



Nandikar, India



Workshop with Rakhal, Bangladesh



Rehearsal with a group of children, HCMC Drama Theatre, Vietnam



Tuk Kata, Laos



Workshop with Kunming Children's Art Troupe, China

Summary of the overall objectives for Children's Voice project

The voices of children represent the basis of the work with emphasis on children's thoughts and views. Work in the project focuses on development of an artistic theatre for children and youth, the ability of children and youth to work with creative forms of expression via drama at school and active efforts to reach vulnerable groups in society. *Children's Voice* is a regional project where cooperation locally within countries and regionally between countries is boosted through exchanges and networking. Sida's policy for *Culture and Media in Development Cooperation* represents a cornerstone, and the project is to some extent adapted to ongoing efforts in the countries concerned.

- Take part in efforts for greater democracy and popular participation, maintenance and promotion of children's rights and greater gender equality, as well as to work from the perspective of poor people, and help to provide opportunities for those who live in poverty with chances to influence their own situation
- Start activities for children, in cooperation between theatres, schools and organisations
- Devise and offer alternatives to the ever-increasing commercial culture, and develop competence in the creation of drama based on the perspectives of children
- Work for greater opportunities of teachers and theatre workers to take care of the needs of children and their individual development. Involve teachers in the working process so that drama becomes an aid in the work towards set targets
- Contribute to developing children's view of the world, their self-esteem and creativity
- Enable development of contact networks and more extensive exchanges of experience between our joint partners – locally and regionally. Swedish practitioners within the field of children's culture extend limited collaboration according to our joint partners' wishes and needs
- Stimulate the local, artistic and social development of children's theatre within the children's own fields of language and culture
- Find ways to carry out children's theatre activities that are reasonable for each respective joint partner and work for increased opportunities for local financial help
- Focus on lasting effects; activities that are able to continue even once projects are finished



Summercamp Rangakishora/Rangayana, India



Rupantar, Bangladesh

For more information contact:

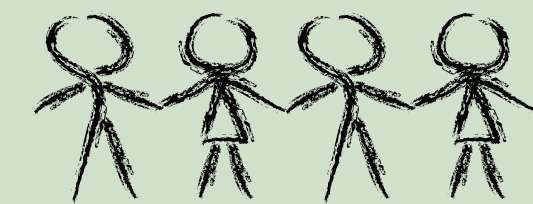


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Children's Voice

A joint project within the field of dramatic art in Asia

The Swedish Centre of the International Theatre Institute (ITI) has run the Children's Voice project in Asia since 2004 with financial support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). The project originally encompassed long-term cooperation with theatres in India and Bangladesh but was expanded in 2007 to include a further project area of Vietnam, Laos and China up to the end of 2009. Cooperation with professional practitioners of children's theatre from Sweden is also included in the project plans.

Joint partners in India, Bangladesh, China, Laos and Vietnam

The Children's Voice project initially embraced work with four professional theatre groups in India and Bangladesh. During the first four years of the project, all these groups have started or expanded extensive theatre activities for children and youth, some of them include a larger scale national dissemination. The local and regional collaboration between the groups has been boosted. The project area was broadened starting in 2007 to also include Southeast Asia, with 12 new joint partners in China, Laos and Vietnam.

Children's Voice is conducted via direct cooperation with a core of 16 theatre groups/organisations/institutions in five countries. The fields of work and local conditions vary greatly between the joint partners, as does their geographical spread. The four theatre groups in India and Bangladesh work in the second phase of the project with an activity that reaches approximately a further 15 drama groups and organisations via broader cooperation.

INDIA

Nandikar

Nandikar is an independent group with a fifty-year history in Kolkata, West Bengal. It is well known in India and has toured internationally. The group's activities include not only an adult and family repertoire, but also performances for children and youth, drama training with school children and street children, drama activities with and among prostitutes, pioneer activities within theatre for blind young people, and communication training for teachers and other groups of workers. Its characteristic artistic drama language is the use of bodily, visual and musical modes of expression. On top of this it also has broad social engagement with ideological emphasis on human rights and gender equality issues.

Rangakishora/Rangayana

Rangayana Natika Karnataka Kalamandira is the "national stage" of the Karnataka province, situated in Mysore. The theatre is a state repertory theatre originally aiming at an adult audience. In 2004, as a consequence of the Children's Voice project, *Rangakishora* (Rangayana's Children Theatre Repertory, RCTR) started up, specialising in theatre productions and activities for children and youth such as regular theatre summer camps. A training activity for teachers is held at Rangayana where actors train teachers

to stimulate new teaching methods in education, with this activity having a well-developed network of contacts with schools in the region.

BANGLADESH

Rakhal

Rakhal is a theatre organisation in Dhaka with a broad field of activities that have developed in cooperation with Children's Voice and in connection with the adult theatre group that has existed since 1981. Rakhal's core team, People's Repertory Theatre, works under three headings, School Theatre Program (STP), Theatre For the Children (TFC) and Theatre For the Kids (TFK). The school theatre programme incorporates both teachers and parents in its activities. The organisation advocates secularisation and addresses children from different social environments. In addition to this, performances and activities for amateur children's groups gain national dissemination via a well-developed network, and contact at international level also exists.

Rupantar

Rupantar is a Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) that started in 1992 with activities in the Khulna and Sundarban districts in southern Bangladesh. The organisation works with drama, song and

music as resources in its endeavours for human rights and issues of gender equality and the environment. The artistic work of the group partly involves resurrection of traditional forms of music and narrative drama and partly is based on contemporary improvisation theatre. The work of Rupantar is characterised by strong emphasis on contacts and cooperation at grass roots level. Its activities for children are primarily held jointly with schools, via theatre workers with special training to meet the needs of actors, children and teachers interacting.

CHINA

Shanxi Drama Vocational College

Shanxi Drama Vocational College in Taiyuan has almost 2 000 students and is supported by the provincial government of Shanxi province. The school started in 1958 and has since advanced to the key position as "National Advance Working Collective". Training is provided in both traditional Chinese theatre and modern forms of drama, music, song, dance and art, including media orientation. Work is also carried out on development of research and educational activities for children and youth. In the Children's Voice project the school collaborates with the Shanxi Modern Drama Theatre.

Shanxi Modern Drama Theatre

In half a century the *Shanxi Modern Drama Theatre*, Taiyuan, has staged almost 500 productions of various types – spoken drama theatre, music theatre, traditional Chinese theatre and children's theatre. These have been dominated by theatre performances for adults, but in recent years its children and youth activities have gained national attention and interest in the reality of children has increased. The Children's Voice project advances the possibilities of reaching greater numbers of rural underprivileged children and youth.

Children's Art Troupe/Kunming National Song and Dance Ensemble

Kunming Children's Art Troupe in Kunming began in 1984 under the superintendence of the provincial

government of Yunnan with the primary intention of addressing children in southwest China, in particular the Yunnan province. The group includes actors, directors, choreographers and playwrights. Performance has primarily involved dramatisation of well-known tales from schoolbooks, along with modern themes. Activities in part embrace school performances in Kunming and surrounding areas, and in part tours to other towns in the region. Emphasis within the Children's Voice project is on activities for children in rural areas and for the many minority ethnic groups in the province.

Chinese Theatre Association (CTA) & Central Academy of Drama, Beijing

Chinese Theatre Association is an NGO that started in 1949 and is now also the national centre of the International Theatre Institute (ITI). The organisation is firmly anchored throughout the country where each province on the entire Chinese mainland has its own local office with a total of almost 15 000 individual members, including actors, directors, playwrights, stage designers and other people active within theatre, as well as close on 2 000 institution members. The CTA organises national and international theatre festivals, seminars, courses and workshops. The Chinese Theatre Association functions as a coordinating body for the Children's Voice project in China.

The project also arranges an annual cultural exchange at one of the two national drama schools in China – the *Central Academy of Drama, Beijing* – to promote interest in children and youth theatre.

LAOS

Vulnerable Lao Youth Development Association (VYDA)

The *VYDA* is an organisation on the periphery of Vientiane that started in 2002 through private initiative and represents a focal point for children in the surrounding rural area. The VYDA trains leaders in children's activities and arranges activities for children such as amateur theatre, song, music and dance and quizzes, as well as organising library services and creative handicrafts. Its basic goal is to work for

development of greater awareness of the needs and rights of children. The VYDA serves as a coordinator of the Children's Voice project in Laos

Kabong Lao

Kabong Lao is supported by the government and works with "theatre d'objects" where implements and day-to-day objects are used to create theatre and music. Kabong Lao puts strong emphasis on artistic form, with object and actor in close collaboration, and the group aspires to reach children in schools and in other activities to spread interest in the participation of children themselves and development of their creative pursuits. The group has completed several international tours.

Tuk Kata

Tuk Kata is a government supported puppet theatre based in Vientiane. Its activities are partly made up of traditional forms of puppet theatre and partly of puppets created through modern inspiration. The traditional tales are based on history and mythology; the modern ones deal with current social issues. The group performs for both adults and children, usually with a very large audience, with tours nationally and to neighbouring countries.

Lakon Vao

Lakon Vao began in 1984 and like the other groups from Laos is supported by the government. Emphasis is on plays with contemporary content, and performances address a mixed family audience of young and old. The group works primarily with small-scale spoken drama theatre with a modern basis where themes taken from reality are adopted, supporting the fight against prejudices and the development of social awareness.

VIETNAM

Vietnam Youth Theatre

The *Youth Theatre* is one of Vietnam's most renowned theatres with three theatre groups and nationwide touring activities, as well as regular performances for children in Hanoi. Its operations are conducted in a

well functioning organisation, with partial government support. The group was formed in 1978 with the task of building up capacity for performances within different fields, such as theatre, dance, song, contemporary/popular and traditional music and pantomime, and to provide an alternative representing moral values, passing on knowledge and having an enriching effect in artistic expressions of high quality.

Ho Chi Minh City Drama Theatre

The *HCMC Drama Theatre* started in 1958, and like the Youth Theatre is partly supported by the government. The group conducts theatre activities both for adults and children/youth and puts emphasis on work in the southern half of the country. A small number of actors are permanently employed while freelance actors are taken on in accordance with normal Vietnamese praxis. In the case of Children's Voice, however, a continuously employed acting troupe has been set up. Activities for children often take place via schools and children's homes, prioritising aesthetic understanding, human values and humanity, as well as social responsibility. The theatre further puts emphasis on drama with homeless children, the disabled and children living with HIV/Aids. The HCMC Drama Theatre works in cooperation with the Small Stage Drama Theatre within Children's Voice.

Small Stage Drama Theatre

The *Small Stage Drama Theatre* is based in HCMC that commenced its experimental activities on a small scale in 1984, but has existed in its present independent form since 1997. Characteristic of the group is its serious artistic emphasis with an aspiration to be "genuine" with a repertoire of quality theatre for adults. A spatially flexible form of performance without proscenium stage or microphones and loudspeakers is unusual within contemporary spoken drama theatre in Vietnam. Within Children's Voice, the Small Stage Drama Theatre has started activities outside its adult theatre emphasising social engagement and reaches out to the particularly vulnerable metropolitan region youth audience.



HCMC Drama Theatre, Vietnam



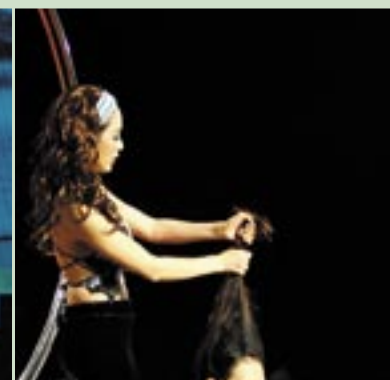
Rakhal, Bangladesh



Kabong Lao, Laos



Kunming Children's Art Troupe, China



Small Stage Drama Theatre, Vietnam



Rupantar, Bangladesh



Nandikar, India



Summercamp Rangakishora/Rangayana, India



Youth Theatre, Vietnam



VYDA, Laos



Lakon Vao, Laos



Small Stage Drama Theatre, Vietnam



Tuk Kata, Laos



Workshop with Shanxi Drama Vocational College/ Shanxi Modern Drama Theatre, China