

Rulu Arts Promoters
Culture & Development

Case Study: Promoting Good Governance by Building Leadership Capacity

Partner: Rulu Arts Promoters

Location: Arumeru District, Tanzania

Introduction

"... the confidence of women both in their self-worth and in their ability to express themselves. It [the project] encouraged the setting up of women's theatre groups, acting as both educators and as a pressure group for change."

Background

Arumeru District of Tanzania is a remote area. Its people have little formal education and traditional custom and practice prevents the involvement of some citizens, particularly women in decision –making. Rulu Arts Promoters, a non-profit and a non governmental organisation that strives for the less privileged development, attempted to combat these disadvantages by engaging local people using their own preferred means of communication: songs, story, poetry, and drama. People 'learned by doing', working with issues that mattered to them. Through these means peoples' consciousness about political issues was raised, and they learned to act (literally) in the public domain, theatre becoming a vehicle for collective problem solving and action

Working in three villages in target area, Rulu Arts tried to engage local people in participatory theatre to highlight issues of governance, such as gender and development, fighting corruption and local government leadership. Local people were involved both as actors and spectators

The project aimed particularly to increase the participation of women in governance, by developing their confidence and encouraging the setting up of women's theatre groups, which would then act both as educators and as pressure groups for change.

The main steps were:

- Familiarisation with the village and its people, including their cultural norms and language.

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- Identifying their problems and preoccupations, by talking to them and by listening to their songs and stories.
- Analysis of these in groups ranging from a handful of people to a full village meeting.
- Translation of the ideas into theatre and training local people to act as animators.
- Performances of the show in each of the project villages. The show comprised elements of storytelling, traditional drumming, poetry, song and drama and ran for about 2 hours.

Impact

Through the performances, the 'cry of the people' was heard. Performers and spectators alike were made aware of issues they themselves had raised more with a dramatic immediacy they had not previously imagined. This provided a great stimulus to do something about them. After each performance, one of the animators, dressed as a joke, commented on the action and prompted people to ask questions. The joker helped the group to create solutions. These solutions were also dramatised.

Lessons

- Action following the performance is vital.
- A community –based organisation to tackle the issues needing to be solved or managed was formed. In this way, the project has a continuing life, so that the project becomes self-sustaining.
- Using different art forms are an effective way to engage and communicate with local people.