



INTRODUCTION

The Social Theatre Toolkit consists of five guides describing different approaches to social theatre in West Africa. This toolkit was created as part of the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) awareness raising approach in West Africa.

Due to its educational and transformative approach, social theatre is an important means of stimulating debate around social issues and sensitive topics.

IOM regularly uses it in the framework of community actions to engage audiences about safe migration, local opportunities and risks to irregular migration.

Social theatre is used by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations, as it can address certain socio-cultural realities by speaking directly to the target audience.

This toolkit shares knowledge and practical tools. It is intended for artists, facilitators, educators, teachers, and cultural and humanitarian workers who wish to use theatre for social purposes.

Included are tutorial videos, which help practitioners, amateurs and even the non-experts, to learn the basics to lead a theatre workshop or how to put on a show.

In this toolkit, the following five social theatre approaches practiced in West Africa are featured:

Theatrical Storytelling
Popular Theatre
Forum Theatre
Collective Creation
Improvisation Battles

This toolkit presents the basics of each of these approaches. It does not claim to provide a single definition, rather these guides are a proposal that can be used as a basis for experimenting and combining different approaches in order to develop new forms of theatrical expression.



COLLECTIVE CREATION

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A SELECTION OF ARTISTS OR GROUPS PRACTICING
COLLECTIVE CREATION IN WEST AFRICA

OVERVIEW OF THE APPROACH

Collective Creation is a social theatre approach where a participatory process brings together a group of people to create a theatre performance.

Traditional roles such as actors, directors, playwrights, are dropped in favor of an accessible community where every member can contribute to the development of the content and form of the show.

At the heart of this process is a dialogue between various artistic expressions such as music, dance, theatre, poetry and visual arts which are used to engage audiences into an experience that brings about change.

HISTORY OF THE APPROACH

Collective Creation is a traditional practice used by communities around the world. It is rooted in artistic movements of the 1960's, 1970's and 1990's where a more equitable society was promoted, and social and political actions were encouraged.

We find in North America, Europe, Colombia and other parts of the world interesting experiences and experimental approaches.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

Unlike the other methods that have a written set of rules, Collective Creation translates into a variety of experiences that find their common ground under some guiding principles: collaboration, participation, dialogue and groupwork are essential in Collective creation.

What defines Collective Creation above all is the way in which the text and the staging are produced collectively. In this approach, the creative process and the final product - the performance - are equally important. Every step is an opportunity for individual and collective empowerment.

The audience is called to question beliefs, take a stand or a concrete action by interacting with the performers during the show.

ACTORS

Collective Creation allows non-professionals to be involved in the creative process. Community members, artists and people with similar life experiences are brought together. They may be survivors of gender-based violence, refugees, returnees, environmental activists or other witnesses to social problems.

The actor-author is encouraged to express his or her own experience through writing and then acting.

They share their truth to the group. The exchange can bring people together and strengthen resilience and personal development. This theatrical experience can be a form of catharsis.

CREATIVE PROCESS

The creative process starts with the creation of the group. Participants identify a theme that interests or influences their lives. Usually a workshop facilitated by an expert allows participants to share their personal stories and thoughts.

Theatre exercises can range from storytelling to improvisation and collective writing sessions that help the group to find their own voice. At the end, the group finalizes the script and starts rehearsing it before the performance.

RULES OF THE GAME

There are no fixed rules to co-create, other than respect and freedom for every participant to express their views and emotions.

At the beginning there is usually no text, no script but the people. A written script can be the result of the creative process and be ready at the end of it.

This approach easily brings to collaboration with artists of different disciplines and can result in video production, photography, visual art installations and other collaborations.

PERFORMANCE SPACES AND PUBLIC

Collaborative performances are often done in public spaces. Markets, youth centers, on the street, bus stations - each place is an opportunity to meet the public.

The choice of a place can be a way to target a specific audience. For example, performing in a market can be a way to target women outside of their household to discuss certain issues.

Bringing social theatre into real-life spaces is a way to show we can change our reality.

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✓ Guinea

Troupe humoristique pour l'éducation et le développement (Thed)

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✓ Niger

Maman Sani Moussa, choreographer, dancer, artistic director, at Association Néma from Niger

✓ Senegal

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For more information

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