

Filling the Granary

**International Association of Theatre of Children and
Young People (ASSITEJ) Africa Network, 1999–2007**

Nicky du Plessis

Department for Africa

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Sida Evaluation 07/05

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* This title is taken (with permission) from a song composed by Daniel Settabba, Uganda.

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Sida Evaluation 07/05
Commissioned by Sida, Department for Africa

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Registration No.: U11 Ya 23.3/5
Date of Final Report: March 2007
Printed by Edita Communication AB, 2007
Art. no. Sida36547en
ISBN 91-586-8295-3
ISSN 1401—0402

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Executive Summary

ASSITEJ Sweden has linked with 14 African countries for the purpose of strengthening the practice and profession of theatre for children and young people in Africa. As ASSITEJ International has been successfully operating throughout the world for 42 years, this connection between the international body and African exponent was important. The Secretary General of ASSITEJ International (Niclas Malmcrona) is the Chair of ASSITEJ Sweden and he assumed the additional role of Project Manager for this African Network Program.

The program was supported by Sida to the value of SEK 5,725 million. This support comes to the end in 2007 and will not be continued. This evaluation is a tool for retrospection on the results and project on expected future outcomes, and will be used in the final Regional Meeting of the Network, taking place in Swaziland in March 2007.

The target group of the program was adult theatre practitioners concerned with theatre for young people and children. By enhancing their capacity, providing skills and opportunities to create regional links, it was intended that the beneficiaries – children – would gain. The target group would be better poised to deliver quality productions, raise the profile of the sector and contribute meaningfully to social development.

The program used two main tools to achieve these aims – Regional Meetings held annually which allowed for capacity building at a structural and networking level, and Regional Workshops, which provided for the all-important transfer of technical skills and knowledge about theatre-making for children. The Regional Meetings also decided on the topics for the Workshops, which were held in a different country each year. National Chapters were formed in different ways in at least 14 countries (as listed on the website), to become the core of this network and nominate representatives to the meetings and workshops.

The evaluator attended a Regional Workshop in Rwanda, and visited the ASSITEJ Chapters in Kenya and Zambia to interview key respondents and stakeholders. The Secretary General ASSITEJ International was present at the Rwanda workshop.

Having the opportunity to meet regularly, to discuss common problems and solutions within the African context, and to learn about each other's craft, has been of huge significance to the practitioners who have participated. The difficulty of travel in Africa combined with the vagaries of political and social situations that don't easily provide financial support for the professionalism of theatre, has led to isolation. The predominance of imported cultural practice and products from the US particularly has also resulted in a situation where home-grown ideas and methods are under-utilised and/or under-valued. ASSITEJ workshops concentrated on developing original material drawn from local heritage and has empowered younger playwrights and directors. A combination of Swedish and African facilitators provided a good range of expertise.

The African Network (and its members) has had to grapple with structural issues, concerning the future of the network and its methodologies. Unless the National Chapters are well-functioning and active, the Network will not survive beyond this program. The development of certain administrative tools (including a website) and the support of the ASSITEJ International Network's experience have been vital to build this capacity. A workshop on LFA planning and conceptualizing has been implemented, which will be followed through. This should provide chapters with an overview of the potential that they can work with to ensure survival, and to flourish.

Some chapters are functioning well, as they have developed a range of stakeholders that provide financial as well as other kinds of support. They have found ways to position ASSITEJ locally that contribute to existing structures and needs (e.g. Schools Drama Festivals, HIV and AIDS Theatre awareness), and so are able to implement activities and maintain associations that are useful. Not all Chapters are at this stage however, and the website (www.africantheatrearena.org) is sadly lacking in information on 11 out of 14 countries. If information is to be shared within the region, and if the valuable experiences and skills gained from the program are to be used to best advantage, then members of the Network should seriously consider what their contribution will be, and find ways to boost communication and participation.

This program has profiled African Theatre practitioners well internationally. They have had a presence at the ASSITEJ World Congresses in 2003 and 2005; have elected two African members to the International Executive Committee and been profiled in the ASSITEJ Book 2004/5. There is evidence to suggest that smaller networks or collaborations between 2 or 3 African countries are now taking place; and some chapters have found additional international partners as a result of the African Network.

The challenge is for members to use the impetus from this well-managed and well-positioned program; to work co-operatively with a range of partners, and to continue to find new ways to boost the profile and the efficacy of their craft.

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1. Program Context

Although full-time employment as theatre professionals in Africa is very difficult for most people, there are nevertheless vibrant theatre communities in various countries that are producing professional and important work. This takes place in the face of many obstacles, including the lack of physical infrastructure, educational opportunities and government funding, a generally low level of appreciation of the value of theatre in society and as an educational tool, and depressed socio-economic conditions that cannot support theatre-for-entertainment or leisure industries.

However, African countries are also increasingly part of the international stage, both regionally and globally. Their musical and story-telling traditions are sought after by festivals, audiences and fellow practitioners from around the world. Within the continent, theatre performances are the most obvious and vivid means to demonstrate a renaissance of African-centered thought and expressions, and cement bilateral cooperation. In addition, theatre and indigenous performing methodologies are being recognized for their value in communicating life-saving knowledge about HIV and AIDS.

The empowerment of children and young people to think creatively and actively through involvement with artistic expressions is appreciated more and more as a vital aspect of supporting democracy and human rights. It is universally accepted that development must pay attention to culture and its various manifestations in the arts, or become one-dimensional and limited by definition.

Against this background, the African Network Project of ASSITEJ International took place from 1999–2007. The goals of the program were:

1. To establish national theatre organisations for children and young people associations in each country in southern and eastern Africa.

Since 1999, many of the countries had established such organizations and became National Chapters of ASSITEJ, so the particular aim from 2002 onwards, was to improve their skills and open up additional possibilities to work both nationally and internationally on a long-term basis. In countries where no such organisations existed, the aim was to help create a national theatre organisation and include them in this cooperation.

2. To strengthen and develop the African regional links and to create a working network system within the field of theatre for children and young people that will last after the program is finished.
3. To increase the cooperation within the region and with the global community within this field, and to provide working tools for such a cooperation.
4. To ensure fuller representation of Africa on an international level within theatre for children and young people, and in ASSITEJ International particularly.
5. To ensure the sharing of skills in the pedagogy of working with and for children in performing arts and to develop different artistic means of making theatre.
6. To contribute towards a better understanding and acceptance of the different traditions in different parts of the world of theatre for children and young people.

The program primarily targeted professional theatre practitioners and the beneficiaries were considered also to be the children, who participated in the resulting theatre activities.

What started as an ad hoc, relatively small interaction between a few African countries, developed into a more detailed and concerted program with detailed three year project plans (2002–2004 and 2005–

2007). This program was a cooperation between ASSITEJ International (the International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People), ASSITEJ Sweden and the participating countries in Africa. The present Secretary General of ASSITEJ International, Niclas Malmcrona, is Swedish, and he acted as the Project Manager in collaboration with the Regional Co-ordinators nominated from African countries, and Swedish ASSITEJ.

The program was funded by Sida under two cooperation agreements to the value of SEK 5,725 million, up to the end of 2007. Continued support from this source is not possible, and the program has been preparing for the phase-out for the past three years.

1.2 Recorded Results of the Program

1. Regional meetings and workshops/seminars have been organised in ten countries in Southern and Eastern Africa. The subject of the meetings has been the development of the network and decisions concerning the content of the Workshops. The Workshops have all dealt with issues of concern raised by the African theatre practitioners.

Regional meetings were held specifically in:

1999 – Zimbabwe
2000 – Zimbabwe
2001 – Zimbabwe (International meeting)
2002 – South Africa
2003 – Kenya and Mauritius
2004 – South Africa
2005 – Zambia
2006 – Tanzania

The Regional Workshops were in:

2003 – Uganda – Directors' Workshop
2003 – Mauritius – Theatre Management
2003 – Kenya – Theatre Education
2004 – Mozambique – Playwriting
2005 – Namibia – Playmaking on HIV and AIDS related themes
2006 – Rwanda – Playwright workshop on adaptation and writing for certain age groups.

2. International meetings have been held in Africa (Harare 2001 and Cape Town 2004), and a meeting of the International Executive Committee is planned for Zambia in May 2007.
3. Fourteen African countries in the region are members of ASSITEJ International, with national representation through chapters. Each chapter undertakes their own activities, but much of it is linked to the work done through the African Network.
4. A website (www.africantheatrearena.org) has been set up to provide an communication tool for the Network. A brochure has also been published, and the Network program documented in an article by Cheela Chilala (Zambia) published in the ASSITEJ Book 2004/5.
5. Two large groups of African theatre practitioners have visited Sweden in connection with the Swedish Theatre Biennals in Växjö in 2001 and in Uppsala in 2003. The African presence on the ASSITEJ World Congress in Seoul, Korea, in 2002 and in Canada in 2005, also marked an important step in integrating African countries on a worldwide scale in the field of theatre for children and

young people. Links developed between South African and Swedish facilitators after a regional workshop in 2005 lead to additional cooperation in a playwriting project. Through the ASSITEJ process, groups of school children from Zambia and South Africa participated in a children's theatre festival in India in 2006.

6. Two of the members of the Executive Committee of ASSITEJ International from 2002–2005 were African – Jackson Ndawla from Uganda and Cheela Chilala from Zambia. During this time they attended meetings, festivals and seminars in Korea, Croatia, Wales, Austria, Australia, South Africa, Jordan, Canada and Sweden. From 2005 Hope Azeda from Rwanda replaced Ndawla. As EC members they have participated in international meetings in Austria, Argentina and Germany.

2. Evaluation Scope and Methodology

The evaluation was conducted by Cultural Radius, an independent arts consultancy based in South Africa. The sole member of this consultancy is Nicolette du Plessis – an Arts and Culture Management and Development Consultant. The evaluation was conducted between the period 2 November 2006 and 15 February 2007.

The evaluation was based on the Terms of Reference developed by Sida, which were available to the Project Manager and Secretary General of ASSITEJ International before field visits commenced.

2.1 Purpose

The purpose of the evaluation was to:

1. Examine the activities of the projects in order to determine their impact and sustainability for the region, on three levels – the ASSITEJ organizational level, the project target group level (theatre workers) and the project beneficiaries level (children or representatives of children).
2. Assess the degree to which the objectives of the project might have been met and identify any challenges and problems that might have been experienced.
3. Draw conclusions of the above and make recommendations for the future.

Full details of the original Terms of Reference are attached in Annexure 1.

2.2 Process

The methodology for the evaluation was prescribed in the Terms of Reference and included the review of project documents, including project proposals, minutes of Regional Meetings, narrative reports, documents pertaining to the national chapters as well as Sida guidelines for evaluations and other key Sida policy documents.

Interviews with key informants were undertaken in three African countries – Rwanda, Kenya and Zambia – including members of various ASSITEJ National Chapters, the International Secretariat, partner institutions, donors and other relevant players in the sector. The consultant was present throughout the Regional Workshop on playwriting in Rwanda and was able to meet with participants and facilitators during this time.

In addition, a call for direct and personal responses to the project was sent out to 55 ASSITEJ African members via the Secretary-General. This allowed for a more inclusive approach and gave opportunities to those people in countries that were not visited during field trips. The four responses received are recorded in Appendix 4.

Mainly qualitative methodological methods were used to analyze the data gathered. Details of people interviewed and materials reviewed are found in Annexure 2 and 3.

2.3 Constraints and Limitations

Only three out of 14 countries within the network were visited on the formal field trips, which provide a limited view of the conditions under which projects are implemented.

This evaluation concentrates on the activities of the ASSITEJ African program primarily and implications for the future, once Sida support ends. It is not an analysis of the program's finances or financial accounting methods. This has been handled by ASSITEJ Sweden as the program partner, and Sida has been well satisfied with all accounting.

This evaluation is specifically intended to offer some observations to the Regional Meeting to be held in Swaziland in March 2007, when the closing of the program will be a main item on the agenda. Recommendations of as practical a nature as possible are therefore suggested in order that this evaluation may also be useful tool for the network which will continue to exist. These are given in Appendix 5.

3. Findings

The findings of the evaluation are presented in seven main sections following, drawn directly from the Terms of Reference. There may be some overlap or areas of inter-connectedness within these sections but wherever possible, repetition will be avoided. For the purposes of this report, "the program" will refer to the totality of the activities undertaken to establish and advance the ASSITEJ African Network. Within this program, there were various "projects", including workshops, meetings, systematic information gathering, bridge-building etc.

3.1 Sustainability and Impact

In "Life Beyond Aid", Lisa Cannon identifies three related perspectives – organizational, social and financial – from which to discuss sustainability. This is particularly pertinent for cultural organizations in countries where public funds cannot ever meet the demands of these activities, and the socio-economic context doesn't yet provide for a consumer class that would pay for such activities. It broadens the question of sustainability to include inter-related factors – not all of which rely solely on funding. It is this inter-relatedness that helps to determine whether project activities will remain after the program is declared complete, and whether sustainable changes have been effected by the program.

The impact of cultural activities in a program such as this ASSITEJ African Network can seldom be measured exactly, particularly when the impact of culture is generally accepted as being indirect. The difficulty of specific measurable indicators are compounded when it is a network of many organizations and individuals as well as a variety of projects, under review. The range of stakeholders is enormous and their interests and needs will be diverse. However, this report will concentrate on three major levels within which sustainability and impact are discussed, firstly, the ASSITEJ organizational levels, secondly, the theatre workers or the program target group level, and thirdly, the children, or representatives of the program beneficiaries' level.

3.1.1 ASSITEJ Organisational Levels

The major part of the program's resources has been devoted to building organizational resources within Africa, in order to stimulate and promote ASSITEJ activities. This has taken place directly through the annual regional meetings, which were convened to allow the national chapters to develop, individually and in relation to each other in the region. The opportunity for representatives of chapters to meet regularly in Africa to discuss, plan and implement the creation of an African network (linked to the international body) was a vital aspect of the program. It is an opportunity that is infrequent in Africa and one that is hugely valuable and significant.

This necessitated the creation of representative structures as national chapters (ideally through the adoption of democratic processes), the on-going organization and maintenance of these chapters between meetings as well as the carrying-out of tasks agreed upon in the meetings, which would further serve the development of the network and its member organizations. Features of the program which have directly aimed to promote organizational sustainability include:

- Through the partnership with ASSITEJ Sweden and the close relationship of the Secretary General of ASSITEJ International (who comes from ASSITEJ Sweden), the entire organizational experiences of both these organizations, has been directly available to the developing chapters. This means that over forty years of practical examples and information about how to construct and maintain chapters under a variety of geographical, political and socio-economic circumstances has been immediately accessible to any of the program participants.
- The nature of the Sida support being time-based and focused on building up an African presence that should thereafter find its own sustainability, has been openly discussed and informed many of the agendas of the regional meetings. Independent sustainability of the chapters was therefore a goal and feature of the program from the start.
- Decisions regarding the activities of the projects were taken by participants in the program in regional meetings. In this way, the program was not imposed by outside managers but grew from needs within. Guidance was provided by the Secretary General of ASSITEJ International, who also was responsible for financial accounting and management.
- The responsibility for hosting regional meetings and workshops was rotated. Chapters were therefore required to build or harness existing capacity to ensure that logistics were well managed. Budgets had to be submitted and approved, and appropriate financial documentation provided after the event. This is important for those chapters as yet inexperienced in this kind of project management.
- To support this, a template of the requirements for hosting meetings was developed. This means that chapters have had guided experiences and should be able to adopt similar, successful strategies for the future.
- The Secretary General of ASSITEJ International was available before and after Regional Meetings for presentations to authorities in the host country, in order to help build credibility of the organization, and support the development of the local chapter.
- Regional Workshops were used as an opportunity to invite local authorities connected to arts and culture to learn more about ASSITEJ and the African Network and this proved successful at least in Namibia (2005) and Rwanda (2006), judging by newspaper cuttings.
- National chapters were requested to submit a written report on their activities to Regional Meetings from 2005. This required chapters to plan ahead, as well as report on activities undertaken – both of which requires a certain level of organization competence. This builds institutional records within

the network and allows for a move towards formal documentation. This in turn has the potential to provide knowledge, either specific to certain national conditions, or common to the region, which can assist with future planning and resolution of problems.

- The host chapter was responsible for the keeping and distributing of minutes of each Regional Meeting. The standard and style of these minutes vary², but most are good records and provide a way for information to be circulated to those who did not attend.
- The establishment of a website (www.africantheatrearena.org) for the African Network allows for chapters to post their information and establish their regional profile beyond the membership. The efficacy of website relies on the constant updating of the information and for chapters to take responsibility for doing so. This report cannot conclusively state whether all the chapters will do this, although the majority should be able to.
- The Regional Meeting in Zambia in 2005 brought 15 representatives from different ASSITEJ centres to participate in a planning workshop, which followed the steps of the Logical Framework Approach for project planning. The focus of the planning was on the objectives, results and activities to which the cooperation between the groups should lead, and was run by Mats Eriksson. This was intended to develop planning skills so that chapters and the Network could define sustainable strategies. A follow up of this was held in the Regional Meeting in 2006 in Dar es Salaam.
- A survey was made during the 2006 Regional Meeting of the current structures of the chapters, attempting to analyse their capacity and help identify strengths and weaknesses. Information from this survey³ is generalized but indicates that a direct focus of the program has always been development at an organizational level.
- A printed brochure was produced in 2006 to provide overall information about the program. This is potentially an important tool for the national chapters, who can use this to establish their credibility and thus build partnerships – either with local authorities, donors, stakeholders or beneficiaries. It helps cement organizational profile and cements the link with the regional and international network.

In terms of stimulating organizational sustainability and maximizing impact at an organizational level, the program can thus be seen to have implemented a variety of interventions which address these issues. These interventions have been repeated and reinforced over time, and are therefore mostly not isolated and singular provisions. The Secretary General has played a sensitive role of guiding and supporting the national chapters' development, but also managing the overall implementation of this program. This has meant that the program has had an experienced manager, who has been able to deliver all necessary reports to Sida, while the region has been able to focus attention on building capacity and increasing levels of organizational expertise. From this perspective, the program was well designed and implemented.

However, for the sustainability of the chapters and the network, as well as its impact to be truly effective, it does require that the chapters engage with the demands presented by structural and organizational developments. Neither “the Network” nor the “program” can enforce organizational reliability at a national level. Nor can the Secretary General or ASSITEJ Internal impose democratic representation or processes. Ultimately the level of organizational vigour at the National level (which will impact on future sustainability) will depend on those who undertake this responsibility and who have had the benefit of the interventions described above.

² It is noted that the Tanzania chapter had not submitted minutes from the meeting in March 2006 by February 2007.

³ This information is drawn from the Secretary General's report to Sida of the 2006 activities.

The scope of this evaluation precluded an in-depth analysis of all the National Chapters and so the obvious and general conclusion is that the National chapters vary with regards to their current state of organizational stability. This is evidenced in part by the ability (or the lack thereof), to produce documents regarding activities undertaken, as well as by the range of stakeholders that have on-going and beneficial relationships with the chapter.

From the review of available documents and field visit meetings, it was clear that the *Zambian Chapter*, for example, has generated strategic plans, a calendar of events, a framework for internal processes, as well as drafting a submission to the relevant parliamentary committee on their work and the theatre context within which they operate. They have also established provincial representatives who sit on an Executive Committee which meets regularly and is able to carry out activities that carry the ASSITEJ profile. They have forged links with the corporate sector and other donors in variety of ways and are affiliated to the National Arts Council of Zambia, which provides for a limited but regular amount of funding. They have established an office, which has an administrative capacity and have initiated an Awards system for the schools drama festival. Each of these initiatives contributes to keeping the chapter functioning, with a profile that is contemporary and not based on one or two key personalities.

The *Kenyan Chapter* has made strong links to the schools drama festival – a key feature of children's theatre in the country that is recognized by the educational and cultural authorities. In that way, ASSITEJ has a stake in government-aligned programs and is positioned well. Unfortunately, at the time of the field visit, they had no ready documentation on the workshops they run, or have attended, or on the processes of the chapter, which relies heavily on the current Chair. The Chapter is therefore vulnerable, as those organizations which are perceived to keep activities or opportunities too close to the same people, are likely to be viewed with suspicion, and generating new members may be difficult.

At the extreme end of this, is the situation of South Africa – the one country on the continent generally perceived to have the most advantageous policies and diversified funding frameworks for theatre practitioners. This country has (despite several attempts from within the Region) been totally unable to mobilize itself into a chapter. This would seem to belie the need for supportive government factors as a precondition for existence, and support the notion that sustainability is not only dependent on funding.

It is important to acknowledge that leadership of successful organizations *does* often depend on a strong personality, to inspire members, convince stakeholders and to undertake those actions needed to create a structure that will survive and contribute to the communal vision. This report doesn't criticize those important initiators and personalities who have made it possible for many chapters to begin and continue to operate. However the challenge is to find ways to sustain the organization *beyond the personality*: through organizational structures, the development of a wide range of active stakeholders and the maximization of all available resources that keep the organization active.

It is evident too, that only those organizations which operate with democratic process and through wide representation, will be able to have an impact on the cultural landscape in which they find themselves. They will be in a strong position to positively influence policy (in some cases) and to benefit from funding mechanisms, such as National Arts Councils. Donors and public authorities seek out member-driven bodies which are legitimately mandated structures as cop-operating partners. Organisations which can demonstrate sustained activities, clear strategies and skilful use and sharing of resources, are obviously better positioned to attract these kinds of partnerships.

As a result of the establishment of African chapters during this program, there are now two African representatives on the ASSITEJ International Executive Committee. While this provides good international representation generally for the region, the practical role of Regional Co-ordinators is not yet clear. How should these people operate within the African Network, particularly after the end of this program? Should they be responsible for co-ordinating African activities, or for governance and oversight at the

international level? It may be difficult for them to take on both roles simultaneously, and yet, once this program is concluded, how does the African Network continue to organize itself, is the important question. This question has been asked in recent regional meetings (Tanzania 2006 and Lusaka 2005), and should form a significant part of the agenda for the proposed Swaziland meeting in March 2007.

The basis for this discussion (which is central to issues regarding the sustainability and impact of this program⁴ structurally), centres on notions of what a network is (or can be), and why it might be considered desirable.

The notion of networking and being part of a network that will capitalize on sharing information and finding common African solutions to some African problems is at the forefront of most of the responses to questions of impact. Added to this is the often-voiced imperative that national chapters be empowered to create a unique style of regional cooperation relevant to African situations. A sub-committee was even formed after Lusaka 2005 to promote and co-ordinate networking opportunities. Everybody says they want a network but it is unclear if the implications of this (structurally and individually) have been sufficiently accepted by all concerned.

The sub-committee for networking hasn't released any formal report which details its progress. An attempt to submit a joint-funding proposal for the region came to a halt as the draft written and distributed for comment was never responded to by the chapters in the region⁵. The ASSITEJ International website, which is operational, doesn't include any details of any festivals in Africa. Not all the African chapters maintain their association to ASSITEJ International by paying the \$100 annual fee, and there have been some instances where participants have taken money to attend workshops without arriving⁶. Not all meetings and workshops have been fully reported on, and the generation of the African website was subject to a lot of difficulties concerning unrealistic expectations of remuneration from the program funding. Quality of information on the website about various chapters varies and in many cases, there is no information at all. The link between this website and that of ASSITEJ International is very small and hard to discern. There are no mentions of any sponsors.

Practitioners and current participants in the program need to ask themselves what they really want for the future, in respect to ASSITEJ.

- This may need to include a detailed scrutiny of what the *benefits* of a network might be – both regionally and internationally – and whether these are sufficient to warrant the effort it does take to continue to participate. This may need a re-examination of the vision, methodologies and associated tools⁷ of ASSITEJ International in relation to the African Chapters.
- A similar interrogation should be undertaken of what beneficial features might be of the African network as it currently exists.
- It could be that people are unclear about what *efforts* are entailed to participate in a network
- or *how* to utilize the tools and methodologies inherent in a network, and make them work for their particular conditions. This might mean exploring less obvious benefits that might not have direct or immediate financial impact. Reference to the work undertaken in the LFA workshop might be helpful here.

⁴ This is relevant to the various organizational levels of the program, as well as to findings concerning the target group of theatre practitioners.

⁵ Eventually the proposal had to be re-drafted to cover one workshop in 2007 which will reinforce the HIV and AIDS work begun in Namibia in 2005.

⁶ These incidents are in the minority and do in no way suggest any financial impropriety on the part of the Project Manager. They are mentioned only as practical evidence of some of the difficulties encountered in the building of a common ethical platform for operations and cooperation.

⁷ By tools and methodologies, it is meant the technical aspects of the network – International Congresses, other meetings, the maintained website, the constitution, information dissemination and sharing, publications etc etc.

- As a way to guide the process in the African situation, perhaps a framework of minimum requirements needs to be agreed upon by all participants, in order to assist future interactions or provide *regulatory measures* to ensure a healthy network?
- Participants may also decide that they are just totally unable to structurally and individually meet any of these requirements,
- or that the input required outweighs the outputs at this stage. There is no point in continuing with something that is not perceived to be sufficiently worthwhile.
- It could be that the majority is generally satisfied with the opportunities to travel and participate in some capacity-building initiatives that they have had and if this program cannot be replicated in the same way, then they are content with what has been achieved.
- It could be that after the program, the perceived benefits of regional networking with all the established chapters are not adequate to overcome the obstacles to maintaining a network with 17 countries. It could be that smaller networks, between countries more closely situated geographically, could be more manageable.
- This discussion should also include close attention to how the positive results of the program could be taken care of, and the impetus not lost. It should also try to detail *opportunities* that are still to be capitalized on. This could include the increased use of the African website as an informational tool, participation in international meetings, aligning to bi-lateral and multi-lateral initiatives that exist (e.g. SADAC, Nepad) etc. etc.

3.1.2 Theatre practitioners – the target group

The findings in this section have largely been drawn from interviews with participants at the Rwanda Regional Workshop in 2006 and close observation of that learning process, as well as interviews specifically with those from Kenya and Zambia who participated in other workshops. In order to open up responses to the broader constituency of the African network, a request was sent out through the Secretary General to allow anyone who would like to offer their opinions and stories of the activities they had experienced⁸. From this investigation, it is clear that the workshops firstly and the regional meetings secondly, have had considerable positive impact on the target group.

This analysis is drawn from the following:

- Given the number of dividing factors currently retarding theatre development in Africa (geographical distance, difficulty and expense of travel, lack of enabling policies and/or infrastructure, few formal training opportunities etc), the program directly addresses the most vital needs of this target group. Most important has been the opportunity for practitioners to meet each other on the continent, and learn from sharing of experiences and acquiring new skills.
- Value was ascribed to being linked to an existing internal association that has been in existence for over sixty years. Participants felt they were discovering and drawing out their own experiences, but against an established and documented international background. This was encouraging, as well as assisting with creating efficient means for capacity-building that drew on international – mainly Swedish⁹ – experiences.

⁸ Full transcripts of the responses are included as an Appendix.

⁹ The significance is in the technical aspects of the program – not necessarily the content. In the workshop in Rwanda an overview of childrens' theatre in Sweden was provided, but not as a template to be replicated. It was presented as an example, tracking different stages of development of the profession and opened discussion on the value and impact of the theatre experience in different societies.

- Participants spoke about realizing that the battles they face are similar if not the same as those faced by other practitioners of children's theatre in other parts of the world. That the struggles for recognition, for acceptance as a viable and legitimate art form, for parental and governmental approval/support, are not restricted to one particular country.
- Political concerns and the regional politics of Africa trying to find its place internationally, despite economic differences, seemed to be present and not ignored. At the same time, they were not foregrounded. The issue seemed to be not how the countries in Africa can become like Sweden with regards to children's theatre, but how Africans can professionalise what they have, according to their needs and circumstances. This is an important discussion as it relates directly to sustainability issues as well.
- A central topic was the way in which theatre practitioners image themselves, as this affects how they are regarded by authorities and other stakeholders. Sharing experiences (and in the long term, a network) helps build knowledge of this and provides positive experiences of the profession that increases self-esteem and confidence. This is also important in regard to how African can establish their own methods and strategies against the perceived European or US mainstream¹⁰.
- The impact of the relational aspects of such meetings and workshops should not be underestimated. In the age of anonymous technology and documentation through machines, internet research, large scale statistical data and global information, the practical and relational concerns of people are seldom addressed. Being together for a working process that constantly acknowledged relationships and drew its energy from the direct and immediate input of personalities, is always significant and cannot be replicated through the digital exchange of information.
- For many practitioners, working through educational drama or drama as a tool for social development is the only way they can survive professionally. Therefore to have additional training on the development of work particularly for young people – the major target of most of these sponsored programs – means that they are receiving input that is directly relevant.¹¹
- Being able to discuss various definitions of children's theatre, as well as ways in which children's drama can be encouraged and developed and what is appropriate to ask of a child, was considered some of the most important aspects of the workshops. This was obviously in relation to the experiences offered by facilitators from outside Africa, and has helped those practitioners working in schools – of which there are many. There is little drama education for educators on the continent so these aspects were well appreciated. It was noted that those practitioners working in schools (as observed in Nairobi at least) had a distinctly child-centred approach to their work.

Theatre practitioners, chapters and arts organizations do need to be more mindful of the question of impact themselves. This assessment should not be only left to external evaluators after years' of activities. Practitioners should be finding ways to build in their own data collection that will lead to ownership of results and also to help determine the most strategic ways forward.

This also includes issues of information-sharing, research and report-writing. What do people think the value of reports might be? Are they mostly considered an irritating obligation imposed by the donors/host? Or are they considered as worthwhile means to share information? What kind of information would be worthwhile?

The (admittedly small) sample viewed of reports from people who had attended Regional Workshops, for example, revealed that either there were no reports, or they were anecdotal, thin on analysis and

¹⁰ It was noted that the ASSITEJ International Constitution was altered in 1996 to allow for African experiences of children's theatre to be included.

¹¹ This also supports job creation and is discussed fully in the section under Poverty Alleviation.

seldom referred to any outcomes or action plans. The notion of what will happen once those workshops are over, is seldom articulated beyond a general intention “to share with colleagues when we get back”. Impact measurements, a consideration of local up-take and how this affects future planning is regrettably seldom a focus. It was also not always easy to discern a direct link between attendance at Regional Workshops and any other subsequent ASSITEJ activities at a national level¹². It is difficult to see how these reports could be the valuable internal tools they could be to help monitor progress.

A true network would capitalize on any aspect of information sharing to deepen or maximize resources available. Websites (national or regional) should be a repository of these reports. Even if anecdotal, it would assist to at least share attitudes and allow for the appreciation of perceptions and assumptions.

Participants and organisers in the African Network do recognize the need to work towards sustainability of the profession, and this emerged in various ways:

- Participants to the workshops are relatively young. While not excluding older practitioners, this does suggest that new faces are being encouraged, and that the opportunities afforded by the program are reaching a new generation.
- Daniel Settuba from Uganda made an interesting point concerning the relationship between non-profit associations and companies or organizations that generate a living for their members. While the latter is necessary to promote the profession, the former might be a way in which benefits are balanced out; emerging artists may be exposed and strengths can be combined to approach authorities and advance the sector. The significance of this is the appreciation of the inter-relatedness as well as in the recognition that sometimes voluntary work for a communal goal is necessary.
- The facilitators and participants in the Rwanda workshop spoke about defining various *strategies* to overcome difficulties rather than focusing solely on acquiring specific technical skills. This approach is both attitudinal and pragmatic as specific techniques may not always be applicable to all situations. Strategies focus on adaptation, moderation and experimentation and encourage a more integrated approach that starts with the belief that a solution can be found.
- There is evidence to suggest that the knowledge acquired in the workshops are taken further in some cases – in Namibia, centres are established outside urban centres and playwriting has been taught in order to generate and support new work; in Zambia, a Drama Academy, providing input based on work learned through ASSITEJ workshops was arranged. Of course there is no absolute way to measure these attempts at multiplier effects, without having a base-line knowledge first. However, some indicators will be the kinds of work being produced at festivals in the future as well as the new work published, even if informally.

A discussion of sustainability as it pertains to the practitioners should also include some of the points made above about networking. A network does depend to a large extent on the will and capacity of individuals. It will require that individuals contribute, often without any direct remuneration and during their own time, to keeping relationships going, and to distributing information. This in turn will create the ethos of a network – it can become truly alive and generous, or it will falter and become stagnant.

3.1.3 The children – beneficiaries

The field trips for this evaluation included visits to a school in Nairobi, which was preparing for participation in the Schools Drama Festival, and schools in Kabwe and Lusaka, Zambia, that have an impressive history of participation and winning in the Schools Drama Festivals. From observation of the rehearsal at the first school, and interactions with the children from the second, it was clear that their drama activities had a very positive impact on these children.

¹² The Namibia Report of 2005 is an exception as it identifies future outcomes clear and quantifiably.

The Schools Drama Festivals are well supported by the Educational Authorities and there was evidence of parents providing additional financial support for props and costumes where necessary. The teachers are well-engaged and enthusiastic, and would not have access to drama skills if it were for ad hoc workshops. The teacher at Kabwe (Freedom Primary School) is also a member of the ASSITEJ Executive Committee.

The type of drama that tends to come from African schools can be didactic, overtly pedagogical or moralistic, and it often appears that children are messengers for adult words or concepts. For example, themes of dramas have included the taking of more than one wife by a man; unwanted pregnancies, love affairs and so on. This could be seen as part of a somewhat authoritarian hierarchical education system and to some extent, reflects the “African” family situation – father as head of the family who sets the frame and determines the rules for behaviour.

Although African theatre practice might at the moment see children performing for children, this might change to include other methodologies, as the profession develops. The opening up of other options is one possible benefit of a network – particularly an international one that may incorporate many different approaches.

However it was clear from these visits, that the children are emotionally committed and able to deliver work of a high standard. This means that the activity has meaning and value to them.

3.2 Program Design, Problems and Challenges

The program design has been simple and effective: it consists of a series of meetings which bring national representatives together to decide on the priorities for strengthening theatre for children and young people. These decisions concern the nature of the capacity building to take place within workshops, as well as how regional cooperation can be stimulated and sustained. Decisions were taken by the target group, guided by the Project Manager. Funds mainly covered the considerable travel and facilitation expenses – it was agreed that no funds would be allocated to capital purchases for any chapters. Meetings take place in different countries to allow the spread of experience and responsibility.

Opportunities for African practitioners to interact in international arenas are found through ASSITEJ's International Congresses, Executive Committee Meetings and children's festivals throughout the world. The program design of regular meetings has also contributed to a greater exposure of African children's theatre of all kinds, which in turn is a factor in increasing international presence.

Major challenges within the program design have included:

- The logistics of African travel. It is expensive, routes are not convenient, visa's not always easily obtained and transferring of money for expenses is not always straightforward due to different financial and political structures.
- Identifying people who could represent the various countries and be able to responsibly start chapters, and find ways to sustain these bodies despite little or no national funding.
- Creating conditions under which the chapters can be developed equably but with respect to differing situations. Ensuring appropriate organizational development requires on-going support but the support coming from this program had to be limited to what could be achieved in the projects. It could not include direct funding of national chapters.
- Building capacity within the national chapters so that additional funding can be sourced nationally in order to support some of these African Network projects.

- Opening up the activities of the network to more people and different people, so that the same faces are not always present, and that the impact is increased. This increases expenses. Having more than one national representative to workshops was discussed but eventually rejected as the funds would not allow it.
- Ensuring that the decisions made in meetings are shared with all participants and that the network functions beyond the Regional Meetings and Workshops.
- The inclusion of African voices and their experiences in international arenas, despite the divides of socio-economic limitations, and the expense of this kind of travel.
- Ensuring ownership of the Network once the program funding of Regional Meetings and Workshops is completed. This includes the need to ensure functioning of the website and other network methodologies, which have been referred to in Sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 above.

The program has been successful because of the simplicity of the project design and strategy, clarity of goals and because of the strong and responsive base provided by Swedish ASSITEJ (which has been the primary partner), together with dedicated and respected African Regional Co-ordinators. African representatives have been able to concentrate on establishing their national bases and identifying their needs for capacity building, while the administration and management has been provided by the Project Manager – also the Secretary General of ASSITEJ International.

Recognition of the specifics of African theatre has dictated the content of the skills development by the practitioners themselves. African theatre practitioners seldom have the luxury of specialization – they are usually required to undertake management, directing, play-writing as well as acting responsibilities. The workshops covered a good range of these requirements.

It is noted that up to 2005, all facilitators were Swedes, drawing on their experiences, but from 2005, workshops have been co-facilitated with an African presence. This obviously opens the experience more and leaves a legacy within the continent that can aid future sustainability. An example is the willingness of the facilitator in Rwanda 2006 – Prof Francis Imbuga – who has now volunteered to work closely with ASSITEJ Kenya on developing scripts and giving additional workshops. It also places the African experience and knowledge alongside that of the Swedish counterparts, which is important.

Effort has been made to promote the African presence and discourse on childrens' theatre within the international context in various ways. Firstly, the Regional Co-ordinators (who have been voted onto the International Executive Committee) have been keynote speakers at meetings in Austria, Australia, Jordan and Cape Town. Cheela Chilala's paper "Pulling the Grasshopper" was published in the ASSITEJ Book of 2004/5. Secondly, groups of African practitioners have been invited to various festivals in Sweden, with and without their groups, and examples of African children's theatre has been presented in Korea.

While the all the funding for these trips might not come from this particular program, it is the contacts and links with this African Network that has made this possible. ASSITEJ Sweden has also acquired extensive knowledge about the situation of children's theatre in Africa and is now well placed to be a conduit for information and networking.

In 2003, National Workshops were also held alongside the Regional Workshops. This capitalized on the ASSITEJ presence and enabled more people to benefit from the learning experiences. However, this has not always proved possible due to the extra funding required. It has also not been possible to invite more than one person from each country to meetings and workshops for the same reason.

The biggest challenge for the continuation of the network is the survival and growth of the national chapters as noted before. This includes points made about networking and includes the capacity of

chapters to fund-raise. Chapters will have to strategically work with what is available to them, and will have to also diversify their funding sources as much as possible. This will have to include income-generation – from services or products – as well as looking beyond the obvious international donor agencies. It might also mean sourcing across sectors – it is well documented that the Health Sector or Social Services Sectors have budgets for message-related drama, and many organizations are surviving on this stream.

Some chapters are beginning to cultivate useful business sponsorships, but this is currently the most neglected area of resource-generation for most arts organizations within Africa generally. It requires a different approach, some skill in negotiation and that organizations begin to appreciate what they might bring to this relationship.

South African artists have the benefit of Business and Arts South Africa (BASA), a government initiative that supports the development of mutually beneficial relationship between arts and business. This includes supportive small-scale funding and an Awards Scheme to reward and reinforce successful relationships. BASA undertakes sponsorship research, provides fund-raising seminars and tries to raise the profile of arts sponsorship so that more organizations can tap into this income-stream. There are strong indications that some (particularly the large-scale corporations such as Mtel) businesses outside of South Africa are willing to sponsor the arts, but apart from BASA, there is little support for the arts in developing this.

3.3 National/Regional Synergies

This section investigates synergies between what ASSITEJ stands for and promotes (both internationally and regionally within the Africa Network), and situations that currently exist within Africa. The aim is to identify how closely aligned ASSITEJ might be to other initiatives, which would in turn argue for the relevance of the program, and possibly point to ways in which sustainability could be enhanced.

3.3.1 Schools Drama Festivals:

Many of the countries have fairly well established schools drama festivals. In Kenya, the schools drama festival is taken very seriously by the Educational and Cultural authorities, and consequently by the schools and students. It involves complex systems of production, presentation and adjudication, with the finalists performing at State House in front of the President. Through this, drama has found a place within the system that is valued and ASSITEJ Kenya should be able to increase their profile more and more successfully within this context. They could provide technical input to teachers and use the event to promote ASSITEJ. Aligning themselves well to this project could also assist the chapter with sponsorship generation, if they could build in marketing or exposure benefits to the appropriate business partner¹³.

The Zambian Chapter has instituted an Award system in their schools festivals, which then has a place in the national Ngoma Awards. This has generated enthusiasm, pride and an increased interest in the possible career path of drama students. Freedom Primary School in Kabwe is very conscious of the fact that one of their students, who had won one of these schools awards, went on to win an Ngoma Award later. It is a way of bringing higher status to a profession that is not generally considered a suitable career. It links ASSITEJ to other positive drama activities taking place in the country.

3.3.2 Dramatised Set Works

Increasingly drama is being used to animate prescribed literature in the schools. Many practitioners earn a living from touring and presenting these works. In some cases, (for example, Nairobi), the book publishers link with the drama presentations in forms of sponsorship. This Nairobi example is a useful

¹³ Obviously this would have to be in keeping with the tone and standards set by the Education Department.

pointer towards perhaps building more corporate support for this work in the future. Already the publisher's logo was on the theatre poster – the development of this relationship is underway and should be beneficial to both parties.

The presence of drama in the school system like this also suggests that continued exposure to educational drama, might also help with audience development outside of schools. If young people have these opportunities, they will increasingly look for and support other drama activities. This implies positive development for the sector.

3.3.3 Theatre for Development

As has been mentioned, the use of drama as a means to convey social message (also called Theatre for Development) is well developed in most African countries. Apart from income generation, this promotes drama in sectors other than the arts. It also suggests that drama is not unknown in these societies and its practitioners have the confidence of donors and educationalists to some extent. This in turn provides a positive arena within which ASSITEJ can carry out its activities. The challenge would be to find ways to extend the type of drama being used, or to introduce innovative methodologies to awaken interest in the work beyond the message.

3.3.4 Similar Networks

The existence of networks such as SATI (Southern African Theatre Initiative) and EATI (East African Theatre Initiative) are positive indicators of regional synergy. In Zimbabwe, SATI is closely linked to the National Chapter of ASSITEJ. Whatever the actual levels of efficacy and productivity of these networks, they are sufficiently established to suggest that ASSITEJ is not acting in isolation. They have functioning websites which could house ASSITEJ information, and should be seen as allies in efforts to lobby policy makers and maximize what little resources there may be.

3.3.5 Current Trends concerning Regional Cooperation

Increased regional cooperation within the cultural sector is a topic that is recently receiving considerable attention. Members of the arts community (including the Regional Co-Ordinator and Chairman of ASSITEJ Zambia) meet in December 2006 to discuss this topic and identify ways in which cultural practitioners can work more concertedly together in Southern Africa, to address issues of common interest. These included policies on cultural diversity, artistic freedom of expression, developing sustainability through a more business-like approach to the arts, and increasing knowledge about attracting corporate sponsorship.

A similar initiative on a more national scale will take place in March, in Senegal where the funding bodies Hivos, Goree Institute, the Danish Centre for Culture and Development, International Network for Cultural Diversity, Strommestiftelsen and Interarts are convening a conference to reflect on the current situation of the cultural sector. A particular aim is to investigate on possible new strategies for networking, coordination, capacity building and funding modalities, and an attempt to overcome the obstacles that hinder the setting-up of sustainable initiatives in the cultural sector.

The regional workshops and seminars have worked as catalyst for further cooperation within the network as well: that is, Namibia with South Africa and Finland, Zimbabwe with Swaziland, Zambia with Botswana and Finland, and Uganda with Rwanda, and Rwanda linking with Burundi and DRC.

Although formal documentation on these links was not immediately evident, it is clear that neighbouring countries have been able to consider setting up their own internal projects. This augurs well for the future, where the funds for projects involving 14 countries might not be forthcoming, and so a smaller budget with more easily achievable logistics might be more appropriate.

3.4 HIV and AIDS

Combating HIV and AIDS is one of the four priority areas for Sida. Sida's policy on HIV and AIDS "Investing for Future Generations" identifies the pandemic as a threat to development as a whole, not just as an isolated health issue. It emphasizes synergy and collaboration with researchers, policy makers and implementers of interventions and identifies "meetings, conference, information exchange networks and multi-site projects"¹⁴ as having an important role to play in building regional capacity.

The use of drama as an effective tool for communication and awareness of all kinds of social development issues has long been recognized. Educational theatre to inform youth about HIV and AIDS and its prevention is being harnessed by most National HIV and AIDS Commissions in Africa. Many theatre groups owe their continued survival to such Commissions and to other concerned bodies that contract actors to develop performances to spread this particular message. Recent local research confirms that "development messages need to fit the social context of a community and that the information which unfolds through the authentic conflict and resolution of drama is more likely to be absorbed into the thoughts and actions of daily life."¹⁵ This is why drama, radio plays and soap operas are being utilized more and more, as effective and creative ways to support community development and education.

Examples of national centres with particularly strong HIV and AIDS awareness projects include Swaziland's SWATCYP, who was asked by their Ministry of Health and Social Welfare to develop a drama dealing with these issues. SWATCYP contracted a cast from a variety of groups, trained and created a performance which toured to 62 schools in the country. SWATCYP also trains communities under the banner of Baphalali Swaziland Red Cross Society, Unicef and the Ministry of Education, on HIV and AIDS issues.

The Rwanda chapter, Artej, is developing a program for street children that will address HIV and AIDS awareness and strategies. This program will use performance techniques to education and has the possibility to be replicated outside of Kigali throughout Rwanda, and even into the neighbouring countries of DRC and Burundi.

The majority of both the ASSITEJ program target group (theatre practitioners) and the beneficiaries (children and youth) are deeply involved in either promoting HIV and AIDS awareness or receiving information about the pandemic, through the nature of drama. Most drama practitioners in Africa are no strangers to the disease anyway, but their work can also be directly connected to various HIV and AIDS strategies, apart from being a conduit for the message.

The Zambian Chapter has formed an alliance with a company marketing a herbal product designed to boost immunity, and in exchange for marketing opportunities at ASSITEJ workshops, the company has provided financial sponsorships for drama awards. This sponsorship relationship has potential to grow, as the Chapter begins to harness the full value of its existing relationship with schools and festivals.

The ASSITEJ African Network program has therefore directly contributed to Sida's fight against HIV and AIDS *structurally* (by being a network that supports information exchange, and provides a platform for collaboration around the subject), as well as in terms of the *content* of at least two of their Regional Workshops. In Namibia in 2005, the workshop was a Director's seminar working with one-person plays on HIV and AIDS related themes. This will be followed up with another similar workshop in Lusaka in 2007.

¹⁴ Investing in Future Generations – Sida's HIV and AIDS policy on www.sida.se

¹⁵ Marvin Hanke, *Linking Culture to Social Change*, pg 114, from *Culture, Entertainment and Health Promotion in Africa*, ed. Kimani Njogu (2005) Taweza Communications Ltd, Nairobi. Kenya

3.5 Poverty Alleviation with Reference to Sida's "Perspectives on Poverty"

*"In Sida's view, poverty is essentially a combination of a lack of power and choice and a lack of material resources."*¹⁶

This experience of poverty as officially defined by Sida allows for an appreciation of the indirect and possibly long range, but beneficial effects of cultural interventions when it comes to poverty alleviation. While cultural network programs may not provide material resources to the target group or beneficiaries, they can (if appropriately designed and implemented) contribute to the strengthening of social ties that

*"stabilize communities and ease the psychological stress of poverty"*¹⁷.

In addition

*"culture has a strong potential to promote the human resources of knowledge, creativity and a positive sense of being " [and to] "enhance socio-political resources ... (which) create social relations, cohesion and networks that bond communities together. Cultural activities also provide a platform for expression – be it artistic, economic, social, cultural, civil or political. Expression combined with the participation of civil society opens up the space for social debate and voice."*¹⁸

In this way it can be argued that the ASSITEJ Africa Network is assisting to build civil society as it strengthens representative bodies sustained by democratic processes. A strong, responsible civil society is able to positively influence policy and contribute to developing a better-functioning social order based on human rights. The focus of the network is not necessarily to advance individuals specifically, but to improve strategies concerning children's and young people's theatre, so that successful platforms for education, debate and social development are established. Youth will be exposed to creative educational methodologies, dialogue and debate, which helps develop the capacity for problem-solving, increasing personal responsibility and community awareness.

Access to a diversity of cultural expressions and dramatic presentations for poor people is vital to provide voices for those usually distanced from the increasing emphasis on information and communication technologies. Community theatre, theatre for development and other forms of theatre create opportunities for exchange of knowledge, debate, dialogue and the positive reinforcement of cultural and individual identities.

As outlined in the discussion above on HIV and AIDS, most of the drama practitioners influenced by the ASSITEJ Africa Network, sustain themselves through employment generated by commissioned contracts concerning social messages. By improving their skills and increasing their capacity to deliver better products which expands on their impact, practitioners are more marketable. Through sharing information and developing situational specific solutions based on best practice, they are also more able to generate their own employment. By participating in a vigorous, confident network, they are open to more poverty-alleviation opportunities – locally, regionally and internationally. This can include tours or invitations to festivals outside the country, which in turn often generates other opportunities – teaching, or sharing information and building up personal and professional resources.

¹⁶ Sida Evaluation Manual pg 42

¹⁷ Ibid pg 12

¹⁸ Ibid pg 18

3.6 Theatre Infrastructure

In most African countries, the physical infrastructure supporting formal theatre (where it exists) is rudimentary, under-maintained and generally old fashioned. Common problems include inefficient management, the restriction of the use of premises or equipment to a few; relatively expensive hire charges; little or nothing beyond the major urban centres and little recognition to the various aspects of the theatre profession. There are few specialized lighting designers, set construction experts, sound engineers, dramaturges, costume designers, marketing and publicity officers. Most practitioners develop multiple skills, and most performances are constructed around these deficits. The situation for childrens' theatre is possibly worse, as childrens' theatre is often not considered "serious" theatre, and access to infrastructure is probably even less likely.

Particularly when it comes to schools, drama practitioners have to be particularly creative with venue usage (many schools don't have a hall or a stage) as well as with the creation of props or use of sound and/or light. Being part of an international network, which includes countries from other continents which may face similar problems, and hearing about their solutions is therefore highly useful. Obviously the content of the Regional Workshops helped to address some of these issues, specially the 2003 Theatre Management, in Mauritius.

One of the features of ASSITEJ is the International World Day for Theatre For Children and Young People, celebrated on 20 March. By linking up with the world-wide events marking this day, the profile of children's theatre is raised. Even if full-scale or elaborate productions may not be possible for all chapters, it is still an opportunity to generate media interest or create awareness that might not have previously existed.

3.7 Relationships within the Network

As has been discussed, the various national chapters enjoy varying levels of formality and sustainability. This determines to some extent, the scope of each chapter's ability to set up and maintain relationships with other centres. Those chapters with established internet access, administrative infrastructure and some on-going funding are obviously at an advantage.

However, as detailed in the discussion on networking methodologies in Sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 and Appendix 5, some actions should not rely only on financial support. The regularity and consistency of the Regional Meetings, as well as the circulation of information and material through minutes and reports of workshops, should have enabled all chapters to enjoy a range of relationships with their counterparts.

The investigation of the level of structure of the national centres undertaken in Dar es Salaam in 2006 is a useful starting point for assessing the capability of relationship-building in the region. It is not clear how this information will be shared within the network, but could perhaps provide centres with reliable and updated statistics of what is possible, and what is not. For example, country reports to the Dar es Salaam meeting do indicate that some chapters have established websites – Nigeria for one.

However, the reality is this site is under construction and not yet functioning. Not all of the email addresses on the ASSITEJ International or the Africa Theatre Arena website are fully functional either. An updating of these technical aspects would help provide the means to build relationships within the network.

Some centres may be close to others geographically, which should also assist with hosting of workshops or festivals across borders, where possible. Listing the available transport and current average costs between these major cities and centres, on the website, might also provide inspiration at a glance for future interactions.

The role of the Regional Co-ordinators and their chapters has been mentioned, but it perhaps important to acknowledge again that this extra responsibility might influence how these people and their respective chapters might be viewed within the network. Those chapters have to generate funds to support the travel expenses of their representative to Executive Committee meetings but may also enjoy a closer relationship to the international network as a result. In order to avoid misconceptions, it may be helpful to draft a brief outline of the role and responsibility of Regional Co-ordinators in order to define appropriate responsibility and expectations.

Throughout the Sida-supported program, the Secretary General of ASSITEJ International has functioned as the pivotal point for relationships within the region. As this role will fall away with the cessation of the program, it is advisable that this is well understood and provisions made for the future. Networks do benefit from a nominated co-ordinator that can take care of certain issues that affect the group. It may be that a rotating role should be established, in order to ensure that information circulates for example, or that data bases of key ASSITEJ members are updated, or the website maintained, etc etc.

The communal identity of the African network in relation to the international network will become less structured due to the ending of this program. Chapters must be aware of this and have some sense of what changes this might bring. National chapters will be both members of the international community in their own right, but also by virtue of this regional identity that has been put in place. How this plays out and with what implications, must also be clarified. A group identity is sometimes useful, but this depends upon equal commitment to that identity. There may also be negative consequences if levels of participation and responsibility are not equally maintained, and may not allow for a natural individuation as chapters develop at different paces. There are fifty four countries in Africa and currently fourteen have ASSITEJ chapters. To what extent and on what grounds can the African Theatre Arena network legitimately speak for the whole of Africa within the ASSITEJ International community?

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

Conclusion 1

This simple and highly effective program design has been highly successful in providing opportunities to strengthen theatre for children and young people in Africa. The goals of the program were clear and straightforward (perhaps due to some extent but not wholly, to the input from the LFA Workshop) which has enabled the activities of the program (the projects) to be well-aligned to these goals.

Conclusion 2

There is an obvious relevance between the projects and the needs of the target group – the theatre practitioners. Moreover, the target group has taken a large portion of the responsibility for determining the nature of the projects which supports the conclusion that the program has been effectively positioned, capable of providing maximum possible benefit and ensuring ownership by the target group. The impact on the beneficiaries (children participating in or being affected by theatre activities) is positive, although more indirect.

Conclusion 3

The role of the Chair of Swedish ASSITEJ (also the General Secretary of ASSITEJ International) as Project Co-ordinator has ensured neutral and experienced management of the program. This has included a sensitive care-taking of financial accounting and reporting, which has allowed the target group of representatives from the African chapters to concentrate on building their national structures as well as their contributions to the network.

Conclusion 4

Valuable tools and methodologies have been put in place to support the continued flow of information between African chapters and also between the African network and their international counterparts. These include the establishment of a website, administrative tools such as templates for meetings and minutes etc, and the formal documentation of the program and its central aims through a high quality brochure.

Conclusion 5

The major challenge facing the target group is to determine whether the network should continue to exist after this program is concluded – for what reasons, in what form and with what resources or structure? Fundamental assumptions around the benefits of a network and the attendant responsibilities and realities of participation, need to be thoroughly and honestly interrogated. Only then can strategies be devised that will have the commitment of all concerned.

Conclusion 6

The eventual nature of the African network will depend largely on the state of effectiveness of the national chapters. This requires the deepening of democratic processes to ensure legitimate representation and skillful strategic planning to guarantee sustainability through social, organizational and financial means. This is a task that only each chapter can undertake, although support and assistance may be found through the sharing of strategies and information.

Conclusion 7

The need for technical capacity-building within the sector will probably not decrease, as there is always something to be learned or re-visited. The lack of formal theatre education facilities within most African countries contributes to this on-going deficit. That African practitioners are looking out for opportunities to share and learn is important, but they should also be able to assess and appreciate existing knowledge, and/or traditional skills, that may contribute to their skills as theatre practitioners. Contemporary story-collection projects or indigenous knowledge initiatives on the continent should be seen as a reinforcement of this acknowledgement.

Conclusion 8

The potential value of this program extends beyond the increased technical skills acquired by workshop participants, travel experiences and the enlarging of collegial contacts on the continent and/or in the sector. It opens up possibilities for practitioners to engage with deep-seated issues that provide the context for their work, and for the possible future network. These include socio-economic trends, political conditions, cultural policy concerns, and the successful establishment of responsive and responsible civic voices. It requires that practitioners engage with these issues – difficult as many may be. The engagement may be personal and/or communal, formal and/or informal, national and/or regional, but is vital if the development of the sector is to be vigorous, positive and self-determined. Non-engagement results in disconnected strategies and allowing agenda's to be constantly set by outside influences.

Conclusion 9

There is a range of political, social and economic initiatives on the continent currently, which suggest that regional cooperation is an important activity in which to invest. It has growing support from various sources, for various reasons, and could provide a groundswell which serves the future of the African Network if accurately gauged and harnessed.

Conclusion 10

Theatre practitioners (specifically in the context of this evaluation and cultural practitioners generally), are often slow to document their successes in ways that can benefit the development of their sector, as well as directly support their own sustainability. This includes:

- understanding the need for of different types of documentation, and especially for accurate and updated information
- appreciating the value a variety of stakeholders can bring in different ways
- assessing and expressing in some way the social values their activities may provide
- engaging in constant self-evaluation and analysis in order to better understand their impact
- creating ways to demonstrate their efficacy so that they may be taken seriously and position themselves usefully

This is important because until meaning and value can be verifiably described by the target group on a small level, it cannot easily be translated to the larger level of a network. Knowing and being able to prove your value (in whatever ways), is fundamental to any other planning. It also supports efforts towards future sustainability.

4.2 Recommendations

(Appendix 5 offers additional comments which pertain to most of these recommendations)

Recommendation 1

The essential issues, problems and benefits concerning the maintenance of a regional network need to be vigorously debated at the Swaziland Regional Meeting. It would be useful if participants were well-prepared before hand; had engaged with members of their local chapters and were prepared to acknowledge short-comings in order to formulate realistic conclusions. The discussion needs to be specific and reasonable, not based on wishes, but on actualities. There should also be complete acceptance of the decision made by any chapter for themselves and no pressure to conform to expectations, if appropriate analysis suggests another route.

Recommendation 2

The structural capacity of each of the national chapters needs to be honestly examined by their members in order that plans for improved actions may be put in place. This should not be seen as a punitive exercise, but an essential part of organizational development that will lead to increased strength for the regional and sectoral communities. The results of the structural assessment undertaken by the General Secretary in 2006 may be helpful here. This exercise may also be usefully done in teams, perhaps grouping chapters that share geographical boundaries and similar circumstances? In this way, common solutions to common problems could be developed.

Recommendation 3

The strategic and practical capacity of each chapter also needs to be reviewed, preferably against a plan of action for the forth-coming year. Emphasis should be put on developing plans that capitalize on existing resources and that have the greatest possibility of success. Strategies and actions may not always be training interventions or performances – they should also include profile-raising and relationship building of various kinds. Chapters should be assisted to develop these plans and to record them, with details of actions to be taken and the people responsible for these actions. Possible outcomes and monitoring should be anticipated and accounted for.

Again, this might be a useful collaborative exercise in small groups.

Recommendation 4

Each chapter should undertake a needs assessment survey of their own situation, but this should not be focused on a generalized need for funding. Financial support is the one resource everyone can claim a need for and it can be argued that there never will be enough. Therefore chapters should be assisted to review their current resources (human, material and financial) and to examine how they can maximize possibilities. Emphasis should be shifted to include a social and organizational view of sustainability, as well as the importance of positioning and developing strategic partnerships. The notion of honourable trading of skills or goods instead of relying on hard cash should also be creatively investigated. This can only be done, once needs are identified and meaning and/or value ascribed.

Recommendation 5

The national chapters should be assisted to develop a one-page, succinct and specific summary of their organization, updated contact details and latest activities¹⁹. This provides (at the very least) a base-line informational tool that can be used on the website, to bring the area up to date; and as a primary vehicle for relation-building, nationally and internationally. If this exercise is completed at the next Regional Meeting, it could form part of the final report and minutes, and upgrade the website immediately. If necessary, professional editing assistance could be provided to create the best possible impression and communication.

Recommendation 6

The forthcoming session in Swaziland may also benefit from the input or direction of a skilled facilitator not connected to the program. A neutral, outside presence may allow for new perceptions to be opened up and old assumptions to be helpfully challenged. It would also relieve the Secretary General, who should also be able to freely participate in this assessment from his perspective. It would also perhaps ensure that the target group themselves come up with final conclusions and decisions. This would have implications for ownership of possible future actions where there is no longer a Project Manager or Secretary General to shoulder responsibility.

Recommendation 7

The roles of the African members of the Executive Committee of ASSITEJ International and the roles of Regional Co-ordinator of the African Theatre Arena Network (should it continue to exist) should be clarified. This would help formulate areas of responsibility within the network and allow for systems of process to be established. The responsibility of maintaining a network outside of a program such as this one, cannot fall on one or two people. Division of labour, delineation of responsibility and acceptance accountability needs to be willingly agreed to and overtly stated, to avoid misunderstanding.

¹⁹ Some chapters do have this tool in place, and their format could be shared or a communal one developed for the group.

Recommendation 8

Should there be chapters wishing to continue with regional cooperation of whatever kind, possibilities of smaller networks within the continent should be investigated. Some of these already exist. Their plans should be made realistically and strategically, and information placed on the website. Smaller collaborative projects with fewer participants may have a better chance of success at this stage. They may then provide the foundation for future, more ambitious plans.

Recommendation 9

The system for keeping the website updated should be clarified. Financial implications need to be ascertained, as well as possible resources required. Agreement should be reached on what content would be appropriate and creative ideas for keeping the website alive should be encouraged.

Recommendation 10

Following from Recommendation 8 and linked to Recommendation 3, reporting and documentation of activities needs to be improved within chapters, which will increase the flow of information between chapters. This includes appreciating responses from a variety of stakeholders, including those of children. Photographs of workshops taken with cell phones; drawings; newspaper cuttings; letters from parents or teachers – these are all methods that can help collect information and assist with establishing credibility. Some of these could also be placed on the website if the technical capacity exists.

Recommendation 11

Depending on the state of the website, useful links to other like-minded websites should be actively sought. This could include donors, supportive corporate sponsors, sites within the theatre sector, sites connected to supporting child development, funding agencies etc. However, this is only recommended if the website itself can be brought to a high standard of content and accuracy of information, and maintained at that standard.

Recommendation 12

Theatre practitioners within the African network need to respond to the challenge of networking by understanding the fundamentals of relationship building. Whether it is a relationship with a colleague, or a beneficiary, a donor or a competitor – a relationship necessarily means each party must be getting something. If this is understood and appreciated in the most inclusive sense, without becoming defensive, it allows for new perceptions and new potential. If the needs of a business sponsor are understood from that business's perspective, for example, this makes it easier for the arts organization to appreciate what they can bring to the relationship to supply those needs, and what they can ask for in return.

This also encompasses the appreciation that what you put into the relationship in a network, comes back in another way perhaps. Or rather, it reinforces the notion that a network is only as effective and vigorous as the individuals who constitute it. Implicit in this, must be the belief that they have something to offer and are comfortable with the benefits (even if indirect) in return.

5. Lessons Learned

1. The simplicity of design for a program of action can result in highly effective and relevant results, if well positioned, with high levels of ownership by the target group. Project design doesn't need to be complicated, but the aims and measurable results should be very clear.
2. Being able to meet regularly has huge impact on theatre practitioners who attended in Africa, where travel is expensive and difficult.
3. Only structure, planning and persistent actions can maintain the impact after these meetings.
4. Theatre practitioners have been creative about capitalizing on opportunities provided by theatre for development, schools drama festivals and the dramatization of prescribed literature.
5. Theatre practitioners need to develop a wider base of stakeholders of all kinds to maintain and build the profile of the sector and their activities.
6. Networking requires considerable effort on the part of individuals as well as groups to be effective. This effort might not always have a direct financial benefit but need to be understood as worthwhile for other reasons.
7. Not all networking activities need a large amount of funding. People need to recognize opportunities and respond, even when they are relatively small.
8. Websites have to be maintained and updated if they are to be effective.
9. Capturing of information in reports and minutes is important if it is to be shared.
10. Practitioners of theatre for children and young people would benefit from guided reflection as to their vision for the future of this profession in Africa at this time. People need to consider what it is that they want and how they might achieve it – with or without international partners.

Appendix 1 Terms of Reference

1 Background

Children's theatre network in Africa started in a small scale in June 1999, addressing a need among theatre practitioners for further collaboration within the continent. Sida has since inception been the only donor for this particular networking activities and workshops with a focus to build capacity within the region. Over the six years of activities the network has increased and today contains 14 member countries throughout the whole of Africa. All ASSITEJ Chapters have their individual national funding. The Sida contribution has only been used for regional activities.

Children's theatre has been a neglected artistic area in Africa and mainly meant that children are performing for other children. The Nordic approach is to use theatre as a tool for democratic change with high artistic quality. There are very limited possibilities to get theatre education in Southern Africa. This fact naturally affects the quality of the theatre performances and how the practitioners get across to the children.

As identified in the Sida in-depth assessment of ASSITEJ, the main achievement/outputs 1999–2004 were:

- 14 ASSITEJ member organisations have been formed; many of whom in a short time have become important actors in their countries.
- 17 meetings and workshops/seminars have been organised in 8 countries in southern and eastern Africa.
- African representatives have attended international meetings in Europe, Middle East and Asia.
- Two large groups of African theatre practitioners have visited Sweden in connection with the Swedish Theatre Biennials in Växjö in 2001 and in Uppsala in 2003.
- International meetings have been held in Africa, Harare 2001 and Cape Town 2004.
- Several synergetic cooperations have emerged out of the network.
- Common values and identity for strengthening regional links has developed
- African presence on the ASSITEJ World Congress in Seoul, Korea in 2002

ASSITEJ is an international NGO promoting children and young people's theatre. The support to the African network has gone through the Swedish ASSITEJ where it is registered as a national NGO. The structure is democratic at all levels with elected boards, annual meetings etc. Decisions regarding activities of the network, regional meetings and workshops are taken at the regional meetings. Two elected regional co-ordinators represents Africa in the Executive Committee of ASSITEJ International.

The purpose and objectives of the program is to

- Continue to recognise national theatres for children and young people in each country in Southern and Eastern Africa as potential member theatres of ASSITEJ
- Strengthen the African regional links and create a working network that will last after the project is finished

- Ensure representation of Africa at international level within ASSITEJ
- Share pedagogical and performing arts skills
- Implement workshops on how to integrate HIV and AIDS in performance
- Increase cooperation within the region
- Strengthen democratic values through better understanding and acceptance of different traditions

The main activities/methods are to arrange theatre meetings and workshops in the region, always planned and organised by the different host countries. Direct target group is adult, professional theatre practitioner of both sexes. Most of the participants already work in existing organisations in respective country. The ultimate beneficiaries are children and young people both in their capacity as audience but also as theatre practitioners.

The network is aiming at adults performing for children. Sida had up to date disbursed SEK 5,725 million in financial support to ASSITEJ. The Sida support will come to an end in 2007 and a continued support will not be possible. The evaluation is a way for both Sida and ASSITEJ to scrutinize the achievements, future sustainability, lessons learnt and to seek the synergies of the network.

2 Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation

The evaluation should have the point of departure in three levels:

- 1) ASSITEJ organisation level;
- 2) theatre workers/project target group level; and
- 3) children or representatives of children/project beneficiaries' level.

It should, firstly, examine the activities of the projects in order to determine their impact and sustainability for the region with focus on the above mentioned levels. It should, secondly, assess the degree to which the objectives of the project have been met and identify any challenges and problems that might have been experienced. And it should, thirdly, investigate national/regional synergies that have sprung out of the network. Finally, the evaluation should draw conclusions of the above and make recommendations for the future to ASSITEJ and identify the most important lessons learnt.

More specifically, the review should include, but not necessarily be limited to, the examination of the impact and sustainability of the project in relation to Sida's overall poverty focus, *Perspective of Poverty*, 2002. The impact of the projects, positive or negative, should be related to state institutions, civil organisations and children theatre practitioners. Specific attention should be paid to the theatre infrastructure.

Gender disparities and HIV and AIDS should also be addressed. The review should further examine the results of the projects as compared to those foreseen in the project proposals. It should assess the projects strategies and designs and their administration and management. These assessments should include visits to about 3–4 African countries. The remaining national ASSITEJ chapters should be assessed via telephone, e-mail, reviewed documentation etc. The relations between the various institutions should be assessed. Any challenges or problems that the project has encountered should be described, as well as the attempted to solve them.

The review should draw conclusions from the above examinations and assessments and make recommendations for how to sustain the network, as well as identify the synergetic, and maybe unexpected, outcomes.

3 Methodology, Evaluation Team and Time Schedule

The evaluation should be carried out by one person. The reviewer should have in-depth knowledge of the cultural field in Southern Africa and is expected to use no more than six weeks for assessing the project. She/He should review the project documents, including project proposals, narrative and financial reports, and other relevant documents as well as Sida guidelines (see chapter 2).

She/He should interview staff, members of ASSITEJ, board members, partner institutions, donors and other relevant actors. And she/he should travel in Southern Africa to assess activities on the ground, preferably in Zambia, Kenya and Rwanda. The review should be carried out with start during the last quarter of 2006, and finalised in the beginning of 2007. The review should present a detailed time schedule for the full assignment: duration, field visits etc.

4 Reporting

The evaluation report shall be written in english and should not exceed 30 pages, excluding annexes. Format and outline of the report shall follow the guidelines in Sida Evaluation Report – a Standardized Format (see Annex 1). The draft report shall be submitted to Sida electronically (air-/surface mailed or delivered) no later than 1 March, 2007. Within 2 weeks after receiving Sida's comments on the draft report, a final version shall be submitted to Sida, again electronically and in 3 hardcopies. The evaluation report must be presented in a way that enables publication without further editing. Subject to decision by Sida, the report will be published in the series *Sida Evaluations*.

The evaluation assignment includes the completion of Sida Evaluations Data Work Sheet (Annex 2), including an *Evaluation Abstract* (final section, G) as defined and required by DAC. The completed Data Worksheet shall be submitted to Sida along with the final version of the report. Failing a completed Data Worksheet, the report cannot be processed.

Annexes 1 and 2 are retrievable from 'Sida-mallar'/Publications/Sida Evaluations.

Appendix 2 List of People Interviewed

In Rwanda:

Niclas Malmcrona: Secretary General of ASSITEJ International
Marie Persson-Hedenius: ASSITEJ Sweden
Francis Imbuga: Kenyatta University, Kenya
Daniel Settaba: Roots Africa, Uganda
Hope Azeda: ASSITEJ Rwanda and Executive Committee Member of ASSITEJ International
Jerry Pooc: South Africa
Robert Chirima: Zimbabwe
Lize-Leandra Ann Kubersky: Namibia
Philomena Coco Julia Bassey: Nigeria
Peter Kisali Pallangyo: Tanzania
Thuli Phindile Ntshakala: Swaziland
Lawrence Gitahi: Kenya
Bernard Mutambwa: Zambia
Narraidoo Rowlandra: Mauritius
Ninette Mukobwajana: Rwanda
Esperance Kankindi: Rwanda
Jean Marie Vianey Rurangwa: Rwanda
Valentin Utaruhijimana: Rwanda

In Kenya:

Ricky Gitahi: ASSITEJ Kenya
Nancy Wamuyu Mutahi: ASSITEJ Kenya
Maina Joseph Gichohi: ASSITEJ Kenya
Waigwa Whachira: University of Nairobi
Kingwa Kamencu: ASSITEJ Kenya
Edward Kabuye: Talking Drums
Wasambo Were: Kenyatta University
Patrick S Khaemba: Executive Secretary, Kenya National Drama Festival, Ministry of Education
Kombo Hassen: Deputy Director of City Education, Nairobi
Charles Kado: Chair of Primary Schools Drama Festival
Mbuthia Ngware: Nairobi Theatre Players
Peter Wasamba: University of Nairobi
David Kiiru: University of Nairobi

In Zambia:

Andries Oliphant: Playwright and Workshop Facilitator

Cheela Chilala: ASSITEJ Kenya and Executive Committee Member of ASSITEJ International

Wesley Musamba Kaonga: Head, Dept of Cultural Affairs, Ministry of Community Development and Social Services

H.M. Kwalombota: Head Teacher, Rhodes Park School Ltd

Denis Chifunyise: Director-Africa and CEO Zambia, Aluwe International

Sharon Pillay: Director, Children International

Jack Chilufya: School Manager, Freedom Primary School

Karen Ng'andu: ASSITEJ Zambia

Gabriel Mbambala: ASSITEJ Zambia

Anette Widholm-Bolme: Sida

Appendix 3 Documents and Literature Reviewed

National Centre Reports

Nigeria – 2005/6

SWATCYP/ASSITEJ Swaziland – 2005/6

Artej Rwanda – 2005/6

ASSITEJ Zambia – 2005/6

ZATCYP/ASSITEJ Zimbabwe – 2005/6

Tanzania – 2005/6

Minutes of Regional Meetings

Lusaka, Zambia in 2005

Cape Town, South Africa in 2004

Nairobi, Kenya in 2003

Mauritius in 2003

Durban, South Africa in 2002

Secretary General's Reports

Report on Activities of Africa Network to Sida, 17 March 2002

Report on International Activities 2002–2005

Reports from Regional Workshops

Lusaka, Zambia in 2005 with Logical Framework Approach summaries

Culture, Entertainment and Health Promotion in Africa

Edited by Kimani Njogu, Taweza Publications: Kenya (2005).

Forging the Links against AIDS

HIV/AIDS Research, Policy and Practice

Sida, 2004.

Investing in Future Generations

Sida's HIV/AIDS Policy, 2003.

Perspectives on Poverty

Sida, 2002.

Sida's Work in Culture and Media

Cecilia M Ljungman, Helge Ronning, Tejeshwar Singh, Henrik Steen Pedersen et al
Sida, 2004

Looking Back, Moving Forward

Sida Evaluation Manual

Sida, 2004

Appendix 4 Transcripts of Individual Responses to Survey

The Request (sent to 55 people in all the countries where there have been workshops and meetings of the Network):

----- Original Message -----

From: "Niclas Malmcrona"

To: Africa@mailrelay1.bredband.net

Subject: Evaluation

Date: Mon, 18 Dec 2006 14:58:08 +0100

Dear ASSITEJ member,

Sida, the funder of the ASSITEJ African Network Project, has commissioned an evaluation of the activities of the project. This report will try to record the impact of the network and important challenges and successes. The report will be completed by March 2007 and discussed in the Swaziland Regional Meeting that month.

We are asking everyone who has taken part in ASSITEJ activities of any kind, to write and offer their opinions and stories. This doesn't have to be a long report, just information about any impact that ASSITEJ has had that you know of.

We are particularly interesting in hearing about *synergies*. In other words, activities or projects that have taken place *after* participating in ASSITEJ meetings or workshops, but *because* of ASSITEJ. This could be in the form of an exchange of performances, joint projects, linking with like-minded people in another country – etc.

If you have any other comments to make about ASSITEJ – about the future perhaps, or comments about important lessons learned through the network, we would be very pleased to have them.

Please send your replies directly back to me on this email, by clicking on "Reply".

With thanks,

Niclas Malmcrona

The Replies:

1.

I am Etoundi Zeyang, the ASSITEJ CAMEROON President.

From 2002, I participated in many ASSITEJ activities as the regional meetings and general assemblies and today I can really say I have reinforced my experience. Also I added my world contacts. As the director of AFRICAN THEATRE FESTIVAL FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE which take place every two years in Cameroon, I can say ASSITEJ help us to be a really international festival: people are coming from any part of the world to visit our festival by all the contacts I am usually get during ASSITEJ meetings. Now it is easy for us to receive companies coming out of Africa as the guest of honour by the ASSITEJ contacts. From our festival, many African companies are touring in Europe by the contact we did during ASSITEJ meetings and I am invited in the international festivals in the world also by ASSITEJ contacts.

Lastly, I participated in a workshop in Mauritius about organisation of a festival that was very important to us because it is confirming what we were doing.

Etoundi Zeyang

2.

Från: "Remymartin Okafor" <planetofthegenii@hotmail.com>

Datum: fredag 29 dec 2006 12.21.36 GMT+01:00

Till: sec.gen@assitej.org

Ämne: RE: Evaluation

ASSITEJ International is truly an organisation that upholds the theatre of 'in principle and in practice' and that has been revealed overtime. My first experience with ASSITEJ was in Cape Town South Africa and the participation is one of most rewarding experience in terms of education and human development. That followed with the re-structuring and development of the African dwindling Children's Theatre which has given birth to series of Theatre workshop in different parts of Africa with Professional facilitators coming from the western world (Sweden). The participants from different African countries I know have a lot of positive stories to tell regarding the follow-up of the workshops and the regional meetings. The Africa Theatre network through ASSITEJ international live transforming projects have been exposed to a whole lot of rewarding techniques to the art and our works spanning across borders, gaining international awareness and giving our children the opportunity to link up with the children of the world in series of international/national projects. Through the ASSITEJ Africa projects, the world of Theatre for Children and Young People have been able to break into Governments and the Corporate society and gradually designing a place for the African child.

3.

Från: washmas Masenda <washmas@yahoo.co.uk>
Datum: torsdag 28 dec 2006 11.41.13 GMT+01:00
Till: Niclas Malmcrona <sec.gen@assitej.org>
Ämne: Re: Evaluation

thank you very much for considering my input to the evaluation excise. I am one of the participants the one man act on HIV & AIDS workshop held last year in Namibia. I enjoyed sharing of the skill which part the network which resulted in the further links and sharing with Mola Pong – Namibia, Maina Joseph from Kenya. There plans to work on collaborative works producing plays jointly with other Assitej Centres. Though not easy to come together to strengthen the networks. The major challenges in the networks include cultural exchanges, collaboration of works, skills sharing plus.

I will update you of more networkdevelopment. May you mail me the list of those who participated at the Namibia workshop and there mail addresses.

Thank you Washington Masenda – Assitej Zimbabwe.

4.

Från: mempuh sophia <mempuh_sophia@yahoo.fr>
Datum: onsdag 27 dec 2006 09.05.09 GMT+01:00
Till: Niclas Malmcrona <sec.gen@assitej.org>
Ämne: RE: Evaluation

Hello Mr Niclas

It is always wonderful the knowledge we obtain from ASSITEJ. Actually as a participant who went to Mozambique and Namibia i wrote a play which i performed here in the Fatej. This has also permitted me to do little workshop (more like discussion in my group) with my own actors as to the art for children is all about.

And i must say that the workshops i have attended has really helped me. It is easy for me to write a play now vis a vis (in relation to) the setting that is the place, the mentality of the children and even the parents. You know most parents are sceptical about what their children watch and listen to especially the international schools. But when we do the rounds we realise that deep down children are the same and we will need almost the same format to create a play and perform it for them.

To come back to the aftermath of the workshop my group and i are preparing a tour in my province of origine (that is Bamenda in the north west province) to act in the schools there. If by chance we are invited to perform even out of the country we will be more than ready.

I hope i have been able to say something about the help the workshops have given to me. I wish i were given many other opportunities to attend workshops to be able to widen my knowledge theatre for children. Cus the ones i attended really helped me. I really hope there will be more occasions like that in the future.

Appendix 5

Questions for the Future and Additional Networking Ideas

Do people know and really understand how to network? It is suggested that successful networking requires an internalization of the possibilities offered, and a interrogation of expectations. It also requires interpreting of supposed benefits for local conditions, to ensure viability.

A few of the *Big Questions* that each National Chapter needs to ask themselves and then the Chapters might need to discuss together:

1. Is there any advantage to being affiliated to ASSITEJ International? Answers should be specific to each local situation and be reflected in actions or outcomes of the Chapter's plans and intentions. For example, affiliation to an international organization brings some credibility, if that organization is itself credible and has a verifiable history of activities and development. The international organization might provide access to information about similar activities elsewhere in the world, but this is only advantageous if the local chapter is actually looking for these activities, and has the capability to access the information, (web access, travel budget) and the capacity (or need) to utilize the information in its own programs.
2. Similarly, technical assistance that might come from an international connection is only a real advantage if the local chapter is specific about what kind of assistance they are looking for and if they have a program of activities and a structure that can receive and utilize this assistance. The technical assistance needs to be relevant to local conditions, which presupposes a clear program of action and intentions on the part of the local chapter.
3. In this way, the annual costs of 100 US\$ to be affiliated to ASSITEJ International need to be clearly investigated and justified. With the justification, will come the commitment to paying this and the development of appropriate fund-raising interventions.
4. Is there any advantage to being a member of a Continental or Regional Network of ASSITEJ Chapters? Again, the answer needs to be specific to local conditions and be clearly identified in local activities. It also needs to address the issue of whether there are sufficient common issues continentally/regionally to support the effort it will take to maintain a living, useful set of relationships. With 54 African countries, what is the point of coming under a generalized African umbrella, which may have challenges of language barriers, differing socio-political attitudes towards children's theatre and the expense of travel within the region?
5. What is the point of having an ASSITEJ Chapter in your country, once the Sida support providing for Regional Workshops and Regional meetings ceases? If there are no perceivable benefits outside of the Sida project, there will be little commitment to maintaining a structure, developing a program and undertaking the work needed to develop sustainability.
6. Should the African chapters agree to continue within a network relationship with each other, do they need to agree on how to conduct themselves within this body? Do they need to establish communally-accepted principles for themselves?
7. What might the chapters (and the individuals who align themselves with the chapters) prepared to contribute to maintaining an African network?
8. What might the chapters (and the individuals within them) have to give up to maintain an African network? This could include perceptions of conquered territory, or a dominance created by closed systems? Perhaps the recognition that there can be no easy rides on other people's energy and

efforts? Or the position of relying always on international donors rather than finding other ways to stimulate your own resources? Not one or any of these might be the right answer – they are simply issues that may be helpful to discuss.

Sustainability (financial, social and organizational) of an arts organization (or network), will depend on the inter-connectedness between the intention, the realized activities and the profile of the organization. Profile cannot be legitimately built if there are no relevant and effective activities; similarly it will be difficult to obtain financial support if there is no documented profile. The need for constant effort to be expended in these areas must not be underestimated.

It cannot easily be done on a volunteer basis by one person, and therefore it must also be emphasized that a network is necessarily a communal activity. Everyone has a role to play because the network depends on everyone. Personal connections may safely be placed at the service of a network that takes itself seriously and is capable of responding respectfully and appropriately. Personal connections can be built through a network too, so ideally, there should be no real conflict but benefit to all.

Some of the activities that might help to sustain a chapter (and therefore the network) that could be undertaken with little financial expenditure include:

- Using existing opportunities to profile children's theatre specifically and the arts generally, in the media. This could be as simple as encouraging writers to cover arts events, looking for and creating new angles for coverage and making it easy for the journalists to provide positive copy; doing interviews on community radio stations; identifying and prevailing upon good role models to speak up for the theatre and its beneficial role in society.
- This could also include approaching a significant elder to act as a Patron (the First Lady if she is known to be an arts supporter, or has a focus on child development.) However this should only be undertaken if the Chapter has fully developed vision and action plan to which the Patron can lend his/her support. It is not suggested that Chapters become politically aligned. It is suggested that a carefully chosen Patron, within the bounds of a considered relationship, might assist efforts to raise the social status of the work.
- Making a concerted effort to be known and to know other networks and groupings in the sector so that information can be easily distributed and synergies identified. For example, the Dept of Literature at the University of Nairobi has a well-established oral history project, collecting and documenting material from around the country. This could be a useful source of raw material for future theatre scripts. In addition, the same University has held seminars on Children's Literature, which members of the ASSITEJ Kenyan network could have attended had they known about it. Similarly, links with SATI and EATI could be more concertedly explored.
- Identify opportunities to expose the ASSITEJ ideals and principals, thereby garnering support and widening the capacity of the network, without much financial outlay. This means scanning existing resources and creatively using them for relationship building. For example, Prof Francis Imbuga of Kenyatta University, Nairobi, co-facilitated a Regional workshop on script-building in Rwanda. He teaches Creative Writing and has offered to open up the building of those scripts with his students. It could be a simple but effective way for the KU students to learn more of ASSITEJ. The more in the network, the stronger the potential.
- Keep the information alive through even simple forms of documentation. An electronic data base of supporters/interested parties would be most efficient, but is not the only way. Collections of articles, cuttings, listings of names and addresses, short reports of meetings and workshops etc etc could be easily kept in display folders. This could be present at meetings, serving as an informal archive as well as a testimony to the commitment of the organization. Newcomers could see at a glance, a

variety of activities and personalities connected to the organization, which is a good way of building new members. It was noted that every participant at the Regional Workshop in Rwanda had a digital camera and took pictures. This is raw material for reports, for short newspaper articles, or local websites and yet has not been seen in any subsequent material, or on the website.

- Use existing information dissemination systems. The ASSITEJ website has space for National Chapters to contribute news and details of festivals. Not one African chapter has contributed to this yet. SATI has a website and links to ASSITEJ which could host one or two pieces of information or images of national chapters' activities at no cost beyond an email. There might also be similar systems within various local cultural resources, such as the French Cultural Centres etc.

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A Reproductive and Sexual Health Centred Approach
A collaborative programme between RFSU, Sweden and MAMTA, India
Gordon Tamm, Rukhmini Rao with the collaboration of Viveca Urwitz, Hoang T. Hiep, Nguyen D. Khe
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