

**Theatre for Development in Kenya:
In Search of an Effective Procedure and Methodology**

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**Dissertation presented for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
at the University of Stellenbosch.**



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Date: September 2004

Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

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ABSTRACT

This is a study of Theatre for Development (TfD) in Kenya. It is an attempt to map out and describe different manifestations of the practice which would, in a way, act as a critical model for practitioners and other stakeholders. However, this is in no way an attempt to provide a rigid all-purpose theoretical model, but nonetheless to offer ways, through a description of aspects of Theatre for Development, within which and through which social and behavioural transformations in this eclectic field may take place. To this end, case studies of a few indicative and contrasting examples of Theatre for Development will be used to provide a mirror which will enable its practitioners to reflect upon and critique their own practices as a way of achieving optimum effectiveness.

The works of Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal provide the study with a theoretical model in which its basic assumptions and arguments are tested and developed. These two authors, whose works are related in many ways, privilege the use of participatory approaches in the process of creating critical consciousness and promoting change in the individual and in society; these are fundamental requirements in any meaningful practice of Theatre for Development.

The findings of this study reveal the discursive and eclectic state of the practice of Theatre for Development in Kenya as originating from a multiplicity of factors such as the skills (or lack thereof) of the practitioners, government interference and the prescriptive agenda and demands of the project funding bodies, institutions and agencies as well as the proliferation of NGOs using Theatre for Development but

lacking its foundational philosophy and methodology. This study therefore suggests that, for the enterprise to be more effective and efficient there is a serious need to reflect critically on its procedures and methodology in order to improve and guide its operation. These fundamental aspects include collaborative research, codification, interactive participation, and facilitation and intervention, and are not prescriptive matters but descriptive, arrived at through a critical analysis of a number of Theatre for Development activities in Kenya. Ultimately the research process has thus highlighted a number of weaknesses and strengths in the practice of Theatre for Development in Kenya.

Because Theatre for Development is a performance event, the study utilised both quantitative and qualitative research methods. This was necessary, because the study depended on a bibliographical review, unstructured interviews and action research, where the researcher participated in Theatre for Development projects, happenings and related activities

OPSOMMING

Hierdie is 'n ondersoek na Teater vir Ontwikkeling in Kenya. Dit poog om die verskillende manifestasies van die praktyk te karteer en beskryf waardeur dit, tot 'n mate, a kritiese model vir praktisyns en aandeelhouers kan dien. Die onderneming is egter op geen wyse 'n soeke na 'n rigiede, allesomvattende teoretiese model nie, maar bied tog 'n beskrywing van aspekte van Teater vir Ontwikkeling waarbinne en waardeur transformasie van sosiale optrede en handeling in hierdie eklektiese veld kan plaasvind. Met dit in gedagte word na 'n aantal toepaslike en kontrasterende gevallestudies van Teater vir Ontwikkeling gekyk om 'n perspektief te ontwikkel wat praktisyns in staat sal stel om hulle eie praktyke krities en effektief te kan evalueer.

Die werk en geskrifte van Paulo Freire en Augusto Boal verskaf die teoretiese model vir hierdie ondersoek, wat die basiese beginsels en uitgangspunte daarvan in die Afrika-konteks uittoets en ontwikkel. Hierdie skrywers, wie se werke nou verband hou met mekaar, gee voorkeur aan 'n interaktiewe, deelnemende benaderings tot die ontwikkeling van 'n kritiese bewussyn en die stimulering van verandering by die individu en in die gemeenskap. Dié benaderings is fundamenteel tot enige sinvolle aanwending van Teater vir Ontwikkeling.

Daar is bevind dat die beoefening van Teater vir Ontwikkeling in Kenia uiters eklekties en uiteenlopend van aard is en dat hierdie stand van sake toegeskryf kan word aan 'n verskeidenheid faktore, insluitend die vaardighede (of tekort aan vaardighede) van praktisyns, inmenging deur die regering, voorskriftelike agendas en vereistes gestel deur borge en befondsingsagentskappe, edm. 'n Ander faktor is die

geweldige toename in nie-regeringsorganisasies (NGO's) wat van Teater vir Ontwikkeling gebruik maak terwyl hulle nie oor die basiese filosofiese en metodologiese kennis en opleiding beskik nie. Die bevinding is dus dat sodanige programme slegs meer effektief en doeltreffend bedryf kan word indien daar ernstig besin word oor fundamentele prosedures en metodologieë, om aan die verdere bedryf van die program(me) rigting te kan gee en uitkomst te verbeter. Fundamentele aspekte hierby betrek sou insluit spannavorsing, samewerking, kodifisering, interaktiewe deelname, fasilitering en intervensie, wat nie voorskriftelik is nie, maar beskrywend en rigtinggewend van aard, afgelei uit 'n kritiese ontleding van 'n aantal Teater vir Ontwikkeling aktiwiteite in Kenia. Die navorsing het dus uiteindelik 'n aantal sterk- en swakpunte in die praktyk van Teater vir Ontwikkeling in Kenia belig.

Omdat Teater vir Ontwikkeling 'n aanbiedings-gebeurtenis ("performance event") is, het die ondersoek beide kwantitatiewe en kwalitatiewe navorsingsmetodes gebruik. Dit was nodig omdat die ondersoek gebruik gemaak het van formele literatuurstudie, sowel as ongestruktureerde onderhoude en aksienavorsing, waartydens die navorser self deelgeneem het aan van die Teater vir Ontwikkeling projekte, gebeure en aktiwiteite.

DEDICATION

To my wife Ruth and the girls, Sue and Mitch; and Thami, the one who has just arrived.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My most profound gratitude can only go to my promoter, Prof. Temple Hauptfleisch, for making it possible for me to register at Stellenbosch University, under the auspices of the Department of Drama, and for facilitating my visit and stay at Stellenbosch. As my supervisor he read the very first draft of the work in its most unpolished shape and made sense out of it. His critical comments provided a more valid perspective on thoughts, ideas and arguments. I will always be indebted to him.

I can surely not forget the ever-helpful Johan Esterhuizen. His friendship and concern made it possible for me to visit Stellenbosch for the two-month fellowship which opened the door to the vast possibilities that have led to the completion of this work. No words can signify my gratitude to him.

I must also remember Prof. Eckhard Breitingner for his immense contribution to the success of this work. The six months I spent in Bayreuth sowed the seeds that led to the development of this thesis. The several summer schools that he organised are indeed the water that germinated the seeds. I can only say: live longer!

I would also like to extend my appreciation to the following organisations and institutions: the German Academic Exchange Services (DAAD) for the six-month Research and Study Fellowship at the Institute of African Studies in Bayreuth University in Germany; the Drama Department and International Students Office at Stellenbosch University, South Africa, for the opportunity to study and carry out

research and also share my experiences with students. A special mention must be made of Dr Robert Kotze and his very kind and helpful assistant, Jean Smith; Moi University for the grant to carry out field research.

A very special word of gratitude for their invaluable contribution must go to those who acted as my research assistants and informants: Joy Masheti, Lwanda Keya, the entire CLARION Theatre Team (especially Faith Ntugi Mary Airo and Onyango Owino 'Zero'), Audrey Agesa, Faith Ntugi, Ochieng' Wandera 'Ochibo, Fred Mbogo, Silas Temba Mutabi and all the Theatre for Development practitioners whose practice provides the basis for my references, descriptions, interrogation and analysis. I also want to thank Hellen Nicholson for help when it was most needed.

I cannot forget the contribution of Edwin Hees, Basil Okong'o, Sam Ndogo and Tobias Otieno for their incisive yet constructive criticism, which provided the most necessary testing ground. To Victor Dugga, my brother in the pursuit of excellence, I say thanks a lot. To the memory of the late Dr John Opiyo Mumma, who introduced me to the practice of Theatre for Development and created vast opportunities for many of us, I can only say: Nuba, dance on, the ancestors wait to crown you. I do not have sufficient words to thank James Enock Madiba' for making my stay in Stellenbosch so homely. You understand just what I mean.

It is not easy to quantify the contribution of my family. What of the many sacrifices? Words just cannot express my appreciation. Your support has been invaluable and immeasurable. Ruth, the girls and the one who has just arrived – just accept this mention as a token of my gratitude.

Finally, all members of Literature and Creative Arts Departments, Moi University -
Asante Sana! For those whom have not mentioned rest assured that I do recognise and
sincerely appreciate your contributions.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

A form of theatre has become increasingly important and popular in Kenya since the early 1990s – more so than ever before. This is the type of interactive theatre referred to as Theatre for Development (TFD). Various reasons have been given for its renaissance. However, the most obvious may be the amendment of section 2(A) of Kenya's Constitution of 1991, which witnessed the expansion of democratic space. This amendment marked the re-introduction of a multiparty political system. Although Kenya had initially adopted a multiparty political system at independence in 1963, one of the main opposition political parties, known as Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU), dissolved with a view to fostering a national unity and its members joined the ruling Kenya African National Union (KANU) in 1964. In 1965/66 another political party, the Kenya People's Union (KPU), was formed following internal disagreements within the ruling party. In 1969 the government banned the KPU. From then on until 1982, although no law was passed preventing other political parties from operating, Kenya in effect had only one political party. In 1982 a law was enacted making KANU the only legal political party. With KANU as the only party, any opposition voices were stifled. This not only affected political parties, but in a sense also generally affected other forms of expression such as the media, public assemblies and theatre performances. This period witnessed the banning of several theatre performances by the government. As Ndigirigi points out:

Ngaahika Ndeenda was the first play to be banned in independent Kenyan history and it set a dangerous precedent. With the death of Jomo Kenyatta (independent Kenya's first president) in August 1978, and the installation of a more paranoid regime, censorship in the theatre reached unprecedented levels. When in 1982 Ngugi tried to have *Maitu Njugira* performed at the Kenya National Theatre, the regime refused to issue a license for the performance. In February 1982, the performance of *Muntu* by Joe de Graft had been stopped at the same theatre barely a week before *Maitu Njugira* was supposed to open, ostensibly because the play promoted violence. With the effective banning of *Maitu Njugira*, the need for writers to censor themselves became much more urgent. The banning of these two plays was not an isolated incident. (1999:75)

Thus, it is in the 1990s that a new dawn began for theatre to flourish once again. But it seems that it is Theatre for Development that enjoyed this new-found freedom of expression to the greatest extent, addressing such diverse issues as HIV-AIDS, female genital mutilation (FGM) and Constitutionalism, to mention a few. Dealing with issues that were considered as fundamental to the society, Theatre for Development practice became an extremely easy avenue for attracting donor funds, and any theatrical and performance event addressing the so-called burning issues "passed" as Theatre for Development, irrespective of its methodology or dedication to any philosophy of the practice of Theatre for Development.

Since Theatre for Development has become part and parcel of the process of promoting change in Kenya, it is not only important but inevitably necessary to explore its nature and modes of operation, and to ascertain whether its procedures and methodology are truly reflective of its objective to promote change.

This study has the following point of departure: to analyse a sampled repertoire of Theatre for Development activities in Kenya within the outlined models adopted from Freirean pedagogy and Boal's theatre practices. Subsequently, the study attempts

through mapping of several Theatre for Development activities to present ‘mirror-like’ models to possibly assist Theatre for Development practitioners in Kenya and elsewhere to critically reflect on their own practice(s) and then decide how to improve, and make more effective, their own practice(s).

1.1. Aims of the study

Given the situation discussed above, this study intends to explore a number of Theatre for Development enterprises in Africa in general, and Kenya in particular, as a way of identifying the recurring procedures and methodologies. These are the indices which will go a long way towards providing this study with what will be considered a mirror which can allow practitioners to reflect upon their different practice(s). This study only includes the very popular and documented Theatre for Development practices in Africa, while the cases dealt with from Kenya are considered for their variety and availability.

This study utilises the theoretical models based on Freire’s ‘pedagogy of the oppressed’ and Boal’s ‘theatre of the oppressed’, which seems to provide established and tested procedures and methodology for Theatre for Development practitioners and scholars all over the world and especially in the so called ‘third world’. Their models are used as prisms to analyse and describe the practice of Theatre for Development in Kenya in terms of procedures and methodology.

1.2. Theatre for Development or theatres for development? : The quest for a definition and a nomenclature.

The extremely eclectic and discursive nature of Theatre for Development makes defining it rather problematic and elusive. A plethora of names, signpost, tags and labels have been assigned to the enterprise by different critics, researchers, scholars and practitioners. These vary from Community Theatre, Popular Theatre, Participatory Educational Theatre, Theatre in Education, Alternative Theatre, Campaign Theatre, Resistance Theatre, Agitprop Theatre, Protest Theatre, Liberation Theatre and Oppositional Theatre, to mention just a few. Many studies have grappled with this issue: this particular study will therefore not go into detail on this issue. Though the nomenclature seems to vary, the essence of all these variants remains the same: anticipating the idea of theatre in the service of social transformation and reformation. Even a cursory engagement with the labels and manifestations of the different variants explicitly suggests their objectives and intentions. For example, Ngugi's experiment with Popular Theatre in Kamiriithu; Penina Mlamba's various projects with popular theatre in Tanzania; Jane Plastow's Theatre in Education project in Eritrea; Carin Asplund's Advocacy Theatre in Ethiopia; Ngugi wa Mirii's community theatre in Zimbabwe and Augusto Boal's Forum Theatre in Brazil all point to and emphasise the role of education and social transformation. According to L. Dale Byam, Theatre for Development is conceived as transcendence over the "less interactive styles of popular theatre," (1999:12) and she defines it in terms of the increased participation of the target audience in the theatrical process. Thus, for her "theatre for development aims to encourage the spectator in an analysis of the social environment through dialogue"

(1999:12). For Zakes Mda Theatre for Development is defined as “modes of theatre whose objective is to disseminate messages, or to conscientize communities about their objective social political situation” (1993:48). And Penina Mlama, referring to the enterprise as Popular Theatre, describes its aims briefly as follows:

...it aims to make the people not only aware of but also active participants in the development process by expressing their viewpoints and acting to better their conditions. Popular theatre is intended to empower the common man with a critical consciousness crucial to the struggle against the forces responsible for his poverty. (1991:67)

And for Nogueira Theatre for Development is,

(...) essentially or ideally a progression from less interactive theatre forms to a more dialogical process, where theatre is practiced with the people or by the people as a way of empowering communities, listening to their concerns, and then encouraging them to voice and solve their own problems. (2002:4)

In fact, even the most casual engagement with these definitions reveals their common denominator: the heightened and interactive audience participation and the anticipated resultant empowerment of those involved, that is, the target audience.

In this particular study I shall adopt the term Theatre for Development. This is because the term reflects its definition: theatre in the service of community. Aesthetic performance expressions and forms such as dramatised poetry, dances, narratives, puppetry and plays are all loosely conceived as *theatre* in this study, given that in most Theatre for Development enterprises the boundaries between the different performance genres are not only fluid but also extremely superficial. Nevertheless, different cultures respond differently to artistic forms of communication. In fact,

Theatre for Development frequently aspires to being the form that will communicate the aesthetics and worldview of the community in the most efficient and effective manner. Such aesthetic forms thus contain within them the optimum potential and possibilities both for entertainment and education. Theatre for Development is process oriented and is best defined through its functions. It sets out to make people aware of the forces which determine their living conditions and to make them active participants in the development process, expanding the expression of their own viewpoints, perceptions and actions to improve their conditions. It is in fact performance about the people by the people for the people, expressing their struggle to transform their social conditions and in the process changing those conditions. It is about 'communities in motion' (Ngugi in Byam, 1999: xv) performing their dreams for a better future. It is about the self-empowerment of communities.

Where Theatre for Development exists, it is facilitated by a team of theatre experts who work with various types of development and extension agencies, helping them create theatre that will carry a message(s). The theatre is supposed to act as a codification to be analysed by the participants and in the process lead them to new consciousness and a new understanding of their reality. There is, however, a considerable overlap between Theatre for Development and Theatre in Education and in this study, whenever necessary, reference will be made to the procedures and methodology of Theatre in Education, on the understanding that the major difference between the two genres lies in their target audiences. While Theatre in Education largely targets learning institutions, Theatre for Development focuses on the community in general. For instance, Theatre in Education, Peter Wynn-Wilson

explains, “is a genuinely hybrid form, with its roots more firmly in education than in theatre, originated by a group not of actors but of teachers in Coventry in the United Kingdom in 1965, built on the simple truth which is at the base of all sensible education: that we all learn best through experience” (1993:1). Anthony Jackson and Shulamith Ler Aldgem also discuss the evolution of TIE and in a way extends its scope when they point out that “there emerged in 1965 the Theatre in Education (TIE) movement, part of a concerted attempt by professional repertory theatres to connect theatre with the lives of the ordinary people” (2004:210). Byam points out that Theatre for Development, as it has become known, “is a relatively new phrase in the framework of theatre nomenclature, coined in Botswana in 1973, to describe an approach that attempted to reconcile Freirian concepts to a development project that used theatre as a stimulus. It emerged from a quagmire of theatre terms with the distinct purpose of using theatre as a vehicle, a code of raising consciousness” (1999:25). Thus, Theatre for Development is characterised by active participation of the community in which it is taking place, during which they identify their problems, reflect on how and why the problems affect them and, with the insights gained through an engagement with theatre performance, explore possible solutions. Nevertheless, the goal of Theatre for Development is to stimulate community consciousness and reflection towards social transformation.

Byam (1999:23) further argues that Theatre for Development can in fact contribute to education for liberation as it has the potential to be used for conscientisation. She stresses that as (a) codification, it offers the participants a means of investigating and analysing their history, past and present, while also providing a forum for discussion.

In addition, it further facilitates an understanding of the obstacles towards development by encouraging reflection on possible problems.

Frank (1995: 10) attempts a clarification between Theatre for Development and Popular Theatre. She argues that Theatre for Development uses Popular Theatre traditions to convey messages. According to her, the terms Popular Theatre and Theatre for the People do not adequately describe the phenomenon. Similarly, she finds Community Theatre and Participatory Theatre insufficient labels, because they only refer to one aspect of this kind of theatre, that is, participatory character. I share her thinking on the use of the term Theatre for Development, since it is more precise and implies the notion that its primary concern is the promotion of development in a specific community. As such, it represents a new theatrical approach concerned with the empowerment of rural and poor urban communities. In utilising this approach to theatre, the community should select the development issues around which the project will work in relation to the perception they have about their reality.

Theatre for Development as an apparatus at the service of development is certainly neither unique nor a phenomenon peculiar to Kenya. It is a practice that has become vogue in most post-colonial developing nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America. It is interesting to note that the practice also manifests itself in the developed world under the guise of Theatre in Education, alternative theatre and experimental theatre. Most notable in this respect are the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States of America.

Other terms that need brief definitions or descriptions in this study, since they are occasionally referred to, are such terms as interactive theatre, a participatory approach, democratic space and codification.

Interactive theatre simply refers to a type of theatre that brings together different forms and practices. It is performance, discussion, education, research, all packaged in one form. It also encourages high levels of interaction between the actors and spectators in the pre-theatre construction activities, the process of theatre creation, in the performance and the post-performance activities. (see Augusto Boal,(1979); Anthony Jackson,(2004); John O'Toole,(1976;1992).

Participatory approaches on the other hand essentially refer to an action, situation or process that involves all parties for whom the result or final product is meant. In Theatre for Development it means that the community for whom the project is meant is involved in all its stages from inception to implementation through a theatrical process: research, analysis of research findings, prioritisation of problems, devising of a theatre piece, and its performance and post-performance activities. In fact participation defines and characterises the concept of interaction.

Democratic space is a term that has gained currency in Kenya especially since 1991, when the then autocratic ruling KANU party under President Daniel Moi allowed competitive multiparty political democracy. This act was a gesture towards allowing more room for freedom of expression and performance, amongst other things. This expanded freedom is what has come to be referred to, metaphorically, as the democratic space.

Codification in this study refers to the use of theatre as a medium of communication to be engaged with by the target community in the process of intervention and consequent critical reflection in a Theatre for Development enterprise.

1.3. Theatre For Development in Kenya: The Context and Perspective

1.3.1. The Fruits of Independence and the Dreams Deferred

Given the brutalising experiences of colonialism, the dawn of independence for Kenyans stimulated images of an improved economic and social order. These visions were further nourished by the rhetoric of the new leaders of independence that the elimination of the triumvirate vices – that is, poverty, disease and illiteracy – would lead to development and in fact an amelioration of the standards of living. However, this was never to be. Rather, the situation deteriorated and, as could be expected, frustrations and disillusionment replaced the enthusiasm, enchantment and optimism that had marked the threshold of the dawn of independence. This frustration and disillusionment are aptly dramatised in Francis Imbuga's satirical play *Betrayal in the City* (1976) on post-colonial Africa's politics. Mosese, the intellectual character, ironically articulates the prevailing mood when he remarks that:

That is why I don't believe in such crap, as the last shall be the first, and blessed are the poor for they shall inherit the kingdom of heaven! For years we waited for the Kingdom, then they said it had come. Our Kingdom had come at last, but no. It was all an illusion. How many of us have set eyes upon that Kingdom? What colour is it? It was better while we waited. Now we have nothing to look forward to. We have killed our past and are busy killing the future... (1976:31-2)

It is the sentiments such as the ones attributed to Mosese that make one ask what has really gone wrong with the political and development vision in Kenya. However, it is

not within the scope of this work to answer such broad questions, but it should be noted that it is sentiments such as those expressed by Mosese that made it not only urgent but inevitable for intellectuals like Ngugi wa Thiong'o to look for alternative ways of participating in development at the grassroots level, using the potential and possibilities inherent in Theatre for Development (see chapter 3). But as Mda argues quite correctly,

Popular Theatre for Development enterprise is usually more interested in the most disadvantaged members of a community creating their own messages, than in preparing them readily to adopt innovations introduced by an external agent. (1993:86)

Mda's point of view, which resonates with Ngugi's when he ((Ngugi) explains his own reasons for involvement in community theatre, indicates that problems facing communities can only be addressed adequately when members of the community are actively involved in the search for solutions and not through waiting for some act of Providence or a kind of *deus ex machina*.

It was therefore the imminent failure of the imported development philosophies and ideologies that prompted the need to generate alternative ways of transferring development to its recipients. The earlier philosophies of development stressed the transfer of development through a 'monologic channel' –what has come to be known in development parlance as the "top-down" approach. The "top-down" approach in development is predicated on the principle that recipients of development are passive and accept development as a providential gift from elsewhere. It also assumes that development can be transferred wholesale and that it is synonymous with knowledge – and that this same knowledge is the preserve of professionals and the educated. This

approach also ignores the fact that the urban poor and rural masses who have little or no formal education have useful knowledge and skills. As Noguiera aptly points out:

So they believe that they know what is better “for the other.” What should be changed and how. As part of that appropriation of social knowledge, they are the ones who should plan the right solutions for the problems of the poor. (2002:47)

This “top-down” approach does not take cognisance of the development priorities of the recipients. It ignores the fact that recipients of development are capable of initiating and executing development programmes and projects and also ignores cultural differentiation between the development beneficiaries.

It is therefore this need for alternative development strategies that Theatre for Development became an important tool in development. As Eckhard Breitingner has observed:

The rise of Theatre for Development also marked a change in international relations. It was both the symptom and the result of the failures of 20 years of development policies that had insisted on the implantation of the materialist and technological culture of the North as the only possible road to the development, irrespective of the cultural and social environment. Characteristic of this style of development policies was the remote control on all levels – defining and designing of development goals administering financial, material and human resources, implementation and surveillance of planning objectives. The target communities were mostly reduced to the state of recipient beneficiaries, lorded over by donors. (1994:E7-8)

A similar observation is also made by Byam, who notes that: “In the post-colonial period, theatre became associated with development strategies, a relationship fostered by the contemporary perception of development” (1999:12).

Thus, Theatre for Development entered the field of development to contest, interrogate and possibly challenge traditional philosophies and vision of development. Through the possibilities provided by Theatre for Development, the “top-down” approach was replaced by the more participatory “bottom-up” approach. This “bottom-up” approach signified the transfer and control of development to the recipients of the intended development by creating strategies and spaces that would enable them to participate in defining and designing of development goals, administering financial, material and human resources, and the implementation and surveillance of planning objectives. This new approach, apart from giving control to the beneficiaries of development, also emphasised the privileging of the social environment and culture in the realisation of development programmes and policies. This meant not only that appropriate technologies are introduced, but also that appropriate methodologies are employed. This realisation clearly recognised the centrality of Theatre for Development in the important sphere of development. As Ngugi in Byam points out,

Community theatre is performance about the people by the people for the people. It is about people celebrating their struggle to change their social environment and in the process changing people themselves. (1999: xv)

In Kenya this marriage between theatre and development has been quite problematic. The practice is faced with various procedural, methodological and aesthetic problems. This is evidenced by the concerns of some Theatre for Development practitioners, for instance Lenin Ogolla, who complains bitterly about the chaotic situation of the practice in Kenya:

Today, many development workers especially in the Donor-supported Non-Governmental Organizations have a fair sense of the power of Drama and

Theatre. The relative lack of expertise in this field however makes them gullible to any professional idlers who prefer to call themselves thespians. TFD has been in recent years patronized by the strangest of fellows whose backgrounds in basic theatre are questionable. Community theatre is an area that needs keen specialization and not just every actor or director can deal (...) Not so long ago in Uganda, when theatre was at the forefront in the fight against HIV-Aids, many groups sprung up overnight, writing proposals to NGOs and government departments. In Kenya today, the civic education movement has created several opportunities for quacks who want to turn the fight for democracy into an industry. (1997:27)

Similarly, Babu Ayindo *et al.* point out that:

The other aspect that needs to be acknowledged is that TFD's (*sic*) have infinite forms and shapes. However, most varied characteristics between "TFD's" (*sic*) are their philosophy or lack of it. Certainly, a large number of TFD's (*sic*) have some philosophical vase (*sic*) varying from commitment to well known ideas or professional ethics which become the focus of their development activities, such as "liberation of the oppressed," "protection of workers," "women liberation," conflict transformation and peace building among others. Other "TFD's" (*sic*) are basically fortune hunters (business ventures) with their interest lying in making a quick buck out of a development activity. While professional TFD is primarily committed to organization of ideals, which form part of the evaluation objectives, the business "TFD's"(*sic*) which are like all other businesses in the market place, have business secrets in which evaluation would tend to remain silent. (2002: v)

The statements by Ogolla and Ayindo *et al.* raise fundamental questions not only of ethics but also about the procedures and methodology of Theatre for Development and what maybe differentiate it from other theatre forms. This brings us to a discussion of a theoretical paradigm or model for Theatre for Development in Kenya.

1.4. A Theoretical Paradigm for Theatre for Development in Kenya.

In Kenya, as witnessed elsewhere, Theatre for Development anticipates the de-conditioning and de-construction of oppressive conditions and situations that undermine individual and collective development. According to Guerav Desai (1993),

Theatre for Development is a functional normative discourse, which can legitimate or subvert the existing power structures of society. But perhaps the question to answer is ‘how’ does Theatre for Development as an artefact intervene? Maybe Simon Gikandi’s observation that it was Ngugi’s realisation that form is supreme in a theatre for community project that led him (Ngugi) to explore the aesthetics of Theatre for Development might be the most appropriate point of departure in this exploration. He comments that:

What is important in this self-critique is not so much Ngugi’s dissatisfaction with the language of theatre (although this was becoming crucial to Ngugi’s cultural project), but the recantation of what the author had previously seen as the foundation of his writing, namely that ideology, or content, was the most important thing in the representation, and that form was secondary. (2000:185)

Jackson and Ler-Aladgem in their exploration of the place of audience participation in alternative theatre and educational theatre seem to share this perspective when they point out that:

One of the main characteristics of audience participation is that it changes the nature of dramatic action and exploits the social, political and therapeutic potential of the event. This encounter between fiction and reality, art and society, drama and politics enlarges ‘the performance text’ to include not only the dramatic text (plot, characterization, dialogue, etc) but also all the social activities before, during, and immediately after the event. (2004:212)

It is obvious that the form of Theatre for Development includes wider framings both intrinsic and extrinsic in nature. All these must be accounted for in a study of Theatre for Development.

It is this realisation that Theatre for Development is defined by the appropriateness of its form and aesthetics or a set of procedures and methodology that informs the choice of the theoretical model of this study.

The study readily assimilates Paulo Freire's pedagogic philosophy and methodology, which privilege dialogical and participatory education, and which Augusto Boal has extended into the realm of theatre, establishing the notion that spectators are now transformed into 'spect-actors'. These two perspectives are important in understanding and analysing the practice of Theatre for Development in Kenya, and the formulation of its procedures and methodology. Furthermore, the current debates and discourses on Theatre for Development in other parts of the world urge the creation of a dialogical participatory process, which the two perspectives adequately provide.

Because Theatre for Development is basically a tool for conscientiation and social transformation, the appropriate theoretical model with which to engage with it, as already pointed out, is premised on Paulo Freire's philosophy, whose work can be traced to Brazil in 1962, where he worked as an adult educator. His theoretical and methodological model is important to this study for several reasons. Firstly, the Freireian model (is the) one that is most often cited, particularly by Theatre for Development stakeholders in Africa and in other parts of the world in general. Secondly, Freire did most of his conscientising educational work in Africa after his exile from his native country, Brazil. He came to Africa through his association with the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Institute for Cultural Action (IDAC). In Africa his main vision was a strategy of education that would benefit the majority

of Africa's population in the post-colonial period, believing that education has the potential to bring about change in individuals and, ultimately, to the entire society.

According to Byam (1999), African educators particularly became attracted to Freireian pedagogy as an alternative strategy for education in the post-colonial development of their countries, as this pedagogy had features such as dialogue and community participation, which largely resembled features of traditional African education. These educators were also attracted to the use of codes or codification in the methodology which included radio programmes, pictures and drawings but which were not as appealing as drama, a more popular medium in Africa, so educators attempted to adapt this pedagogy, using theatre as its primary code.

Freire's alternative educational method, the problem-posing approach to education, which breaks with the vertical patterns characteristic of what he (Freire) refers to as "banking education", also attracted educators in Africa because of its dialogic nature, where there is no predetermined content or message, as the content is constructed in the process of interaction and communication between the educator and the learner. This problem-posing pedagogy is based on dialogue involving the genuine participation of all those concerned. For instance, the educator must respect the learner's knowledge of his social reality and the history that has conditioned it. In this pedagogy the teacher is not the be all and end all of information and knowledge. It is a collaborative learning venture between the teacher and the learner. Because of its collaborative nature this pedagogy becomes a powerful tool for conscientisation. Freire describes the difference between the banking concept and the problem-posing concept of education as follows:

Banking education (...) attempts, by mythicizing reality, to conceal certain reality, to conceal certain facts which explain the way in which men exist in the world; problem-posing education sets itself the task of demythologizing. Banking education resists dialogue; problem-posing education regards dialogue as indispensable to the act of cognition which unveils reality. Banking education treats students as objects of assistance. Problem-posing education bases itself on creativity, thereby responding to the vocation of men as beings who are authentic only in inquiry and creative transformation. (1970:71).

But the critical aspects of Freireian pedagogy that have attracted theatre artists and which inform the thinking in this study are his ideas on conscientisation, participation, dialogue, codification and investigative research methodology.

Conscientisation was Freire's response to colonialism: it was a philosophy of liberation that advocates popular participation in education – an education which, as previously noted, is a collaborative exploration between the teacher and the learner. Translated into the realm of Theatre for Development it would, be a collaboration between actor/facilitators and audience/spectators, aimed at cultural action for freedom and critical awareness and consciousness. This analytical process is developed through a dialogic process or dialogue. Dialogue for Freire is the main channel for the development of critical thinking which can lead to critical consciousness. It is through conscientisation that people become more aware of their social, cultural and political environment and, becoming conscientised means understanding the relations between people, their social realities and the historical circumstances and conditions that create oppression and exploitation. Furthermore, through conscientization people acquire the awareness that would enable them to intervene in their own social reality to remove oppression and exploitation. Thus dialogue, facilitated through codification, becomes a critically essential factor in creating consciousness. Freire's problem-posing pedagogy, therefore, becomes a

function of dialogue between the actor/facilitator and the spectator/audience. Through dialogue the actor and the spectator are able to engage with each other better to understand their reality and their relationship to it.

The other critical factor in this pedagogy for a Theatre for Development practitioner is participatory research and investigation, which facilitates the dialogue among participants and is pertinent in catalysing critical thinking. It is through participatory research that both the researchers and the community become co-investigators of the problems facing the community. In this kind of research there is no distinction between the researcher and the community. The research itself is an instrument of critical consciousness. Therefore, theatre as pedagogy calls for research on the community and with the community in form of action research, leading to critical awareness.

Finally, a theatre that needs to develop the spectators into protagonists of their reality and history should itself be an appropriate code or codification. In Freirean work the codes used included pictures, drawings and radio programmes. Byam (1999) points out that theatre as codification is not a new phenomenon in Africa, having been used through history as manifested in visual images, masks and dances, and as such it is not surprising that theatre is used extensively as codification in Theatre for Development. The basis of codification is its ability to pose a problem and engage participants in a process to solve this problem. In Theatre for Development, where theatre functions as a codification, it (theatre) ought to be implicit and open-ended, to leave room for dialogue and discussion.

In addition to Freire's model, this study is also informed by Augusto Boal's techniques and methodology. They have had the most significant, remarkable and extensive influence and impact upon the practices of Theatre for Development throughout the 'third world' and over the time have become a sort of a theoretical and methodological model in Theatre for Development. For me, his 'poetics of the oppressed,' significantly influenced by Freire's pedagogy, provides a set of procedures and methodology for Theatre for Development in Kenya in general, and in particular, his thoughts on the objective of theatre for change are fundamental to this study. As he points out:

In order to understand this *poetics of the oppressed* one must keep in mind its main objective: to change the people - "spectators", passive beings in the theatrical phenomenon - into subjects, into actors, transformers of the dramatic action... (Boal, 1979: 122)

Boal's theatre practice in many ways resonates theatre of the medieval Christian church, Erwin Piscator, Bertolt Brecht and the European Agitprop movement, amongst others, which tended to redefine the relationship between the actors and spectators in the process of play production and the level of audience/spectator involvement and participation. The Agitprop Theatre, for example, was driven by the desire to bring revolutionary messages to grassroots communities. According to Noguiera:

Agit-Prop aims were to inform, to educate and to mobilize to action. Its change proposals aimed to reach beyond the stage-audience relationship, that is, to society itself. Theatre mobilization aimed at contributing to the process of building a socialist society. (2002:49)

A significant development of the agitprop method was the Proletarian Theatre, a theatre that used collective working methods, introducing the use of improvisation to devise the plays to be presented. Kees Epskamp explains:

Agitprop theatre, therefore, is not a genre but a method, or rather, part of an ideology aimed at changing the world through a social and political process. Productions with an 'agit-prop' production approach are productions that wish to directly interfere with or relate to the current political issues outside the theatre in society. (1989:64)

As for Brecht, theatre had to move beyond entertainment into the realm of instruction (though this is a truism for all theatre), as is evident in his Epic theatre, patterned largely on Erwin Piscator's experiments, where empathy and catharsis are redefined into a dramatic form that attempts to encourage the spectator's reflection on life to the point of change. For example, the actor kept some distance from the character as he never was the character - a process familiarly referred to as the 'alienation effect'. The aim of epic theatre for Brecht and those of his persuasion was something more than purging the spectator, but indeed transforming him/her and society. Boal's poetics similarly aspires to give ownership of the play production to the audience. This is what he calls the 'poetics of the oppressed,' turning spectators into "spect-actors". He argues that:

(...) all truly revolutionary theatrical groups should transfer to the people the means of production in the theatre so that people themselves may utilize them. The theater is a weapon, and it is the people who should wield it? (1979:122)

In Boal's aesthetics of change the actors and the spectators are engaged in exploration of a common predicament and dilemma as a prelude to understanding larger social

realities. To achieve this, he developed a number of techniques: Image Theatre, Invisible Theatre, Simultaneous Dramaturgy and Forum Theatre, amongst others.

Image Theatre, for instance, exploits human sculpting and tableaux as ways of highlighting oppression without introducing the confusion and cultural ambiguities associated with spoken language. The reason is that an image communicates in a more immediate way than the spoken language.

In Invisible Theatre a theatrical event happens without the audience being aware that they are spectators. For instance, in order to raise consciousness about sexual harassment three actors (two women and a man) board an underground train. The actresses start ogling the actor and touching his bottom. A pre-prepared quarrel ensues between the women and the man. The passengers join in the scene commenting and intervening. A discussion starts off about how sexual harassment can victimise both man and woman. Through their involvement, spectators engage in a learning process in which they are free to decide for themselves which direction they would want to take.

In Simultaneous Dramaturgy the actors are not presenting a message, but rather grappling with a problem through performance. The problem is developed up to a critical moment, and this is the point where the Joker, the Boalian facilitator, comes in to mediate between the performance and the audience. The Joker stops the play at crucial climatic moments and asks the actors to try out in dramatic mode the spectators' suggested solutions. In this mode the performers are not disseminating

information nor passing across messages to the audience, but are actually co-learners with the spectators.

However, through practice Boal realised that these modes were not so effective and he came up with a more advanced technique, the Forum. In this technique a fully scripted play explores in a realistic manner an easily recognisable problem, but one which is apparently not easy to solve. The spectators are invited to suggest solutions by taking the role of the actors and enacting those solutions. In a manner similar to Simultaneous Dramaturgy the Joker acts as mediator between the actors and the audience, and more significantly outlines the rules of this theatre game. The Forum takes into account all the diverse ideas, strategies and experiences of the spectators. It is in this sense that Boal pronounces the aim of his poetics as:

To change the people - 'spectators,' passive beings in the theatrical phenomenon - into subjects, into actors, transformers of the dramatic action (...). The liberated spectator, as a whole person, launches into action. No matter that the action is fictional, what matters is that it is action! (1979:122)

Since Theatre for Development largely seeks to bring about change in the individual and society using certain established and identifiable procedures and methodology, to appreciate its practice in Kenya requires a theoretical model which stresses such a set of procedures and methodology, provided in both the ideas and practices of Freireian pedagogy and Boalian theatre.

1.5. State of Research in Theatre for Development in Kenya

Though there is a lot of documentation and research on Theatre for Development in most parts of the world, the same cannot be said for Kenya.

A brief bibliographical survey in fact demonstrates the barrenness in the documentation of Theatre for Development activities in Kenya. Michael Etherton (1982), in his seminal research work on the development of drama in Africa, explores the different trends and manifestations of drama in Africa from a historical perspective. In this overview Etherton devotes one chapter to Theatre for Development. Though this work does not make reference to Theatre for Development in Kenya, it provides us with important insights into the general history and definition of the practice of Theatre for Development. David Kerr (1995), on the other hand, traces the development of popular theatre in Africa and situates Theatre for Development within the realm of Popular Theatre. His discussion on the University of Nairobi Free Travelling Theatre and Kamiriithu Community Theatre affords us the only examples from Kenya. Kerr's work, though, is important because it provides much valuable historical material on Theatre for Development. It is interesting to note that Kerr's research consists largely of a re-reading and re-construction of secondary material rather than an engagement with on going Theatre for Development activities. Zakes Mda (1993) attempts a theoretical formulation of Theatre for Development based on development communication theories. This is indeed one of the most important studies in Theatre for Development. Exploring the possibilities inherent in communication theories, Mda discusses trends in the development of the practice and approaches of the Maratholi Theatre in Lesotho in their quest for a relevant methodology. While Mda's study is largely informed by Theatre for Development projects undertaken in Lesotho, it occasionally refers to Kenya's Kamiriithu Community Theatre Experiment as an index for comparison.

Penina Muhando Mlama (1991) critically reviews Theatre for Development from other parts of the world as a way of showing how Theatre for Development in Tanzania has advanced over other enterprises, especially in its exploitation of popular culture and artistic forms. Mlama also makes mention of Kenya's Kamiriithu, but as a caution to Theatre for Development practitioners to tread carefully in their work to avoid confrontation with political hegemonies. This warning, though, is ironical because Theatre for Development as a conscientising agent cannot avoid becoming involved in politics. Banham *et al.* (1999) have produced a collection of essays by different Theatre for Development scholars, practitioners and researchers from different parts of Africa. The collection does not have any articles on Kenyan Theatre for Development, but nevertheless still remains important to this study as it provides examples for comparative purposes.

Liz Gunner's (1994) collection is not dissimilar to Banham's (1999), even though it only focuses on experiences from the Southern part of Africa. Byam (1999) situates Theatre for Development in Africa within a post-colonial political and development discourse. Like Mda (1993), she attempts a formulation of a theoretical construct, but one based on Paulo Freire's pedagogy, which stresses a problem-posing pedagogy and its consequent praxis. The work describes and critically analyses a number of Theatre for Development projects in Africa, such as the Kamiriithu Community Theatre in Kenya, though its main focus remains the Zimbabwe Association of Community Theatre (ZACT). Noguiera (2002), in her work on the search for Poetical Correctness in Theatre for Development, analyses Kamiriithu Community Theatre as the evolution of a theatre model that transcends the theatre concerned with bringing messages for

the people by being a theatre made by and with the people. Noguiera interprets the Kamiriithu Community Theatre enterprise as an attempt to break away from the confines of a formal theatre and bringing theatre to the people. From the foregoing it is clear that research and studies on Theatre for Development in Africa have ignored the emerging trends and activities of the enterprise in Kenya and, when they have discussed its presence in Kenya, they have largely remained preoccupied and fixated with the Kamiriithu enterprise.

For example, studies documenting Theatre for Development works specifically in Kenya – notably those by Ngugi (1981), (1983) and (1984) – all report on the making of Kamiriithu community theatre and the political consequences for its initiators and facilitators, but they hardly refer to other Theatre for Development projects in Kenya. Ross Kidd (1983), for instance, discusses Kamiriithu Community Theatre within the institutional structures of colonialism and neo-colonialism. The theoretical framing of his paper is founded on Marxism and Freire's pedagogy. The paper does not consider any other possible Theatre for Development events in Kenya. Ingrid Bjormann (1989) provides a narrative reconstruction of the political environment in which Kamiriithu found its expression as well as the rehearsal performances of *Maitu Njugira (Mother, Sing for me)*.

It has become clear that the world-renowned Kamiriithu Community Theatre Experiment has become the most referred to Theatre for Development enterprise in Kenya, as documented by Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1983), (1986); Ross Kidd (1983); Ingrid Bjormann (1989); David Kerr (1995); Guarav Desai (1990); Penina Mlamba (1991) Kees Eskamp (1989) and Eugene van Ervne (2001), among others. Ross Kidd

discusses the significance of the Kamiriithu project quite clearly when he comments on its popularity:

The significance of the Kamiriithu experience has been obscured by the repression and needs to be spelled out so that others can learn from what they have done. Their breakthrough in developing a truly popular theatre linked to popular organizing and struggle represents a major advance over other experiences in 'popular' theatre in Africa, for example,

*Urban-based 'political' theatre, which is often aimed at a small, privileged English-speaking minority;

*University travelling theatre (e.g. Kenya and Zambia), which takes plays to the rural villagers, but rarely involves them in the creative process;

*'Populist' drama of West Africa (e.g. Yoruba Opera, Concert Party, etc.), which involves working-class performers and audiences, but fails to advance working class interests;

*Theatre for development, (e.g. Botswana, Zambia), which takes plays on the development themes to the villagers, but keeps the control of the process outside the community;

*The farmers' workshops in northern Nigeria organized by the ABU popular Drama Collective, which involve the farmers in a process of drama-making and critical analysis, but lack an on-going organizational base. (1983:56-7)

Though Kamiriithu is the most widely cited example of the Theatre for Development enterprise in Kenya, the available literature tends to stress its political ramifications at the expense of its artistic and aesthetic implications. In contrast, not much has been recorded on any aspect of Theatre for Development enterprises in Kenya after the Kamiriithu event, though it is interesting to note that a great deal of Theatre for Development activities have been going on, especially since the introduction of multiparty politics in the early 1990s, as mentioned earlier. This is a direct response to the newly expanded democratic space and the explosion of HIV-AIDS and the concomitant donor funds to address these phenomena.

In recent years, however, there have been major attempts to document other Theatre for Development activities in Kenya. Mumma and Levert (1995) have produced a seminal work on Theatre for Development in Kenya. Mainly a collection of reports on experiences of different Theatre for Development practitioners in Kenya's Western province, its most important aspect is its attempt to define different terms and concepts used in Theatre for Development. Furthermore, the work provides a record of the continued survival patterns of Theatre for Development activities in Kenya. Lenin Ogolla (1997) chronicles Theatre for Development projects that he and others participated in as facilitators. The main weakness of this work is that it does not explicitly point out the theoretical assumptions of the facilitators' practice and approach.

Eugene van Ervene (2001) examines Theatre for Development in the five continents of the world and refers to these events as Community Theatre. Five countries from the five continents are used as metonyms of those particular continents. The Community Theatre work by the Kawuonda Women's group in Sigoti in Kenya is a metonym of the practice in Africa. In this work van Ervene traces the history of Theatre for Development in Kenya as a general backdrop to the study of the Kawuonda women's community. Van Ervene's work is founded on ethnographical research techniques.

Amollo Maurice Amollo (2002) situates the practical workshop approach of the Amani Peoples Theatre (APT) within the domain of traditional African performance philosophy. Amollo attempts to elicit the poetics of the Peoples' Theatre through experience with the workings of APT. Amollo's work, however, does not look at the totality of Theatre for Development in Kenya, as it is restricted to the APT experiences

in conflict transformation and peace building. Other than highlighting the aesthetics and therapeutic possibilities of theatre games and story-telling, Amollo hardly explores other dimensions that would characterise and clarify the procedures and methodology of Theatre for Development in Kenya.

As has been mentioned in the above discussion, even though not much has been recorded on Theatre for Development in Kenya, there is quite a lot of literature on this enterprise from other parts of Africa. A critical survey and review of such experiences form the body of our next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

The Evolution of Theatre for Development in Africa: A Quest for Relevance

2.1 Introduction

To provide this study with a backdrop against which to situate the Kenyan experience in the practice of Theatre for Development, this chapter explores a few paradigm shifts and transmutations in the practice of Theatre for Development from various parts of Africa. This attempt takes both a synchronic and diachronic approach.

2.2. Manifestations of Theatre for Development in the Colonial Period

Kamlongera (as quoted in Mlama 1991:70) observes that Theatre for Development was witnessed in Africa as “early as the 1930’s, when the colonial health workers, secondary school teachers, agricultural and community extension workers used drama to sell the virtues of modernization, cash crop productivity, and financial prudence”. Mlama (1991:68-9) confirms this when she states that during the colonial period the “field workers traveled from village to village organizing drama performances, discussions and demonstrations based on such topics as cash crop production, taxation, and disease eradication. The theatrical programmes were planned, message chosen, and scripts prepared by government workers”.

In his reading of the works of Carr (1951), Mulira (1975), and Pickering (1957), Kidd also points out the presence of Theatre for Development during this period:

In the 50s a number of “theatre-for-development” experiments were carried out by colonial governments in the transitional period as pressure built up for

independence. In Ghana and Uganda, for example, mobile teams were formed to tour the rural areas with plays on cash crop production, immunisation, the importance of self-help, literacy, sanitation, and local government tax. The actors were development workers and often combined their performances with practical demonstrations (for example of agricultural techniques), question-and-answer sessions, and other forms of practical activity (e.g. the distribution of insecticide sprayers, vaccination drives, literacy teacher recruitment's etc.). The tours were a form of "mass education" to compliment and reinforce a process of community and extension work at village level. (Kidd, 1984:5)

Admittedly, there is no doubt that Theatre for Development as a tool in the service of development communication has always existed. But it has responded differently to different situations. For instance, during this time in the history of Africa it was used to entrench colonial policies and ideologies. The philosophy of the practice at this time inclined more towards conformism than radical transformation. As Mlama (1991) observes, the message was always pre-packaged for the recipients and was communicated in an artistic and aesthetic mode that was far removed from the cultural expressions of its recipient. Furthermore, at this time those who used the mode hardly ever anticipated the active participation of the target audience, the emphasis was indeed more on the message rather than on how that message was delivered or received.

2.3. University Free Travelling Theatre Tradition: Entertainment or Conscientisation?

At the dawn of independence in many African countries there emerged from the universities a kind of theatre whose main philosophy was to take theatre to the people. This, according to Kess P. Epskamp (1989:105), was "the initiative of a small group of foreign employees, attached to the English or Drama Departments (sometimes also called the department of 'Dance, Music and Drama' or the department of 'Performing

Arts’) was of special importance to the development of new ideas about the relationship between theatre and society”. The expatriate lecturers and their students at the universities formed touring theatre companies which came to be popularly referred to as the University Travelling Theatres. Apparently, the first effort in University Travelling was witnessed at Makerere University in Uganda during the years of 1964-1966. Nuwa Sentongo (1998), points out that it was pioneered by two expatriates, David Cook and Betty Baker. The project was sponsored by the British Council in Kampala and some multinational corporations. The Travelling Theatre troupe consisted of students from different East and Central African countries such as Malawi, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, and lecturers from the University. Their main objective was to take theatre to people in the rural and poor urban areas for free performances.

The first performance by the Makerere Travelling Theatre was in 1965 at Katwe Community Centre. The group toured other parts of the East African region with a repertoire of plays. One play, a translation of Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, and *Bones* were in Kiswahili, *The famine* in Luganda, *The Mirror* in Runyoro Rutooro, *Keeping with the Mukasa*, *The Exodus*, *Ladipo’s Last Stand*, *The Bear*, *Third Party Insurance*, *The Cloak*, and *Temptations of Juniper* in English.

The most notable achievement of the Makerere Travelling Theatre, for Sentengo (1998:20), “was that it made it possible for people to realize theatre could be performed in many spaces and in any language.”

However, situating the initial efforts of Free Travelling theatre within the concept of Theatre for Development has always been very problematic. This is because most Theatre for Development critics, scholars and researchers argue that the movement had a skewed and parochial ideology and philosophy of the practice. They cynically see the movement as something similar to the ostrich that buries its head in the sand or the proverbial man who leaves his house that is on fire and decides to chase after the rat – indications that the movement was seen as irrelevant in the larger scheme of things. Mlama in fact accuses the movement of several sins, both of omission and commission, when she says that:

First is the assumption implicit in the idea of “taking theatre to the people” that those people do not have a theatre of their own. Travelling Theatre represented an imposition of outsiders’ agendas and analysis. One is reminded of what Cabral observes of undemocratic and non-participatory processes of development. In travelling theatre, too, the peasants were left out of the action, forced into the conventional role of watching someone else’s interpretation of the reproduction of their culture of silence. They remained the passive recipients of outside ideas, robbed of an opportunity to voice their own thinking. Second, the travelling Theatre was embarking on a futile venture to spread a middle-class type of theatre among the peasantry. The objective was to influence the people to start similar groups all over the country. It did not strike these theatre artists that this was an impossible task due to the alien nature of that theatre and the lack of a base for its possible development that emerges out of a people’s way of life and not from a one-day show by a visiting group. The travelling theatre also leaned more towards the provision of entertainment, emulating the bourgeoisie theatre from which it emerged. Like the urban-based theatre movements, it did not bring out the more significant ideological functions of theatre. Little effort was made to use the potential of theatre to analyse problems and to offer criticism. This was contrary to the characters of the popular theatre forms that normally combine entertainment with education and critical analysis. (1991:65)

Admittedly, in its nascent stage the movement did not respond to the mood of its time. The kind of productions that were toured were completely insensitive, incongruent and inconsistent – in terms of artistic forms and content – with the realities of rural and

urban poor audiences. For example, in commenting on the movement Epskamp says that “at this stage it was still the outsiders who decided which problems dominated life in the villages and how they should be dealt with” (1989:105). David Cook, quoted in Kerr, states that “the *Makerere Free Travelling Theatre* toured a very wide area, even touching towns within border areas of Kenya, reaching an estimated audience of at least 17,000 people. Their repertoire ranged from Chekhov’s *The Bear* to Julius Nyerere’s Swahili translation of Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, performing sometimes in English, sometimes in an African language” (1995: 137). It is these kinds of performances that Cook mentions, which seem to be alienated from the concerns of the rural masses and urban poor, that have drawn a great deal of criticism. Ngugi also shares the same concerns about the shortcomings of this movement when he argues that:

Where it tried to break away from the confines of the closed walls and curtains of a formal theatre building into the rural and urban community halls, the assumption was that theatre was to be taken to the people. People were to be given the taste of the treasures of the theatre. People had no traditions of theatre. (1981:41)

However, the movement began gradually to respond to the needs of the rural masses and the urban lower-class audiences. Kerr comments:

The leaders of the 1976 Northern province Travelling Theatre (Mapopa Mtonga and Youngson Simukoko) became conscious of the didactic possibilities of drama and decided that two of the plays they performed (*Blood* and *Kamsakala*), which carried messages about health problems, should help focus the tour on primary health care. (1995:145)

Thus with time the movement became a site for experimentation with different modes of Theatre for Development. For instance, Kerr notes that Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Kamiriithu endeavour drew its impetus from the activities of the movement:

(...) the Kamiriithu theatre had its origin partly in an indigenous tradition of cultural resistance to colonialism, and the radicalisation of intellectual popular theatre forms such as Theatre for Development and the university travelling theatre. (1995:240)

The more radical move from travelling theatre to Theatre for Development is envisaged in the transformation of the University of Nairobi Travelling Theatre into the Tamaduni Players, who started off performing conventional plays, but later on went on to experiment with Theatre for Development in their collective creation of a play portraying the struggle among the street urchins for survival.

Given the history of this movement, suffice it to say that it certainly made some significant contributions to the evolution of Theatre for Development. The Universities Travelling Theatre seems to have provided a springboard for the growth of the enterprise in almost all cases encountered in our bibliographical explorations of Theatre for Development in Africa.

2.4 Theatre in Response to Development: The Search for Methodology

It needs to be made clear that the different stages in the evolution of Theatre for Development are not clear-cut; they overlap with and transcend different historical epochs. However, the search for a correct and appropriate procedure and methodology has seen the practice transform and respond to new development strategies, visions and philosophies over the years.

Nonetheless Theatre for Development in its current form is a direct response of marginalised populations to their marginalisation. The new realisation in the 1970s that traditional development philosophies and policies had failed to initiate meaningful development meant that new and alternative approaches to development had to be found. A need for more participatory approach to development was then envisaged and the best way to achieve this was through an interactive approach. This found expression in the pedagogical works of Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire and the interactive theatre works of Augusto Boal (see Chapter One). The philosophies and ideologies of these two Latin Americans largely defined and shaped the direction that Theatre for Development in Africa would follow. Thus the new thinking in development and Theatre for Development came to recognise the centrality of the target groups in both the development process and the construction of development-oriented theatre. The implication of this was the recognition of the privileged status of “process” rather than of “end product” in the conception and implementation of developmental enterprises. This move signified a radical departure from the top-down approach to development towards a more democratic, bottom-up approach, where the recipients of development are expected to negotiate their own development through a dialogic process. This new realisation is succinctly articulated by Fantu Cheru cited in Byam (1999:15) when he argues that,

Development programs aimed at rural areas of developing countries often benefit one area at the expense of another ... These development schemes ignore face- to face planning and dialogue, something that development specialists have come to appreciate as essential to a viable development plan

This argument is extended by Alistair Matheson also quoted in Byam (1999:15) when he says that ;

The limited participation by the indigenous people in these development programs has contributed to the failure of past development efforts and promoted the decision to rethink development strategies at the end of the 1960s.

It is in response to these concerns that Theatre for Development became a very important partner in communicating development. Thus most remarkable development in the practice of Theatre for Development during this period was the stress on target communities' participation in the process of creating developmental theatre and the consequent translation of the fictional enactment into concrete development projects. In this sense the involvement of the target community in the process of making theatre becomes a significant factor in the translation of the fictional act into the actual development act. Participatory theatre invites the target community to research and analyse their problems, and also creates in them a critical awareness and potential for action to solve their problems. As Mlama (1991:66) points out: "Theatre becomes a process through which man studies and forms an opinion about his environment, analyses it, expresses and shares his view point about it and acquires the frame of mind necessary to take action to improve upon it." Kerr (1995:149) also articulates the mood of the period that prompted the re-visioning of the practice. He notes that "many adult educators ... felt dissatisfied by the centralised use of folk media packages. To use the fashionable jargon of adult education, there was a desire to displace the domesticating 'top-down approach' to communication with a more participating 'bottom-up' approach."

The obsession with this new trend, which privileges the participation of the target community in all the stages in the making of Theatre for Development as well as the implementation of solutions that emerge from the theatrical event, reveals itself in the practices of several practitioners at this time in the history of its development. A look at several different Theatre for Development enterprises from different parts of Africa will suffice to illustrate the situation. Furthermore, more case studies are reported in Mlama (1991); Kerr (1995); Eskamp (1989) Etherton (1982); and Kidd and Colleta (1980).

2.4.1 Botswana's Laedza Batanani: The Genesis of Dialogical Theatre in Development.

This programme started basically as a community education project in the 1970s. It was the brainchild of a number of adult educators including Ross Kidd, Martin Banham and Adrian Kohler, who were all associated with the University of Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana (later University of Botswana). Kerr states that their motivation to use theatre was ironically rekindled by their dissatisfaction with the methods that were in use then in propagating adult education.

The Laezda Batanani experiment was an annual one-week event organised in such a way that a team of actors toured the villages putting on performances and organising discussions on the issues highlighted in the performances. The performances were often preceded by the identification of priority issues.

In terms of the mobilisation, the local councillors provided the overall leadership for the campaigns. The extension workers in the area were involved as the main local

organisers of community participation. During the performance tour the team covered five major villages. In each village they presented a 90-minute performance which included drama, puppetry, dance, song and drum beat poetry. The performances were followed by a post-performance discussion, during which the actors and the extension workers in the area divided members of the audience into groups and facilitated the discussions of the problems that had been dramatised.

In the first four years of its operation Laedza Batanani grappled with issues ranging from cattle theft, inflation, unemployment, the effects of migrant labour on the community and family life, conflict between traditional and modern practices, education and health problems.

The hallmarks of this approach, in contrast to that of its precursors (the colonial didactic theatre and the travelling theatre movement of the universities), lie largely in its ability to effect a two-way communication and meaningful dialogue between the target community and the development agenda. The programme made people aware of their situation, encouraged them to look at their own problems and to take the necessary action to solve those problems. This approach was a clear departure from the pre-packaged approach of the colonial campaign theatre. It is because of its dialogical dimension that Laezda Batanani's seminal project became the role model for later initiatives. It is significant that this approach attempted to place the target community at centre stage, empowering the community by elevating them from being passive spectators to becoming more active participants in the enactment of their realities. This actually proved to be the beginning of a practice that would later see the

communities becoming the subjects of their development agenda rather than its objects.

The perceived success of this approach had a multiplier effect on other programmes in Southern African regions such as Swaziland, Lesotho, Zambia and Malawi, as is demonstrated in the following examples.

2.4.2 Zambia and Swaziland: Adaptations and Applications of the Laedza Batanani Approach

Kerr notes that “in Zambia the theatre workers found the Botswana Theatre for Development ideas very attractive” (1995:153). And it indeed impacted on their practice. The landmark Theatre for Development project in Zambia took place at Chalimbana Training Centre in the form of a workshop to train theatre workers in the Laedza Batanani approach. The main objective of the workshop was to test the participatory potential of Theatre for Development. However, critics have pointed out that the approach was not successful within the framework of this workshop. This failure has been attributed to a number of reasons: firstly, most of the participants in the workshop did not speak Soli, the language of the local community, used as the subjects for the experiment; secondly, the time was too short for the workshop to have any meaningful impact on the lives of the community. In fact the workshop never took into consideration the long-term consequences of the practice for the villagers.

In a style similar to that used in Zambia, the Swaziland encounter with the Laedza Batanani approach was introduced via a workshop that took place in 1981 at Nhlango Training Centre. However, in this experience the plays that emerged out of the

workshop were taken around the communities of Konjingile, Manzini and Nsingzini. The facilitators of this workshop were the veterans in the field from the Botswana and the Zambia experiences, namely Martin Byram, Mapopa Mtonga and Stephen Chifunyise.

As a consequence of the workshop the approach was enthusiastically embraced and adopted by Community extension workers for their own communication work. In the words of Martin Byram (as quoted in Mluma, 1991:72-3):

The more established means and methods of communication have not succeeded in reaching these people in the rural areas. Some cannot read, others cannot afford radio and television sets and, in most cases, they cannot be reached by radio and television. Theatre, on the other hand, has been used as yet another new method of reaching a majority of people.

In Swaziland the process started with the gathering of information in the target villages; then the participants, extension workers and theatre practitioners rehearsed and put on performances in the villages. Through the use of drama and puppetry the participants tackled a vast range of problems encountered in the area. The issues included resettlement, illiteracy, land shortage, unsuccessful co-operatives, bad village leadership, health conditions, lack of social amenities, unemployment and alcoholism. In Swaziland, unlike in Zambia, the workshop approach seems to have been quite successful.

2.4.3 Malawi: From Enclosures to Disclosures in Performance Framings

The history of Theatre for Development in Malawi was similar to other experiences in Africa, traced back to the colonial utilisation of theatre for extension work and the University Travelling Theatres. To improve the weaknesses of the former practices, a

Theatre for Development Workshop was organised at Mbalachanda Rural Growth Centre in 1981. Under the auspices of the University of Malawi, the University Travelling Theatre Group decided to improve its ongoing travelling theatre approach by addressing the problems of rural audiences.

The aim of the workshop was to involve the extension workers at Mbalachanda in the creation of plays to illustrate some of the problems that they (extension workers) were trying to deal with in the community. As is characteristic of most workshops, there was not enough time for gathering information from villagers, a stage in which the villagers were expected to participate in the process. Nevertheless, a discussion with the extension workers provided data on which plays were created by the University group. The main issues that emerged were illiteracy, bad sanitation and cultural resistance to agriculture extension work. It is obvious from the difficulties identified in the foregoing discussion that this approach did not deviate too much from the previous approaches that it had set out to improve upon. It showed only a slight improvement on the Travelling Theatre approach in the sense that this time round the practitioners at least conducted research on the needs of the community. But the target community still remained isolated from the process, only waiting to consume the finished product created for them by experts from outside the community.

However, in 1987 the shortcomings of the Mbalachanda work were redressed. This was through a follow-up workshop that has been referred to as the Liwonde project. This time round the Boalian Forum Theatre technique was employed to stimulate the meaningful involvement and participation of the Mwima and Mbela villagers in primary health care (PHC). The major concern of the Liwonde PHC project was to

ensure community participation. The most remarkable feature of this project was the manner in which the PHC team, a theatre team, and the villagers worked together to discuss health problems; they researched causes and consequently took action to solve their own problems. In this particular project the villagers actively participated at all levels of the process.

2.4.4 Lesotho: Simulating Significant Audience Participation

Theatre for development practice in Lesotho, as in other regions in Southern and Central Africa, could not resist the influence of the then famous and influential *Laedza Batanani* approach from Botswana. The practice of the Maratholi Travelling Theatre, operating within the National University of Lesotho's Department of English and the Institute of Extra-Mural studies, reflected the similarity in approach. The programme produced plays exploring themes of re-forestation, co-operatives and rehabilitation of prisoners, migrant labour and sanitation. The basic approach of the Maratholi Travelling Theatre consisted of a group of students visiting the villages to gather information on the problems of the target area. This information was then analysed and prioritised, and stories were improvised around the issues. The stories were rehearsed and then performed at the villages. After the performances discussions were organised on matters arising from the performances. The follow-up activities consisted of practical advice to the villagers and the extension workers.

In time there was a clear realisation that this process marginalised the villagers in the analysis and the creation of the performance and it was consequently abandoned. A new approach and practice that was more interactive and integrative in terms of

audience involvement was adopted instead. This new approach came to be known as Theatre for Conscientisation. But even within the framework of this approach the central actors still came from outside the community, yet it nonetheless offered more opportunity for the villagers to participate in the process. Within this approach the rehearsals still took place outside the immediate environs of the village, but now the very nature and form of the performances invited more significant and meaningful participation from members of the community. Through a modified form of the Boalian Forum Theatre technique, the community engaged and interrogated the performance on the issues that it dramatised. Exploiting the concepts of interruption and intervention, the members of the target community took the place of the actors to try out their understanding and interpretations of the problems facing them and their probable solutions. This act not only empowered the community but also sharpened their sensibilities, consciousness and critical awareness of their reality and environment. This was indeed a radical departure from the earlier practice, where the community became involved only in the post-performance debate.

2.4.5 Nigeria: Towards Simultaneous Dramaturgy

One group that undertook consistent and sustained critical reappraisal of the practice and approaches of Theatre for Development was the *ABU Collective* at the University of Ahmadu Bello in Zaria, Northern Nigeria. In tandem with the practice manifested at the time, Ahmadu Bello's initial attempt was conceived and structured on the basis of a similar practice as the one of *Laezda Batanani* of Botswana.

The first *ABU* Theatre for Development project was *Wasan Manoma* (Hausa for ‘plays for farmers’) presented in 1977 in Soba, a rural market centre near Zaria. The project took the workshop approach in which four plays tackling the themes of corruption, profiteering and migration to towns were created. All these issues emerged out of the research that the group had carried out in the village.

The sequel project was presented in 1979 and followed closely the approach of the 1977 productions. This was at Maska also near Zaria. The workshop name of this project was *Wasan maska*. The results of the workshop were three plays dealing with the themes of hygiene, corruption in the distribution of fertilisers and the conflict between illiterate poor farmers and the *Alhaji's*.

These two projects clearly reveal that the villagers were hardly involved in the process. This revelation led *ABU Collective* to question the achievements of the workshops in Soba and Maska. Indeed the facilitators of the *ABU* programmes realised that there was a serious need to develop a more creative working relationship with the target community and also to come up with a coherent and pragmatic follow-up programme which could grow naturally from the performance, “but without lapsing into the problem solving tokenism of the Laedza and Chalimbana workshops” (Kerr, 1995:163).

The realisation that the two workshops did not achieve the desired goals inspired *ABU* to organise yet another workshop, this time in Bomu. This particular workshop brought together drama students and literary officers. More significant was the close rapport between the theatre team and the villagers. The approach this time round

stressed improvisation and the repeated revision of the drama, in the light of the ensuing debate. In this approach only skits were staged and were frequently interrupted to allow the audience to intervene and suggest the character's next move or action. The members of the audience had the opportunity to comment on what followed, improvise or even take the acting roles. However, the core actors still came from outside the community and rehearsed the skits out of the sight of the villagers. But more important was the flexible and fluid forms and structures of the skits that made it possible for the villagers to interact with the issues both as spectators and actors. Subsequent projects by the *ABU Collective* followed the same trend but with varying degrees of success.

2.4.6 Cameroon: Ambushing the Community

The Theatre for Development project in Cameroon took place in 1984 in three villages: Kake, Kurume and Konye. This project was a result of an international Theatre for Development workshop that took place in Kumba. According to Mlama, "the Kumba workshop made little effort to explore the use of indigenous theatre forms in the Popular Theatre process" (1991:87). This shows that the Cameroon project did not bring any new insight or dimension to the practice. In fact, it hinged on the dominant practice that had been popularised by *Laedza Batanani*.

In this workshop, as in the previous one in Murewa, Zimbabwe (1984), a group of theatre practitioners and extension workers (community development students) came to work with the villagers. And as in earlier practice, the target group only became active in the post-performance discussions.

In this instance it seems that the participants ambushed a particular community to try out the Theatre for Development techniques and methods which had been theorised in workshops elsewhere. Mlama¹ bitterly decries this approach when she says that,

In fact it has been debated whether it is proper for Popular Theatre to operate with an external team going into a community and trying to work with the people to solve their problems. This is frequently the case in Africa, where the Popular Theatre workers are often expatriate or middle class theatre artists and University lecturers ...However, it should be noted that people from outside or within a community can play an effective role if they understand their role in the Popular Theatre as being primarily that of animators, facilitating critical analysis of issues, ensuring the participation of all interest groups, broadening views where they are too narrow or restricted; facilitating discussions without imposing one person's ideas. The broader worldview on intellectuals can contribute towards a better analysis of the situation at the grassroots level. But this is only possible if the popular Theatre participants first grasp their role as animators. The popular Theatre still has to grapple with this problem. (1991:91)

Similar views seem to be expressed by Hansel Ndumbe Eyoh, who was the convenor of this project, when he reflects in retrospect that:

In spite of my self-questioning, the urge to be serviceable to my community, to the community of man, has been overpowering. This is how I came to accept yet another invitation to be a resource person at the Theatre-for-Integrated-Development Workshop (TIDE) in the Oturkpo region of Nigeria in 1989. Yet another middle-class intrusion into the lives of the wretched of the earth; another attempt at empowering the disempowered; another trickle of hope being dropped in an ocean of despair. (Eyoh, 1999:106)

According to Eyoh, the Theatre for Development enterprise that took place in Cameroon in 1984 was a one-off experience which did not have a great impact on the lives of the villagers of Konye, Kake and Kurume, as it did not leave behind structures that could sustain the theatre work. The main weakness of this particular project, as highlighted

¹ Mlama prefers the label Popular Theatre, but as I indicated I will privilege the term Theatre for

by its critics, is that it did not involve the community. It has been noted that a group of theatre workers and extension workers did most of the theatrical work and therefore restricted the participation of the community to discussing the content of the performance.

2.4.7 Tanzania: Exploiting Popular Culture

In Tanzania there was a strong desire to deviate from the experiences of the *Laedza Batanani* and *ABU* collective towards adopting the Kenyan Kamiriithu model. Mlama (1991:106) observes that working with Theatre for Development in Tanzania is not problematic as there is already an existing theatre movement tradition as well as an existing grassroots structure of Ujamaa villages “where people live as a unit and mobilise each other for various economic, political and social issues”. Therefore mobilising people to participate in popular theatre is relatively easy, because people are used to getting together and discussing and debating issues in public.

In consonance with other Theatre for Development programmes, the Travelling Theatre movement of the 1960s impacted upon contemporary practice in Tanzania, as Mlama (1991:106) observes:

The adoption of the Popular Theatre approach in 1980, therefore, was an attempt to provide the missing link. Popular Theatre was meant to promote people’s own theatre practice and to use it to advance their own concerns instead of merely parroting the ideas of the ruling class. The people needed to use the theatre which they already possessed to communicate and analyse their development problems especially in the face of economic crisis.

Development, because it is more specific in terms of what this kind of theatre is intended to achieve

In Tanzania four workshops were conducted during 1982-1986 in four different regions using Theatre for Development to initiate dialogue and development. The workshops took place in Malya (Mwanaza region), Bagamoyo (Pwani region) and Mkambalani (Morogoro region), and in these areas, “Theatre for Social Development” was utilised as a means through which the people could participate in initiating, discussing, analysing and evaluating their own development process. The approach was also meant to exploit the people’s own popular theatre forms (traditional dances, mimes, story-telling etc) as the medium through which they could communicate issues concerning their wellbeing.

Though Mloma claims that the Tanzanian approach is a novel one, closer scrutiny reveals that in fact the approach does not deviate much from the practices that have been discussed above. Just as elsewhere, the process begins with research and problem analysis during which information is gathered and analysed. Members of the audience are then divided into groups and an animator assigned to each discussion group to discuss questions and issues that had emerged from the villagers’ own performances. Further, more informal research was also conducted based on “conversations” with members of the village, which revealed that the main problems facing the community are theft of crops in the farms, laziness among villagers’ youths and adults, *bhanga* smoking (rampant among the youth) and land shortage.

Theatre for Development practice in Tanzania differs from that of other parts of Africa only in the sense that it explores and exploits the performance aesthetic forms of the villagers (target groups). However, the facilitators improved on the performances, especially at the level of content, form and performance skills. For instance, in the

Malya project ten days were spent on theatre production. Most probably inspired by the Kamiriithu experience, everybody in attendance was allowed to contribute in the creative process. In accordance with the Boalian techniques and other modern theatre workshop methods, warm-up exercises were based on the local dance rhythms and dances, followed by improvisation, which were used to achieve high levels of concentration and a working mood. All these were conducted under the leadership of external facilitators from the Dar-es-Salaam University.

In the creation of the drama the facilitators drew up a skeletal outline of the play, and developed its plot and content by incorporating the views of the villagers and their analysis of the situation into the process. The draft was then debated with the participants and the necessary amendments made. The resulting draft formed the backbone for further collective creation of the production, which integrated the various theatrical forms existing in the village, viz. dances and story-telling.

Similar to other Theatre for Development practices in Africa, there was the usual post-performance discussion with the audience. In this case a member of the community chaired the post-performance discussion. The issues raised in the performance were collated with the people's own reality during the post-performance discussion. At the end of it all the people collectively sort out their problems. In the Tanzanian experience, unlike elsewhere, provision was made for follow-up activities. The villagers were supposed to continue working on the productions and the animators visited the villagers on specific occasions to evaluate the progress of the project.

2.4.8 Uganda: Towards Campaign Theatre

In Uganda two variants of Theatre for Development approaches co-exist: a participatory-oriented mode and what Marion Frank (1995) has called Campaign Theatre. Participatory-oriented theatre is specific to a locale and anticipates an undertaking of, and implementation of, an identified project in that area. Project-driven Theatre for Development utilises the target group in the creation of dramatic performance. Campaign theatre, on the other hand, envisages a wide unrestricted audience; the performance is pre-packaged and presented to the audiences in different locales as a finished product. About this approach Frank (1995:115-6) notes:

CT ... is not usually performed by the target group. In as much as the play is supposed to give information that is necessary to create a new attitude in the audience, this information cannot possibly come from within the target group.

What Frank calls Campaign Theatre, however, in many respects sounds like the political theatres of Reinhardt, Meyerhold, Piscator and Brecht, though the difference here is in the content of message. Campaign Theatre in Uganda is structured mostly around themes on HIV-AIDS.

A critical reading of Frank's case studies strongly suggests that the Theatre for Development practice and approach closely followed the Laedza Batanani model. For instance, Jonathan Muganga's Nattylole project (1986) started as a primary health care project in Nattylole, sponsored by an NGO, the Catholic Secretariat, a subsidiary of the Catholic Church. Theatre for Development found a role to play in this programme because the previously used lecture method had failed to effect participatory communication. The Nattylole approach was akin to the other approaches and began

with research. Information was gathered and analysed in Nattyole and a play devised and created based on the result. The play, in a style reminiscent of the University Travelling Theatre, was taken around the neighbouring villages. The main divergence from the University Travelling Tradition was that this time round the issues dramatised emerged from the research carried out in the villages. A very interesting and significant angle to the Nattyole project was its concrete results and achievements.

Frank (1995:61) notes that:

The project evolved so well that it even had a measurable economic impact. The club members established a demonstrating garden on land of the Catholic Parish Church in order to show how to plant crops necessary for a balanced diet... A co-operative society was established, and what had started as Primary Health Care campaign developed into an agricultural project for the whole community .All the while, however, the health education activities continued.

The hallmark of the Nattyole project was that it was people driven, since the facilitators only functioned as catalysts, while the villagers themselves identified their own problems, analysed those problems and then devised plays and songs in which they suggested solutions. On the basis of the results achieved in this particular project

Frank acknowledges the transforming powers of Theatre for Development as follows:

The Nattyole project is proof that TfD is able to create a consciousness that encourages communities to initiate their own projects. Through theatre, the people of Nattyole have come to realise that they are the ones to influence their own life. (1995:62)

Geoffrey Wandulo's 1990 project utilises the same approach that Nattyole had successfully employed. The project also focused on health and was sponsored by the Committee for International Self-Reliance (CIS), also an NGO.

While project-driven Theatre for Development aspires to concrete achievements, Campaign Theatre participates in the awakening of consciousness and conscientisation. In Uganda, because of the high rates of HIV-AIDS, Campaign Theatre is the more dominant variant of Theatre for Development. Campaign Theatre in its preparatory stage does not invite the participation of the audience. This is because of the intricacies and complexities of the issues dealt with. The issues addressed need experts who are conversant with the medical implications of the messages. Frank (1995:65) rationalises the situation as follows:

Health issues, however, require help from outside, especially when more than just information is needed. Problem analysis and health education can only be carried by medically trained personnel, expertise not normally available in the villages: the transmission of health information requires translators, mediators, and especially facilitators who can dispose of organizational, financial and managerial resources effectively to launch health information campaigns, liaising between medical experts and actors and performers, and between both of those and the target audience.

Campaign Theatre is much closer to the University Travelling Theatre movement approach than the project Theatre for Development approach. Nevertheless, Campaign Theatre goes beyond what the University Travelling Theatre Movement did in the sense that, though the plays are devised away from the audience, they never anticipate the participation of the audience. This difference is aptly summarised by Breitinger in his observation of a Campaign Theatre project in Uganda by a Katanga Group. “After the show a long debate with the audience took place...within the debate, a spontaneous dramatic sketch was staged with several of the spectators and members of the group” (1994:E26).

Indeed, Campaign Theatre aspires to audience participation, though at times this is not achieved because of the nature of the audience and the space of performance

2.4.9 Eritrea: The Failure of Imported Forms

The literature on Theatre for Development reveals that the practice is relatively new in the region. Those who have been involved with it in Eritrea prefer to call it Community Theatre. The lull in the activities of Community Theatre in Eritrea is associated with the long war of independence against Ethiopia.

Theatre for Development in Eritrea functions at two levels: one is to reinstate a tradition that had become moribund as a result of the long war against Ethiopia and the other is to allow Theatre for Development to participate in the reconstruction of the nation as a result of the war.

The Eritrean community-based theatre has been in existence only since 1995. The project was the brainchild of Jane Plastow in conjunction with reputable donors and funders. All the facilitators in the Eritrea project were expatriates from the North. According to Plastow, theatre, as it is known in the European sense, was a very new phenomenon in Eritrea. So the brief of these expatriates was twofold: to reinvigorate the theatre forms in Eritrea and to introduce a sense of Western theatre in Eritrea.

Plastow, the initiator of the project, explains:

I set the project up at the request of the Eritrea government following an initial chance meeting in 1992, shortly after Eritrea had won 30-year liberation struggle against Ethiopia. That war had left the country devastated, with nearly a third of the population of 3.7 million living as refugees abroad, some 70,000 fighters dead and unknown civilian casualty toll. Before the war, the indigenous culture had been suppressed in favour of the Ethiopian Amhara language and performance forms. Many young people had never learnt their traditional stories or the

meaning of their dances and songs. The Eritrea people's Liberation Front had tried to nurture Eritrean cultures, performing the music and dance of all the nine of Eritrea's language groups in its new cultural troupes, but new ideas from other parts of the world about dynamic theatre in the widest performative sense of the word had not reached Eritrea. Traditional performance was separated by an insuperable gulf from dialogue-dominated drama as introduced by first Italian and then English colonisers between 1890 and 1952. (1991:38-9)

Thus the history of Theatre for Development in Eritrea is premised on the need to reinvent Community Theatre. It is interesting to note that the evolution of Theatre for Development in Eritrea in many ways does not depart radically from that of the rest of post-colonial Africa. The Eritrea project in its initial stages echoed the earlier University Free Travelling tradition movements of the 1960s and 1970s.

The first phase of the project in 1996 saw a Tigrinya group of 16 course graduates undertaking a two-month tour with plays about land reform and issues of dowry and virginity. It is noted that audiences of up to 7,000 sat on stony hillsides to watch the performers, the performers lit only by two powerful lights, which often flickered when the hot wiring that connected them to the portable generator was trampled on or kicked. The troupe travelled on local buses and sometimes by camel to reach remote communities, "but every audience participated with gusto"(1999:42). (Unfortunately one of the facilitators, Ali Campell (in Plastow *et al.*, 1999), who provides this description, does not elaborate on the exact nature of the audience participation).

Once more, as with developments in other parts of Africa, the second phase of Theatre for Development in Eritrea saw an emphasis on audience participation, especially at the level of performance. In the case of Eritrea the community was not involved in research and analysis, since the theatre arts students and the facilitators identified the

problems and prioritised them. Ali Campbell, the main facilitator of this second phase, notes that:

It's hard to find an issue around development that isn't a women's issue. We have already brainstormed some of the things we feel as a group we might explore through theatre (...) and in the safety of our compound all kinds of issues we are ready for have been duly listed and roughed out as scenarios for Forum Theatre, which is one of the forms I feel we ought to try when it is our turn to occupy the communal space by the church tonight. (Plastow, 1999:40)

Unfortunately the Forum Theatre technique did not succeed in Eritrea. Ali Campbell's dismayed observation attests to this failure:

How I could have failed to see the entire script of a perfect community play, handed to me on a plate on my very first day, remains a rich source of humility as I write this now. Maybe we were so sure that one kind of theatre means Development and another means Entertainment that we couldn't see over the mental wall we had built between them. (Plastow, 1999:43)

Campbell's remarks in many ways not only reverberate with, but also reinforce, the arguments by Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Mlamba that for Theatre for Development to be effective in communication, it must draw largely from the indigenous theatre forms of the target community. Interestingly in the case of Eritrea, Campbell notes that when they finally reverted to the community's own performance modes, the experience became more enriching than when they attempted to use the Boalian techniques:

Iyob told the tale, then, to a couple of thousand people accompanied by traditional instruments with women ululating and showering us with popcorn. All versions of the story were valid at the end. There wasn't a moral as such, but a moment of silence, a song to the 70,000 martyrs of the liberation war, and a tree-planting where my present of a baby Daro was held aloft by a beautiful old priest, in one moment of wonder and respect, meshed together and sang the harmony the women wore around us. This is, from my point of view, the story of what Sala'a Daro really means. I hope I'm asked back there again, and I'll make no end of

plans, but please, if you meet me before I go, don't ask me what I'm going to do there. (Plastow, 1999:44)

The Sala'a Daro experience is great lesson for facilitators of Theatre for Development who visit target communities with fixed and preconceived ideas about what theatre ought to be. Mlama attributes this problem to the expatriate adult educators from the West, who privilege the conventional theatre forms from their own theatre traditions in Theatre for Development projects without taking cognisance of the cultural art forms of the community. It is ironical that this should have happened in Eritrea, when research had already shown that for Theatre for Development practice to be successful, it must ingeniously employ the cultural art forms of the target community.

2.4.10. Burkina Faso: Indigenising Boal's Techniques

Theatre for Development in Burkina Faso pervades all development and communication spheres. The approach and practice is signified in the works of the most popular theatre company, *Atelier Burkinabe (ATB)*. The main objective of ATB is to utilise the potential of Forum Theatre to empower people through information transfer.

In a remarkable departure from Boalian Forum Theatre, the ATB approach is a blend of both non-participatory drama for development and fully participatory theatre. The practice of the ATB is characteristically analogous to that of the early *Laezda Batanani* and *Ahmedu Bello University Collective*. *ATB* begins the process by sending a group of actors from the capital city to villages, where they perform pre-written scripts and in the process invite the local population to participate as well as encourage them to react to the performance as a means of stimulating participation. In all the

performances of ATB audience participation is ever anticipated. During the play an actor addresses the audience directly, commenting on the scene just played and the scene to come. Certain scenes are created and the spectators are invited to intervene, to propose changes or improvements, to engage in role-playing, or to provide commentary.

ATB's approach and practice has gone through a radical transformation. But this kind of transformation in approach and practice is not peculiar to *ATB*. This is characteristic of the growth of Theatre for Development in most of post-colonial Africa.

ATB involvement with Theatre for Development dates back to 1979-81, when the theatre group assisted the government in a relocation scheme in the Volta Valley, where a large project to eradicate the tsetse fly had opened up large areas of the low-lying valleys for habitation. There was some reluctance on the part of the rural people to move to the new site. The government therefore needed a medium through which to explain the scheme and its benefit to the target community. The *ATB* performed a short play about the project after which, in a post-performance discussion, the audience was invited to make comments and debate on the merits of the relocation scheme. It is significant to note that it is after engaging with theatre that the people finally saw the sense of moving to the new site.

From 1981-83 the group created plays addressing serious urban problems such as juvenile delinquency, problems with schools and alcoholism. All the performances included a post-performance debates. The most significant transformation in *ATB's* approach and practice occurred in 1984. This is the moment that the group fully

embraced the Boalian technique of Forum Theatre. At this point in the history of its development the group began to invite spectators to “step into” the shoes of the actors or directly intervene in the process of the performance.

Joy Morrison contends that Forum Theatre is effective in communicating development in Burkina Faso “because it has strong roots in African culture, because it is an oral medium that makes use of the preferred means of communication in Africa, because it is interactive, and therefore participatory, and because it involves a democratic exchange of information” (Morrison, 1991:83).

2.4.11. Zimbabwe: Community Theatres or Theatre for Development?

The Theatre for Development movement in Zimbabwe has been more vibrant than in most other countries in Africa. The vibrancy of the Theatre for Development movement in Zimbabwe derives from a history of the struggle for liberation. The Pungwe, an indigenous art form, was central to the liberation struggle and it was the main tool for mobilisation, conscientisation and communication during that period. So in 1983, when Theatre for Development workshop was organised in Murewa bringing representatives from 19 countries together, the structures for Theatre for Development were already in place. The major contribution of this international workshop was to enable the Zimbabwean theatre workers to transfer the existing theatrical forms into the domain of communication and development.

Theatre for Development in Zimbabwe is organised under the Zimbabwe Community Based Theatre Project that also falls within the ambit of the Zimbabwe Foundation of

Education Production (ZIMFEP). The three aims of Zimbabwe Community-Based Theatre set up in 1982 are:

- to facilitate the establishment of urban and rural community theatre groups;
- to encourage community participation in theatre as a way of instilling self-confidence, creativity, organisational skills, critical awareness of environment, history and culture;
- to help the development of theatre skills (e.g. evolving a play, scripting, acting, etc.) (Plastow, 1996:168).

The Zimbabwe programme is the brainchild of two Kenyan exiles, Ngugi wa Mirii and Kimani Geau. The two were closely associated with the Kamiriithu Community project in Kenya.

Given the strong organisation of theatre in Zimbabwe, the country has managed to produce highly professional theatre practitioners in the field of Community Theatre. The umbrella body has also encouraged the proliferation of theatre groups in all parts and sectors of the country. In Zimbabwe Community Theatre – like the Kamiriithu model – is supposed to entail income-generating projects for the members.

The main problem with community theatre in Zimbabwe according to Mlamba (1991:60), Stephen Chifunyise in Ngugi wa Mirii (1986:16) and Kerr (1995), is that it has been co-opted by the ruling ZANU-PF party to popularise its socialist ideology. Most of the theatre performances support the policies of the government as the ‘correct’ political and economic modes. This has to do with the fact that the association of Community Theatres is funded by the government. More so, theatre was

used as tool by the now ruling ZANU-PF party during the struggle for independence and it continues to use it even in the post-independence period.

2.4.12. South Africa: Shifting Towards Theatre for Development?

Temple Hauptfleisch (1997:42), discussing the shifting paradigms in South African theatre, observes that towards the later part of the 1960s there was a growing grassroots cultural struggle and workers' movement, a new kind of theatre - 'community theatre,' 'workers theatre'- which began to surface in the black community. It was a pure 'peoples theatre' in the style described by Boal (1979) and heavily influenced by the work of Paulo Freire and Bertolt Brecht. This type of theatre evolved out of the broader socio-political and socio-economic issues within the community and also within the more specific context of labour relations.

In this study I am going to critically analyse the work of DRAMAIDE, which serves a similar purpose, that is, to create awareness in the community, involving students in the creative process of performances to communicate messages on HIV/AIDS to the broader adult community in the early 1990s as a case study from South Africa.

2.4.12.1 DRAMAIDE: Experimenting with Theatre-in-Education Techniques

2.4.12.1.1. The Background

Dramaide is a project which has been operating in schools throughout Kwa Zulu since 1992, using drama in education to highlight the spread of HIV-AIDS in South Africa. The project's facilitators use a mixture of performance, Theatre-in-Education, Forum

Theatre and arts workshop techniques. The project works through the children to empower them to assist the adult communities to understand the dangers of AIDS and how to deal with them. The facilitation team consists of actors and health workers who go to school(s) on the invitation of the principal(s), especially during the school Open Day.

2.4.12.1.2. The Process and Performance

The first phase of the programme is a performance to the school children, a comic piece of theatre which raises the question of HIV-AIDS in a light-hearted parable. The children then ask questions raised by the performance. The children write down the questions to avoid feelings of embarrassment/or humiliation. The health professionals in the team answer the questions as candidly as possible. The project targets children because Zulu society is very traditionalistic, resistant to pressure groups wanting them to change their ways and sexual mores.

The next stage consists of workshops, where the children are provided with strategies to put across the messages to their parents. This is facilitated through the most popular creative aesthetic modes in the schools: music, painting, performance or science exhibition.

The most significant development in the group's working process was the discovery of the power of oral tradition, which is consistent with the "inside-out" or "bottom-up" approach in Theatre for Development. Thus, rather than impose aesthetic criteria on students, they are encouraged to use their own folk tradition, especially the folk dances and praise poetry. These are the forms that the students then use to convey the

message about HIV-AIDS to the adult community. This is appropriate, since some of the songs can be traced back to the puberty ceremonies that were held long ago.

According to Lynn Dalrymple:

Those songs were used as a way of teaching young people about sexual matters and now with the help of DRAMAIDE they have changed them and made them about HIV-AIDS. So when the parents come to watch, they can read the form - the message is new, but the form is their own, and they are excited by it. (1996:34)

2.4.12.1.3. Audience Participation and Involvement

This is considered at two levels: the school community, and the larger adult community. At the level of research both the school and the larger communities are hardly involved. This is because DRAMAIDE is very specific and goes into the communities with a particular message determined by the funding body: to put across a message about how to prevent the spread of HIV-AIDS, together with an understanding of how the disease can be transmitted and how it can be prevented. The school community is also excluded in the creation of the performance, but included in the post-performance session through the use of the techniques of Forum Theatre and workshops, where they are encouraged to use their own voices to tell their own community and parents about HIV/AIDS. It is unfortunate that the larger community composed of parents, who are supposed to be the target of change, do not really get to participate meaningfully at any level in the project other than as passive spectators in the drama of their own lives.

2.4.12.1.4. Criticism of the Project's Working Methodology

This is a very interesting project, but one which suffers because of the restrictions placed on the facilitators by the funding body. The message is pre-determined and this definitely does affect the level of participation. Other issues that affect the community and which might have some causal relationship with the spread of HIV-AIDS are not explored. Because the message and its designed outcomes are already pre-determined, very little critical consciousness can be achieved.

Though the community is allowed to utilise its own performance aesthetic forms, the same does not apply to the message content which is not derived from their immediate socio-cultural context. In fact HIV-AIDS as a problem cannot be solved without situating it within the larger socio-economic and cultural contexts of the community.

Even though this project is intended to communicate the message to adults, using children as mouth piece, the adults remain passive spectators throughout. This goes against the very principles of educational drama, where both learners and teachers are supposed be involved in the collaborative search for solutions to their problems. Given that the Zulu society is a very conservative society, especially in matters of sexuality, perhaps it is only through these kinds of forums that their culture of silence can be challenged and their perceptions transformed.

2.5. Conferencisation of Theatre for Development: Cui Bono?

A major defining characteristic of the Theatre for Development movement in Africa is the extent to which it is pervaded by international conferences, seminars and workshops. These have become prominent because of the problematic nature of the

approach to, and practice of, Theatre for Development in Africa. In the post-colonial period there have been strong attempts to define the paradigms and set up a matrix of Theatre for Development. This need to properly define the practice has compelled Theatre for Development practitioners in Africa to organise numerous “forums” for discussing the matter.

David Kerr (1999) traces the first workshop to Lusaka in Zambia in 1979. This workshop has come to be known as the Chalimbana Workshop. Kerr notes that this workshop was aimed at improving on the practice that had been initiated by the famous Botswana *Laedza Batanani* project. This workshop came up with a model that was intended to transcend the *Laedza Batanani* approach and practice and whose focus would be:

- Research into a community’s problems;
- Using a workshop technique to create a play contextualising those problems;
- Presenting the play to the community;
- Using the post-performance discussions as the basis for initiating action to solve the problems.

The most significant feature of the model was the experimentation with what was learnt in the workshop in the local villages. According to Kerr (1999), the villages became the laboratories and the villagers the guinea pigs used to test the viability and practicability of the theories and practices encountered in the workshop. This trend continued with the 1983 workshop in Murewa, Zimbabwe, but this time round there was an attempt to co-opt the villagers more meaningfully in the creative process. As Ross Kidd (1984:75) points out:

The adoption of the Pungwe structure and the villagers' theatre forms was a major breakthrough. (it complimented the strategy of working with the villagers throughout the process.) Much theatre for development work in Africa has undervalued indigenous performance forms and the indigenous organisation of cultural activity. Through working with villagers' own patterns of cultural activity, rather than imposing an alien structure, we are not only reinforcing villagers' confidence but also building on and extending something which was already being organised and controlled by the people, thus ensuring continuity. By breaking down the separation between theatre for development and villager traditional performances, making them one activity, we affirmed the value of the Pungwe as an activity in its own right and as a catalyst for development.

Other conferences took place in Rehoboth, Namibia (1991), Lagos, Nigeria (1995), Harare, Zimbabwe (1997) and Ibadan, Nigeria (1998). The aims of these workshops were not dissimilar from the previous ones. The major divergence in the Harare and Lagos conferences of 1997 and 1998, respectively, was that they broadened the scope of the practice of Theatre for Development by incorporating other mediated arts such as radio, television and cinema. However, the mediated arts were considered as complementary to the more participatory theatre.

An interesting phenomenon that has recently emerged in this area is the idea of Summer Schools. (see appendix photo1) These are international Theatre for Development workshops that bring researchers, scholars and practitioners together to exchange and share their knowledge and experiences in the field. The workshops are collaborations between Eckhard Breitingner of Bayreuth University, German Academic Exchange Services and an African University. The first workshop in the series was held at Bayreuth University (Germany, 1999), the second was in Stellenbosch University (South Africa, 2000), the third was in Moi University (Kenya, 2001). This third workshop was slightly different from the earlier ones, as it introduced a new

dimension to the composition of the Summer Schools by including undergraduate theatre arts students. This trend has now become an integral aspect of the workshops, as was evident in the fourth workshop at Dar-Es-Salaam University (Tanzania, 2002) and Chancellor College (Malawi, 2003).

The conferences also stressed the role of networking among Theatre for Development practitioners and scholars. At one conference the crucial role of networking was stated in the following terms:

Networking is about making contact with and maintaining connections between people with interests in the practice. It is also about disseminating information and receiving feedback, sharing concerns, ideas and examples of good practice, debating issues, celebrating “successes” and generally co-ordinating activities of the practice. (Jama, 1999:89)

Even the most cursory encounter with Theatre for Development in Africa reveals the impact of these conferences on practice. The practices, methods and techniques shared and tested at the conferences determine the trends and introduce new ways of working with the practice of Theatre for Development throughout the continent. Though these conferences are very important, they have their own problems. It is not very easy for those who attend the conferences to disseminate the new knowledge and experience among other practitioners in their countries. The reasons for this are many. But the most obvious is usually the cumbersome task of organising a local workshop. The implications of such an undertaking are often too enormous. And if the dissemination does not percolate down to the grassroots, then the very objectives of the international conferences are defeated.

2.6. Conclusion

The main issues that emerge from the above discussion are indeed significant for understanding the practice of Theatre for Development in Kenya. In critically reviewing the trend of Theatre for Development in Africa it is obvious that the practice and paradigms have undergone some quite significant transformations, both in approaches and emphasis – from the rudimentary stage, where the stress was only on the didactic message, to the moment where the mode of rendering the message has become more important.

It seems that the stress has been shifted more to the “inside-out” or “bottom-up” approach, where the theatrical production, which is in effect the rehearsal for development, is generated at all stages together with the recipients of development. But under circumstances where the “inside-out” approach is not effective, the “outside-in” approach is still in vogue. This seems to be the trend as evident from the above twelve case studies from different parts of Africa.

The question of the relevance of aesthetics has also preoccupied researchers, scholars and practitioners of Theatre for Development. The main argument is that form should not be imposed from elsewhere, but should emerge from the participants’ own cultural aesthetics. However, the contradictions between the philosophy and ideology behind communal cultural aesthetic modes and those of Theatre for Development should first be resolved. Breitingner's remarks aptly sum up the nub of the argument:

A dynamic approach to folklore, folk art and folk forms of communication has infused new meanings into the folklore literature and performance and opened new avenues for political relevance. Folk forms combined with modern messages, as we find in the various forms of theatre for development and community theatre,

is one of the prime examples of the hybrids that brings newness into allegedly retarded rural areas. Okot p'Bitek who had just been appointed the director of the National Theatre in Kampala Uganda, complained in the 1972 that village culture did not have any "artificial" drama, and he explained that with "artificial" he meant dramatic and cultural performances that were not directly related to social and religious contexts like ritual performances, dirges, wakes. Okot p'Bitek continues to argue in favour of transposition of these rural forms of communication into the National Theatre, thereby de-contextualising them and giving them new meaning and different aesthetic qualities. Theatre for development is in many ways a dramatic form that depends on the immediate context, just as rituals and dirges do in Okot's opinion, but Theatre for development contextualises a different socio-political agenda than the traditional performance arts. Okot's idea of bringing rural performance into the city was meant to give rural masses a voice and to provide for them a space, and to give them a hearing beyond the immediacy of the village context. But his concern was predominant with the aesthetic of communication. Breaking the silence of the rural masses, raising their voices beyond the village boundaries, reclaiming articulation and thereby, participation in the control of their destinies, has become the essence of the socio-political message of Theatre for Development. The reinstatement of village communicative forms today is concerned with the pragmatics of how to change the material and social environment towards an improvement of living conditions. The hybridity of the message and form provides for the dynamics of newness. (Breitinger, 1994:9)

In Africa, improvement in the practice of Theatre for Development has been mostly effected through the several conferences and workshops that have been organised over time. Nevertheless, one major problem in the development of Theatre for Development in Africa has been the over-reliance on expatriate skills and the conditionalities of the funding agencies. This has had its own problems, especially in the choice of performance and the flexibility of the content to be conveyed. Ngugi (1981) and Mluma (1991) note that more often than not these expatriates privilege their own theatre forms over those of the communities they work with and in the process alienate the people who are meant to benefit from the experience.

It is from the general context of the trends in Theatre for Development in Africa as exemplified in this chapter that the subsequent chapters of this study on the practice of Theatre for Development in Kenya will proceed.

CHAPTER THREE

Theatre for Development in Kenya Before the 1990s

After critical exploration of Theatre for Development enterprises from other parts of Africa in the previous chapter it is now possible to examine Theatre for Development in Kenya. This chapter looks at Theatre for Development activities in Kenya between the time of independence up to the time when Section 2A of the Constitution was repealed in 1991, because the period had its own demands and challenges not only as regards the practice of Theatre for Development but on theatre productions in general.

Characteristic of other parts of Africa, Theatre for Development enterprises as we know them were first witnessed in Kenya during the colonial period, when the practice was adopted in the service of colonial propaganda. Pickering (1957:180) describes how students from local communities designed crude story lines for short skits about literacy, child care, co-operation and sanitation. The first stage was to develop storylines based on discussion sessions, after which skits were constructed by improvisation. Before the skits were performed for communities, they had to be scrutinised by the supervising instructor and colonial officers. Ngugi (1981) argues, however, that theatre has been a tool at the service of the community since time immemorial, but was disrupted by the colonial structures. He points out that virtually every activity in pre-colonial Africa was accompanied by some kind of theatrical performance: work was celebrated; there were rituals of birth, marriages and death;

war was also dramatised. Thus, central to all these varieties of dramatic expressions were songs, dance and mime. He describes the central place of theatre in the pre-colonial life in Kenya as follows:

Drama in pre-colonial Kenya was not, then, an isolated event: it was part and parcel of the rhythm of daily and seasonal life of the community. It was an activity among other activities, often drawing its energy from those other activities. It was also entertainment in the sense of involved enjoyment: it was moral instruction: and it was also a strict matter of life and death and communal survival. This drama was not performed in special space set aside for the purpose... 'The empty space', among the people, was part of the tradition (Ngugi, 1981:37).

However, there is very little documentation of Theatre for Development activities in Kenya as we know it today, until the epic enterprise of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Kamiriithu Experimental Community Theatre. As I have pointed out earlier, this is one of the theatre activities that has been widely documented both locally and internationally. It is for this reason that a study of Theatre for Development, its procedures and methodology in Kenya must take as its point of departure this particular (Kamiriithu) enterprise.

3.1. Kamiriithu Community Theatre: A critical overview

The Kamiriithu Cultural and Educational Community Centre became a popular site in the history of theatre in Kenya, and specifically Theatre for Development, when Ngugi wa Thiong'o and other facilitators from the University of Nairobi introduced the concept of theatre as a tool for development among the peasants and workers in the impoverished village of Kamiriithu on the outskirts of Kenya's capital city, Nairobi.

As Ndigirigi (1999:71) notes, “by having workers and peasants act in *Ngaahika Ndeenda* the Kamiriithu group had departed radically from the practice of other groups by having the underprivileged act in the drama about their lives.” Ngugi claims that his motivation to work with the community was a result of persistent requests that he share his book knowledge with the villagers. Cook and Kayanja (1996) (cited in Eugene Van Erne, 2001:10) note that “Ngugi began to develop a more explicit interest in participatory community theatre after 1974 when John Ruganda introduced the Free Traveling Theatre concept to Kenya from Uganda, where it had existed since 1966”. Though the success of Kamiriithu has been attributed to its collective approach, it must be recognised that the presence of the external facilitators with a vast knowledge of participatory education and Theatre for Development, influenced by the theories and ideologies of such figures as Marx, Boal, Brook and Freire, played a greater role in the success of the Kamiriithu enterprise, perhaps even more than the villagers’ theatrical instincts and skills. As Ndigirigi (1999:74) says, “the intellectuals in the group exerted a high level of influence on the rest of the group, which explains the inability of the ‘workers and peasants’ to revive the Kamiriithu project in the absence of the intellectuals.” In tandem with other Theatre for Development enterprises elsewhere in Africa, Kamiriithu too required the input of external facilitators to act as catalysts for the imagination and creative energy of the underprivileged masses. This is supported by Ogolla’s criticism of the enterprise:

Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s famed Kamirithu Cultural and Educational Centre inevitably fell with Ngugi’s detention in 1977 and his ultimate departure into exile in 1982. Most studies into Kamiriithu have focused on the external forms of state control, so much so that Kamiriithu today is celebrated more as an anatomy of a dictatorship than as a people’s cultural and educational facility. We contend that a

truly participatory implementation of the Kamiriithu “experiment” could have survived without Ngugi. Not even the thoughtless razing down of the physical structures of the centre by state thugs would have stopped the masses of Kamiriithu from pursuing their destiny. (1997:19-20)

Ogolla’s criticism of the implementation of Kamiriithu, a position also shared by Mlama (1991) and Mda (1993), is valid to a large extent and is confirmed by Ngugi’s own personal accounts of the making of Kamiriithu community theatre. A close reading of Ngugi’s seminal essay on Kamiriithu – “The language of African Theatre” in *Decolonizing the Mind* (1981) – reveals that participation as used in Theatre for Development was a secondary concern for Ngugi, as he was more interested in the dynamics of a truly African theatre as a self-constituted aesthetic experience. This is abundantly clear from the following passage:

Kamiriithu then was not an aberration, but an attempt at reconnection with the broken roots of African civilization and its traditions of theatre...Kamiriithu was then to them a question of the real substance of a national theatre. Theatre is not a building. People make theatre. Their life is the very stuff of drama. Indeed Kamiriithu reconnected itself to the national tradition of empty space, of language, of content and of form. (Ngugi:1981:42)

Thus, though Kamiriithu cannot be described as an ideal Theatre for Development enterprise, it nevertheless left an indelible mark on the history of the form not only in Kenya but also all over the world. Before discussing Kamiriithu as a Theatre for Development project, it is necessary to attempt to situate it more clearly within a general discourse on Theatre for Development.

3.1.1 Kamiriithu Community Theatre: The Background

As noted before, Ngugi states that theatre in Kamiriithu, as in other African communities, was not a new phenomenon. It existed even before the coming of the white man. Though, philosophically, the traditional theatre that Ngugi alludes to and Theatre for Development as we understand it now might not mean the same thing. As theatre historian Anthony Graham-White (cited in Byam, 1999:3) explains, since ritual focuses on the supernatural there is less likelihood that change can come about through it. In Africa rituals, with their supernatural themes, were performed to ensure the continuation of the society. Traditional theatre and rituals indeed aspire to social conformity as well as the preservation of the status quo, but Theatre for Development is essentially subversive as it frequently sets out to consciously contest the structures and values of hegemonic ideologies and relationships. Indeed, in the case of Kamiriithu theatre could never be used to sustain the status quo given the history of the region. The Kamiriithu village, like other post-colonial rural villages, had been defined in terms of domination, denigration, poverty, economic dependency, landlessness and alcoholism. The members of the community had been made to feel a sense of self-worthlessness and sense of low self-esteem as well as deflated confidence and pride. It is this kind of situation that had to be confronted by the proponents of adult education in Kamiriithu. However, the formal adult education curriculum and its mode of implementation could do little to ameliorate this situation. What was required was a different form of education, one that could restore the lost confidence and self-esteem. Ngugi wa Mirii, who had been trained as an adult educator, then introduced the Brazilian Paulo Freire's pedagogy to the area, a process

which emphasises a problem-solving and participatory approach to education, whereby both the educator and the learner are involved in the discovery of solutions to the problems that inhibit the growth of their understanding and the transformation of their reality. At the end of the learning-teaching experience, the learners are expected to be able to deconstruct and decode the accepted systems of codification of their social reality and use the new insight gained from the experience to solve the problems facing them, both individually and collectively.

The facilitators at Kamiriithu saw the possibilities of this method and decided to transfer it from the confines of the adult education classroom to the larger community. Thus, the communal space became a democratic learning space, a site where the villagers could meet and participate in a programme of integrated rural development consisting of adult education, study groups, economic production and health. In this sense theatre became the site for organising all the development activities of the community.

To initiate dialogue between the people, their history and their oppressive conditions, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Ngugi wa Mirii were commissioned by the committee of the community to draft a script that could be used as a starting point for interrogation and discussion by the villagers. This is the script that became the published play *Ngaahika Ndeenda (I will marry when I want)*. Ngugi notes that this script enabled the workers and peasants of Kamiriithu to engage with, and confront, their exploitative and oppressive conditions. Ngugi (1981:54-5) describes this process as follows

The participants were most particular about the representation of history, their history. And they were quick to point out and argue against any incorrect positioning and representation of the various forces at work in the struggle against imperialism. They would compare notes from their own actual experience ...The workers were keen that the details of exploitation and the harsh conditions of life in the multinational factories be laid bare.

That the process of participatory theatre offered the previously silent workers and peasants a chance to participate in the dramatisation of their struggles is once again commented on by Ngugi (1981:55) when he talks about the play *Ngaahika Ndeenda*: “The details of the struggle between capital and labour which are described in a long dramatic monologue by one of the worker characters, Gicaamba, were worked out in discussions.” That Kamiriithu aspired to embodying the philosophy of Theatre for Development is evident in the workshop approach that was greatly exploited during the open rehearsals. The workshop approach meant that ideas were not imposed on the community and those participating in the drama. Indeed, the workshop approach ensured a democratic and dialogic approach in the activities of the Kamiriithu project. This approach is both consonant and consistent with the “inside-out” approach common in ideal Theatre for Development enterprises, an approach where the facilitators worked alongside the communities at all levels of the performance production. In fact, the inside-out approach is analogous to the bottom-up approach in development philosophy. As Ngugi (1981:56) notes,

The content of the play was asking many questions about the nature of Kenyan society and this generated ever more heated discussions on the form and content during the entire period of the play’s evolution. Sometimes these involved not just the actual participants but also the ever-widening circle of the audience.

For Ngugi the concept of participation was to make the participants-community understand that they had latent potential, which could be translated into real development; to echo Boal (1979), they were “rehearsing for real action”. By using the possibilities inherent in participatory educational theatre, Ngugi wanted the people of Kamiriithu to realise that knowledge was not the monopoly of the selected few who had gone through a formal education.

The Kamiriithu experiment was a process of demystifying knowledge and hence reality. People could see how actors evolved from the time they could hardly move their legs or say their lines to a time they could talk and move about the stage as if they were born to it. Some people in fact were recruited into the acting team after they had intervened to show how such and such a character should be portrayed. The audience’s applause led to their continuing in the part. According to Ngugi (1981:57),

Perfection was thus shown to be a process, a historical social process, but it was admired no less. On the contrary they identified with that perfection even more because it was a product of themselves and their collective contribution. It was the heightening of themselves as a community.

What Ngugi describes above is consistent with Freire’s pedagogical philosophy, where a problem-posing education is supposed to provide the participants with new perceptions which would enable them to decode the coded systems of their reality. Through this process the villagers of Kamiriithu were indeed rehearsing for social action, as Boal would call it.

Theatre made the people of Kamiriithu realise that things they never imagined that they could do were possible. It is instructive that the play *Ngaahika Ndeenda* ends with a call for a strike by the workers. This is the rehearsal for a real future action.

Ngugi states that Kamiriithu operated in accordance with the Boalian principles of 'Theatre of the Oppressed', because people could identify with its content, embodied in a form which they could recognise and identify; and because of their participation in its evolution from the research stages (the collection of raw material such as details of working conditions on the farm and in firms; old songs and dances such as Muthurigu, Mucung'wa, Mwomboko and opera forms like Gitiiro, etc.), the discussion of the scripts and therefore the content and form; and the public auditions and rehearsals; to the performance itself.

3.1.2 The Paradoxes of Kamiriithu as a Theatre for Development Enterprise

It may seem from the above account that the Kamiriithu experiment was indeed an ideal Theatre for Development enterprise. But the performance of the finished product seems to have been a completely different story. Though the participants were supposed to sell the product that they had created – that is, perform for a fee-paying audience – a mechanism should have been put in place to ensure that the final product attracted the audience's participation. It seems that, although the final product was still acting as a conscientising tool, the level of influence was not as intensive as had been experienced in the creative process. Maybe this is demanding too much, but given that

the Kamiriithu experiment was supposed to be a Theatre for Development enterprise, it should have maintained its participatory character even in the public performances. The facilitators should have created a form which would have allowed for audience intervention and interrogation. The form should have been made as open-ended as possible to allow discussion by the audience. What happened instead is that the audience occupied the position of what Wole Soyinka (1964: 38) calls “fee-paying strangers”.

So what transpires at this level is that the villagers of Kamiriithu attained a more heightened consciousness than the outside spectators did. This seriously negated and compromised the philosophy of Theatre for Development, where both the spectators and actors are supposed to discover solutions together. At this level the Kamiriithu experiment seems to have reverted to the framing and ideology of the conventional Western theatre that Ngugi is ever-critical of and frequently seeks to deny. It might have been more effective if the facilitators of the Kamiriithu Cultural and Education Community Centre (KCECC) had created a narrator, jester or joker to bridge the gap between the spectators and the actors to achieve a meaningful Theatre for Development experience. Otherwise the kind of participation that was achieved during the main performances can best be said to have been quasi-participation. This comes out more clearly in Ingrid Bjormann’s study of the second Kamiriithu enterprise *Maitu Njugira (Mother, Sing for Me)*. This second production was to première at the Kenya National Theatre, but at the last minute was denied a performance licence by the state machinery. However, the performances took place at the University of Nairobi ED Theatre II under the guise of “public rehearsals”. Of interest here is that this

production at the National Theatre would definitely have robbed the production of its potential and possibilities as a participatory Theatre for Development venture. The pseudo-participation of this production is described by Ingrid Bjorkmann:

While the performance of *Mother, Sing for Me* was within the Western convention of stage/actors, auditorium/audience, there were two significant differences: 1) the play was firmly rooted in the African song-dance tradition; and 2) the audience took an active part (joining the songs, climbing onto the stage, etc.) and plainly considered themselves as participants rather than mere spectators. (1989:62)

Though the kind of participation that Bjorkmann singles out is legitimate within the realm of traditional Africa performances, such participation is of little significance in a theatre process that is motivated by a desire for deep conscious transformation and conscientisation. Elsewhere this author has argued that:

In Theatre for Development the level of audience participation is paramount. Participation is a conscious act and not an empty gesture where participants are, for example, driven into frenzy, hysteria and excitement of the theatrical moment to join the actors in the singing and dancing of popular songs and dance steps. The participation in Theatre for Development has to do with the audience intervening in the actual process of the theatrical creation as well as in the negotiation of the meaning of the performance which, is in, fact their own reality. (Odhiambo; 2001b: 90)

The kind of participation which Bjorkmann reports in the performance of *Maitu Njugira (Mother, Sing for Me)* would be of significance in Theatre for Development only at the level of breaking the ice and creating a sense of communal identity amongst the audience. This is because this kind of involvement where some members of the audience join in singing songs that they are familiar with, when used in productions, does not in anyway seriously change their perception of their reality.

The other weakness of Kamiriithu as a fully-fledged Theatre for Development enterprise was that the script was not wholly a product of the community, but a creation of Ngugi and Ngugi. This must assuredly have determined the ideological input and the final direction of the content. Also in terms of empowerment, the members of the community should have been given an opportunity to produce their own plays. Ngugi (1981) says that after engaging with *Ngaahika Ndeenda*, three other people came up with their own scripts, but Ngugi does not say what happened to those scripts as the next performance by the troupe was once again by Ngugi wa Thiong'o, that is, *Maitu Njugira (Mother, Sing For Me)*.

Ngugi (1981:61) states that all in all Kamiriithu had a spiralling and multiplier effect, in the sense that other communities also started their own cultural events. But most of these did not follow the Theatre for Development model of Kamiriithu, as they were only concerned with the reconstructions of traditions and cultural performances. There was an emergence of people's-based cultural festivals like the Vihiga Cultural Festival in Kenya. They were not attempts to replicate the Kamiriithu process, but were

inspired by a similarly felt need for a renaissance of Kenyan culture, which would be achieved by going back to the roots of the people.

With the government's clampdown on the activities of Kamiriithu and the demolition of its theatre space, the opportunities for such theatrical activities became quite constricted. Eugene van Erven (2001:10) observes that after the ban on the Kamiriithu Experimental Popular Theatre in 1982 by the government, Theatre for Development or Community Theatre went into some kind of hibernation and only found legally sanctioned outlets in school-based theatre activities and women's groups, from which it finally emerged as a distinct art form once again after 1991, when governmental control began to ease up with the advent of multiparty politics and the consequent opening up of democratic space. Before looking at Theatre for Development in the current multiparty political dispensation, let us first look at what happened concurrently with, or preceded, Kamiriithu.

3.2. Kenya National Schools and Colleges Drama Festival: Disguised Theatre for Development Enterprises

Though the Kamiriithu Experimental Theatre has preoccupied the imagination and criticism in most studies of theatre generally, and specifically Theatre for Development in Kenya, there is another theatre movement that ensured the continued existence of Theatre for Development even when the democratic space had been severely restricted. The annual Kenya National Schools and Colleges Drama Festivals are considered to be the single largest theatre event in East and Central Africa. It

draws larger audiences to the theatre spaces in several regions of the country than any other festival happening in the country at any other time.

The festival begins in February and runs through to mid-April. The performances take place at zonal levels, then move through the districts to the provincial and finally to the national festivals. The main performance genres include dramatised verse or poetry, oral narratives, dramatised cultural creative dances and plays. These performances deal with themes and issues that are of great concern to society. For the past 20 years the repertoire of themes has included HIV-Aids, gender sensitisation, female genital mutilation, land issues, effects of the World Bank's and International Monetary Fund's economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), and the ruinous and endemic corruption that eats into the moral fabric of Kenyan society and Africa in general.

Though the modes of presentations at the festival emphasise the techniques of the proscenium arch stage theatre, it is interesting to note that to a great extent some of these theatrical pieces reveal aspects of Theatre for Development, which Frank categorises as Campaign Theatre (or what is more commonly referred to as Agitprop theatre). According to Frank (1995:13),

CT (Campaign Theatre) is a form of Tfd which is concerned with raising consciousness of the people on such topics as child care, environmental issues, health care, etc. It is increasingly used by GOs, NGOs, and IOs as part of the information campaigns. The notion among the organizations which advance CT is that with the help of theatre, a message will reach a larger number of people, and also that theatre through its inherent entertainment values is better suited to convey that message than, for instance, a series of lectures.

In terms of Theatre for Development, a more significant feature of the Festival productions has been the trend towards transcending the structural restrictions of the festival's organisation. Opiyo Mumma describes one such production as follows:

In the Kisii Teachers' College's play "*Majuto ni Mjukuu*", the aims, procedures, and methods of health campaigns were spelt out clearly and simply. The medical facts are presented in the language of drama with vivid imagery appealing to the eye and ears...The main thrust of this performance was to make the audience aware of the health risks. It is significant that after the Colleges Drama festival, The Kisii Teachers' College decided to tour this play as a project-oriented educational theatre piece aimed at specific audiences in the semi-urban communities of Kisii; Migori, Homa Bay and Kendu Bay. They performed in the open air between houses in the shopping centre with the auditorium and stage designated by a simple wooden fence. At the far end of the yard, loose earth was piled up to form a slightly raised stage, from which the performers could easily step down to extend the performance into the audience area. These arrangements were not derived from any dramatic designs, but from what was possible. A piece of cloth strung between two fence poles served as a curtain for the changing space. The audience sat on benches or on boards placed on empty crates. The atmosphere was one of improvisation and informality. (1995:46)

A major, though incidental, transformation in the Festivals that enhanced their potential as Campaign Theatre occurred in 1981; after 21 years of the festival, a decision was taken to shift the national finals from Kenya National Theatre to the various provinces of the country. The new development saw the rotation of the festival's finals in the eight provinces of the country with the exception of the North Eastern province and this meant that more people now had the chance to watch and learn from these highly educative and entertaining productions.

From the foregoing it is obvious that the Schools and Colleges Drama Festivals performed some of the functions of Theatre for Development at a time when engaging with this kind of theatre was a very risky activity. Other than the Schools and Colleges

Drama Festivals, other expressions of Theatre for Development took place, so long as they were not seen as very critical of the status quo. The two cases discussed below exemplify this.

3.3 The University of Nairobi Free Travelling Theatre after Ngugi's *Kamiriithu*

The University of Nairobi became involved in Theatre for Development programmes in the mid-1980s. The University's project covered several areas of Western Kenya, including Homa-Bay, Kendu-Bay, Maseno, Butere and Asembo Bay. This project, however, was a collaboration between the Department of Literature and the Extra-Mural Education Department. The aim of the project was to address the high level of illiteracy in the rural areas by promoting the benefits of adult education to people in these regions.

3.3.1. The Process

This particular project deviated to a considerable degree from the University's former approach in the 1970s, when the motivation had been to take theatre to the peasants and the urban poor. This time round the emphasis was on conscientisation. Rather than unilaterally taking an already scripted play, a team of performers and facilitators visited the target communities, where they carried out research on the problems of adult education programmes in these areas. They then used the information gathered to devise and improvise a Kiswahili play entitled: "*Kifo Cha Ujinga*" ("The Death of Illiteracy" or more accurately "The Death of Foolishness"). The plot of the play was as fluid as possible to allow artistic manipulations.

3.3.2 Synopsis of the play

In scene one a government officer addresses villagers, urging them to enrol in adult education classes. Resistance by the men marks the dramatic tension and conflict. The scene is a classroom where a teacher is teaching a simple Maths and English lesson. Male students cannot answer the questions posed by the teacher, while the female students perform extremely well, because they have been regular attendants of the literacy classes. Scene two, an agricultural officer is addressing the villagers through the sub-chief as an interpreter. There is a breakdown in communication, because the sub-chief is semi-literate and therefore gives incorrect information.

3.3.3 Audience Participation

The main techniques that the team employed to involve the participation of the audience were what Mumma (1995) refers to as “hot-seating” characters and “role-on-the wall.”

Hot-seating characters involves the actors responding to the questions from the audience, while still in their roles as characters of the drama. Role-on the-wall, on the other hand, involved making a rough outline of the characters on a large piece of paper on the wall, and then asking the participants to respond to the outlines by writing or drawing pictures of certain characters or issues that appeared important to them from the drama.

3.3.4 Criticism of the Project

This project made a lot of assumptions about the intelligence of the target group. It simplified a very complex problem. In comparison with the Kamiriithu experience, one could say that the entire project was rather superficial. It completely ignored the intricacies of the community's social, cultural and economic matrices. Recognition that education is more than the acquisition of numeracy and literacy skills seems to have been obscured by the implementers of the programme. The fact that the same play was taken to different locations with completely different levels of cultural sophistication reveals that the facilitators were making the assumption that the problem was homogenous and could be solved using the same approach everywhere. But the most unfortunate phenomenon is that the facilitators had the advantage of hindsight and history, given the experiences of Ngugi wa Thiong'o and other University of Nairobi facilitators during the more elaborate and carefully documented project at Kamiriithu, yet did not use it.

3.4 The Child Care Programme

This was a UNICEF-supported programme on childcare, focusing on preventable diseases and malnutrition. The programme started in 1984 and was facilitated by two Kisumu theatre personalities, Winnie Olilo-Ogunde and Obat Aketch Masira. Ogunde rationalises their choice of Theatre for Development as a medium of communication as follows:

Great emphasis was laid on communication as a necessary means to propagate information and solicit support from the target group to participate in the programme based on informed decisions and choices. (1995:57)

3.4.1 The process of theatre creation

The process began with the training of both the youth and women groups in basic theatre skills. Afterwards, the theatre training workshop approach was used to diagnose problems. The problems were diagnosed as malnutrition, diarrhoea and vomiting, polio, measles and malaria. After the identification of the problems, a discussion followed on the possible causes of and solutions to the problems. In a follow-up workshop the main problem that was identified during the first workshop was transformed into performances. The performances took the form of songs, plays and verses. At the end of the workshop the participants went back to their own localities to rehearse. The youth groups worked with scripted performances, while the women's groups worked through improvisations. In the creation process the groups discovered that the problems of childcare were closely related to other social problems such as poverty, alcoholism and gender violence. In this project, according to Ogunde, the facilitators' role was only to catalyse the process. She notes:

The role of the facilitator was to provide guidance and direction to ensure that the messages were well developed and that the demonstrations were relevant to an actual situation. Training in theatre techniques and music were sometimes provided by teachers. (Ogunde, 1995:61)

3.4.2. The performance context

The items were performed in festival mode, with the different groups involved in the project participating in a festival competition of plays, songs and poems. The winners in the various categories were presented with awards. The organisers of the project defended the festival approach as follows:

... greater attention was paid to the actual message contained in the plays or songs. The competition was used to strengthen the group's capacity and skill to develop messages. Apart from that, the forum reached a wide audience - usually 2,000 per day. (Ogunde, 1995:61)

To reach even wider audiences the winning items were taken on tour to various villages. During the tour performances the audiences participated in post-performance discussions. The chief's Barazas were used as appropriate sites to mobilise people to attend the performances. This project came to an end when donor funding ran out.

3.4.3. Criticism

This project, unlike many others, made considerable efforts to involve the target groups at virtually all the stages. Given that this was a commissioned project, the alternatives and possibilities open to the facilitators were rather limited. They had to adhere strictly to the agenda set out by the donors and could therefore not address other problems which were not part of this particular project, even if such problems seemed to be more urgent to the target communities. Like most other Theatre for Development projects, this one too could not sustain itself without donor funding; this

leaves one asking if the participants had indeed been empowered to face new challenges.

It is clear that after the Kamiriithu enterprise's confrontation with the government, Theatre for Development continued to function, but in a very subdued manner. This situation nevertheless radically changed with the advent of multiparty politics in the 1990s, which now meant the availability of a more expansive democratic space, something that is very necessary for Theatre for Development. The next chapter deals with this new stage in Theatre for Development in Kenya.

APPENDIX



A Theatre for Development performance during the Summer School at Chancellor College-Zomba, Malawi.



Theatre for Development on Civic education at Baraton



An audience watching aTfD performance in a village set-up



Moment of mobilization by Clarion Tfd team at Baraton.



The challenges of Tfd performance-the unrestricted space.



A Tfd team devising a performance at Kapsabet .



An actress, joker and facilitator in a Tfd enterprise at Baraton.



A facilitator engaging members of the audience in a discussion.



A Tfd performance in progress. The LandRover acts as back stage.

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CHAPTER FOUR

Proliferation of Theatre for Development after 1992

4.1 The Politics and Economics of Theatre for Development

The wind of change that swept the whole world in the 1990s had visible effects in Kenya as well. After years of single-party dictatorship, the ruling party grudgingly opened its doors to Western-style (multiparty) democracy. The implications of this new development were many and far-reaching. For theatre it meant a more expanded and democratic performance space. The censorship that threatened performances gradually disappeared. The new democratic culture revamped and revitalized theatre and Theatre for Development activities, which had been looked at with a great deal of suspicion after the Kamiriithu experience, came into vogue again. But unlike the conventional theatre, whose renaissance can easily be seen as commensurate with the expansion of the democratic political space, the flowering of Theatre for Development is more complex. Its regeneration is a function of several related social, political, cultural and economic factors. The major factor in this regeneration, however, can be traced to the new realisation by the government agencies (GAs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international organizations (IOs) that theatre could be used in the service of communication and development, especially in the fight against the HIV-AIDS epidemic, the campaign against female genital mutilation, sensitisation on gender violence and in civic education. At the same time, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank's Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), which

froze employment opportunities, propelled school leavers and university graduates to form theatre groups and solicit funds from donors to engage in Theatre for Development activities.

4.2 Theatre(s) for Development

Since the opening up of democratic space several activities claiming to be Theatre for Development enterprises have been taking place in different parts of the country and undertaken on behalf of NGOs. In this section we consider a number of these.

4.2.1. CARE-Kenya HIV-AIDS Participatory Educational Theatre (PET) Project – Kisumu

This project was a collaboration between CARE-Kenya, an NGO, and two amateur theatre youth groups, *Kama Kazi* and *Apondo*. The rationale behind the collaboration was to have the two theatre groups use theatre to sensitise people and create awareness about HIV-AIDS in all its manifestations. A commentator on the project explains how the NGO and the two groups came to work together:

In 1992 CARE decided to involve theatre in its projects since it has a number of benefits. Theatre has the ability to reach a larger community than face-to-face contact and acted perspective (*performance*) becomes emotional and will catch on better (*Communicate effectively*).^(sic) Particularly in this region of Kenya, folk media had developed into a much-used educational tools (*sic*) and youth seemed to enjoy participating in it. (*Kama Kazi ProfileII Undated*,:38) (The bracketted additions are my own intended to make the quotation more accessible)

It is worth noting that at that point the two theatre groups which had been contracted by CARE-Kenya had not had any contact with the practice or the methods of Theatre for Development. Their theatre was what could be defined as straight or conventional.

The young women and men had founded the two groups as a form of self-employment, as many others did in the country.

Nevertheless, at this point in their history they had produced plays with HIV-AIDS as themes. They performed such plays with the view to participating in the annual World AIDS Day awareness campaign. They describe their performance repertoire before their liaison with CARE as follows:

The group started out performing satires since it expected to be most popular and thus financially most beneficial to the club. Their very first was a skit called *Death Sentence I*, which they performed on World AIDS Day 1992. One year later they produced *Death Sentence II* and performed it, amongst others, in the Medical Training Centre and World AIDS Day 1993, both in Kisumu. (Kama Kazi, *ProfileII*,:38)

It is obvious from the above quotation that, although *Kama Kazi* was producing plays on the theme of AIDS, their intentions were more commercial than to genuinely create awareness. But ironically it is because of such productions that CARE-Kenya contracted them to do theatre on AIDS awareness in Kisumu and its environs. Nevertheless, it is the collaboration with CARE-Kenya that affected a shift in their approach and methodology.

Members of the two theatre groups had already developed a sense of theatre through their involvement with the school drama clubs and participation in the Kenya National Schools and Colleges Drama Festivals and Kenya National Schools and Colleges Music Festivals. However, as noted earlier, they were not aware of the possibilities of Theatre for Development. At the time the two groups were contracted by CARE-

Kenya, the British Council made an announcement that a Theatre-in-Education specialist from the U.K. would be in Kisumu to train theatre groups in the skills of Participatory Educational Theatre. Thus it was decided that, from the groups that attended the workshop, the TIE specialist would work with *Kama Kazi* in developing a Theatre for Development piece on HIV-AIDS.

4.2.1.1 The Making of Participatory Educational Theatre (PET) on HIV-AIDS in Kisumu

According to Roger Chamberlain *et al.* (1995) and Ogolla (1997), PET draws upon, and is born out of, participatory educational methodologies such as Theatre-in-Education (TIE) and Drama-In-Education (DIE). It is an educational theatre methodology that applies participatory techniques, allowing the audience to probe, reflect on and respond to issues of concern to them. Its primary concern is the development of critical and conceptual thinking through an understanding of the interconnected nature of social problems. The approach poses questions and problems rather than supplying answers and solutions. Its aim is to contribute towards change in individuals within the target community. (See further details in the writings of Gavin Bolton, Jonathan Neeland, David Best, John O'Toole, Anthony Jackson, Dorothy Heathcote *et al.*).

The British Council invited Roger Chamberlain, a TIE expert from UK, to start the project and in the process he co-opted two Kenya theatre practitioners, Lenin Ogolla and Ochieng' Wandera, to assist him in working together with *Kama Kazi and Apondo Youth Group*. In a way reminiscent of Ngugi's Kamiriithu project, Ogolla and

Wandera were commissioned by the team to develop a script, which would be used as a starting point for the project. The script entitled *Sigand Tom - Ngimani gi Thoni (Red Ribbons for You?)* in Dholuo was subjected to interrogation by members of the group and where necessary changes and adjustments were made. But unlike the Kamiriithu enterprise, the script was not used as it was for the larger community but only as a starting point by the performers involved in its production. In the end the script became a product of a collective creative collaboration.

Though the production had a scripted play, the actual performance made the necessary allowances for community participation. A commentator of this project notes that, “although the nine scenes composing the project are all written down in a script, improvisation come in at the (*sic*) “Questions in role” and “Open-ended role play” in which the active participation of audience is required.” (*Kama Kazi, ProfileII:41*). From this observation it is possible to argue that the facilitators of this project consciously interpreted the Theatre for Development aesthetics as going far beyond the performance text. As Chamberlain (1995:69) comments:

PET is an educational theatre methodology, which uses a participatory approach to allow the audience to probe, reflect on and respond to the issues, which concern them. This approach poses questions and problems, rather than supplying answers and solutions.

4.2.1.2 PET: The Methodology

A PET project begins with research within the target community, followed by the identification of a group to collaborate with the facilitators in the devising of theatre. The group and the facilitators then together discuss the research findings. The next

step is the devising of the theatre piece, which involves the plotting and developing of a scenario through still-life depictions, tableaux and objects in space, myths and legends, songs, narratives, photographs and newspaper cuttings.

The actual presentation to the community includes the use of a storyboard. The storyboard is indeed the central educational aesthetic. The storyboard is neither a conventional theatre set nor a conventional teaching blackboard, but a three-dimensional resource that combines both. PET uses questions to elicit the participation of the audience and the central questions relating to each scene are hung on the storyboard separately. The purpose of the board is to invite informal interest, provide focus, act as a physical totem and hold the line of thought of the presentation and invite the audience's participation.

In PET the drama is divided into scenes, each varying in length from 7 to 15 minutes. The duration of the participatory drama that follows each scene is entirely in the hands of the community and facilitators and usually lasts between 15 and 75 minutes

This approach seems to conform generally to the Freireian philosophy of problem-posing pedagogy. It is through participation that the community constructs meanings out of their situation. The structural aesthetics of PET suggests that it communicates to the people through emotions, but then allows the participants to reflect on and examine these emotions and feelings objectively. This is achieved through the use of short episodes of scripted theatre; through the role of the facilitator, the audience is invited to participate and help to resolve the dilemmas presented in such episodic scenes.

4.2.1.3. PET Performance: *Red Ribbons for you? Sigand Tom-Ngimani gi Thoni*

The script of *Red Ribbons for you? Sigand Tom-Ngimani gi Thoni?* is a dramatic narrative that explores the life of a young man, Tom Omondi, through infancy, puberty, adolescence and young manhood up to and immediately following his death at the age of 23. He contracts the HIV virus whilst studying at the university. Some other members of his family and friends, whose stories are interwoven with Tom's, also contract the virus at other points during his life. In fact it is Tom's father, Samuel, who is inadvertently infected and who triggers off the chain of infections in this particular group of people.

Tom's story was broken up into nine separate free-standing sections, each section summarised in question form. As a way of ensuring that the community owned and controlled the process, a member of the community selected a question from the storyboard to be performed. After the performance of the section, the question that represented the particular section became the starting point for the discussion on that section. The discussion took the form of an oral tradition riddling session. As Ogolla (1997:52) explains:

This question is in a sense the opening question and it is open-ended. It is the question which we should ask our community to grapple with and it is the question that ultimately leads the community asking themselves other questions.

4.2.1.4. Space as Aesthetics in the PET Process

In this PET project the storyboard is placed in a strategic position where the audience can see it. The audience forms an arc around it and the storyboard completes the

circle. The performance is not presented on a raised stage, but on the same level as that on which the audience is standing, usually outdoors and perhaps under the shade of a tree. This kind of space demystifies the power structures that the proscenium arch stage establishes as well as the illusions of reality, and in a practical sense makes the interaction between the facilitators and the community easy and more intimate.

4.2.1.5. Aesthetics of Facilitation

In this Pet project the facilitators acted as a link between the performance text and the community. The facilitators engineered the site for participation. The facilitators encourage the spectators “to try on the shoes” of the actors in a way that is characteristic of Boal’s theatre of intervention. The facilitator is not considered as an appendage to the performance text, but is indeed an integral part of the whole aesthetic performance structure.

As such the facilitator’s style has to be egalitarian and enchanting, serious and yet amusing. Without a well thought-through facilitation strategy the whole PET process would have ended up as a farce. It is in this sense that facilitation becomes aesthetically tied to the performance text.

4.2.1.6. PET and the Communal Cultural Performance Forms

The PET project in Kisumu strove as far as possible to identify with the community. Ogolla, one of the facilitators of the project, comments on this: “The project uses familiar, traditional story-telling techniques, with the people choosing whose story they want to hear first” (Ogolla 1995:107). In addition to the story-telling tradition the

PET process also exploited the Luo traditional riddle structure in the participatory process. This entails a puzzling question and answer structure, in which one person challenges another with a witty question. Because the participatory approach of PET is based on asking the community questions that lead to discussions of issues raised in a performance, the riddle tradition becomes very important to the process – and all the more so because it is part of the community’s popular cultural aesthetic forms.

4.2.1.7. Polemics of Language in the PET project

Language as a metaphor for culture was a major bone of contention in this project. This most probably had to do with the fact that the facilitators did not take cognisance of language as a vehicle of culture. As Ngugi (1981:130) has noted in a different forum, “Language, any language, has a dual character: it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture.” In this particular project the language of the performance was usually English, while the facilitation was more often than not conducted in the language of the target area, that is, Dholuo. A commentator on the project states that language shifts in themselves did not constitute a problem. However, the problem emerged out of the fact that the facilitators used the language without taking into consideration the implications of certain utterances which were offensive, especially to the more elderly people in the audience. The commentator describes the language problem as follows:

Half through the projects, problems concerning use of words in the play arose. The Luo version of the project contained some lines that especially the older community members viewed as too rude. CRUSH field workers overheard this in the communities. (*Kama Kazi, ProfileII:47*).

This problem might have arisen because the team did not carry out research on the larger community, but used the theatre groups as representing a microcosm of the larger society – and yet the theatre groups are made up of youths who might not have been conversant with the cultural nuances of the community. The commentator reports that the language problem inherent in the facilitation component had adverse repercussions on the intentions of the entire process:

The language barrier (...) results in a diminishing of impact. The audience will not fully grasp what the actors are trying to put across and will not freely participate in a PET project - central element of discussing with one another and with the facilitators. (sic). (*Kamakazi ProfileII*,:49)

When language becomes a hindrance in Theatre for Development then not only is its very essence, which is to communicate a specific message through participatory modes, lost but its purpose is severely undermined. It is in this sense that Ogolla's comment, as one of the facilitators in the project, ironically undercuts itself. He has commented that:

PET recognizes that the actor/teacher must remain accepting of the ways and present conditions of others, while considering how best to intervene and bring about shifting perspectives and understanding. The search for truth does not solely rest with the artist, but is a communal responsibility the people themselves are enabled to undertake and which they are empowered to discover. PET wholly accepts what the community brings to the situation a reversal of the stereotype role of the artist. (*Kamakazi ProfileII*, 49).

From the foregoing analysis it seems as though the Kisumu project stressed participation, despite the inability of its facilitators to recognise the relationship

between language and culture and this drastically affected its achievement. This is explicitly expressed by a critic of the project who laments that:

... another effect of a faulty choice of language is the fading away of players' motivation. A passive attitude and lack of audience-response decreases the enthusiasm with which the actors play their parts and this again effects (*sic*) the attention and enthusiasm of the audience. The vicious circle that thus develops is difficult to break through and works counter-productive (*sic*) for both the audience and players. (*Kamakazi ProfileII*, 49)

The sentiments expressed by this critic suggest the very crucial and central role that is played by the medium of language in any Theatre for Development process. As such, the language must be seen as central to the aesthetics of the entire enterprise.

4.2.2. Theatre for Development in Civic Education: The Case of the Clarion Theatre Team

4.2.2.1. The Background

The Clarion Theatre Team is the awareness-creating wing of the NGO Centre for Law and Research International (CLARION). CLARION is concerned with the following activities:

- Research
- A civic awareness programme
- Claripress Limited.

Theatre for Development is one of the tools that CLARION exploits in its civic education programme. Theatre became an immediate part of its conscientising enterprise, especially during the review of Kenya's independence constitution. The revision of the constitution demanded that the populace should be provided with an

education that enables it to articulate informed suggestions on the new dispensation. CLARION seems to have realised that no better approach could be found to achieve this task than Theatre for Development strategies.

4.2.2.2. CLARION's Theatre for Development Approach

CLARION claims to use the Participatory Educational Theatre approach as was used in the CARE-Kenya Kisumu PET project. But in practice the process largely conforms to Boal's Forum Theatre technique.

The CLARION Theatre team of actors and facilitators were selected after an audition. After this, they underwent a three-week training session on both Theatre for Development techniques and the issues of constitutional review. At the end of the workshop the participants devised four skits to be used in the communities to generate debate on the interpretation and understanding of the four related constitutional issues:

1. Constitution – the Constitution and constitution-making;
2. Democracy - democratisation and the principles of femocracy;
3. Governance – types and levels of governance;
4. Nation - nationhood, state and the nation-state.

4.2.2.3. CLARION's Theatre for Development Work: Examples from Eldoret and Nandi Districts.

This researcher witnessed CLARION's work in Eldoret and Nandi. The activities of CLARION are replicated in all the areas where they work. Therefore one experience will be used as an exemplification of all their activities. The Eldoret and Nandi projects took place in the last week of April 2002. All the actors and facilitators were from Nairobi. The most interesting aspect of this enterprise was the collaborative work

that took place between these actors and facilitators and the local theatre groups.(see Appendix photo 6, 7) This team of actors and facilitators from the capital city, Nairobi, conducted an intensive workshop on the skills and techniques of Theatre for Development. The rationale for the workshop was to equip these local theatre groups with skills and techniques which they would continue using in civic education long after the external actors and facilitators had left this region for other areas.

After the workshop the CLARION team and the local theatre groups went to Nandi District to perform the plays on the themes of constitution making to the grassroots people. The event took place at Baraton Centre, adjacent to the International University of Eastern Africa - Baraton. The process began with the mobilisation of the community. (see appendix photo 4) This was facilitated through songs, dance and formation of a grotesque shocking image of a monster by masked actors. After a reasonable audience had gathered, the actors sang a popular song that is usually used as welcoming song for tourists to Kenya, but in this case was reworked to welcome the audience to the performance space. As the singing went on, the actors moved into the audience and greeted them. This must have been intended to break the ice, develop trust and establish a rapport as well as a sense of camaraderie between the outsider actors and the community. At the end of this activity, the leader of the group then took the opportunity to explain to the community their purpose and intention of coming to this place. He then invited the community to enjoy the performances and to participate in the ensuing debates and discussions.

4.2.2.4. The Space and Audience Arrangement

The arrangement of the audience in an arc shape seems to have been quite natural. There was no prompting at all. The acting arena was in front of the team's Land Rover. The role of the Land Rover was indeed multiple: it acted as a backdrop, as backstage for the props as well as the changing room. (see Appendix photos 3, 5, 9)

4.2.2.5. The Performance Texts and Facilitation Process

The CLARION team brought the four skits that had been constructed during the training workshop to the community. Each skit ran for about ten minutes, then a discussion followed. The time allocated for discussion was determined by the involvement of the audience. Each of the four skits was based on an issue that would lead to a particular constitutional review component (i.e. the constitution, democracy, governance and nationhood).

The first skit was intended to generate discussion on the constitution and is constructed around the relationships between a mistress and her housemaid, the mistress and her boss, and the mistress' son and the housemaid. All the relationships dramatise different levels of power. What emerges out of each relationship is the abuse of power and privilege. There is a tinge of irony in the sense that those who abuse their power are then surprised when they become the victims of abuse of power. The skits are comical and amuse the audience a lot.

The second skit seeks to encourage discussion on democracy. It is based on a narrative about a woman of thirty-five years who is still unmarried. This creates a lot of anxiety and panic in the parents. The father unilaterally decides to get a rich old man to marry

her. But then there is a twist in the plot of the drama. The unmarried daughter comes home accompanied by the family's farm hand. She announces to the parents that she has found a fiancé. The mother is excited, but the father is tense because he has already received part of the dowry from the rich old man and has not even informed his wife. He then asks the daughter who Mr Right is and she points to the unkempt farm hand. All hell breaks loose and the facilitator steps in.

The third skit is intended to ignite debate on the issue of governance. This is a dramatisation of a popular folk narrative featuring animals. To bring out the characters of the different animals in the story, the actors don masks. (see Appendix photo 2) The animals speak a human language. Behind the mask the puppet-like characters have the poetic license to articulate what would normally be considered seditious. Whereas puppetry is not common in many parts of Africa, in Kenya it is increasingly becoming popular through the activities of Community Health Awareness Puppeteers (CHAPS). The reason why CHAPS prefers the use of puppets seems to support the position taken by CLARION in using masks; in one of their pamphlets they argue:

Puppetry begins by blowing the first breath of life into an 'inanimate object' and makes it 'come alive.' Any object can be given this gift of life by the puppeteer. The puppet is a visual, metaphor, representing 'the real life' but at the same time, it is one step removed from the real world. Puppetry can be used to break down racial, social and political barriers and stereotypes because it represents the 'neutral' aspect of the human, exaggerating its larger than life issues. Puppets can say more than the live actor. Puppet can get away with being highly controversial and thus often say more than would be possible to a live actor to say. This especially true when dealing with taboo or sensitive issues such as family planning, sexually transmitted diseases or the reproductive system when a puppet performance can be less embarrassing to the audience than human act. The puppets form a barrier between the performer and the audience. (Family Planning Private Sector-FPPS pp1-2)

The drama is based on the narrative of the animal kingdom when, once upon a time, there was a severe drought that caused a major famine. But during the early periods of the drought Lion (King of the Jungle) and Hare (the archetypal trickster) jointly operate a well in great secrecy. However, when the well runs dry Hare in his characteristic wisdom advises Lion to invite all the animals for a meeting and to ask them to communally dig a well. The animals are excited about this wisdom and agree to dig the well. This is supposed to be a communal well. The well is dug and all the animals are enchanted, because once again they will have water and the famine will be a thing of the past. But the excitement is short lived. Lion threatens the other animals and they all flee leaving the well for him and Hare alone once again.

4.2.2.6. The Art of Involving the Audience

During the session at Baraton the facilitators used a particular technique to have the audience appropriate the performance text. The facilitator outlined the character traits and roles of the characters in the drama and then asked the members of the audience to give names to the dramatis personae. The interesting thing was that the audience actually gave the characters symbolic names suggestive of their dominant characters. The names were from the naming system of the local community – the Nandi. It was after the naming of the characters that the main drama began.

At the end of the performance the main facilitator, who is not part of the acting team, then stepped in to generate a discussion. (see appendix photo 8) This is the format and pattern that followed after the performance of all the four skits. The discussion begins with questions based on the specific text, but gradually and systematically transcends

the context of the skit into the larger constitutional issues. The discussion in Baraton was quite intense, with the members of the audience articulating their discontent and disenchantment with the way the government and the politicians were ruining the country. The members of the audience suggested that they wanted a constitution that would provide a forum for them to decide the kind of governance and development that they desired. The CLARION team also used the Boalian technique of the joker to redirect discussions and also to diffuse tension by diverting emotions to some trivial issue, but one which would lead to a more serious discussion.

4.2.2.7. The Language and Performance

The CLARION team conducted both the performance and the facilitation in the national language, Kiswahili. This seems to have worked quite well within this cosmopolitan centre. However, the use of Kiswahili in the more remote interior regions might not have achieved similar amount of participation. Faith Ntugi, who was facilitating in Meru district, suggested to this researcher that in Meru they achieved a higher degree of audience participation when they used the local Meru language.

In the CLARION's Theatre for Development enterprises the performances are pre-packaged. However, they are specially constructed in such a way that they only act as catalysts for discussion on the Constitution. The members of the team argued for this approach, explaining that the constitutional review team had already carried out a national study of those aspects of the constitution and developing plays along those lines with the communities would be a waste of time, energy and the limited resources. But all the same, the process of collectively creating the performance with

the audience would have been more enriching, as one might see in Ngugi's Kamiriithu Experimental Theatre and Boal's Forum Theatre. Nevertheless, the main weakness of this project is that it was a one-off event. The actors and facilitators came to the community, raised the constitutional issues with them for about three to four hours and that was it.

4.2.3. Creating Theatre for Development in the Lamu Coast province

This project was a British Council initiative intended to start Theatre for Development activities in the Lamu district. The rationale was that it would enable the local people to identify and find solutions to the innumerable problems they face in their daily lives. The British Council contracted a team of actors from Nairobi to facilitate the project.

Joy Masheti, one of the facilitators, stated that the local people who were supposed to be trained in the technique(s) and methodology of Theatre for Development did not have basic theatre skills and this made the whole process difficult. However, it was later revealed that it was the facilitators from Nairobi who assumed that their understanding of theatre was universal. They did not realise that the local people had their own theatre aesthetics. This reminds one of Mlama's (1991) disenchantment with the early Theatre for Development practitioners, who rejected the popular performance forms of the target communities and insisted on working with their own aesthetics. This problem also emerged in Lamu and in a sense recalls Ali Campbell's experience in Eritrea, mentioned in Chapter 2.

Masheti notes that, because of this view, the local participants had to be introduced to the rudiments of conventional Western theatre practices and subsequently to those of Theatre for Development.

4.2.3.1. The Lamu Enterprise

The process started off with research on the socio-economic problems in Mokowe location. The research revealed that there was a tension between parents and teachers concerning the priorities that the parents had. Parents in this area were placing more emphasis on Islamic teaching than on formal education, which was reflected in the low performances in national examinations by the pupils from the area. The other issue that emerged from the research was that parents were too protective of their children and confronted the teachers any time their children were reprimanded for delinquency.

It was the object of the Theatre for Development practitioners to use theatre to confront the problem and seek ways in which the conflicts could be resolved. The theatre practitioners from Nairobi, together with the newly formed Lamu community group, went through a workshop process and devised a short performance to highlight the problems identified earlier. The skit was rehearsed and then a date was set for a public performance. The skit was meant to be a catalyst to facilitate dialogue within the community. Masheti notes that by the time the performers arrived at the performance arena there was already a substantial audience. Before the main performance the facilitator worked through songs and theatre games with those present to break the ice, a characteristic of most of the Theatre for Development enterprises.

At another level this interaction was meant to develop rapport between the facilitators and the community, though ideally this should have been established during the research. This indeed confirms Masheti's disappointment with the level of audience involvement and participation. In an interview in Eldoret in April 2001 Masheti said:

The first text was presented. Participation in this work was not maximum. We realized that the audience had not opened up enough and that the local person who was facilitating was not skilful in the art of facilitation.

Interestingly, Masheti comments that the second performance took a completely different form. This time round the facilitators opted for the indigenous performance aesthetic forms: Taarab music and Swahili poetry (*shairi*). Masheti notes that this time round there were tremendous improvements in the community participation. This experience goes a long way to confirm the often-made argument that Theatre for Development must take cognisance of the communities' performance aesthetics and modes. It is clearly evident that it is this recognition of the indigenous forms that intensified the participation of the community in Ngugi's Kamiriithu enterprise. The community took ownership of the aesthetic modes and could therefore relate to the whole process of collective creation, even if the facilitators are from outside the community and might be holding a different ideology from that of the community.

4.2.4. The Impact Project: Towards Behaviour Change

4.2.4.1. The Background

The aim of the project is to sensitise the local population to behavioural changes, especially in regard to sexuality. The Impact outreach project is carried out in Kaptembwo Location in Nakuru Town in the Rift Valley province. This is a slum area with a very high population of poor and deprived families.

This particular project is an initiative of the Programme for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH), an NGO operating in partnership with Health Forum International (HFI). The project is funded by USAID. The outreach projects are normally carried out on Tuesdays and Thursdays of every week in identified areas within Kaptembwo. Here I will only make reference to the activities of this outreach initiative that took place between September 2001 and August 2002.

4.2.4.2. Methodology of Impact Project: Experimenting with Boalian Techniques

The Impact project started with a research phase. In this particular case the research was carried out by HFI. The research revealed that because of the large population and slum conditions, the area had a high risks of HIV-AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections. Through the research it was also discovered that the area has a high population of school dropouts, leading to idleness. In addition, there is a large population of commercial sex workers. It is these findings that made PATH (Programme for Appropriate Technology in Health) start an outreach programme that would provide the residents of this region, especially the youth, with information on

HIV-AIDS and other related problems. PATH decided that the most appropriate method to achieve its objectives would be through the use of theatre. *Impact Theatre*, under the co-ordination of Jerry J. Aura, its artistic director, was given the responsibility to translate the research findings into performances that would generate discussions on the problems and provide a forum to seek for possible solutions.

The procedure used by *Impact Theatre* to communicate the messages was generally same every week. The only difference was in the issue presented. The issues presented in the weekly performances included drunkenness, the appropriate use of condoms, the effect of socialization among the youth and the advantages of safe sex. The groups targeted by the project were mainly unemployed youths, which explains why the performances took place during working days.

A typical performance of this project begins with *The Impact Theatre* group arriving at Kaptembwo “Kwa Chief” grounds in a vehicle playing loud music to attract the audience. This is followed by entertainments, mainly songs and dances. When a reasonable audience has gathered, the theatre co-ordinator, who also doubles as the facilitator, invites the dancing troupe to perform. The dancers dance to popular tunes that are familiar to the audience. The members of the audience are also encouraged to join in singing and dancing. At the end of the dance members of the audience are called upon to nominate the best dancer, a gesture intended to serve as ice breaker as well as to bridge the gap between the facilitators and the audience.

When the facilitator is satisfied that the audience is now ready for the performance, he invites the group to begin the performance with an episode from local TV play series

known as “*Nini Kati Yetu*” (*What is Between Us*), scripted by one of the local playwrights, Oby Obyreodhyambo. These scripts are made available to PATH by HFI. The group performs an episode that had been screened on one of the local broadcasting stations - the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation Television (KBC) the previous week. After the performance the audience is asked to answer questions based on an earlier episode that they had watched on TV. Those who get the correct answers are rewarded with gifts such as sandals and *Family Health* magazines, among other things. Apart from encouraging participation, this gesture is supposed to motivate them to watch these series on TV, since they also deal with issues related to sexuality and HIV-AIDS. After this activity the main performance dealing with the day’s issue is presented. This is a performance created through workshop method by members of *Impact Theatre*, with the theme derived from the issues identified during the research in the community. However, the target group is never involved in the devising and creation process. There is no formal script and the production depends largely on the imagination and creativity of the performers. The end products are usually open-ended so that they can provoke discussion. They are often structured around two central questions, mostly concerned with characters’ motives and predicaments. The following two questions will serve as examples:

1. What could s/he have done?
2. What should s/he do?

The group mainly uses Boalian techniques of simultaneous dramaturgy and forum theatre. This is seen when members of the audience are asked to suggest ways to solve the problems facing the characters on stage and the actors then try out the suggestions until they come up with what seems as the best option for the character facing the

dilemma. This is “simultaneous dramaturgy”. The forum technique is seen in their performances when they ask members of the audience to choose scenes which they would want to be replayed. The person who has made the choice is then invited to take the role of an actor whose actions he did not agree with and then show what exactly he would have done to change the course of things. This is in fact “fitting into the shoes” of the other.

The group ends its session, asking the audience to agree, by show of hands, on certain resolutions. The facilitator, for example, can ask the question “Should we use condoms?”, “Would this lead to promiscuity?” This idea of seeking consensus on issues that had been raised in the drama, however for me, does not really add value in terms of conscientization because these are the same issues that were supposed to have been resolved in the process of facilitation and intervention. If the same questions that were being explored through drama have to be asked again out of the participatory theatre context, then it seems that the process might not have achieved its intentions effectively.

At the very end of the day’s presentations and ensuing discussions, there is always a follow-up activity with the seemingly most active members of the audience invited to remain behind for further discussion with the facilitators. It is this section of the audience that helps the facilitators to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the project.

4.2.4.3. A Typical Storyline of the Group's Performance

Mash has just completed his secondary school education. He's out in a night club to celebrate this achievement. But he is alone as his girlfriend, Julia, has declined to accompany him because she has not been given permission by her parents. At the disco, Mash's former schoolmates are all having fun with their female partners. After a few beers and encouragement from his friends, he agrees to approach one of the women in the club. He later on leaves the club accompanied by this woman. One week later he goes to see his girlfriend, Julia. She (Julia) realises that he is walking in an awkward manner and that he has also developed strange rashes on his body. The play ends as he pleads with Julia to help him.

4.2.4.4 Criticism of the Process

Though this project endeavours to use different techniques to involve the audience, there are certain weaknesses in the process. For example, the theatrical creative process excludes the target audience, yet this is the most significant aspect in the process of developing critical consciousness. The exclusion is quite ironical given that the target audience consists of jobless and idle youths who are readily available to participate in the process. The other problem with the methodology is that it is too reductive. The issues are treated without any regard for their causal relationships. For example, the problems of sexuality are presented as if they are not contingent on slum-related problems such as poverty and general unemployment. Indeed the slum's problems that lead to prostitution are not addressed at all. For instance, couples are encouraged to be faithful to one another and youths are encouraged to use condoms, and yet economic circumstances that lead women into commercial sex and frustrations

that make men become alcoholics are not addressed cogently. If these underlying issues are not addressed, then the prime objective of the project, namely behavioural change, cannot be achieved. Maybe what should be addressed first would be how to empower these slum dwellers to take control of their situation. It seems, however, that the objectives of this project are very specific and so are the performances, and anything therefore outside the agenda of the donors is completely ignored. This particular project in many ways echoes the DRAMAIDE project from South Africa discussed in Chapter 2. A critical evaluation of these two projects suggest that maybe the role of funding and contracting agencies also needs revisiting and rethinking just as much as the procedures and methodology of Theatre for Development do.

Whereas this group seems to elicit the audience's participation and involvement, one cannot be too sure about the quality of this in terms of heightening critical awareness and conscientisation. This is because at end of the whole interactive exercise, the most active participants are given gifts. This could mean that the motivation to participate may derive more from the wish to win the gifts rather than a genuine need to acquire knowledge that would lead to change of behaviour. Hence, the so-called audience participation might be deceptive. For Theatre for Development to be successful, it would be more appropriate if the participants are not lured by material gifts, but rather made aware of the benefits of the message contained in the drama.

An interesting feature of the group's activities is nonetheless their attempt to mediate between the monologic TV programme on HIV-AIDS mentioned earlier and the public audience. This TV programme raises very serious issues on matters of

sexuality, but because of the very nature of TV as a one-way channel of communication, people have no room to ask question, so by replaying some of the TV episodes, the theatre group provides the public with an opportunity to discuss the issues more incisively.

4.2.5. Great Rift Valley Theatre for Development Project (GRIFFORDA)

This project was initiated in the year 2000. It was the response of a group of theatre practitioners in Nakuru to the perceived problems facing their community. Because Art Net Waves Communication (ANWC) was already involved in AIDS awareness programmes, GRIFFORDA decided to confront other issues to avoid duplication. GRIFFORDA's main effort was then directed towards creating awareness on the consequences of deforestation and gender violence.

GRIFFORDA draws its affiliates from established theatre groups such as *Playmakers*, *Baragumu*, *Tongoma* and the *Diocese of Nakuru Catholic Youth Group*. The group is registered with the Provincial Department of Culture, which also assists the group with funding. The Department also provides the group with transport when they go on outreach programmes.

The group usually organises one-off theatre events for communities. The group identifies an open space ideal for performance and then through songs, dances, chants and other theatre games attracts the attention of an audience. Most of the performances are improvised spontaneously on the performance space. However, songs and dances are prepared in advance. The group uses tableaux to stimulate the imagination of the

audience, and in this way they generate discussion on the issues relating to deforestation. The group carries out research on the issues to be performed and discussed. The general community is not involved at this stage in the development of the process.

Fred Mbogo, one of the participants in this project explained that carrying out research has been the most difficult part of their work. He complains:

The research into some communities is difficult given that most of the projects have a short life span. It makes the work difficult especially since no written material or documentation has been done on some communities previously. Communities also have their own views about certain problems so at times the group speaks down on them, and the community then ignores the message. (Interview with Mbogo October, 2001 in Eldoret)

Mbogo's sentiments certainly confirm the fact that research with the community is not only significant but indispensable to the success of a Theatre for Development project. The research should not be seen as a catalyst, but more as part of the organising structure and aesthetics of a Theatre for Development enterprise. If the research is done without the participation of the beneficiaries, then these beneficiaries do not feel part of the whole enterprise.

Apart from engaging in Theatre for Development activities, GRIFFORDA also translates the theatre outcomes into actual results. This is evidenced in their activities in a small village called Mauche in the Njoro location, where they are involved in tree planting. This is an advocacy programme sponsored by the British Council. In this programme the theatre activity preceded the tree-planting activity and was used to

mobilise the community as well as to create awareness on the need to plant trees. The theatre component is important here, because it reinforces the knowledge that justifies the act of planting trees.

Though GRIFFORDA's approach is most appropriate, it should involve the community at all the levels in the process of Theatre for Development, that is, from the research up to the point of the project's evaluation. In this way the whole process might be more appreciated and readily embraced by the communities concerned.

4.2.6. The YMCA AIDS Control and Rehabilitation Programme (ACREP)

This group was founded by a group of young volunteers who worked with community-based groups of the YMCA's food security programme in 1993. The intention behind the formation was the realisation that information channels used in AIDS awareness campaigns in Kisumu, Busia and Chavakali were not as effective as initially thought. These included posters, advertisements and radio and TV programmes. The group resorted to theatre because "theatre is a vital tool of learning by doing," (2000:2) says Osborne Wanyama, a member of the team.

4.2.6.1. The Practice and the Process

The group describes its approach as a bottom-up approach, whereby they learn from the community and the community assists them in identifying the problems. They send a group of ten actors/facilitators to the community. This group of ten has the responsibility of initiating a collective creation process with the community. The process begins with research based on interviews carried out by the group in the target

communities. The group then uses the results from the interviews to develop a script. The actor/facilitators then rehearse the script. Finally, the play as a finished product is presented to the community. The group then uses simultaneous dramaturgy, that is, members of the audience suggest solutions to the problems facing characters in the play/skit, and the actors try out those solutions until they come up with solution that is acceptable to a majority in the audience. To make the community feel that they own the process, a member of the community is normally asked to facilitate the process. After all this the play is then considered as a complete product and is taken on tour to different places and venues, usually churches, schools and market centres.

Though this group refers to its approach as bottom-up, it does not follow the principles of a bottom-up approach all the way. For instance, actors/facilitators come from outside the community, interview members of the community, create a play and then present the play to the larger community. In fact only a small group in the community is involved in the creative process. Though a member of the community is normally invited to help in facilitation, this in itself does not make the process bottom-up. For the process to be bottom-up it would be in order for the community to be more involved from the very beginning of the process to the end.

4.3 Campaign Theatre: Message-Centred Theatre for Development Enterprises

Not all Theatre for Development enterprises in Kenya emphasise process and participation. Indeed most of them have opted for the more message-orientated campaign. These are intend to intervene, but through providing information on issues without necessarily involving the audience in the search for the roots of such problems

or an exploratory consideration of solutions to such anomalies in society. These forms of theatre simply confront the target audiences with such issues and members of the audience engage with these meanings privately and individually. Needless to say, the performers expect those whom they encounter to be challenged by their messages and to be led to some form of the transformation or changes that the message intended. However, campaign theatre can be made more effective by ensuring that it embraces the techniques of bottom-up approach by including the input of the target community during research and in post-performance discussions. This section will look at some examples.

4.3.1. Imara Theatre Players Society - Siaya District

4.3.1.1. Background and Motivation

Imara is an amateur youth theatre group in the Siaya District of Nyanza province. The drive to start the group was a direct response to the problem of unemployment among the school-leavers in Siaya Town. Theatre became an avenue for the youth to deal with their unemployment, a kind of creative instinct for self-employment. The group started in 1998 and, according to the founder-leader and artistic director, Lwanda Keya¹, its initial objectives are:

To offer the youth a forum and space to share ideas and experiences about social problems facing them, and at the same time to tap and develop latent talents in the youth through participating in theatre.

¹ Introductory comments by Keya in a video recording of the group's activities.

The group operates under the aegis of the district culture department, but gets hardly any support from it. The philosophy of the group, which clearly echoes that of the University Travelling Theatre Movements of the 1960s and 1970s, is “take theatre to the people.” The repertory of the group includes straight theatre, skits, dramatised poetry, creative dramatised dances and narratives.

4.3.1.2 Imara’s Theatre for Development Approach

Imara is actually a commercial theatre group and is driven by the desire to make profits. This makes sense, given that all the members are unemployed youths who need to make a living through theatre. *Imara* therefore performs for a paying audience, unless commissioned to do Theatre for Development work by some organisation or the other. Our concern here will be with such performances.

The performance under analysis is a work that was commissioned by ACTION AID and CARE-Kenya on HIV-AIDS awareness. Characteristic of Theatre for Development activities, this too started with mobilisation of the community by using the usual techniques: songs, dances, chants and instrumentation. After the audience has assembled the members of the group introduce themselves using the Luo praise poetry form. This must have been intended to create a sense of connection with the community’s cultural expressions and aesthetics as well as a sense of belonging.

After the introduction, the group embarked on the performances with their HIV-AIDS message. All the performances were sermon-like in tone and moralistic in content. All the items, whether poetry, songs, dances, narratives or skits, espoused the ideals and benefits of safe sex and the dangers of not upholding such ideals. For instance, the

narrative in English about the beautiful lady called Sweetie warned men against falling in love with women, because the women would most probably infect them with the virus. The item was clearly gender insensitive, because it seems to assume that it is only beautiful women who are a danger during this era of the HIV-AIDS epidemic.

The other instructive item was the Kiswahili poem entitled “*Mshale nyama*” (translated literally as “*Meaty arrow*”). The title is a metaphorical reference to male genitalia. The underlying message in this poem is that a man uses his penis like an arrow, a weapon. But with the prevalence of AIDS, it is a rather vulnerable weapon. And if it must be used as a hunting weapon, and it is certainly vulnerable, then it must be reinforced with stockings, a euphemism for condoms.

Though most of the items that the group performed offer a myriad of opportunities for audience participation, the group never took such opportunities to engage in a dialogue with the audience. Given the group’s methodology, however, the lack of critical engagement suggests that it does not deviate much from mediated media (such as radio, television or posters) in this regard. If we take, for instance, the performance of the well dramatised verse “*Mshale nyama*”, which raises very serious issues especially regarding unprotected sex, a facilitator could have used this piece to generate discussion on the use of condoms. It would have been more effective to pose questions rather than provide supposed answers. Among the Luos, where this production took place, there are several rituals that revolve around sexuality and simply to tell men to use condoms is ineffective.

There was a need to involve the audience deeply in discussions of some of the cultural practices that make them vulnerable to the HIV-AIDS scourge. But maybe, given the politics of funding in Theatre for Development, such details are usually not given the emphasis they deserve. Nevertheless, this project was also supported by Population Services International (PSI) whose main agenda seems to be the marketing of condoms. The performance of this particular verse does not make it very different from other radio and TV advertisements marketing condoms. In an interview with the Artistic Director of this group, Boniface Keya Lwanda, it was apparent that he was very familiar with all the methodology and techniques involved in Theatre for Development. In the interview he says: “We prefer to create a performance with the designated audience in mind. Our performances vary depending on the type of the audience, target region and or nature of the social problem in question.” (Interview with Luanda Keya, September 2001, Eldoret). My involvement with the group’s Theatre for Development performances, however, did not confirm what Lwanda had said in the interview. For instance, the choice of language by the group was not quite appropriate, given that this is a rural town where most people can only speak and understand the Dholuo language. Other than the songs, all the other items that had very profound messages were rendered in English and/or Kiswahili. A simplified Kiswahili idiom would have been more profitable, if not Dholuo. Even though Keya had said in the interview that the group creates its performances collaboratively with the target community, my observations revealed otherwise. All their performances are self-constituting in terms of form and content, and there is hardly any possibility for audience participation. This comes out very clearly in the rendition of the dramatised

verse “No turning back”, which preaches doom for those who have contracted HIV-AIDS, and in the narrative about “Sweetie”, which assumes that AIDS is only spread by beautiful women. Nevertheless, most of the theatrical pieces by this group have great potential for educating the community, if they are effectively used as open-ended forms that can catalyse dialogue and discussion on HIV-AIDS and awareness education.

4.3.2. Pioneer Kakamega: Theatre for Conscientisation in Kakamega

The group was formed in 1990 and is based at the Family Planning Association of Kenya, (FPAK) offices in Kakamega, the provincial headquarters of Western Province. Just like the *Imara Players*, *Pioneer Kakamega* also performs for a fee-paying audience, since most of its members are unemployed youths who use theatre as a source of livelihood. The repertoire of the group includes skits, song and dances, narratives and puppetry. The group does not perform plays. In a discussion with one of the group members, he intimated that they do not have the expertise or time to produce plays. So they prefer short pieces.

4.3.2.1 Research and Creative Process

Members of this group normally utilise personal experiences and narratives from the community to collectively devise narratives or create puppetry programmes, compose songs and choreograph dances. The larger community is never involved in the creation process. The group has benefited a great deal from puppetry workshops conducted by the Community Health Awareness Puppeteers (CHAPS), and theatre and drama workshops on HIV-AIDS by Art Net Waves Communication (ANWC).

4.3.2.2. Mode of Performance

Like other Theatre for Development teams, the group presents its performances to the audiences in open spaces such as market centres, bus parks and “*Boda-boda parks*” (bicycle parks). The team presents its theatrical pieces before an audience and at the end of each presentation a facilitator raises issues that have emerged from the performance. For instance, in the narrative “*Olwembe*” (*Razor Blade*) dealing with HIV-AIDS the facilitator begins by asking a member of the audience to explain his interpretation of this symbolic narrative that uses the image of a shaving a razor blade to make comment on how HIV-AIDS can be contracted. The discussion is developed and extended to encompass other issues on AIDS which were not necessarily raised by the narrative.

In the skit “*Mtoto ni mtoto*” (*A child is a child*) on the need to educate the girl child, the same technique is used. In all their performances the community is only involved in the post-performance discussion conducted through a question and answer technique. This is one group that can achieve much in terms of conscientisation, if only they can improve on audience involvement techniques. They can make their performances more interactive by using ice breakers, trust games and a variety of skills in facilitation, for instance, introducing a Jester or the Boalian Joker, to elicit more amusement in the facilitation process and also mediate between the performance

texts and the audience. This would be useful because the question and answer technique tends at times to be too pedagogical and monotonous if not handled skilfully. To achieve meaningful conscientisation the group seriously needs to expand the opportunity for learning and involve the community in the entire process rather than in the post-performance discussions only.

4.3.3. Mukinya Dancers: Female Genital Mutilation Campaign

4.3.3.1. The Background

This is a group made up of teachers and school-leavers based in Embu, Eastern province. The group was formed in 1995 to provide youths with a forum and space to develop their performing arts skills, especially in the traditional Aembu dances. From 1997 the group has been involved in the use of dance drama to create awareness of the risks of female circumcision, also known as female genital mutilation (FGM). Embu is one of the regions in Kenya where this rite of passage is still very common. In 1998 the group performed one of its dramatised dances on the psychological effects of the rite on a young school girl at the International Drama / Theatre and Education Association (IDEA) congress in Kisumu, Kenya. Because of this performance, the group was identified to (among other things) devise and present a dance drama during the UNFPA festival celebrating the day the world's population reached a record six billion people, dubbed the 'Day of Six Billion.' The philosophy of the festival was not just to bring a number of groups to the metropolitan city of Nairobi to perform, but for the theatre or performing groups to make theatre with their own communities and in the process create awareness in those communities, before eventually presenting the

items at the grand festival in Nairobi. To ensure that groups went through this process, Dr John Opiyo Mumma of the Literature Department University of Nairobi, and members of Kenya Drama/Theatre and Education Association (KDEA) were contracted to facilitate the process. Here I will describe the process of Theatre for Development that Mumma and I witnessed in Embu by *Mukinya Players*.

4.3.3.2 The Dirty Knife

4.3.3.3. The Research and Creative Process

This group only performs dramatised dances and occasionally verses, as mentioned earlier. The group leader, a local primary school teacher, Mputhia, explained that they perform dramatised dances because these are very popular in the region and also communicate messages in more subtle ways, therefore hardly raising problems for them with the conservative members of the community. Further, Mputhia noted that most members of the group have been brought up in the community's dance tradition and therefore choreography is not a big problem. Many of the members have also participated in the annual Kenya Schools and Colleges Drama Festivals and Music in the dance category and are quite familiar with the aesthetics of this form. In addition, Mputhia pointed out that he had carried out a great deal of research on the Aembu dances.

The devising of the dance drama *Dirty Knife* was, from aesthetic point of view, highly interactive and participatory with the members of the community enthusiastically contributing ideas on dance movements, formations and patterns. However, they had

no input at all on the content and message that the dance was supposed to communicate, because, the dance troupe had already developed the storyline and plot and the community was never invited to give their opinions or suggestions in this regard. The material for the content and message of the dance drama was actually a result of a research that had been done by medical doctors highlighting the physiological and psychological implications of this rite of passage on the female initiates.

The story that the dance dramatizes revolves around a primary school girl of 14 years who has not been 'cut'. The father gets impatient and declares that she must go through the ritual and then get a suitor. The mother objects to this and the father gets extremely angry with them. He walks out of the house but before he does so, he warns them that if they are not going to do as he wishes then they would be in for big trouble. He comes back drunk and asks the girl, Makena if she was ready for the ritual. She replies in the negative and all hell breaks loose. Mother and daughter run away and seek refuge in the home of the local social worker, who advises them to see the local representative of the association of women lawyers. The lawyer escorts them to the local chief, who directs the Administration Police (AP) to go and arrest the man.

The action of the dance then moves to the courtroom. In the court the magistrate invites a medical practitioner to come and address the community on the risks associated with female circumcision. The medical practitioner gives a litany of such risks from a professional perspective, mainly to create shock. All this is done through song, dance and drama. Then at the end of the dance, the magistrate gives a socio-

cultural and legal dimension to the problem and warns the parents against taking their daughters for the ritual and accordingly fines the father.

The dance was rehearsed the whole morning and presented to a large audience in the local primary school's playing field late in the afternoon. Whereas there was active participation in the devising process involving the dance drama troupe and the community, especially in choreography, the same involvement was not visible during the performance in the afternoon. When he was asked about this after the performance, the team leader explained that they did not involve the audience in any discussion because they thought that all the issues had been adequately addressed within the framework of the performance; their performance had been a self-sufficient entity raising issues and yet providing all the possible solutions.

At this point Mumma and I decided to run a brief workshop on facilitation skills, audience participation, research on societal issues and devising of a performance that would fulfil the basic requisites of an effective Theatre for Development codification.

4.4. Theatre Festivals as Theatre for Development Enterprises

Chapter 3 indicated that the Kenya National Schools and Colleges Drama Festivals have always been a site for articulating issues in a similar manner to the practice of Theatre for Development, especially its forms that have been identified as Campaign Theatre. With the prevalence of HIV-AIDS and other social problems, additional theatre festivals have emerged, but unlike the schools' drama festivals, they explicitly proclaim their purposes as educational theatre enterprises. The organizers of these

festivals set out the themes of the festivals and then theatre groups are asked to interpret the themes and come up with performances. The performance genres range from straight theatre, narratives and dramatised poetry to dances and even puppetry. Emphasis is placed on general production techniques and correct interpretation and the realisation of the theme. The most dominant theme is frequently HIV-AIDS. The festivals usually have a competition structure, with theatre groups being eliminated at different levels. The competitions begin at the district level and end with the finals at the national level, which often takes place in the capital city, Nairobi. The rationale for this pyramid structure is that as many people as possible will see the performances at different levels and in this way the desired or intended message will have been disseminated to as many people as possible. Two examples will illustrate this development.

4.4.1 Art Net Waves Communication (ANWC) and HIV/AIDS Festivals

Art Net Waves Communication (ANWC) is one of the NGOs involved in the AIDS awareness campaign. Its main tool is theatre. It uses both participatory and campaign theatre approaches, but its main focus is the campaign theatre festivals. These festivals are an annual event organised to coincide with World AIDS Day.

Because of the competitive nature of this festival, the learning process which is such a significant feature in any educational theatre is relegated to a lower order and production gimmicks become privileged. The festivals usually end up as “watching events” rather than as dialogical educational forums. This is because there are usually too many performances and there is hardly enough time for the watcher to reflect on or

discuss an item before the next item is called onto the stage. The items are also adjudicated for their aesthetic achievement in addition to the relevance of their theme, normally HIV-AIDS.

Giving people the opportunity to discuss issues during these festivals can be justified by the number of people who gather in groups outside the venues after the performances to discuss some of the issues raised by particular theatrical pieces they had watched. I remember one such occasion after the festival of 1997 at the Kenya Polytechnic in Nairobi. There was a heated debate about one of the performances concerning use of condoms. In the performance the actor had used a banana symbolically to make a comment on the use of condoms when having sex. He had asked his girlfriend if she would enjoy eating the banana with its peel on and she obviously said no. But within the play this was not followed through to its logical conclusion to show clearly the characters' attitudes to the controversial issue on the (ab)use of condoms. When the festival ended there was outrage and very serious debate on this issue, but now outside the structure of the festival since the festival did not offer room for discussions. The adjudicators were also criticised for failing to make a strong comment on such 'misinformation.' It is from these kinds of episodes that one sees opportunities for creating awareness and conscientisation, which the organisational structures of the festivals do not, unfortunately, envisage. In ANWS festivals the rules are very restrictive, just like those of the Kenya National and Schools Drama Festivals. Here the performers are supposed to be aware of the dichotomy between the proscenium arch stage and the auditorium. As such the actors cannot go out of their way to involve the audience at any cost whatsoever.

4.4.2 Family Planning Private Sector (FPPS): A Non-Competitive Festival

The festival under discussion took place in Eldoret mid 2001. It was organised by the above-mentioned NGO as a prelude to an international Puppetry Symposium that was to take place in early 2002. The purpose of the festival in Eldoret was to give an opportunity to puppetry groups in the North Rift to show their items to the public. There was also a group from Nairobi reputed to be the best in puppetry. Their presence was intended to add glamour to the occasion and also to offer informed advice to the upcoming groups participating in the micro-festival. However, the festival also had room for other forms such as skits, narratives, rap music, dramatised dances and poetry.

Unlike Art Net Waves Festivals on HIV-AIDS, the theme of this festival was open and the participants explored themes ranging from AIDS, corruption, female genital mutilation, drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, civic education and gender violence (violence against women). The festival took place at the multi-purpose Eldoret Town Hall.

The most sophisticated performances in the festival were the puppetry items, most probably because the puppetry performances had been prepared for the forthcoming international festival. The other items definitely demonstrated a paucity of theatrical and performance skills.

The most striking phenomenon in this festival was the way the performers in every form strove to involve the audience in some kind of discussion. But this was usually frustrated by the facilitators' inability to follow the issues to their logical conclusions.

The structure of the festival also militated against any meaningful discussion, as there was always the fear of disrupting the programme. As in all festivals of this kind, there were several teams and the time was limited, so they needed to perform and not to engage in discussion. Moreover, the principal objective of this particular festival was to give the puppetry groups an opportunity to show their items to the general public as rehearsal for the international festivals. But this festival did make it clear that the festival structure can also accommodate meaningful audience involvement and participation that would result into deep reflection and perhaps a transformation of perceptions, attitudes and behaviours.

4.5. Interrogating Theatre for Development practice: Seminars and Workshops

Given the discursive nature of Theatre for Development in Kenya, as suggested by the examples discussed above, attempts have been made through workshops and seminars to characterise and clarify the practice in Kenya. A look at a few case studies shows how the lack of an appropriate procedure and methodology has made it extremely difficult to categorise the practice.

In 1997 the Mizizi Cultural Centre in collaboration with the British Council organised a seminar on “Working with Theatre for Development”. The interesting outcome of the seminar was that most participants could not see the difference between straight theatre and Theatre for Development. For example, Gichora Mwangi, a leading theatre scholar and practitioner, presenting a paper on “Community Theatre for Development in Kenya” completely denied the existence of Theatre for Development as a genre on its own. This confusion might have arisen because the procedures and methodology of

the enterprise had not been well outlined. The entire seminar ended without the participants coming out with any new insight in the workings of this enterprise.

In 1998 the British Council organised a Theatre for Development workshop at its premises in Nairobi and this time round invited a Theatre for Development practitioner from Ghana, Selete Nyomi, as well as Opiyo Mumma from the University of Nairobi, and myself, amongst others, to facilitate. Selete Nyomi narrated his experiences in Theatre for Development in Ghana, through which he managed to outline what the Theatre for Development working process is. Later in the workshop Mumma and I conducted a simulated Theatre for Development workshop, which attempted to take the participants through the procedures and methodology of the genre. The object of the exercise was to provide the participants with hands-on experience in the enterprise.

In December 1996, as a prelude to the 3rd International Drama/Theatre and Education Congress (IDEA) to be held in Kisumu-Kisumu in July 1998, the local congress convenors - Kenya Drama/Theatre and Education (KDEA) - organized a Theatre for Development symposium at Ufungamano House in Nairobi. The object of the workshop was to bring the different Theatre for Development practitioners, operating in the different parts of the world, to share their experiences and methodology. In the workshop, one of the facilitators, Lenin Ogolla, took the participants through the techniques of Brecht, Augusto Boal, Penina Mlamba, Ngugi and Rose Mbowa. From the responses of most of the participants it emerged that this was the first time they

were coming in touch with the methods of these practitioners, with the exception of Ngugi.

In 1998 the British Council convened a theatre for development workshop in Kisumu for theatre practitioners operating in the Western region of the country. In this particular workshop/seminar a number of papers exploring different aspects of the practice were presented. A very interesting dimension of this workshop was the critical review of theatre video recordings of previous works by Misango Arts Ensemble based in Kisumu in conjunction with a Dutch NGO, HBK. From the videos it was obvious that most of these activities were mostly versions of campaign theatre. The skits on hygiene and reproductive health, for example, had messages pre-packaged for the audience(s) and were largely didactic, sermonising and moralising. The dialectical aspect of Theatre for Development, as espoused by Freire, was non-existent. There was absolutely no effort by the performers to involve the audience at any level. All the performances were structured in a closed manner, encompassing both the problems facing the target communities as well as the solutions to those problems.

Another British Council workshop on Theatre for Development was held in Nakuru District within the Great Rift Valley. This time the Council contracted a team of four artists from Nairobi to facilitate the workshop. In an interview with Joy Masheti, one of the facilitators, the following scenario emerged. Masheti said that all the participants who attended the workshop were new to the practice. As such, the facilitators had to introduce them to the very rudiments of the enterprise – what

Masheti refers to as a 'step-by-step process'. This involved taking the participants through the history of the enterprise, its definition, its various manifestations, as well as the merits and demerits of employing or working through a particular variant.

In the practical component Masheti said that they decided to introduce the participants to the more inward looking "inside-out approach". This meant that the facilitators started by introducing the participants to the different stages involved in a Theatre for Development enterprise. They began by explaining the importance of the research and how it can be carried out. Then they took the participants through the process of data analysis and how to prioritise the issues; this was followed by a practical demonstration on devising a performance, the use of role play, and how to conduct an effective facilitation which would elicit audience involvement and active participation. Masheti notes that at the end of the one-week workshop the participants, working in groups, came up with performances which they showed to each other.

Another Theatre for Development workshop was organised by the British Council for the regional directors of Shangilia Mtoto wa Africa, a home for former street children run by the illustrious Kenyan artists Anne Wanjugu, a stage and film actress, and Anne Mungai, a film director and producer. The British Council commissioned Joy Masheti and Frances Harding from the Republic of Ireland to facilitate this workshop. The aim was to equip the regional directors with Theatre for Development techniques that would assist them in rehabilitating the former street children.

In this workshop the two facilitators started the workshop with warm-up exercises, ice breakers and trust games. After this session Harding conducted a workshop on the

relationship between power and space. According to Masheti, the main difficulty that the two facilitators faced was the inability of the participants to discern the relationship between theatre and social transformation.

In 2001 Moi University Literature and Creative Arts departments, in collaboration with Bayreuth University's Institute of African Studies and DAAD, organised a summer school on the use of Theatre for Development in the fight against HIV-AIDS. During the presentations Theatre for Development as a practice was placed under critical scrutiny. Different practitioners from different parts of the world worked with the theatre arts students on this. What emerged from this exercise was the realisation that facilitation was the most crucial aspect of Theatre for Development; if it is not handled efficiently, a Theatre for Development enterprise is destined to fail.

From the above overview it is apparent that many efforts have been made to give a proper perspective to Theatre for Development in Kenya, notably with the help of the British Council. Yet there are still so many theatre practitioners ostensibly using the Theatre for Development mode, but with very little knowledge of what it is all about. For most of these practitioners Theatre for Development is just a method of passing on messages and information. This kind of approach in fact denies Theatre for Development its full potential.

The Theatre for Development workshops and seminars that have been taking place in Kenya in many ways echo the "conferencisation" of Theatre for Development throughout the continent, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Against this background we may look at a more interesting Theatre for Development workshop organised by Art Net Waves Communication, in the Mumias/Butere District in Western Kenya. The aim of the workshop was to equip the participants with Theatre for Development skills and understanding of its philosophy. The participants included representatives of stakeholders in HIV-AIDS such as medical practitioners, religious leaders, youth theatre groups, and HIV-AIDS guidance counsellors. Before the Theatre for Development skills training commenced, participants had the opportunity to relate narratives and experiences of HIV-AIDS from the perspective of their interest groups. A medical practitioner gave participants an elaborate dossier on HIV-AIDS, full of statistical facts and in addition showed the participants a shocking video of the effects of the epidemic on a human body. At the end of it all he advised the participants that the only way to avoid contracting the ailment was by observing the ABC rule that is (A) Abstinence, (B) Being faithful to one partner and (C) use of a Condom. The mention of the condom ignited a heated discussion, with the religious leaders vehemently opposing it as an option. It became very difficult to resolve the conflict within the structures of the lecture. This then was the opportune moment for the Theatre for Development facilitators to intervene. To ease the tension that had built up, all the participants were invited to the open space behind the hotel where the workshop was taking place. Theatre games were then used to break ice and establish trust and a sense of community. After the tension had subsided, the participants were divided into groups, where they shared their experiences about the epidemic. A member from each group was then asked to narrate, in a summary form, the issues raised by their group. This marked the end of the research stage. It was then decided

that the issues should be analysed in more detail and then prioritised. Though the workshop was meant to train the participants on the use of Theatre for Development, the participants decided that for them to confront the issue of the condom it was necessary to extend the debate to the larger community. A skit, a song, and a dance were devised. The most difficult aspect had to do with training someone to do the facilitation. This required a participant from the locality who was familiar with the local dialect. This facilitation training took a lot of time, but finally one participant seemed to have gotten the idea. The three items to be used - that is the skit; the song and the dance - were all improvisations. The subject matter of the song was polygamy and its form was antiphonal i.e. it consisted of call and response. The soloist and his chorus were actually engaged in a debate about the merits and demerits of the practice in the light of HIV-AIDS. The dance explored the theme on widow inheritance and dramatised the life of a woman whose husband dies in a road accident and after the burial of the husband is forced to be remarried by one of the relations, as the traditions demand. In the dance the widow is the protagonist, a soloist who pleads with the community to spare her from this practice, because she is not sure about the HIV status of the inheritor.

The last item was a skit based on the story of a man whose work takes him away from his wife and family for several months. The wife offers him a pack of condoms before he leaves just in case! Through the use of chants, songs and dances within the vicinity of the local market, an audience was mobilised. As most of the songs were popular, the public soon joined in the performance, but others stayed far way, not sure what the commotion was all about.

At the market place the participants formed a large circle and the crowd formed another circle. At this juncture the workshop convenor, Oluoch Madiang, took the opportunity to inform the audience about the purpose of the performance. He also asked them to participate in the performances and the ensuing discussions. The first item was the song. It did not elicit a lot of participation from the audience. The second item was the dance on widow inheritance. This generated a lot of debate. Most men in the audience expressed the opinion that the practice should not be interfered with. Most women argued that the practice should be maintained, but should be redefined to exclude the sexual component. There was no clear conclusion, but the most important thing was that debate had been started and which the community would extend on their own. The last item, the skit, generated the most participation. It was both a moral and ethical issue. The views offered were so divergent. But an elderly woman, who stated that she was taking care of her orphaned grandchildren, whose parents had been consumed by the disease, brought the discussion to an abrupt conclusion. She told the crowd that if condoms could protect people, then it must be allowed to be used, because people were still going to engage in sex and more will die. No one had anything to add. Her views brought a new dimension to the participants who were originally adamant and rigid about the use of condoms.

During the debriefing session the participants agreed that theatre should be used to open up possibilities for the communities as it has the potential of providing alternative ways of seeing. Thus in this case the skit worked very well as a catalyst for reflection.

CHAPTER FIVE

Looking into the Mirror: Reflecting on Practice

From the previous chapters it has emerged quite strongly that there is a need to critically reflect on the procedures and methodology of the practice of Theatre for Development. As mentioned in Chapter One with respect to problems associated with the definition of Theatre for Development, what needs to be done for the practice to be more effective is to engage with the different aspects of its methodology and procedures because it seems that the problems facing the practice of Theatre for Development in Kenya are somehow directly related to lack of critical overview, interrogation and reflection on its philosophy, procedures and methodology; this situation seems to confirm Byam's (1999) concern about the practice generally when she laments that, though many Theatre for Development programmes claim to be engaged in conscientisation, the term has been reduced to a cliché. Indeed, this concern is specifically true of the practice of Theatre for Development in Kenya. For instance, many of the Theatre for Development teams advocate conscientisation, yet the community contribution to the process remains superfluous, making the whole idea of audience participation a mere symbolic gesture. In the case of the *Mukinya Players* (see Chapter Four), for example, audience participation is restricted and, it seems, participation is permitted only at the aesthetic level, that is, in the choreography of the dances and not in the formulation of their content and consequently the message.

At times, the initiators of Theatre for Development processes completely ignore the participation of the community in respect of all the stages, that is, research, the creative process, performance and post-performance activities: elements that are fundamental in any meaningful attempt at conscientisation of individuals and communities. These problems are explicit in the practice of Theatre for Development in Kenya as the following examples of different aspects of its procedures and methodology will suffice to illustrate.

However, because the practice of Theatre for Development is very eclectic and discursive in its manifestations, it would be duplicitous to come up with prescriptive, all-inclusive sets of procedures and methodologies. My intention in this chapter, therefore, is rather modest, namely to examine critically some Theatre for Development programmes in Kenya within what has been identified as the theoretical model(s) that defines and characterises the more appropriate and effective practice of Theatre for Development and, in the process, map out tenets designed to act as a mirror for the practitioners to engage with and in return decide through a process of self-reflective criticism how to improve their own practices.

5.1. Research

Research in Theatre for Development should not be confused with the academic type or form of research. It entails particularised research, where the researcher and the community researched are seen as equal partners. None is more knowledgeable than the other. It is in a way interactive, participatory and action-oriented research; a collaborative venture between the researcher/actor/facilitator and the community in a

quest to find out the community's perspective of the subject, its priority problems, interests, concerns, peculiarities and desires. Thus, research in Theatre for Development is the starting point in linking a local community's priority issues and external development agenda. It can be undertaken through discussion, living in the community and participating in their daily rituals and narrations, also known as 'homesteading', through performances with the community followed by discussions, the rendition of narratives and (in)formal interviews.

Granted that Theatre for Development deliberately sets out to confront the problems and difficulties facing a particular community, it is necessary that all the stakeholders in such an enterprise should participate in the (re)search, especially if it deals with the structural causes of their problems, in order to arrive at long-term solutions. Of significance is the manner in which this research is undertaken. The community must be the main focus of the research, as it is the community that will provide the information that facilitators will use later to devise a play, highlighting the identified problems facing the community. In most of the case studies I have analysed very little or no research was undertaken with the community on the problems facing such communities. *Mukinya Players*, for instance, depended on scientific information on the problem of FGM and yet it might have been a more fulfilling experience if the research had been based on the community's understanding and interpretation of the rituals related to female circumcision. The same can also be said of the *Imara Players*, who seem to have based the content and message about HIV and AIDS in their performances largely on common knowledge and information, overlooking the very fact that HIV-AIDS is socio-culturally bound phenomenon, which cannot be

confronted using messages and information that do not relate to the larger socio-cultural practices and context of the community. For instance, at the places where the *Imara Players* conduct their Theatre for Development activities, discourse on HIV and AIDS cannot be de-linked from the rituals associated with the practice of wife inheritance. Given this, thorough research should have been undertaken by sponsors of this particular project to enable the facilitators to raise questions through theatre that challenge the myths that make individuals in this community resist the use of condoms, especially in the performance of some of the overtly sensual rituals.

Given that Theatre for Development is an artistic and aesthetic experience, the (re)search must take into cognizance the people's own popular artistic expressions and forms such as proverbs, riddles, narratives, songs, dances, ritual performances, festivals and other forms of dramatic expression. It is in this way that research in Theatre for Development will conform to its philosophy that stresses a “bottom-up” approach in communication development. Because if this is not adhered to, then there is the danger of Theatre for Development introducing what researchers, scholars and critics of development refer to as cultural intrusion or invasion where cultural workers/facilitators from outside a community impose their cultural artefacts, ideologies and discourses on a community. It is therefore proper to carry out research on the community's performance aesthetics, because these principles are used for codification, and if a codification is strange to the culture of the participants, then they might not become involved in the ensuing activities fundamental in the process of both individual and social conscientisation. I would say that the PET project and CLARION work in Western Kenya and Rift Valley, respectively, were relatively

successful as they used the more familiar and popular artistic forms from the local communities.

5.2 Performance as Codification

Theatre, an act of performance, is normally considered as a codification in Theatre for Development. As an element of problem-posing education, it functions in similar ways to the other codifications: pictures, drawings and radio programmes, which Freire suggests unveil reality as part of the process of transforming it. Codifications act as a bridge between the facilitators, the target community and their lived reality. Freire outlines the requirements for an appropriate codification as follows:

The first requirement is that these codifications must necessarily present situations familiar to the individuals whose thematic is being examined, so they can easily recognise the situations.[...] an equally fundamental requirement for the preparation of the codification is that their thematic nucleus be neither too explicit nor too enigmatic.[...] Since they represent existential situations, the codification should be simple in their complexity and offer various decoding possibilities in order to avoid the brainwashing tendencies of propaganda. Codifications are not slogans; they are cognisable objects, challenges toward which critical reflection of the decoders should be directed. (1972:85-86)

Because Theatre for Development draws its inspirational philosophy, methodology and theoretical model from Paulo Freire's problem-posing pedagogy discussed in Chapter One, codification is fundamental and indispensable to the success of any Theatre for Development practice. This is because its interrogation, interpretation and analysis allow for the participants' heightened understanding and critical awareness of their reality, assists them to develop a clearer and more accurate perspective to explain reality as part of the process to change it. Nonetheless, it is by engaging with Tfd that

new insight, consciousness and conscientisation are achieved. Since it plays a central role in Theatre for Development, it is significant to find out which kind of *theatre* really fulfils Freire's requirements of codification. The question, however, is whether this codification should be explicit or implicit – or in Freire's own words 'explicit' or 'enigmatic' (1972:85) – to achieve heightened consciousness and conscientisation.

Codification, nonetheless, should not be seen as an end in itself, or just a maze (a puzzle to jog the minds of the target community), but should be a catalyst engaging the community or spectators in a meaningful and serious introspection into their reality with the main object, so to speak, being to lead them to reflect upon, and consequently transform, that reality. The act of engaging with a codification is what Freire refers to as the de-coding process and whose mechanisms he explains as follows:

The de-coding process requires moving from the part to the whole and returning to the part; from the concrete to the abstract and to the concrete again, as part of a constant flux and reflux. Through this process it is possible to reach a critical perspective of the reality previously perceived as dense and impenetrable. (1972:77)

Thus a theatrical performance as a codification should be framed in such a way that it allows the target community to discuss the problems that face them as individuals or as a society, and at the same time provide them with new ways to think of pragmatic strategies to solve such problems. In the analytical description of the case studies of Theatre for Development in Kenya in Chapter Four, it appears that most theatre teams had not taken into account this issue of codification as a fundamental element in

their enterprises. It is most probably in the activities of *CLARION Theatre*, *Kama Kazi*, *PETAACK* and the *Legal Resource Foundation Theatre Wing* that the idea of codification seems to have been thought out quite seriously. This is apparent in the intense and meaningful audience participation that seems to ensue during their facilitation processes.

Theatre-in-Education (TIE) specialist John O'Toole (1992) has noted that drama or theatre is an oblique medium. Therefore, it must be subjected to a process of decoding, interrogation or interpretation. As such the use of theatre, whether implicit or explicit, depends on the level of consciousness that is intended to be achieved by the target community or audience. In an effort to understand how theatre would operate explicitly or implicitly as codification, we will now take a critical look at some of the theatre scripts that have been utilised in Theatre for Development in Kenya by two different groups of theatre facilitators.

5.2.1 *Mosquito Mask*: Explicit Codification

This was a play written and performed to challenge a rural community's perceptions on the contraction of malaria. The script was co-authored by C.M. Mutero, Elly Owagogo and K.O. Angir. In the foreword to this unpublished play Hans R. Herren, Director General of the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE), Nairobi, Kenya notes that:

In response to the worsening Malaria situation, many countries have during the last decade adopted a preventive approach to Malaria control mainly through the use of insecticide-impregnated mosquito nets. Whereas significant reduction in morbidity and mortality has been achieved by this method, post experience with

Malaria dictates that a more holistic approach be emphasized. Such an approach should among other things embrace community creation and promotion of complementary low-cost environmental measures that can feasibly be implemented by resource-poor rural and urban populations. (*Mosquito Mask*, 1998:2)

The expressed objective of this theatre piece was to create awareness of the significant role mosquitoes play in disease transmission, and also to highlight the methods that are currently available for both mosquito and malaria control.

To achieve this objective ICIPE used the Moi Sindo Girls Secondary School's teachers and students to perform, interpret and realise the play-script. Though the play was entered in the Kenya National Schools and Colleges Festival, the underlying desire was to create awareness in the general public about the dangers of the mosquito and specifically malaria, and to suggest appropriate methods for the fight against mosquitoes and the prevention and cure of malaria.

The script of this play as codification is quite explicit. It dramatises the conflict between the mosquitoes and human beings. Through the conflict the dangers posed by mosquitoes are highlighted and fore-grounded. For instance, one of the characters in the drama, the Director of the Division of Vector Borne Diseases, states within the fictional context of the play that:

Malaria continues to be a major public health concern
Watch out, Mosquitoes Wat-ch ou-t (*Mosquito Mask*, pg. 6)

And the Scientist in the play vows that:
You.... You insect of death
I vow to work tirelessly

To bring you under control (*Mosquito Mask*, pg. 6).

So the play clearly established that malaria and other related diseases are caused by mosquitoes and suggests that a total war must be declared against the mosquitoes. The effect of mosquito bite is revealed through the Character Ogun, who complains rather desperately:

This malaria is wearing me out
I am in and out of hospital as if I live there
Struggling with the chemo-therapy formula 4-2-2-2
I have an important case tomorrow (*Mosquito Mask*, pg. 8)

Ogun's daughter, Vero, reinforces the gravity of the problem when she too complains about sickness whose symptoms are obviously those of malaria:

I am sick.... My joints are weak
I vomited in the bus ... Headache... (Lies on the seat shivering) (*Mosquito Mask*, pg. 8).

In the play we are told that Ogun has already lost his son, Joseph Mirothu, to malaria. This revelation by Ogun when he and his daughter are already showing signs of malaria is clearly intended to cause shock and fear in the audience. They are supposed to be alerted to, and be alarmed by, the inevitable consequences of malaria if they do not confront the menace of the mosquitoes. Interestingly, Ogun and his daughter are suffering from malaria and yet ironically at the same time Ogun is busy spraying anti-mosquito insecticides. Maybe this is a case of prevention is better than cure realised rather too late. To intensify the shock and instil fear in the audience, the scriptwriters used the flashback technique to replay the death of the son, Joseph Mirothu. The flashback utilises a Luo funeral dirge to warn the people that it was their laxity and

negligence regarding the mosquitoes that led to the death of Joseph Murothu. The deceased's aunt, Aunt Wambita, laments that:

You Katwere people
Had you taken heed to control Malaria
This village would not lose her people at this
alarming rate surely, this is a malaria epidemic
(*Mosquito Mask*, pg. 10).

It is intriguing that this statement comes from one of the villagers. It clearly makes the assumption that the villagers are aware that malaria is killing them, yet they seem to be complacent and do not take any serious action to fight the epidemic. The scriptwriters now use the character of the Pastor to reinforce the message that has already been made by a member of the community. This is an ingenious use of technique in Theatre for Development, because a Pastor is an opinion shaper, revered and highly respected in the community. He proclaims in his prayer for the departed soul that:

Young master Joseph
Was a victim of a mosquito bite
Which brought premature end to his life.
And which continues to cause untold suffering
To your children.
God, forgive the mosquitoes
And have mercy upon Katwere community.

O Lord, give the people of Katwere
Strength, Wisdom and determination

To put asunder this mosquito threat
May his soul rest in eternal peace!
All mosquitoes are very dangerous (x 2)
They killed Joe, my brother-in-law (x2)
As I wanna control them
Ooh I wanna control them (x 2) (*Mosquito Mask*, pg. 11).

The message is further reinforced by Rayo singers as they mourn the death of Joseph. It is obvious that the voices of the three different characters are deliberately utilised to reinforce the message and information that malaria is caused by a mosquito bite. However, there is an underlying tone of irony that undercuts this message. A cross-section of the society as reflected through the voices of the different characters seems to suggest that just about everyone in this society is aware that it is the mosquitoes that are responsible for spreading malaria, but they all seem to be completely complacent when it comes to practical engagement with the problem.

Whereas this script acts as a way of articulating societal problems that militate against development, it does not unfortunately offer dialogical possibilities for the community to interrogate the cultural attitudes implicit in their lives, which render them incapable of taking action that would enable them to overcome the problem. The script proceeds to provide what its initiators imagine to be the solutions to the problems facing the community, through the introduction of a medical perspective. Science is in this case considered as the only solution to the problem facing the community. The script apparently seems to suggest that scientific information is a panacea in the fight against the mosquito problem and its consequences. The particular scene within the plot of the

play that deals with the role of science in the fight against malaria advances the position that malaria treatment is secondary to the preventive measures. This is revealed quite explicitly in the conversation between the Doctor and Nurse characters in the play.

NURSE: (enters and administers drugs and the doctor fixes the intravenous quinine)
Something should be done about Katwera area. Eighty percent of the admission cases are due to malaria.

DOCTOR: The Director is considering declaring it a malaria emergency zone to empower and mobilize Katwera people to participate in prevention measures (*Mosquito Mask*, pg. 13).

However, the play does not allow the members of the community to explain why they have not been taking preventive measures. This can be explained by the fact that structural problems of the community have not been considered as possible contributory forces in the epidemic. Surely this community's economic challenges have been ignored in this discourse on malaria.

In an attempt to situate the problem within the cultural context of the community the scriptwriters have employed oral narrative technique as part of the process of information dissemination and message delivery. This is appropriate as the technique is part of the people's traditional pedagogic technique. Just as in the traditional set-up,

the grandmother figure in the script is the character employed to give a mythical sense to the rendition of the long rivalry between *Homo sapiens* and mosquitoes.

The main weakness of this codification lies in its explicitness in the presentation of issues which seem to be in sharp contradiction with Freire's comment on codification quoted in Noguiera (2002:117), namely "that the 'reading' of a codification should include what Chomsky calls the 'surface structure' and the 'profound structure,'" and which according to Noguiera (2002:117), "the first level includes the description of the codification, identifying its constitutive elements, which should be followed by a deeper exploration and as such several problems could be discussed based on a single codification'." But in this script a debate that could have been used to elicit the audiences' participation is restricted within the fictional context and the play's plot structure. The cause-effect relationship is hemmed in within the fictional world of the drama. It would have been profoundly significant if the issues that emerge in the fictional dialogue were actually facilitated and mediated by the actors, teachers and the scientist (medics) from ICIPE and the real community; not through the simulated stage community (village). The following dialogue between the fictional characters attests to this deficiency.

CHIEF: My people of Katwere are busy
struggling to live. They cannot listen to
this talk at this juncture because
they are trying to make ends meet.

SCIENTIST: You don't understand Chief.
It is not just mere mosquito talk;
the success of Katwere's struggle against
mosquitoes relies heavily on the

Katwere people themselves. We want them to be aware of the looming danger they live in and suggest to them the avoidable remedial measures (*Mosquito Mask*, pg. 17).

This could have been more meaningfully effected if done through a forum theatre/simultaneous dramaturgy approach, as it would have given the community an opportunity to relate the mosquito problem to other socio-economic and cultural problems facing them. Obviously the mosquito problem cannot be solved in isolation from the other problems facing the community. At the end of it all this script is a self-constituting information package that leaves very little room for dialogue. The experts (scientists) already have all the answers to the problems facing the community concerning the malaria epidemic. This attitude is amplified by the statement of the character who plays the role of Director, when he notes that:

Anyway, before the vaccines
Can be readily available to common man
Please remind patients and the community
At large that nets when properly used or
If treated with certain insecticides have also
Become universally accepted as a means of
Mosquito and malaria control (*Mosquito Mask*, pg. 20).

What could have ensued as a dialogue between the community and this codification in a problem-posing enterprise is negated by a simulated one within the fictional context. The following dialogue by the fictional characters summarizes the explicitness of the

codification which denies it (codification), its ability to raise to a higher level the consciousness of the participants.

Scene 6:

(Katwere Community enter- singing work song)

CHIEF: My people, this is a sign of co-operation
and indeed, unity that has made this community
a force to reckon with;
the mosquitoes will soon know who we are.

(They bust into a war song)

You the Awafe Clan, drain all the
ditches and unused water ponds and
cover all septic tanks.

The Akana Clan should clear the bushes
and trim the trees around houses.

You the Akana clan move around every
home assisting people cover their beds
with insecticide-impregnated mosquito nets.

MONSONIA: *(Mosquitoes take cover)*

Eeh Heeh, mosquito comrades don't sleep.
Rebate to the dark corners ... head for the lake.

CHIEF: *(Monologue, alone on stage)*

My people have gone to fight mosquitoes.
Children will have a blissful slumber
malaria has far-reaching effects on us.

1ST ELDER: The work is well done, Chief.

2ND ELDER: I never could have imagined
this could be done.

Those young men and women know their
business.

3RD ELDER: We are through and you people must now feast!

CHIEF: My people will ever again

allow the mosquitoes to rule our land.

CROWD: No and no!

CHIEF: Let us go and celebrate at the Chief's camp.

(*Mosquito Mask*, pp. 20-21)

The end of the play seems to be too romantic and simplistic. It does not really give space for serious reflection and action on the part of the community. All the solutions are simulated within the fictional world. This overrides the subtle cultural, economic and social problems that obviously militate against the fight against mosquitoes and malaria. The play does not show how the community can address the problem of mosquito nets and disinfectant sprays. These are the questions that a more participatory approach in which theatre mediates, as code, between the fictional world and the real-life situation could have set out to address/answer.

5.2.2 The Implicit Codification: Pandora's Box

Between 1995 and 1998 *Participatory Educational Theatre Against AIDS in Kenya (PETAAK)*, a Theatre in Education team working in Western Kenya, used a pre-prepared script in their HIV education programme. This script as a codification is quite subtle and its thematic concerns seem far removed from the reality of the intended audiences. It falls under what John O'Toole would refer to as analogy or an oblique text. He explains the rationale for using the oblique medium as follows:

In-drama in education, as in TIE, how much analogy the leader needs to use to relates directly to the negotiability of the participants, and the learning outcomes

which might emerge. A drama teacher in an inner-city school wishing to engage with the issue of racism with a group of Grade 12 students felt she could not confront the issue directly, since there were some very real tensions within the class between the main traditional ethnic groups of Anglo-Saxon and Greek, and the Vietnamese, who had recently formed a major catchments area. She felt that the attitudes of all the students within needed to be respected, and while it was imperative for her to bring up the subject and use drama to “challenge the groups’ initial perceptions” (...), she did not wish to bring the drama into conflict with strongly held prejudices and risk aggravating those prejudices. Accordingly she set the fictional context for the drama in seventeenth-century England, among a group of Flemish Huguenot weavers and the residents of the area where they settled (1992:67).

This concept of implicit codification has occupied the imaginations of many theatre practitioners and scholars over the years: Byam (1999), Freire (1972), O’Toole (1992), Mda (1993) and Noguiera (2002). Whereas there is great need to use an implicit code, Noguiera wonders how this should be undertaken when she reflects on a Theatre for Development codification that was used in *Ratones Theatre* project in Brazil.

Can we call these symbolic images codification? Freire’s main requirement of a codification is to present familiar situations possible to be recognised by the participants. Moreover a codification should allow for the increase of the participants’ understanding about reality, to allow them to build more accurate perspective to explain reality, as part of a process to change reality. Should the discussion around fragments of living situations be the only way to achieve this? Could, in a similar way, an imaginary situation bring contributions to help understand reality? (2002:119)

While a codification can use imaginary situations as O’Toole has pointed out, the codification should not end up as a puzzle to any extent, but should be a catalyst which the target community can put to use to analyse the problems associated with their reality. This brings me to the codification which *PETAACK* chose to use in their HIV education project in Western Kenya. This was an adaptation of the Greek myth of

Prometheus. Their rationale for the use of this myth is provided in the introduction to their presentation, which states that:

This presentation is based on the Greek myth of Prometheus. Despite origins in ancient times, this story has certain resources that apply to the present. It is a parable of our times, especially in the face of the AIDS pandemic. This story raises certain questions which remain unresolved and at various stages of tonight's presentation we will invite you to help us resolve them. Welcome. (*Pandora's Box*, 1)

The nature of myth, functioning more or less as a parable, readily lending itself to a multiplicity of interpretations and meanings, seems to have stimulated PETAAK to utilise this form. In a proposal to one of their funding bodies they explain:

... Participatory educational theatre and drama holds a great promise for significantly contributing to this synergistic mix as it has the richness and emotional impact, at deep emotional level, on people's understanding and attitudes. But to effectively do so, the methodology needs to be highly interactive and non-directive so as to allow people to self-explore, in an intense, personal manner, the issues and arising contradictions of HIV-AIDS. (CARE (K), PETAAK Project paper, 26.2.1996. pp.1).

In this presentation the dramatic text as a codification is both allegorical and analogical. This type of codification would certainly work well when the issues to be unravelled are considered as taboo and which members of the community would usually not speak nor talk about openly without feeling embarrassed. Given that this script was used in the early 1990s when AIDS was still a taboo subject, and given that most people rarely discuss sex-related issues in most African cultures, especially among the Luos of Western Kenya where this particular project was undertaken, the use of such subtle and obscure codification was indeed appropriate. In this sense the

ancient Greek myth of Prometheus became a safe code with which to initiate and negotiate (a) dialogue on HIV-AIDS and other related sexual issues.

PETAACK adapted this myth into a dramatic structure while maintaining its narrative sense through the use of narrators who doubled up as facilitators linking the myth-drama with the audience. The adaptation also involved the use of indigenous music and dances to create a familiar setting.

In the adaptation the myth is divided into three dramatic Acts. Each act revolving around a particular symbol/image and idea. The first act is an enactment of Prometheus's creation of man, his journey to Olympus to show off his creation to Zeus (the god of the gods), the argument between Prometheus and Zeus whether to destroy Prometheus's creation or not, the return of Prometheus and his determination to train man, Prometheus's dilemma in getting the fire, Zeus's refusal to give him fire, the sacrifice of the Bull and Prometheus's trick on Zeus. Zeus's flat refusal to give fire ends the act.

The second act begins with the mortals eating uncooked meat, Prometheus's plan to steal fire and his eventual stealing of it, his declaration to teach mortals about such things as astronomy, art, mathematics and architecture, his act of putting all the evils that would afflict the mortals in a box, leaving the box under the custody of Epimetheus, his instructions that the box should not be opened, his warning that Epimetheus should not receive gifts from Zeus, and the act ends as he leaves for the journey.

Act three, which is the last act, presents Zeus's revenge plan, the creation of Pandora with all her elegance, the presentation of Pandora to Epimetheus as his wife, her curiosity about the box's content, her trick on Epimetheus and eventual opening of the box, Prometheus' returns and his shock, and Zeus's reconciliation with mankind.

PETAAK presents this script as a problem-posing codification to the audience. The audience and facilitators are supposed to decode the meanings inherent in this performance text specifically in relationship to the question of socialisation, sexuality and HIV among young adults. Thus the main question that PETAAK grappled with was, "What do we want to tell our audience and how can that be achieved through the use of the myth of Pandora's Box as a codification?"

In using the myth as a codification, the PETAAK narrator/facilitators worked through central symbols/images and ideas in each of the three acts. In Act One fire as a central image was used to initiate a dialogue and discussion on the implications of the fire within the context of the myth, and its relation to the question of socialisation, sexuality and HIV. Zeus's refusal to give the fire was interpreted as the conservative forces in society that are not ready to provide information about sex to young adults. This was immediately connected to the Church's refusal to accept the introduction of sex education into the Kenyan school curriculum.

The central image in Act Two, the box, enabled the participants to see the contradictions in adult views on matters relating to sex and sexuality. The participants interpreted the box and its content as the messages and information about sexuality which parents, adults, keep away from young adults.

In Act Three the main symbols were identified as the box and Pandora. The discussion revolved around the dangers and risks of denying young adults information about their sexuality and how this kind of situation leads to anxiety and curiosity. The reconciliation between Zeus and the mortals was interpreted as the concerted effort needed to deal with the questions of young adults' socialization, their sexuality and the HIV.

From this presentation one can see that it is possible to use an implicit codification such as an ancient Greek myth to talk about a very contemporary issue such as HIV. Indeed, the myth provides more room for interpretation than a codification that is more direct and explicit, such as *Mosquito Mask*.

PETAAK's choice of codification is similar to one that was used in Brazil described by Nogueira and one which she finds most effective in revealing and improving participants' understanding of their living reality.

In the performance 'Pais dos Urubus' we did not propose a concrete link between corruption in Brazil and this imaginary country. The proposal was to imagine something completely different from the reality, at least the ideological way in which the society is presented to children. But stepping back from the realistic perspective or the intellectual approach to understanding society, they found in this opposite direction a lot of elements about reality. The Minister of Education actually did not propose: 'to preserve dirt, to pollute, not to clean the toilet to maintain such a good smell but, in their schools, the bathroom always has an awful smell'. In the story, old people were arrested to guarantee carcass stock. In the real world, there was a demonstration by the retired people in Florainopolis, against the miserable pension they were receiving and proclaiming their need for dignity. Their demonstration provoked a reaction: the old people were beaten by the police and this was broadcast by TV. In creating their stories, the children were revealing and improving their understanding of their living reality. (2002:120)

It seems from the above discussion that a codification that deals with a distanced perspective on reality offers more opportunity for conscientisation than one that is closely linked to the participants' lived reality. For instance, as codification, *Mosquito Mask* offers very little room for the participants to de-code the meanings of their social reality, because right from the outset it assumes privileged knowledge above the target community. As such, it comes out as a didactic piece that only advances the "monologic banking" pedagogy, where the learners are seen as empty vessels waiting only to be filled with knowledge from outside. As Freire (quoted in Noguiera 2002:116) strongly argues:

The codification represents a given dimension of reality as it lived by the people, and this dimension is proposed to be analysed in a different context than the one that is lived. In this sense, the codification transforms what was a way of living in a real context, into an 'objectum' in the theoretical context.

The capability of theatre as codification to transform the lived reality into a fictional context which can be analysed in various way is what makes it essential in Theatre for Development. Without a well thought through and structured codification no meaningful participation can take place. This brings me to the aesthetics of participation.

5.3 Participation in Theatre for Development

The inevitable question in Theatre for Development has to do with participation. It is through participation that both intervention and the consequent reflection and action are supposed to be achieved. But the question is: exactly when does this participation begin? More than this, what is meaningful and significant participation? In Brecht's

and Boal's forms of theatre, participation is embedded within the structure, which is “processual”, to use O’Toole’s (1992) coinage. In traditional African performances audience participation was also processual – part and parcel of the performance tradition. However, for most Theatre for Development practitioners in Kenya getting the audience to participate is a big problem, because most of them cannot differentiate between meaningful participation that leads to new consciousness and pseudo-participation, where spectators are involved in activities such as singing and dancing. In such cases hardly any development in consciousness can be expected.

An example of pseudo-participation can be well illustrated using the *Imara Players* Theatre for Development work (see Chapter 4). This is an instance where participation takes place at a very superficial level, as spectators are only involved in the more aesthetic aspects, that is, singing and dancing, but not at the cognitive level, i.e. engaging with the issues raised in the performances. This reveals itself in the way the actor/facilitators only attempted to involve the audience in singing and dancing, a most successful way of breaking the ice, but an activity which would not necessarily lead to levels of critical consciousness.

The deficiency in their participatory approach is evidenced by the kind of performance items they presented to the community. The team came into the community with pre-prepared art forms, self-constituted constructions in terms of content and messages to be delivered. The entire performance fails to provide room for the participants to engage in dialogue and discussion with the performance texts. It appears, apparently, that the facilitators assumed that the theatrical artefacts already had inherent in them

the problems as well as the solutions for this particular community. This kind of approach not only subverts but indeed negates Freire's and Boal's ideas on codification, in which theatre is supposed to be a catalyst for critical reflection and consciousness and not an end in itself.

For participation to be effective and meaningful, then, the theatre script as a code must be constructed in such a way that it would open up opportunities and possibilities for participants to actively interrogate it. For instance, the allegorical story that was used by the *CLARION Theatre* team, the ancient Greek myth of 'Pandora's Box' adapted by *PETTAK*, and the symbolic narrative used by the *Legal Resource Foundation (LRF)* readily offered themselves for discussion. I will briefly use the *LRF*'s script as an illustration.

LRF used a farm as a central symbol in their performance to create a forum for discussion on issues of democracy, governance and constitution-making. This symbolic play entitled "*Shamba la Mfukeri*" (*Mfukeri's Farm*), resonates with George Orwell's famous political satire *Animal Farm*. The story begins with a community at peace with itself until the intrusion by the white man. The white man completely disrupts their way of live, stops them from growing subsistence food crops, and instead introduces cash crops. In the process he also introduces new rules to govern the lives of these people, forcing them to pay taxes directly to him, and manipulates the opinion shapers in the community to assist him in his corrupt and oppressive acts. However, in the course of time the community awakens and, in an act reminiscent of the Mau Mau revolution in Kenya, throws him out. But ironically the same people

who had conspired with him in the oppression and exploitation of the community end up as the new leaders of the farm. As such, in the end there is no real change as these new leaders simply continue unchecked with the oppression and exploitation that the white man had begun. These new leaders sell the farmers' cash produce, but do not pay the farmers their due. This situation leads to disillusionment and the farmers in defiance of the law decide to uproot the cash crops. But the farmers realise that uprooting the cash crops would not readily solve their problem. In a show of solidarity, they invite the leaders for a meeting and after lengthy and stormy discussions they agree to elect an interim team of new leaders representing all interest groups in the society. This new team is also given a mandate to review and revise the rules that govern the farm.

The play is divided into three main episodes. Each central action in each episode is also graphically represented on a cloth backdrop with an accompanying question. The drama is introduced by a narrator, who is also the key facilitator and mediator between the actors and the audience. Each episode begins with the image that is on the cloth backdrop and the audience selects the episode that they want to watch. Before each presentation, the narrator/facilitator ask the spectators/audience their interpretation of the image. The image is then animated into a performance drama, which in a way reveals how the image had been arrived at. The drama, cyclical in structure, ends with the same image. It is at this moment that the narrator involves the audience in discussing the issues raised by the drama. But the discussion is not restricted only to the issues in the fictitious world of the drama, but through questions and answers is gradually also connected to the social and political issues facing the community in

particular and the whole country in general. This symbolic, allegorical and analogical codification allowed for diverse responses from the spectators.

As indicated in the above illustration, it is in fact through the act of participation that the community gains insight into the problems facing it, analyses its problems, and reflects on ways and means to solve such problems. Without meaningful participation on the part of the community in a Theatre for Development enterprise, there would obviously be nothing to differentiate it from (say) a lecture, a conventional proscenium arch theatre presentation or even the rendition of the same material through a mediated medium such as the TV or radio.

5.4 Facilitation and Intervention

The other more important elements in Theatre for Development are facilitation and intervention. Indeed, the whole idea behind Theatre for Development is to intervene. In a sense, then, one would say that all the dramatic texts used in Theatre for Development anticipate intervention, to use Freire's (1970) words, in the limited situations of the target community. However, as Mda (1993) has observed, intervention without proper facilitation might not achieve much in terms of conscientisation. This aspect of Theatre for Development seems to be the most elusive for most Theatre for Development practitioners in Kenya. An analysis of a project commissioned by the International Committee of the Red Cross on ethnic conflicts or land clashes will serve as an example.

5.4.1. *Maua Kwenye Jua la Asubuhi (Flowers in the Morning Sun)*: Product-Oriented Theatre Enterprise

As mentioned above, the play *Maua Kwenye Jua la Asubuhi (Flowers in the Morning sun)* was commissioned by the International Committee of the Red Cross to highlight the devastating effects of war. Specifically, it was supposed to confront the effects of the so-called land clashes that had dominated most parts of Kenya just before the introduction of competitive multiparty politics in the early 1990s and once again just before the general elections in 1997. The play is in fact an interpretation of the events of that history by the playwright Kithaka wa Mberia. Though the setting of the play is in an imaginary country, Lolomo, there are, several indicators to suggest its resonance with the events that took place in Kenya. The songs and linguistic nuances of certain characters in the play reveal as much.

The play pits two ethnic groups against each other, namely, the Ndiku and the Tange. The rivalry between the two ethnic groups derives from their obsessive quest to control the political powers of the country. The Tanges, who are in power, are using their position to intimidate and annihilate the Ndikus.

The play begins with displaced people in a refugee camp receiving relief food. From their lamentations it is revealed that they were economically endowed and independent before violence was unleashed upon them. Through the use of flashbacks, mimes and freeze images we are presented with the history of their present predicament. Through a close-up drama of the families of the two political leaders we get an insight into the crisis. Through the two leaders, Kabitho and Chebwe, it emerges that the conflict

between the two ethnic groups is political. After the displacement of his community, Kabitho is organising ways and means whereby his community can protect itself. Chebwe, on the other hand, is also training his people for yet another attack on the Ndikus. However, in spite of the imminent conflict there is a subtext of a romantic nature between Kabitho's nephew, Waito, and Chebwe's daughter, Nali. Several issues emerge in the master narrative and the sub-narratives. The main issue, however, revolves around the structural causes of conflicts in Africa. From wa Mberia's point of view, the conflict are by-products of political greed and unchecked ambitions.

From the discourse of this play it is obvious that it was constructed to function as an intervention against civil wars and ethnic conflicts. It is in this sense that it functions as a Theatre for Development instrument. But the play seems to fall short of Mda's (1993:165) explanation of intervention:

...as a result of the target community's participation in naming their problems, in reflecting on them by exploring the reasons for their existence, and in the community decision making on the course of action to take in order to solve the problems.

From Mda's (1993:165) description of conscientisation, namely that "community participation, of crucial importance in conscientization, happens during the process of dramatization - the process of creating and performing the play," it is clear that this play did not achieve this,. Given the fact that this was a production commissioned by the Red Cross, the process of dramatisation was limited to the group of artists invited to the production. Another factor that militates against this production is that the process of participation was limited by its very conventional framing and structuring.

It actually runs from the beginning to the end without any interruptions to allow the community to engage, interact and conduct a dialogue with the very sensitive issues that it highlights. As Mda notes:

Intervention happens during the dramatization process when catalysts interrupt the proceedings of the dramatization to contribute their views, or to guide the participants. Intervention is directorial, and serves...to facilitate deeper analysis. (1993: 164).

In “*Maua Kwenye Jua la Asubuhi*” there are opportunities for such interruptions, but they were not taken advantage of. There is, for example, a moment when Chebwe is in a dilemma, wondering whether to continue with his evil acts or not. This is revealed through the physical personification of his conscience. Instead of the use of the personification of his conscience, perhaps the play could have been interrupted at this point and members of the audience invited to discuss this crisis with him (Chebwe). Moreover, instead of using songs within the fictional context of the play as solutions, members of the audience could have been invited to participate in the search for solutions to the problems raised by the drama. Furthermore, instead of the “happy ever after” ending enacted through a symbolic gesture of reconciliation through the use of yet another song, a more interactive Boalian Forum Theatre would have offered more an immediate opportunity for discussion and therefore more learning and insight.. This is the moment that the audience would have confronted their reality through this fictional codification; this would have been a more useful experience for the audience than their witnessing romanticised solutions embedded in the concluding song of the drama:

I dream of a country...
Where there is peace
Not the flow...
Of blood in the rivers...
Let us stretch our hands...
In the direction of peace...
O peace
Peace to women
Peace to men
Peace to children,
Peace to our country.
“Where there is a will
A way will not lack”
“I have started a plan with
other fellow women”
“This is the time for the first step.”

As it is, this play offers very little room for intervention and community participation. Indeed, in this particular enterprise the theatre group, with motivation from the sponsors, created a play and took it to communities in both Kenya and Tanzania as a finished product. During the performances the members of the community were not involved at any level in terms of contributing views on issues raised in the play, not even during the creation process. The entire performance is one continuous ‘narrative’ running from the beginning to the end and the members of the target community remain on the periphery as passive spectators. Throughout the performance it is only members of the theatre group on the stage who are involved in enacting out the causes and effects of war and ethnic conflicts. At the end the play comes out as a sermon,

seriously didactic and moralising. In fact, the following song used in the play is a very good example:

I stand before
To denounce
The spillages of blood
Of my brothers and sisters
We use a lot of strength
To oppress our friends
Instead of building
and feeding our nation.
It is possible for our tribes
to live together
like flowers in the morning sun.

For this play to have had impact as an interventionist codification, it should have allowed within its performance structure moments of interruption and acted more as a catalyst, generating more questions than answers, and maintaining an open-ended structure. Indeed the best examples of scripts that seems to fulfil the requirements of interventionist codes are the ones by *CLARION*, *PETAACK* and *Kama Kazi* discussed in Chapter Four and '*Shamba la Mfukeri*' by LRF discussed earlier in this chapter.

CONCLUSION

This study undertook to examine critically Theatre for Development in Kenya and in the process endeavour to identify and reflect on some aspects of its fundamental procedures and methodology. As emerged from the description and analysis of the case studies drawn from Kenya in particular and Africa in general, a search for a clear set of procedures and methodology for the practice of Theatre for Development has always preoccupied and predominated theatre critics, researchers, scholars and practitioners. My analysis of most of these cases in a way indicates that most Theatre for Development enterprises have not been very effective, (even though there have been many conferences and seminars organised to chart a way forward) as they lacked clear sets of procedures and or methodology within which Theatre for Development as a practice would operate. As Boal (1979:122) has accurately noted, “in order to understand this poetics one must keep in mind its main objective, to change people.”

The question this study has been grappling with is: how can ‘*theatre*’ as a codification be used effectively in the process of change? Since the 1960s, as demonstrated in the various case studies in Africa, Theatre for Development has been consistently obsessed with the search for a set of procedures and methodology. Such procedures and methodology aim to elicit the participation of the target community as a way of awakening their consciousness and conscience. This approach is predicated on the notion that, if the target community can participate fully in the process of Theatre for Development from the very first stages of research right through to performance and

post-performance engagements, then they can translate this experience and insight into real action. It is in this sense that this kind of 'theatre,' as Boal (1979:142) has observed, becomes "a rehearsal for real action".

For theatre to achieve this function, that is, rehearsal for real action, its methodology must be oriented towards change. In Kenya the discursive and eclectic nature of the practice have not allowed for any clear set of procedures and methodology. Every theatre group seems to conduct its own Theatre for Development practices according to what it perceives as the most effective and appropriate procedure and methodology. This is not to say that there is one clear way of working with Theatre for Development, yet there are certain principles which, if not followed, could mean that the whole process cannot achieve the desired conscientisation and therefore change.

It is indeed ironical that there are no clear procedures and methodology of doing Theatre for Development relevant to the Kenyan situation and yet one of most celebrated success stories of Theatre for Development, the Kamiriithu Community Theatre, took place in Kenya in the late 1970s and early 1980s (See Chapter Three). After the government banned Kamiriithu Community Theatre activities, Theatre for Development became dormant and when it occasionally manifested itself, it was quite subdued. But with the wind of political change that brought democracy to Kenya in the 1990s, more freedom of expression became evident in most spheres of Kenyan society. Theatre practitioners also took advantage of this expanded freedom and gradually theatre began to flourish once again. Theatre for Development also carved a niche for itself. Its revival was enhanced by a myriad of other factors, including the

proliferation of NGOs in development communication using theatre in the dissemination of information and messages on diverse issues such as HIV-AIDS, family planning, civic education, female genital mutilation, among others.

The acute problem of unemployment amongst the school leavers and university graduates also contributed to the mushrooming of theatre groups that saw Theatre for Development projects as avenues for gainful employment. Most of these theatre groups obviously had very little or no knowledge at all of the philosophy, methodology and theoretical models of the practice. It was therefore inevitable to undertake a study that would critically engage with the fundamental aspects of the practice of Theatre for Development's procedures and methodology, if the practice were to remain relevant and effective in the realm of conscientisation and change. Tim Prentkil *et al.* (2003:99), argue very clearly for this:

Theatre for Development (TFD), around under various guises and labels since 1970s, has lately begun to give serious attention to forms which are appropriate and effective for the self-development of diverse communities around the world. The desire to look for a poetics of TFD reflects both a typically post modern concern with relation of form to content and coming of age of the discipline that acknowledges the need to move beyond an exclusive focus on questions of agenda. Today it is widely if belatedly understood that culture, the ways in which people make meanings out of their experience of the world, is the vital ingredient not only for quality of life but also for the survival of the diversity of the cultures upon which our future as humans depends. Therefore how we express ourselves, the range of expressive tools available to us, is important as what we express, our understanding of the issues, agendas and contradictions that confront us globally and locally.

This argument on the importance of the way people express themselves in fact clearly show that Theatre for Development is not just about the messages to be disseminated,

but more about the ‘way’ that the message is delivered. It is this concern with the ‘way’ that messages are packaged and delivered that prompted me to investigate and interrogate constitutive procedures and methodology for the practice of Theatre for Development

Because Theatre for Development is not just about the performance and its effects on the audience, a search for appropriate procedures and methodology – including all that happens before and after the performance – is therefore essential. For instance, through research, which is one of the aspects of procedure, the problems of a community are collectively identified, not through scientific methods, but by way of the community’s own aesthetics as expressed in songs, narratives and even dances, among others. This research is a collaborative effort by the outside facilitators and the community members. Its collaborative nature and utilisation of local forms of indigenous knowledge and aesthetics safeguards the community against the intrusion of the outsider’s agenda or what Freire calls cultural invasion. However, from the case studies of Theatre for Development in Kenya that I have outlined, this is the exception rather than the rule. Prentkil’s comment largely supports this argument, when he says that:

There is now something of a crisis in the application of TFD which can only be confronted successfully by repositioning it within the radical discourses emerging in the areas of resistance to globalisation and the promotion of indigenous knowledge by a deconstruction of its aesthetics in order that it can operate within a poetics that is responsive to the contemporary crises, both local and global. (Prentkil *et al.* 2003:102)

After the research has been undertaken, it has to be processed into some form of codification. In Theatre for Development the codification takes the form of '*theatre*'. The way this codification is used is very sensitive, because it is the stimulus for critical debate in the audience; it is the starting point of involvement of the 'spect-actors'; it is also the agent provocateur of critical consciousness and collective social action in the wider community. An appropriate codification must be open-ended to allow interrogation, and must clearly draw a balance between form and content, entertainment and education.

Nevertheless, theatre as codification in a Theatre for Development enterprise on its own cannot effect any development of critical consciousness. In order for it to be effective, there must be a skilled facilitator to intervene through asking questions, to interrogate social realities and perspectives, or to invite other participants to provide their perspectives on the same experience. Throughout the facilitator is motivated by a conception of change. What are the hindrances to change? What possibilities for change are located within the community? Who needs to change in the given context or situation? Facilitation is typically interrogative and the intention is to invite the participants to explore the familiar with eyes wide open, so that what was once believed as deterministic, inevitable and fixed now appears as transitory and capable of being transformed through human efforts and actions. However it should be noted that the question of intervention and facilitation has always been polemical. The nagging question has always been how much intervention should be allowed to enable the participants to own the change process.

Though I have only highlighted critical concepts and elements that inform what I have referred to as the procedures and methodology of the practice of Theatre for Development in Kenya, the dynamics of the practice are more complex and other dimensions – such as theatre games, use of space, choice of language, the role of donors, and the place and impact of the newly introduced course on Theatre for Development at Moi and Maseno Universities, the impact assessment of the practice based on pre-testing and post testing techniques – might need to be explored more extensively in future studies.

From the findings of this research I would like to make the following recommendations:

Because this thesis is intended to provide Theatre for Development practitioners in Kenya and other parts of the world with a critical model to evaluate their own approaches and procedures without necessarily being prescriptive, it is anticipated that its publication or its parts will make it more accessible to Theatre for Development practitioners.

Furthermore, for Theatre for Development to become more effective in approach, practitioners who attend both local and international conferences and seminars (see chapter 2 and 4) should endeavour to share the knowledge and skills acquired in such conferences and seminars with new and upcoming practitioners. In addition, there should be more workshops for the practitioners at the grassroot levels. Good examples can be derived from the works of CLARION and Artnet Waves Communication. (see chapter 2).

Finally, a mechanism utilising pre-testing and post-testing research techniques should be put in place to assess the impact of Theatre for Development as a tool of social and behavioural change. Though, it be note should be taken of the fact that Theatre for Development alone can not effect social and behavioural changes, as it is in itself it is a function of several other factors: political, cultural and economic.