

Full Length Research

The Role of Amateur theatre Clubs in Promoting Community Development in Wolkite Town: The Case of Tesfa Fana and Yejoka Aberus Theatre Group

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This study investigated the role of Amateur Theatre Clubs' in promoting community development in terms of Cultural and Social perspective in Wolkite town. The objective of the study was to explore and analyze the roles and activities of theatre clubs in community development. The researcher has employed qualitative research method with a descriptive aim. The respondents were selected by using purposive and dimensional sampling techniques. Moreover, the study adopts referring books, the internet, various PhD dissertation and MA thesis and guiding principles and rules and regulations, reports of international organizations and other researchers and articles which are written on it and its related activities as a source of secondary data. The researcher mainly employed thematic data analysis technique while dealing with the gathered qualitative data. The findings from the study revealed that, amateur theatre clubs have involved in community development, cultural values and heritages preservation, and health education promotion. Furthermore, the study has sorted out that theatre has multiple functions but it also once again assured that the theatre clubs are facing multiple challenges. The issue under this study capitalizes on issues, which focus on the interaction between the person and the environment, so it clearly contributes to the enhancement of theatre arts studies practice, research, and education and service delivery systems. But, it needs an all rounded, realistic and participatory intervention in order to solve the challenges faced by amateur theatre clubs of the study area.

Key words: Amateur theatre clubs, community development, Cultural values preservation, Health service promotion

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INTRODUCTION

Since the introduction of modern theatre in Ethiopia in the 20th century by Russia educated *Bejrond* Teklehawariat Teklemariam, dramatic genre and form shifts have largely been influenced by religion, politics, or

economic condition (Aron, 2010: 2). Most of the plays presented during the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie I, whether they deal with the issue of family, society or history tend to be moralistic and preach good manner of

the monarchical kingdom. The influence of church and royal court still haunts the acting style in "realistic" plays of modern stage. Following the overthrow of Haile Selassie I in September 1974, the newly established Ministry of Culture made sure that socialist agitprop dramas got most of professional or amateur stages (Aron, 2010: 4). After the fall of "socialist" Derg in July 1991, the theater scene has increasingly grown to be commercially driven owing and motivated by the changes taken place in the socio-economic terrains and within the economic and media strategies happened in Ethiopia (Aron, 2010: 2). The contemporary Ethiopian drama mainly tries to project the everyday happenings of life with more affiliation to romantic and comedy features. Previously, the content of the dram has been inclined towards patriotism, education and the promotion political ideologies, but at the recent times most of the drama plays are predominantly characterized by romantic and comedy contents. Typical Ethiopian drama, that is the dramas which are associated with the historical contexts, indigenous values and daily routines of Ethiopians gives priority to spoken performance (performances which are dominated by dialogue/conversation) which leaves nothing to be expressed physically or visually (Ibd, 2010: 2).

The United Nations (2000:4) defines Community development as "*a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems.*" It is a broad term given to the practices of civic leaders, activists, involved citizens and professionals to improve various aspects of communities, typically aiming to build stronger and more resilient (resilient to external imposition of programs, societal problems and personal problems) local communities. Community development seeks to empower individuals and groups of people by providing them with the skills they need to effect change within their communities (Magee, Liam, and et al., 2012: 3).

The existence of multiple assets within amateur theater clubs assures the sustainability of community development by exploiting different artistic forms like music, theater and education. Their role is not only limited to entertainment but also dealing with education, health and community mobilization related issues. Thus, it is believed that the involvement of the amateur theatre clubs on influencing and implementing the community development effort of the community living in Wolkite Town are highly important.

Amateur theatre clubs are also one among the plenty assets of the community. Hence, both community development and amateur theatre clubs are interrelated for the many reason that those amateur theatre clubs use dart (theatre and music), informal education as a tool to achieve common goals for the community.

Like other communities or societies, the Wolkite town community has different amateur theater clubs which are

used to address different problems related within the community (reproductive health, drug abuse, unemployment and generally industriousness and motivational related problems). These amateur theater clubs play a significant role on initiating the community to involve on relevant activities that helps them to solve their problems by using the available resources within the community itself. Hence, amateur theatre clubs are becoming a source of productive citizens which are more focused on contributing to community development by using creative and innovative approaches and the community members are also both a source of resources and consumers of the services provided by the amateur theatre clubs. So, the researcher has discovered the extent of contribution of amateur theater clubs on promoting theater arts and community development in the case of Wolkite town, Ethiopia.

Background of Wolkite Town

The town has an altitude average of 1710 and 1950ms above sea level which demonstrated that this town has subtropical climate. The rain period of the town is from March to September with the period of intrusive rain going from June to August. The annual average rainfall was 1137.4 mm of the town (Harmod Magazine, 2005:19).

The total extension of the town is 7260 hectare. The town has three sub cities and seven localities. In this town a lot of nation and nationalities from different parts of the country lived together. Among these ethnic groups Guraghe and Kebena are the dominant ethnic communities' residents of the town. According to the 2005 Ethiopian population statistics, the total number of the people living in the town is 43195. Among this number, males are 21,232 and 21963 are females (Solomon, 2005:19). To evaluate the relation between the size of population and the number of houses in the town, we can employ the crude density. Regarding the architecture of the dwellers, the houses are traditional and were made of weed and mud. Some of the residents of the town practiced extensive agricultural activities as the most important means for their livelihood. Their agricultural practices mainly encompass Teff, Chat and Enset. In this town there are also civil servants, merchants and students are lived.

Wolkite town has continued its growth and eventually become one of the main commercial centers in the surrounding area and nowadays the town is the capital of Guraghe zone. Being the capital of the Guraghe Zone, about twenty different governmental offices are founded which in turn, lead to the encouragement of different social activities emerged such as social service institutions, schools, hospitals, shops, restaurants, bars, hotels, CBOs, NGOs and entertainment institutions like

amateur theatre clubs.

Theatre

Cassady (1984: 17) defines theatre as *'imagination, emotions and intellects... (Which) embraces all the world cultures and perspective, answers questions, predicts our tomorrows and mirrors our today'*. Bernard (2006: 14) offered a broader definition when he said that *'theatre occurs when one or more persons, isolated in time and or space, present themselves to another or others'* (Ibid). For Shakespeare, *'theatre is a mirror for highlighting man's humanity and also a tool for understanding why man also finds it so easy to transgress that same humanity'*(Yerima, 2007: 23). In his own view, Oduneye (1996: 6) asserts that theatre is *'the stepping stone through which anthropologist, sociologists, historian, ethnographers and other fields of study have given identity, meaning and interpretations to people, period or dates and societies.'*

It is good to have various definitions for a given term [in this case of theatre], but the researcher prefers the first definition which was given by Cassady. Because in order to realize community development; the amateur theatre clubs need to address problems within the cultures and perspectives to answer various unsolved questions. Once again the amateur theatre clubs need to analyze the ongoing activities and predict the socio-economic conditions of the community in the near future. The contents of the performances and shows of the amateur theater clubs should include the world perspectives, cultural values and the essence of the existing problems. They [amateur theatre clubs] also need to include farsighted solutions that eventually help the community members to realize the goals of community development.

Development

This is one of the different terms that have become very difficult to define. The various attempts at defining the concept have left the definers at the door step of subjectivity and or political and ideological coloration. The Collins English Dictionary - Complete and unabridged (2003: 76) gives three definitions of development as the act or process of growing, progressing, or developing; the product or result of developing and a fact, event, or happening, especially one that changes a situation. Development involves change new ways of doing things. It can mean growth of ideas, methods and positive change in circumstances.

As a concept that is broad, the term development as observed by Adesiyani and Arulogun (2005:12), has not subjected itself to a single definition. The authors, with these lines of thought, seem to have alluded that because development covers a wide spectrum of human

endeavor, it has largely been difficult to offer an objective definition of the concept. Indeed, what exist as we have identified earlier are basic differences of opinion about the goals of development. While some scholars see development as a state or condition that is static, others see it as process or course of change (Adesiyani and Arulogun, 2005: 13). Economists, politicians and others freely use the term especially when discussion of borders on state of growth of a given society, place or thing. The term which is somewhat closely bound with the evolution of capitalism and the demise of feudalism has many meanings such as there are numerous clashing perspectives, theories and deep differences of opinion (Ibid). Indeed contradictions and ambiguity have characterized the many attempts to define the concept. The meaning a particular person attaches to the term depends on his or her subjective view of the word.

These are no doubt considerable and significant definitions of development. Common to all these definitions however are the desire for changes that will affect citizens welfare positively and or liberate them from poverty and inequality. This makes development an act of freedom, just like the theatre. In the context of this research development is linked with community development, thus the meaning and context of community development in this research is presented in the following section.

Community Development

According to Oketch (2006: iii), comments that, the concept of community development is founded on the premise that changes in the living conditions of people are best effected by the people themselves. Thus, development in this sense consists of processes in which various groups are stimulated to improve aspects of their lives particularly by people from outside of their community. Ibd (2006:76) goes on to say" *community development refers to the long- term process whereby people who are marginalized or living in poverty work together to identify their needs, exert more influence in the decisions which affect their lives and work to improve the quality of their lives, the communities in which they live, and the society of which they are a part.* The primary outcome of community development is to improve the quality of life of its dwellers. Effective community development results in mutual benefit and shared responsibility among community members and recognizes the connection between social, cultural, and economic matters (Frank and Smith, 1999: 8).

Community development stems from the belief that the community itself becomes able to develop solutions to issues and opportunities within the communities.

The socio cultural spectrum has the following categories of indicators; the first indicator is related to direct socio cultural effect of the amateur theatre clubs. It

is manifested in terms of creating socially valuable leisure activities, elevating people's thinking improving the psychological and social welfare of the community and enhancing sensitivity towards different issues (Frank and Smith, 1999: 17). The second indicator is related to the indirect socio-cultural effect of the amateur theatre clubs. This indicator was evaluated in terms of their capacity to enrich the social environment with stimulating or pleasing public amenities. The other dimension of evaluation is to evaluate whether the amateur theater clubs serve as a means of sustaining civilizing impacts of social organizations. The third point of evaluation was to check whether they [amateur theatre clubs] enhance innovation and create collective memory to the community or not. The fourth dimension of evaluation emphasizes on whether the amateur theatre clubs serve as a reservoir of creative and intellectual ideas to the future generations and manages to improve quality of life of the community or not. The fifth dimension of evaluation focused on the capacity of the amateur theatre clubs to enhance personal security (especially in urban areas) and to reduce the incidence of crime and hooliganism (Todaro, 1997: 37).

In general, community cultural development is a philosophy that is concerned with fostering an environment in which cultural democracy can occur. It values community expression through the arts as ways in which communities can create a sense of place, affirm their values, assert their differences and communicate their aspirations (Todaro, 1997: 36).

Community-driven development efforts are not new in Ethiopia. Farmers have used their social networks for support. Traditional institutions like *iddir*, *mahber*, *senbete*, *debo(debiat)*, *wonfel*, and *iqqub* have been useful during social and financial crises (Dercon, Bold, De Weerd, & Pankhurst 2004: 21) Specifically, *mahbers* and *debo*, member-led inclusive development institutions, were organized around socio-cultural values related to social control, reciprocated assistance, divine gratification, and conflict resolution (Mequanent, 1998: 505).

Theater for Development

Theatre for Development aims to offer an alternative approach and medium by which theatre can be used for the direct service to the marginalized urban and rural peasant masses. It stresses community and inter-personal participation in self-realization and uses existing and familiar performance forms in the various communities such as songs, dances, music, storytelling, puppetry and mime to either validate those cultural forms or serve as an adequate instrument to bring about social change in those communities. According to Pammenter (2003:18) theatre for development is expressed as follows: "*Theatre for development is a way to sharpen the*

contradictions in our societies. It allows us to communicate about what we want to transform. It also has its roots in the best of dialogical education, which can help identify different perspectives and purposes around change. It can help us to identify what we are and what we choose to become." Within a certain community there exist multiple realities. Among these realities some of them are more essential than others and these more important elements of life (elements of life related with basic needs and development of the community) can be performed in terms of theater. Hence, theatre for development can be used as a forum to exchange ideas, to transfer community development missions and to mobilize the community members to involve in community development initiatives. Thus, theatre for development can produce positive changes if it is supported by policy reforms and active commitment of the community members in creating a scenario that better meets the communal needs of all community members.

As we are saying theater for development is the best way for development, we mean that it is democratic (it is democratic because it encourage the participation of the mass or audience in theatre) compared to other artistic option that exists in the world. Because it entirely permit its audience to be proprietor of the issue raised in the performance and be able to speak what he or she feels on the time without any precondition. Once we stand for sustainable national or community development, we need to maintain full participation of members of the society. To this end, there must be a perfect way to completely engage our society without any reservation. Mavrocordatos (2004: 69) said that "*all sorts of stuff will emerge if you let people tell stories. This is a way to open up discussion on closed situations. For example, in some settings, women can't speak in public meetings, but they have used the theater concept to raise issues.*

Since, 1994 E.C. it has been performing in many parts of Ethiopia. There are some efforts in the government owned national theatre studios of Ethiopia and these efforts are being supported in at least five educational programs opened in five national universities (Addis Ababa University, Wolkite University, Wollo University, Mekelle University and University of Gonder) (In-depth interview [Mr. Abate Mekuria, on Monday 23, Jan 2015) . The various performances and works produced and presented by theatre practitioners are the result of the general work produced by the amateur theatre club as a whole. It is the presence of the institutional or organizational entity (theatre club) with its specific goals, resources, organizational systems and activities that gives life to the performances of the theatre practitioners. So, it is logical to evaluate the efforts of the theatre practitioners (components of the big entity or the amateur theatre clubs) in order to evaluate some of the activities and achievements of the amateur theatre clubs in Wolkite town. Therefore the above reviewed literatures mostly

based on research paper works shows the multiple roles of the theatre in different dimensions of life. However, in line with the objectives of this research, the researcher has focused on evaluating the role of amateur theatre clubs on community development with a specific association with their effect on health education and cultural values preservation. The additional areas of emphasis also includes; community development and the comparative functions (amateur theatre clubs are involved in different alternative aspects of life for instance they can engaged in community development or entertainment) that they have on different aspects of life on the community members of Wolkite town.

In Wolkite town, there are two targeted amateur theatre clubs named Tesfa Fana and Yejoka Aberus amateur theatre clubs which are carrying out different activities in helping the community. The researcher has employed the socio-cultural perspective while evaluating the performances and activities of these amateur theatre clubs in relation to the contribution in expanding health education, cultural values preservation, community development and their different functions in satisfying the service demands of the community members. As it is stated earlier, the educational program is also delivered at Wolkite University. Then, the professional insights and their collaborative engagement (if there exists any) with the amateur theatre clubs has been evaluated. With regards to the foundation date of the two amateur theatre clubs; Tesfa Fana and Ye Jeko Aberus were founded in 1993 E.C. and 1994 E.C. respectively. The size of the members of TesfaFana amateur theatre club has 46 members (27 male and 19 female) and Ye Joka Aberus has 28 members (18 male and 10 female). Both Tesfa Fana and Ye Joka Aberus were more focused on reproductive health education (family planning, condom dissemination, training for commercial sex workers, personal hygiene and sanitation and peer education), environmental protection, economic empowerment and the reduction of harmful traditional practices. In line with this the health sector and the education sector were the main beneficiaries among the social sector.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the researcher present the outcomes of the various dimensions of the contribution of the amateur theatre clubs based on the review of individual case studies, which were purposely selected from the individuals who are either engaged in theatre related tasks, different activities of basic sectors or consuming the services of the amateur theatre clubs and the sectors (the community) who are purposely selected from Wolkite town. Efforts were exerted to present individual amateur theatre clubs members, representatives of different sectors, experts and community members own

assessment of their personal contribution and observation on the roles of amateur theatre clubs in community development and other related domains of social development. The contribution of amateur theatre clubs in enhancing community development, the preservation of cultural values and promotion of health education was analyzed and considered. Accordingly, the functions and challenges of the amateur theatre clubs are presented. The researcher tried to present and analyze the data collected on separate cases since the study employed a case study method.

Enhancing Community Development

As it is clearly stated in different literatures, theatre is used as an essential tool for community development. It has been used as a mechanism of solving community problems in different nations of South America, Asia and Africa. As we can recall from the literature section, it was used in addressing different social issues like the problems of unemployment, administrative errors, health related limitations, sanitation related irregularities and it was also used as a means of empowering the community members or people living within a given society.

The major role of the amateur theatre clubs should be serving as a development agents which involves community members and addresses the problems at grass root level. Amateur theatre clubs have huge potential in terms of building the capacity of youths and other segment of population of the community in different dimensions such as psychologically, socially and culturally. The amateur theatre clubs which are found at Wolkite town were integrated not only with the community members but most of their activities and plays were directed in solving community problems. For instance; a play entitled as "Hulum Be'eejachin" in Amharic which is equivalently translated in to English version as 'Everything is within our Hand' indicates that the community have multiple resources and potential that can be implemented with a proactive and reactive approaches. Most of the health problems can be prevented by employing appropriate preventive mechanisms. For example, maintaining an appropriate sanitation and hygiene status helps to prevent different communicable diseases and others as well.

Similarly the works of Muansa and Bergman (200: 35) identified the theater as a useful media for development. They contend that theater serves a social function by educating community members. Besides theater, they have added that it helps to mobilize groups within the community or society, and in the case of Africa she has a rich and vibrant performing tradition. Theater as he further assets, also helps to depict social reality and encourages audience participation, a reason he maintained that there exist a strong relationship between theater and national or community development. Hence,

in order to adequately evaluate the role of theater clubs in community development; it is essential to understand the nature of theater and the concept of community development. There were several plays and performances presented by the two amateur clubs for instance; Tesfa Fana amateur theatre club has produced a play with a title of "Sira Seriwun Yasadigal" in Amharic which is translated in to English as "Work Benefits the Worker himself/herself" which focuses on the importance of developing the habit of industriousness. The play emphasizes on the life conditions of two youths who have two life characteristics. One among the two characters of the play was represented by pseudo-name "Teshale"-which means 'the better one' in English version. The contents of his character deals about the values that Mr. Teshale attaches to industriousness and the remarkable impact of his habit in leading a successful life. The other character who was named as "Kebede"-which means 'the heavy one' in English version; his character demonstrates the life experience of the person who did not his time wisely and who eventually happen to lead a miserable life. Thus, the works of the amateur theatre clubs were centered on different issues that directly or indirectly enhance community development in the area.

Community mobilization

One among the essential components of community development is community mobilization for the reason that without community participation it is difficult to achieve the goals of sustainable and comprehensive community development in a given community which is also applicable for the community members of Wolkite town. It is worth mentioning the fact that the probability of realizing community development, increases as the role and participation of the community members on community development. Regarding to this, the active involvement of the amateur theatre clubs or the theatre practitioners in community sensitization and participation are one of their major tasks. This fact is also reflected when the researcher collects data about the activities of the amateur theatre clubs.

So, according to the collected data theatre practitioners are contributing enough and helping both the various sectors and the community to manage the various resources which are found at different levels of interventions. These resources could be tangible or intangible (the resources are manifested in terms of material and non-material aspects) which are found at macro (at large community and society level), mezzo (at middle level of intervention or at institutional and organizational level) and micro level of intervention (at individual, family and small group level). It has a dual benefit. Because, in one hand, the amateur theatre clubs are working on developing the awareness of art and

theatre within the community members. On the other hand, they are also working on different activities that help to deal with problems related to community mobilization and community development in the study area.

In line with the above point, Oketch (2003: 91) refers to theatre as a communication tool stems from the belief that with the help of theatre messages reach a larger number of people and though theatre is an inherent entertainment value it is better suited to convey sensitive messages than present a series of lectures. He also argued that theatre for development as the use of performed arts in initiating and promoting active and collective communal participation is essential in addressing societal concerns (Oketch, 2003: 92).

Social solidarity: Prevent exclusion and promote diversity of participation

Among others social solidarity of the community member's involvement are vital in order to be triumphant on the battle of community development. Above all, the presence of common consensus and mutual understanding within the community members helps to mobilize resources and commitment towards one direction to enhance the community development itself. The amateur theatre clubs are working on different dimensions of life like fostering and advocating the culture of tolerance and developing the habit of collaborative engagement which goes in line to the classic saying that "*many hands makes work lighter.*" Thus, the theatre practitioners are concerned and engaged in promoting social solidarity within the community.

The poems and plays presented by Tesfa Fana amateur theatre club focuses on the relevance of solidarity in materializing community development. The poem with a title of "Edget Behbret"-in Amharic version means 'Communal Effort for Development' in English. The content of message of the poem reflects on the importance of critical thinking on discovering common asset and social networks of the community that boosts the community's endeavor to realize development. It also preaches about the role of economic development and increased productivity in enhancing social solidarity within the whole community members. It finally narrates about maintaining unity in harmony with social diversity. In additions to that, here were also different community sensitization programs that advocates about the importance of communal participation in a way that promotes community's involvement on different government owned initiatives that assures the benefit of the community. The campaigns were presented on the implementation of health care programs, environmental protection intervention, construction of road and bridges at Wolkite town.

Social support: Support the action necessary to achieve community goals

The major mechanisms of filling the institutional gaps (gaps left by family, health, education, and politics, economy, sport, and entertainment and media institutions) are by establishing an appropriate and responsive social support mechanism. The social support should consider all the possible elements which help to meet the community goals in general and the interest and demands of the disadvantaged and systematically discriminated segment of population. We consider disadvantaged segment of population to include the people with disabilities, commercial sex workers, street children, children, Orphan and Vulnerable Children (OVC), elderly people, women, single headed families, drivers, women headed families, people living in a distant place than the service area, ethnic minorities and people living with HIV/AIDS in particular.

The contribution of the amateur theatre clubs is also reflected in terms of providing social support. The dramas presented by Ye Joka Aberus, illustrates about the critical value of the youths involvement in voluntary community based interventions and service delivery schemes. The drama which was presented under the title of "Metegagez Le Biltsgina" in Amharic version which means 'Collaboration for the Development of the Community' in English. The drama displays facts about the role of the community members on helping each other without compromising their regular activities. The drama also has portrayed the use of allocating some time, labor and financial resources in filling e institutional and organizational gaps.

Preserving cultural values

Community cultural development is a philosophy that is concerned with fostering an environment in which cultural democracy can occur. It values community expression through the arts as ways in which communities create a sense of place, affirm their values, assert their differences and communicate their aspirations. As a result, amateur theatre clubs and theatre practitioners are capable of working on transmitting the needed message about cultural values preservation and they are also have the responsibility of studying the cultural values and heritages of people living in Wolkite town and its surrounding area so as to prepare films, drama, conversation, theatre, music and other possible way of demonstrating the cultural values and practices. One among the components of theatre is conducting investigation in order to convey the facts related with the cultural values of the community that is the contents of the plays or dramas should transmit valid information.

A stakeholder can be defined as any person, group, or

institution that positively or negatively affects or is affected by a particular issue or outcome (World Wildlife Fund, 2000). Thus, like other actors who play a crucial role in cultural preservation, the amateur theatre clubs and the theatre practitioners are useful in teaching and documenting cultural values of the Guraghea community. But, in this context the role of the amateur theatre clubs and the theatre practitioners is considered from the point of view of contributing to the preservation of the cultural values of the community.

Producing shows and films on cultural values

There are various approaches employed in promoting the cultural values of the community. One among the approved approaches and appropriate responsibility of amateur amateur theatre clubs is producing shows and films on various cultural values. Some of the problems which are observed while producing shows and films is the works are either focused on cultural preservation or tourism. Thus, producing work by amateur theatre clubs that harmonizes cultural preservation and tourism for a given community or in this case of Wolkite town. Though much is left to be improved, the amateur theatre clubs are directing and guiding their works to be focused on the cultural preservation and tourism. What the researcher wanted to indicate here is that most of the shows and films are focused on promoting tourism rather than cultural preservation. As a result; needs to make a paradigm shift from only focusing on tourism to emphasizing on both tourism and cultural preservation.

The research respondent interviews indicated that there are some efforts which are made to preserve the cultural values of Guraghe people. The cultural preservation tasks are carried out in different forms, in terms of show, film, literature and performing shows. But, much works are expected to be accomplished because the community has infinite cultural values. Above all, more attention should be given to the cultural values which are approaching to extinction or which are not frequently practiced by the current generation. The other important point here is the need of collaborative engagement of different stakeholders. Especially, the office for tourism and culture needs to work on cultural preservation in a more advanced manner. Otherwise, there will be some cultural values which will cease to be practiced if they are not filmed and documented properly.

Inspiring community and the government to involve in cultural preservation

Community takes the lions share in implementing the strategies of cultural values for the fact that the community has many eyes to see, many ears to hear,

many mouth to speak and many hands to work. This is because, without an active participation of the community members and the government the effort of other stakeholders is meaningless. Community members can work to the best or to the worst of the efforts of the cultural preservation endeavors. Thus, the amateur theatre clubs and the theatre practitioners are expected to work in mobilizing the community members and the government. In doing so; they are supposed to use different mechanisms like; theatre performance, poem, drama, dance, songs, conversations, monolog and literature events. This is one way of contributing their share in the endeavor of cultural preservation.

The government officials are entrusted with multiple responsibilities. Some of the responsibilities are not clearly stated, for instance the Kebele chairman is not directly expected to involve in culture preservation related works provided the fact that he/she is engaged with administrative and political tasks. But, the amateur theatre clubs can show the government officials that they can simultaneously work within political and administrative matters in one hand and culture preservation related tasks on the other hand. Thus, the amateur theatre clubs are involved in refreshing and reminding the government officials to involve in cultural preservation related initiatives.

They are expected to consider the cultural values of a given community and the government while preparing theatre, songs, storytelling, drama, monolog, conservation, poems and poetry. The amateur theatre clubs are also actively engaged in arranging a discussion platform with the community; involve different stakeholders like the cultural bureau, the elders, influential personalities, professionals in the areas of cultural preservation and promotion.

Working on resources mobilization and leverage

Like in other communities, in Wolkite town there exists plenty resources that ranges from resources possessed by individuals to the resources that are owned by organizational and institutional establishments. At personal level there are resources like; personal talents, creativity and industriousness. At group level; there exists different resources like; social capital, cooperation, social support mechanisms including, *Iqqub*, *Iddirand Mahber*. At organizational and institutional level there exist resources like; GOs, NGOs, CBOs and Faith Based Organizations (HBOs). In additions to the mentioned organizational settings there are also institutional organizations like; health institution, educational institution, economic institution, political institution, mass-media institution, water supply institution, electric power institution, transportation institution, sport institution, cultural institutions and entertainment institutions (Wolkite

town Trade and Industry Office, 2007). These resources are instrumental in achieving the community development goals of the community. Hence, needs to be mobilized for the purpose of promoting cultural preservation and community development.

In fact, the key issue to consider here is why the stakeholder collaboration is so important especially in relation to the activities related to resources mobilization and leverage tasks that helps to achieve the goals of the cultural values preservation. This is equally reflected on the resources mobilization and leverage tasks, because the presence of smooth communication and common understanding on communal issues like cultural values and heritage preservation is essential. Developing a symbiotic harmonization between heritage originality and conservation requires the involvement of all stakeholders in both tourism and conservation related issues by using all possible resources which are found at different level of intervention of the social fabrics of the community. Therefore, the issue of integrating heritage originality (preserving the originality of the heritage) and conservation through stakeholder involvement and collaboration should warrant more research.

Promoting Health Education

One among the socio cultural perspective of evaluating the contribution of the amateur theatre clubs and the theatre practitioners is their valuable input in promoting the health and wellbeing of the community. The amateur theatre clubs are essential in facilitating conditions (information and resources dissemination, discussion forum, human and resources mobilization, peer education and advocacy) and resources that helps to deal with the health problems of the youth segment of population. They are also in a position to deal with any health problems at different times; because the several health problems had occurred and continue to occur at different times. For instance, Tesfa Fana and Ye Joka Aberus were established in 1993 E.C and 1994 E.C respectively. At that time the spread of HIV/AIDS were found on its peak, hence the intention of the establishment of the amateur theatre clubs were to provide short term solutions or prevention campaigns to such kinds of health problems. But, later the goals of Tesfa Fana were modified to and then expanded its emphasis on dealing with reproductive health and human sexuality. In the case of Ye Joka Aberus it is expanded to include community development and cultural values related goals. To be fair enough both amateur theatre clubs are often times involved in community development related tasks.

According to the research participant information we can understand that within the early stages of the establishments of the amateur theatre clubs, their mission has been delimited to the promotion of health

education. Both TesfaFana and Ye Joka Aberus has been emphasizing on reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, communicable disease, FGM, the health aspects of early marriage and abduction and personal hygiene and sanitation. The crucial point here is that, the amateur theatre clubs have partially contributed in improving the health seeking behavior of the community members. Thus, their [Tesfa Fana and Ye Joka Aberus] remarkable achievement has contributed to the promotion of some aspects of community development goals of Wolkite town.

The health service delivery mechanism of health institution is showing improvements in recent times. The health institutions are providing services for different health problems of the community and there have been different measures taken to improve health service delivery packages. But, there are always gaps and there exists a practical problem within the health care service delivery in Wolkite town. The amateur theatre clubs are expected to fill the gaps by Producing plays about health related issues; family planning, reproductive health, nutrition, prenatal and antenatal care, children immunization, HIV, sexually transmitted infections, FGM, early marriage, communicable disease and sanitation.

Health promotion is a structured, systematic approach to achieving widespread uptake of health, hand washing and faces disposal practices that are likely to limit the transmission of intestinal pathogens and parasites. There are different types of activities and different areas of emphasis of the actors while dealing with health problems. The activities includes; reproductive health education, campaigns about personal hygiene and sanitation, education about FGM, education about nutrition and children immunization and education about disease prevention mechanisms. The areas of emphasis may range from dealing with family planning related issues to addressing sanitation and hygiene related problems. So in line with the above statement the role of the amateur theatre clubs are very high.

The role of amateur theatre clubs for the improvement of the social life of the different socially vulnerable and marginalized populations

Among others, amateur theatre clubs are expected to serve as a voice of the voiceless. The disadvantaged segment of population like; children, youth, women, person with disabilities, commercial sex workers, drivers, elderly people, poor of the poor and street children needs more attention and support. When we see the ordinary functioning mechanisms of the social service delivering organizations and institutions; we came to know that they are more focused on the means (bureaucratic procedures) rather than the real problems. Hence, the amateur theatre clubs need to remind and sensitize the

various institutions to go an extra mile in providing services to the marginalized group of people.

With TFD, those clubs are succeeding in attracting theater tension of the authorities to give more emphasis and to invest more resources in providing health services to the segment of population. In previous times, the health institutions were already there but providing health service with a different approach and coverage. Following the active involvement of the amateur theatre clubs, the officials have got a chance to identify the major gaps in health service delivery mechanisms. For instance, in previous times health institutions were only focused to provide services when the beneficiaries visit the institutions themselves. Latter, the efforts of the amateur theatre clubs in disseminating condoms and providing home to home education influenced the health institutions to shape their activities and hence improved accessibility. The services were delivered to individuals and groups which are exposed to health risks and this in turn has increasing people's confidence in the in ability to control their social and material environment more effectively than they did before.

Enhancing the knowledge and exposure of the community

When we evaluate the major missions of the amateur theatre clubs we discover the fact that the clubs are expected to work on improve the knowledge ad exposure of the community members. This can be realized by focusing on behavior centered and skill-based tasks. Some of the works of the amateur theatre clubs presented to audience includes plays and theatres that focus on behavior change communication (for instance in relation to sexual intercourse and reproductive health). The other approaches focus on involving the community members in skill based tasks like community asset mapping and advocacy related works.

Health education is the transfer of knowledge and understanding of health practices and their associated health risks. Health education activities are thus one subset of possible health promotion activities (Wills, 2000:171). On the other hand 'theatre can articulate and transmit new information and new values; they can provide alternative ways of being human and so provide us with choice and a sense of potential' (Horne, 1988, 74).

Challenges of the theater clubs

There are plenty challenges which are faced by amateur theatre clubs right from the time of their establishment. The absence of well-organized organizational and institutional arrangement left them to encounter problems

within the existing setting of interaction. Their challenges ranges from absence of office and hall, lack of financial resources, material shortage, lack of professional trainings, high turnover level of practitioners, lack of recognition from government and other stakeholders up to discontinuity of the theatre club itself.

CONCLUSION

This paper examined a major issue that had been rarely discussed in the existing literature which attempted to assess if the role of amateur theatre clubs was authenticated in enhancing community development endeavors of the community. The paper tinted many of the contributions that have fluently managed the community development endeavor which mainly emanates from the efforts of the amateur theatre clubs or theatre practitioners. Working within community development, health education promotion and cultural heritage conservation task was very delicate one. These institutions did not recognize the contribution of the amateur theatre clubs and they are not in a position to allocate resources or institutional setting that facilitates and integrates the works of amateur theatre clubs with their organizational functions and activities

Finally, it should also be noted that fulfilling what is lacking in the cooperation of different local sectors and absence of appropriate planning and executing activities is the major preconditions to the authentication of the community development, health education, cultural heritage conservation related goals and the development of amateur theatre clubs. The governmental and institutional setting are poor in creating an umbrella forum that integrates and monitors the various activities executed by different bureaus and tasks performed by the amateur theatre clubs.

In general, motivating and supporting amateur theatre clubs efforts appear to be one of the most important and an active resource for the awareness creation or implementation of development, while the tendency of weak support efforts may lead to marginalization of the amateur theatre clubs and their potential and practical role in community development. The source of weak support emanates from the policy directions and organizational functioning mechanisms of the education, health and culture sector bureaus. A synergy between characteristics and assets of amateur theatre clubs and community development agenda can be realized when the available resources across different sectors and different stakeholders are properly managed. Hence, the effort made by the amateur theatre clubs or the theatre practitioners of Wolkit town is good but there should be a comprehensive, consistent and institutionalized mechanism addressing the problems of these artistic oriented clubs which in turn helps them to contribute their

share in community development, cultural values preservation and health education related problems by making sense of the existing realities.

RECOMMENDATION

If amateur theatre clubs are to flourish, the government should pursue a balanced policy direction towards the various sectors, and priority of one sector over the other must end. Because, offering much attention to one sector and ignoring another sector results on losing some assets like the contribution of amateur theatre clubs in community development. Hence, if amateur theatre clubs are to remain sustainable within a community framework, there must be community-wide participation as well as continuous assessment of resident perceptions to ensure their role in community development, cultural heritage conservation development and health education remains consistent with the local culture. The culture and tourism bureau should be responsible and accountable for the sustainable development of the amateur theatre clubs.

Developing a symbiotic harmonization between supports provided to the amateur theatre clubs and their contribution to community development requires the involvement of all stakeholders in amateur theatre clubs related-related issues. The support can be gathered from governmental offices (health, education and cultural bureaus), NGOs, civil society organizations and community members. Therefore, the issue of integrating the supports presented to amateur theatre clubs and their expected roles through stakeholder involvement and collaboration should necessitate more research. An improvement is needed from planners, NGOs, government sectors, urban development experts, administrative personnel, community members, local institutions, private sector and international organizations.

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