

The Regional Children's Theatre Project in South Asia



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Author: Karin Markensten

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Summary

Sida has commissioned a mid-term review of the regional project “Children’s Voice”. The five year project agreement ends October 31, 2009. The activity period for the project ends at December 31, 2008. The project aims at developing and establishing a professional children’s theatre in India and in Bangladesh. The Swedish International Theatre Institute/ITI is the Swedish counterpart. The project is financed by Sida with SEK 16 200 000.

The project is active in India and Bangladesh. A first part of this review was carried out in India in October 2006. The second part, the review of the Bangladeshi part of the project, was carried out in February 2007. The visit to Bangladesh was postponed because of security reasons. A first part of the review, over the Indian project part, has been presented to Sida in a specific report in January 2007. The present report *replaces the first partial review*, “The Regional Children’s Theatre Project in South Asia – A review of project activities in India”, 2007-01-21.

The *development objective* for the project is to contribute to that “*children will enjoy basic rights, including the right to theatre*”. The *project objective* is “*a professional basis for children’s theatre established*”.

European theatre, which was introduced to India during the colonial time, has today been transformed into a modern theatre in India and thereafter also in Bangladesh. In both countries the theatre groups have demonstrated a strong engagement in the development of society. This modern socially engaged theatre is however seldom in any of the countries directed to children and youth. Professional theatre for children, with only professional actors on stage, has been produced for the first time in West Bengal and Karnataka in India and in the southern areas and Dhaka areas in Bangladesh within the project “Children’s Voice”. Western theatre as an art form has difficulties to be allowed to perform for a general public in Bangladesh, in contrast to India, where it is accepted both by the society and the authorities, although not a prominent feature of Indian daily life. The difficulties for the Western theatre as, well as for the Bengal traditional theatre, to perform for the general public in Bangladesh, have increased during the last few years.

Four professional theatre groups have participated in the project. In India they are the Nandikar, an experienced independent group in Kolkata, and the governmental “national theatre” Rangayana Theatre in Mysore, where a children’s ensemble has been created at the theatre with support from the project. In Bangladesh, Rupantar, a development

organisation working with Folk Drama as a tool, takes part in the project in the southern parts of Bangladesh, and Rakhal in Dhaka and the areas around the capital. Rakhal does also work occasionally in other parts of Bangladesh. In India, the two professional groups have identified and collaborated with altogether fourteen new theatre groups, named Fellow Travellers since the project started. In Bangladesh, where the authorities' acceptance for professional theatre has been more problematic, two NGOs will start to collaborate with Rupantar in 2007. Rakhal, the other professional Bangladeshi group, has entered one year later in the project than the other groups and starts collaboration with Fellow Travellers in 2008. The "Fellow Travellers" are not yet professional, but have been trained by the professional groups (and will be in Bangladesh) in order to spread good professional children's theatre in a larger area. All the groups have worked both with children's theatre productions and performances and with workshops in drama training for children and young people.

675 professional children's theatre performances have been presented for an audience of about 237 522 children and young people combined with pre-and after workshops conducted by the theatre groups. Added to this 16 644 children and young people have participated in longer workshops for drama training conducted by the professional groups. As the Fellow Travellers are still not regarded as professionals their amount of performances and audiences is not included (these quantitative results can however be found in Appendix). Swedish professional theatre workers have contributed to the project with training for the theatre groups in the art of children's theatre.

During the review about 190 adult persons, teachers, headmasters, parents, and representatives for school authorities were interviewed about the impact of the project, especially about the effects of the long lasting drama training workshops. The adults had seen a significant difference in the children's behaviour and individual development before and after the longer lasting drama training. Most of the children had after the training demonstrated a better self-confidence, better creative thinking, and a better capacity to discuss and express their opinions. Often the children also had better results in school and better notes.

In summary, the result of the project for the first part of the project period is very positive. The project activities are furthering the project objective that a professional basis for children's theatre is on its way to be established. There is also evidence that the project influences positively the development objective, the situation for children.

The project is relevant both seen from Sida's new policy for culture and media and Sida's overall goal. It also scores high on efficiency and feasibility. The main problem is the sustainability of the project, especially the situation for the Rangakishora group at Rangayana Theatre, which was specially created to work with children's theatre and where the actors are now paid from project funds. An important next step could be to develop even better management skills within the participating groups for them to be able to more actively search for more economic support.

The project is planned according the LFA method. The development and the project objectives can be improved. The participation of children and youth and its effects on the development objective should be added to the project objectives. For the remaining project period the poverty issues could be given even more emphasis, because the basic structure of a professional children's theatre is now in place. The results from a rights

perspective and the perspective of the poor could be reported more clearly in the future. Reporting methods should be developed and follow the LFA plans. The results in the LFA plans should be the same for all groups and indicators should be better developed.

Increased focus on national and also regional collaboration between the participating groups would probably be beneficial. It could be financed at the expense of less short-term support from Swedish professionals.

It is *recommended* that the project is given support for two more years after the project period 2004–2008 has come to an end.

Background

In 2002, ITI/Swedish International Theatre Institute, was asked by Sida to carry out a fact finding mission to India and Bangladesh with the intention of starting a regional co-operation, with theatres in the region participating. Four different groups were identified by ITI to collaborate in the project, with ITI as a Swedish Counterpart:

- Nanidkar, independent theatre group in Kolkata, the Indian state of West Bengal
- Rangayana, the governmental “national theatre” of the Indian state Karnataka
- Rupantar, a NGO in Khulna, Bangladesh
- Rakhal (earlier called Peoples Theatre Association) in Dhaka, Bangladesh

The four theatre groups were invited by ITI to a seminar to plan a South Asian regional theatre project with children and young people as the main target groups. The seminar resulted in the project plan “Children’s Voice” with the three independent theatre groups and the “national theatre” of Karnataka as founders and with ITI as the Swedish counterpart. The project plan was presented to Sida. Sida approved the project in accordance with the Assessment Memo dated December 2003 (Ref. number DESO 2202-2911).

The Project

The stated development objective is to contribute to that “*children will enjoy basic rights, including the right to theatre*”. The project objective is that *professional basis for children’s theatre should be established*. For the Indian part of the project, the intention is that the project objective shall be achieved in the two states West Bengal and Karnataka and for the Bangladeshi part in the southern and north eastern areas and the areas in and around Dhaka.

The project works with two issues, 1) to develop a professional children’s theatre in the areas mentioned above and 2) to carry out drama training for and with children and youth in the same areas with the purpose to strengthen not only their creativity but also their self-confidence.

In both India and Bangladesh there has during the last twenty years existed amateur children’s theatre, where children have produced theatre plays for a child audience, once or twice a year, often linked to a celebration. This has been the only theatre directed to a child audience, and also one of the very few forms of art directed specially to children.

In three of the four participating groups in the Children's Voice project, most of the work is done by professional theatre workers, who have dedicated their life to the art of theatre and who also have a strong awareness about their society. The fourth group, Rupantar, is a development organisation working with human right issues and with theatre as a tool. This group aims at changing the school system and – in a longer perspective – the society. The members of Rupantar have dedicated their professional life to working for the development of the society, and they work in Rupantar because they are talented in art of theatre.

The four groups have received training by the project in how to create professional *children's* theatre, with support also from Swedish theatre workers. Professional children's theatre is a totally new form of theatre in areas where the project is active.

All the groups also carry out drama training for children, short and intensive or lasting for more than a month. During this drama training close contact is kept between the participating children's teachers or parents in order to follow up the progress of the drama training work.

Budget

The total budget for the regional project, financed by Sida, amounts to SEK 16 200 000 for five years, 2004–2008. The participating groups have received equally large Swedish grants during the period 2004–2006. For 2004 the grants to each one of the groups amounted to SEK 450 000, for 2005, SEK 400 000 and for 2006 SEK 375 000 (the Bangladeshi group Rakhal was not registered as a NGO in 2004 and received their first grant in 2005). All the groups have contributed themselves to their specific project budgets with approximately 50% of the Swedish support each year. Costs for the Swedish counterpart, ITI, to coordinate and administrate the project amounts to an average of 20% of the total Sida budget for the first three years.

The participating groups in the project use most of their Swedish support to co-finance new theatre productions and to carry out performances of these productions in poor or relatively poor areas.

Another major budget item for all the groups is drama training with and for children and youth. All participating groups have organized a core team to carry out the professional project work.

Budget and Expenditure 2004–2006 (SEK)

	Budget 2004	Expenditure 2004	Budget 2005	Expenditure 2005	Budget 2006
Transf SIMA	140 000	140 000	100 000	70 000	100 000
Four Groups	1 800 000	1 370 000	1 800 000	1 780 000	1 800 000
Swedish Professionals	425 000	305 278	525 000	701 658	600 000
Reg. Seminars In Sweden	190 000	190 018	60 000	68 579	70 000
Reg. seminars in South Asia	95 000	64 097	125 000	61 588	130 000
Administration					
Fees proj, coord.	300 000	275 562	350 000	324 677	350 000
Cost Admin ITI	140 000	190 000	150 000	200 000	250 000
Travel	150 000	98 807	160 000	197 301	160 000
Other		- 7197			
Total	3 240 000	2 626 565*	3 270 000	3 403 803**	3 500 000

* Saving SEK 613 435 transferred to 2005, used mainly for grant to Rakhal (SEK 430 000)

** Saving SEK 479 969 transferred to 2006.

The Indian and Bangladeshi Culture

Strong traditional art and culture in India and Bangladesh

The cultural identity in India and in Bangladesh is, to say the least, strong. Theatre and dance, in combination with music and poetry, constitute an important platform for communication both from social and political aspects. The Indian cultural tradition is one of the oldest and most developed in the world. European theatre, which was introduced to India during the colonial time, has today been transformed into a modern domestic art of theatre, which in the bigger cities has demonstrated a strong involvement in the development of society.

Bangladesh was up to 1947, when India became independent from the British colonial power, a part of India and the Indian state of Bengal. With Independence, the Bengal state was divided in two parts, a western and an eastern part, the later governed by Pakistan. After years of devastating civil war, the eastern part of Pakistan was in 1971 declared as the Bangladesh nation.

Bangladesh has Islam as its official religion and the majority of Bangladeshis are Muslims. In West Bengal the majority are Hindus. But in spite of these differences there is a strong affinity between the Bangladeshis and the West Bengalis. Bangladesh and West Bengal have the same language, Bengali. And they are historically coming from the same culture in almost all areas – theatre, dance, music and poetry.

In India, art and culture has its own values and these values are recognised and respected also by the authorities and the Indian government – although not supported very much financially. In Bangladesh, however, religious and political pressures have at times created obstacles for public artistic expressions. During the last few years, it has been difficult for theatre as well as for other art forms to present their art for an audience. In the rural areas it has been even more difficult than in the capital, Dhaka.

No professional art and culture for children and youth

The modern socially engaged theatre that was developed during the 1940s in India was rarely directed to children and youth. According to the Indian theatre groups participating in the project, little of the modern cultural expressions in India are directed specifically towards children. The situation is said to be the same in Bangladesh. Not much of modern literature exists for children in any of the countries. But in both countries, theatre played by children has been accepted.

Theatre played by children has mostly not had a relevant content for the children of today. According to the theatre groups, there has earlier not been a demand for good children's theatre, neither in India nor in Bangladesh. Professional theatre for children, with only professional actors on stage, has been produced for the first time within the project "Children's Voice".

The school system for governmental schools in both Karnataka, West Bengal (as it is said to be also in the whole of India) and in Bangladesh, according to interviews with representatives from the school authorities in both countries, is based on old-fashioned hierarchical models. Children learn by heart and repeat what the teachers say. The Children's Voice project has, especially in the Indian part of the project, included as an important feature drama training for teachers in government schools. The purpose is that teachers should be able to communicate better with their students, children as well as youth.

The Four Participating Theatre Groups

India

Nandikar

Nandikar is located in Kolkata. It started as an independent theatre group in 1960 and is led by the experienced and very well known actor and stage director, Rudraprasad Sengupta. It has 47 theatre workers, out of which a core group of actors/theatre workers have worked with Rudraprasad Sengupta for many years. During the project process new young talented theatre workers have been involved in the group, and been trained daily by the older and more experienced actors. Daily training is a must for all actors at Nandikar, experienced artists as well as newcomers,

Workshops for vulnerable children and youth

The sign board outside Nandikar's small office in the old part of Kolkata says: "Nandikar – Training centre in drama for children and youth". Training for poor children and youth in drama is a dominating and important part of Nandikar's work. Nandikar has an evident awareness of the Indian society, a strong political interest and a focus on the poor. Over the years, Nandikar has worked continuously with discriminated groups, with sex-worker's children, children living at the streets/vagrants, blind children, other physically handicapped children as well as with mentally handicapped children. The gender aspect has been focused in a festival for women theatre (with women play writers, stage directors etc). In November 2006 Nandikar started to work with a Muslim school for girls in Kolkata with 1 800 students. With the project Children's Voice the group has got the possibility to focus even more on children and youth and on professional children's theatre.

Little external funding

Nandikar is occasionally supported by small grants from the government of West Bengal and has also received, occasionally, some support from the national government. Nandikar is well known and respected by cultural authorities in the whole of India. It is one of India's leading independent theatre groups. With little external funding, and with many employees, Nandikar strives daily to make ends meet.

10 new children theatre groups – Fellow Travellers

Nandikar has developed 10 young independent children's theatre groups in the province within the framework of the project. They are called the "Fellow Travellers". Most of these groups are still not professional. But they are, according to Nandikar and also to the Bengal governmental National Academy for Theatre, well on their way. These groups are deeply involved in the project in two aspects. They are regularly trained by Nandikar and they carry out (with support from Nandikar) outreach programs with children's theatre performances as well as a series of workshops in drama training for children and young people. Nandikar share their project budget with their Fellow Travellers. In 2007 and 2008 the Fellow Travellers will use 50% of Nandikar's project budget.

Swedish theatre professionals

Four Swedish theatre groups, with a total of 14 professionals, have been collaborating for shorter periods (1–2 weeks) with Nandikar: Teater Pero, the puppet theatre Tittut, Mårten Hedman's shadow theatre and Tyst

Teater. Two drama pedagogues, Erika Marklund and the actor at “Backa Teatern”, Maria Hedborg, have also worked with Nandikar in drama pedagogic training.

Rangayana

Rangayana is the governmental theatre of Karnataka. It is located in Mysore and has a permanent ensemble for adult theatre. Mysore is since a long time the traditional cultural capital of Karnataka. When the “Children’s Voice” project started, Rangayana set up a specific children’s theatre group at the theatre, the Rangakishora. During the project process Rangayana, with its Rangakishora group, has developed a professional children’s theatre. The group has also worked with children and youth in drama training at schools and in long workshops and summer camps at the Rangayana Theatre. Summer camps with drama training have been carried out by Rangayana before the project. But professional children’s theatre and collaboration with schools, including drama training, did not exist before the project started.

The Rangakishora at the Rangayana theatre consists of 10 young actors, just graduated from the well-known theatre school Ninasam in Karnataka. Rangakishora has become well known for its talented productions. All performances, held at the Rangayana Theatre or in the rural areas in the province, are prepared with shorter workshops for the children before the performance is presented. Workshops are also carried out regularly after the performances.

High artistic quality and teacher training

Rangakishora, as a young professional group, does not have Nandikar’s solid experience in working with drama training with children. Nor do they have Nandikar’s professional experience in producing professional theatre. The artistic quality of their productions and performances is however good. Rangakishora’s outreach program, with performances and shorter drama workshops in combination, is popular and the demand for it among schools in the province is now more than can be satisfied. The group is used regularly by the Institute for Teachers Education in Mysore to train teachers in communication. The Ministry of Education finances travel costs for the teachers in the province for this training and the training normally lasts for one week for each group. The Rangayana Theatre is not paid for its service to the Institute of Teacher Education.

Four new children’s theatre groups

During the project period 4 young theatre groups, Fellow Travellers, have been identified and trained by Rangayana/Rangakishora in children’s theatre. The Fellow Travellers do both children’s theatre productions/performances and drama training together with children and youth.

Swedish professionals

Seven workshops have been carried out with the Rangakishora ensemble, conducted by different Swedish professional theatre workers (all in all 9 professionals). Two professional children theatre’s productions have been set up with two of the Swedish professionals, one directed by Lars-Eric Brossner and one by Maria Weisby. Other professionals that have participated are Ingrid Kyrö and Anders Linderöth (workshop on professional children’s theatre in society), Erika Marklund and Maria Hedborg (training in drama pedagogy), Jeanette Roos Sjöberg (training, drama

pedagogy)and Karin Rudefelt, “voice trainer” in a specific training for only the five women actors, conducted by Maria Weisby at a second visit to Rangakishora,

A workshop for authors to train drama writing for children has also been carried out for 16 Karnataka authors. As a result 15 new plays for children were written. 6 of them got published. Rangakishora has not produced any of the new plays. Some of them have been produced, however, by the Fellow Travellers. The workshop was conducted by the Swedish dramaturge Lena Fredell and the Swedish/Indian author Zac O’Yeah.

Bangladesh

Rupantar

Rupantar works in Khulna in the southern part of Bangladesh. It is a big and comparatively strong NGO. Rupantar is not a theatre group, it is a development organisation that uses modernised Folk Drama and also so-called Pot Songs as a tool to change society. (Pot songs belong to the old Bangladeshi cultural tradition. They are songs combined with pictures/ folk art on a fabric roll, shown behind the singer as illustration of the context of the song) Rupantar started its activities in 1995 and works with local government issues and with human rights. It has 314 members/ employees out of which 91 are theatre workers, musicians and dancers. Rupantar’s overall goal is to strengthen poor people’s own possibilities to change their life conditions. The organisation is built in a non hierarchic way, which is one explanation why the 314 people at Rupantar are called “members” and not employees in spite of them getting monthly salaries. The members belong to many different religions. Every working day starts with firm and happy community singing to lighten the working spirit and the feeling of collaboration.

Rupantar has its headquarter in Khulna. Nine other area offices are spread out in the country. The organisation works today with many different projects supported by different national or international national donors. In 2004 Rupantar joined the Children’s Voice project. With this step taken, Rupantar started to work with a new target group, children and youth. A specific core team was created for this work with 22 persons/theatre workers/drama trainers involved.

Folk Drama and Pot songs with high artistic quality

Rupantar has developed a high artistic quality both in their Folk Drama and in combination with Pot Songs for children, as well as for an adult audience. According to Rupantar a high artistic quality is their best tool to get their messages through to the audience.

Rupantar calls its theatre form “Alternative Living Theatre/ALT”. It can be compared to Peter Brook’s story-telling theatre that he developed during the 1980s; an empty stage on which stories are presented by the actors, with almost nothing else on stage as a help for the audience imagination. The actors, when telling the stories, use some few cultural symbols that are easy for the audience to understand. The actor is everything and everything depends on the actor.

Rupantar works in the same way – without any other artistic comparison with Peter Brook! With simple dresses and with shawls they use only a thin carpet to mark the stage in their performances, often presented outdoor. And the shawls together with the actors create forests, houses, water wells, birds, dogs as well as a mother’s vagina from where a new born baby enters into the world. It is simple and direct, and with no mysticism at all.

Strong society restrictions for public theatre performances

Traditional folk theatre – as well as Western theatre – has had serious difficulties to be presented publicly during the last 4–5 years in Bangladesh, especially in the rural areas. The leaders at Rupantar had to hide, some time ago, for half a year, in different places of the country, after a journalist had been shot when interviewing Rupantar about an ongoing women's right project. Rupantar has installed a security system at its headquarters to prevent the organisation from physical attacks.

Rupantar does not present their professional performances for the general public. That would not be possible. In the Children's Voice project Rupantar focuses on school collaboration and has today close collaboration with 33 schools and also an increasingly better collaboration with the school authorities. Also other donors have become interested in Rupantar's work within the Children's Voice project and have started to support. 45 schools more will participate in 2007 with the support of the organisation Concern World Wide. In early 2008 another 300 schools probably will follow the same training schedule as in Children's Voice, with regular drama training in schools. The donor will in that case be Care-Bangladesh.

Two Fellow Travellers identified

Two NGOs have been identified as Fellow Travellers/project partners to Rupantar. One is located in Rajshahi in the north eastern part of Bangladesh and the other in Chittagong (south eastern part of the country). These organisations work in a similar way as Rupantar, with Folk Drama as a tool. Both organisations have many members which make it possible to start, later on, a widespread outreach program. The collaboration will start in 2007. Rupantar has not been able to start earlier with the Fellow Travellers concept because they claim they had to concentrate on their own capacity building, as they are new to children's theatre.

Swedish theatre professionals

Six different Swedish theatre groups, with altogether 20 professionals, have supported Rupantar with training and seminars in 1–2 week's sessions. Two professional productions have been set up with support by two of these Swedish groups, one together with the Slava group and another with the actor and director Hans Wigren and two of his colleagues.

Other Swedish professional groups that have participated are the puppet theatre Tittut, Mårten Hedmans Skuggteater, Pantomimteatern and two theatre pedagogues, Nina Kjällqvist and Åsa Ekberg Kentros. A seminar on professional children's theatre in the society was conducted by Ingrid Kyrö and Anders Lindroth and a workshop for play writers has been conducted by Mia Törnqvist and Marie Hedenius

Rakhal

The Rakhal theatre group was started already in 1981 by the well known Bangladeshi theatre leader Ali Lucky. It is located in Dhaka. The theatre has since it started worked with adult performances and with a large national network of children's theatre groups, where children are trained in doing theatre performances. Rakhal has about five people employed for its regular work. For the Children's Voice project, 12 actors and trainers constitute a core team. They get paid according to time spent in the project. All theatre workers that work with Rakhal get daily training by Rakhal. They are trained as actors and as trainers.

No external funding

Rakhal has no other external funding than the Sida support. The Swedish support has enabled the groups to carry out an outreach program with 25 schools. Bangladeshi schools have not participated in drama training before the project. Weekly drama training for slum children is also conducted by Rakhal within the project, two days a week for 3–4 hours. Professional children's theatre productions are produced and presented for a public audience when possible, and always within the school program in combination with the children's own theatre productions.

Because of the negative attitude in Bangladesh to theatre during the last few years, Rakhal was denied to be registered as a NGO in 2004 – in spite of, or maybe because, Ali Lucky is one of the most famous and respected theatre persons in the country. Without being a registered NGO it was impossible for Rakhal to enter the project. This delay is the reason why Rakhal could present quantitative results only for 2 years, 2005–2006 (and not 2,5 years as for the other groups).

Rakhal has survived without any, or sometimes little, financial support since 1981 (although under another name before the project started; Loko Natyo Dol – People's Theatre). The main reason for the theatre group's sustainability seems to be Mr Lucky's other professional work as a businessman in the textile area. When needed, he supports the theatre with his own resources.

Intensive school work

Rakhal works in two months sessions with their drama training in schools. Only Nandikar in Kolkata works sometimes with so long training sessions. The artistic result of these longer training sessions is sometimes brilliant. And when looking at what impact this deep training has had on the participants, both parents, teachers and also the children and young people themselves do not hesitate: the impact is evident with higher self-confidence, more concentration in the school work, and better capacity to intervene in a conflict situation and try to help etc.

“Children, ask why!”

Mr Lucky says himself that the Children's Voice project has affected rather drastically his theatre and the drama training for children. Before Children's Voice, Rakhal trained hundreds of children to play theatre for “the sake of theatre itself” and with the hope to inspire some of the children to become professional actors in the future. After Rakhal started to participate in Children's Voice, where children's right is a point of departure, Ali Lucky has started deeper training in professional children's theatre and deeper training in how to work with children. “A trainer must be aware” he says, “that children in our hierarchic society often are oppressed. They have to obey without asking why. We shall use our theatre training to help the children not only to express themselves in theatre, where we already have a deep knowledge. But we shall now also train them in asking “why”, we shall train them not to be afraid of asking, to start dialogues, to dare to speak with their teachers and their parents. We shall train them to express their opinions. This is a new task for us, and it is a challenge”

13 coming professional groups identified

Rakhal, being one year late in the project, will start to collaborate with so called Fellow Travellers in 2008. Rakhal has identified 13 groups that have good enough talent and management to become professionals later. These groups have already sometimes been invited to Rakhal for training.

Swedish professionals

Rakhal has collaborated with 7 Swedish theatre groups with a total of 19 theatre workers. The groups are Slava, Tittut, Mårten Hedmans Skuggteater, Pantomimteatern and Mattias Lafolie, (who also directed “The little Dream Play” by Staffan Westerberg together with Rakhal). Two Swedish drama pedagogues, Åsa Ekberg Kentros and Nina Kjällqvist, have also collaborated with Rakhal. A seminar in play writing has been conducted by Mia Törnqvist and Marie Hedenius and a short seminar on Children’s Theatre in society was held by Ingrid Kyrö and Anders Linderöth.

Project Results from 2004 up to August 2006

A total number of 254 166 children and youth have according to the project participants been reached by the project in the Indian states Karnataka and West Bengal and in the southern areas, and Dhaka areas in Bangladesh during a period of 2,5 years. 160 166 children and youth were reached in India and 94 000 in Bangladesh.

Quantitative results within the project Children’s Voice for the four different groups are presented in the attached Appendix. These quantitative results have been presented by the groups to the reviewer. Below are listed in summary some important quantitative results achieved by the four groups in the project.

- 24 different professional theatre productions for children and youth have been produced, 13 of them in the Indian states Karnataka and West Bengal and 11 in Bangladesh.
- 657 professional performances of the above productions have been presented. 399 of these performances were presented in India (Karnataka and West Bengal) and 260 in Bangladesh.
- 237 522 children and youth constitute the total audience at these performances, 152 522 in India and 85 000 in Bangladesh.
- 16 644 children and young people have taken part in drama training conducted within the project by the four groups, 7 644 in West Bengal and Karnataka and 9000 in Bangladesh.
- 165 schools have up to now had a close collaboration with the project.
- 1000 persons have been trained as resource persons. They are headmasters, members of school managements, members of school authorities, authors, amateur theatre groups, culture activists. All these persons are trained to promote the professional children’s theatre and the drama training for children and youth, (284 in West Bengal and 716 in Bangladesh.).
- 752 teachers have been trained by the four groups in drama and communication, 694 of them in Karnataka and West Bengal and 58 in Bangladesh.

Assessment

Relevance

Art as tool in development cooperation

Art and culture, especially when a clear user perspective is included, can be an excellent tool in all societies to strengthen and stimulate people's active participation in their society. Art has its own value. But in Sida's development cooperation with countries where democracy is not fully developed, art as a tool is also considered to be of an extra value. For art to be an effective tool, a good artistic quality is needed, and a good outreach to the target groups.

In poor countries, the few professional children's theatre groups that exist, mostly work with a strong awareness about their society and its problems. They do not only produce theatre performances directed to specific vulnerable target groups. They also work with a combination of performances and drama training for the target groups. This can be seen for example in the West Bank and Gaza, in South Africa and in Central America, where Sida has supported development of professional theatre, aiming to reach poorer strata in their societies. The result has in many cases been good and a clear impact for the target group has been demonstrated. Children and youth have trained their capacity to express themselves, their self-confidence, and learnt to collaborate and to more easily understand other people's feelings and reactions.

Children's theatre as a specific art form

To create a good children's theatre production is a difficult art work. In professional children's theatre the actors, adults, play also the children's characters on stage. Contemporary children's theatre aims to give children a performance with which they can identify themselves, reflect on their surroundings, lives, dreams, sorrows, everything that is a part of human life. In Sweden one can see marvellous children's theatre performed by only professional adult actors on stage, with no "overacting", no extra manners to demonstrate that "here is a child". Sweden has become famous for its quality in children's theatre. Themes and issues are often presented that concerns children, and where children are recognised as the human beings they are, small persons but persons and individuals that have a right to be listened to seriously.

When children's theatre is of lower quality, for example when the actors overdo it, pretend being a child etc – then the young audience normally immediately drops its concentration and the wish to hear more.

Professional Children's Theatre introduced to India and Bangladesh

The "Children's Voice" project has introduced professional children's theatre in West Bengal and in Karnataka in India and in the southern areas and the areas in and around Dhaka in Bangladesh. Earlier, children's theatre was rarely produced and never on professional level. With "Children's Voice" 24 new professional theatre productions for children have been produced in the two countries, during the first phase of the project, and presented for a child audience in altogether 657 performances. A total amount of 237 522 children and youth have been reached by these performances. All productions have had more relevant content for the target groups than before, a content that can engage children and youth, and to which they can relate. Issues related to the Indian and Bangladeshi society of today, and stories about children's and young people's lives, have been artistically set on stage by professional theatre workers. According to participating theatre groups, educational authorities, children, youth and parents as well as the Swedish counterpart ITI, the difference to the situation before the project is evident.

The artistic quality was before the project started high at the Nandikar theatre group in Kolkata, and at the Rakhal group as well as the Rupantar organisation in Bangladesh. The artistic quality is also surprisingly high at the recently started children's theatre group at Rangayana Theatre in Mysore. The four groups create professional children's theatre.

Although the artistic quality of the four groups is considered to be high, both by its cultural authorities and the Swedish participating professionals, some observations can be made. During the review, 1–3 professional children's performances have been visited at every group. Although the quality was considered by the reviewer to be very good as a whole, sometimes a lack of dramaturgy could be noted, how to change the different scenes in a way that the audience could follow the course of events, and with that also how to keep the audience's concentration. Another observation is that more actors training is sometimes needed for adult actors to play child characters without imitating or exaggerating. This kind of problems occurs all over the world within professional children's theatre and should not be taken as a strong criticism. But it could be discussed by the project for the further project planning. The Rangakishora group, which is very young, seems to need a stronger common artistic vision that ties the group even better together.

The groups worked also, apart from performing, directly with children and youth in poor areas in drama training. Nandikar and Rakhal, as the extraordinarily experienced groups they are know today exactly the purpose of their work, including the perspective of the poor. This applies even more to Rupantar with its sharp development objective in working with and for poor people. They all want to stimulate and support children and young people to express themselves and to take part in the democratic process. The young Rangakishora at the National theatre of Karnataka is also committed to this objective, although they are not yet as experienced in this work as the "old" groups are.

The project objective, that a "professional basis for children's theatre shall be developed and established", is not fully reached yet. The four participating professional groups have developed a good professional children's theatre and they are established. But for this objective to be fully achieved some more training might be needed. More years are certainly also needed for most of the so called Fellow Travellers both in India and Bangladesh to further develop their professional skills.

Professional children's theatre has been introduced, but is still not established in the West Bengal and Karnataka and the southern, north eastern and the Dhaka areas in Bangladesh.

Gender relevance

The gender issue is on the agenda for the project. In Kolkata, when girls become teenagers, they are often not allowed to leave the house without parents or a brother present. This makes it more difficult for teenager girls to participate both as audience and in drama training. Normally, some more boys than girls have participated in the audience and as participants in drama training in Kolkata. For Rangakishora in Mysore the reported results in the review are more equal for the participation of boys and girls. One explanation could be the fact that Mysore is a much smaller city with relatively calm rural areas outside Mysore. In Kolkata, with its huge suburban areas and a population pressure also in the rest of the state, it is perhaps more difficult for parents to let their girls go for a theatre performance or a drama training. However, the impression is that more could probably be done to reach more girls in the future theatre activities in West Bengal.

In Bangladesh, Rupantar concentrates its project work on collaboration with schools (until now in the southern rural area). Here teachers and drama trainers say that girls seem to be more interested than boys to take part in the project activities. Also for the other Bangladeshi group, Rakhal, girls participate in the project more than boys, with 55% as an average. Both the Bangladeshi groups have put extra energy into involving girls in the project activities, which might be the reason for this result.

Relevance for the development objective

The *development objective* for the project is to strengthen children's possibilities to enjoy basic rights, including right to theatre. This should probably be interpreted along the lines sketched in the introduction given here on Art as a tool in development cooperation. Through participation in for example drama training, children and youth can become more active in society. Poor children have a tough life both in the Indian and in the Bangladeshi societies, and the school system is said to be very strict and hierarchical in the government schools. The four different professional groups in Children's Voice aim to strengthen children's self confidence and to train them to speak up in drama training.

A clear awareness of the necessity to work specially with the poor children and youth has been proved by the three professional children's theatre groups, and not the least by the development organisation Rupantar, since the project's very beginning (and for Nandikar before that). This awareness seems also to be relevant for the 14 new young groups in India (Fellow Travellers), trained by Nandikar respectively Rangayana

Impact

Impact can be measured

There are some few methods developed in Europe how to measure impact on children when they have participated for a longer period in art and culture activities. In 2006, a research for a doctoral dissertation has been carried out how to measure impact on children and youth after having participated in drama training. The research was carried out in Gaza and in Gdansk. The dissertation will be presented early 2007 to

the University in Gdansk in Poland. The result from the research shows that children who have participated in frequent drama training of good quality, and for not less than a month, have got better self confidence, stronger self identity, better capacity for creative thinking, better capacity to dare to express their thoughts and reflections, to dare interfere in difficult situation for a friend, and to speak up. Mostly also the children got better notes at schools after the drama training. Children in the Gaza territory were more deeply influenced by the drama training than children in Gdansk. The researcher assumes that this is because children in Gdansk are more exposed to an open informative society than the children in the Gaza strip.

Impact of the project Children's Voice

About 100 teachers, parents, headmasters and representatives from ministries of education and culture have been interviewed during the review in West Bengal and Karnataka. In Bangladesh approximately 90 persons, teachers, headmasters, members of school management, representatives from the local ministry of education as well as parents have participated in discussions and interviews about the value of professional children's theatre and the drama training with children and youth, conducted by the professional groups. Also about 80 children and young people have been interviewed (more children than youth), in Bangladesh about 30 and in India 50. 90% of the interviews were carried out with groups, separately with adults and with children and youth. The question to adults was "Can you see any impact, any difference in the children's behaviour, after having participated for a longer period in the drama training?" The children and youth were asked what made them come back week after week to the drama training, almost never missing a single workshop? And also what they did like in the professional performance and why they did like it". Another question was "Try to explain what it is you like with theatre?"

A typical answer from the adults (teachers, parents, headmasters etc), was that they could see a clear difference in the children after they had participated for a longer period in drama training. According to them, the children had got better self-confidence, could more easily express themselves and dared to speak out in different, not always easy, situations. A very frequent answer was also that the children had got better notes at schools after having participated actively in drama training. Teachers and headmasters that had participated in the drama training were surprised that they could more easily get into contact with their students after the drama training. They also used frequently drama as a tool in their education after their participation in the training – and with good result.

The interviewed children, in their turn, generally answered that they wanted to take part in drama activities because they felt free there, they could play in the drama activities and they could get friends there. Otherwise they were not very much with friends and mostly had to work with their school homework. They liked to be able to pretend to be other persons in the drama activities. With emphasis it was said that they felt themselves to be respected as persons by the drama trainers and that the drama trainers listened to their opinions. The teenagers had many of them participated for longer periods since childhood. The drama workshops helped them to feel free, to express their feelings and to collaborate in a group. They loved to collaborate with other young people as a difference to school work, which was looked upon as a lonely work, hierarchic

and pressing. The Bangladeshi children emphasised that the school work had become more “vivid” after the introduction of drama training at schools. Now they attended the lessons every day at school. Before the introduction of drama training, some of them often stayed away from school. The questions what they had liked in the performance and what they liked with theatre was more difficult to answer, especially for the younger children. A rather frequent answer for teenagers was, though, that they liked to see how other persons reacted when they felt something special, like anger, sadness or loneliness. In a theatre performance one could forget one’s own world and enter into that of others.

Specific for Bangladesh was also the interest in how the drama training affected the girls. One example, mentioned several times by people involved in the Rupantar work, was about a girl in primary school (one of the schools visited during the review) who was very shy and controlled. After having participated for one year in the drama training, she participated more in the games at the school yard, she developed a much better self-confidence and also very good school results. When after two years in the primary school – and with the drama training – she passed to secondary school, a school where Rupantar conducted drama training as well (one of the few secondary schools with drama training). Just before ending her first year in secondary, the girl told her drama teacher that she would have to leave school immediately. Her parents, who were very strict, had decided that she should marry an older man. The girl was frightened and frustrated, and asked the drama teacher for help. The drama teacher told the girl that she very clearly had demonstrated in the drama classes that she could argue in an excellent way and even win a discussion with good arguments. The teacher recommended the girl to first try herself to convince her parents to let her finish secondary school and after that she would be ready for marriage. If she did not manage to convince the parents, the school would interfere and try to help her. The girl managed to convince the parents herself, and is now studying at college –unmarried. A story with happy end and told by many interviewed teachers and trainers in the Khulna area, as a proof of value of drama training for children who live in a hierarchic atmosphere.

Efficiency and Feasibility

LFA as a method for planning

After the initial LFA plan made in late 2002, LFA planning has been carried out each year for the project since it started in 2004 (with the plan from 2002 as the basis for the project work during 2004). Some difficulties have occurred for regional LFA meetings because of the tense relation between India and Bangladesh. The Indian project participants were not allowed to enter Bangladesh in 2004 for the LFA planning seminar held in Khulna. The problem was solved with the Swedish project coordinator travelling between Khulna and Kolkata during the seminar, thus facilitating the dialogue between the four groups and their project planning. The seminars for 2005 and 2006 have been held in India with no trouble for the Bangladeshi partners to participate. For the future, the project is recommended to continue to give priority to all the different participants being able to take part in the LFA meetings. It is more important that all members can participate, than that all partners get an experience in how to arrange a seminar.

Assessment of the LFA matrix

The LFA plan does not totally correspond to the project's reality.

The "Children's Voice" stands on two legs, 1) professional children's theatre productions and performances carried out by professional groups, 2) drama training carried out by the professional theatre groups together with children and youth.

The drama training is considered by all the four groups, not the least the most experienced groups, to be an important part of the project. This part is very relevant from the perspective of the poor in accordance with Sida's overall objective to reduce poverty.

In the existing LFA plan for 2004, 2005 and 2006 there is no specific estimated "result", "sub goal", for children's active participation in the project work. This has, in its turn, made the annual reports from the project less representative.

The project is advised to discuss with Sida to insert such a "result", sub goal, for the entire project. A new sub goal/"result" is inserted in the new LFA plan for 2007: "Variously deprived children are reached & integrated in society." This is an advancement, but the "sub goal" could be formulated even sharper with two sub-goals, for example:

"Increased access for poor children and young people to professional children's theatre performances."

"Increased participation for poor children and young people in drama activities conducted by professional theatre groups."

To demonstrate its importance for the development objective, these two sub goal could be inserted directly after the two first sub goals.

It might be considered to reformulate also the development and the project objectives in the LFA plans for the future. The *development objective* for the project is now: "Children enjoy basic rights, including right to theatre." This objective might be understood as that children, with theatre as a tool, will develop their understanding of and participation in their society, rather than that all children have the right to see theatre. But this could be made more clear, and the project is highly recommended to discuss this aspect.

To illustrate: the development objective could for example be formulated as follows:

"Poor children and youth in India and Bangladesh will increase their possibilities to create better living conditions by developing their capability and interest to participate in social and democratic processes in their society."

The *project objective* says that a professional basis for children's theatre should be established. This is very clear. But with a reformulated development objective, it might be advisable to make a more clear connection between the objectives. For example, by adding in the project objective "...as a tool for children and youth".

Also it might be advisable to be more explicit on the geographical dimension of the objectives. Of course the project cannot have major influence for example in the whole of India and not even in the smaller Bangladesh within just five years. Even to get a basis for professional

children's theatre established in the West Bengal and Karnataka is a tall order. A new formulation of the project objective could be:

"...in wide areas of Mysore and Kolkata in India and the southern and north eastern parts together with the Dhaka area in Bangladesh."

National and regional network

In the LFA plan is not mentioned any specific "result", sub-goal, for regional collaboration or national networks. One conclusion from the review is that such a sub goal could be of interest to sustain the project results. It could substitute for the now existing "result E", "Collaboration between groups within the programme". National networks are now being formed in both Karnataka and West Bengal. And national networks are on its way to be started in Bangladesh. Also the creation of a regional network, which is probably more difficult, could be more explicitly incorporated in both annual plans and reports. Indicators to follow up the national and regional networking aspects of the project can be the same as those now indicated under the "result E". The new result E could be formulated thus:

"National networks as well as a regional network for professional children's theatre established"

Project reports

A clear and useful LFA plan is not only a good tool for planning but also facilitates the follow up. The reports, the annual plans as well as the annual reports on the project results, should be written according to the LFA plan both by the participating groups in the project as well as by the Swedish counterpart. That would result in logical and consequent reporting. It is also recommended that the annual LFA plans for the four different theatre groups are combined by the Swedish counterpart to a basic document for Sida's decision on further support for the coming year. This means that the LFA plans produced by the four South Asian groups should be reformulated by the Swedish counterpart in a specific document, in words not in matrix, for both annual plans and reports. To this basic document should be attached the four different LFA plans/reports.

When reporting about the work and the outcome, the four groups are recommended to follow the headlines of the LFA plan and check carefully that all indicators have been noticed.

When all plans and reports are written according to the same method, and also summarised for both annual plans as annual reports verbally (without matrix) by the Swedish counterpart, the project outcomes will be more easily demonstrated and communicated to Sida. This will also make it easier for the participating groups to see the result of the whole project and not only their own contribution.

The *Final Report* on the project is an important document and should be planned for in time by Sida's Swedish counterpart. The Swedish counterpart is advised to write all project reports in English. ITI's reports to Sida should be understood also by the local project owners and also preferably be commented on by them, before they are sent to Sida.

The administration of the project

The Swedish counterpart, ITI, carries out a very ambitious and careful administration of the project from the Swedish side. A project coordinator, working half-time, has been engaged for this work. Added to this a consultant is occasionally engaged to conduct the LFA planning. To ascertain the quality of the project's administration and planning from the Swedish side, also a Advisory council has been appointed at ITI with specialists in children's theatre.

The atmosphere in the project both between the four South Asian groups as well as between the groups and the Swedish counterpart/ITI is positive. The Swedish counterpart is appreciated and respected by the Indian participating groups and vice versa. All the four groups report annually in detail about the project and its outcome. The reports have however not been written in accordance with the LFA plan. The organisational and administrative setup is adequate and supports well the execution of the project activities.

However the Swedish counterpart could consider the possibility to extend the coming LFA seminars with a day or two, in order to ensure a more consequent reporting for the future. The impression is that the LFA seminars mostly work with project planning for the coming year and not at all with annual reports. With a short extension of the period for the seminar the capacity for the groups to make also annual reports according to the LFA method could be supported and strengthened.

The participation by Swedish theatre workers

Swedish theatre professionals have collaborated with the Indian and Bangladeshi groups during the entire project process. Most of them have been interviewed. All interviewed participating Swedish professionals express praise for the artistic quality of all the four groups.

For the young – only three years old – Rangakishora at the Rangayana Theatre, this collaboration is considered to have been of an extra value. Both parties, Swedish and South Asian, say they have learned from the collaboration. The most important contribution from the Swedish theatre workers is, according to Rangayana: "We as actors have never played a child character on stage before. For us this is remarkable and has forced us to develop a professional children's theatre. That we, as adult actors, can do this child character without imitating a child, not to overdo it, and not to use totally unnecessarily expressions, has provoked us to develop a new kind of theatre. We create a new art of theatre. We love it!" Nandikar's answer about the importance of the Swedish collaboration is that they appreciate, among other things, the new techniques they have learned in puppet and shadow theatre. "On the other hand" Nandikar's leader say, "Nandikar's professional capacity is good. We are able to exchange our experiences with the Swedes more than to learn from them." Not the least Teater Pero agrees strongly with Nandikar in this respect.

Also for the Bangladeshi project partners the Swedish contribution by professional theatre workers is said to have been of great importance. Rakhal, who has a long theatre experience and also a vast experience of working with children, already had a well developed know-how in professional theatre as well as extensive knowledge about the relation of children to theatre. Rupantar, who for seventeen years has worked with development issues with Folk Drama as a tool, has already a good knowledge about how to deal with theatre expressions in a way that their messages come through. But also these Bangladeshi groups praise the col-

laboration with the Swedish colleagues as it has given new artistic perspectives. What is also highlighted by the Bangladeshi groups is that they have learnt more on how to catch the children's ideas in drama training. Although experienced in this field Rakhal emphasized that new lessons have been learnt.

A relatively large number of Swedish professionals have contributed to the project with short interventions. An alternative is that fewer Swedish professionals collaborate with the Indian and Bangladeshi theatre groups and that these Swedes can return and work with their South Asian colleagues continuously during the project process. This would most probably increase the qualitative results of the collaboration. This is an experience gained in other parts of the Swedish development cooperation, and has also been proposed by some of the Swedish participating professionals.

Sustainability

Success factors supporting the project's sustainability

- Professional children's theatre is introduced in West Bengal and Karnataka and in the southern areas and the Dhaka areas of Bangladesh, with a good artistic quality and with a relevant content for Indian and Bangladeshi children of today. There is therefore a good "product" as a base.
- Altogether fourteen new children's theatre groups, the Fellow Travelers, are on their way to be professional, ten in West Bengal and four at Karnataka in the Mysore area. In 2007 two more will collaborate in Bangladesh followed by four more in 2008. These groups are continuously trained by Nandikar and Rangayana/Rangakishora, to become more skilled professionally. The same will happen in Bangladesh. Rupantar will start training their new Fellow Travellers in 2007 and Rakhal in 2008.
- The professional groups have to some extent shared their economic Swedish support with their Fellow Travellers during the project process. In 2007 and 2008 this share to the Fellow Travellers will amount 50% for all the four groups. The agreed financial contribution by the four professional groups proves their dedication to establish a professional children's theatre in India and in Bangladesh
- The two most experienced professional theatre groups, Nandikar in Kolkata and Rakhal in Dhaka are "survivors". Nandikar has been working as an independent group since 1960, Rakhal since 1981. None of them have had sustainable financial support from their societies before the project started. Undoubtedly, these two groups will continue their work as independent groups and with professional children's theatre as well as drama training for children, also when the project period has come to an end.
- The development organisation Rupantar is a strong NGO with many projects and many donors. Rupantar has already involved other donors to sustain and increase project activities similar to those in the Children Voice project. Rupantar's focus on school collaboration can, in a longer perspective, influence the Bangladeshi school system. In this aspect also Rakhal, with its nationwide reputation, as well as its school collaboration in the Dhaka area, will be very supportive.
- In India the authorities in Karnataka as well as in West Bengal has shown their interest for the project and its outcome. Karnataka has included the professional children's theatre in its governmental

“National theatre”, and thereby supported with premises, administration and also a certain status in society.

- The National Academy for Theatre in the West Bengal Government has made a five year plan where support to drama training in government schools will be one priority. Nandikar, together with the ten Fellow Travellers, are the most well known trainers for drama with children and youth. They will be used in this program as trainers. Especially Nandikar, as the experts they are, will then, for the first time, be paid for their job in government schools, which is a sustainability factor.
- One Fellow Traveller outside Kolkata has started specific drama training sessions for teenagers in one of the neighbouring slum areas. The work will be carried out together with the leaders in the slum area. The municipal council will extra carefully follow the project work and its impact, and will apply for grants from the Indian government to hopefully support the work even more.
- A demand for good professional theatre and for drama training is growing among the schools both in Karnataka and West Bengal and in the southern and Dhaka area of Bangladesh.
- A national network for professional children’s theatre is on its way to be created in the Indian states Karnataka and West Bengal. A network is also slowly being developed in Bangladesh

Risk Factors for Sustainability

- Rangayana’s children’s theatre group, Rangakishora, does not have its salaries covered by the Karnataka government or any other source. This cost is now paid by the project. When the project has come to an end, the Rangayana Theatre will have a major economic problem. Salaries are not high at the theatre, but neither is the theatre’s income. This problem is not analysed in the project reports, neither by the Rangayana Theatre, nor by the Swedish counterpart. The problem has to be faced, and strategies how to prepare for what happens when the project ends should immediately be worked out. If the Rangakishora group will not have a possibility to continue as a professional group, there is a need for strategic plans how to preserve and develop experiences gained and lessons learned, for professional children’s theatre with a good artistic quality to be continued in Karnataka.
- Support to theatre is small in India. Although there is an understanding and respect for theatre as art in Karnataka, and also by the authorities in the West Bengal, this does not result in the two most prominent theatres getting much of financial support. The Rangayana receives some government support but it has been reduced drastically during the last few years. Nandikar gets only occasional financial support. Without the Children’s Voice financing, the project with its very positive results would not have had any possibilities to be carried out. A demand for their work has been created during the project process in their societies. But in spite of that the groups have not got any increased financial support from their respective authorities. It might be possible to raise money also from private sources. One example is the Indian Culture Fund with an office in Bangalore. The office knows about Rangakishora and its work.
- In Bangladesh the art of theatre is not as accepted as in India. This is a risk for sustainable results regarding professional children’s theatre in the country.

- There will most certainly be less professional children's theatre activities in the project areas after the Children's Voice, with its financial support and its focus on professional children's theatre and drama training. Children's theatre is less profitable than theatre for adults. Less activity might in its turn result in less interest from the society.
- The perspective of the poor is probably there to stay, for all the groups. But activities directed to poor children and youth will probably be much less than when supported by financial means within the project Children's Voice, if not local financial support will be forthcoming.
- Language difficulties make it difficult for the two Indian groups to meet and exchange professional experience. The Nandikar group speaks Bengali and so do the two groups in Bangladesh. The Rangakishora at Mysore speaks Kannada, a language totally different from Bengali.
- The vast geographic distance between Kolkata and Mysore is another difficulty for the two groups to meet. To go by train from Kolkata to Bangalore and then by bus to Mysore takes three and a half days. The groups in India and Bangladesh are also far apart.

Discussion of Sustainability

There are a number of success factors indicating possibilities for sustainability. On the other hand there are some serious difficulties for the project to sustain its rather remarkable both quantitative and qualitative results.

The most difficult problem seems to be that the Rangayana theatre does not have any budget for the Rangakishora group after the project is completed. Rangayana only has a budget for their national ensemble for adult theatre. A professional children's theatre and its possibilities to be spread and developed in the area will need the professionalism and good artistic quality that Rangakishora has developed. This issue has been discussed both with the theatre and with the Swedish counterpart.

Sustainability for theatre groups needs management. Training in management skills could be useful for all the groups (probably except for Rupantar in Bangladesh with its rather big and efficient organisation). For Rangakishora management skills is of most importance, because of its risky and uncertain future as a professional theatre group. Also Nandikar and Rakhal, with their long experience as independent groups, would probably benefit from management training so that more people than the leaders themselves could take part in the management work. Also some courses in English might be supportive for the groups to widen the possibilities for more group members to contribute to the management tasks.

For Rupantar a continued and widened collaboration with schools in drama training and with professional Folk Drama is a distinct possibility. And for Nandikar and Rakhal the problem is not so acute. After the project ends, they will most probably manage as they always have. The two groups now have a deep knowledge about professional children's theatre and they will continue to produce good and interesting theatre for children and youth, and they will continue their outreach program for the target groups. However, without a sustainable financial situation, poor children will most probably not be as well represented in the groups' work as they are now. The impression is that Nandikar focuses more today on the poor target groups than Rakhal, although the differ-

ence might be small. The cause of this is, according to Rakhal, the difficulties for the art of theatre to work just now in Bangladesh. But both the groups will have to collaborate more with schools that can pay at least something for their work. A reduced focus on children's theatre and children's drama training is likely, as children's theatre is less profitable than theatre for adults. Nandikar and Rakhal will most certainly continue to work with professional children's theatre to some extent and they will continue to have their awareness of their society. They will continue, but they will do less work for poor schools and in the slum areas.

The fourteen Fellow Traveller groups in India and the six new groups in Bangladesh are depending on the professional groups for their further development and professionalism. In India they have been collaborating also before the "Children's Voice" project started, it can be assumed that this collaboration will continue. The eagerness from both parts seems to be evident. Also in Bangladesh, where the collaboration with new groups has started later than in India, the assumption is that this collaboration will continue also after the project has finished. The new project partners have been selected carefully and the development perspective has been deeply discussed before the collaboration should start in 2007.

More national collaboration

There is a need for a developed and stronger collaboration between the two Indian professional groups, Nandikar and Rangayana, and for Rupantar and Rakhal in Bangladesh. That would most certainly make the project and its result more sustainable. As Nandikar has such a long and deep experience in working for and with children and youth, it seems a waste not to use its experience, especially in drama training for children, also for theatre groups outside West Bengal. Also Nandikar has something to gain from experience from some of Rangakishora's good children's theatre performances. The situation is the same for the Bangladeshi groups. Rakhal has more than twenty years of experience in children's amateur theatre, Rupantar has not. On the other hand, Rupantar's experiences from development projects and with the sharp attention to the perspective of the poor would probably be positive for Rakhal to learn from. For this kind of professional exchange, it is suggested that plans and budgets are prepared for the rest of the project period. Even if the distance is very long between Kolkata and Mysore and language is a problem, such a professional exchange should be tested. Such collaboration, with the professionalism that has been developed within the project, could also to some extent replace and be more cost-effective than collaboration with Swedish professionals.

Strengthen the regional aspect

It is of no use having a regional project if a professional experience between the participating countries are not exchanged. The LFA seminars are excellent tools for this, but more might be needed. The tense relation between Bangladesh and India has been an obstacle for this kind of exchange, and especially for Indians to be admitted into Bangladesh. In addition, the impression is that the groups are so much occupied with their own survival, with the project activities and with their regular theatre work that they have no time for regional collaboration. Within the project period, this problem could be handled by setting aside money for such collaboration in the budget. With a budget for more regional collaboration and exchange – and if necessary, with meetings held only in India, a more vivid professional exchange would probably be realised.

Conclusions

The project result for the first part of the project period is very positive. The project activities are leading towards the project objective that a professional basis for children's theatre should be established. There is also evidence that the project influences positively the development objective, the situation for children.

657 professional performances have been presented within the project areas of India and Bangladesh in 24 professional theatre productions. In addition, the Fellow Travellers, with less professional experience, have produced 240 performances in India.

A large number of schools have participated in the project. An estimated 254 166 children and young people have been reached by the project through the four professional groups. Out of this amount 16 644 children and youth have participated in longer drama training workshops. The national authorities for culture and for education in West Bengal and Karnataka know the project and the outcome of it and so does both the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education in Karnataka. The school authorities in the southern part of Bangladesh has shown their interest for the project carried out there by Rupantar and this is on its way to be achieved also in and around Dhaka. The "Children's Voice" project has won respect and a demand is created for professional children's theatre and drama training for children and youth in the project areas. The main problem is the financial sustainability, especially for the group Rangakishora that was especially formed with help of the resources from the project. However, a platform is now created for further communication with stakeholders and for making applications to authorities and other possible future financial backers.

An important next step could be to develop even better management skills within the participating groups and for them to more actively search for more economic support in their respective countries. The authorities know about the project, but are not as yet giving financial support. All possibilities to receive governmental and private funds should be explored with the help of better management skills. The project's experience in working also with poor and vulnerable children and youth should be of interest to private actors and to governments with an agenda to reduce poverty and increase the possibility also for poor children to exercise their basic rights.

The rights perspective is an objective of the project and the perspective of the poor is well integrated in the work of the groups, according to

about 190 school teachers, parents and representatives from authorities interviewed in the review. Children who have participated in the drama activities for a longer period have most of them demonstrated a better self-confidence, increased their capacity to express their opinions, and they have more easily involved themselves in discussions also with adults. Many times the participating children have also dared to interfere in problematic situations, where they have contributed to a positive solution. A more developed creativity was also said to be a significant result for the participants. Almost all teachers interviewed say that children and youth that have participated in the drama workshops for a longer time have got better school results and better notes. This is a result that is not enough emphasised in project reports.

For the remaining project period, poverty issues could be given even more emphasis in the Indian part of the project, because the basic structure of a professional children's theatre is there already in place. And the results seen from the perspectives of the poor and the rights perspective should be reported more clearly in the future.

Increased focus on national collaboration between the participating groups in each country would probably be beneficial as well as a stronger regional collaboration and exchange of professional skills. It could be financed at the expense of less short-term support from Swedish professionals

It is *recommended* that the project is given support for two more years after the project period 2004–2008 has come to an end and, in accordance with the recommendations made in this review. This would increase the possibilities for sustainability. Five years for introduction of a new art form, professional children's theatre, is probably not enough. With two more years, which would make the project period last for a total of seven years, the theatre groups would get time to develop and strengthen the artistic quality in professional children's theatre, to get more management skills and to mobilise more national support and funds. A network of professional theatre groups would get more time to be established within and between the two states. And not least, the new project partners in both the countries, the Fellow Travellers, would get more possibilities to develop their professionalism and would have better chances to survive on their own. More children and youth, especially the poor, would be reached.

Appendix

Quantitative Result of the Project Children's Voice

Nandikar

- 10 new young children's theatre groups have been identified by Nandikar during the project period as possible professional children's theatre groups (the Fellow Travellers). These groups are regularly trained by Nandikar. Altogether 150 theatre workers from the new groups have participated in this training. The creation of these 10 groups is a result of Nandikar's work within the project.
- 16 new children's theatre and youth productions have been produced by Nandikar and the ten new young children's theatre groups, trained by Nandikar (7 big productions by Nandikar and 9 by Nandikar's ten Fellow Travellers) Professional children's theatre has been created by Nandikar in their seven productions. *This kind of professionalism for children's theatre did not exist in West Bengal before the project.*
- 262 performances of the above mentioned 16 productions have been presented in areas in Kolkata and in the West Bengal province (218 performances by Nandikar and 44 by the 10 new young groups)
- 130 000 children and youth constitute the total audience at these performances (110 000 for Nandikar and about 20 000 for the 10 new young groups. (60% are boys and 40% girls.) *The amount of children and youth reached is larger than before the project, as the amount of performances carried out is much larger then before the project.*
- 86 schools in the province have collaborated with Nandikar in drama training. Nandikar's performances have been presented regularly at these schools. (3 500 students participated.) *Before the project, only 36 schools during a period of three years participated in this kind of regular training.*
- 3 500 children and young people have been trained by Nandikar in drama workshops lasting from 5 days to more than a month (52% boys and 48% girls). *Compared to the situation before the project started, the quantitative result achieved is better. Nandikar has worked with training for children and youth many years before the project started, but not as much as now, in the project work.*
- 53 full-fledged theatre performances have been presented by children and youth as a result of Nandikar's drama workshops. This is the result of the drama workshops within the project. Children have been playing for children, on the basis of the training they received from

Nandikar. *The result is better than before the project. No specified amount of full fledged performance carried out before the project is available.*

- 284 actors, teachers and parents have been trained by Nandikar as resource persons in drama training for children and youth. *The total amount of trained resource persons was about half the amount as a total for the three previous years before the project.*
- 186 teachers from 86 schools have been trained to communicate better with their students and to understand the value of contemporary children's theatre with which Indian children can identify themselves. *In total 36 schools participated with about 1–2 teachers each during the three year period before the project started.*
- A Centre for children's theatre has been established within the project frame by Nandikar with technical equipment that can also be used by other groups and with a rich arsenal of Indian music instruments. Nandikar has been the centre for training children and youth in drama in West Bengal also before the project period. But the centre is enhanced and equipped with better technical equipment. It can now also be used by the ten new young groups in and around Kolkata.
- 9 festivals for children's theatre, created by children, have been arranged by Nandikar during the project period. A total of 57 performances were presented for an audience of approximately 30 000 children and adults.
- 18 productions created by children in collaboration with Nandikar were presented at these festivals.
- 4 Swedish workshops have been carried out by Nandikar and conducted by Swedish professionals. Also representatives from the 10 Fellow Travellers participated in all these workshops. No Swedish theatre group has collaborated with Nandikar before. Nandikar has after the workshops used both the technique for puppet theatre and for shadow theatre in their productions which they did not do before.
- 4 collections of plays and dramatic stories for children have been written by Nandikar. The collections have been published and distributed in the province
- 2 books on theatre games have been produced and distributed
- 1 Bengal monograph on socio-cultural profile of children has been produced and distributed. The monograph is based on a survey of 2 243 students, 11–14 years old, at 44 different schools in West Bengal.
- Three audio CDs with professional children's theatre performances by Nandikar have been produced.
- 2 seminars on a national level on the role of children's theatre in society have been arranged
- 12 seminars on a regional/state level have been arranged on the same issue
- 21 interactive meetings with students, teachers, parents and representatives from regional authorities have been carried out with the purpose to strengthen understanding of children's theatre and its value for society.

Rangayana

- A Centre for children's professional theatre has been established with the creation of Rangakishora, at Rangayana Theatre. *No professional children's theatre existed at the Rangayana Theatre before the project started.*

- 4 new young children's theatre groups (Fellow Travellers) have been identified and trained by Rangayana. The four groups are regarded as promising professional groups for children's theatre. *This is a result of the project work.*
- 17 children's and youth theatre productions have been produced by Rangayana and the four other groups (6 by Rangayana/Rangakishora and 11 by the new young groups). *No professional theatre production for children and youth has been produced in Karnataka before.*
- 375 performances have been presented in the province (A total amount of 179 performances by Rangakishora: 76 performances at the Rangayana Theatre in Mysore and 103 shorter performances without technical equipment at schools in Mysore and rural areas. By the four other young groups: 196 performances in Karnataka).
- 82 827 children and youth constitute the total audience at the above mentioned performances, 42 522 for Rangayana and 40 305 for the four new young groups. Girls and boys have on the whole been equally represented.
- 330 children in 13 schools have participated in regular drama training conducted by Rangakishora in Mysore and in the rural area. *This kind of outreach program, also directed to the poorest children, has not been carried out by Rangayana before the project.*
- 64 boys and girls, 16–20 years old, have participated in 2 drama workshops at the Rangayana Theatre (2005 and 2006). Each workshop lasted for 2 months. Poor youth from the slum in the neighbourhood was mixed with wealthier young people.
- 3 750 children and young people have participated in two summer camps with drama training at the Rangayana Theatre during the project period (six–twelve year olds).
- 70 teachers have regularly participated in drama workshops conducted by Rangayana in 7 schools in Mysore as well as in rural areas. *The training is a result of the project work and has not been carried out before.*
- 438 teachers from the province have participated in fourteen drama training workshops, each one lasting for five days. All of them have been carried out in collaboration with Ministry of Education. The purpose has been to train teachers to communicate better in their teaching. *This is a result of the project work.*
- 5 workshops have been carried out with Rangakishora and Fellow Travellers by Swedish theatre professionals. Two of the workshops resulted in professional children's theatre productions, one from each workshop. *No Swedish professionals have collaborated with Rangakishora before.*
- 1 workshop for playwriting for children's theatre arranged. New children's theatre plays are rare in India. *In the Kannada language this is a totally new result.*
- 2 children's theatre festivals, produced by the children themselves, have been arranged by the Rangayana Theatre. 13 productions were presented in 26 performances for an audience of 6 300 children and adults.
- 10 publications have been produced and distributed, among them a translation of a model for drama introduction for children and teachers, written by the Swedish drama pedagogue Jeanette Roos-Sjöberg.

Rupantar

- A core team for children's theatre at Rupantar with 12 theatre workers/trainers has been established. *A result of the project Children's voice.*
- 3 new Folk Dramas with Pot Songs included have been produced for children by Rupantar in their specific Alternative Living Theatre form. *Rupantar has not produced any professional theatre for children before the Children's Voice project.*
- 180 professional performances of the above mentioned productions have been presented by Rupantar, all of them in schools.
- 30 000 children and youth constitute the audience of these professional performances. *Children as audience are a totally new kind of audience for Rupantar, a result of the project.*
- 33 schools in the rural area outside Khulna work with 3000 school children today with Rupantar in regular intensive drama training.
- 3 000 school children take part in intensive drama training in 33 schools. 23 of these schools have participated since the project started in 2004. The drama training runs for a 14 days session, 4 – 5 hours a day. Thereafter Rupantar comes back once a month with training during the entire year.
- As a result of the Children's Voice project other donors have entered to increase the amount of participating schools. 45 schools more participate since 2007 with the support of Concern World Wide with 900 schoolchildren in one-week drama training camp once a year. In the beginning of 2008 another 300 schools will probably follow the same training schedule as in Children's Voice with regular drama training in schools. The donor will be Care-Bangladesh.
- 66 new theatre plays have been written for school theatre groups and have been distributed to all schools where Rupantar has carried out regular drama training. *This has not been done before and is a result of the project.*
- 1 book on child theatre has been published with 20 drama scripts for children's theatre. The book has been distributed to all 33 schools now participating in the project as well as to teachers, NGOs, Government educational institutions, local cultural activists and to different libraries on the national level and on the national book archive.
- 3 Audi-visual documentations produced and distributed in 150 copies each to schools, school authorities, Government educational institutions etc.
- 105 teachers and parents have participated in 3 Workshops about the role of theatre in school education.
- 800 members from different School Managing Committees attended a workshop where the result of theatre in school education, i. e. when children were trained to take part in theatre work at school, was discussed. The workshop is said to have been successful. Teachers and committee members became aware of the positive effects of theatre work in school, and have as a result of the workshop authorized one teacher in every participating school to be responsible for cultural activities in that school.
- 120 new teachers participated in 4 different Networking meetings arranged by teachers that are already working with Rupantar with drama training in schools (from the 33 schools mentioned above.)

- 285 resource persons constitute a social network for Rupantar within the Children's Voice project.
- 65 members of local theatre groups have been trained by Rupantar in three different seminar sessions in professional children's theatre.
- 3 Child theatre festivals with combined seminars have been carried out. 460 children presented their performances for an audience of 25 836 (consisting of 20% less girls than boys)
- Two project partners (named Fellow Travellers by the other groups) have been identified, one in Chittagong and the other in Rajshahi. These groups are similar to Rupantar, local NGOs working with good governance and human rights. Both of them work with Folk Drama as a tool. Rupantar will start its collaboration with the two other NGOs in 2007.

Rakhal

Because of registration problems Rakhal could not join the project from its start. Rakhal entered 2005. The results for Rakhal are therefore presented for two years, 2005 and the whole of 2006.

- 8 new professional theatre productions for children have been carried out. *Rakhal has not before carried out professional theatre productions for children.*
- 80 professional performances of the above mentioned productions have been presented.
- 55 000 children and youth constitute the audience for these performances (60% girls).
- 25 schools collaborated with Rakhal with intensive drama training. The workshops last for two months each. Thereafter the students present their theatre production in combination with a professional performance by Rakhal in their schools and they also tour to other schools and culture centres for longer or shorter periods. *Rakhal has not worked in schools before the project.*
- 1 500 school children and young people have during Rakhal's project period participated in this school training. (50% girls)
- 4 500 children from the whole of Bangladesh have been trained, by Rakhal during 2005–2006 with a developed method of training with children's right in focus. This is a result of 2 years work in Children's Voice. *Before Children's Voice approximately 500 children were trained yearly.*
- 110 children's theatre clubs, spread over the entire country, have collaborated with Rakhal for a long time (also before the project Children's Voice). These clubs receive training from Rakhal and they are members of Rakhal's Training centre. Rakhal has created a new method how to train children and young people. *This new method is a result of the Children's Voice, with the estimated effect that children shall dare to speak up and to stand up for their right.*
- 500 resource persons have been trained by Rakhal during the project period. *This is a tenfold increase compared with the years before Rakhal entered the project.*
- 60 actors from future Fellow Travellers have been trained by Rakhal in professional children's theatre. *This kind of training has not been offered by Rakhal before the project.*
- 80 stage directors have been trained by Rakhal in professional children's theatre. *This is a tenfold increase compared with before Rakhal entered the project.*

- 50 teachers have participated in 4 seminars dealing with theatre training for school children and its impact on children. *As Rakhal did not work with schools before entering Children's Voice, this result is new.*
- 2 National children's theatre festivals have been arranged by Rakhal (in 2005 and 2006). 140 children's theatre groups, (children playing for children) presented their performances in combination with Rakhal's professional performances for an audience of 60 000 people.
- 5 Regional children's theatre festivals with children's theatre groups / children playing for children (and with Rakhal's professional performances in combination) have been arranged for an audience of 25 000 children (50% girls and boys).
- A Training centre established. Rakhal has established a training centre for children's theatre in Dhaka. Here adult actors from the entire nation, stage directors, professional actors as well as children are trained by Rakhal.
- Rakhal has during the project period identified 13 theatre groups who in 2008 could be possible Fellow Travellers to Rakhal. None of these groups has however started to produce professional theatre for children, i.e. to make performances for children with adult actors on stage. The agreed plan for Rakhal is to include Fellow Travellers in their work during 2008.

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SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY

SE-105 25 Stockholm Sweden
Phone: +46 (0)8 698 50 00
Fax: +46 (0)8 20 88 64
sida@sida.se, www.sida.se