



COMMUNITY / STREET DRAMA

Drama is a powerful and entertaining form of communication, and it can be used informally without the need for an indoor stage or theatre house. Community or street drama is often presented in ordinary buildings or in the open air, and can be performed in various locations. Plays can be devised to suit the local audience and inexpensive props and costumes can be made.

Advantages of Community / Street Drama

Because drama is live and is performed close to the audience, it allows people to actively respond to what they are seeing. In some cases the audience is encouraged to interact with the actors or even asked to step into the performance themselves. Topical issues can easily be included in the drama.

- Local people /actors can be used.
- Drama is easy to understand and enjoyable for all community members.
- Plays can be performed in the local language.



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How to use Community / Street Drama

Very short and simple drama performances can be devised without much help from experienced actors, but for a bigger drama project experienced people will be required. They can help with choosing, adapting or writing a script and with casting characters and rehearsing the performance.

- Be clear about the development issue you are tackling and make sure the drama communicates it effectively.
- Consider using local stories, humour, slang, song and dance.
- Incorporate opportunities for audience involvement.
- Consult with existing drama groups and consider using local actors.
- Consider the gender balance within the drama team.
- Select an appropriate venue and time for performances.
- Promote the performance in advance.
- Consider recording performances on video.

Constraints of community / street drama

- Some experience in drama production and acting will be required.
- The drama group will require significant rehearsal time.

Real life story

Conflict Theatre in Your Village!

Kachahari Theatre is a kind of interactive drama where the audience themselves direct a performance about their own lives. In the Nepali language, the word “Kachahari” means a village gathering or a place to seek justice. It refers to a traditional kind of people’s court where villagers gather to hear and resolve conflicts in their own community. Kachahari theatre attempts to create this kind of forum using drama. The first half of a play is presented by a group of actors.

They go to a village ahead of the performance, observe and ask the locals questions about their lives and the kind of conflicts with which they are confronted. In this case the actors are people from the local communities, that have learned some basic acting skills. They already know the broad basis of the conflicts, but through informal discussions with people they learn how such conflicts are seen and experienced locally.

Based on this reality, they put together the first few scenes of a play. The scenes incorporate aspects of daily life in the village in which the audience lives, and uses words and expressions that the locals use. The play builds up to a dispute that represents the social conflict in which local people are caught. A vigorous discussion takes place when the audience is asked to suggest answers to the conflict, and the actors show the suggestions on the spot. Various ideas are tried out and their consequences shown. In some instances members of the audience come into the play and act out their own ideas. The stage seems to provide a place that is safe to try out ideas. Consciously or subconsciously the audience knows that the play is really about themselves, but the world of drama creates a space where one’s imagination can be seen acted out.



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Real Life story by kind permission of MS Nepal

Website: http://www.msnepal.org/reports_pubs/conflict_theatre/2.htm

Further reading

Storytelling Practical Action Technical Brief

Singing and Dancing Practical Action Technical Brief

Puppetry Practical Action Technical Brief

Public Gatherings Practical Action Technical Brief

CAT / Public Address System Practical Action Technical Brief

Video Practical Action Technical Brief

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Practical Action is a development charity with a difference. We know the simplest ideas can have the most profound, life-changing effect on poor people across the world. For over 40 years, we have been working closely with some of the world's poorest people - using simple technology to fight poverty and transform their lives for the better. We currently work in 15 countries in Africa, South Asia and Latin America.

technical brief