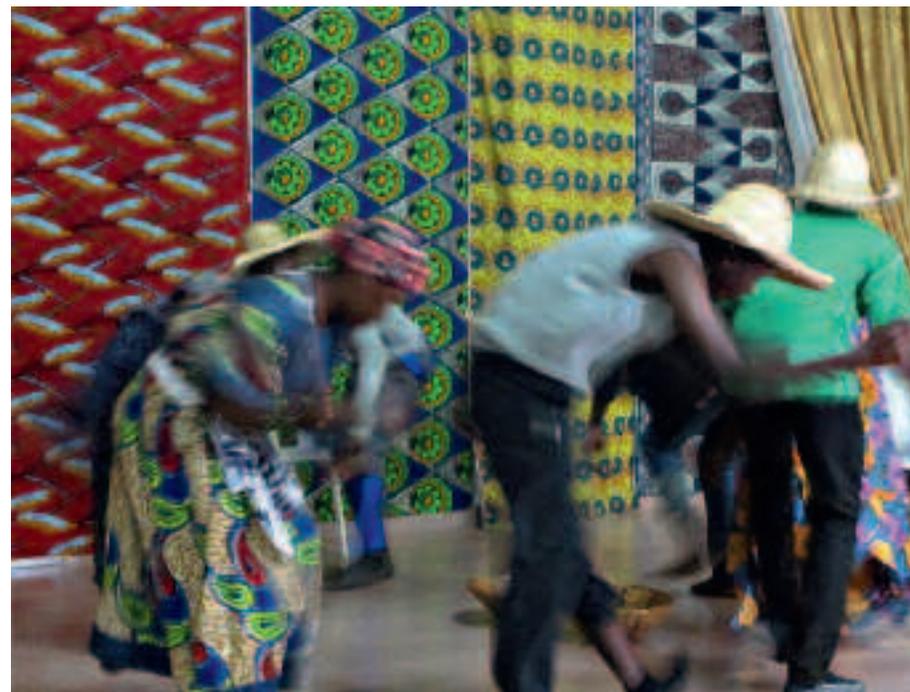
One person tries to catch the others. If you are caught, you stop at this place and stand with your feet apart. To be freed, another player must pass between your legs. The game is finished when all the participants have been caught.

20. “Red, white and blue”

The players form a line along one side of the room. One participant alone is on the other side. They turn their back on the others and cry: red, white and blue and then turn around. Meanwhile, the others try to catch them. When the person turns around, the others freeze. If they see a movement, they can send the person to the wall. The person who touches the leader first will be the new leader.

21. “Crossing the water”

A fisherman is on one side of the room and the other actors opposite them. The troupe of questioners cries: “Fisherman, fisherman, how deep is this water?”. The fisherman replies using their imagination: “It is (1cm, 20,000 km, etc.)”. The questioners: “and how can we cross it? The fisherman now chooses a possibility of moving and says “by (jumping, walking on one foot, back and forward, like snakes, by swimming, etc.)” The others try to cross the room, moving as requested, and the fisherman tries to catch them also by moving from one side to the other. The ones who are caught become fishermen. The game continues until everyone has become a fisherman.



“Farmers dance” in the scene about conflict between livestock breeders and crop growers



The audience at a performance by students at Zimpouet

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Outcomes of theatre for peace trainings in Cameroon

by Jeanne Medom

“The young people who have had this training are able to show what is wrong, denounce social conflicts and foster their transformation, through the use of theatre”

Catherine Kolyang née Dadaï, and René Teswe are respectively Director and person in charge of the Monitoring, awareness-raising and advocacy Programme (PSP) at Saare Tabitha, the Cameroon Baptist Church Women’s Social Centre in Maroua. They attended a workshop on “Theatre for peace” techniques from 15—17 January 2014 in Maroua, run by Mrs Silvia Stroh, peace worker with CIPCRE. They share their impressions below.

Jeanne Medom: *How did you find the workshop?*

Catherine Dadaï: The workshop was very well run. This is the first time one of our network partners has provided capacity building in this framework.

René Teswe: We found the workshop very enriching and instructive for the staff and for the trainee students. It allowed personality development for better awareness of social conflicts.

J.M.: *What did the workshop contribute as a plus to Saare Tabitha?*

C.D.: The personnel who attended the training now feels it has the tools to go into the communities and help consolidate peace, by approaching people through theatre performance.

R.T.: The training allowed the personnel to build capacity and strengthen the interprofessional links in the centre. It led people to understand that beyond simple verbal and written communication, they can communicate in another way: through gesture and mimicry. Given the multicultural nature of the personnel (different ages, levels of study, denominations, etc.), this training constitutes a basis for quality intercultural management. On the strength of the knowledge acquired, the personnel will be able to pass on the message in turn to learners who will disseminate it in their surroundings.

J.M.: *For the young people you work with, what change did you see?*

C.D.: The learners understood that through theatre, we can convey messages and make people think.

R.T.: The young people trained from Saare Tabitha are able to show what is wrong, denounce the scourges, create theatre that stages bad social practices and conflicts to encourage their transformation.

J.M.: *Which component of the training was most important?*

C.D.: The relaxation was the most important point. The different attitudes were memorised, the techniques for identifying topics also.

R.T.: The relaxation. It appeases the atmosphere between colleagues. It also allows them to become closer and share information.

J.M.: *How will you make use of the knowledge acquired in the training?*

C.D.: We will make good use of the relaxation in the daily management of Saare Tabitha. This will allow us to exchange news, share tips, etc.

R.T.: In the work on the personal level, interpersonal conflicts, fatigue and stress are factors that erode the performance within a team. The emphasis shall be placed on the relaxation techniques. In the learners attending the training at the centre, the techniques for staging sketches to be presented to the public for awareness raising make it possible to portray the realities lived by the girls. In our zones of intervention where female subordination is the rule, the techniques of staging could encourage women to break their silence.

Inset

Saare Tabitha is run by the Union of Baptist Churches of Cameroon (UEBC). It is a Social Centre for girls/women in Maroua, an institution for the social reinsertion of vulnerable young girls/women aged 16—21, without distinction of religious faith. It provides training in dressmaking, fabric dyeing and crafts and organises advocacy towards opinion leaders and workshops and seminars for the benefit of the most underprivileged communities.



Energizer-back-to-back dance

“The training received catalysed certain latent forces within the Justice and Peace Commission, allowing them to express themselves”

Dr Maurizio Guerrazzi is a peace worker with the Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission in Douala. The young people he mentors were able to avail themselves of the skills of Silvia Stroh, Peace worker with the CIPCRE, in techniques of “Theatre for peace” during a training course from 3–4 January 2013 at the Centre des Pères Xaveriens in Ngodi Bakoko, Douala. He gives his impressions below.

Jeanne Medom: *How did you find the training dispensed by the colleagues of the CIPCRE for the benefit of your young people?*

Maurizio Guerrazzi: Super. The training received catalysed certain latent forces within the Justice and Peace Commission, allowing them to express themselves. Everything that was hidden deep within these young people was able to emerge in favour of peace building. Some also found the strength to share it all in groups.

J.M.: *What did this training add to the existing work of the Justice and Peace Commission?*

M.G.: Certainly this training afforded an opportunity to take another look at the work of the Commission and see how to extend it to include informal training for adults and young people. This type of training can be done in a group, joyfully and with each person giving thought to their role in society, their limits as an individual, as a vector for the improvement of our human and social environment. The Commission is aware of this and will make good use of it.

J.M.: *For the young people you work with, what changes did you see?*

M.G.: The courage to call oneself into question, to attempt different approaches for their own personal development.

J.M.: *Which component of the training was most important? For you? For the young people?*

M.G.: The realisation that each person plays a role in the performance. Understanding that for a role to be played well, it can't be done solo, is important. On stage as in life, the individual ego should leave room for each individual to express themselves. In addition, becoming aware that responsibility, while collective, should also be personal in resolving any type of conflict. During our training, some conflicts emerged. The empowerment and accountability of the individuals allowed us to control the conflicts, to speak about them openly and take a step towards deeper, more honest knowledge of ourselves and others.

J.M.: *What will you do with the knowledge acquired in the training?*

M.G.: We shall make good use of it. For the future, we intend to use the performance technique as one of the means of expression in our think tanks. We are going to form groups to think about a topic (social reinsertion after prison, living in prison) through the dynamics and pedagogics of drama. From this perspective, our colleagues of the CIPCRE showed us the importance of dramatic expression for oneself and for others. I'm sure they will also be ready to help us make practical use of the experience derived from this training.

Inset

The Douala Justice and Peace Commission is a commission of the diocese of Douala which deals with the dignity of the individual. It intends to be an instrument to promote justice, the consolidation of peace and integral human development and, more generally, the development of people by defending the dignity of the fundamental rights of the individual, with a preferential option for the poor.

Interview in Kribi, on 13 June 2014 by Mrs Jeanne Medom of the CIPCRE

Peace work in the country of social harmony

CPS work in Nepal

by Anne Dirnstorfer

In 2008, when the Civil Peace Service Program (ZFD) of GIZ started in Nepal, the political debates were all about “establishing social harmony” and bringing the peace process “to its logical end”. In this context, peace was either connected to silence, acceptance of the status quo or a result delivered by political leaders. Conflicts were perceived as something negative, and using the ZFD term “conflict advisor” would not have gone down well. The idea that conflicts and conflict transformation processes are necessary for change and the development of a culture of peace was new. Despite the 10 years of armed conflict, there is still a tendency amongst those in power to negate the structural violence that formed the root cause of the conflict.

As part of the ZFD project on regional conflict transformation we called ourselves “peace facilitators” in order to avoid the conflict terminology. Starting with trainings in transformation, Forum Theatre became one of the core approaches to address conflicts at the grassroots level. The method opened up opportunities to discuss sensitive issues like domestic violence, discrimination and exploitation in the public space. It was easy to gather audiences for theatre in any corner of



Nepal. Theatre works as a strong social connector that brings together men and women, young and old as well as people of different castes/ethnic groups, levels of education or directions of political ideology. Nepali street drama has a long tradition that we could build upon, but the open approach of a Forum Theatre dialogue was new to most actors and audiences. The improvisation and the openness to the audience was a challenge. We had to work against the actor’s impulse of wanting to “raise awareness” by introducing them to the concept of “transforming conflicts”. A major focus had to be on attitudinal change that would allow the actors to think of themselves as people providing space for discussions and exploration rather than delivering lessons or solutions.

Target groups for the ZFD’s trainings were local peace activists like social workers, women’s rights or human rights activists from different regions. The trainings were conducted in cooperation with different Nepali NGOs, and partly in cooperation with the GIZ program Measures to Strengthen the Peace Process (STPP). We organized follow-up and advanced level activities (such as joker’s training) for those who were taking their own initiatives. To support the groups in their process of growth we visited them and offered feedback on their performances. Selected activities were facilitated in cooperation with Nepali theatre professionals in order to create a link between the peace activists and the more artistic theatre sector.

In 2010, we organized a joint visit of the International Forum Theatre Festival Muktadhara in Calcutta to motivate and encourage a group of selected theatre activists. Here, we developed a play on gender violence that was powerful enough to work beyond the language barriers between India and Nepal. The exchange with theatre activists from all over the world empowered and inspired the young Nepali actors.



In 2011, ZFD conducted Forum Theatre journeys to the areas around the cantonments where the former Maoist combatants lived during the six years after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). After participating in an armed struggle against structural violence and exclusion, many of the former combatants felt disillusioned. The values that they were fighting for still clashed with the conservative social settings in most communities. Forum Theatre offered a space to discuss non-violent ways of addressing these issues. We invited the surrounding local communities to the performances which were organized near the cantonments. Some of these Forum Theatre dialogues lasted several hours as people would not stop bringing in new ideas.

In 2012, we shifted the work more towards coaching and supporting the groups in dealing with internal challenges. As all of them worked on a voluntary basis, most groups had difficulties to keep their actors together, to find the time and patience to develop strong performances and to facilitate the dialogue in an energetic way. From time to time some had found ways to access small funds for their theatre work. But most of them were even struggling to pay for local transport or their food during their performances. Donors or local government actors did not seem to understand the difference between street drama and Forum Theatre and were usually less supportive of the latter. To them, Forum Theatre was difficult to integrate into their programs either because the dialogue took too much time or because the outcome and the message was not clearly fitting into most project frameworks. The difficulty to find support for Forum Theatre reflects the challenging environment of working in a culture of deep hierarchies where even peace workers hesitate to bring conflict issues up for discussion.

In order to strengthen the Forum Theatre approach in Nepal, we organized the Kachahari Camp in spring 2013. The main idea of this national gathering of 100 Forum Theatre activists was to exchange best practices, share ideas, and develop a common understanding of how to work for social change through theatre. It

provided a space for internal reflection, creative encounters and collective action between the actors. As a result of the Kachahari Camp the theatre activists formed a network to exchange and support each other. Some are visiting each other, supporting performances, others just talk on the phone about how to develop their plays or whom to approach for funding.

During the Kachahari Camp, a documentary film was produced and, to draw more attention to the work of the groups, screened all over the country. As a result Forum Theatre and its contributions to conflict transformation became much more known and the work of the network got more attention through the local and national media.

During the follow-up journey to the Kachahari Camp, a second documentary was produced that focused more on the challenges of conflict transformation through theatre.



Both documentaries can be watched on YouTube through the following links:

Kachahari Camp (2013): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zc3sdgUUtU&list=PLFBWN-VuESzShhF2IKZ-8D6-5B3SikTC2V>

“It’s our Culture — Challenges in Conflict Transformation Work” (2014): <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLFBWNVuESzShY58X2covpahpDBUF88mcT>

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The second educational manual we are publishing alongside the **Building peace series** places the spotlight on theatre as an instrument for promoting peace, but also for educating the young generations. Professionals and lovers of the dramatic arts working in the Great Lakes countries (DR Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and Sudan), in Sierra Leone, Cameroon and Nepal present the discipline for us as a technique that can open up multiple horizons in child and adult alike at the level of expression and the development of artistic skills. They also show how it can be thought-provoking and question our prejudices and values. This is a critical first step towards societal change.

This is theatre practice as a tool for reflection and communication, for expressing emotions and points of view, be they diametrically opposed, which can open a chink in apparently sealed situations weighed down in dead ends or which seem to be impossible to resolve and let some light into conflicts between people and communities.

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This manual is an opportunity for the CPS networks to share the experiences of some of the people and organisations who use theatre as a tool for communication, change and peace. You will find theoretical bases, concrete examples related to the contents and some techniques and methods. — The manual includes 77 colour photographs impressively illustrating different aspects of theatre work in progress.