



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.



POPULAR THEATRE

1

OVERVIEW OF THE APPROACH



2

HISTORY OF THE APPROACH



3

BASIC PRINCIPLES



4

CREATIVE PROCESS



5

ACTORS



6

PERFORMANCE SPACES AND PUBLIC



7

MAIN GROUPS IN WEST AFRICA



8

POPULAR THEATRE MAIN EVENTS IN WEST AFRICA



Popular Theatre - which is the opposite of elitist theatre and literary theatre, based on an absolute text - is inspired by traditional forms of theatre practiced in villages, especially during social events (such as births, weddings or harvests).

It is a multidisciplinary form of theatre, which mixes music, dance and performance, which often includes comedy.

In Africa, there have been forms of representation comparable to what is called theatre elsewhere for thousands of years. For example, in Mali, after the harvest season, during weddings or circumcisions, the villagers would gather to watch skits performed by the youth of the village.

This type show, which includes music, dance and sketches, is called Koteba. Often, the skits echo the daily life of the inhabitants. This kind of practice exists everywhere in West Africa. Popular Theatre has its origins in this folklore.

Popular Theatre aims to democratize access to spaces of artistic expression. As its name indicates, it is a theatre for the people, which intends to go beyond the theatre halls to meet its audience. Popular Theatre is a multidisciplinary theatre that often mixes performance, music, dance and poems.

The show is presented in the form of a relevant and coherent thread and is composed of different local artistic talents.

Popular Theatre generally uses comical methods, such as satire or caricature.

Popular Theatre deals with topics of interest to communities and frequently addresses the issue of living together. Among the social issues that can be addressed, these have included child marriages, rural exodus, water shortage, etc. Topics that are relevant to the daily lives of community members. Popular Theatre uses comedy to denounce certain factors of dysfunction in the society.

The creative process is flexible and free. There are several ways to create a play, sometimes companies use a script.

This script can be modified according to the work of the actors. Other times, the actors start with a theme and are invited to reflect, discuss and improvise to create the play.

Actors are drawn from the community and often speak for the community. In order to best improvise, the actors start by doing research on their characters, such as by interviewing members of their community.

The find answers to questions like:
How do their characters dress?
How do they live and express themselves?
What are the issues they face?

It is also important for an actor to practice regularly with the other members of the troupe. This will facilitate the work of improvisation.

Popular Theatre is brought to the audience, not the other way around. It is therefore performed in places that are open and accessible to the community, such as schools, soccer fields, public squares, and markets. Any place that is accessible to the community.

In order to be understood by as many people as possible, it is often performed in local languages.

✓ Côte d'Ivoire

Company les Ambassadeurs d'Abidjan (CT2A)

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ambassadeursdabidjan

✓ Gambia

Jamma Ak Salaam Drama Group

Website: www.jammaaksalaam.gm

✓ Guinea

Company Fénènè from Guinea

Email: aboukanke253@gmail.com

Company La Muse

Address: Quartier Kipé, Commune de Ratoma,

Conakry/Guinea

Email: contac@lamusegn.org

✓ Senegal

Company Bou-saana in Ziguinchor

Website: <http://www.bousaana.com>

Company Gindi from Kaolack

Email: gindikl@hotmail.fr

Association Ker Mame from Ngor, Dakar

Email: mouhagtp@gmail.com

✓ Côte d'Ivoire

"Rencontres théâtrales d'Abidjan" (Rethab)

✓ Guinea

Humanitarian festival "FRISTIVAL"

✓ Senegal

"Festival national des arts et de la culture"

"Festival International de Théâtre et de Danses populaires"

For more information

Bibliography:

✓ JOULIA Dominique. Regards de l'étranger : Notre Librairie. Revue du livre. Afrique, Antilles, Océan Indien, 1984, n°75 – 76.

✓ DERIVE Jean. Oralité moderne et nouveaux bardes dans les pays africains francophones : Revue de Littérature Comparée, 1993, n°265, pp.101-108.

✓ MAÏGA M. Le Koteba. Le grand escargot bambara : Notre Librairie. Revue du livre. Afrique, Antilles, Océan Indien, 1984, n°75 – 76, pp.135-136.