

## Theatre for Development as a Veritable Tool for Women Participation in Community Development; A Study of 2015 Kuyambana Field Experience in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

RASHEED O. OGAKASON

Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria.

**Abstract.** In Nigeria, there have been increasing trends over the issue of women segregation in development process and governance. This has sprung up concerns among scholars and development agencies as it is seen as gender mis-representation in driving development. Achieving gender equity is one of the United Nation's highest priorities and is considered as a necessary precondition for fully achieving development (UNDP 2012). Women have been subjugated and marginalized in development related issues due to socio-cultural beliefs which can serve as an inhibiting factor in creating gender balance towards achieving sustainable development especially in the northern part of Nigeria. However, in canvassing for gender equity in development, several participatory models have been conceptualized to serve as guide for community driven development. Thus, Theatre for development has become a strong medium for engendering women participation as it gives them a voice in the decision making process. In proving this fact, the crux of this study is to analyze and discuss evidence from the 2015 *Kuyambana* Development Communication field experience. This paper conclusively attests that Theatre for Development is a means to promoting gender participation in achieving the desired goals to bring about societal change in the society.

**Keywords:** Community, Women, Participation, Gender, Equity, Sustainable, Development.

### 1. Introduction

Theatre for Development has been an age-long concept and a veritable tool for sustainable development both at the rural and urban level. It has been deployed over time by development agents and facilitators in bringing about social change and development in the society. According to Breed (2002): *Theatre for Development is used as an egalitarian method to access and distill information, working with communities to create a self-sustaining tool for dialogue to affect policy. It creates an infrastructure for communities to define themselves by developing systems of communication that identify key issues, implement solutions, and establish partnerships between resource groups.*

Theatre for Developmental issues and programmes are relevant and quiet essential. Theatre can break through language and cultural barriers and is an extremely useful communication tool. Theatre has been used in community development in various ways. Manukonda (2013) posits that Theatre for Development (TFD) is more than simply making and performing plays. It gives target group representatives-who typically develop and perform the plays- the opportunity to tell their own stories, involvement and addressing matters that are relevant to them. This is one of the most effective ways of participatory approach where people can participate and talk about the taboos of the society which reflects the society openly. However a theatre for development intervention cannot take effect without a community as development is mostly geared towards human

needs and transformation of a people living in a particular settlement be it urban or rural dwellers. This is clearly one of the motives of the 2015 Kuyanbana project which was human based development. The crux of this paper is to project how Theatre for Development intervention can serve as a veritable platform for women's inclusion and participation in achieving sustainable development.

## **2. Community Development**

Community and development are two multifaceted concepts that cannot do without each other because one influences the other. A community could simply be referred to as a geographical territory or a particular cultural or political entity. This may be defined as such to include a population under a particular religious, cultural or political administration, and constituting only a part of the nation. Community is also seen in terms of shared interests, tastes, values, and even in demographic or psychographic terms. In coining the concept of community, one can simply say it is a group of people who identify themselves with particular social, economic, cultural or political ideological interests, views and orientation might constitute a community. Development is all about man, and man is both the subject and recipient of development. It is conceived as a multi-dimensional process involving major changes in social structures, popular altitude and national institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of poverty. Community development is about the active involvement of community members in issues and problems that affect their lives. Indeed it is a dynamic process involving all segments of the community in their own development process. It combines the idea of "community" with "development". Thus, community development relies on interaction between people and joint action, rather than individual activity. For community development to occur, people in a community must believe working together can make a difference and organize to address their shared needs collectively. Community development operates on the values of equality, participation, education and empowerment of community

members. The 2015 project took place in various communities in Kauru local government area of Kaduna state, the communities visited includes Zululu, Kuyanbana, Garmadi, Galadimawa, Tudun Wada, Madam, Fulani. These communities were chosen with the sole aim of engendering development as the facilitators were divided to the various communities with the aim of development.

## **3. Gender Equity and Women Participation in Development.**

Gender is defined as distinct from sex in that it refers to the social and cultural constructs which, while based on the biological sex of a person, defines his or her role in the society. WHO (2001) defines gender equity as "fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between men and women. Women constitute about half of the total population of the country. Apart from the household activities, they are contributing substantially to the national economy. Given that women are usually in a disadvantaged position in the decision making and governance in the society compared to men, promotion of gender equity implies explicit attention to women's needs and perspectives. At the same time, there are also significant negative effects of unequal power relations and expectations on men and boys due to stereotyping about what it means to be a male. Instead, both women and men, and boys and girls, should be free to develop their abilities and make choices without limitations set by rigid gender roles and prejudices based on personal interests and capacities. Achieving gender equity is critical to sustainable development. In all societies women's and men's roles are socially constructed, but all too frequently gender-based disparities exist that disadvantage women; this impedes their development and hence that of humankind. Despite decades of effort, overall progress in improving women's lives has been inconsistent. Moreover, environmental benefits and burdens affecting human capabilities are inequitably distributed. Women are still underrepresented in all levels of government and other decision-making arenas, whether at work or, for many, at home. Such lack of power is linked to higher

levels of female poverty, especially in rural areas of developing countries like Nigeria where women are responsible for 60–80 per cent of food production as well as fuel and water provision yet have little access or control over natural assets such as land, water and ecological conditions that create opportunities for a better life.

Participation is a development approach, which recognizes the need to involve disadvantaged segments of the population in the design and implementation of policies concerning their wellbeing. The strengthening of women's participation in all spheres of life has become a major issue in the development discourse. Socio-economic development cannot be fully achieved without the active participation of women at the decision making level in society. Various scholars define 'Participation' in various ways. Norman Uphoff (cited in Khan1993:111) identified four main kinds of participation, which are distinct but interrelated. They are as follows: a. Participation in decision making in identifying problems, formulating alternative planning activities, allocating resources etc; b. Participation in implementation in carrying out activities, managing and operating programs; c. Participation in economic, social, political or other benefits individually or collectively; and d. Participation in evaluation of the activity and its outcomes for feedback purposes. According to Mishra (1984:88), "participation means collective and continuous efforts by the people themselves in setting goals, pooling resources together and taking actions which aim at improving their living conditions". Rahman (1991:3) state that all forms of actions through which citizens take part in the operation of administration may be termed as 'participation'. Here, 'taking part' refers to any level from macro to micro region or it may be of any type e.g. advisory or in decision-making or in implementation etc. According to Human Development Report, (1993:1): "*participation means that people are closely involved in the economic, social, cultural and political processes that affect their lives*". Participation has both a narrow and wider connotation. In a narrow sense participation means some specific action by which the citizen participates for a

limited purpose. And in a wider sense participation refers to the role of members of the general public as distinguished from that of appointed officials, including civil servants, in influencing the activities of government or in providing directly for community needs (Rahman, 1991:14-15) Women's participation in the development process has been recognized not only as an issue of human rights and social justice, but also as a crucial contribution to solving the pressing needs of important and often-excluded segments of society. Solutions to women's basic and strategic needs are part of the development process and effective, sustainable solutions require participation by the women likely to be affected by those solutions.(Mokate 2004).

Furthermore, evidence shows that women's participation in social development initiatives in policy making and in development decisions generates benefits that affect not only women and their communities, but also society as a whole. Today, more than ever, women are becoming active participants and full protagonists of the development process. However, many obstacles and barriers continue to complicate women's participation. In many parts of the world, large numbers of women remain isolated, unorganized, poor and constrained by socio-cultural and legal structures that restrict their access to, and involvement in, the development process. The obstacles and barriers that limit women's opportunity to participate in different aspects of community life and social development are notably diverse. Public policy initiatives to overcome barriers to women participating equally in economic, social and political activity vary greatly among countries and over time. Of course, the role of women in development must be analyzed and understood within the historical, cultural, social and political contexts of each nation and region. History, tradition, technology, demography and urbanization, among other factors, have influenced the role of women and their opportunities and experiences in the development. According to (FWCW,1995:1): *Women's equal participation in political life plays a pivotal role in the general process of the advancement of women. It is not only a demand*

*for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspective at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved.*

However, to ensure sustainable development in the nation there is a great need to create a gender balance otherwise known as equity in order to ensure full participation in the development process as women not only will they be acknowledged the vital role they can play but also, building a sustainable future and unveiling those potentials they represent in the society.

#### **4. Sustainable Development**

The term development is generally used to denote growth or progress. However the term, particularly in last two centuries, has become synonym to economic growth in terms of gross domestic product or the per capita income of the nation. Sustainable development is a core concept within global environmental policy. The concept of sustainable development is one that arguably is multi-disciplinary, complex, and systematic, yet defining the concept is without a doubt a great task. Sustainable development was a term first coined in 1980, when the intent of the concept was merely basic. It was in the World Conservation Strategy (1980), a union between three prominent environmental non-governmental organizations IUCN, WWF, and UNEP, where sustainable development took on the meaning of 'conserving the earth's natural resources. It provides a mechanism through which society can interact with the environment while not risking damaging the resource for the future. There is a wide range of definitions on the concept of sustainable development is the sheer amount of definitions that are available. Unfortunately, a clear definition of sustainable development has still not been devised. When looking at the definition in a document titled *Our Common Future* (1987) "sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

Servaes and Patchanee (2004) assert that different perspectives have influenced over the years the holistic and integrated vision of Sustainable Development. Nevertheless, one of the central ideas is that there is no universal development model which leads to sustainability at all levels of society and the world. Development is an integral, multidimensional, and dialectic process that can differ from society to society, community to community, context to context<sup>5</sup>. In other words, each society and community must attempt to delineate its own strategy to sustainable development starting with the resources and "capitals" available (not only physical, financial and environmental but also human, social, institutional etc.), and considering needs and views of the people concerned. Sustainable Development implies a participatory, multi-stakeholder approach to policy making and implementation, mobilizing public and private resources for development and making use of the knowledge, skills and energy of all social groups concerned with the future of the planet and its people. Within this framework, communication plays a strategic and fundamental role contributing to the interplay of the different development factors, improving the sharing of knowledge and information as well as the active participation of all concerned.

Sustainable development is a popular and important concept, but one that is open to a variety of interpretations. Haris (2000) defined sustainable development as the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In the extensive discussion and use of the concept since then, there has generally been recognition of three aspects of sustainable development as further purported by Haris (2000). These include:

- Economic: An economically sustainable system must be able to produce goods and services on a continuing basis, to maintain manageable levels of government and external debt, and to avoid extreme sectoral imbalances which damage agricultural or industrial production.
- Environmental: An environmentally sustainable system must maintain a

stable resource base, avoiding over-exploitation of renewable resource systems or environmental sink functions, and depleting non-renewable resources only to the extent that investment is made in adequate substitutes. This includes maintenance of biodiversity, atmospheric stability, and other ecosystem functions not ordinarily classed as economic resources.

- Social: A socially sustainable system must achieve distributional equity, adequate provision of social services including health and education, gender equity, and political accountability and participation.

The concept of sustainable development is rooted in human thinking. It helps us understand ourselves and our world. The problems we face are complex and serious and we can't address them in the same way we created them. But we can address them.

### **5. Kuyanbana Community at a glance**

Kuyanbana is a small clustered and remote community in Rumaya town, Kauru Local Government Area of Kaduna state, Nigeria. Tummana is the language spoken among the Kuyanbana people. As a predominantly Christian community with a population of about 300 people, the people in the community are mainly farmers and being a rural settlement, they use local farming implements and plough to cultivate their farms. Also the use of Indigenous knowledge in curing illness is visible via their knowledge of medicinal herbs. The Gwari people are said to be the first settlers in the area, but they left and went further into the mountains because they don't want their culture to be infiltrated through interacting with other cultures. Some traditional ceremonies are annually celebrated in the community such as Ribiko and Kumusu. Their major occupation and source of income is farming.

### **6. The Kuyanbana field Experience**

The Kuyanbana TFD experience was embarked upon by the Post graduate students of

Development Communication and Theatre and Performing Arts, Faculty of Arts, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. It was a five day intervention that started on the 21<sup>st</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> of January 2015. Although the facilitators constitute students from different backgrounds, Such as, students with first degree from Theatre and Performing Arts, Mass Communication, English and Literary studies, Medicine, Agricultural sciences among others. The composition of students is broad based and cuts across all the above mentioned fields of study. This composition becomes an advantage to the research work frequently carried out by the Centre of Excellence on Development Communication, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Kaduna state, because it will avail students to bring their knowledge from these areas of study into Development Communication studies. Every TFD intervention is embedded in integral steps and processes ranging from community research, project planning and implementation. Also, in doing TFD, a number of tools are usually adopted and deployed in the field, such as, Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) to gather information about community issues. The kuyanbana experience witnessed the deployment of tools like Transect walk, Community Map, Problem Tree, Stakeholders Analysis as well as the Pairwise Ranking to generate information on the community towards building the community. Also, some methodologies were deployed in the community which include; Behavioural Change Communication (BCC), Participatory Video (PV), Key Informant Interview (KII), Focus Group Discussion (FGD), and Participatory Viewing (PV).

### **7. Encounter with Women of Kuyanbana Community**

On arrival at the community, the facilitators paid homage to the community head and briefed him about the purpose of the intervention. He assisted in summoning the community women with the permission granted them by their husbands as it is part of their cultural beliefs to confine women to remain indoors and avoid interaction with strangers especially the opposite sex. The facilitators had to interact in the community's local dialect (Hausa) because all

the women were non-literate who could barely understand English language. As a key starter in trying to get the women's attention to participate, the facilitators had to come up with songs in Hausa language and also requested that the women come up with their own traditional songs. The singing of the songs was an attempt to break the ice as majority of the women were shy to open up to the facilitators, however they were able to come up with various songs in their dialect which were accompanied by local dance steps leading to a brief performance that invoked the spirit of participation. Before this dramatic experience, some of the women were noticed to be cautious and within their comfort zones but however they became more open, interesting and entertaining after the singing and dancing session. When people are allowed to express themselves in their own language which they understand, the best output is achieved.

### **8. Situation Analysis**

Although, conventional approach to Theatre for Development follows a prescribed methodology, overtime experience on the fields has shown that reality on ground does not stick to presumed processes. Dialogue with Kuyanbana women took a separate shape from normal process of TFD and began with general discussion where it was noticed that participation was not 100% inclusive which necessitated the interjection of singing some folklores. The resulting readiness of the women to air their views after this interlude implies the need to think out of the box and use of best judgments as the situation dictates come to forefront.

The participatory interaction with the community women yielded much result as it was an open forum for them to vividly and freely express themselves raising issues that confronts them as a community.

#### **8.1 Findings after Situation Analysis**

The interactive session was attended by population of 40 women out of which 33 were married while 7 were widowed. They were all non-literates who complained that they were unable to attend school because of lack of motivation and educational infrastructure in the

community. Among the women, were farmers and traders who mainly deal on farm produce as a source of livelihood. During the course of the discussion, the women opened up on the challenges they encounter in the community. Some of them lamented bitterly on how they struggle to survive amidst these problems, while some blame it on the government and male folks, a few also talked about how they were being oppressed, marginalized and not given a voice in the community. The problems identified include:

- Lack of Health facilities to promote personal hygiene
- Bad roads
- Lack of educational infrastructure
- Teenage pregnancy.
- Deforestation
- Identifying themes and scenario building

In achieving this, the women were asked if they can draw out scenarios centered on themes woven from the challenges they have identified from the discussion using drama skits. At first they were quite intimidated as many claimed not to be acquainted with scenario building and dramatic performance but the facilitators had to assist the women by explaining vividly on scenario formulation. Thereafter, they were happy and agreed to build the scenarios themselves. They were given enough time to brainstorm and prepare themselves. They were advised to avoid lengthy scenes so as to avoid boredom and be able to create awareness that will be able to convince their audience and to stimulate questions on the message they are trying to pass across.

### **9. Rehearsal**

The rehearsals actually kicked off a day after the scenario building on the 24<sup>th</sup> of January, 2015. The women undertook the whole process from story formulation, casting which was done through trial. The process was time consuming as majority of the cast members took their time to be attuned to their various roles, while further suggestions and decisions came up on how to go about achieving the performance. Majority of the cast pleaded that they needed more time to

be prepared as it was their first time to be involve in role playing and dramatic performance. To spice up the process, traditional songs and dances were also rehearsed and included.

### 10. Performance

The play performance took place the next day at the community market; it was performed by the community women in Hausa language. Although non-elaborate costumes and makeup were used as their costumes and props were their daily wears and items brought from their homes. As the performance unfolds, some of the women were made part of the audience with the view to observe vividly. The performance was done in the Augusto Boal's style of presentation "Forum Theatre" where the actors were interrupted on the spot by spectators who can in turn take up roles during the performance; this was evident as one of the spectators took over a role from another actor on the basis of poor representation of a character on stage. In order to avoid misunderstanding the facilitators assured them that it was a learning process where mistakes are permitted as it also forms an essential part of the process. The performance ended in jubilation as the women were seen congratulating themselves and thanking the facilitators for assisting them to achieve the whole process by themselves. A post-mortem session was organized by the facilitators with the women to enable them discuss issues raised during the performance and ways in which they can be resolved. After an extensive interactive session the women offer suggestions, some of which include the following:

- Contributing token amount to enable them build toilets and classroom blocks
- Encouraging child education
- Educating the teenagers on sexual relations to prevent teenage pregnancies
- Tree planting to tackle deforestation
- Follow up

The field experience witnessed an evaluation exercise and process as the facilitators were made to go back to the community three weeks after the TFD project to observe the impact of the project on the community. To a great extent,

the evaluation process was successful as positive impact were highly recorded as most of the communities were able to implement their action plans while a few are still on course in tackling the development issues raised during the previous visits. The achievement was high as observed during the evaluation process between the facilitators and the community members. In the community, development issues such as, deforestation, Lack of proper toilet facilities, Girl child education, teenage pregnancy, Lack of adequate maintenance of the bridges and roads linking the communities and lack of personal hygiene. During the evaluation process it was observed that, the Villagers have since planted and always take turns in watering and caring for the plants distributed to them by the facilitators in order to breed forestation because it was observed earlier that the community are very fond of indiscriminate tree falling. The plants were planted and nursed in a fenced garden to protect them from being destroyed by animals. Another achievement in the community was the fact that, some toilets were under construction in some households within the communities, these toilets both constitutes the local (pit toilet) and the modern (water system) toilet. It was also realized that other community members are on the verge of beginning construction of toilets in their homes.

In the community, it was also observed that the issue of teenage pregnancy was addressed as the Hakim (Village Head) had addressed all the youths in the community to beware of the harmful effects and consequences of illicit sexual relations and teenage pregnancy; he also urged the youths to embrace western education and entrepreneurship in order for them to be self empowered. Parents were also mandated to enroll their children in schools, this was clearly observed as most of the children were not seen roaming about the community during morning hours as they were found in the school environment.

### 11. Conclusion

From the discourse above, it is imperative to conclude that theatre for development is a veritable medium for engendering women's

participation and empowerment in achieving sustainable development. It bridges the gap of gender imbalance and misrepresentation in decision making process as well as governance in tackling issues that poses as challenges to the society. It also reveals how women can be an agent of societal change by contributing immensely to the growth and development of the society if given a voice to partake in the development process in order to bring about sustainable development both at the rural and urban level.

### References

- Breed, A. (2002). *Playback in Theatre for Development*. From <<http://www.playbackcentre.org>> Retrieved on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of October, 2017.
- Fourth World Conference on Women. (1995). *Women in Power and Decision Making*. [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/decision/htm](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/decision/htm), retrieved on 08.01.016.
- Harris, M. (2000). *Basic Principles of Sustainable Development*. USA: Tufts University Medford.
- Manukonda, R. (2013). Theatre–Communication that Captivates and Enchants. in *Global media Journal-indian Edition*. Vol 4. No.2. India: University of Calcutta Press.
- Misrah, N. (1984). *Participation and Development*. India: NBO publishers.
- Mokate, K. (2004). *Women's Participation in Development*. Washington, DC.
- Rahman, S.(1991). *People's Participation at the Upazilla Level: Problems and Prospects*. India, Rajshahi University.
- Servaes J. & Patchanee M. (2004). *Communication and Sustainable Development* Background paper, to the 9<sup>th</sup> UN Roundtable on Communication for Development. FAO, in press.
- WHO. (2001). *Transforming Health Systems: Gender and Rights in Reproductive Health*. Geneva.
- UNDP, (1993). *People's Participation*. HDR.