

**PAPER FOR PRESENTATION AT THE CREATIVE ART WORKSHOP  
9<sup>th</sup> INTERNATIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION CONFERENCE  
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**TOPIC: RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS: THE ROLE OF THE  
CREATIVE ARTS**

**THEME: BRINGING AWARENESS TO THE STREETS OF UGANDA.**

**1. INTRODUCTION:**

In this presentation I will stress the following key subjects:-

- i Corruption
- ii Creative arts
- iii Public awareness
- iv Streets of Uganda

However, before getting to this level allow me to give a brief and simple background of the International Anti Corruption Theatrical Movement (IATM) which I represent.

**A. IATM BACKGROUND:**

IATM is a Civil Society organisation, which has a **vision of a strong vibrant civil society for a moral and peaceful world.**

The Mission is to build the capacities of individuals and theatre organisations as change agents to articulate and implement their goals for sustainable development.

IATM is the brainchild of a regional workshop on 'Corruption and its Effects on Development' held at the Danish Training Centre for Development Co-operation (MS-TCDC) in Arusha Tanzania over 1995. This workshop which attracted leading NGO's from East and central Africa came up with the Usar River communiqué: challenging the workshop participants to develop strategies of implementing the anti-corruption knowledge acquired as they went back to their respective counties.

The Ugandan participants included, among others, Elizabeth Nahamya, by then chairperson Transparency Uganda, and Sulaiman Madada of Kigulu Development Group. In our follow up meeting, we agreed on employing drama as one of the main approaches

in our anti-corruption crusade. **SAMAMU THEATRE GROUP** was commissioned to produce a play and *"the impossible is possible"* written by Madada was launched in March 1996 at the National Cultural Centre. After a number of shows in Uganda, **Samamu Group** visited Arusha, Tanzania. This visit resulted into a joint theatre programme between MS Ngoma Troupe (Tanzania) and **Samamu Group** (Uganda)

Following two exchange visits and a three-day workshop at MS-TCDC Arusha, the International Anti Corruption Theatrical Movement was born 1997.

## **B. OUTSTANDING ACTIVITIES**

So far, two Pan-African anti Corruption Festivals have been held in Kampala Uganda (August, 17-23 1998) and in Maputo Mozambique (Aug 21-30, 1999.)

The themes covered in both festivals were **"Corruption your Responsibility"(1998) and "Civil Society in Democratisation and Development" (1999)**. In total, performing artists from 12 countries in Africa alone and over 60 performing local groups have been involved in these past two years in creating public awareness and bringing the messages to the open streets!

## **C. OUR TASK!**

### **i. CORRUPTION:**

By way of definition, Corruption will be the abuse of office for private gains.

A deviation from established standards and norms by public officials and parties they deal with. Corruption has different forms that include bribery, fraud, embezzlement of public funds and other assets, legal use of assets for private gain over invoicing or under-invoicing under payment / declaration of taxes and duties 'missing files' court decisions to award damage in excess, nepotism etc.

### **ii. THE CREATIVE ARTS:**

The creative arts include music, dance, drama, cartoons, mime. They originate from the deeper insights of man about their society they live in. Artistic creativity is means to finding ways of helping people to create new and better ways of living and working together.

The arts are humanities and as such the most immediate recognisable form of human creativity, that should be accorded recognition in all our planning and action plans in the next millennium. If we are to succeed we should look at artistic creativity as the basis for human economic development. Anybody who is not artistic is lacking in the essentials of humanity. That is why all people enjoy music, dance and drama, pictures / photographs, well designed clothes which portray peace, harmony, wealth, brotherhood, development etc.

The creative arts forms like riddles, storytelling, music, dance, drama, mime, mimicry, cartoons, animations etc are simple to use, easy to adopt, and on most occasions have the elements of association with the group, class or peers in mind. They are normally contextualised and universal in their knowledge this makes the arts universally acceptable beyond barriers of language, culture and names!

**iii. PUBLIC AWARENESS:**

Human beings are the corner stone of any societal endeavours. To keep the majority well informed and aware of their rights, obligations and facts is a duty we in IATM have taken on to keep people informed in this case about the existence and dangers of corruption. Beyond this awareness, IATM believes in challenging the Civil Society into action against corruption. Empowering the individuals in oppressed communities to demand for their rights and to demand for accountability from their leaders. IATM longs to create a strong and vibrant civil society, geared at moral, well-governed and free corrupt world.

In this struggle, behavioural change is paramount. We put our efforts into causing change in the apathetic behaviour of the oppressed masses and the evil hearts of the powerful and wealthy who are enabled at the former's expense.

**iv. STREETS IN UGANDA.**

Uganda, like most disadvantaged societies is populated by uninformed masses in the streets. These include both highly educated and uneducated people, as street children, hawkers, graduate job seekers, sex workers, road side traders etc.

The majority of them are not so much aware about their human rights, obligations of state to their welfare and their role as citizens. They get involved in "Corruption for survival" but at their own expense and loss. They are culprits of police, judiciary, and local authorities who have squandered their welfare, rights and denied them of livelihood.

**2. WHY A THEATRICAL APPROACH?**

All the above mentioned have one important characteristic: they have ears to listen and eyes that can see and lack the skills to read. Theatre as a medium of communication has the following as advantages and above all, the ability to instruct and delight!

1. Theatre if well utilised is as entertaining as it is educative and informative
2. A big percentage of our total population (African) are illiterate and poor, thus the most appropriate way of reaching them is through music, dance and oral means by direct performance, or television and radio (if they have success).

3. Over 80% of the population is rural based. Even those who know how to read can hardly afford the newspaper. And books.
4. Conventional theatre is partly a cost recovery approach. Cost sharing is possible where the audience is willing to contribute unlike other methods like seminars and workshops.
5. Drama/Theatre teaches by demonstration, a long lasting impact on the audience proverb (when you bear you forget, when you see you remember).
6. Theatre cuts across a number of the would be barriers like language, cultural taboo, status limitations/protocol and can therefore penetrate thick iron curtains to address even as highly placed persons as heads of state at their very nose.
7. Dance and singing form a core of African theatre. Dances constitute sincere indicators of people's culture. Dancing therefore is reflection of the community ways of living and thinking. Dance is a folk media of communication throughout the world.
8. **SONG:** Music was and still is a strong mechanism of communication. In the king's palace in Buganda. for example, musicians would be called to give messages through their songs: In real sense life is musical. In church, successful preachers have elements of the theatre. Music is used in churches, military training, in wars to boost morale even calling down ancestral spirits to plead for the living..
9. Theatre as such is highly regarded as a mode of communication because:-
  - i. Its based on the human being as the chief resource hence behaviour change is possible.
  - ii. Interpersonal communication is encouraged / promoted
  - iii. Brings people together to appreciate and understand one another and as *Soyinka* asserts:-

To act channels of anguish into creative purpose  
which releases man from a totally destructive despair,  
releasing from within him the most energetic,  
deeply combative inventions  
which without usurping the territory of the internal gulf  
brides it with discovery hopes  
.....P. 146.
10. Communication barriers are limited in theatre.  
David Kerr observes:

Although the main spoken language was Kikuyu,  
the play in fact used very little dialogue,  
relying mainly on songs, dances, mimes, slide projections  
and crowds disciplined into senses of ensemble action.  
Even Non Kikuyu audience members  
could understand most of what was happening

.....(P.249)

### **3. LIMITATIONS OF THEATRE**

1. People sometimes do not take the messages seriously, since they come to relax and be entertained.
2. Sometimes amateur theatre practitioners are involved and follow up is not possible.
3. Artists are sometimes regarded as curtain raisers or crowd pullers and that is all about them.
4. They are in many cases not facilitated to develop their artistic skills hence they are always in ups and downs.
5. Theatre approaches. E.g. free travelling theatre in Uganda started by Makerere University in 1960's forced ideas of individual writer (troupe) to a community (audience) without critical and serious consideration in human and geographic differences. This argument is raised by those artists who advocate for "participatory education theatre" which is made by the people themselves.

### **4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**To improve anti - corruption theatre as a media of communication, the following needs to be done:-**

1. Increase on research to establish the theatrical contributions to the anti corruption campaign worldwide.
2. Involve the community at all levels of developing such drama
3. Monitoring and evaluation of the campaign should be done on spot and immediate follow up made through participants committing themselves individually to the campaign.
4. Emphasis on networking with people/organisations of similar or related interests
5. Documenting theatre works/experiences and sharing on the worldwide level
6. Encourage street theatre or carnivals i.e. theatre practiced in streets or selected busy places like markets, car parks. This method of art is brought down to the people who are sometimes too busy to find time for "Leisure" in theatre halls. As a result, they miss the lessons and become prey of corruption and oppressive laws.
7. Popular theatre: meant for a specific goal and based on awareness promotion is to be developed.
8. Community theatres: Performances whose subjects and issues of treatment are basically simple social issues should be harnessed to include complex topics like this one of corruption.
9. School and colleges drama should embrace themes on corruption, democracy, and human rights as a matter of principled education

**5. RAISING AWARENESS ON THE STREETS OF UGANDA**

- a) Having discussed the role of the creative Art, particularly theatre, let me address my self to the Ugandan situation.

Uganda is a relatively small country in size and has a population of about 20 million people. The majority of the people live in the rural areas and poverty is the song every day throughout the year. Corruption in Uganda has penetrated almost all sectors of life, despite the political will to fight it. The poor think that through bribery, they will save the little they intend to get while the rich take bribes and embezzle in the very nose of ignorant masses. Civil Society members must be involved in the fight because they are the chief sufferers. The best way in our view is theatre by their side in the places where they live and work.

b) **IATM ACTION PLAN 1999-2002**

In view of building a strong vibrant civil society ready to challenge and demand for accountability of the leaders, IATM shall do the following:

1. Build capacities of theatre groups / individuals as change agents.
2. In turn, they shall carry out the anti corruption campaign within the work places, villages and specified operational zones.
3. Strengthen the General Secretariat, administration and management structures in order to root out being compromised by the rich and powerful.
4. Address the issue of sustainability of the fight against corruption by causing a human change chain from below to the top and within the society.

c) **THE SERVICES OFFERED INCLUDE:**

1. Skills Training
2. Networking and coordination opportunities.
3. Information and communication dissemination
4. Lobby and advocacy skills and practice

d) **MAJOR PLANNED ACTIVITIES:**

**1. ORGANIZING ANTI CORRUPTION AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS ANNUALLY.**

- (a) Theatre performances throughout the year at strategic places
- (b) Public demonstration and debates on thematic issues

- (c) Letter writing to leaders asking for accountability and answers to revelations.
- (d) Media campaign, phone in radio & T.V. programmes on topical issues.

NB. This year's Anti - Corruption week 23<sup>rd</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup> October is organised jointly with other civil society organisations under the umbrella of the Anti Corruption Coalition of Uganda (ACCU)

1. Co-organise annual Pan African Anti - Corruption Festival in Zambia 2000.
2. Organise integrity building anti corruption workshops. This year the target is to cover 10 districts in Uganda, establish IATM Chapters in 10 African Countries
3. Broadcast radio and T.V drama series locally and internationally.
4. Organise anti corruption Art exhibitions to coincide with important events
5. Document anti corruption theatre works/other materials and circulate for raising public awareness. So far, four plays and festivals are documented and awaiting duplication for circulation.
6. Link artists to other anti corruption and development agencies worldwide.
7. Promote good governance in the partner organisations
8. Produce informative anti corruption materials and circulate them to the public
9. Aim at exemplary leaders and leadership in the IATM family.

All these activities aim at creating public awareness which is action oriented.

<My presentation is punctuated by short video anti corruption materials>.

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