

Theatre's Potential to Change the World: A Critical Overview

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ABSTRACT

The propensity of theatre to change the world has been alluded to by many scholars, however, theatre has not been able to achieve this huge responsibility due to some factors. These factors vary from nation to nation but there are core ones that cut across all climes which had militated against the growth of theatre in some societies. Government's insensitivity and lip-service to theatre, unprofessional and dismal attitude of many theatre artists and ignorance, especially in the rural areas have been the bane of theatre progress in the last few decades. With the failure of all stakeholders in relation to theatre's welfare, its inability to broker change is understandable but not excusable. To properly foreground this position, comments of theatre practitioners and scholars are analysed. This research espouses the pertinence of theatre, especially Theatre for Development (TfD) in national development, change and transformation. Suggestions are made in order for theatre to perform its laudable role of engendering change and development. Examples of TfD's exploits and active participation in bringing sustainable change, transformation and development to disadvantaged communities are highlighted.

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I. INTRODUCTION

There are different views about the ability of theatre to change the world. Change here is tantamount to holistic, sustainable, unbound development and advancement, and better alternatives in all facets of human existence in the local communities as well as in urban slums. The conventional theatre, that is, performance within the four walls of our auditoriums is yet to receive even tacit support from stakeholders (little wonder its comatose state), let alone Applied Theatre, that is, performances that happen solely for the development and transformation of rural communities.

Africa, especially Nigeria, has not yielded favourably towards the cardinals and indices of development, as it is the case in other climes, due to the many contradictions, acute and unprogressive traditions and customs and human tragedies that have bedeviled our communities due to retrogression occasioned by insensitive and unresponsive leadership; those who attained leadership positions basically for avarice and personal aggrandizement. Unfortunately too, some NGOs sprang up with 'fake' intentions to develop local communities but in the actual fact their ineptitude and desire to use such means as conduit pipe to circumvent sponsorship deals for personal gains has ruined such interventions. No thanks to their lack of genuine interest and unprofessional attributes that are in direct opposition to what Applied theatre is designed to achieve. These situations have denied local communities the essence of proper and sustainable development.

It is believed that if theatre, especially Applied Theatre, in which Theatre for Development (TfD), in which our focus subsumes is consciously adopted and professionally handled, it can engender an indelible mark in the lives of the people. Over the years, Theatre for Development has made impact on the lives of the people through series of interventions, better alternatives and humble developments. For example, there have been situations where communities holding on tenaciously to dastard and obnoxious traditions have discontinued due to TfD interventions. TfD has also provided the needed education and orientation for communities where bold refusal to train female children and female genital mutilation have reigned supreme to discontinue such obnoxious traditions. Through TfD interventions, community's ignorance about rape and HIV/AIDS have been brought to the fore for proper education, edification and abhorrence.

There are countless TfD interventions in Africa. This research will highlight some of these examples, especially from Zambia and Nigeria. This research aims at showing that social change, development, transformation and positive alternatives are possible if TfD is given the needed push and support by stakeholders (government, scholars, practitioners, communities, donors, NGOs). This research will affirm that theatre, in our own case, TfD can change the world and also cite examples where such changes have taken place in the past.

Clarification of Concepts

Fate

In some instances, people have accepted problems militating against their survival as fate and god-inflicted injury (just as this researcher experienced when he conducted a research in some communities of Rivers State where people believe that God gave them fortune [oil] but added punishment [oil pollution] to it), that must remain with them forever. Such people, in some instances too, have been jolted to consciousness to realize that their problems are man-made and that they needed to brace up to solve the quagmire. Such people needed to be awoken from their slumber. When asked if his theatre is revolutionary in nature, Osofisan (in Osakwe, 154) claims that his revolutionary theatre is meant to achieve the following feat:

... what I like to do is awake people out of their usual complaisance, rouse them out of their usual feeling of helplessness, and provoke them into ..., thinking and ultimately into realizing and accepting not just the possibility of action, but also the necessity of it.

Such theatre is expected to create new possibilities and create in the people the “believe very strongly in our capacity as human beings to decide and alter our society, and shape it into whatever we desire because God has endowed us with all that we need to make it so” (Osofisan in Osakwe, 154). One major inadequacy of the execution of Tfd intervention mentioned by Femi Osofisan was that of imposition of drama skits on communities by donors/sponsors. He mentioned that in the past, when the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Ibadan, embarked on theatre interventions which were sponsored by the United Nations Organization, drama skit topics were dictated to them by the UNO and quite often, what they prepared were at variance totally with pressing problems facing the people. This led UI to discontinue what they termed “‘outside-in’ approach, where you, the outsider take a pre-constructed play to the community, we decided instead, to develop what we call the ‘insider-in’ method where the community itself will work out its own problems and then try to use drama to solve these” (Osakwe, 156). Such ‘inside-in’ methodology will definitely prove to the people that the way they are is not because they are predestined to be like that but that through onerous efforts and determination on their part, the situation or the condition can be changed.

Applied Theatre

Applied theatre refers to the practice of theatre and drama in non-traditional settings for/with/by marginalized communities. This theatre practice covers areas of social and community living such as public health, education, housing, social welfare, and juvenile and criminal justice. Etherton (27) describes applied theatre as having “various methodologies that evolved a general set of principles or axioms for a creative drama that promotes active engagements by audiences, however large or small, and purposes social change as an outcome. This involves the devising of plays, performances and the assessment of their impact, both immediate and long-term on them and their communities”. Obadiogwu (ii) describes Theatre for Development (Tfd), a branch of applied theatre, as a “potent theatre for the development of rural and urban masses in contemporary society... it provides one of the most comprehensive critique of western histrionics”. He goes further to say that Tfd “opposes Aristotelian theatrics with its anti-dialogical matrix and fatalistic acceptance of the ways of the world” (Obadiogwu, ii). Tfd “is a form of theatre that aims to *disseminate knowledge, raise awareness, change attitude and modify behaviour in regard to societal problems*” (www.griffith.edu, accessed) (emphasis mine).

Theatre

Theatre takes place in a specific place, often on a stage, especially a theatre hall. Such organized theatre at every time thrives in a prepared and already-made performance for an audience, usually for a fee, to watch for a period of time. Primarily, the audience is in the theatre to be entertained and after the performance they go home relishing the sumptuous performance, and at most reflecting on the aesthetics and spectacles. Such experience, most often, does not create the expected impact on the audience. The participatory level of the audience is minimal and very shallow.

Osofisan (in Osakwe, 159) elucidates on the importance of drama and theatre as follows:

- i. It has the advantage of immediate and direct impact on the audience.
- ii. The barrier of the English language can be greatly overcome on the stage, if the play is well performed.
- iii. Drama (theatre) is much more a communal art because dialogue is needed for reflection, for argument and for contemplation.

From the above, points i and ii explain why drama/theatre is essentially employed for Tfd interventions. Such drama skits, which are weaved by the people themselves through the efforts of interventionists, happen here and now, therefore, with a profound effect on the people. The intervention drama helps the people to reflect and contemplate on how the new alternatives can foster transformations and development. The second point above is not much of an issue for Tfd interventionists because the local language is usually employed as a means of communication.

Devising Theatre

Devising theatre encourages collaboration between the two parties involved; the artists and the people. This type of theatre discourages the consumption of finished theatrical performances by the people without their involvement and active participation. Heddon and Milling's (in Sidiropoulou, 91) contribution to devise theatre shows similar identity and functions with Theatre for Development, a branch of applied theatre, which is the focus of this research:

Devising is variously: a social expression of non-hierarchical possibilities, a model for co-operative and non-hierarchical collaboration; an ensemble; a collective; a practical expression of political and ideological commitment, a means of taking control of work and operating autonomously; a de-commodification of art; a commitment to total community; a commitment to total art; the negating of the gap between art and life; the erasure of the gap between spectator and performer; a distrust of words; the embodiment of the death of the author; a means to reflect contemporary social reality; a means to incite social change; an escape from spectator; an expressive active language; innovative; risky; spontaneous; experimental; non literary.

TfD is devised as a collaborative endeavour that bridges the gap between the spectator and performer to 'reflect contemporary social reality' in order to 'incite' the people to 'social change' through the use of 'expressive', 'creative language' and 'innovative' local songs to achieve 'spontaneous' reactions from the people for their betterment. It is a variant of theatre with 'strong political and ideological commitment', with a 'commitment to total community' and 'a total commitment to art'. It is totally committed to engendering change, transformation, development in the local communities and urban slums. TfD practitioners achieve this onerous task through the TfD praxis. Praxis here is a term of Marxist theoretical tradition that implies not just practice but the ideological assumptions undergirding and deriving from practice. It is employed to describe the TfD practice as well as the ideological underpinnings that accelerate the essence of TfD interventions and its methodological circumspections.

The statement of Hillary Clinton in 1996 on the importance of the *art* for disadvantaged children in the US is appropriate for the condition that our neighbourhoods, communities and urban slums are today. She affirms that:

We see too clearly how an erosion and a breakdown of our most cherished institutions have resulted in a fraying of the whole social fabric. We know that the arts have the potential for obliterating the limits that are too often imposed on our lives. We know that they can take anyone ... and transport (him/her) beyond the bonds that circumstance has prescribed (Weitz in Lowe, 358).

Our circumstance in Africa and Nigeria, in particular is that of abandonment by insensitive successive governments that left our communities in complete pristine, doldrum, underdeveloped state with high level of poverty and attendant woes in health, environment and obsolete traditions. Therefore, in the face of such sheer neglect, TfD readily comes to mind as an intervention mechanism to liberate, transform and develop the people and the communities. This theatre brand:

... provides pedagogy through which less privileged communities can be transformed. It achieves this by mobilizing them, through theatrical enactment of their problems and finding ways of developing their potentials for their survival as well as cherishing their most valued traits (Adeseke, 48).

The potential of TfD in bringing change, transformation and development to such communities is not in doubt as it helps the people to identify "the emergence of the social bonds of solidarity and collective identity that occurred as a result of bringing neighborhood residents together, providing a shared goal and setting a common mood for the purpose of designing a community symbol" (Lowe, 358).

Understandably, TfD has become a global phenomenon and its adoption by practitioners and NGOs to engender transformation and development has been epochal. Many scholars of TfD-bent have worked on numerous projects/interventions all over the world; examples are in Asia, South/Central America, Ngugi wa Thiong'O's Kamirithu experiment, Oga Steve Abah's contributions in the Northern axis of Nigeria, TfD workshops in Botswana, Cameroon and in almost all parts of Africa. In Nigeria, very many institutions have engaged in many TfD interventions in and around their milieu. This research will highlight examples from Department of Theatre and Media Arts, Ekiti State University, TfD interventions by the College of Education, Oyo Special and an example from Zambia workshops. These examples are provided to underscore the landslide and landmark achievements that have been recorded in our different communities.

Theatre's Potential to Change the World

Scholars all the world over differ on the issue of theatre's ability to change the world. But interestingly, the art of narration and storytelling in African communities have always been geared towards teaching morals and discouraging vices. Therefore, the instruction to "teach by entertainment, that dictum so basic to Aristophanes, to Racine and to Synge, underlies the raconteurs' praxis in black Africa" (Osofisan, 82).

Attention is shifted now to scholars' views about the ability of theatre to change the world. Terence McNelly, a playwright says that:

Theatre changes the heart, then it changes the mind, and that makes people get off their asses and do something. I'm a great believer in theatre as a social-active force (theatreround.com, assessed 12/05/2020).

Joshua Bergesse, a choreographer believes he learns a lot from the theatre by declaring that:

When I go to see theatre, when I leave, I'm a different person. Hopefully I've learned something about myself and about other people. I think that good storytelling is the way that human beings grow (theatreround.com, assessed 12/05/2020).

Most African theatricians, especially those of Marxist bent, believe that theatre has a huge role to play in changing the world. Such theatricians include Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1981, 1998), Ola Rotimi (in Aunton, 1972), Ken Saro-Wiwa (2001), Niyi Osundare (2007), Olu Obafemi (2008) and others. Chris Woode even argues that "theatre can change the world (and) is already doing so" (www.theguardian.com, 04/02/2020).

Why Theatre may not Change the World: A Global Appraisal

That theatre may not change the world is not borne out of pessimism or despair; it is only that clearly there are many forces against the theatre. Some of these forces are argued below. Some artists have failed in their responsibility in coming to terms with the realities on ground in their societies; instead "most theatres try to put audience at ease, to lure them into a state of self-satisfaction and of self-assurance" (Osofisan in Osakwe, 154). Chris Goode puts it succinctly that, "theatre makers should prove that they are right, that theatre is indeed a major force to be reckoned with, rather than something that is politely paid lip-service, pattered on the head, then quietly cut and ignored" (www.theguardian.com, 04/02/2020). The responsibility of theatricians should be to jolt the people to a state of self-recognition and to redeem the society. The latter part of Goode's submission leads us to another issue which is the expected collaboration between theatre and the government. What we are saying here is the sponsorship of art by stakeholders, especially the government, which is a mirage as far as we know. Without sponsorship, it is impossible for theatre to thrive and play its role adequately. Here, we are talking of real funding that is done concertedly to develop and support arts, theatre and culture, not "sporadic, epileptic, man-no-man, self-serving micro-financing of arts and culture" (Sowande, viii). Osofisan (28) reiterates this lukewarm attitude of the government towards culture, by extension, the arts generally in the following words:

The evidence available to me indicates that this official prejudice against culture has not changed at all in the corridors of government. Cultural matters are still considered in official circles as just mere entertainment, as a time away from serious issues.

In some countries, theatre has been incarcerated, imprisoned or sent on exile. Examples abound, but three of such examples will suffice here. In Hungary, the country's parliament is set to sack the director of its National theatre on the ground that his work is categorized as "obscene, pornographic, anti-national and anti-Hungarian". In Belamy, Natalia Koliada, the artistic director of the country's only free theatre company, has, following the re-election of Alexander Lukashenko, been forced to go into hiding, threatened with rape and torture. The education minister of Iraq has banned the study of theatre in Baghdad's Institute of Fine Arts. (www.theguardian.com, 04/02/2020). The statistics of government's persecution of theatre and arts generally, world over, is staggering. A recent report collated from reporters in 2017 and published in 2018, around the globe, gives an in-depth analysis, breakdown and factual experiences of artists; the fate they suffered in the hands of highhanded government executives. A part of the report states as follows:

... nearly one attack per week took place on theatrical artistic works in 2017, 62 percent against artists seen as opposing the government. 23 percent in the USA; the play *Julius Caesar* received threats and their funding was cut due to the main character's resemblance with President Trump. Many other plays were cancelled on the ground of racism, disrespect of minorities, indecency and strong language. The clamp down on political dissidents continued with attack on theatre linked controversial artists targeted by the government. These include seven artists considered as counter-revolutionary by authorities who were detained during a performance about using art as means of freedom. In Democratic Republic of Congo, four artists were detained due to a performance criticizing the government for widespread killing and long term conflicts in the country which was seen as rebellious (Plipat, 23).

In Nigeria, where theatre is not banned, its development and constant evolution has been grossly affected by inadequate funding and sheer neglect. This is unfortunate because as it is happening in some advanced countries, it would have been used to propel major changes, especially the Theatre for Development brand. Professionals and theatricians are trying their best in floating self-sponsored TfD interventions but with the present economic hardships and importantly, economic recession, there is little or nothing they seem to offer. Therefore, government's patronage of the theatre is non-negotiable in the present circumstance.

Any Hope?

Government's lukewarm attitude towards theatre should not dampen the commitment spirit of the artists. In fact, the artists should, within their limited resources, ensure that best theatre practices are adhered to,

eschewing any compromise. They should become undaunted and resolute in their artistic duties to their nations. The most important thing should be to help Africa out of the present doldrums; the acute cases of nepotism, tribalism, insecurity and corruption. This is encapsulated by Bakare Traore in the following quotations: The first immediate preoccupation of a modern Negro-African theatre *is to identify itself with the struggle for the emancipation of Black Africa*. It must present to the public *themes which correspond to their own preoccupations*. The problem is a human one: to express social reality in an objective way. To produce 'images and thoughts popular in style and in content which would act as educational and spiritual nourishment for the entire race', as Copeau says: to produce plays with some content, to identify with one's period and express dramatically; this should be the preoccupation of an African theatre if it is to meet the needs and demands of our times (Traore, 105).

Artists' relevance to bringing our nations back to their moral past is not contestable, therefore, it is a responsibility that must be performed for the obvious reasons of rescuing our societies from collapsing under moral latitude. To achieve this, artists must "work courageously and stubbornly against official and public neglect" (Osofisan, 29). This is expedient because, if

Properly mobilized, art can help create, promote, and hence bring into being the still elusive national ethos which is one of the causes of our contemporary failure ... The truth, however is that, without a conscious effort of mobilization, we cannot hope to shake our people out of our habits of needless hysteria, political cynicism and economic cannibalism, and create a healthy and enduring national ethos (Osofisan, 36).

It is obvious from the Tfd interventions highlighted below that there are lots of resources embedded in this kind of theatre to liberate, develop and transform the people and their environment and that theatricians should make the necessary sacrifices to get the right outcome. At the end, it would mean that the dramatists have created:

To heal and restore the life of a sick and battered humanity; To create a new vision for growth, renewal, regeneration and edification of man for a wholesome life and a better community; To mobilize a collective conscience for a particular desired objective (Sofola, 3).

The above is possible if artists, especially Tfd practitioners "believe very strongly in our relevance to the solution of our problems of development and certainly, one of the contributions we as artists can make is to the creation and definition of a national ethos" (Osofisan, 29).

Tfd Examples

Tfd has been engaged variously in many parts of Africa as a social movement. It has been widely used in developing nations beginning from 1970s to support development works in the areas of agriculture, water and health but has recently been extended to cover enlightenment programmes on the prevention of HIV and AIDS. This is in countries like Nigeria, South Africa, Gambia, Tanzania and as our example here will show, in Zambia as well.

The Use of Tfd for HIV/AIDS Prevention in Zambia

In Zambia, "Tfd has been utilized as a tool for investigating and disseminating information and organizing people in matters of development and has in the last four years been part of the campaign against the spread of HIV and HIV/AIDS" (Mwansa, 5). Tfd is employed extensively in the service of humanity and community development in Zambia and that is why there are over 400 theatre groups that participate either on full time or part time basis in Zambia.

In Zambia, it has been observed that HIV/AIDS has become very prevalent and the most infected were defence personnel in the three units (Army, Air Force and National Service), teachers, nurses and mini bus drivers and commercial sex workers. The background story by Nwansa shows the effect of such disease on the defence that, "for resources that are occupational, social and economic the, defence personnel are a vulnerable group to HIV/AIDS infection" (Nwansa, 2).

Due to such vulnerability, death is frequent among the defence units and this must have been responsible for regular advertisement for recruitment of new entrants to the defence units. Suicide was rampant, for example, before 2003, when there were over seven cases reported of officers of the rank of Captain up to Colonel and Warrant Officers who committed suicide in the event of being diagnosed with HIV (Mwansa, 6). This brought untold hardship on the family, with the wives resorting to sex work within the camps for survival.

In order to forestall this incidence, Tfd was employed and the focus here was on behavioral change. The project engaged 35 animateurs consisting of Airmen (7), Soldiers (9) and (4) non-military workers (mainly widows) employed to provide home-based care and to provide cultural work as singers and performers. The project which was jointly sponsored by the Department of Defence, HIV/AIDS Prevention Programme and GEO-CENTERS of American Army with a grant of \$100,000 was targeted at defence personnel of all ranks and their families. Though, "some performances were differentiated and where the population was small, officers and non-commissioned personnel attended some performances but held discussions in different groups" (Mwansa, 5).

Participants were taught theories of Tfd techniques for gaining entrée, collecting and analyzing data. Drama skits and songs were created to provide pure entertainment and education through theatre which were adapted to issues relating to HIV/AIDS prevention. At the initial stage, these drama and songs were staged for officers to watch but due to the vast nature of coverage, they were transformed into video of 53 minutes duration and 300 copies were produced for distribution to all bases and camps. Another feat is that all songs were recorded and packaged in 2,500 audio cassette and 100 CD Cassettes for distribution to all bases and camps for integration in AIDS education programme. 6,000 tracts and posters carrying information on HIV/AIDS were equally distributed. The effect of this exercise was enormous. Apart from the fact that the drama and songs touched the heart of defence personnel, noticeable changes in attitudinal behavior of personnel, which eventually led to reduction in HIV/AIDS cases was recorded.

Tfd Intervention in Educational Development with Emphasis on the Girl-Child Education

Another case of study was the intervention of Tfd in educational development with emphasis on the girl-child education carried out in the North-west geo-political zone of Nigeria precisely at Ugene-Okpiko in Ohimini Local Government Area of Benue State. Prior to the intervention, the region recorded a high level of imbalance in the education of the boy-child and the girl-child. Attention was given to educating the boy-child to the detriment of the girl-child as the latter is left for early and forced marriage, with its negative consequences. The girl-child is usually exposed to underfeeding and neglect. More often than not, the girl-child is denied proper health care, attention and education.

The drama skit was aimed at “sensitizing and encouraging the community to change its attitude and perception towards the education of the girl-child” (Idoko, 274). The drama revolved around Onyeche who after following her brother to Lagos came back to the village as a trained nurse and assisted the village to solve most of their health problems that had claimed several lives. Through her education, she was able to convince the people that their problems, as they believed, are not caused by evil forces. She, through proper education, helped the community to jettison their superstitious beliefs and unhygienic practices and focus on their main problems which was eventually solved. The thrust of the drama skit titled ‘A Land of Possibilities’ is that “the education of a child-girl has the potential to bring boundless benefits to the community and essentially, it shows that Tfd has become a mobilization tool to take positive action on the education of the girl-child in our society” (Idoko,275).

Audience response reveals the effect and acceptability of the skit which showed their readiness for attitudinal change on the issue of girl-child education. The community was also inspired when they saw female University undergraduates in their community participating in the drama skit. Those interviewed after the performance declared that the effort proved positive due to the soaring number of female students’ enrolment since the intervention. The royal father, therefore, appealed to the facilitator to take skit to neighbouring communities so that they can benefit from such experience.

It is obvious from this experience that Tfd proves to be a formidable and viable platform for stimulating and fast-tracking the girl-child education for sustainable national development (Idoko, 270-279).

Tfd Experiences in Akinmoorin and Sabo Communities of Oyo State

The Tfd has also proved to be a useful tool in some communities of Oyo State as reflected in the experience of the Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo. The team took different drama skits to Ilora, Aawe, Fiditi, Akinmoorin, Jobele and Sabo communities of Oyo State. Employing the technique of community theatre, the group in conjunction with the community performed skits that dwell on dangers of illiteracy/unhygienic habits and mismanagement of social infrastructures. Of special interest are the interventions at Akinmoorin and Sabo communities. The skits performed at the two communities centred on unhygienic habits of people but of different focus. The Akinmoorin drama skit centres on the use of unhygienic water for domestic purposes due to non-availability of potable water while that of Sabo focuses on the unhygienic habit of careless and indiscriminate disposal of liquid and solid wastes of cassava (Lawal, 267). The skits highlighted the negative impact or consequences that unhygienic water and environment could have on people’s health. The two communities resolved to take positive steps toward solving their problems of shortage of clean/drinkable and unhygienic environment (Lawal, 262-269).

Tfd Experiences of Department of Theatre and Media Arts, EKSU

In Ado-Ekiti axis where Ekiti State University is situated, the story of using Tfd to broker change has been extremely positive. The fact that different communities face different challenges and problems and that solutions to such challenges lie among the people, which is achievable through Tfd praxis is incontestable. This tool for communication, development and change has proved to be effective in the hands of students of Department of Theatre and Media Arts, Ekiti State University who have been involved in intervention engagements in some fourteen (14) different villages within the state to put into practice what they have learnt

in the class. This researcher led the team of staff and students to all the villages. Interventions at two of these communities will be highlighted to underscore the ability of TfD to bring change and development to communities bedeviled with archaic tradition and abominable act. Therefore, this section will look into how TfD was engaged to curb Female Genital Mutilation and Rape.

A team of TfD interventionists, comprising students and staff, led by this researcher visited Kajola-Ekiti and Ijurin-Ekiti between 4th and 11th February and 11th and 17th March, 2018 respectively. Preliminary research showed that in Kajola-Ekiti, there was prevalence of rape among the youths while at Ijurin-Ekiti, the people held firmly to the tradition of Female Genital Mutilation. The following were our observation and findings at the communities.

II. OBSERVATIONS AND FINDINGS

One of the major issues with our local communities in Africa is ignorance. Usually, the people are ignorant of the consequences of some of their actions. They hold tenaciously to some traditions and cultures without considering those at the receiving end of such cultures and traditions. Most times, the sufferers or the oppressed are the girl child and women. This is obvious from our findings at Ijurin Community where the people were ignorant of the consequences of FGM on the girl child and women. Our findings revealed that many children had died in the past in the village due to hemorrhage. Our findings also showed that the same blade is used for several girls during the circumcision exercise which must have led to infection of different types and likely death of innocent girls and women. The people saw the warning from the government to discontinue FGM as an attempt to dissuade them from practicing their cherished ancestors' tradition. At Kajola, our findings showed that the people were ignorant of the repercussions of rape on the culprit because it used to be a common practice among male youths before the intervention. The people also believed that early pregnancy is tantamount to dropping out of school. They did not know it is only a temporary stoppage and that the victim can continue her studies after child birth. They were totally ignorant of the support, assistance and understanding needed by rape victims. From the drama skits, the people were properly educated on why they need to discontinue FGM and the consequences of rape on the rapist, the raped and the families and the community. The TfD performances brought a relief to the entire communities, especially women. On the two issues, especially FGM, the exposition of Naffisatou (1) is quite reassuring:

... the harmful social norm of female genital mutilation, common in some 30 countries around the world, rests on the shakiest of foundation, it is a constellation of faulty beliefs, perceived obligations and inferred expectations, tied together in a durable knot. Given the strength of social mutilation has proved difficult to unravel. But the practice cannot forever withstand the harm in causes; the fact it violates laws and human rights meant to protect women and girls; the moving voices of survivors; and mounting evidence of changing attitudes. Female genital mutilation cannot withstand the force of collective action and social evolution. Our work is to accelerate the inevitable demise of the practice.

Therefore, all stakeholders must put all mechanisms, methodologies and policies in place to push for the total eradication of this dastardly act.

Developmental Impact of TfD on Kajola and Ijurin Communities

The developmental impact of TfD on the communities can be measured through the level of education, reorientation and liberation the people received from the intervention. Many of them regretted their past deeds and embraced attitudinal change. Another impact is that the people are now wiser and better equipped to face life challenges. It is an obvious fact that in a village where rape is rampant and attracts no penalty, the social, capital and personal development of young people will be grossly affected. This will, without doubt, affect their vocation and farming which is their major occupation. If farming is affected, the repercussion on the well being of the people is better imagined than experienced. A society can only develop sustainably when the citizens are free from molestations, harassment, health-related issues as a result of rape and FGM. The future of communities will become bleak if their youths suffer from rape and Female Genital Mutilation and such community can never grow in any sphere of life (Adeseke, 193-206).

III. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The TfD intervention/projects highlighted in this research is an indication that TfD praxis and mechanism are potent tools that can be employed to galvanize development, advancement, transformation, change, total reorientation and emancipation of our communities.

For example, the defence officers who were involved in the Zambia intervention were better educated on the causes, effect and prevention of HIV/AIDS. The intervention also reduced death among them to the barest minimum. One can only imagine the new lease of life that would bring to the people. Cleanliness is next to godliness and it saves people from sicknesses. The people of Akinmorin and Sabo communities had known better and this reorientation has transformed the community for the better.

The people of Ijuri-Ekiti, in the long run, embraced the intervention project and this resulted in their resolve to eschew such dastardly tradition that has caused the death of many female children and women in the community. Interventions have also led to change in people's attitude towards FGM through the current waves of modernization and growing awareness and changed behaviour (Ahmady, 11). Certainly, the people of Kajola-Ekiti learned a lot from the intervention in the village. They resolved to, henceforth, expose and report rape cases and culprits as well as giving support to rape victims, unlike before when culture of silence was the norm over rape cases in the community. Visits to the two communities, few months after the intervention, revealed that the people kept to their words,

In eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls, the United Nations (UN) and European Union (EU) under the aegis of "The Spotlight Initiative" have directed their "attention to violence against women and girls in order to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment" (Williams-Breault). Such efforts are commendable but they are not enough to stem the tide of violence against women and girls. For instance, within five months of lock down due to COVID-19 pandemic, Nigeria Police Force recorded over seven hundred (700+) rape cases; some of which led to the death of the victims. Between January and May, 2020, the Inspector General of Police (IGP) disclosed that police arrested 799 rape suspects in 717 incidents, stressing that the authorities are determined to tame rape cases across the country (Leadership Newspaper, 21, 22). This is coupled with the spike in gender violence. This goes to show that Nigeria needs to take drastic steps towards addressing this ingrained social malaise.

Therefore, it is suggested that all stakeholders, especially government, donors and NGOs should embrace TfD mechanism to reach out to people in their different communities so that reorientation, education, advancement and change can counteract the tide of backwardness and dastardly acts. In essence, the much needed change is attainable if governments change their insensitivity to theatre and embrace TfD to broker development, reorientation and change in our local communities and urban slums. We would like to conclude this piece by quoting the view of Bulduk Banu (658) about theatre that:

Theatre forms an important part of society and culture. As a branch of art which contributes to the culture formation of a society and at the same time develops depending on the cultural structure, theatre can also be defined as an activity performed on a stage which provides enjoyment by making people think with its guiding features, which raises awareness, guides and educates, which enriches life with a new perspective and artistic activity and depth.

The above simply means that theatre has the potential to solve any problem that crops up in the society, at least, to a reasonable extent because of its ability to do three things: raising the awareness of the people about the problem, be it social, political, economic, health, amongst others; guiding the people on the danger not tackling the problem(s) and finally educating the people on how to solve the problem(s) as well as how to avoid a repeat with the result that the people will develop a new perspective. The positive new perspective that is developed will enrich the people's lives which will then impact on the nation.

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