

JANAKARFALIYA

Evaluation Report

By Janakaraliya Team

1st August 2003 to 31st July 2006

Condensed Evaluation Report of Activities of JANAKARALIYA

Purpose of the Evaluation.

Examination of the activities of Theatre of the people by the founders and other members during a period of three years.

Period covered by the Evaluation.

Three years from 1st August 2003 to 31st July 2006.

Expected functions of theatre of the People.

(A) Mobile theatre and associated activities

- a. Construction and launching a mobile theatre
- b. Creation, training and maintenance of a traveling theatre group.
- c. Production of plays in Sinhala and Tamil Languages where roles are played by members of the aforesaid group.
- d. Traveling in all districts of the country where the plays produced utilizing over cast are staged in the mobile theatre.

(B) Activities conducted outside the mobile theatre.

- a. The cast of theatre of the people not confirming themselves to the mobile theatre, travel to distant villages and give performances for the benefit of the people in those areas.
- b. Educational activities we conduct workshops for the benefit of students, school teachers, regional artist and young men & women who are interested in the dramatic art.

(C) Networking

- a. Formation of a network of organizations in all districts where the mobile theatre travels with the intention of popularising the dramatic art which in tern will boost creativity among the people.
- b. Creation of regional theatre groups through the activities of the Network.

1. The Mobile Theatre and associated activities.

(1) Construction and launching of a mobile theatre.

We have successful in construction and introducing a mobile theatre the like of which the people of Sri Lanka have never witnessed before. This is a novelty in the spehere of local drama where we had been hooked to what might be called a "picture-frame stage" for over a century. Costs in this regard were borne by USAID/OTI institute.

(2) Creation and maintenance of traveling theatre group.

We founded a theatre group on 29th July 2004. The member of this group come form different parts of the century. Members of this group comprised both communities, Sinhala & Tamil. The group was given three months grounding in practical and theoretical aspects of drama and acting. No theatre group who received such fulltime training while living under one roof had never been know before. Therefore this group was a pleasant surprise in the field of local drama. It was a surprise too for the folks who are interested in drama. Member of two communities young men and women who had been alienated from each other who came together in this theatre group have discovered a new and lasting brotherhood.

(3) Creation of drama with the group.

By November 2004, we were able to put the finishing touches to both Sinhala & Tamil versions of plays. What follows is a list of all plays we produced during the last two years.

- i Makararaksha/ (Name is same for Tamil Play)
- ii Andraramal / Erukkalam Poo
- iii Seethanebrapata / Mayapattadai
- iv Chandrandas / Charandao Kallau
- v Devlo Gamana / Devaloha Payanam
- vi Mahath Hore / Periya Kallan

I addition to these the group has created six short plays of 10 to 15 minutes in length.

(4) Traveling through the district staging the plays in the mobile theatre.

BY January 2005, having been constructed, the mobile theatre was installed at the Peoples Arts Centre at Battaramulla. On the 29th of the same month, a programme to introduce theatre of the people was conducted in the presence of invited guests representing the field of drama.

“ Andaramal” was stages on that occasion. The spectators who had been accustomed is the “Picture-frame” stage found the New Arena method of the mobile theatre to be an extraordinary experience. Later on from 10th March to 19th March of the same year, Mobile theatre went into action at Nomads grounds in Colombo. By this time we had been brought into limelight through the press the radio and the television. That the mobile theatre was a challenge to the conventional “picture frame” stage then became clear through the positive as well as the negative response we received from a large number of members of the public.

After our performance in Colombo, we were able to take theatre of the people to Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Trincomalee and Puttalam where we presented many programs.

2. Activities outside the mobile theatre

(1) Performance of the theatre group outside the mobile theatre in villages far and wide. During the time the mobile theatre remained in a particular place, we went away into distant villages to perform before people who found it difficult to come to the mobile theatre. We performed in rural school and in factories. We received the support of schools, regional secretariats and voluntary organizations. Once a workshop was held in a particular rural school a play would be staged in the playground of that school. Among the spectators there were school children, Their parents as well as others. On certain occasions, after a workshop for women and other was over, a play would be staged in suitable sport on the same night.

(2) Drama workshop for school children, teachers regional artists and young men and women who interested in drama. These workshop were conducted successful as well as uninterrupted. While programmes were being planned the directors of education in the respective areas extended their assistance. However when the programmes were being implemented the

co-operation they extended was rather unsatisfactory. However the assistance of heads of school and some teachers enabled to organize the number of workshops that we had planned for.

In various district that we performed is regional artist as well as many young people who had a flare for drama were drawn to us we conducted workshop for such people. The most successful that we conducted is the last two years were those in Hambanthota and Polonnaruwa.

A play written by a group of young people in Polonnaruwa was improved up on at one of these workshops to be staged at the drama festival of theatre of the people.

This particular play later became an award winner at a provincial drama festival. It was held in high esteem even at the National Drama Festival at Hambanthota a workshop was held for "Youth Circle for Future Use" Two plays made by them at this workshop was later presented at the drama festival of Theatre of the People and since then they have been continuously by staged in villages.

3. Networking

1. A network of organization have been established in all regions that Theatre of the People operates in, in order to boost the dramatic art with the intention of making over people creative. It is true that many drama enthusiasts joined us where ever Theatre of the People traveled. But in our absence a continuous program could only be assured through the creation of an effective network. But this was not possible on account of the absence of a suitable staff or funds to back such a network.

2. Creation of regional theatre groups through networking.
As a result of our programmes, many groups of young men and women volunteered to form theatre groups and continue their activities it was hard to maintain relations with such groups once we were out of the region. Reasons for such difficulties were lack of funds and personnel. However relation already established with them remain intact and there will not be any, if the occasion presents itself, difficulty in ensuring their active participation in the activities of Theatre of the People.
3. Expected results and influence of the project. We are a traveling theatre group. The foregoing description includes the changes piloted by us in the different regions we visited. Out of these all expect the one numbered 9 could be directly be attributed to our project. Unlike film, teledrama and other physical production. Dramatic performances, other programmes based on drama and acting - are live activities. For this reason all resource person of the theatre group need to be present in presenting the programmes of Theatre of the People. Therefore even outside the times our scheduled programmers the theatre group interacts with the people the people of the respective area. It is clear that therefore that the changes effected were caused not only by our dramatic performances an related activities but also by other from of interaction of our staff with those people.

Since all over programmes are live, the target groups can have access to them only when the theatre group is present in their locality. Hence we realise the necessity of establishing appropriate structural organization which will be instrumental in maintaining our activities interruption.

- The liaison we have managed to establish with people in various areas was made possible by the contribution made by the authorities, officials, entrepreneurs and others whom in presenting our programmes.
- The change of attitude that we was observed the combined result of the discussions we conducted with those people, the pleasure they would have derived from watching our plays and the feedback they would have received from the spectators that responded positively to our plays.
- Many of those people had not taken witnessed a live programme of this nature. Perhaps it was for the first time in their lives that they enjoyed being exposed to an experience of this nature. Therefore we feel that our plays did sharpen their sensibilities.
- Some of our target areas may be called, without exaggeration, cultural deserts. The enjoyment they derived during our performances and the opportunity for collective enjoyment made them long for such enjoyment even in the future.

- Multi cultural concerts that we conducted contributed to there change of attitude.
- A profound change of attitude was brought about among teachers as a results of workshops on drama and acting that we conducted so that almost all educational divisions of Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa and Puuttalam were covered. Opening the doors of the mobile theatre to the plays created by the participants after they had gone through the training offered at our workshop.
- One other deciding factor was the pleasure they derived from our performances and educational programs combined with interactive of the theatre group with the community.

4. Unexpected positive effects.

The expected mentioned belong were not at all unexpected but they quite exceeded all expectation . During the workshop conducted in Valy Oya for school children the extremely cordial relationship that developed between Tamil girls and those children was quite unexpected. We happened to realise the power of acting and drama in alleviating the tensions in the young minds in winning thee hearts was reality enormous.

In certain communities women are relatively under pressure. We conducted educational and self-development programmes with students belonging to that community and thereby discovered the change in women to overcome the cultural restrictions raised its head to greater extent than we had expected. Besides in the summery up programmes following those workshop they were expressed these views quite openly. We have stated else where that one of the aims of drama and acting into make available the democratic rights to express their expectations which have been forwarded through suppressions. Nonetheless we never expected those girls to make use of the available opportunity so early in expressing their feelings.

In the course of the programmes conducted in LTTE- controlled regions, they displayed a high degree of cordially towards us after having witnessed our programmes. It was therefore a revelation that there was no better remedy that drama and acting in bridging the gap of hostility between the two alienated communities. The potential of drama and acting here seemed to much changer than we had ever realized.

FEEDBACK

There is no need to changes in either our dramatic production or educational programmes. However we need to produce more programmes of the genre which we have been producing so far. Nonetheless the facilities available for staging our

dramatic production should be improved. In order to access the potential spectators from distant and villages, a mobile theatre smaller than the one we use at the moment is required. Use at the moment is required.

In the field of education and personal development, programmes featuring “acting and drama in education” have been successful. But we have not been able to hold the workshops and forums which we planned for young men, women, farmers, fishermen, manual workers and members of a variety was the lack of cooperation from non governmental organization in those areas whose assistance we expected. Therefore, in future ways and means of enlisting the support of such organizations functioning in areas through which our mobile theatre makes its way should be designed. We need to be particularly mindful about seeking help of the partner organization of FLICT. Sponsorship and guidance of FLICT will be particularly helpful in this regard.

Being understaffed is a serious problem that we are facing right now. Therefore the attention of the two directors is often diverted to routine matters with the result that essential and important work is neglected. This state of affairs stems from the fact that really capable men would refuse to join our staff since their work entails traveling all over the country most of the time.

In order to overcome this problem, we have formed smaller groups headed by senior members of the staff which have been entrusted with varied responsibilities.

Our aim and objectives comprise comprehensive development that should spread throughout the entire Sri Lanka society as a whole. One component of this development is the creation of a peaceful society through spiritual cultural development and utilization of acting and drama as the pivotal strategy. Young men and women who are the products of an intellectually poor society are hard to bring into line with the expectation of our organization.

5. Binding a viable organization.

We hope to launch a programme in order to earliest the support of authorities, officials and top-level businessmen to establish an organizational structure to draw financial assistance from the government as well as from private individuals.

At present our sole income is the monies collected from selling tickets when plays are staged are stated at the mobile theater which are hardly sufficient to cover our project proposals as supplementary sources of income were abandoned since we were not able to find the money to meet their fundamental expenses. But those proposals still hold good.

We have already done the spade work for launching a newspaper as a means of communicating our experiences to the society. This newspaper will help us to set up a printing press and a publishing house as well.

There are many places in Sri Lanka to where the mobile theater has not traveled. From such places we continue to receive request to show our plays in their own auditoria. As is done by other drama-producing bodies we could show our plays in their on a control arrangement in order to earn an income. We hope to hold public performance in accordance with our aims and objectives.

Yet another development Theater of a People envisage is the establishment of a television production centre. Such an institute will enable us to disseminate information leading to resolution of conflicts through documentary programmes and teledramas. At the same time, we would be able to offer our services to other producers of similar programmes and earn as income.

6. Summery of Progress / Reexamination and Evaluation

Estimation of our piloting and evaluation techniques.

- i Record as to the number of spectators who watched our plays are an indicator which helps us to measure the success in attracting people to our plays which one of our aims. Those shows exert influence in a number of ways. The Spectators who witness the fruits of the work done jointly by young Tamils and the young Sinhala, they begin to ask themselves the questions, " Why can't we work in the same manner?" A second effect in the spector being transformed more useful individuals to the society through the wisdom and pleasure he derives just like in the case of watching any other good play. We have been able to gauge spectator reaction to our plays through comments made by them immediately after a show is over as well as through specially organized programmes to examine public response. Some these options expressed by them have been tape-recorded. As stated as a means of ensuring enhance participating of people in our educational and personal development programmes. Usually the time period allocated to a district is one month. However, factors beyond our control such as the occurrence of a school vacation at time caused our stay to be extended to two months. During that period spectators' appetite for stay watching our plays and attending other programmes of ours is sharpened. But then time would be right for us to quit that area. Hence before the desire of those people to see our plays and take part in other programmes is satisfied, we do leave them. We suggest that a regional organizational structure be created in order to continue the work we have started. However such a structure could not be created for want of financial resources to appoint regional organisers. We do hope through, to achieve this aim in future. A noteworthy reason for failure in this case was the absence of support from non- governmental organizations of the areas in question. A factor at the foot of this nonchalance on the part of those organization is then unawareness that spiritual and cultural awakening is part parcel of total development of a nation. But it is very necessary that we enlist their cooperation. As a first step we hope to receive

the support of the partners of FLICT which operate in those areas. We earnestly appeal to FLICT for their support in formulating a program in this regard.

- ii Records and participation in workshops on acting is a reliable indicator of how many of them have been served by us. In all workshops, at the end of the morning session at least one male and one female participant session at least one male and one female participant supply us feedback. This information helps us to evaluate our work. We are constantly on the alert as to whatever our approach should be altered based on opinions expressed by them.
- iii We expect to change the attitudes of regional, provincial and central government authorities and officials and enhance our relations with them. Statistics on participation in these discussions we hold with them are good indicators of their attitudes and the relations with us. We feel that these statistics are quite satisfactory. Ideas they express during such discussions and the cooperation extended by them in our practical programmes clearly indicate the effects of our efforts.
- iv Regional dramatists make the maximum use of the opportunities they are given to perform in our theatre. Dramatists of Annuradhapura, Medawachchi and Polonnaruwa as well as women dramatists of the Free Trade Zone of Katunayake used our theater to present their dramatic productions. On these occasions, in addition the pleasure derived from watching the plays the mobile theater became a means whereby information about farmers, workers etc was exchanged. Dramatists of the national level did not use our mobile Theater except on one occasion. As we realized because of the inadequacy of the income they received.
- v Spare provided by the mobile theater was utilized to enhance actual activities among different communities. At a show we gave at Batticaloa. Professor Mawunaguru, some university teachers and some students from the Batticalor University and some were present. At the end of the show a teacher of the Batticalor University presented some items of dancing, some members of our cast presented some item of dancing from upcountry-Tamil dancing and some Sinhala members presented their own dances. This was a rare opportunity for different communities to enjoy watching actual presentations of each other district of Trincomalee.
- vi A workshop for Sinhala and Tamil teachers was held in Trincomalee by the Peace promotion Board of Sri Lanka. The last session of these workshops was housed at the mobile theatre in Kantale. At the end of this session every one had an opportunity to enjoy cultural presentation. A presentation of this kind was better organized in Puttalam. A variety of cultural items from different communities were scheduled to be staged on a particular day

and sufficient publicity was given of the show. While all these items were presented by children, a large number of adults from all communities were among the spectators.

vii But contrary to our planning, we did not succeed in transferring our mobile theater into a mobile cultural centre through holding international film festival, local, Sinhala and Tamil film festivals as well as other cultural events. One major drawback we had here was non possession of the necessary equipment. However we hope to acquire the equipment we need in order to achieve this aim.

viii From school pupils of all districts who participated in our programmes we have received essays, poems and paintings depicting their attitudes and ideas in relation to the program in questions. Through these creations we would be able to examine to what extent our programmes have a productive influence up on them.