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FOR COMMUNITY WATER SUPPLY AND  
SANITATION (IRC)*Abstract*

*This article describes how performing arts play a role in a number of water supply, environmental sanitation and hygiene programmes in India. The Indian experiences are placed within the wider framework of performing arts for social change in Asia and Africa. It is remarked that most accounts of performing arts for development in these regions are gender-neutral. Some exceptions are presented and compared with the programmes in India. A gender perspective is needed to avoid that performing arts confirm and reinforce existing gender inequalities.*

## 1. Performing arts and development programmes

For generations, people have expressed themselves through music, songs, dance, plays, puppets and other performing arts. Such arts have long been a form of social memory and a means to pass on commonly held values and perspectives to younger generations. They have also been an important medium to spread news and expand cultures. Hindu religion and philosophy have spread mainly through the medium of performing arts (Storey, 1992). Although the performing arts have always been part of people's own communication systems, they were not used for development communications and to address social and political injustice until the second half of this century. Since then, a development has started whereby performing arts have become tools of social change for external programmes, indigenous movements and local groups.

In Table 1 an overview of this development and a typology of programmes is presented. Indigenous performing arts (Type 1a) generated locally and were used as the conservers and purveyors of the established culture as well as promoters of new developments. Often, they were performed by local masters and reflected the ideology of the dominant feudal classes. Elements of protest were either not present or weak (Kidd, 1992a).

This situation changed during times of repression and war, when indigenous folk performances became a means for spreading messages and information that could not be spread through formal media (Type 1b). The performances were also a way of keeping up morale. Governments banned this type of performances and prosecuted its performers (Kidd, 1992b, Storey, op. cit.).

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Acknowledgement: For the sections on communication on water and sanitation through folk performances in Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala I am indebted to the following persons and organizations:

Dr. J. De and Ms. P. Nair, Project Support Unit Foundation, P.O. Box 285 GPO, Lucknow 226001, Uttar Pradesh, India; Ms. P. Vyasulu and Mr. K.Y. Narayanaswamy, Project Support Unit, 31 17th Cross, 7th Main, Bangalore 560046, Karnataka, India; Dr. K. Balachandra Kurup, Ms. T. Mathew, Socio-economic Units, Post Bag 6519, Vikas Bhavan P.O., Trivandrum 695 033, Kerala, India.

<sup>1</sup>International Water and Sanitation Centre, P.O. Box 93190, 2509 AD The Hague, The Netherlands

Table 1 Development of performing arts for social change

Type	Local initiation	Social change	People's control
1. Indigenous arts			
a) by confirmers	high	low	low
b) by protesters	high	high	high
2. Centralized external programmes			
a) by employed mobile teams	low	high	low
b) by traditional performers	low	high	low
3. Localized external programmes			
a) by programme-formed village groups	low-medium	high	low-high
b) by universities	low	high	low-high
4. Local programmes by extension workers			
	high	high	low
5. Individual awareness and capacity building programmes by trainees and local groups			
	high	high	high
6. Programmes for social, economic and political analysis and change by community groups			
	high	high	high

In the 1950s and 1960s, governments began to discover the performing arts as a means to spread their own development information and concepts and to persuade people to adopt government-promoted policies and programmes (Type 2 programmes). Governments in Ghana, Uganda, India, Indonesia and Malaysia founded mobile professional theatre groups, which toured the rural areas with plays on cash crops, literacy, sanitation, self-help and general government policies. In other countries, such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Nigeria and Kenya, professional theatre groups were part of government campaigns for literacy, sanitation and agricultural reform, with plays linked to action. They also encouraged traditional performers to include campaign-related development messages in their art. Thus, *griots* in Mali used their art to reinforce campaigns on child survival and development (Mda, 1993).

From this period onward, governments began to see the performing arts as a valuable means for local mass communication. The use of performing arts as part of or based on indigenous communication systems has a number of advantages (Storey, op. cit., Wang and Dissanayake, 1982). They reach remote audiences more easily than non-local forms of mass media. They fit into oral cultures with a tradition of audience participation, share the audiences' language and symbols and do not depend on literacy of men, women and children. Adaptation to new themes and to local conditions and experiences is possible and can be done with a varying degree of

flexibility. The credibility of the information transmitted is generally higher than with mass media, because the medium belongs to the traditional communication network and is known for its proven reliability. It is more effective in changing beliefs and attitudes than modern mass media, because it is based on the shared emotions, feelings, values and social experiences of members of the same culture. The investment costs are generally lower than those of mass media programmes, but the cost per person reached may be higher, because television, radio and video films can reach many people at a low recurrent cost.

Not all centrally organized programmes and campaigns used external groups and traditional performers. Some governments formed and mobilized local theatre groups. The government of China did this on a large scale. Government workers created over 280.000 amateur village theatre groups. The groups provided a means for recreation, but had also to spread government messages and create acceptance of the government's policies (Type 3a). Although the groups' influence on the content of messages and the direction of change in this case was low, it can be high when groups can function autonomously.

In the 1960s and 1970s, new forms of theatre for development emerged. Groups of African university students began to tour the countryside to promote theatre in the villages and organize workshops to help people start their own theatre groups. Functions were the recovery, revival and reassertion of the people's own culture through music, songs, drama and other forms of performing arts. Although the cultural resurgence could result in popular action, this was not the direct aim of the programmes (Collins, 1992, Kidd, *op. cit.*). Other university groups carried out standardized plays as part of government programmes. They now began to base the scripts not only on official information and messages, but also on discussion with the people. Performances began to have room for spontaneous dialogues with members from the audience and be followed by public discussions, e.g. in a Lesotho play on sanitation (Mda, *op. cit.*)

Local extension workers began to practice performing arts in their training and work (Type 4). Extension workers began to perform sketches based on local problems and developed songs on community development issues. First they did so based on their own programmes and observations. But gradually, extension staff and theatre workers began to realize that they needed to appreciate reality from the villagers' points of view and they began to research village issues and concerns and to use this information to develop locally-specific drama. The performances were often linked to other ways of communication and sometimes followed up by action. Kidd (*op. cit.*) points out that this type of local theatre is still little participatory in nature. The performances are made about and for, not by the villagers, and the initiative lays with the actors, not the villagers. Messages are prescriptive rather than that they stimulate people to make their own analyses and choose their own solutions. The follow-up is often too limited to spark off village development action.

In the 1970s, these practices started to change. Instead of being performers and scriptmakers themselves, extensionalists and adult educators began to enable the villagers they worked with to put up their own performances. Socio-drama, role playing, mime, songs and dances made and performed by the villagers themselves made group sessions on village development more attractive and relevant for the participants. The arts provided them with means for self-expression and the practising of newly acquired skills, such as literacy. They also helped the participants to select and analyze local problems, come to conclusions and decisions and plan actions (Type 5 in Table 1). The use of the performing arts for social change remained limited to the groupwork itself; usually the participants did not perform their work outside their group.

In programmes of type 6, the performances also focus on social analysis and change, but they are performed in public and performing becomes a tool to analyze and restructure society. Members of the community act their own problems and link these in their scripts to the identification and analysis of the underlying social, economic and political causes. Extensionalists and theatre workers do not determine the content and form of the performances, but are catalysts and assistants. They help the members to take part in the process, choose the theme(s), identify the underlying problem(s), reflect on what causes the problem and identify their own solutions and actions and put these up to a larger audience in songs, folk operas, dramas and other forms of performing art. Where possible, the performances are linked to a local organization which is able to translate the identified actions into a local implementation programme. Ideally, the performances and actions not just tackle the symptoms of a problem, such as a lack of latrines, but address underlying questions, such as why people do not act themselves and what keeps some groups more than others from undertaking action (Mda, op. cit.). In this form, performing arts are not controlled by an outside authority. They are created, owned and controlled by the people themselves, although catalysts have an important role in guiding the process. The performances are a tool to express the people's own concerns, analyze the system, voice dissent and protest and organize against forces in society which keep them in a disadvantaged position.

### 3. Performing arts for sanitation and hygiene in India

India is one of the countries in which the performing arts are an accepted medium for development communication. The Indian Ministry of Information has a permanent song and drama unit, whose professional groups give an estimated 20.000 performances per year. In addition the government organizes short-term campaigns on specific development themes. One such theme is improved health from better water supply, environmental sanitation and hygiene. In India 55% of the villages get water from handpumps or piped systems and 11% of rural households have a latrine. Some 3% of these latrines have been installed and financed through government programmes. The remaining 8% have been built by the households themselves (Samanta, 1994). Latrines are mostly built by the higher income strata; lower income groups use open defecation. Presence of excreta in the environment and insufficient hygiene habits, especially with regard to washing of hands with plenty of water and soap, ashes, sand or firm rubbing are the main reasons for the high incidence of faecal-oral diseases (Esrey, 1994; Boot and Cairncross, 1993).

In 1989, the Government of India undertook a mass communication campaign to spread information and motivate adoption of a safe water source and regular handwashing among rural populations, especially women. Safe disposal of human excreta was not addressed, as this was not yet a policy goal. The nature of the strategy and materials places the campaign into category 2a, communication of standardized and government-decided messages with no participation of village groups. The campaign was built around an artform known as Nautanki, a poetic form of play that has become popular in many parts of India. However, to lower the recurrent costs of the performances, the government decided to use a 30-minutes video film of the play instead of long nightly performances by professional or village theatre groups. The films were shown at night using a mobile van and a wide screen. The script centered around Mother Earth (Dharti Ma) as a traditionally venerated mother figure as well as a figure of religious authority for all denominations. Dharti Ma intervenes in the battle between the king of germs and the villagers by giving advice on hygiene and providing a handpump. The performance was backed up by 4 television spots, 4 radio spots, 2 songs, 3 posters, 3 banners and a flipbook for use by local

extensionalists. Tests showed that the materials were good enough for field release, but their impact has not been researched (UNICEF, 1991).

Promotion of better water use, sanitation and hygiene through life performances of traditional artforms is however not extinct. Nationwide, India has some 150,000 traditional performers and groups and some of them have been engaged by the water and sanitation projects in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala and Uttar Pradesh, in order to spread information on the links between water supply, sanitation and health and promote the adoption of better facilities and practices. In total the projects are carried out in some 7000 villages from the very north (Uttar Pradesh) to the most southern part of the country (Kerala). Financial support comes from the Government of the Netherlands. The various artforms used in the projects were presented and discussed in a workshop held in Lucknow in December 1994. A large range of performances was presented live or on video, revealing considerable differences between the projects. Some projects use local professional groups to give general health information (Type 2a). Others ask the groups to develop messages based on researched village issues (Type 4). Yet others help villagers to form their own groups and either put in themes on health and hygiene chosen by the project or develop and stage their own performances with themes and messages chosen by the village teams themselves (Type 6). The presented performances also varied considerably in their gender perspectives. A gender perspective leading to a more equitable share between men and women in decision making and project benefits, such as training and jobs, and a less skewed physical work burden for women is one of the policy goals of both the Indian and the Dutch government.

In general the projects started by engaging a professional theatre group which uses the traditional popular artform of the region. The projects also chose the themes of the performances and the messages to be conveyed. The main functions are the transfer of information and the promotion of popular support of and participation in government initiated projects. Performances are one time events presenting a general problem and solution. The performers and their audience do not analyze specific local problems and do not develop problem solving skills for these issues.

The project in Nalgonda district in Andhra Pradesh employs a cultural team which uses as medium for development communication the *Barakatha*. A Barakatha is an all-night epic drama about a historic hero, in which jokes and funny comments on current events are woven in. In Nalgonda, the actors insert also messages on health and hygiene and the coming water and sanitation project and encourage the villagers to take part in the project (Type 2b in Table 1). In Kerala, the project uses a play which was developed in 1990 by the government movement for adult literacy as part of a set of four. The play was conceived by a professional group, but is performed by the village literacy groups and youth clubs (Type 3a in Table 1). The play depicts how crows scavenge on human excreta and how open defecation spreads disease. The actors use mime and dance, while the storyteller gives comments on the side and a chorus recites the sounds of the crows, the cries of the diseased and the wails of bereaved relatives, under the accompaniment of drums. But when the villagers adopt safer sanitation methods, the diseases disappear and the crows leave for another village where open defecation is still practised.

The projects in Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh also started with existing theatre groups and externally developed scripts. In Dharwad district, the project engaged a local theatre group, Myala, to make and perform a streetplay with a function and set-up similar to the Barakatha show in Andhra Pradesh. In Uttar Pradesh, performances were by professional groups from inside and outside the region and involved puppet shows, street theatre and magic shows. The performances were always viewed with great interest and made the projects widely known, but they seldom led to problem solving and behaviour change. The projects in Karnataka and Uttar

Pradesh therefore began to base the performances on researched village issues and encourage local groups to make these issues the subject of mime, dance, plays, puppet shows and other forms of popular theatre particular to the local culture.

In Karnataka, the project has contracted the Myala group to develop two new plays on critical hygiene behaviour, one concerning the safer storage of drinking water, the other on handwashing after defecation and before eating. Although the project has chosen the theme and messages and Myala, not the villagers, develop the script and give the performances, the plays are based on participatory rural appraisal exercises in which the entire village participates. Participation is either mixed or in specific women's groups for certain subjects such as water source ranking and women's work. The research has led to the identification of priority problems and to the drawing up and implementation of village action plans for improving environmental sanitation. The action plans are drawn up by the village water and sanitation committees. The plays serve to support the plans and promote better hygiene practices. They can be compared with the work done in the 1970s by the university-based groups. The next step now planned is to assist an interested village in each project district to form its own voluntary theatre group. A professional facilitator will equip the group with skills to analyze and prioritize problems, choose the art medium, write the script(s) and organize the performances in their own and neighbouring villages. The voluntary theatre groups will draw from interested and talented youth from the project villages and evolve appropriate communication activities within the broad framework of the programme.

In Uttar Pradesh the shift from external to local performers and scripts came when the group organizers, female villagers whom the project trained and involves as local extension workers, discovered the potential of the performing arts for communication and doubled as a performing team. In the table this signifies a shift from programmes of type 2 to programmes of type 4. Subsequently other villagers became interested and began to take part. Gradually a systematic approach developed to revive existing artforms and link them to village problem analysis and action planning. The process includes three major steps:

a. Identification of local artforms. Professionals, who are familiar with traditional artforms in the region, interact with the Pradhan (village leader) and the community (especially women), to learn about the prevalent folk arts and the villagers' perceptions on them. In the process local performers are also identified. Often, village elders help unearth rare artforms of the region. The output of such surveys are cultural resource maps.

b. Identification of local resource persons. These may be local performers but also interested young men, women and children, who want to give new life to traditional artforms and adapt the contents, format and style to the messages which have been developed by the project or which emerge from their own analysis of village situations.

c. The process of team-building

Training of the teams starts with building understanding of the critical issues involved. The status and the dynamics of their community and the problems faced are analyzed in the context of the water and sanitation sector. Thus wholly local issue based themes/scripts are developed. Although water and sanitation are the entry points, local analysis may show up other underlying or interfering issues, such as a culture of excessive alcohol use which prevents concerted action, or the felt need of women and girls to be literate, so that those in power can no longer use their illiteracy for cheating them.

Subsequently the teams are put through a pace of physical exercises and games which are not only geared toward ensuring bodily strength and flexibility, but also contribute to the teambuilding process. The objective is to develop lasting and cohesive teams with a clear purpose and vision. The practice starts with ice breaking exercises developed to break inhibitions and encourage interaction between the team members. Trust and support of each other are developed, as they form the strength of an effective team, and in the process a strong leadership is generated. Once the teams have become cohesive and self-perpetuating groups, the next step is to enhance the theatrical skill of the members.

Enhancement of theatrical skills covers a wide range of inputs, including voice modulation, facial expressions, body movements and developing a relationship with the character, or in the case of puppetry, with the puppets.

Use of local material as props is an important aspect of the programme. It makes the performances affordable and stimulates the creativity of the groups. Costly musical instruments are replaced by easily available objects, such as sticks, stones, pebbles, plates and earthen utensils. Masks, also made of locally available materials, are used extensively.

Finally, the process includes evaluation of the activities and documentation, often on video. The groups themselves monitor and evaluate their activities and new performances are recorded on video. Self review of each performance through group discussion and video review is encouraged and provides substantial inputs for further development.

#### 4. Gender aspects

An aspect which springs to the eye in accounts of performing arts for social change is that many of them are gender-neutral. Village groups are formed and trained, but it is not mentioned whether only males participate, or also females, and if so, if women participate on an equal footing or in subordinate roles. It is mentioned that the groups develop scripts on the needs and problems of the people. But it is not said who develops these scripts based on whose problems and needs. In water supply, sanitation and hygiene the problems and needs of men and women can differ considerably. For men sanitation often has a lower priority than for women, while in water supply their interest and support go to productive rather than domestic use. Performing arts are said to reach people better than mass media like radio and films. But how audiences are built up and whether women can and do attend and take part in discussions and follow-up reflecting their own interests and change gender concepts which subordinate women is seldom mentioned.

Reality is not gender neutral. Men and women have different access to information, different areas of responsibility and influence and different amounts of work. Nor are these roles and influences static. Gender concepts and relations change over time (Wakeman, 1992). When performing arts neglect these realities they do not reflect the full situation of the people and consolidate and reinforce existing inequities.

In a number of cases gender aspects are reported to be a part of rural people's performing arts. Indigenous performing arts often depict women in their traditional roles as revered mothers and protecting goddesses. Women's own artforms, such as work and marriage songs, often have the existing division of labour and gender relationships as major subjects. In line with indigenous arts that reflect the dominant culture (Type 1), these artforms show up the hardships of women's

lives, but seldom question them or attack the social structures and cultural concepts underlying them.

Although not common, examples of indigenous performing arts which contain social criticism on gender divisions do exist. Zakes Mda tells, in his very interesting, but otherwise almost totally gender-neutral book on rural performing arts in Lesotho, "When people play people", how girls from a village with an improved water supply ridiculed the girls in a neighbouring village for their unimproved system. In translation the song runs as follows:

"Hey, see the girls,  
See the girls of Qokolo's village.  
They draw water from dirty ponds.  
They fight over water  
With frogs.

Hey, see the girls,  
Girls of Mositi's village  
Who have washed themselves.  
They draw water from taps.  
The water flows from the taps.

Hela! Taps ...  
Taps of the chief's child.  
Taps!  
Taps are useful, taps!" (Mda, op. cit. p. 77)

The song expresses women's interests, but depicts women as beneficiaries, not actors in obtaining an improved water supply. It shows nevertheless that traditional performing art can show and inspire critical thinking among young women on issues that concern them and can be a tool to get these interests realized, when used to put pressure on local leaders to meet women's needs.

Centralized programmes for water supply, sanitation and hygiene generally address women, but rarely with a gender perspective. In analysing development communication programmes, Pilar Riñao mentions three functions of such programmes in relation to women: encourage women to support national or regional development programmes such as water supply and sanitation; stimulate women to change critical practices, such as water storage and handwashing; and mobilize them to distribute messages on women-related issues, e.g. health and hygiene, to other women. A fourth function, enhancing women's awareness and cooperation to such an extent that they take action on issues and in ways they themselves consider relevant, is found in what she calls programmes for feminist communication.

Both centralized and participatory development communication programmes rely increasingly on indigenous communication networks, such as informal associations, encourage interpersonal communication between experts and communities and use folk media, such as puppets, theatre and dance, and small-format media, such as drawings and photographs for analysis and discussions (Riñao, 1994: 8). Neither programme generally has a gender perspective. Centralized programmes want the women to adopt the practices and facilities which the programme has chosen for them. Participatory programmes enable men and women to take control of their individual lives. The gender implications of women's involvement are seldom addressed and the



existing division of work, resources and decision-making between women and men is not questioned. For example, communication programmes which urge women to change their water use practices or promote such changes by fellow women do not consider how the hygiene messages and promotion tasks affect the workload of women as compared to men and they do not consider whether women have access to and control over the financial and technical means which they need to practice better hygiene behaviour. Riñao only found a gender perspective in what she calls feminist programmes, in which women's and feminist groups are inspired by the principles of participatory development communication, but their work is distinguished by incorporating a gender analysis.

In communication it is often held that women are shy, cannot speak in public and are predominantly passive in public gatherings. The alleged passiveness of women in communication is however strongly related to the selection of the type of media and way of use. In the theatre for development workshops organized in Tanzania between 1983 and 1991 women proved to be very active communicators when the workshop organizers involved women and men in the research of village problems and the choice of themes and artforms. Women always selected problems which concerned them most and chose traditional women's dances with songs as the artform culturally acceptable for them, but introducing new gender themes. Key themes included schoolgirls impregnated by teachers or wealthy villagers, a poor water supply, unfair division of labour and failing income-generating projects. The dances proved an effective mechanism to bring out the viewpoints of the various groups, unite the women, hold leaders accountable in a way which was culturally accepted and put pressure on them to take things in hand. One of the cases reported is a water project. "The women in Misalai used the Kibwebwe dance to express their dissatisfaction with the village leadership, which had failed to complete a water project that could have brought water to all parts of the village. They argued that they had volunteered to dig the trenches for the pipes and that the women had turned out in higher numbers than men. But when the pipes were finally laid and the water connected, it went only to the part of the village where the government leaders had their houses. The Kibwebwe dance lamented the people's, especially the women's suffering over the lack of tap water. They had to fetch water from unclean water sources. The women were saying that unless the water problem was solved, they would not turn up for any more volunteer development work" (Mlama, 1994: 61).

An account of how performing arts are used to raise gender awareness in training workshops (Type 5 in Table 1) comes from the Philippines. Here, conscientization on gender and change of gender roles are the specific objectives and themes of *Usapang babae*, or gender awareness through theatre arts, games and processes (Magtoto & Cloma, 1992). During the three-day workshop, the group of women taking part practice various forms of performing arts to become more aware of their restricted position, identify changes and build confidence to undertake these changes. The women participants also learn how to organize the same workshop with other women.

As a life reality gender issues are especially likely to emerge in programmes for social change (Type 6). However, this is only the case when gender aspects are explicitly recognized and planned for in the formation of the group and the development of the story and messages, as the following case from Zimbabwe demonstrates. It occurred during a Pan-African Training Workshop for specialists in popular theatre for social change. As part of their training, the specialists visited a village in Murewa district to assist the villagers to organize a theatre workshop of their own. The aims of this village theatre workshop were to help the villagers identify and analyze social problems and put the problems, their causes and suggested actions

into a performance for the whole village, in order to start community decision-making and remedial action.

The original plan was that the theatre specialists would work with an organized village group. However, the specialists ended up working with an informal community gathering instead of a well-defined group, and people, especially men, tended to come and go in these gatherings. As a result, the debate on village problems kept changing. One day it was dominated by well-owners and more affluent men, the next by poorer villagers. This made it hard to get a deeper understanding of local issues and a consensus on action. For example, when the well-owners were present, they resisted any analysis of use and payment for water, simply stating the official policy. Another problem was that even though the women outnumbered the men ten to one, the agenda and debate tended to be dominated by the men. The author concluded that the workshop would have been more effective if they had worked first with the women, who were already organized and motivated for action, and then gradually brought in the male members of the community. In this way, the workshop would have recognized and strengthened women's organization and would have given them a structured input in community problem solving. Now the workshop never got beyond the point of providing a forum for women's ideas which had never been discussed in public as a matter for the whole village (Kidd, 1992b).

From these cases it is clear that folkart is not gender neutral and that elements of gender must be looked at when planning and analyzing the various forms of development theatre. As all cases except that from the Philippines stem from Africa, the question is how these elements are dealt with in the Indian programmes that are being reviewed. A first such aspect is gender-specific access to performances. One of the advantages of people's performing art is the easier accessibility for rural people. One might assume that this is true for women as well as men, as long as attending a traditional type of performance is culturally acceptable for both.

The experiences in the Netherlands assisted programme support this assumption. The streetplays in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala and the puppet and other shows in Uttar Pradesh draw large audiences in which women can join freely and extensively, although no statistics have been collected. But research on the gender-specific attendance of the Mother Earth show on water use and hygiene revealed that only 15% of the audience were women, 40% men and 45% children (Unicef, 1991). The reasons for this difference have not been investigated and require further research. It may be that in the latter case information on the performance and its theme reached women less well than men. There may also be differences in timing and location, with the Mother Earth show held at times or places less convenient for women. Or a video show by an external team may have been considered less appropriate for women to attend than a performance by a well-known local group.

When both men and women can watch, and women are not confined to sit at the back where they cannot properly see and hear, it can be assumed that the use of the local language, images and themes in popular theatre ensures that the messages are easily understood by men, women and children. On these aspects the above-mentioned Unicef study found no problems, as long as ethno-linguistic differences were observed.

Other gender-related aspects are whether the performers are men or women and what gender messages are put across. Songs and dances in indigenous art are often performed by separate groups of men and women. They have the function to transmit and confirm the prescribed roles of women and men, although they may also criticize the hardships involved or express male appreciation of women's work. An example is the *Birha*, a folksong on anguish of separation

which is widely sung in eastern Uttar Pradesh. In the Birha used in the water project, a wife is anxiously waiting for her husband to return and uses the time to sing about her views on hygiene and cleanliness to the women around her. Meanwhile, in the male group her husband sings about the hardship of being separated from his wife and how much work she did when they were together. The song recognizes and reinforces the importance of the wife for her husband and for family health and happiness, but does not go as far as drawing implications for male support to work and hygiene.

In many areas of India it is uncommon for women to perform in mixed groups and to have roles as actors or musicians. Women have their own songs and dances and in mixed performances tend to take the role of chorus. When the script has one or more female roles these tend to be performed by a male youth. Segregation can also be noted in folkart performances in the Netherlands' assisted water and sanitation programme. The professional team in Andhra Pradesh consists of men only. Myala, the professional theatre group involved in Dharwad in Karnataka and the village literacy groups and youth clubs which stage the sanitation play in Kerala are both mixed. But in the play on water in Dharwad, and also in the dance on sanitation in Kerala, the acting roles were performed by the men. The women were the chorus and clapped hands. The play itself, with as theme community decisions on environmental improvements, also showed an all-male village council analysing the situation and taking the decisions.

In contrast, the two new plays, on water storage and handwashing are based on the observations and knowledge which the village women gave in the participatory appraisals. Each play has significant women characters, which are acted by women. The women analyze the situation and take responsibility for changing habits. The plays thus recognize and reconfirm the roles and authority of women in health and hygiene, but do not challenge the existing gender division, in which all hygiene work rests with women and girls, but they do not necessarily have the time and financial means to implement the new habits, nor the influence to change the habits of male family members.

In Uttar Pradesh, the situation was identical. But participation in the same processes of team building and theatre skills development as the male teammembers built the confidence of the female teammembers to express themselves in the group and in performances. As a result, both teams and villagers gradually came to accept that men and women perform together and that both contribute their views to the choice of the theme and messages and the development of the script. The puppet play *Bahu man gayee* was developed by a mixed team and its script reflects the viewpoints of the women as much as those of the men. It tells the story of a city bred bride who asks for a sanitary latrine in her new home in the village. The play not only expresses what the villagers themselves see as the main benefits of a sanitary household latrine (modernity, safety, privacy and status), but also involves women as puppeteers for the female puppets and brings into focus the decision-making role which a woman can play in a society where she is traditionally marginalized.

Gender roles and relations are not static. Active participation of women in problem review, theme selection, script development and performance can influence these roles and relations. Enabling women to express themselves has as impact that scripts with women's concerns and viewpoints become part of the collection and are put across to the audience by local women. Women's artforms get recognition and are consciously used alongside those of men, thus preventing the reinforcement of the myth that women are audiences and theirs is only a passive role. But when the initiative of the group and the reception by the community allow changes go further. In several cases in Uttar Pradesh women have become musicians or the storyteller who

gives comments on the side to the audience, functions which women were traditionally not allowed to have. The step from women as performers to women as producers was made when an external consultant helped a group of women organizers to make a slide show to provide the context for a puppet show on village sanitation. Training of illiterate village women to produce their own modern communication materials does exist in India, but is carried out by an all-women non governmental organization, the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA). Cases of general development projects which train village women to become producers of modern communication media like in the Indo-Dutch cooperation in the state of Uttar Pradesh are likely to be more rare.

Several scripts also depict changing gender roles in water supply, environmental sanitation and hygiene in the Indian society. An example is a modern version of the famous Mahabharata saga. It was developed by a group of representatives from the first village teams in the project districts in Uttar Pradesh. In the play the five brothers of the saga stand near the broken village handpump. They are dying from thirst and complain that their mutual wife Draupadi does not provide them with drinking water. Draupadi appears and explains that she had gone to a training course for handpump mechanics. She shows her materials and equipment, explains what they are for, repairs the pump and begins to move the handle. Her husbands ridicule her that no water is coming, but she answers that the pump has been broken for some time and several stokes are needed to bring the water up. Water does indeed appear and the five brothers are very satisfied with their wife's new role and training.

Performances such as the one described above are often followed by local discussions and action planning. These and the presence of neighbourhood water committees help to link community analysis and decisions to action. Because the neighbourhood organizations are not equally strong everywhere, the availability of periodic support from programme staff at district level remains imperative. For action the programmes offer also other forms of external support. The programme in Uttar Pradesh has for instance a training course for village handpump mechanics. The training was set up after a pilot project had shown women's interest to be trained as village handpump caretakers and be employed on contract by the water supply agency. In the pilot training, 9 village women participated along with a group of men. Field visits learned that only the women caretakers continued to function and that their performance was better than that of mobile district teams at a lower cost to the water agency (Sharma, 1989). Hence the training was extended to other project areas, with a female participation of 75%. Opportunity costs for the women themselves can however be higher than for the men (Jonsson & Rudengren, 1991). What impact the performing arts and their portrayal of women as managers and technicians have had on changes in gender roles in the technical and decision making aspects of water supply and sanitation has not yet been investigated.

The use of the performing arts for the promotion of water and sanitation projects and for changing risky behaviour is an established phenomenon in India. The formation and training of community theatre groups for developing and performing their own plays, not just as directed by the programme but in some cases also based on the problems and solutions selected by the villagers, and the incorporation of a gender perspective are more recent elements. By assisting male and female villagers to translate their analysis into performing arts and link their performances to action, the water and sanitation programmes in Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh aim to contribute to the development of theatre for environmental and social change in India. This development can be stimulated further through in-depth research of the approaches and results by development theatre specialists and by a systematic review of the impacts of the art group's work on gender relations, knowledge and tasks in water supply, sanitation and hygiene.

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