



## Summary Report on two week training in Interactive and Legislative Theatre

### *1. Background*

In June 2015, Helen Lindley from Oxfam in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) contacted Theatre for a Change to explore the potential of a training for CEDIER, a partner organisation in DRC. The focus of the training was to enable the representatives of the CEDIER, and some local Oxfam staff, to be able to use Interactive and Legislative Theatre to enable community groups to represent themselves and their rights to people in power, particularly the army and the police.

Over the course of the following months, Oxfam and Theatre for a Change carried out a risk assessment, and developed a Terms of Reference and agreed a budget, and the training was agreed for two weeks from 27<sup>th</sup> June to 8<sup>th</sup> July in Bukavu, in South Kivu.

### *2. Planning*

Extensive planning for the training was carried out. This had three areas of focus:

- The first involved logistical planning, to ensure that the Theatre for a Change trainers were prepared and that their health and safety was ensured.
- The planning for the training also focussed on ensuring that we integrated the needs of the group into the delivery of the training, by consulting with Oxfam staff and asking each of the participants to complete a needs assessment in advance.
- The planning also involved preparing for the training in French, primarily by translating the Legislative Theatre manual.

### *3. The group*

We started with a group of 17 and ended with a group of 18. One participant attended the first day (Helen). Another joined us on the first Wednesday and yet another joined us on the Monday. The group consisted of five organisations in total:

Oxfam - 6 participants

CEDIER - 9 participants

SOPROP - 1 participant

SIKASH - 1 participant

UPDI - 1 participant



Ages ranged from early 20's to mid-50's with differing levels of work experience, and different degrees of seniority - from an organisation co-founder through to co-ordinations and animators.

One participant had a disability. He was able to participate in most activities and games although not all. He also needed to sit in a chair for most of the day but was able to stand for the occasional activity.

In terms of responses to the process, some were more willing than others to address their own behavioural tendencies explicitly and adopt a reflective learning approach. This is an approach that we encourage in all our training of facilitators so that they are aware of their own patterns of gendered behaviour, and are able to act as role models as well as facilitators. However, by the end of the two weeks most, if not all, participants were clearly invested in the process. They all showed high levels of commitment, openness and playfulness throughout. They were a particularly expressive group. One reflection question would provoke answers from almost all participants. They were clearly curious and asked many questions throughout the process about the methodology and how best to integrate it into their current approach as well as the communities with whom they work.

The manual on Legislative Theatre was very well received as an accompaniment and reminder, especially for those who clearly want to implement the methodology sooner rather than later.

#### *4. What went well and what was challenging? How were one challenges met?*

Both we and the participants felt that the training was a success. By the end of the two weeks, participants were already discussing amongst themselves how they might implement the methodology into their current structures of facilitation.

Participants openly acknowledged that they had expected more of a sedentary 'table-based' training and were all surprised and stimulated by the playful, interactive nature of the work. The opportunity to share and represent (via sculptures, improvised scenes etc) the difficult situations they frequently experience in their daily working lives, proved novel, revelatory and clearly valuable to them. As a result, the quality of the work they produced had a notable vitality and gravity. Many of the activities also clearly inspired them/ struck a chord - 'Laying down the stick', 'The human knot', the discrimination exercise, etc.

Challenges included:

*The size of the group and time-keeping* - as an expressive group, we often struggled to negotiate day endings and reflective discussions. On the one hand, we were all keen to end on time, on the other, all participants wanted to have their say. We tried a variety of strategies to meet this challenge - a 'guardian du temps' was appointed each day (who would anticipate endings with 5 minute warnings), we encouraged them to offer their (which often took a few



minutes to express) feedback as one phrase, or even word. Lastly, we would set time-frame challenges eg. You have 5 minutes to exchange stories. They responded well to this.

*Re-emergence of unconscious behavioural patterns* and how to address them - Having begun the training by reflecting on our own behaviour, the behaviour of the group etc., maintaining this degree of awareness throughout the two weeks proved challenging. One way we addressed this was to invite participants to ask each other open ended questions in relation to team-building activities. Also, as the training evolved and participants facilitated more and more, we were able to add our observations and feelings as participants. Something we could have done differently to address this is to ask the facilitator what they noticed about the group. Depending on their answer, we could then ask them what they might do to encourage further awareness from their participants.

This also manifested in terms of male and female tendencies throughout the two weeks. It was notable that men tended to dominate during activities. Some of the men made very clear efforts to address the imbalance but two of the more timid female participants found it harder to step forwards. To address this (as well as an incentive to start on time), we left the juggling balls in the room and suggested they begin before starting time. This slowly but surely became a check-in diagnostic to notice what may have happened. Ie. Men and women forming different groups, men taking central positions, men taking the ball more etc. In partner activities and during co-facilitation, we strongly encouraged men and women to pair up.

*Risk analysis:* Safety and security were recurrent concerns. We addressed this by talking about TfaC's emphasis on the long-term nature of the work in Malawi and Ghana (ie. A longer term process involving series of stages - developing relationships with power-holders, gradually building trust within community etc) as well as introducing a session on 'Minimising risk and resistance, maximising participation' - a brainstorm created by ourselves and the group.

*Learning Journals:* Participants were somewhat confused as to what exactly the learning journal was for. There are at least two documents in the file which contain a list of possible questions. Added to that, there was at least one daily learning journal question. We attempted to simplify the structure by suggesting they focus on the daily question and to reflect on their own behaviour, the group's behaviour and their own facilitation skills later on. Upon reading the journals, it was clear that they had relied on familiar journal layouts which were reflective to a limited extent - more focussed on activities and daily objectives. In the future we would consider spending a good half hour introducing the journal with examples of previous participants' journals.

*CEDIER expectations:* It became clear that CEDIER expected to be the sole beneficiary of the training. It caused some tension towards the end of the training when co-facilitators were



paired up and mixed (re: organisations). However, once clarified with the co-ordinator, he understood and accepted why this might be of value.

*Rules of Legislative Theatre (LT) 'Touch tag Improvisation':* The term touch tag and the possibilities inherent in LT proved occasionally confusing. Having just got to grips with touchtag for behaviour change, the new and extended possibilities in LT were tricky to establish as it consists rather more of introducing new characters and scenes rather than only tagging the protagonist. We addressed this by introducing a new session on 'LT interventions'. We also introduced facilitation on Tuesday and practiced it in teams every day from then on.

*Delivering two weeks of intensive training in French:* We expected this to be a challenge and we certainly felt that our French improved significantly throughout. However, there were issues with accent, rhythm and phraseology which meant that instructions were occasionally misunderstood. There was a period of adaptation for all concerned and the participants were, on the whole, confident to ask for further clarification when in doubt. Melanie was also very helpful in helping us to communicate the subtler aspects of the methodology.

### *5. Next Steps and Recommendations*

We would suggest the following:

1. The enthusiasm of the facilitators is built on by inviting them to share their experiences of delivering the training through membership of a whatsapp or Facebook group. This will enable us to stay in contact with participants as they implement the training, and how this develops over time. We would like to support the group wherever possible as they progress towards Legislative Theatre performances. We have been in contact with the group, asking them when they are likely to implement the training. Some of the participants have said that they will begin with introducing Interactive and Legislative Theatre to power holders in their communities. We would suggest that they share evaluations of their performances.
2. We would encourage the group to practise facilitating Interactive and Legislative Theatre among themselves as well as with their Community Protection Committees, the Forum des Femmes and the Agents of Change. We will also send the baseline/endline and evaluation for participants to use with their groups.
3. One of the key challenges that the group identified was the relationship between the law and custom, and the risk of challenging customs that are upheld by power holders. We would be interested in seeing the risk analyses that are undertaken by participants when they are carried out, and would recommend that participants are supported in this process through developing partnerships with the police.
4. Some of the group are interested in training other people how to facilitate this process, and to do that they will need training as trainers. We would suggest that we deliver a training in how to train others to facilitate in 6-12 months.

6. Cedier have expressed an interest in having the training in Uvira – it would be helpful to clarify what they would like the training to focus on, and start to explore whether this would be possible.

7. We would be interested in exploring future collaboration with Oxfam in DRC, both with these organisations, and with others in other areas of the DRC.

#### *6. Feedback from Participants taken from Evaluation Forms*

Having read the Evaluation Forms which the participants completed on the final afternoon of the two-week workshop, feedback is mostly very positive; each section averaging 4 and 5. There are numerous positive comments on, and thanks for, our enthusiastic co-facilitation and clear delivery of Legislative Theatre.

Many of the participants reflect that activities involving both Behaviour Change and Legislative Theatre can be genuinely integrated into their own practice as Project Co-ordinators and Animateurs in their communities. They are clearly in the process of adapting games and activities to suit the specific needs of the groups they work with.

Popular workshops include Team Building, Top Ten Communication Skills, Assertiveness and Open Ended Questions. But, above all, the development and practice of LT was their clearly their ultimate objective; there are some profound thoughts on their commitment to strengthening their grasp and practice of it. Some comment that they intend to continue writing a Learning Journal to reflect on and enhance their practice as facilitators.

Many of the participants really grasped the idea of the facilitator encouraging group learning – and some commented on the notion of leading from the front, the middle and the back, according to context. There was a general consensus that the group itself was a strong, interactive and collaborative one; there was a high level of trust and genuinely open dialogue from a very early stage. Many reflect that they developed their skills over the two weeks and a number of evaluations reveal a wish to continue working on their own assertiveness.

Many express a sense of difficulty when putting Legislative Theatre facilitation into practice, but felt it was a challenge worth undertaking. They comment that there was a steep learning curve over the course of the two weeks; they are clearly committed to developing their skills over time, and within the communities within which they work. There were some issues with the Powerpoint presentations (on one occasion technical – projector not bright enough). And some felt that on Day One, it was difficult to grasp the theory put forward, having not had much practice. Some also felt that the sessions were too short.

A handful of participants mentioned difficulties with our French; however this opened a window for the more ambitious participants (who are clearly intent on delivering this training themselves) to take the ball in hand and clarify any doubts. Many commented informally on



our use of non-verbal communication and expressivity. A few commented on the challenge of time-keeping, though there was an understanding that this was often to do with the participants wanting to continue the reflections at the end of the day.

### ***7. Conclusion***

It is clear that this training was a great success and was effective in enabling the participants to understand how Legislative Theatre works, and how they could use it in their communities. Participants clearly enjoyed the training, and are keen to implement what they have learned.

We would be interested in exploring how this can be built on, and to discuss possible next steps above.

Patrick Young

25<sup>th</sup> July 2016