

**FORUM THEATRE AS A MEDIUM OF SOCIAL
CONSCIENTISATION AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE BY
SELECTED THEATRE TROUPES IN MERU COUNTY, KENYA.**

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been submitted for an award in any other University.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents Nunzia Gaturia and the late Julius Marete.

To my gurdian parents Gladys Naini and Domisiano Maingi.

To my son Emmanuel Marete Kimathi, Mtu'angu Kimathi M'Kiara, my sisters Kawiria and Kangai, brothers Njogu, Mwonokia and Muthomi.

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OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Anti-model: Refers to the core scene of Forum Theatre. Boal calls it an anti-model rather than a model because it consists of a problematic situation in which the protagonist does not achieve his/her goal, and thus it is certainly not meant to be followed. The anti-model is intended to elicit spect-actor intervention and the playing out of alternative actions, leading to solutions.

Conscientisation: From the Portuguese conscientisation of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire is an ongoing process by which a learner moves toward critical consciousness. This process is the heart of liberatory education. It differs from "consciousness rising" in that the latter may involve transmission of preselected knowledge.

Forum Theatre: Is a TO technique that begins with the enactment of a scene (or anti-model) in which a protagonist tries, unsuccessfully, to overcome an oppression relevant to that particular audience. The joker then invites the spectators to replace the protagonist at any point in the scene that they can imagine an alternative action that could lead to a solution. The scene is replayed numerous times with different interventions. This results in a dialogue about the oppression, an examination of alternatives, and a "rehearsal" for real situations.

Joker: The joker is the director/master of ceremonies. In Forum Theatre, the joker sets up the rules of the event for the audience, facilitates the spectators'

replacement of the Protagonist, and sums up the essence of each solution proposed in interventions.

Spect-actor: Refers to the activated spectator, the audience member who takes part in the action. In Forum Theatre, there are meant to be non-passive spectators. Boal emphasizes the potential involvement of even those who do not physically participate, and the fact that they at least have the choice.

Theatre of the oppressed: (TO) Describes theatrical forms that the Brazilian theatre practitioner Augusto Boal first elaborated in the 1960s, initially in Brazil and later in Europe.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

APHIA	:	Aids Population and Health Integrated Assistant
ATB	:	Atelier Burkinabe
CBO	:	Community Based organisation
FGD	:	Focus Group Discussion
FGM	:	Female Gernital Mutilation
FT	:	Forum Theatre
GBV	:	Gender-based violence
HIV	:	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
MYAP	:	Meru Youth Arts Program
NGEC	:	National Gender and Equality Commission
NGO	:	Non Governmental Organisation
OB	:	Occurrence Book
TfD	:	Theatre for Development
TO	:	Theatre of the oppressed
USAID	:	United States Agency for International Development

ABSTRACT

Kenya as a country is confronted with myriad social challenges. Some of these challenges can be alleviated using interventions such as Forum Theatre. Forum Theatre entertains as it intervenes. Hence, the audience, therefore, is not aware that they are being asked to change. Despite various efforts by the NGO's, the County Government through the women representatives, the church, CBO's and other parties that fight against Gender-based violence, Meru County remains a hotbed of Gender-based violence. It is with this background that this study explored the use of Forum Theatre as an agent of sensitisation against Gender-based violence by selected theatre troupes in Meru County. The study specifically explored the use of characterisation, plot, structure and local language for conscientisation purposes. Qualitative research design was employed to achieve the study objectives while purposive sampling design was used to select the theatre troupes. Data was collected through close reading of the plays by the theatre groups. The plays were analysed thematically and presented as analytical discourse. The findings show a consistent use of the joker system of characterisation although the joker in *Kirema* by Kangaroo Actors fails to embrace Boal's system while the one in *Murega* by MYAP did elicit audience participation. In regards to the structure and plot of the plays, each of the two plays addresses GBV. *Murega* by was more effective in involving audience. By altering the original plot, *Murega* employs applicable solutions that benefit the victims. Lastly, language use in Forum Theatre was found to influence and motivate audience participation. The use of local language was found to be particularly useful in engaging the local audiences, especially where the play adopts local phrases, idioms and euphemisms that the target community understands and relates to. While *Murega* meets Boal's expectations of Forum Theatre, *Kirema* needed some changes to ensure it met the criteria for Forum Theatre. This study was important in highlighting Gender-based violence in Meru County, using Theatre Forum. It enabled the researcher to establish the cause, challenges and possible solutions to GBV through Forum Theatre. The likely beneficiaries from the study include students of Literature, community members, advocacy groups and policy makers.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Theatre as a literary enterprise has been found to have a number of social functions especially when looked at in its applied sense. Some of these forms, especially in Africa, borrow from traditional African theatres that were highly utilitarian in form and content. One of these forms of theatre is Forum Theatre, which is a subgenre of the larger Theatre for Development (TfD). As Odhiambo notes, TfD is an interactive theatre that has increasingly found popularity in Africa more so in Kenya (1). He notes that this popularity hinges on the expanded democratic space that was witnessed after the ouster of the KANU regime in 2002. Since then, theatre has been used to provide entertainment as well as offer an opportunity for people to learn while enjoying themselves.

One of the theatre practices that has found root in Kenyan theatre is Forum Theatre. This is form of theatre was established in 1971 by the Brazilian theatre director, Augusto Boal. It is a theatre in which the main character confronts oppression, an unjust use of power that is maintained by a threat of force. Even though victimised, the oppressed person is not synonymous to a victim because victims don't usually fight back. The oppressed confronts a problem, analyses what is happening and takes action to change his or her situation.

Forum Theatre, which this study is interested in is a theatre for development. It differs from other forms of community theatre entities because it offers the audience a chance to participate directly in theatre. The audience can interrupt ongoing theatrical action and rehearsed solutions. The desired change and transformation is closely monitored through the enacting of participants' lives. Participants are able to enact their own 'difficult' situations by suggesting, rehearsing and acting them out, through such ventures. Boal emphasizes that,

“The participants who chose to intervene must continue the physical action of the replaced actors.....often a person is revolutionary when in a public forum, he envisages and advocates revolutionary and heroic acts, on the other hand he often realizes that things are not so easy when he himself has to practice what he suggests.” (30)

This kind of performance encourages audience participation by creating a dialogue between the actors and the audience. Everybody present gets involved in the dialogue. They are free to contribute, comment and to correct the proposed action of he or she feels it is not credible. Slowly by slowly, even the shy member in the audience manages to speak thereby breaking the culture of silence and anticipating change.

Forum Theatre, therefore, creates an urge – in the participants – to practice the rehearsed action in case the oppressed face such a problem in real life situation. It causes a person who is facing oppression to develop an innate desire to be free. For example, a victim of Gender-based violence who has been part of Forum Theatre should engage in self liberation as Boal opines,

“It evokes in him a desire to practice in reality the acts he has rehearsed in the theatre. The practice of these theatrical forms creates

a sort of uneasy sense incompleteness that seeks fulfilment through real action.” (45)

In this case, a Gender-based violence victim who faces oppression now puts into practice what they have rehearsed in Forum Theatre. They do this because they are aware there are alternatives. They now know they have avenues they can explore as they search for freedom from this oppression.

The nature of Forum Theatre is supported by Richard Schechner’s Performance theory thus,

“Self conscious and the ability to change behaviour according to self consciousness (and not just ‘objective’ stimulation) sets most animal ritual off from nonhuman primate and human performance.” (58)

Forum Theatre helps set into motion self consciousness. It helps create dialogue about oppression and lead to examination of alternatives. It helps set ‘animal ritual off’,

Further, the study is guided by Freirian Development Paradigm. This is a theory by Brazilian educator Freire, who posits that,

Through cultural invasion the oppressed people lose their own culture because they see reality through the eyes of the invaders. (9)

Freire notes that dialogue often promotes critical reflection ,this raises people’s critical consciousness thereby catalysing conscientisation and breaking the culture of silence.

The liberated spect-actor in the Forum Theatre breaks loose. He/she gains a voice to resist the oppression. The members of the audience become alert and

conscious of the effects of silence. They endeavour to stop oppression and try out their alternatives.

Kenya as country is confronted with myriad social challenges. Some of these challenges can be alleviated by using a number of interventions including Forum Theatre. The advantage of using such vicarious and lively media of intervention is that they entertain as well as intervene without the audience/participant realising that they are being asked to change. Forum Theatre provides a more holistic method of solving social problems as it offers a platform for discussion and conceptualisation of views of an audience/community. The dialogue in Forum Theatre is articulated through participatory process between the actors and the audience. The spectators are turned into actors and *vice versa*. Usually, dialogue is preferred as a mode of communication. Entering it as equals creates awareness of participating individual's situation since the dialogue advanced, in this case, is a sustained, collective inquiry into the issues of everyday life (Rae 35, 42).

Forum Theatre has been applied in different spaces and places in creating social intervention. This study interrogated how the principles of Forum Theatre, developed by Augusto Boal, were being applied in creating social intervention in Meru County. Specifically, it was interested in how Forum Theatre was employed in creating awareness and as a social medium for addressing Gender-based violence in Meru County.

Meru County is located in Eastern Kenya. It borders Tharaka, Isiolo, Laikipia and Nyeri counties. It is divided into six sub-counties namely, Meru Central, Imenti North, Igembe, Meru North, Tigania and Meru South. According to Boi in his report, *The Baseline Survey Report done in December 2012*, Meru County was among the counties in Kenya that were greatly affected by Gender-based violence with the highest number of victims being women. Boi notes:

84.9% of respondents were aware of prevalence of wife battery in the area, 79.2% were aware of rape, 56.6% were aware of FGM and while 28.3% were aware of other forms of GBV such as early marriages, discrimination and husband battery. (15)

There are more than ten theatre troupes in Meru county that use drama to raise consciousness on issues pertaining Gender-based violence (GBV), Drug abuse, poverty eradication, FGM, Early marriages among others. Despite efforts by NGO's, the County Government through the Women Representative, the church, CBO's and other parties that fight against Gender-based violence, Meru County remains a hotbed of Gender-based violence as Mukinda notes,

Hitting, battery and beating are the most prevalent forms of violence and mostly occurMeru at 88.0 per cent.....Victims were also subjected to, psychological humiliation, forced marriages, marital rape, forceful initiations and discrimination at work. They were also deprived of sexual desires, money and land, as well as freedom of movement. (8)

It is from this background that this study sought to explore the use of Forum Theatre as a medium of social intervention against GBV, using selected plays by theatre troupes in Meru County.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Forum Theatre is used by a number of theatre troupes in Meru County to communicate agitation for change among communities since it offers them enormous possibilities. It is important to explore their procedures and methodologies in order to ascertain whether their plays reflect and achieve the set objectives or not. This is what this study was conceived to do: to interrogate the intervention techniques of Forum Theatre as employed by a select number of theatre troupes in Meru County. Specifically, the focus was on the social issue of Gender-based violence. To achieve this, the study sought to evaluate the use of characterisation, indeterminate plot and the use of local and participatory language as agents of conscientisation against GBV.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

- i. To establish the effectiveness of characterisation to achieve conscientisation against GBV in Forum Theatre performances by selected Tfd troupes in Meru County.
- ii. To examine the structure and plots as agents of conscientisation against GBV in the Forum Theatre performances by selected Tfd troupes in Meru County.
- iii. To explore the use of local and participatory language as precursors and bearers of Boalian conscientisation in the Forum Theatre performances by the selected Tfd troupes in Meru County.

1.4 Research Questions

- i. How do the selected Tfd troupes use characterisation in their Forum Theatre performances to achieve conscientisation against GBV in Meru County?
- ii. How do the structure and plots of Forum Theatre performances by the selected TFD troupes act as agents of conscientisation against GBV in Meru County?
- iii. How does the use of local and participatory language as precursors and bearers of Boalian conscientisation in Forum Theatre performances by selected Tfd troupes in Meru County lead to conscientisation against GBV in Meru County?

1.5 Assumptions of the Study

- i. Tfd troupes in Meru County use characterisation in their Forum Theatre performances to achieve conscientisation against GBV in Meru County.
- ii. The structure and plots of Forum Theatre performances by the selected Tfd troupes act as agents of conscientisation against GBV in Meru County.
- iii. Use of local and participatory language as precursors and bearers of Boalian conscientisation in Forum Theatre performances by selected Tfd troupes in Meru County lead to conscientisation against GBV in Meru County.

1.6 Justification and Significance of the Study

Forum Theatre and other forms of TfD have been used by various theatre groups in Kenya with aim of raising communal consciousness on different issues. These issues include GBV, FGM, and Poverty eradication among others. However, there has been fear that many of these theatre groups are not aware of the philosophies and techniques that guide such theatres of social intervention. Ogolla avers,

Today many development workers especially in donor supported Non-Governmental organisations have a fair sense in the power of drama and theatre. The relative lack of expertise in the field, however, makes them gullible to any professional idler who prefer to call themselves thespians. TfD has been in the recent years patronised by strangest of fellows whose backgrounds in basic theatre are questionable. (2)

Non-Governmental Organisations mostly support the theatre troupes so as to use theatre in creating awareness on different issues. However, the donors do not pay much attention on the theatre troupe members' background in theatre. It is possible some of the members of the troupes do not know much about the form of theatre they use. Most likely, they may not be able to tell the difference between Forum Theatre and conventional theatre. This study aspired to alleviate that.

The study also analyzed the objective of Forum. Theatre which is to disseminate messages and to conscientise communities about their prevailing situation as far as Gender-based violence is concerned. It is important that practitioners follow the process and methodology that leads to conscientisation. This study will help Theatre for Development groups to keep

in check their practices and most importantly improve or make their Forum Theatre performances effective.

Furthermore, this study will act as a framework through which the troupes can evaluate their application of Forum Theatre: by paying close attention to characterisation, plot and language use in their plays.

1.7 Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study had a limited scope. To begin with, the location of the study was limited to Meru County. This limited scope of the location allowed for in-depth research. The study, as well, delimited itself to two theatre troupes, which sensitize community to Gender-based violence. Boal developed other theatrical techniques but the study delimited itself to Forum Theatre. Boalian's conscientisation is deeply envisaged in Forum Theatre. This theatre is characterized by its choice of characters, plot, structure and language. Key to this definition is the participation of audience as 'spect-actors'.

1.8 Review of the Related Literature

In this review I have set the study subject in a broader context through investigation of relevant literatures, other studies and theories. I have covered in detail the concept of Forum Theatre and language use, characterisation and plot of forum theater performances.

Characterization in Forum Theatre has to take into consideration the fluid nature of the practice. While in mainstream theatre characters are distinct from actors and participants, they are fused in Forum Theatre. The actor is a character, a participant and at times, a facilitator. The audience is urged to take the characters role and deliver the message unto itself. In his research ,C.J Odhiambo affirms that in Forum theatre, the level of audience participation is a paramount. That participation is a conscious act and not an empty gesture. Members of the audience join in activities within the performance such as singing and dialogue (80 - 81).

In TfD, the performance space is converted into the main interactive sphere of theatrical texts. However, the space is not a complete interactive paradigm without turning the spectator into a spect-actor. Forum Theatre provides the audience (the oppressed) spectators, in this case the GBV victims, an opportunity to participate in the theatrical process. They end up making their own decisions and taking action aimed at improving themselves. The democratic space provided by Forum Theatre contributes in making theatre a process through which man studies and forms an opinion about his environment, analyses it, expresses and shares his view points about it. They acquire a frame of mind necessary to take action and improve it (Mlama 66).

This study indeed benefitted from the insights by C.J Odhiambo in advocating for audience participation (86). As such, it sought to find out how

characterisation in plays performed by the theatre group was tailored to exploit the power of audience participation in achieving conscientisation. Quinn analyses the experiences by Kaddu Yaraax, a Senegal primary Forum Theatre company's theatrical experiences. The group tries to transform community through theatre by use of traditional dances, music, and folklore which has its origin in colonial period. With the changing times, the group developed a desire for a form of theatre that is not only dialogical but multilogical in terms of characterization. In 2002, the group is said to have discovered Forum Theatre (76). To them, Boal's Forum Theatre characterization which comprises a character called the joker – who intervenes to solicit reactions from the audience – was the best form of theatre that could help them meet their expectation. The joker invites the spectators to replace the protagonist at any point in the scene. This way, they can imagine an alternative action that could lead to a solution (Schutzman 237).

The concept of a joker character is fundamental to this study. The research desired to identify whether the theatre groups in Meru County use the joker character in providing a link between the artistic world and the physical world. Forum Theatre plays are supposed to be open ended with no definite resolution. This is a key differentiating aspect that distinguishes it from spectacle theatre. In Boal's logic, the cathartical effect should be entirely avoided as Quinn says;

The conflict at hand must remain unresolved on stage as it is in life. Performers do not attempt to provide audience with answers to their

problems but rather aspire to serve as a catalyst for the kind of social dialogue that might lead to workable solution (85).

The already conscious spectator uses the rehearsal as a stable foundation for action in the real world. The unresolved conflict makes them reflect on their oppressing situations and in turn break the culture of silence. It as well makes them aware that they can do something to change their situations.

According to Jemal, when oppressed people begin to analyse their social conditions, hence developing conscientisation, they would feel able and compelled to act to change them (7). This borrows from Brecht's alienation effect. Brechtian alienation effect endeavour to avoid immersion whereby characters are completely aware of their actions instead of being "inside the skin" of a character. This gives the audience a chance to take a step back and critically think about what is happening on stage. However, critical thinking alone cannot lead to change. Action is necessary for audience to change their prevailing circumstances and break the culture of silence. The critically conscious spectator must launch into action.

Forum Theatre provides an avenue for the spectator to change into spect-actor. It fosters critical thinking by breaking the actor-spectator dichotomy and lets the audience suggest and act out their own problems through conscientisation.

Conscientisation begins when the audience starts to think about and for themselves. This process is completed when the theatre space provides the

spectator with the opportunity to play in the position of an actor, make decisions on the acting and change certain dramatic actions and plot. By doing so, they prepare themselves for real-life action that they could effected later, in everyday reality. Therefore, Forum Theatre offers audience participation through interventions and acting. This can be achieved through dialogue as Were asserts,

The dialogue in theatre for development is cultivated through a process between the actors and spectators, the essence of this as Boal confirms is that it unearths the never-ending desire among the masses to experiment and rehearse (3).

The process that Were talks about is well achieved through Boal's Forum Theatre, which has no room for passive audience. The actors do not think on behalf of the audience because the two can interchange roles in the course of the action. Spectators enter into a dialogue with the actors. They are given a chance to interrupt the action through various interjections like seeking explanations, changing the direction of the plot and dialogues without waiting politely for the play to end. In this, they are transported to the time and place where the action occurs (Boal 73). There is a relationship between Were's application of Brechtian alienation effect and the Boalian Forum Theatre since the two address the issue of raising awareness. A third perspective is given by Artaud in his theatre of cruelty. The relationship between these three can be illustrated in the following diagram:

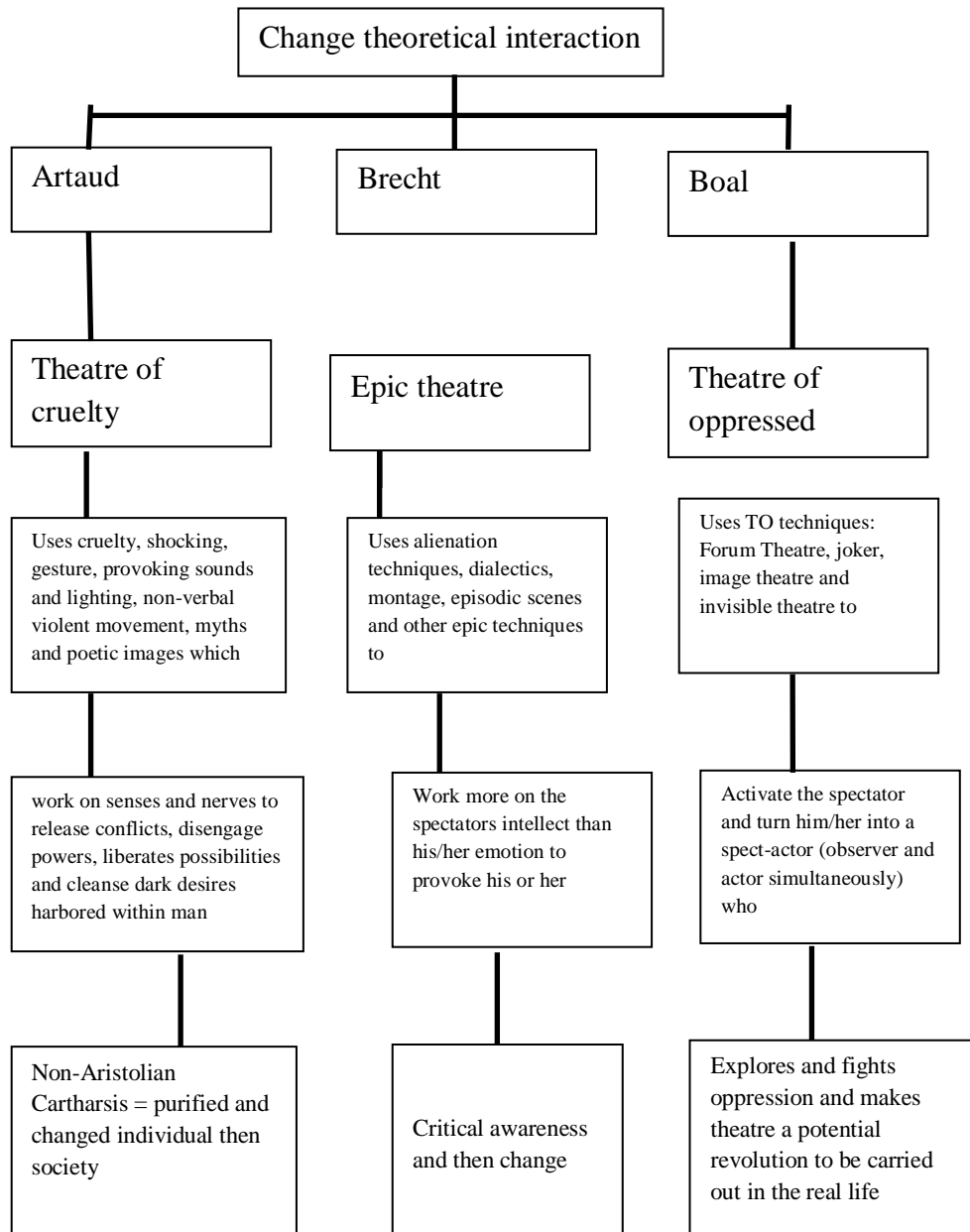


Figure 1.1: Diagram showing the relationship between Forum Theatre, Theatre of Alienation and Theatre of Cruelty

The diagram shows that the three perspectives that is epic theatre, theatre of cruelty and Forum Theatre are all interested in changing mind sets. However, one also discerns that the only perspective that limits itself to conscientisation is Forum Theatre by Boal. It is this theatre that this study is interested in.

Exploring the practices and efficacies of community theatre in Nyanza Kenya, Wangari et al. opines that theatre can provide an interesting way of changing the way people socialise, think and act. They point to the fact that TfD stimulates consciousness of the target community and points them towards social transformation which leads to action. Since language used ought to be understood, be inclusive and cause participation, the use of local language is inevitable. The argument is that “local languages meet the present-day issues, which cut across taboos, beliefs and their tacit cultures...” (110). In their study, they view TfD as a primary contributor to community theatre. They acknowledge that TfD is characterised by active participation of community in which it is taking place. As they take part, they identify their problems reflect on how and why the problems affect them and with insights gained through an engagement with theatre performance, explore possible solutions.

These sentiments about language used in such theatre performances are shared by Rae who posits that Forum Theatre is a dialogical approach to learning and development. He avers that it can also take on a more didactic approach (102). Dramatic dialogue and interactive sphere of performance with spectators during the performance are some of the aspects these scholars highlight in the use of community theatre and developmental practices in Western Nyanza. Blurring the distinction between performer and spectator is a key foundation of Forum Theatre and therefore these insights benefit this study. This is what helped this study respond to the question, how did the theatre groups aspire to

maximise audience participation by letting the GBV victims resolve their oppressing situations through theatre?

Several performances in Africa have proved that Forum Theatre has succeeded in conscientisation. For instance, Joseph gives examples of theatre groups from some African countries that tried other forms of TfD entities and failed to achieve the desired change. However, when they tried Forum Theatre the success was eminent. He gives an example of a theatre company named Atelier Burkinabe (ATB) from Burkina Faso and comments thus:

“The most significant transformations in ATB’s approach and practice occurred in 1984, this is the moment the group fully embraced the Boalian technique of Forum Theatre.... the group began to invite spectators to ‘step into’ the shoes of the actors or directly intervene in the process of performance.” (58)

Joseph also mentions the Mbalacha and the workshop in Malawi that fails to have the people participate but when they applied Forum Theatre in the follow up, the villagers participated at all levels of the project. In Lesotho, Maratholi Travelling Theatre staged plays with different themes but during performance and discussions it was noted that marginalised villagers failed to participate. Later, in the follow up, they use Forum Theatre as the most interactive mode and observed thus,

“...Through a modified form of Boalian Forum Theatre technique, the community engaged and interrogated the performances on the issues that were dramatised, exploiting the concepts interruption and intervention, the members of the target community took place of the replaced actors to try out their understanding and interpretations of problems facing them and their probable solutions.” (44)

Lastly, Joseph also mentions that the success of Ngugi's wa Thiong'o's Kamiriithu Community Theatre was a result of having applied Boalian Theatre of the Oppressed techniques. The people could identify with the contents embodied in the form.

1.9 Theoretical Framework

This study is premised on Schechner's Performance as the main theoretical framework. The study used the theory to explore Boal's Forum Theatre technique. Paulo Freire's conscientisation paradigm, which constitutes critical aspects of conscientisation, dialogue and language will offer a structural framework for Forum Theatre, which will be used in this study. Performance theory comes in as tool of analysis with which Boalian dialogue, characterization, plot and language will be evaluated. The study asserts that it is through Boalian Forum Theatre that Schechner's description of drama can exist and Freire's conscientisation can be achieved.

Schechner views drama '...as that which includes the audience, performers and anyone who is present' (87). Performance theory is founded on key principles, including 'presentation of self', 'restored behavior' and 'expressive culture'. It incorporates social drama and ritual. The radical nature of performance theory is demonstrated by its all-encompassing, even holistic, approach to theatre and performance. Schechner's concept of performance (which contrasts sharply with previous, principally modernist, approaches to

the arts,) asserts the importance of different 'systems of transformations', which vary enormously from culture to culture, and throughout historical periods and movements as advocated by Boal when he is quoted by Cohen-Cruz and Shutzman thus:

“All the participants in a forum session learn something, become more aware of some problems that they did not consider before, because a standard model is challenged and the idea that there are alternatives is clearly demonstrated. We never try to find which solution proposed is the “correct” one. I am against dogmas. I am for people becoming more conscious of the other person’s possibilities. What fascinates me about forum is the transitive character of its pedagogy.” (29)

In performance theory, Schechner questions the effectiveness of traditional perspectives of theatre. He argues that drama is not a preserve of the actors: it is a stage of all attendants to contribute to the topic and become part of the verdict. This assertion was important to this study since the study sought to find out how theatre has been engaged as a tool of raising awareness. In this study, Gender-based violence is a social problem that requires suggestions from all players including the affected persons just as Schechner asserts: In some situations, the performer is also the audience. (70)

The performer becomes the audience when the Boalian *spect-actor* replaces the performer so as to act out his/her suggestion. This allows each one to experience a different point of view hence, promoting tolerance and mutual understanding.

Coincidentally, Forum Theatre process happens to provide an analysis of Paulo Freire's pedagogical process of conscientisation where the community is involved in voicing its concerns and discovering solutions to problems. Freirian pedagogy has features such as dialogue and community participation, which largely resembles features of Forum Theatre. Here, the teacher is not a dispenser of knowledge – learning is a collaborative venture between the teacher and the learner. Translated into acting, the actor is not the solution giver, the spectator too, has to intervene in a performance by contributing and changing the course of the plot. Freire asserts:

“Only men as ‘open’ beings are able to achieve the complex operation of simultaneously transforming their world by their action and grasping and expressing the world's reality in their creative language.” (39)

In Forum Theatre, the act of transformation begins when the spectator is not satisfied by the ongoing action on stage. The dissatisfaction gets too much and the spectator intervenes either by yelling “STOP” or “NO” to not only suggest the solution but also gets on stage to act the solution. This is an ‘act’ that sets in motion a self-liberation process of the oppressed.

Conscientisation is a product of dialogue. The nature of dialogue itself determines whether social action will be a potential outcome. This Freirian dialogue that leads to conscientisation is actualised in Boalian Forum Theatre, which seeks to free the spectator and demolish the barriers between the spectator and the actor. The liberated spectator is then launched into action. Such a revolutionary rehearsal encapsulates a transitive dialogue which

recognises that each person must determine for himself or herself the identity of the enemy and how, given personal and social circumstances, to best combat this enemy (Schutzman and Jan Cohen-Cruz 142).

According to Freire, consciousness of and action upon reality are inseparable constitutes of the transforming act. Dialogue is the main channel for critical thinking which leads to critical consciousness. It is the encounter between men (88). When people are conscientised they become aware of their social realities, historical circumstances and conditions that create oppression and exploitation. By triggering conscientisation, Forum Theatre helps people to acquire the awareness that enable them to intervene in their own social reality and get rid of exploitation and oppression – in this case Gender-based violence.

Freire's pedagogy captures another critical factor that informs Forum Theatre that is participatory research and investigation. In Forum Theatre the actors and spect-actors investigate problems facing them and try out possible solutions, this participatory nature of Forum Theatre allow the actors and spect-actors to become co-investigators of their social problem, the research open up the minds of the oppressed and lead to critical thinking which in turn lead to rehearsal of action which is thereafter applied in real life situation.

Freire's theory aims at breaking the culture of silence while Boals's theatre offers a voice to the oppressed by letting them take an active role in changing their oppressing reality. In relation to this Freire asserts that 'only when the people of a dependent society break out the culture of silence and win their rights to speak, only that is, when radical structural changes transform the dependent society Freire.' (46).

The oppressed in this case were the Gender-based violence victims, who due to societal construction have accepted their oppressed state. To be liberated, they needed to be active participants in breaking the culture of silence, to earn a voice and aspire to set themselves free.

1.10 Research Methodology

1.10.1 Research Design

A research design is the blueprint for data collection, measurement and analysis of the data (Kothari 31). For this study, a descriptive and qualitative research design was used where the researcher facilitated gathering of facts from a large population through interviews and observation. Through the descriptive study, the researcher described the attitudes, opinions, habits and feelings of the respondents towards Gender-based violence in Meru. The descriptive qualitative research design makes it possible for the researcher to describe the events and then organise them into patterns that emerge from the field study.

1.10.2 Research Location

The research focused on Meru County. The county was chosen due to the presence of a number of theatre groups working on advocacy. Secondly, it was chosen due to the high cases of Gender-based violence in the area as reported by Meru County Government Policy document on the fight Against Gender-based violence. In this policy document, it is stated that a woman in Meru has a 65% chance of experiencing one or more forms of Gender-based violence in her life time (12). This is a very high rate that needs intervention from both state and non-state actors. The use of theatre as an intervention strategy motivated this study.

1.10.3 Research Sample and Sampling Techniques

Sampling refers to the process of selecting a number of individuals for a study in a manner that represents a large group from which they are chosen. Walliman asserts that, it the selection of some of them in hope that you get a representative or typical fraction of all the rest (93). For this study, purposive sampling technique was used to select the two forum theatre groups based in Meru, which focus on Gender-based violence and other social matters in the region. Purposive sampling was also used in the selection of the interviewees and discussants who were members of the public that took part in the plays.

1.10.4 Research Data Collection Techniques and Tools

Research tools refer to the instruments used for gathering data. Since the study employed the use of FGD and participatory learning, the following data collection tools were used.

1.10.4.1 Observation Guide

A structured observation guide was employed in aiding data collection by observing the participants and the actors. During the study, the researcher assumed the role of a non-participatory observer in fulfilling the task of effective observation (see the attached observation guide, Appendix I). Notes from the observation guide were used simultaneously with the play scripts (see Appendix V and VI) during the analysis of the performances.

1.10.4.2 Focus Group Discussion

Six (6) members of MYAP took part in the focus group discussion. Since it would have been repetitive to hold another focused group discussion with the Kangaroo Actors, the research deemed the information provided within the FGD by MYAP as providing sufficient data to arrive at the conclusions (see Appendix II for this FGD guide). Another FGD was carried out with the members of the audience during the performance of the play *Murega* by MYAP. The researcher selected six people (five women and one man) who had been active participants in the course of the performance. However, since it was a market day in the area, more people (mostly women) joined in the

discussion and the number rose to 10. It is worth noting that those who responded to the FGD questions were the six that had been selected for the discussion as they had information since they had participated in the play. The other passersby simply joined due to curiosity. The discussions centred on their experiences in taking part in the play and how they related it to their lives and experiences (see the attached FGD schedule, Appendix IV). Data collected through the FGDs was used to analyse the performances as pieces of Forum Theatre.

1.10.4.3 Interview Schedule

The researcher interviewed Mr. Benedict Muchai the leader of MYAP. Data collected through the interview was used to corroborate the data collected through observations, as the researcher watched the plays, and their subsequent readings. (See the attached interview schedule, Appendix III).

1.10.5 Data Analysis and Interpretation

The analysis of data was done based on the objectives of the study. First, the researcher cleaned the data by identifying the missing values, edited it for completeness and organized it by sorting it into the key objectives. Thematic analysis was used to do when the data was coded, trees drawn, nodes generated and links established.

1.10.6 Validity and Reliability

Validity is the accuracy of the research instruments. Validity focuses on the meaningfulness of inferences based on the research results arrived at (MacDonald and Headlam 72). Reliability refers to the degree of precision of a research tool (Kothari 73). This is what assures that the study yields consistent result after repeated trials.

The researcher conducted all interviews and discussions from both troupes and had them recorded for later transcription. The researcher interviewed TfD participants, policy maker and theatre audiences. These multiple data sources helped augment the data which was triangulated to ascertain accuracy. The constant revision of the discussion questions during the preparation of the proposal allowed for editing and for ease of comprehension of all data collection tools prior to their use during data collection. The researcher was a non-participatory observer through the observation phase. This meant that studying the phenomena as it unfolded, in the event of the performances, had no interferences. This assured highly valid data collection.

1.11 Conclusion

In this chapter, the background of the study is presented. This introduces the concept of Theatre for Development and Forum Theatre. The chapter has shown how the study was conceived as well as how it took place. Review of literature related to the study was done, too. Through this review, the study

highlights gaps in the area of this study's interest with regard to Forum Theatre and language use, characterisation and plot of Forum Theatre performances. This chapter has also presented the theoretical framework and the research methodology, which the study relied on. In this regard, the study has pointed out the research design, location, and population, sampling criteria, data collection, analysis and how findings would be presented in the discussion.

CHAPTER TWO

FORUM THEATRE AS A MEDIUM FOR SOCIAL INTERVENTION

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is a bridge between the introductory discussions and the analytical discursive chapters. It seeks to lay bare the theoretical underpinnings that inform the practice of Forum Theatre which this study adopts in appraising theatre activities meant to address issues of Gender-based violence in Meru County. This chapter will appraise specific discussions by Boal on three areas of interest to this study which are characterisation, plot and language. The chapter will, as well, provide the profile of the two theatre troupes used. These are the MYAP Theatre Troupe and Kangaroo Actors. Lastly the chapter will provide the synopsis of the plays *Murega and Kirema* that were performed during the outreaches.

In 1950s and 1960s, Boal created a form of theatre for the oppressed in the rural communities for the purpose of voicing their plight in the society (SFCG 7). With this, Boal brought out the significance of theatre in politics and social functions. After assuming the directorship of Arena Theatre in Sao Paulo, Boal developed various fora that attracted the attention of Brazilian population, including the government. For instance, in his writing, *Hamlet and the Baker's Son: My Life in Theatre and Politics*, Boal addresses change and how to effect it at a personal and political level (Boal xxvii). This is what led to introduction of spect-actors, where audience is made to become part of the

play. As well, the audience was expected to contribute in identifying solutions for the social issues that were being acted.

2.2 Boal's Creation of Characters in Forum Theatre

Boal's characters are created in such a way that theatre becomes a social communion of art that blurs the lines of the actor-audience divide. The breaking of the fourth wall is encouraged so that the audience becomes participants in the play. To effectively break the fourth wall, Boal's forum theatre creates a joker system where the contents of the drama are localised to ensure relevance and immediacy. Characters are then distanced from audience through alienation techniques, using third person in commenting about someone's character or by putting on masks. The main aim of Boal's characterisation is therefore, appropriation of theatre context to suit different audiences. This leads to the understanding of social reality in different places of performance, which is deemed paramount (Schutzman and Jan 146).

The protagonist in the Forum Theatre is oppressed and denied freedom of expression through intimidations and other social injustices. In the context of the society, the protagonist bears the pain of socially constructed values. Through Forum Theatre, the protagonist is rescued by spect-actors at a time of defeat. These spec-actors are the audience, who after sympathizing with the protagonist, provide alternative solutions. This improves the condition of the protagonist, hence, solving the problems of others in the audience who could

be facing similar problems. According to Macdonald and Rachel, Boal's creation of the protagonist serves a good purpose of representing the oppressed persons in the society (3, 4). In the context of this study, GBV victims are protagonists who bear the pain of retrogressive cultural practices that can be changed through social interventions such as Boal's Forum Theatre.

Antagonist is the character created by Boal to serve the purpose of the oppressor. The antagonist utilises all the available socially constructed avenues to take advantage of the protagonist. The antagonist is normally conservative and resists change especially when it is meant to free the oppressed. Macharia asserts that Boal's use of antagonist helps in understanding the nature of social challenges. He says, "...the society has been antagonized in traditional values that tend to oppress a section of its members..." (150).

The other character in Boals Forum Theatre is the joker. This is a character used to regulate Boal's Forum Theatre. He/she introduces the drama and provides the audience with storyline. In fact, the main distinction between Boal's Forum Theatre and other forms of theatre is the role given to the joker. The audience is fully engaged through stylistic techniques of the joker who normally uses games to excite the crowd. Ogundele argues that the use of the joker system is one of the best inventions of modern theatre because it

stimulates the audience into participation as they search for solutions to social challenges (123). This concurs with Boal's assertion that 'the audience is made to fully participate in providing solutions to social challenges being acted' (131).

2.3 Structure and Plot as Agents of Conscientisation

The structure of Boal's theatre productions begins with a typical session which starts with exercises and games. These are aimed at activating as well as enabling the spect-actor's five senses to connect with and engender the atmosphere to foster fun and creativity. The objective of the session is to come up with an evolving piece or different pieces of theatrical acts which are derived from the varying experiences of the participants. Here an expression or an issue forms the basic point of focus. Therefore, the structure of each piece should be created to encompass the protagonists. These are the oppressed who, in real life, are defeated or frustrated by the antagonist. Additionally, Trent argues that each of the sessions is overseen by a facilitator, '... the joker who is the enabler; the mediator in Forum Theatre' (49).

The Forum Theatre performance involves the replacement of the protagonist with those watching the act. These are not merely spectators, but rather, spect-actors who are in common understanding with the performers of the piece. The piece can be of any length. It is played once through to the end and the repeated all over again from the start to end. As Bowler notes, Boal believes

that the spect-actors have the capacity to offer ‘alternative actions to the protagonist and are encouraged to shout, “stop” and take over the role and try out a different approach to the issue’ (15). Quite often the plot of Forum Theatre begins with simultaneous dramaturgy where the invitation is made to the spectator who has to intervene without necessitating any physical presence on the stage. A resident proposes an issue and the actors compose the scene directly. The suggested scenario is developed to the point where it becomes a crisis that requires an immediate solution. Once this is done, the actors call on the spectators (the spectator is transformed into the actor). He or she stands up to make alternative suggestions from those presented by the actors. Bowler points out that, ‘In Boal’s theatrical plays the audience is asked to participate in the staged presentation: they are transformed from being spectators to “spect-actors.” This fulfils Boal’s vision of the purpose of theatre’ (10).

The structure of the performance allows for the theatre to change people from mere spectators (passive beings in the theatrical phenomenon) to subjects, actors and transformers who play an active role in the issue being addressed. The spectator does not relegate power or delegate it to the actor or character to think or act in his or her place. Rather, he or she assumes the protagonist’s role and changes the action, tries new solutions and changes the plans.

2.4 Language in Boal's Forum Theatre

Boal asserts that theatre is a language in itself; a language that can be used by anyone with or without an artistic talent (97). Boal's perception of the theatre is that it is part of the human language game but not restricted to spoken and written word. Hence, discursive theatres rely on the spoken or written words.

He posits that,

"...there are many languages besides those that are written or spoken. By learning a new language, a person acquires a new way of knowing reality and of passing that knowledge on to others. Each language is absolutely irreplaceable. All languages complement each other in achieving the widest, most complete knowledge of what is real." (96)

However, in the case of theatre arts, Trent notes,

'The physical-tactile communication serves more than mere words. The art of language games are subjective in the context within which they are expressed calling for an evaluation of their relevance in relation to its coherence within a particular context.' (123)

Therefore, Boal identified theatre as the perfect place where the spectators could participate in the learning of a new language with or without any artistic skills or talent.

To ensure that this passes the correct and intended message, Boal insists on the need to communicate to the audience in a language they understand. He argues that '...well intentioned theatrical groups are unable to communicate with a mass audience because they use *symbols* that are meaningless for that audience' (101). Thus, the vocabulary of theatre is such that the performer can control the body to make it more expressive. The individual is freed of his/her condition as the spectator to take on the role of an actor; changing from a

witness to a protagonist. To achieve this participatory measures in language, one must first know the body by conducting exercises to know oneself, one's limitations, strengths and social distortions. This is followed by participating in a series of games which enable expression through the body and not the habitual forms of expressions. The third is the practice of theatre that is living and present. The fourth and last stage of participatory language is the theatre as a discourse where simple forms enable the spectator/actor to come up with spectacles according to the needs and themes or rehearsals. Once this is done, then it becomes easy for the *spect-actor* to play out his or her role and deliver it in a clear and understandable manner to the other *spect-actors*. Boal opines that,

“...while the audience ‘writes’ the work, the actors perform it simultaneously. The spectator’s thoughts are discussed theatrically on stage with the help of the actors. All the solutions, suggestions, and opinions are revealed in theatrical form. The discussion itself need not simply take the form of words, but rather should be effected through all the other elements of theatrical expression as well...” (109)

Through this incentive, Forum Theatre rejects the past notion where scripts were predetermined and theatre was meant to control the populace. Bowler avers that Forum Theatre is intended to be an interactive public forum wherein possible solutions to current experiences can be exploited. Therefore, the audience is able to use the theatre as a forum where discussions can take place where everyone participates in the action through a common language (11).

2.5 Profile of the Theatre Troupes

In this study, the researcher involved two acting groups, The Kangaroo Actors and the Meru Youths Art Program. This was because the two groups were involved in sensitising the public on issues concerning the welfare of the society such as gender-based violence.

2.5.1 MYAP Theatre Troupe

MYAP initials stand for Meru Youth Arts Programme. This theatre troupe was formed in the year 2009. In 2010 it was registered as a community-based organisation. Its main objective at the time of inception was to identify, motivate, train, showcase and market talents of the youths in Meru County. In addition, the organisation is involved in youth empowerment programmes focusing on entrepreneurial empowerment, civic education, reproductive health concerns, environmental conservation, peace and social integration, child rights and Gender-based violence advocacy, cultural conservation and awareness, fighting drug and substance abuse, peace and social integration and animal rights advocacy.

MYAP began as a small group. It was founded by Mr. Benedict Muchai and other a few others. With time, it grew and has partnered with National AIDS Control Council (NACC), Ripples International, Marie Stopes International, Family Health Options, Kenya Red cross Society, Ministry of Health, SOS Children's Home, Ministry of Education, Youth, Ethics and Anti-Corruption

Commission, Ministry Of social & Gender and Save the Children Canada, among others. Its main sources of funding are membership registration and renewal fees; community grants; donor support; NGOs partnerships, and corporate sponsorship and partnerships. Members are mostly secondary school graduates and college students. When new members join, they are usually trained on performances and the group's expectations.



Figure 2.1: Banner of the MYAP group showing the groups initials, name and Motto

This group was selected for study because of its extensive work in the areas of intervention to social issues. Though this group uses several activities to advance their agenda, theatre is the most vibrant. The theatre activity of interest to this study was commissioned by the Family Health Options, a health organisation that sought a vibrant way of disseminating health knowledge to communities in Meru County.

2.5.2 Kangaroo Actors

Kangaroo Actors is a local not for profit organisation that was formed in 2000 as a Community Based Organization (CBO) under chairmanship of Mr. Chris

Mutua. Membership is based on talent in drama activities. However, members must be secondary school graduates. Kangaroo Actors trains its actors based on the task at hand. Sometimes, they do this with the help of the partnering NGO. Their main source of funding is donor funds from NGOs and governmental organizations that they work with. In most cases, the partner organisations decide the kind of activities the troupe engages in. Key among these activities is the intervention in social welfare through dramatic performances.



Figure 2.2: Kangaroo Actors in a past Forum Theatre Event

Some of the organisations they have partnered with include Plan Kenya, Hope for the African Child Initiative, National Aids Control Council, Pathfinder, USAID, Kenya Scouts Association, Save the children International, APHIA Plus, Save the Children Canada and others. Since its formation, the organisation has embarked on various projects by own initiatives as well as donor funding.

The main objective for this group is to positively contribute to changes in the socio-economic, cultural and environmental well being of the poor, vulnerable and women through implementation of activities that touch on food security, sexual and Gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health, livelihood and nutrition to orphans and vulnerable children. This group has been advocating for and raising awareness about community problems through the use of Theatre for Community Development. This is an approach that endeavours to entertain, inform and educate targeted audiences particularly, on issues of child protection, the plight of orphans affected by HIV and AIDS,, child abuse and child protection in general, civic education on issues of good governance, GBV, FGM, drugs and substance abuse, and human rights, among other social-cultural challenges impacting Meru County. The group currently operates in Igembe Central and South, Sub-counties of Meru County.

2.6 Synopses of the Plays Used in the Study

2.6.1 KIREMA by Kangaroo Actors

Kirema, an anti-model play, by Kangaroo Actors was performed at a rural market centre. The play involves Kirema, his wife – Nkatha, the local Chief Mutuma, Pastor James and a neighbour – Karendi. Kirema staggers home extremely drunk, demands food from his wife Nkatha and since she doesn't have enough, he batters her. He storms into the house, picks the food meant for their child. Nkatha pleads with, urging him not to eat the baby's food. He beats her some more, hurting the child in the process. Karendi, who

is a victim of Gender-based violence, comes to rescue Nkatha. She advises Nkatha to seek help from Mutuma, the local chief. Mutuma is also a drunkard who is likely to side with Kirema. However, the two women decide to seek his help. They explain their problems to the Chief though they highly doubt his capacity to help since he is already drunk. To their surprise, the Chief demands for a bribe that he calls *chai ya Chief* (Chief's tea). Karende offers to pay the bribe since Nkatha has no money. Sadly, the Chief does not help them even after receiving bribe. He gets more money from Kirema and forgets about the case. Having failed to get help from the chief, the two women seek help from Pastor James who also unfortunately offers nothing more than a prayer. He promises to pray for Nkatha's husband and he reminds her that the bible demands that she remains submissive even under the prevailing circumstances. He warns her against leaving her matrimonial home since it is ungodly. He quotes a bible verse that demands for submissiveness and adds that the man is always the head and should be respected. He further implores Nkatha to be committed in paying a tithe as the bible commands since 'God helps a cheerful giver'. Nkatha and Karende are not satisfied with the pastor's advice. Nkatha decides to go back home. She has to tolerate abuse. The play ends on a lugubrious note.

2.6.2 *Murega*_by MYAP Theatre Troupe

Murega is an oppressed man. This, in the eyes of the audience, was extremely odd and rare because it was not culturally acceptable for a man to be

oppressed by a woman. However, they said men who worked at vast whites' farms (*machamba*) in Nanyuki became aliens to culture and were probable victims of Gender-based violence. The play involves Murega, his wife, Kanyua, their four children (Kirimi, Murerwa, Kagendo and Kamathi), Assistant Chief Ntiirika, neighbours and a council of elders. In the play, Murega goes to work at Sir Juan's farm in Nanyuki for forty years. During this period, he hardly goes back home – he has to work all the time. Kanyua constantly visits him at his work place. Murega gives her his earnings to feed the children and pay their school fees. However, Kanyua uses the money to buy alcohol, and fashionable clothes. She does not pay the school fees and lies to the children that their father is a rich man and does not support his family, thereby causing the children to hate their father. When Murega is given his retirement benefits, he gives all the money to his wife, asking her to help build a good house for the family. Again, Kanyua misuses the money. When Murega returns home, Kanyua turns against him. She insults, telling him he neglected his family. The children side with their mother and they beat up their father. The neighbours mock him for being battered by the wife, something which is 'unacceptable'. Murega goes to report to Ntiirika but the Assistant Chief, as well, makes fun of him. He calls a friend to help him laugh at Murega. Feeling extremely depressed, Murega decides to seek help from the council of elders, hoping they will listen to his side of the story. Ironically, the elders mock, tease him and threaten him. They finally give him a piece of meat to take to the wife as a reward for beating the husband. Abused by his

wife and children, Murega seeks solace in his mother house where he turns to drinking. This is how the play ends.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed characterisation, plot and language as key ingredients of Forum Theatre. Boal's plot characters created to include the audience as participants in the play. Through the joker system, which localises the drama, Boal characterization can enhance understanding of social reality. Through Forum Theatre, the protagonist presents the oppressions in the society. The antagonist is the oppressor in Boal's Forum Theatre and is often a conservative, helping in understanding the nature of social challenges. The joker is the other character who introduces drama and gives the story's outline. The joker regulates the forum theatre through stylistic techniques. Through the structure of performance, the spectators change from passive to active beings. In this sense, Forum Theatre rejects predetermined scripts, preferring an interactive forum where the solutions to social problems can be sought. In this chapter, the profile of Kangaroo Actors and Meru Youths Art Program is provided. MYAP is concerned with motivating, identifying, training showcasing talent. In their play *Murega*, the forum addresses the oppression of a male member in the family. The objective of Kangaroo Actors is to positively contribute to changes in the socio-economic, cultural and environmental conditions for the poor, vulnerable and women. They do this through implementation of activities that touch on food security, sexual and

Gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health, livelihood and nutrition for orphans and vulnerable children. Their play, *Kirema*, highlights the plight of Nkatha who is abused by her husband Kirema.

CHAPTER THREE

**CHARACTERISATION AS A MEANS OF FIGHTING AGAINST
GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the use of characterisation as agents in the fight against Gender-based violence. It will triangulate Boal's Forum Theatre with character portrayal as well as the fight against Gender-based violence as it emerged in the plays. Lastly it presents a summary of the findings of the chapter.

According to Mitchell and Freytag, in Forum Theatre, Boal provides a platform where the oppressed can voice their concerns and change the way the antagonists view them. In addition, he creates a protagonist (oppressed) who could be replaced by any willing member of audience and antagonist(s) – oppressor(s) – whose main role is to intensify oppression (5, 12). In theatre for advocacy on issues such as Gender-based violence, characterisation is very important in order to achieve conscientisation. Normally, in many types of theatre, there exists a gap between the actor and the spectators. The spectator is not always allowed to intervene in the theatrical situations. However, Forum Theatre is practiced in such a way that the spectators are expected to be active and are thus allowed to participate and are given the opportunity to observe and act, hence helping in addressing the societal problem (Mitchell and Freitag 14). In such a set-up, the theatrical situation is deeply experienced as a

platform for dialogue and a self-empowering process, involving a moderator – the joker. This chapter will, therefore, identify the antagonist(s), protagonist(s), joker(s) and other peripheral characters in the two plays. It will then proceed to interrogate their characterisation as far as Forum Theatre is concerned. Lastly, it will investigate their role in making the plays more responsive to the fight against Gender-based violence in Meru County.

3.2 Characterisation and Gender Balance

In each of the two plays, different characters have been used to the objectives of each play. In each case, the theme of oppressions is brought about by the various characters. In *Kirema* by Kangaroo Actors, the following characters are involved: Kirema, his wife Nkatha, the local Chief Mutuma, Pastor James and a neighbour called Karendi. There are two women, and three (3) men. Further, there is imbalance in relation to the roles played by each gender. The two women play the roles of a wife (Nkatha) and a neighbour (Karendi). This is an indication of gender imbalance in terms of power and number in the play.

In the play, *Murega*, by MYAP, the following characters are involved. Murega, his wife Kanyua, their four children (Kiriimi, Murerwa, Kagendo and Kamathi), Assistant Chief Ntiirika, neighbours and a council of elders. In this play, there is a gender imbalance with four (4) male actors (Murega, Kiriimi, Murerwa, and Ntiirika) and three (3) female actors (Kanyua, Kagendo, Kamathi). Besides, there is a council of elders, which is ideally composed of

males in line with the Meru culture. There is also power imbalance in relation to gender, whereby all the positions of power are held by men. For instance, the Assistant Chief, Ntiirika, is a man, while the council of elders is exclusively composed of men despite their role in making decisions that affect both men and women. On the other hand, the three women in the play are wife (Kanyua), and her two daughters.

3.3 Spectator Response to Characterisation

Spectators participated actively in relation to the roles of the characters when the play, *Kirema*, by Kangaroo Actors, was staged. They responded to GBV projected in the play, even sometimes pointing out the flaws of the play, which was – though they weren't aware – in relation to adherence to the Forum Theatre as expected by Boal. For instance, the role of the Joker was not adequately felt. The audience highlighted this by showing their displeasure. Further, he took a lot of time interpreting unnecessarily for the audience yet the oppression was self-explanatory. Some spectators were heard clicking any time he interrupted unnecessarily – his interruptions of the spectrum actors were too frequent limiting the flow of the forum session. Worse still, he failed to explain to spectators that instant magic solutions were unrealistic and that it is impossible to solve problems by wishing them away. Also, there is minimal interaction between the characters and the audience in this play. This was further evidence of lack of intensity on the role of the joker who should ensure this is achieved.

In the play *Murega* by MYAP, there is more input by the audience with regard to characterisation. Perhaps this was due to the fact that the play has a quite an uncommon perspective – Murega, the husband, was the victim of GBV. This is a very rare occurrence in the Meru culture. In most cases, it is the women that are usually the victims. (Kameri-Mbote 2). One of the participants during the FGD also observed thus;

The use of TfD to highlight the issues in our community has really changed my perception of GBV. The play really highlighted different perspectives on Gender-based violence. At least, now people know how intricate this issue is and that men suffer, too. And yes, I would agree that the performance changed my views of GBV. This is more so in regards to the involvement of the audience. I feel that the approach engages the audience and really brings up issues that would otherwise go untouched.



Figure 3.1: MYAP group in action at a past theatre event

The observation by the spectator above shows how performance of a play impacts the perception of the audience. It also shows TfD's influence on the audiences' level of involvement in the ongoing social debate on critical societal issues. This concurs with Quinn's assertion that an ideal work of theatre is often intended to exert a strong influence on the concept of identity

and participation among local African audiences (79). In another observation, a respondent claimed that,

Performances on GBV are really informative. They really do address the issues from a multifaceted point of view. Using jokers to involve the audience is also critical to its success in eliciting critical and thoughtful approaches towards the whole issues of Gender-based violence.

According to Boal, the function of the joker is to be magical, omniscient, polymorphous, and ubiquitous (159). Once on stage, the joker takes on a number of roles including being an MC, raisonneur, among others. He makes all the explanations, verified in the structure of the performance.

The joker character in *Murega* MYAP performance was depicted characteristics of Boal's explanation of the joker. After the introduction, he explained to the audience the rules of the game, gave them the plot outline and reminded them they were only expected to replace the antagonists and not the protagonist. During the second show he encouraged spectators to intervene and also to take part in acting. The audience at some point got furious especially when they saw a man being beaten. The men in particular felt offended and became aggressive. It took the great effort of the joker to contain the situation. This shows the degree of influence the joker has on the audience and the eventual response to this influence by the audience.

3.4 Spectators vs. Actors Change of Characterisation

In the two plays, there is a varying degree in change of characterisation. In the play *Kirema* by Kangaroo Actors, spectators from the audience replaced the protagonist. They decided that the best way to deal with the violence was for the wife to take her child and go back to her parents' house. She actually said, *Si niko na wazazi? Mbona niteseke.* (Why should I suffer when I have parents?). After this remark, she improvised a sack, in which she put her belongings, carried her child and set off to her parents' home. Initially, the welcome at her parents' was warm with a lot of questions from the father on how the husband was doing. However, it changed when she told them about her situation and her decision to come back home. The actors 'made it difficult for her'. The man acting as the father informed her that the husband owned her body and soul and since it was late, she was given a chance to spend two nights at their home and go back to her husband. For those two nights, her father informed her that she was to sleep on the floor with her child, a directive that her mother agreed with. However, the audience agreed that that was not a good solution to the problem. Some members of the audience disagreed with directive to sleep on the floor. They seemed confused and were heard saying '*angevumilia kwake*' (she should have persevered at her home). They thought sleeping on the floor was demeaning than being beaten.



Figure 3.2: MYAP in a past Forum Theatre Action. Note the readiness of the spectator on the right to join in the action

The play took a different course when another spectator jumped on stage to replace the protagonist. Her first line was *Hawezi kunisumbua maisha yangu yote.* (He cannot stress me for the rest of my life). She poisoned the food. When the husband came back, he ate it and died. The play ended with the protagonist being arrested. Unfortunately, the joker failed to explain to the audience the effects of unrealistic alternatives thus the forum ended with hopelessness. Therefore, even though there was change of characters, this did not lead to the expected results. The role of the joker was not effective in explaining such complexities. However, it should be noted that due to the absence of help from the State for Gender-based violence victims, there have been cases of women taking law into their hands and murdering their violent husbands. Kenyan prisons are full of such women. For instance, Mutethia reported that a Meru man was scalded with hot water by the wife after a

domestic disagreement (Mutethia). Similar cases are reported by Gathogo who cites several cases across Kenya where men have been victims of domestic violence (1 - 2). It was, therefore, not farfetched when the 'new actress' decided that the best way to deal with a violent husband was to poison him.

The play by MYAP was quite reminiscent of this change of characterisation as expected of a Forum Theatre. For instance, the play *Murega* by MYAP created opportunities for spectators to intervene. Most people participated in it. One of the audience members said this was because it was not acceptable for a man to be chased away by his wife. The first spect-actor replaced the Assistant Chief and decided to go and talk to the wife. However his offer to help created more problems because immediately he left, the protagonist was denied food and thrown out of the house. A second one replaced the chairman of the council of elders. He directed the husband to undergo the ritual of becoming a member of council of elders so that they could protect him. When this failed to yield the expected results, the audience shouted at the joker and as a result, the protagonist was replaced.

3.5 Portrayal of GBV by Characters

Through their roles in each play, all characters play a significant role in showing how GBV manifests itself within communities in Meru County.

3.5.1 Kirema by Kangaroo Actors Play

In the play *Kirema*, Nkatha is the protagonist who tries to deal with Gender-based violence. She portrays the level of naivety that engulfs GBV victims which makes them to fail to stop the vice in the society. Nkatha is naive and she believes that the pastor – another character – can genuinely help her escape her GBV misery. She cannot read through his greed, especially his insistence on paying of the tithe and on submissiveness without offering any help. He only promises to pray for Kirema, her abusive husband. When all the avenues close, Nkatha chooses to stay in an abusive relationship. This gives the impression that most women who experiences GBV within the society, eventually, fail to get a solution, hence, submit – reluctantly – to the abuse. Nkatha stays ‘for the sake of her children’. According to Boi, women in marriages where domestic violence prevalence is high stay because of their children (39). Most of the women do not have the financial muscle to take of their children’s financial needs by themselves. Therefore, they are forced to persevere the abuse to ensure their children go to school and receive basic needs like food, clothing and shelter – from their abusive father. In some cases, the children, especially the daughters, are abused by the father once the mother leaves the home. Hence, they prefer to stay around to prevent this abused by the father (NGEC 38). This is also compounded by the patrilineal Meru culture where the children ‘belong’ to the father and if a woman decides to leave her matrimonial home, she is expected to leave the children behind (Boi 39).

Further, Nkatha is depicted as a religious woman. She believes her pastor can intervene and save her situation. Sadly, she finally chooses submissiveness that the pastor preaches. She takes solace in religion which turns out to be oppressive as well. Through her, the relationship between GBV and religion within the society is made clear. Instead of using effective and real problem-solving strategies, women take solace in the religion with the hope that prayer can change the situation (Nkaabu 59). Nkatha is ignorant – she is not well informed of her rights. She is battered by Kirema after serving him a meal of maize and beans. She believes it's her responsibility to provide food for her children and husband even when he spends most of his time drinking. In this case, Nkatha portrays women who despite abuse must, still, shoulder the responsibilities of being mothers and wives.

Nkatha's helplessness leads to disillusionment when she realises that the Chief may not help her since he is Kirema's friend and drinking partner. She gives up and decides to swallow the bitter pill of staying in abusive relationship. This depicts the level of frustration and disillusionment that engulfs GBV victims especially women when the recommended channels do not function (Boi 43). Therefore, Nkatha represents the position of women in abusive unions in Meru community who suffer physically and emotionally but the general society does not find anything extraordinary with her plight (Boi 43). She has been used to portray how GBV has been accepted in the Meru County – as norm – instead of being fought. Based on Nkatha's situation, it

can be deduced that gender power is skewed against women. All instruments of redress are against them to the extent that they now suffer in silence.

Nkatha embodies conscientisation on the helplessness of women in the society.

One participant observed that,

Most of the times, if characterisation is done right, the troupes often achieve conscientisation on issues they address. However, there are instances where the forum performances fail to achieve conscientisation. These occur when there is inadequate community participation and unexamined issues due to censorship.

Karendi – Nkatha’s friend – advises Nkatha to seek redress from the Chiefs since he is a government official charged with resolving such conflicts. This shows she is aware of the right place to seek redress. This goes against the current – most women in Meru who are unaware of their legal rights, hence, they do not seek redress from the government. Boi reported that the legal measures in place to detect and prevent GBV in Meru County were ineffective because the public as well as the police officers who receive cases are unaware of what they are supposed to do – they lack knowledge on how to seek redress (43 – 45). This has roots in the government’s inability to sensitise women on availability of channels of redress. Sadly, these channels are almost always defective due to corruption and lack of capacity (Boi 48). This is evident in the play – the Chief demands a bribe from Nkatha in order to help her when he was expected to obtain an arrest warrant from the court and arrest the culprit. The Chief would have then produced him in a court of law

within 48 hours to face charges of assault. However, the Chief in the play, does not enforce the law. Instead, he demands for a bribe.

Karendi, like most Kenyan citizens who have come to accept the corrupt nature of some government officials, realises that without a bribe one cannot get services. She offers to pay a bribe on behalf of her friend. Karendi sympathises with her friend, Nkatha, and wonders how long she will continue suffering GBV. The implication of offering a bribe is an admission and acceptance of the bitter reality that most women in Kenya suffer abuse under a corrupt system that perpetuates GBV in the community (NGEC 54). In this case, Karendi shows how helpless women can be, given the strictness in respecting the marriage institution among the Meru. Indeed, the marriage institution is given weight to the extent that given a choice between sufferings and ending a marriage, many will opt to suffer (Boi 39). The traditional belief in the sanctity of marriage coupled by religious admonitions of male dominance forces many women to bear the brunt of marital violence in silence (Nkaabu, 3, 18). Amidst all these road blocks erected on the path of women, Karendi stands out as a voice of reason, willing to take on the violent husband. She reports him to the government representatives but she is let down by the same government officials that demands bribes.

The conservative Meru traditions on matters marriage, again play out in the play *Kirema* by the Kangaroo Actors. Kirema the oppressive husband plays

the role of antagonist. He oppresses his wife throughout the play. He portrays the picture of the oppressor in relation to GBV in Meru County. Kirema is favoured by power relations in a patriarchal society, which views the man as the authority in a home by virtue of being a man. This power demands violence as a means of asserting it. Unfortunately, gender power can lead to waste. Kirema is a drunkard who wastes the little family resources on the drink, hence, can't provide for the family. To make matters worse, he demands for expensive food that he wife is unable to provide. While the husband is expected to love, protect and provide for the family, he does the opposite: he regrets paying dowry, does not provide for his family and he beats his wife. He avoids any responsibility. In addition, he does not agree to the idea of his wife seeking help. When his wife goes to seek for help from the pastor, she hides – in the dark – when she hears him approaching.

The character of Kirema is made deeply virulent, violent and repugnant to rebuke men that oppress women just because they are women. Kirema, according to societal expectations, was supposed to provide food for his family and beat his wife due to his own failure. During the FGD, a participant observed that the community was highly patriarchal and Kirema was a symbol of male dominance. It should be noted that GBV is, at times, misconstrued to be an act of corrective behaviour on erring women. However, it is an exertion of male dominance. The GBV oppressor lacks sympathy, reason, and consideration for a GBV victim.

The pastor, who should ideally be a mediator, instead, promotes GBV by appealing for hope rather than applying reason. In this play, the pastor represents religion and its role in promoting Gender-based violence instead of offering meaningful solutions. It should be noted that Meru County has a very high percentage of the Christian population. Religion has been accused of either doing nothing in the face of oppression or worse still, standing on the side of the oppressor. According to the society, the role of a pastor is to offer spiritual help through prayers.



Figure 3.3: MYAP actors in a Forum Theatre showing the Hypocrisy of Religious Leaders

In this play, the pastors prays for the injured wife and promises her that God is in control;

“.....Vumilia na umuombee dada na uzidi kutoa fungu la kumi, mungu atakusikia, hivyo basi mtumishi anaomba kuondoka, nikuachia Baraka za mungu baba mwana na roho mtakatifu Amina”

(Persevere and pray for him, my sister. Continue tithing, God will hear you. I, God’s servant, wants to leave. I bless you in the name of the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen)

It is ironical that the pastor asks her to pray for her husband to change but still demands for a tithe and does not try to get a practical solution to the GBV. Faith-based leaders can be powerful behavioural change agents as they are revered and respected in communities. They can help people like Kirema to change their perception and behaviour towards women and as such stop GBV. The villagers who watched the play argued that the pastor was speaking for most churches and some religions. For example, the pastor quoted that the bible, saying that women should be submissive their husbands. This served as a reminder to oppressed women, that like Nkatha, they were to suffer in silence. This in particular painted the church in bad light – that of being an enable and or an agent of Gender-based violence. Writing about Meru women and their attempts to survive the intrahousehold gender conflicts that occur in the horticultural sector, Dolan makes a curious quip on how they deploy religion and witchcraft. She narrates that women get saved not because they are religious but so as to maintain stability of their marriages and negotiate what she labels ‘patriarchal bargain’ (26). She further enumerates the virtues of a good Christian wife (*mwekuru umwega*) as dictated by the Meru social cultural and religious interpretations key of which are: not quarrelling the husband, obeying the husband, not speaking badly about him, not speaking rudely to him, and welcoming guests in her home. Conversely, she opines that a bad woman is one who neglects God, her husband and children. This intertwining of religion and social cultural norms, therefore, oppress a woman even before a husband has been introduced in her life. One can see

that women are expected to be almost slaves to their husbands. This is the reason Nkatha's resigns to her fate in the play. Her thinking and decision-making can be understood within this context. The character of the pastor was more of a dreamer, a fantasist who believed that a prayer would solve a serious Gender-based violence case. Additionally, his insistence on the paying of a tithe brought him out a deceiver in him, – one who was out to take advantage of a GBV victim. It brought to the fore the plight of GBV victims who seek help from such deceptive religious representatives. One would have expected the pastor to advice Nkatha and take an active role in ensuring that the culprit, Kirema, is punished accordingly. He should have asked Nkatha to report the matter to the police or to the Chief and thereafter, followed up to ensure that justice is done. However, he did not. However, as we will see in the next discussion, the Chief is not any better.

The Chief, on the other hand, represents the government, hence, its power. In Kenya a Chief is the representative of the executive arm of the government at the ward level also known as location (Bagaka 4). Therefore, the Chief, with his or her administrative power can help solve GBV cases. He has legal authority to investigate and intervene, and even propose prosecution and punishment for the GBV perpetrators. Ironically, the Chief in the play sides with the oppressor. He refuses to use his power as an administration officer to help a victim of gender violence. He is unethical.

The Chief is a drunkard, which compounds an already worse situation for the victim of GBV. This is because he drinks with the men who abuse and assault women (the victims). This is why Nkatha and Karendi seemed to lack confidence in him and sure enough he ended up oppressing them more by soliciting bribes from them. The Chief's character was that of open cynic, blocking any opportunity for breakthrough for the Gender-based violence victims. Understandably, it must have been because Kirema, the wife batterer, was his drinking mate. It was then obvious that if he was receiving bribe from the women he could as well receive from Kirema and therefore the problem could not be addressed and oppression got worse.

Therefore, the Chief enables GBV due to his actions. He maintains the status quo thereby empowering the oppressors to continue oppressing their victims. Worse, his exhortation of victims without offering any solution falls short of his legal and ethical expectations. As such, he portrays GBV as an inherent problem which even the authorities are not sensitive to.

3.5.2 Meru Youth Arts Program Play

Kangaroo Actors play plugged into the patriarchal conservatism of the Meru to tell the narrative of oppressed women at the hands of both their men and their government. On the other hand, Meru Youth Arts Program play turned this patriarchal conservatism on its head. In this group's play, *Murega*, the man, Murega, was the oppressed. This, according to the audience, is extremely

odd and rare. According to Gathogo a man became a *murume* (an adult male) after the weaning rites at the age of 15 –18. These rites signify not only a rite to adulthood but also signified a community soldier (warrior), a leader and a protector (4). Therefore, being battered by a woman is a taboo and an abomination. To avoid being termed as an abomination, men exert control over their families, through any means, including violence. Moreover, as Boi claims, beating a wife and children is *a sign of love* from the husband (39).

The conservative nature of the Meru culture also calls on any familial issue to be resolved within the confines of the family. When a man feels slighted, he has to subdue the wife through beating to reinforce his status as the head of the family. When a woman beats a man, this status quo is reversed and such a man loses his self-respect and that of the community. This is more so when he has to go back to his father to provide for him like a child (Gathogo 4). Therefore, the alien concept of a wife (Kanyua) beating her husband (Murega) in the play *Murega* by MYAP plugs itself in this patriarchal society where male dominance is expected and even encouraged. In this play, the husband is portrayed as a victim of various types of abuse by the wife.

At the beginning of the play, it is established that Murega has provided money for food and tuition fees for their children, which the wife has squandered. This serves as the inciting incident of the play as Murega seeks to know where the money goes. To make matters worse, his wife (Kanyua) has set the

children against their father by lying to them that he holds a senior position in one of the farms at Nanyuki and therefore, he is rich but does not provide for them. Upon retirement, Murega goes home only to be welcomed by insults and when he complains, is beaten and sent away. The protagonist faces oppression from the neighbours as well, when he is beaten neighbours come to watch and laugh at him while making fun of him instead of helping him. A man being beaten by a woman is viewed by society as a sign of weakness. That is why he is mocked. Murega receives worse treatment when he goes to the Assistant Chief's office. Those present laugh at him and make fun of him. When he decides to seek help from the council of elders, they get furious and threaten him because traditions dictate that as the man of the house he should not be beaten by his wife. They are sarcastic; they give him a piece of meat to take to the wife and congratulate her for being the man. He is even threatened that he should leave her or he would be fined. Helpless, the man decides to go to live in his mother's house and he becomes a drunkard.

Through Murega's character, the actors bring out the other side of Gender-based violence that is meted on men by women. Murega is the one that is oppressed. He represents a minority group of victims, who, despite their suffering, cannot confess due to stigma since it is against the norm. Usually, they are expected to instruct and punish their wives as culturally necessary. Eventually, Murega successfully shapes the narrative of men who are GBV victims and their inability to seek help due to the mockery that they are

subjected to. The play, therefore, encourages any man in the audience who could be suffering under the yolk of gender based oppression to speak out.

On the other hand, Murega's wife, Kanyua, is projected as the oppressor. The uneven gender power play existing between men and women plays out in this play. Women are not trusted to go out and look for money to fend for their families. It is only men who can go out and seek work on farms (in this in Nanyuki) to earn money in order to sustain the family – back at home. Kanyua takes advantage of her husband's absence; she uses the money as she wants, and not as her husband had instructed her. The reason Murega does not go home is that his wife, Kanyua, insists that he should work overtime to increase his earnings. She promises to take care of the family only to set the children against their father whom they beat mercilessly.

In this case, just like in the first play, *Kirema*, the role of the oppressor comes out clearly in line with Boal's Forum Theatre. The wife, Kanyua, who is the oppressor, contributes in showing that GBV does not just affect the female gender but the male gender too.

The Assistant Chief is charged with resolving conflicts and taking action against those who break the law, including those who perpetrate violence against others. He or she must deal with Gender-based violence issues if they arise in his or her jurisdiction. The Assistant Chief's role is critical to law

enforcement and conflict resolution because he is the first administrative contact between the government and the people. If he or she abdicates, cases of violence and other crimes in the society are bound to increase. The victims will not have a safe place to report their problems. The Assistant Chief in the play *Kirema* is another antagonist who, just like in the Chief in the play *Murega*, fails to provide a solution yet he has the power, means, and authority to do so. Instead, the Assistant Chief, his friend and the council of elders turn out to be another group of oppressors. The Assistant Chief is obliged to solve conflicts within his village without discrimination, however since the community believes in male dominance, Murega fails to get help. He actually orders Murega to go back and beat the wife and children and that their screams should be heard by all villagers. Together with his friend they laugh at Murega calling him henpecked.

“Pwahahaha, umekaa kwa mzungu ukakuwa zuzu la mtu. Mimefanya kazi miaka kumi na saba na sijawahi sikia kesi kama yako. Mwanamume muMeru amepigwa na bibi? Hai!!! Uko na kasoro kubwa sana. Ni nani mwanamume kwa hiyo nyumba sasa? Sikiza Kwa makini, mwanamume ni simba kwa nyumba? Rudi huko na uwatandike wote sawasawa – huyo mwanamke na watoto wapige nduru hadi niwasikie nikiwa hapa. Usiaibishe wanaume waMeru. (Anaita M'mwenda) Haha! M'Mwenda, M'Mwenda yeeee, njoo uone ndume akikamuliwa, hahahaha!!!”

(Laughs derisively). You have worked for the white man and become extremely foolish. I have worked for seventeen years and I have not encountered a case like this one of yours. A Meru man beaten by the wife? You must have a big problem. Who is the husband in that house now? Go back to that house beat them up until I can hear that woman and her children screaming. Don't embarrass men from Meru. (He calls M'Mwenda) M'Mwenda come and see a bull being milked hahahaha.

The Assistant Chief is expected to tackle issues to do with Gender-based violence because he is the representative of the government at that level. However, when the husband reports this case, as seen above, the Assistant Chief mocks him, saying that he has never solved of a case involving a woman who beats her husband. Basically, he does not expect it. The Assistant Chief calls a friend to listen to the issue and they both laugh at Murega instead of helping him. He also portrays GBV as acceptable in the society as long as it is the husband beating the wife. This is the reason he instructs Murega, the victim, to go back home and beat his wife and children.

The council of elders (Njuri Ncheke/Kiama) is a respected body that has immense authority among the Ameru people. They are expected to solve any dispute that is taken to them by community members. They discuss, deliberate and pass judgement. Sometimes, they punish culprits or perpetrators of both petty and serious crimes, severely (Mburugu and Macharia 25). This group is the chief counsel of the community and it is tasked with the responsibility of solving problems within the society. Such problems include Gender-based violence (Ndung'u). According to Ndung'u, the elders play a major role in the society where they discuss the implementation of policies on sexual and Gender-based violence. To address these issues, they sought to regulate the issue of dowry payment, and welcome traditions for boys and girls. Mburugu and Macharia do affirm that the Njuri-Ncheke was formed to make laws, issue state orders as well as decrees, affecting the Meru community. However, in

the play, when Murega, the husband, greets the elders with respect and explains his case, the elders laugh at him and continue eating meat. One of the elders threatens him, saying that if he does not leave, they will eat the meat meant for him. He is even accused of stepping in the house of the council of elders with dirty feet. Hence, the elders fine him two goats, which he is expected to deliver to the council within two weeks. They also applaud the wife for being the ‘man’ of the house. In this regard, they offer Murega a piece of meat to take to the wife as reward, from the elders. This caricature of Nchuri Ncheke, a respected institution within the Meru community, helps the playwright to invite the audience to question its relevance and even usefulness in the fight against GBV. By compounding Murega’s woes when he goes to them seeking help after being beaten by his wife, the play points to the sad truth of men experiencing GBV. Their reaction to this case of GBV is that of shock.

Amka uendee zako. Tukiamua tutakula Nyama yako. Pelekea bibi hii nyama. Ni zawadi ya kuwa yeye ndiye mwanaumme nyumbani kwako. Umepewa wiki mbili ulete mbuzi mbili kwa wazee ili usamehewe kukanyaga nyumba ya wazee na uchafu.”

(Get up and leave. When we decide we will feed on your meat. Take this piece of meat to your wife. It’s a present to her for being the husband in your house. You have been given two weeks to bring two goats so that you can be forgiven for stepping into the elders’ house with dirty feet.)

In this case, the council of elders portrays GBV as acceptable in the society. However, this does not depict them as unwise, but as proponents of patriarchy and custodian of the traditions whose time has passed. The council does not define the rules but seek to uphold historical cultural practices of the Ameru

culture. Hence, they cannot be described as unwise. However, their solution to GBV are contradictory to the legal expectations in the modern society, whereby GBV is unacceptable. Therefore, they represent the face of traditional authority which accepted GBV in marriage, but only when it targets women.

3.6 Audience Interaction on GBV by Actors

Audience interaction is a key plank in Forum Theatre. According to Warheit, it must not give spectators answers but rather a stimulation to enact the answers themselves (23). The voice of the audience is widely heard in reaction to the two plays, *Kirema* and *Murega*, which address issue to do with GBV. For instance, in the play *Kirema* by Kangaroo Actors, the audience comes in to offer solutions to the GBV problem at hand. Members of the audience hint that if a woman goes out of her marital home to her parents' home after a conflict, she is not allowed to sleep in bed, she sleeps on the floor. However, they audience agrees that not all parents asked their daughter to do this. This suggests that there is an opportunity for Nkatha to go back to her parents without fearing that she would be scolded. This ensures a positive solution by the audience. The audience also suggests that Nkatha, the oppressed, should kill Kirema, the oppressor, to provide an instant solution to the GBV problem. However, this decision is disqualified by the fact that if the oppressors are all to be killed as the solution to GBV, then there would be very many deaths in the community. It is unlawful, too.

In the play *Murega* by MYAP, the audience provides alternative solutions to end the GBV observed, especially due to the fact that it is uncommon among the Ameru. For instance, one member of the audience intervenes by replacing the Assistant Chief. He goes to the victim's (Murega's) home and offers a solution. However, this does not prove useful because as soon as he leaves, the victim is denied food by the oppressor, his wife – Kanyua. This means that for the solution to work there must be a more complex approach to this issue.

3.7 Characters Intervention on Negative Perception on GBV in the Society

In the two plays, *Kirema* and *Murega*, different characters portray the negativity surrounding the issues of GBV in the play, which eventually affects the ability to solve the issues around GBV.

In *Kirema* by Kangaroo Actors, some characters intervene to influence the negative perception of GBV. For instance, Karendi seems to be among the few characters who are willing to intervene. As a friend to the oppressed (Nkatha), Karendi is ready to help her friend to solve the GBV problem, meaning she sees it as a problem rather than a culture. This is unlike several other characters who, despite having the power to stop GBV, still think it is not a problem. Karendi advises Nkatha to seek help from the Chief, and even offers her some money to bribe the Chief since it seems to be the practice in the society.

The pastor (James) is also another character who sympathises with Nkatha and intervenes to stem the negative perception of GBV in the play. He believes prayer can be used to stop GBV, meaning he sees it as a problem that should, eventually, be solved.

In the play *Murega* by MYAP, most of the characters see no problem with GBV. Hence, there is minimal intervention on the negativity surrounding GBV. In fact, the victim (Murega) is widely mocked by other actors who play the role. It is only his children who empathise with him after knowing the truth. Hence, they are the only actors who show some intervention with regards to stemming off GBV.

3.8 Audience Intervention on Negative Perception on GBV in the Society

Like the characters, participation of the audience to some extent portrays intervention on negative perception of GBV in the society. Empathy for victims triggers the audience to intervene. For instance, in the play, *Kirema* by Kangaroo Actors, the audience suggests that the oppressor (Kirema) should be killed, despite the fact that this is an extreme solution. This shows that the audience is highly opposed to GBV as portrayed in this play whereby the oppressors torture the victim (Nkatha) and get away with it. The audience is dissatisfied with those in authority who seems to accept GBV as a norm.

The audience also shows their support to the GBV victim in the play, *Murega* by MYAP. For instance, a spect-actor – one member of the audience – seeks a legal approach to the problem, which, eventually, forces the Assistant Chief to act. In this case, he records his case with the police and gets an Occurrence Booking (OB) number that he presents to the Assistant Chief to force him into action. Indeed, the Assistant Chief acts – he uses an M-Pesa message as evidence for the case. Armed with this, he is able to find an amicable solution to the problem. The rest of the audience is happy with the results. They regard the solution as the best compared to asking the victim join the council which would have promoted further oppression. This suggests that the audience is against GBV.

3.9 Characterization, GBV, and Conscientisation

In the two plays, characterization is used in different ways to bring about conscientisation. The actors in each of the two plays play their roles effectively to shine a light on GBV in the Meru County. In the play, *Kirema*, there is no much reaction by the audience due to the fact that the violence that is portrayed is commonly experienced probably by some of the members of the audience. Each character does their best and as they play their roles, they bring to attention GBV in Meru County. The victim, Nkatha, is depicted as helpless despite the fact that she is suffering. She draws the audience's attention to the suffering and helplessness of the oppressed women, facing GBV in Meru County. The oppressor, Kirema, shows the level of oppression and pride and

comfort with which oppressors perpetrate GBV and get away with it. The local chief, Mutuma, portrays the level of ignorance by the authorities, who, despite being aware of the GBV challenge still solicit money from the victims and oppressors while maintaining the status quo. The pastor (James) on the other hand, portrays religious leaders who are incapable of helping victims. They instead prescribe spiritual solutions to the problem, hoping the problem will go away. Karende represents friends who are willing to help but can only do so much. The role of the joker is not felt as would be expected in Forum Theatre, hence, the involvement of the audience to get to a widely acceptable solution is inhibited. Therefore, through the interaction of various characters, the audience is sensitized on the negative effects of GBV on women and the challenges victims face as they seek help in Meru County.

In the play, *Murega*, various characters interact, too, to shine a light on GBV, which in this case is meted on men in Meru County. As seen in the play, GBV against men is a fairly rare scenario. However, the characters play their roles well to sensitize the audience on the plight of men as victims of GBV in Meru County. Murega, the victim, represents men who suffer in silence as they brave GBV. These men cannot access any form of help due to shame and they are mocked once their situations are exposed to the public. Through the role that Murega plays, the society is made aware of the fact that men, too, experience GBV and its effects are as traumatising just as those experienced by women in the same context. The wife, (Kanyua), represents a minority of

women who abuse their husbands, bringing to the attention of the audience that GBV is sometimes perpetrated by women. The council of elders (Njuri Ncheke) represents the community's authority and together with the Assistant Chief show the level of negativity and disdain that GBV against men draws. On the hand, the children show how children are manipulated by their mothers who further GBV against their husbands. The role of a joker in this play is effectively applied, with numerous interventions, which eventually offer a perfect solution to the problem. As such, while perfectly adhering to expectations of Forum Theatre in relation to audience involvement towards an amicable solution, interaction of all characters in this play helps to sensitise the audience on the plight of GBV against men and how it can be resolved.

3.10 Conclusion

In Boal's Forum Theatre, there is much emphasis on characterisation. All characters should be involved in their different capacities, either as protagonists or antagonists in order to help solve a pertinent issue in the society. Victims and oppressors according to Boal help make Forum Theatre effective. Further, Boal insists on active participation of the audience. Members of the audience should be involved in the play at different times. They do this by giving their opinions, regarding the problem and solutions. In this case, a joker is used to ensure there is adequate involvement of the audience. In the two plays in this study, Boal's ideas are applied though in different degrees. *Kirema* by Kangaroo Actors has an evident victim (Nkatha)

and oppressor (Kirema) and other actors who support the two in the GBV context in the play. However, the joker is not quite effective hence this limits the participation of the audience in the proceedings. This suggests that characterisation in this play does not meet the expectation of Forum Theatre as proposed by Boal. This failure however may not necessarily be placed on the actors. As Komu puts it, a large percentage of participatory failures arises from inadequate training of the actors, hence, limiting their ability to engage communities (247). On the other hand, besides having a victim (Murega), an oppressor (Kanyua), and sympathisers, the play *Murega* by MYAP has an active joker who triggers active participation of the audience, involving them in finding an acceptable and appropriate solution to the GBV problem at hand. This play, *Murega*, adheres to characterisation expectations of Forum Theatre according to Boal.

CHAPTER FOUR

PLOT AND STRUCTURE AS POINTERS TO THE FIGHT AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the plot and structure of Forum Theatres will be used to identify the pointers that are used to fight against gender-based violence. Here, the study looks at the aspect of plot development in forum theatre, how the participation of the spectator influences plot diversion, we shall also look at plot interventions and how it advances GBV conscientisation.

4.2 Aspects of Plot Development in Forum Theatre

The structure and plot of Forum Theatre performance is not predictable. An anti-model play is supposed to present a conflict and leave it unsolved. Unpredictability comes in when spect-actors disagree with the situation and change the course of action through audience-actor interaction where the audience members propose solutions to the problem that the protagonist faces. The solutions are played out by the actors and spect-actors, one by one, until all solutions have been exhausted. This technique opens up interactive dialogue on stage. This is observed in the first play, *Kirema*, by Kangaroo Actors. On the other hand, a model play involves exploration of all possible opportunities through which a solution can be achieved. This is after disagreeing on the current situation, involving the spect-actors, and getting a solution to the problem as observed in the play, *Murega*, by MYAP.

The aim of Forum Theatre is to explore real scenarios like GBV in a way that empowers the audience to search for and find solutions, and change the outcome of a scenario for the better. It is a form of interactive drama. Hence, the main objective of the plot is to ensure interaction towards seeking the best solution among alternatives presented. A participant involved in preparation of performances stated that,

The troupe's addresses day-to-day challenges facing the society. We examine the society and go about identifying pressing issues in the community and then go about arranging for a play. Our main aim is to help sensitise and create awareness in the community about issues affecting them.

Boal advocates for a theatre with spectators, who he refers to as spect-actors, that are incited to act immediately on stage to embody the social behaviour changes necessary to address a given problem (xxi). The audience are encouraged to take on the status of "spect-actor," by stepping on stage themselves (sic) to replace one of the actors and modify the scene's outcome. This modification is what gives forth to an indeterminate plot. As such, participation of the spectators is one of the most important factors in the plot of a Forum Theatre. Further, Boal advocates for interaction and involvement of the audience in identifying the best possible solution, meaning that the plot should focus in creating room for multiple interventions for solutions (Boal 109).

4.3 Spectator Influence in Plot Diversions into GBV

In the two plays, *Murega and Kirema*, the audience is involved in different degrees and different stages to alter the original structure and plot of the plays. In the performance of *Murega* by MYAP the audience participation was fully explored. To begin with the joker encourages interventions, opens up dialogues with the audience – in between the scenes – and he draws out themes and realisations without imposing his ideas or dictating the course of events. As a result, the plot of the anti-model play took a different course as the spect-actors stepped in to replace the actors.

One of the participants observed thus;

Sometimes during the play, I felt that some actors, including the Assistant Chief and the joker, were not really appropriate for the role.

During the play, this spect-actor felt that the Assistant Chief failed. He, therefore, replaced the Assistant Chief and went on to a warning to the wife (antagonist). The audience members were heard saying, '*hawezi sikia huyo ni kichwa ngumu*' (She won't obey she is hard-headed), about the wife (antagonist). Other actors made it difficult for that solution to work: immediately after the Assistant Chief left the house, the protagonist was thrown out of the house by his wife and children, telling him to follow the Assistant Chief. After a discussion by the audience, it was agreed that the empty threats would not yield much. Another spect-actor argued that the main reason why the council of elders failed to listen to the protagonist was because he was not a member of the council. This spect-actor suggested that the protagonist should become a member of this council in order to be heard. This

spect-actor replaced the chairman of the council of elders. With him (the spect-actor) in charge, the council listened to the protagonist and offered to help him on condition that he would become a member of the council of elder. A problem arose in that the amount that the protagonist was asked to pay for membership was too high for him to afford. As a result, the intervention failed. The play continued until a man in the audience clapped his hands to call for attention. He said that the protagonist was not supposed to give up and become alcoholic because – as this spect-actor suggested – there were other avenues that could offer solutions. The joker invited him to step forward and try out those avenues.

At this point, the plot took a dramatic twist. A police post was created and the man replaced the protagonist. When the Chief failed, the man went to the police post and recorded a statement, regarding his problems. He was given an abstract form and another form that he took to the Assistant Chief and explained his predicaments. The Chief summoned the wife and asked about the allegations but she denied the accusations. With the Chief's guidance the man was told to produce evidence. A safaricom shop was created and M-pesa messages and all the conversations between the protagonist and his wife were printed out. The M-pesa messages showed huge amounts of money had been sent by the protagonist to the wife for four years. Once the evidence was presented the Chief summoned the protagonist's wife and the children. The wife attempted to deny the accusation but the Chief showed the evidence to

the children and read it aloud to all present. This was very embarrassing to the antagonist and her children were very disappointed in her and they apologized to their father. The wife was ordered to remit the money in her account to the husband and the Chief asked the protagonist to forgive his wife who was on her knees begging for forgiveness. The audience liked this particular intervention and it was agreed that it is not embarrassing for a man to seek help in case of gender-based violence. This shows the influence of the audience in diverting the original plot to achieve a solution for the GBV. According to the original plot, the husband was supposed to go home and beat his wife and children, as directed by the council of elders. This way, he would have reclaimed his status as the head of the family and command respect/fear from his family and neighbours.

On the other hand, interventions of the audience in the play, *Kirema*, by Kangaroo Actors neither led to great altering of the plot nor offered an amicable solution. The scenes included incidences at home, at the Chief's office and at home with the pastor. The first scene involves the husband and his wife at home. When the husband arrives home drunk, he calls the wife, cursing and insulting her. Despite the insults, the wife comes out with a plate of food, containing some little maize and beans in it. However, the husband does not eat the food but spits in it and forces his wife's face into the plate. In this scene, the issue of gender-based violence is fully experienced. The husband does not care where the wife gets food from but he expects to get

enough delicious food from his wife. However, when the wife does not deliver what he expects, he beats her up. Luckily, she escapes and locks herself in the house. The husband swears that he will kill her and leaves.

The second scene takes place at the chief's camp. The wife is advised by a friend to go to the chief's office and seek help from the chief. At the chief's office, the wife lays bare her problems but the Chief does not take them seriously. However, the Chief promises to look into the matter and after that asks for a bribe from the victims who does not have anything to offer him. The friend offers to give some money to the Chief on her behalf. They both leave without much help but rather a promise that the Chief will talk with the husband.

The events of the third scene take place at home, when the husband comes back. The husband comes home furious, accusing his wife of reporting him to the Chief. The wife locks herself inside the house in order to avoid any further beatings. However, the husband breaks into the house and beats her thoroughly. Luckily, the pastor hears the commotion and comes over to the rescue the woman. The husband heeds to the call of the pastor to let her go from his tight grip. He shoves her towards the pastor and tells him to teach her how to respect him... *“Mchukue huyu mwanamke umufunze kuheshimu bwanake, na umuombee mapepo yaishe.”* (Anamrusha kwa pastor na kuondoka) ‘Take this woman and teach her to respect her husband and pray

for her so that the demons within her may leave.’ The pastor can only offer spiritual help. He prays for the wife and promises her that everything will be okay if she keeps on praying and trusting in God. Also, he reminds her to tithe.

The plot of the play *Kirema* by Kangaroo Actors is designed in such a way that it highlights the events that are happening, why they are happening and how they are happening. The play is aimed at highlighting the level of gender-based violence in Meru County. This is achieved by introducing a conflict between the husband and wife over food. The wife, who is the protagonist, is suffering. She is a victim of gender-based violence. Her husband is a drunkard that does not understand his responsibility of protecting, loving and providing for his family. Instead he gets drunk and comes home to demand delicious food from the wife. The wife explains that there is no food; that the little that is remaining is meant for their child. The man will not hear any any of this and he beats her up. This is the same man who comes home drunk, meaning that he can afford money to buy alcohol instead of buying food for his family. However, it is the wife who bears the brunt of her husband’s poor decision making.

The attempts to solve the conflict lead to rising action. The Chief is introduced to intervene in the issue of gender-based violence, since, he is obliged by the law to solve such issues in his locality. However, instead of the Chief helping the GBV victim, he solicits money from her. The Chief views her problem as a

‘normal’ issue, and simply promises to talk to the husband. He Chief does not help her at all. In fact, when the husband comes back home, he batters his wife for going to report him to the Chief. Apart from exploiting this woman, the Chief made the situation worse. When all fails religion is put to test in solving the problem of gender-based violence. Hence, the pastor is introduced to help solve the issue at hand. However, the pastor is presented only as a spiritual leader whose advice and intervention are even more frustrating. He, indeed, makes the situation worse by quoting a bible verse that calls for submission and silence. The husband leaves the pastor with the wife and he advises the pastor to teach the wife how to respect him. The play ends with the protagonist defeated and frustrated by the protagonist and other oppressors.

At various points, the input of the audience in attempts to change the plot is felt. However, it is not adequate just to alter the plot and solve the GBV issue at hand. For example, at one point, the audience tries to intervene by suggesting that the oppressor, Kirema, be killed. The downside of such a decision would be dangerous and costly, hence, the decision is not taken. Therefore, the audience’s input in this play is minimal and equally inadequate and it does not successfully change the plot to help acquire a solution to GBV problem at hand.

4.4 Interventions of the Plot and GBV

The open-ended plays in Forum Theatre are meant to pose questions to the audience so that the audience can propose courses of action that can change the outcome of the play. It should be entertaining in form and thought provoking in content. *Kirema* by Kangaroo actors was open ended and it paused a question. Should the protagonist give up and be submissive to the violent husband?

After the model play, the plot becomes indeterminate; the audience chips in to change the plot. No one can predict how the play will end. In the performance of *Kirema* by Kangaroo actors two interventions took place. One spect-actor replaced the protagonist and decided the best way to deal with the violence was to take her children to her parents' house. She actually said, '*Si niko na wazazi? Mbona niteseke*' (Don't I have parents? Why should I continue suffering?). After these remarks, she improvised a sack and threw in her few belongings, took her child and set off to her parents' home. Initially, the welcome was warm with a lot of questions from the father on how the husband was doing. When the protagonist realised she would not escape the questions she told them about her situation and her decision to come home. The actors made it difficult for her since the man acting as the father informed her that the husband owned her body and soul. However, since it was late, he gave her two nights to sleep at their home. He asked her to plan to leave and go back to her husband on the third day. For those two nights, she was to sleep on the

floor with her child .Sadly, her mother nodded in agreement. However, there were loud murmurs of disapproval from the audience as most disagreed with these sentiments. Most of them seemed confused and were heard saying, ‘*Angevumilia kwa bwanake.*’ (She should have persevered at her husband’s place).

The play took a different course of action when another spect-actor got on stage to replace the protagonist. Her first line was; *Hawezi nisumbua maisha yangu yote.*’ (He cannot disturb me all of my life.) This new spec-actor put poison in the food and when the husband came back home he ate the poisoned food and died. The play ended with the protagonist under arrest. Unfortunately, the joker failed to explain to the audience the effect of unrealistic alternatives thus the forum ended with hopelessness.

4.5 Plot, GBV and Consientisation

Due to the interventions, the plot took on different structures. It is this characteristic of Forum Theatre that makes it a tool of transformation. The audience gets a chance to manipulate the plot to suit their alternative views thus leading to consientisation. Although the play, *Kirema*, by Kangaroo actors ended in hopelessness, the rehearsal was important as it opened the eyes of the audience to the fact that murder is not a solution to gender-based violence.

In the anti-model play, *Murega*, interventions of the plot and GBV lead to a positive resolution. Normally, it is expected that after an instance of gender-based violence, the victim should seek help from the relevant authorities and this was, indeed, the case after the husband was beaten by his family. A complication arose when he was mocked instead of being assisted contrary to the law that obliges the area Assistant Chief to listen to grievances, intervene and help a victim of GBV whether male or female. The plot was complicated even further when he was, again, mocked by the council of elders when he went to report the matter to them, seeking justice after his wife had squandered his money and had physically abused him. Again, this is contrary to the expectation of cultural laws that require that the council of elders to intervene and resolves issues arising in the community from social challenges such as gender-based violence. To compound his misery, the council of elders the fined protagonist two goats for stepping in their holy shrine after being battered by his wife. Frustrated and worn out, the man decided to give up and go back to his old mother's house, regretting that he had not built her a better house. The plot kept getting complex because Murega finds his mother. This sets him on a path of despair that led to him to becoming an alcoholic, which further compounded the situation. The play, deliberately, ended on a note of despair since Murega did not get a solution to his gender-based woes.

The two scenes were meant to strengthen the already constructed oppressive situation, which is the main dramaturgical rule in creating a Forum Theatre

anti- model. The plot and the structure of the anti-model should present phases of events when the process can be stopped or altered. In addition, it is better when the situation is unresolved since this will encourage the audience to think about the issues and explore alternative solutions to them. This performance showed that the plot and structure of Forum Theatre plays were agents of conscientisation against gender-based violence.

4.6 Conclusion

The structure and plot of the plays have a starting, a middle, and an ending. This is the case in the two plays, whereby the issue at stake is GBV. The plots of the set plays seek to ensure that the gender-based violence are addressed so that at the denouement, the victims find respite and justice. Further, this study has found that there were audience interventions with alterations in the plot to ensure that perceptions of the audience were considered when deriving amicable solutions. Active audience involvement is a key expectation in Forum Theatre as espoused by Boal. This was particularly exemplified in the play *Murega* by MYAP, where the audience was involved in altering the original plot to lead to a positive solution to the benefit of the victim and the oppressor.

CHAPTER FIVE

LANGUAGE USE AS AN AGENT IN FORUM THEATRE

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines how the use of local and participatory language as precursors and bearers of Boalian conscientisation in Forum Theatre performances by selected TfD troupes in Meru County, leads to conscientisation against GBV in Meru County. The discussions presented in this chapter include language use in the selected plays as well as how these languages have influenced conscientisation against GBV. The chapter also considers the analysis of certain words that advance euphemism in the event of GBV.

5.2 Language Use and Forum Theatre

To make its case, Forum Theatre highly depends on language that is clearly understood by the local community or the audience in all perspectives. The reason for this is that Forum Theatre takes the form of a conventional play but reflects on the community's lived experience on a chosen issue and culminates in an unresolved crisis within that context. To resolve the crisis, participation by the audience sourced from the local community is put into perspective. Hence, language used in Forum Theatre should be understood by the audience.

As emphasised earlier, Boal perceives Forum Theatre as participatory theatre, meaning the audience takes part in solving the problem by providing their

input regarding the best solution to the current problem in the play. Therefore, language plays the role promoting trust in Forum Theatre. Further, it promotes spontaneity, creativity, collaboration, listening and awareness; communication, effective interaction, confidence and capacity, information and education; problem-solving, and incitement for change.

Forum Theatre, like any other form of art addresses issues affecting a society. Its strength is allowing the audience to take part in the decision making process through intervention during a performance. Issues affecting individuals in the society such as gender-based violence are always common to many members of the society. It is expected that the audience, in Forum Theatre, fully participates by intervening in order to get a solution to a problem. In order to achieve this, the play should be easy to understand. This in turn encourage and or allows the spectators to participate, thereby suggesting possible solutions to the social problem. This is the reason the play should involve a language that all the spectators can understand and identify with.

5.3 Language Use in the Plays

The greatest advantage of any theatre use as a means of communication is the possibility that it holds as a participatory tool conducted by marginalised people (Schechner 264). For a theatre to be participatory, it must communicate in a language that is understood by the majority of the 'participating

audience.’ That is why Forum Theatre advocates for searching for more participatory and dialogical ways of communicating to the ‘oppressed’ (82). Local language refers to a local language spoken by most of the people who hail from where the performance of a play is taking place. This language in the case of this study was Kimeru. The use of local language, including the use of idioms has at times been used to pass on messages for which specific responses are required by people in the community. Similarly, the use of local language as the participatory language ensures that the audience can take part in the play, enabling them to identify with the present problem and seek specific solutions to the problem.

5.3.1 Language Use in *Kirema* by Kangaroo Actors

Kirema by Kangaroo Actors employs a mixture of both local language and Kiswahili, with an inclination towards Kiswahili, which became responsible for limiting the contribution of the spectators in realising a solution to the issues being addressed. It was noted that the spectators often intervened in Kimeru. In the case of the little Kiswahili employed by the spectators, it is notable that there was a heavy accent of the Kimeru in the spoken Kiswahili. This suggests challenges in fluency and perhaps deeper understanding of Kiswahili by most members of the audience. However, some members had a good understanding of Kiswahili, and they, sometimes, used words that can only be understood in that context. For instance, *chai ya Chief* translated to

mean tea for the chief – actually meaning a bribe given to the Chief to influence a decision.

During the FGD, some participants noted that the language generally used was okay, one of the participant observed thus:

Yes, the language used by the characters is very familiar to me. I liked that they used both Kiswahili and Kimeru during the play, which made it very easy for me to follow and relate to the concept of the story.

On the contrary, another participant noted that, language use ought to factor in the locality where the play is to be performed. The participant said,

When choosing the language of the play, we consider the locality of the play. Our main purpose is to address issues intrinsic to the particular community. Through the use of local language, including phrases and idioms, we are able to connect the audience to the characters.

The core of community theatre is the language of the people. This concurs with Wa Thiong'o's assertion that it is the audience who settles the problem of language choice, in that, in a matter of choice for a language to use, one must consider the audience (44). This assertion points to the fact that learners must be allowed the privilege to influence the language used in theatre since they are the primary recipients of what is to be communicated. Thus, from the observations above, the use of a language that is commonly used by most members of the society would ensure that some, but not all members of the society, understood the issue in the play.

5.3.2 Language Use in *Murega* by MYAP

The play *Murega* by MYAP employed the use of Kimeru. It also did incorporate Kiswahili language as well. Even though the use of words from the Kimeru language were minimal, the words used had a great influence on the audience. Words such as “*nkurumbo*” (A word referring to someone who has not been initiated into council of elders) or “*gashungwa*” (a word meaning an orange in the local language for but loosely used to mean a mistress) were only contained in the local language. Therefore, their meanings were intrinsic to the culture of the local community. Such words ensured that the audience identified with the play. Hence, the audience was able to associate with the issues in the play and relate them with the real issues that they have been experienced in the society. The rest of the play is acted in Kiswahili that was also mixed with some *sheng*.

5.4 Kiswahili Language Use and GBV

Nabea asserts that in 1964, Kiswahili was officially pronounced the language of Adult Education alongside mother tongue (126). This thus implies that for effective achievement of adult pedagogy, Kiswahili was considered essential. Kenyans are largely considered polyglots. In the local order of languages, Nabea asserts that in Kenya English is considered the main official language. Kiswahili is the co-official language and the local lingua franca. At the bottom are the local languages or mother tongues such as Kimeru is (127). Njubi perceives Kiswahili as “the unifying bond of a broad linguistic community

without clear cut ethnic boundaries”, a statement that affirms the essence of Kiswahili across linguistic divides in a multi ethnic community as Kenya is (106).

The use of Kiswahili though perceived to be limiting the involvement of some spectators, is largely found to be fairly successful. It can be inferred that the participants were somehow able to comprehend Kiswahili. This is evidenced by the fact that even though most of interruptions from the spectators were in Kimeru, they must have understood the discourse in Kiswahili for them to accurately respond in Kimeru.

The failure of Kiswahili is however evidenced in certain scenes. While the use of Swahili language clearly explained the scenes in the chief’s office, the language did not capture the cultural systems such as the *Njuri Ncheke*, since most of the language spoken by the elders could not be fully translated into the Swahili language without losing meaning. As a result, the role of the elders, though helpless to the husband, was not fully reflected to the audience.

5.5 Local Language and GBV

GBV has the same impact on all victims regardless of the local language involved. However, in Forum Theatre, the ability to use local language defines the degree to which members or the audience understand the magnitude of GBV at hand, and this is what Wa Thiong’o alludes to when he observes that

necessity does influence a commonsense solution to the issue of language (42), since good theatre is that which is on the side of the people (43).

According to Boal, the use of local language derived from the peasants in Forum Theatre is to ensure that the social problem is defined by the terms of the local community, hence, the solution is easier to find from the members of the affected community, as ignorant as they can be thought to be (32). Indeed, when Forum Theatre uses a language that is different from that of the audience, the level of understanding and interaction with GBV issues varies as well, affecting their ability to effectively contribute in developing an acceptable solution. When faced with an issue to communicate, perhaps key information that is intended to empower a local audience, then it is essential to package that information in a manner that they will understand without much hustle. Wa Thiong'o also notes that first languages can at times present other consequences in relation to other theatre issues such as content, for instance, actors, auditioning and rehearsals, performances and the reception of theatre as a language (44). Nevertheless, it is observable that the local language has its own words that make it easier to understand the problems affecting the society as compared to the use of a secondary language.

5.5.1 Incorporation of Local Words

In the plays, local words are incorporated used to indicate the level of gender violence and make it to be felt in the same weight by the audience, especially

in the play, *Murega*, by MYAP. For instance, words such as *Nkurumbu* and *Gashungwa*. While *gashungwa* means a sweetheart, *nkurumbu* is used pejoratively – to disgrace someone who has not joined the council of elders, *Njuri Ncheke*. In the employment of these words, the weight of the matter at hand is brought to fore. For instance, the wife to Murega uses the word *gashungwa* to deceive her husband so as not to follow up on the issues at home in order to get the true picture. On the other hand, the word *nkurumbu* is used by members of the council of elders to despise Murega for allowing a woman to beat him. While these local words add colour to the use of Swahili and enriches it to bring the message closer home, they also serve to attract the attention of the audience.

5.5.2 Local Words and the Consientisation Process

Local words accurately depict the real picture of the actual events in relation to GBV in the society. For instance, If English words were used in place of the two local words, *gashungwa* and *nkurumbu*, the exact impact of GBV could not be felt by the audience, given the fact that English language is only understood by a few members of the community. On the other hand, words that could replace them are not as weighty as the local words, hence, the actual weight of the matter could not be understood. Application of local words helps the audience to relate with the real GBV issues affecting their society. This was observed in the play *Murega* by MYAP whose use of local words helped in undertaking, interpretation, and development of the most suitable solutions.

In this case, the audience was able to interact with the GBV issue and devise a platform for addressing the issues raised. This offers the best platform for conscientisation. On the other hand, the play *Kirema* by Kangaroo actors uses much of Swahili language, which, perhaps affected the ability of the audience to internalise and relate with the GBV problems. As such, they see it as a foreign problem, with the used words failing to trigger their emotions. As a result, conscientisation in this case is not fully achieved.

5.6 Use of Sheng' and Code Mixing as a Language and GBV

Another subset of language experienced in the theatrical performances was sheng'. This is a hybrid language formed mainly by mixing English, Swahili and a host of Kenyan indigenous languages. Tsikhungu notes that sheng is characterised by phrasal switching, reversal of letters, as well as the use of words in phrases and formation of new words.' (158). In *Murega* by MYAP, sheng' words identified include words such as "sweetie" used to mean sweetheart and "walahi", a word used when swearing.

In *Kirema* by Kangaroo Actors the Sheng' employed is characteristic of codemixing. Codemixing was employed especially by some actors in the play *Kirema* by Kangaroo Actors. According to Nabea,

"Sheng can be viewed as the mediation between local languages and hegemonic languages. Considering that it obtains its lexicon from Kiswahili, English and African languages and thrives on the Kiswahili morphosyntactic structure, this is a manifestation how people are making use of the dominant languages to express themselves in their own fashion." (135)

Some examples of code mixing include the sentence “*Ninalo jibu, my friend*” by Karen, which is made up of a mixture of Kiswahili and English words. Examples from Murega by MYAP include “*nimepata pesa ya retirement*” (*I have received my retirement benefits*), “*biashara ya kutukeep busy*” (*business that keeps us busy*) and “*By the way ni pesa ngapi, darling?*” (*By the way, how much is it, darling?*), among others. There are many more instances where English words have been contextualised in *Murega*.

It is worth noting that though the scripts of both plays were done in Kiswahili, and some English, in the case of Murega, upon constant intervention by the spectators, Kimeru words were borrowed and employed in the performances to enhance meaning of what was being communicated.

5.7 Euphemism

Euphemism describes polite words or expressions used in place of words or expressions that can be perceived as offensive, unpleasant, or harsh. In the two plays, euphemism is evidently used.

5.7.1 Euphemism and GBV

In performance of the two plays, euphemistic words used could easily be used to promote GBV instead of diminishing it. This is because they sanitized GBV despite the fact that the oppressed victims suffered significantly. For instance, phrases like “*chai ya chief*” is a polite way of saying asking for a bribe and

deodorizing it to make it acceptable and easier for the victim to give it. If the actual word like “corruption” or bribe was used, it would have been awkward for the victims to give the bribe and difficult for the Chief to solicit for it. Similarly, it would be seen as offensive if “*fungu la kumi*” as mentioned by pastor was called fees, which is actually the case. While *fungu la kumi* is tithe and used to show the 10% of their earnings, which Christians give as a tithe, it is interpreted in this context to mean free money that one has not worked for. It could be argued that it is essentially a bribe since no one works for a bribe. The fact that it is a pastor soliciting for it from a desperate woman who is a victim of GBV in return for offering spiritual guidance to a woman who is broke in the first place, is already a misuse of the concept of tithing. While the use of these euphemistic words helps connect the audience with their currency, it nonetheless does not hide the fact that sanitisation of violence and denigrative words is a strategy mastered by the oppressing forces within the social construction of GBV. In the plays, euphemisms seemed to downgrade the impact of GBV on the victims.

5.7.2 Euphemism and Consientisation

The two phrases of euphemism as used in the two plays affect the effectiveness of consientisation in relation to GBV. In this context, members of the community as represented by the audience ought to have the actual picture of the real GBV issues in order to be fully sensitised of the situation at hand and develop approaches towards fighting it. Instead, euphemism drags

the issues around, with ‘nice’ words used to describe heinous practices, hence promoting GBV. The use of words such as *chai* makes a bribe look acceptable, hence the Chief can openly and publicly ask for it as just ‘tea’. For conscientisation, the real word ought to have been used. The character playing Chief perhaps would have simply asked for a bribe and in this case used the Swahili word, ‘*hongo*’ while demanding for it. This would have aroused and immediately triggered the audience to see the actual reality of GBV and the failure of the system perhaps thereby creating disgust for such social characters and what they represent. Therefore, while euphemism can be positively impactful in theatre, it does the opposite in this case.

5.8 Conclusion

In relation to language use in Forum Theatre, the specific language used influences the ability of the audience to participate, which is a major objective in Forum Theatre. The use of a local language, one which is fully understood by the local community, helps the members of the community/audience internalise the problem in performance, hence, get them involved in problem-solving. In this case, the use of local language is important because the phrases, idioms, and euphemisms can all be understood by the audience without diluting the message. The use of local language especially in the play *Murega* by MYAP triggers more participation by the audience, leading to an amicable solution by one of the members of the audience.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The chapters preceding this chapter have highlighted various concerns on Forum Theatre on GBV issues. This chapter restates the relevant observations and findings arrived at in the course of the study and points them towards the field of practice. The chapter labours to present a summary of the critical finding as outlined in the objectives of this study.

6.1 Summary of Findings

The first objective of this study was to establish the use of characterisation to achieve conscientisation against GBV in Forum Theatre performances by selected TFD troupes in Meru County. Under this objective, the study looked at the antagonists, protagonists, jokers and other peripheral characters in the two plays. The study interrogated their characterisation as far as Forum Theatre is concerned, hence, looking at their role in making the plays more responsive to the fight against Gender-based violence in Meru County.

It was established that both plays are characterised with representations of what the ideal society in Meru County looks like today. In both plays, all positions of power are given to men while the women are made to look in and to depend on the men. Even the wife to Murega who had abused him eventually lost her position of 'power' when spect-actors intervened. The

study also established that the role of the joker especially in *Kirema* by kangaroo Actors was not fully explored. It was observed that audiences would often click or jeer at poor performance or untimely interruption by the joker and other characters as well. *Murega* by MYAP had more spectator interruptions than *Kirema* by Kangaroo Actors. This was due to the fact that *Murega* presented a narrative that was deemed unusual in the society. It was also established during the study that in the two plays, characterisation on GBV was employed at varying degrees to bring about conscientisation. Further, the actors in each of the two plays played their roles effectively. This aided in bringing about knowledge of GBV in the Meru County.

The second objective of the study aimed at examining the structure and plots as agents of conscientisation against GBV in the Forum Theatre performances by selected TfD troupes in Meru County. This study established that the structure and plot of Forum Theatre performance is often unpredictable. The play chosen for acts of TfD as established by this study is supposed to present a conflict and leave it unresolved, as was the case with *Murega* by MYAP. Unpredictability comes in when spect-actors disagree with the situation and change the course of action through audience-actor interaction, hence, allowing the audience a chance to propose solutions to the problem(s) that the protagonist faces. Such a course was exemplified when the spect-actors in *Murega* charted a way to investigate, through mobile money transfer, the case of Murega and his wife. The course charted by the participants helped solve

the crisis that the play had left unresolved. This is critical for Forum Theatre, which intends to explore real practice scenarios while involving the audience. The open-ended nature of the plays encouraged the joker to probe the audiences for reaction.

It was also established that in the two plays, the audience was been involved in different degrees at different stages. This, again, in both cases, altered the original structure and plot of the set plays. As the need to solve the issues highlighted in the plays heightened, significantly, there occurred a rise in action. During the performances, the joker encouraged interventions by spectators – though at varying degrees – and this helped establish discussions with the audience in between the scenes. These discussions helped audiences draw out themes and realisations without imposing ideas on the course of events.

Finally, the third objective of this study explored the use of local and participatory language as precursors and bearers of Boalian conscientisation in the Forum Theatre performances by the selected TfD troupes in Meru County. The study established that Forum Theatre highly depends on language that is clearly understood by the audience in all perspectives because it ought to reflect on the community's lived experience on a chosen issue, which culminates in unresolved crisis within that context. The role language plays carries weight since Forum Theatre aims at highlighting issues in the society

with regard to finding a solution to the said challenges with the help of a participating audience.

It was established that the sampled plays largely employed Kiswahili as the main language with a little Kimeru, which was mostly used by the intervening spectators. Whenever the spectators used Kiswahili, it was noted that their Kiswahili had a heavily Kimeru accent. This showed that the members of the community had challenges using Kiswahili fluently and perhaps a deeper understanding of the language. This ascertained the need to factor in the language used in the locality where the play was being performed, since the core of community theatre is a language of the people. With this in mind, therefore, the study observed that the audience must be allowed the privilege to influence the language used in theatre because the message transmitted is intended for them – they are the primary recipients.

This study also established that the incorporation of popular words from the local language adds colour to the use of Kiswahili. Such words, which either have direct meaning or bear some form of euphemism, often enrich the message, hence, help bring the message closer home, such words also do attract the attention of the audience to the issues under discussion. These local words often accurately depicted the real picture of the actual issues in relation to GBV in Meru County.

6.2 Conclusions

In regards to Boal's Forum Theatre, this study concludes that characterisation is emphasised with active audience participation being central to Boal's approach. Through the Joker system, the audience's views, on problems, are solicited and solutions sought. However, the joker in *Kirema* by Kangaroo Actors failed to fully embrace Boal's system. The joker the one in *Murega* by MYAP elicited audience participation effectively. In regards to the structure and plot of the plays, each of the two plays addresses GBV, but *Murega* by MYPA seemed to be more effective in involving audience. By altering the original plot, the play, *Murega*, by MYAP found applicable solutions that benefitted the victims of GBV.

While *Murega* by MYAP meets Boal's expectations of Forum Theatre, *Kirema* by Kangaroo Actors needed some changes to ensure it fully meets the criteria for a Forum Theatre. The role of the joker should have been enhanced. This would have caused the audience to fully participate by intervening/interrupting in order to change the plot and have a useful ending. The audience that watched *Kirema* was fairly passive for most of the time, a situation that could have been changed by an active joker. Similarly, the use of Swahili limited the ability of the audience to fully understand the problem at hand and intervene thereby suggesting and or offering possible solutions. Lastly, Wa Thiong'o asserts that the real language of African theatre could only be found among the peasantry in the community (41). In line with this

study, therefore, language used was found to influence audience participation. The use of local language as was exemplified in *Murega* by MYAP was found to be particularly useful in engaging the audience. The play adopted local language phrases, idioms and euphemism that local the audience understood and related to. With these in mind, this study draws the following conclusions:

- i) That the choice of characters in the sampled plays was fairly adequate. However, there are other roles that did not fully embody the requirements of Forum Theatre. For instance, the Joker in the play, *Kirema*, did not meet the full expectation regarding their role.
- ii) That the nature of the sampled plays allowed for the intervention of spectators in the unfolding events, thus giving the audiences a chance to participate and provide interventions to GBV issues in their community. As such, the participants were perceived as having the knowledge and ability to intervene in their community whenever such the need would arise.
- iii) That language is a critical element of Forum Theatre, and that its use must be well thought out, otherwise, the intended meaning might not be communicated. That the use of relevant vocabulary and audience-friendly languages enhances consentisation.
- iv) That Forum Theatre is viable ‘edutainment’, which when fully embraced has the potential to enhance community learning and the entrenchment of such values as are necessary for adoption, or for consideration, as intervention mechanisms in the community.

6.3 Recommendations

Drawing from the data obtained and subsequently analysed, the study draws the following recommendations:

6.3.1 Recommendations for Policy

The findings of this study established that there is need for a push in policy formulation that aims at advancing TfD trainings to community theatre practitioners and actors. Such a policy would entail suggesting modalities on how to effectively run Forum Theatre and the benefits of the same, thereafter. With such training embedded in performance curriculum, many actors would eventually be knowledgeable in what is required of them.

Since many actors in the community are usually young people who have at least been through secondary school, the study also recommends that the element of TfD be introduced in schools as an acting curriculum with competitions at the schools and colleges drama festival.

6.3.2 Recommendations for Further Research

The findings of this study established that the role of the joker in one of the plays was not fully explored as it ought to have been. It was observed that an inactive and uninformed joker limits and affect the involvement of the spectator in the performance. This study recommends that further studies be conducted on the character of the joker in Forum Theatre. Such a study would

include the definition of the joker in view of local theatre as well as an exploration of the functionality of the same with regards to local theatre.

Language is a critical element in communication and personal relationships hence, a change agent. The study established that there is need to establish a more detailed understanding of the significance of language use in theatre, with a greater inclination to the use of vernacular languages. The study therefore recommends that further studies be done on language use in TfD and its significance on desired change.

6.3.3 Recommendations for Practice

The findings of this study established that an audiences-friendly language yields much fruit with regard to Forum Theatre. Such language while it may not necessarily be a people's first language should be that which enables articulation of vital points intended for education in a manner that is least compromised. Further, it must be in a language that the audiences can comprehend easily. This makes it possible for the audience to then interrupt the performance and offer suggestions/solutions to problems.

TfD programs must encompass an all round joker that encourages intervention of the spectators. Spectators must be encouraged to interrupt the play as often as required, which is symbolic to a rise in their personal conscientisation.

Finally, the study recommends that with regard to practice, the choice of characters must also be in consideration to the character's ability to transform into a suggested role as need arises throughout the performance.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Observation Guide

Aspects of characterisation	
<p>Are the characters balanced by gender?</p> <p>Does the audience agree with the decisions of the characters in the model play?</p> <p>Do the actors change positions with the spect- actors?</p>	
<p>Do the characters creatively portray GBV as undesirable aspect in the society?</p>	
<p>Do the characters in the play seek the opinions of the audience in regard to GBV?</p>	
<p>Do the characters use their creativity to correct negative perceptions of audience regarding GBV in the society?</p>	
<p>Do the audience agree to the resolution or do they offer to replace the actors in order to play their solution?</p> <p>How does the audience participate in solving the problems facing the characters?</p> <p>Are the spectators turned into actors nervous on stage or do they interact freely with the actors?</p>	

Aspects of plot and structure	
Does the plot of the play incorporate various styles of delivery? How does this enhance conscientisation process?	
Do the performers use Songs, dances, poetry and other communication styles to enhance plot and portray the negativity of GBV?	
Is the set-up of the play familiar the larger audience?	
If performers use dances and songs, do the audience participate in dances and respond to queries regarding GBV or do they just dance for entertainment?	
Are there deliberate efforts to divert the play towards sensitizing the audience against GBV? Do the spect-actors change the course of the plot? How many interventions do take place in the course of the performance, and how do they affect the plot?	
Does the audience give positive feedback on what they learn from the play?	
Use of local language	
Is the language used in the play is common to the larger audience?	
What are some of local words used to refer to GBV? Are the local words incorporated in the play?	

<p>How does the use of local words help in the process of conscientisation?</p> <p>Are there some euphemistic words used in the performances?</p> <p>If yes, does the use of euphemistic words hinder or aid conscientisation?</p>	
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Appendix II: FGD Guide to Members of the MYAP Theatre Troupe

1. Briefly describe the performances. How was it?
2. Comment on audience participation
3. Was the performance a scripted play? How were the interventions performed?
4. How do you perceive the characters? Was the role of the joker effective?
5. Which languages did the performance use?
6. What factors do you think were considered in choosing the language to use?
7. Were all the actors theatre experts?
8. Have you ever attended any TFD training?

Appendix III: Interview Guide Interview Guide to the TFD Scholars

1. Briefly give an overview of your experiences with theatre?
2. Are you familiar with philosophies of Augusto Boal and Paulo Freire?
3. Have you ever worked with theatre troupes that employ Forum Theatre?
4. What are some of the issues do the troupes you have encountered address?
5. Out of the many TFD entities, which one is common in areas you have worked or studied?
6. Do you think characterization, plot and language used in Forum Theatre play are agents of conscientisation?
7. If yes, how?
8. Do you think TFD groups are doing their best in sensitising the masses on matters pertaining GBV?
9. If no, what are some of the reasons do you attribute their failure to?

Appendix IV: FGD Guide for the Audience

1. Have you attended any drama performances on GBV before?
2. What makes it different from any other performance you have ever watched or participated?
3. Did you participate in the play?
4. If yes, in what role?
5. Did the performance change any of your views on GBV?
6. Which was the most interesting part of the play according to you and why?
7. Was the language used familiar?
8. Did you have any favourite character? If yes, what made that character stand out?

Appendix V: *Kirema* by Kangaroo Actors

In a village set up, a seriously littered homestead a shabby looking man in his thirties appear singing and shouting

Kirema: *singing* Ohhh kuna watu na viatu nduniani, *loud laughter* aachana nao waepuke Kama Saitan *laughter* wapi huyu mke mshenzi, hiyo Miraa nilipeleka ingefanywa majani ya mbuzi."Shouting" Nkatha. Nkathaaaaaaa

Nkatha: Naam mume wangu, lipi la mno?

Kirema:"*mimicking her*"lipi la mno, kutoka asubuhi umejua ni nini bwanako amekula? Asubuhi Chai bila maziwa, bila sukari na pia moto haitoshi, wewe mwanamke kichaa bure kabisa, hujui jinsi ya kuchunga bwana ni tumbo. Njoo hapa mara moja

Nkatha: *amebeba sahani ndani unaona mahindi name maharagwe kidogo tu* .Mume wangu hakuna chakula humu jameni, mie na wanao tumekuwa vijakazi kwa Bw juma ili wapate karo,wote wanarudi shule jumatatu,kumbuka muhula uliopita hatutulipa hata Centi.

Kirema: *Anachukua kile kijisahani, anachungulia ndani kisha anatema mate humo ndani. Anamvuruta nywele anamleta karibu naye halafu anamwekelea kile chakula Kwa uso . Eti hiki ndicho chakula wamletea bwanako,nataka ule hata wewe anamsukuma chini kisha kumlazimisha kula Huku akimlazimisha Kula mchanga pia huku akimsaba makofi. "watoto wanaanza kupiga nduru"*

Nkatha: Tafadhali bwanangu naumia, "Huku akilia" Kwani umelewa nini leo? niachilie jameni ,niache nikakutafutie chakula kingine, *anzidi kumchapa kisha anararua rinda lake, Nkatha anahepa kwa bahati tu anatumia mbio na anajifungia Kwa nyumba,Kirema anawafukuza watoto waliokuwa wakipiga nduru nao wanamshinda mbio, anaondoka akiimba . Nkatha anafungua mlango pole pole anachungulia kama ameenda, anaketi chini anaanza kumpa chakula mtoto mdogo huku akichungulia kama Kirema anarudi, punde tu Kirema anatokea.*

Kirema: mjinga wewe, ulificha chakula ndio nisile eehh?

Nkatha: Naweza kukupakulia mandizi ya mtoto baba Karen? Tafadhali wacha vita, nikimaliza kumlisha mtoto nitakushughulikia

Kirema: Sikuhitaji hapa chukua chokora hawa wako muende zenu, anamrushia jiwe, Nkatha anaanguka na mtoto pia anaanguka na kuumia kichwa vibaya sana.Kirema anachukua kile chakula cha mtoto anakula "

Kirema: *mwanamke wewe, nitakuua kabisa.' anaondoka huku Nkatha anamkimbia mtoto aliyeumia, Karende, rafikiye Nkatha anamsaidia kumhudumia mtoto'*

Karende: *Mama Karen utavumilia haya mateso mpaka lini? Ukifa wanao wataenda wapi?*

Nkatha: *Hunielewi mama Jane, nitafanya nini, nitaenda wapi?*

Karendi: Ninalo jibu my friend, nenda kwa Chiefumwelezee yanayoendelea labda atakusaidia, kuwa na imani mama Karen, kwanza ndiye yuleeee anapita, hii ni sadfa wacha nikimbie nimuite, *Chieffffff* *Nkatha anaanza kumfuata Karendi*

Nkatha: Mama Jane, wacha vituko, utaniletea shida, 'Karendi *amemfikia chief, wanakuja kwa Nkatha pamoja*

Chief: Habari ya Mama Karen? Naskia kuna tatizo, usiwe na shaka, nitatua mara moja. ongea, watu ni kuongea

Nkatha: Niko salama nashukuru chief, baba Karen amerudia pombe, ananichapa kila siku, sijui nifanye je, lakini please chief, usimwambie ni mimi nimekwambia, tafadhali

Chief: Haina neno, nitaongea naye, sitamwambia nimekuona, sitaki anipate hapa, leta chai ya chief

Nkatha: Bwana Chiefsi...*Karendi anamashieria anyamaze*

Karendi: Chai hii hapa Chiefanatoa *mia moja anampatia*

Chief: Sawa basi, nitamtafuta saa hii

Nkatha: Nashukuru sana mama Jane, lakini nina wasiwasi, simuamini chief, hata yeye ni mlevi

Karende: Tulia mama Karen, kuwa na imani"Kirema anasikika kwa umbali akiimba, Karende anamuaga mama Karen kwaheri anaenda zake'mama Karen anaingia kwa nyumba anajifungia ndani

Kirema: 'Akiimba 'mke wangu ni mlevi anakunywa fombe,,ahahahahah hata Chiefni mlevi anakunywa fombe,'anacheka zaidi' Wapi huyu kichaa na rafikiye? Mnatuma Chiefkwangu? leo unaenda kwa huyo Chiefsaa hii tu. Ulimpa mia moja, nimempa mia tano, na hizo pesa ulikuwa umeficha nimekunywa zoteeeee, mjinga wee, uliniambia huna pesa, fungua mlango

Nkatha:"bado amejifungia ndani Baba Karen ulichukua karo ya watoto ya shule ukapeleka huko kununulia watu pombe? Jameni nipatie pesa ya watoto, tumefanya kazi likizo nzima kama vibaraka ili wapate karo,

: 'Anapiga mlango teke anapita nao, anampata mama Karen na kumzaba makofi kisha anamvuruta nywele anamtoa nje anamrusha chini na kumchapa vibaya sana'

Wewe mwanamke wewe, unapeleka nani kwa chief, lia kabisa, lia hata damu,'anamkanyangia chini'

Pastor: Jirani ambaye ni mhubiri anakuja mbio baada ya kuskia kelele Mbona kelele mingi, nani analia? 'Anamuona Kirema akimchapa bibiye' Baba Karen kwa heshima za Mungu tafadhali, muachilie bibi yako. Anamsaidia Nkatha kisha anamshika anamshika mkono'

Kirema: Mchukue huyu mwanamke mfunze kuheshimu bwanake, na umuombee mapepo yaishe, *Anajifanya kama anataka kumpiga Nkatha tena lakini anaondoka*

Pastor: Pole sana mama Karen, bibilia inasema mungu hawezi kupa msalaba ambao huwezi beba ama shinda ambazo huwezi tatua, vuta machozi dada.

Nkatha: Sina nguvu ya kustahimili tena mtumishi, nimechoka kabisa, ni kama kwamba mungu amenisahau, nafikiria kurudi kwa wazazi wangu niwaelezee wanikubali nyumbani, lakini siwezi enda na watoto. Hivyo basi natateseka ili nichunge watoto wangu

Pastor: Umenena vvyema mama Karen, Kurudi kwa wazazi sio suluhu, bibilia inasema utaacha mzazi wako uende kwa mumeo, kasha inasema, mwanamke mnyenyekee bwanako. Vumilia na umuombee dada na uzidi kutoa fungu la kumi, mungu atakusikia, hivyo basi mtumishi anaomba kuondoka, nikuachia baraka za mungu baba mwana na roho mtakatifu Amina.

Nkatha: Amina, asante kwa maombi mtumishi. Mungu akubariki. Kwaheri. *mtumishi anaondoka, Nkatha anajiongelesha.* Sina lakufanya, nikiondoka watoto wataenda wapi? Sitaki bibi mwingine alee watoto wangu. Siendi pahali nitavumilia tu labda siku moja atabadilika *Kirema anasikika akiimba kwa umbali, Nkatha anajificha.*

GIZA**Plays translation (English)**

In a village set up, a seriously littered homestead a shabby looking man in his thirties appear singing and shouting

Kirema: *singing* (Ohhh there are people and shoes in the world, *loud laughter* leave them and avoid Like Saitan' *laughter*'

Where this savage woman? That Miraa I sent for proposal should have been eaten by goats 'shouting' Nkatha. '*Shouting*' Nkathaaaaaaa

Nkatha: Yes my husband, what is it?

Kirema: '*mimicking her*', what is it? From morning do you know what your husband has eaten? Morning Tea without milk, without sugar and also not hot enough, you crazy woman completely useless, you do not know how to take care of the husband. Man is stomach .Come here immediately

Nkatha '*carrying a plate*' *inside you see corn and beans just a little* .My husband, there is no food here please. Your children and I have become slaves at Mr. Juma's farm, we are saving to get fee they will go back to school on Monday, remember last term we did not pay even a cent.

Kirema : *picks up the plate, looks inside and spits into it. He pulls her hair and brings her close and then slaps her face with the food* .Shame on you woman, is this is the food you bring to your husband? He *Pushes her down and then*

force her to eat while forcing her to eat soil too slapping her 'Children start screaming

Nkatha :Please Kirema , you are hurting me , *while he is crying'* you are drunk today, let me go, let me find you some food. *He continues to beat her and then he tears her dress, Nkatha escapes luckily she runs away and locks herself in the house. Kirema chase the children who were screaming but they outrun him, staggering he leaves singing. Nkatha opens the door slowly and looks around, not seeing Kirema in the sight she starts feeding the baby checking uneasily if Kirema is coming back, suddenly he shows up*

Kirema: You stupid idiot, you hid the food so that I don't eat it eehh?

Nkatha: how can I do that dad to Karen? Please stop fighting, when I finish feeding the baby I will take care of you.

Kirema: I don't need you here, take these street children of yours and go away, *he throws a stone at her, Nkatha falls and the baby also falls and gets a severe head injury.*

Kirema: You woman, I will kill you, *he staggers away Nkatha runs to attend the baby who was hurt Karendi, their neighbor and Nkatha's friend who has arrived after she heard commotion helps her take care of the baby.*

Karendi: Mama Karen how long will you endure this suffering? If you die, where will your children go?

Nkatha: you don't understand me mother Jane, what am I going to do? Where will I go?

Karendi: I have the answer my friend, go to the Chief and tell him what's going on maybe he will help you, have faith mama Karen, and I can see the Chief passing by, what a coincidence, let me call him. She runs towards the road shouting 'Chief' 'Nkatha *follow her telling her to stop*

Nkatha: Mama Jane, stop this madness, you will cause me trouble. *Karendi has already called the Chief and they are in Kirema's compound*

Chief: Hello mother Karen? I hear there is a problem, do not doubt, I will solve it immediately. Talk to people don't die alone

Nkatha: I'm fine thank you chief, father Karen has gone back to drinking alcohol, he beats me every day, I don't know what to do, but please chief, don't tell him it's me I told you, please.

Chief: It's not a problem I'll talk to him, I won't tell him I've seen you, I don't want him to find me here, bring the chief's tea

Nkatha: Mr. Chief I don't have (Karendi signals her to be silent)

Karendi: Here is your tea Chief *gives him one hundred*

Chief: Okay then, I will look for him at this hour

Nkatha: I am very grateful mama Jane, but I am worried, I do not trust the Chief, he is a drunkard too.

Karendi: Calm down mama Karen, have faith, *Kirema can be heard from a distance singing, Karendi says bye to Karen's mother and goes away. Karen's mother enters the house and locks herself inside.*

Kirema : *Singing* My wife is drunk she drinks beer ,,,, ahahahahah even the Chief is drunk he drinks beer *laughter* Where is this madwoman and her friend? You send a Chief to me, today you go to that Chief this hour. You gave him a hundred, I gave him five hundred, and the money you had hidden I drank all of it, you idiot, you told me you had no money, open the door. *He bangs the door fiercely*

Nkatha: *still locked in.* Baba Karen you took children's school fees and went to buy people alcohol with the hard earned money? Please give me the children's money, we have worked all day to get money for fee

Kirema : *kicks the door he gets in, slaps Nkatha severally and then pulls her by her hair and throws her on the floor beating her up* You woman, who are you sending the Chief to ? Cry louder; cry even blood, *'he stamps on her while she is on the ground (Pastor who is a neighbor comes running)*

Pastor: Why is there so much noise? Who is crying? *He sees Kirema beating his wife Baba Karen* God's name and honor please, let go of your wife *'Kirema lets go. The pastor helps her to get to her feet as he holds her hand'*

Kirema: Take this woman and teach her to respect her husband, and pray for the demons to end *(he threatens to hit her and leaves)*

Pastor: I'm so sorry mama Karen, the bible says God can't give you a cross you can't carry or a burden you can't solve shed no more tears sister.

Nkatha: I have no strength to endure anymore servant of God, I am completely exhausted, it is as if God has forgotten me, I think I will go back to my parents and tell them to accept me home, but I cannot go with the children, so I suffer in order to take care of the children.

Pastor: You have said well mama Karen, the bible says you will leave your parent and go to your husband, then it says, submit to your husband. Persevere and pray for him to change sister, you are his rib sister and continue to give the tithe, God will hear you, the servant of God will pray with you and I leave you the blessings of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit Amen

Nkatha: Amina, thank you for the prayer God bless you. Goodbye. *The pastor leave, Nkatha is talking to herself.* I have nothing to do, if I leave where will the children go? I do not want another woman to raise my children.

'Kirema is heard singing from a distance, Nkatha hides in the dark

.....END

Appendix VII: The Play *MUREGA*

Murega: Mama Ken unajua miaka inasonga mbio, hatutadumu, Kwa hivyo pesa yangu yote nakupatia ili uchunge watoto mambo ya elimu na mavazi ili nikitoka huku tuweze kujikimu kimaisha, wanielewa kweli?

Kanyua: Nakuelewa kabisa mpenzi, nimetumwa na watoto nikusalimie Sana sana, na nikwambie hata kama unaishi maisha ya matatizo, wanatia bidii mno shuleni ili ukizeeka wakitunze, hao watoto wanakupenda, mara ingine naona nikama hata huwa hawanikumbuki.

Murega: Usiseme hivo sweetie, unajua tunakupenda nikikuja nitawaketisha chini niwaambie kama si wewe singeliweza kuwasomesha shule ya upili. Hao watatu wakifanya mtihani nitabembeleza mzungu nione kama angalau angeniruhusu hata siku moja. Nimewakosa sana hao wanangu.

Kanyua: Usiwe na wasiwasi mpenzi, hata usijisumbue kuomba ruhusa kutoka kwa mzungu, nitaeleza wanao, hata kama ni kulia nitalia ndio wanielewe.

Murega: akupenda sana bibi yangu,afadhali ninyue maji ya chumvi nilale ili ninyi mkae maisha mazuri. Tazama vile hiki kinyumba kinakaa vibaya, naishi kwa zizi la ngombe ,mvua ikinyesha naskia ni kama niko nje. Nje na ndani mwa hiki chumba hamna tofauti. Naam naskia mdosi anaitana, mara nyingine wanatuzaba makofi tukichelewa

Kanyua: Pole darling, itabidi niondoke, kungekuwa angalau na kitanda ningelala, lakini itabidi niondoke.

Murega: Naelewa mke wangu. Sasa nimepata pesa ya retirement, nimebakisha mwaka mmoja kwa kazi, nimefikiria sana ni mradi gani tunaoweza fanya na hizi pesa hebu tafakari.

Kanyua: Naona tujenge nyumba la kifahari ili ukikuja nyumbani ufurahie, zingine tumalizie karo ya shule kisha nianzishe biashara yenye itatuweka busy. By the way ni pesa ngapi darling.

Murega: Ni elfu mia tano mpenzi. Nimekusikiza tena kwa umaakini, nimekubali nilioa mke mwenye akili sana, nakupenda sana. Kwa hayo machache nakupatia hizo pesa zote kisha nikutumie mshahara wa hiyo miezi imebaki ili umalizie hiyo mikakati.

Pesa ndiyo hii, chukua bibi yangu, changu ni chako na chako ni changu. Mwezi ujao nitalipwa baki ya miezi sita, nayo pia nitakutuma kwa mpesa

Kanyua: Darling, sijui nilie machozi ama nikubusu ama nikuimbie wimbo. Asante sana kwa kuniamini, lakini wewe utakuwa unakula nini? Hata mavazi huna, chukua hii mia mbili niko nayo at least uta survive.

Murega: Busu zote utanipa nikija nyumbani, hiyo mia mbili nunulia mtoto soda, ile itabaki wewe kunywa chai. Itabidi niondoke, leta busu sasa.

Kanyua: Mimi ni wako hadi kufa. Nakupenda darling. Nitakumiss sana. Kwaheri ya kuonana.

Murega: Nakuenzi mpenzi, safari salama, nitakukosa sana pia. Salimia watoto sana.

Anaondoka huku akitabasamu

Ken: Mum, unakaa umechoka na huna furaha

Linda: Pia naona uso umefura

Leonard: Na hiyo bandage kwa mguu?

Cyrus: Ni nini mbaya mum, tumeshinda shamba ya neighbor ili ufurahi ukipata pesa, ndizo hizi hapa.

Kanyua: Watoto wangu, nilienda kumtafuta baba yenu, kufika huko nikampata yeye ni mdosi, ako na pesa nyingi anaishi nyumba la kifahari na ako na msichana mrembo ambaye anaita bibi, uchungu ulinijia nikatazama shida zote tunazopitia, nikakumbuka hamkuenda shule za upili sababu sikuwa na mapeni, hazira zikanipanda, nakamwendea huku nikimwambia arudi nyumbani. Akanivuruta nywele, akanichapa kichapo cha mbwa huku huyo binti akinicheka. Wanangu haya machozi ni yenu *anaanza kulia zaidi, watoto pia wanalia.*

Cyrus: Mum usilie tena, huyo mtu atajuta , hata kama hatukuenda secondary tutakusaidia, usilie tena.

Leonard: Nitamuua kwa mikono yangu mwenyewe, Walahi, atajuta.
Pole mum

BAADA YA MWAKA MMOJA

Murega: Mama Ken, Mama Ken yoooo, njoo unifungulie

Linda: Mum, kuna mtu anaitana kwa gate, mzee hivi na ako na mikoba chafu amerarukararuka.

Kanyua: Waite nduguzo, labda ni mwizi. Watoto wote wanakuja wote wanaenda nje.

Kanyua: Uui uui uui uui, kujeni muone yule mtu aliacha watoto wake me bibi, amefukuzwa na huyo bibi wa pili anakuja kutusumbua uuui uuui uui, watoto wangu nimekufa.

Leonard: Huu upanga utaua mtu leo, songa mum, nisphe huyu hatatusumbua hapa.

Ken: Linda, nipee hilo jiwe.

Cyrus: Mum nipee panga, wewe chungulia tu

Kanyua: Mmchape lakini usimuue.

Murega: Mama Ken, ni nini mbaya my dear?

Kanyua: Unaniita my dear baada ya kula raha huku nikisumbuka na watoto uuui uuui

(Murega anakatwa mkono na mwanawe, wengine wanampiga kwa mawe, anazirai, wanachoma vitu zake kisha wanamvuruta na kumrusha mbali kwa mtaro.)

Murega: Mungu wangu mungu wangu, mbona umeniacha, niende wapi sasa, yaani mtu anaweza kunidhulumu hivi na familia?

Wacha niende kwa Assistant Chief anaweza nisaidia, nadhani kwake ni pale, kichwa chauma, mdomo unatoka damu. Hakika wanadamu ni wanadamu

Kaleria: Murega habari za kwako, siku mingi bwana, umevamiwa na wezi ama nini? Pole sana

Murega: Kwangu so kuzuri Bwana Assistant Chief, nimevamiwa na bibi baada ya kumpa pesa yangu yote ya retirement, no vipi unaweza nisaidia?

Kaleria: Pwahahahaha, umekaa kwa mzungu akakuwa zuzu la mtu, nimefanya kazi miaka kumi na saba na sijawahi sikia kesi kama yako, mwanamume numeru amepigwa na bibi? Ai!!! Uko na kasoro kubwa sana. Ni nani mwanamume kwa hiyo nyumba sasa? Sikiza kwa makini, mwanamume ni simba kwa nyumba, rudi huko watandike wote sawasawa, huyo mwanamke na watoto wapige nduru mpaka niskie hapa ,usihaibishe wanaume wa Meru.

Wacha niite M'mwenda asikie haya! M'Mwenda M'Mwenda yeeee, njoo uone ndume ikikamuliwa hahahaha!!!

M'Mwenda : Alas! Siku nyingi sijakuona bwana Murega, umeletea wazee nini? Umejaa damu, unahitaji kuona daktari wala sio Assistant Chief bwana.

Kaleria: Amepigwa na bibi, ameniletea kesi

M'mwenda: Wacha mzaha bwana, haya mambo si ya kuchezea, hapa sio Nyeri,

Murega :Si chezo bwana Mwenda ,bibi amenifanyia hivi pamoja na watoto

M'Mwenda: Wacha kuleta ujinga hapa, tangu lini mwanamume aseme amepigwa na bibi? Mjinga wewe, ondoka hapa ama tumalizie kazi ya bibi

M'Mwenda & Kaleria: Pwahahahhahahahaah!! Kwenda kabisa

Murega: Mungu wangu, haya ni maisha gani? Sina mbele wala nyuma, najipeleka kwa Njuri Ncheke nikapewe nyama na labda watanisikiliza

Anajikokota anaenda kwa nyumba ya Njuri Ncheke, anaingia amejawa na woga)

Mzee1: Jitambulisha na useme utakacho wewe nkurumbo, ama ni njaa imekuleta?

Murega: Nawasalimu kwa heshima kuu baba zangu, nimeletwa na njaa na pia kushtaki bibi yangu, amenipiga na kuniumiza baada ya kumpatia pesa zangu zote za retirement.

Anagongwa na Jiwe na kuanguka, wazee wanaangua kicheko na kuendelea kula nyama ,mzee mmoja anamkaribia amebeba kipande cha nyama

Mzee 2: Amka ujiendee zako, tukiamua tutakula nyama yako, pelekea bibi hii nyama, ni zawadi ya kuwa mwanaumme kwa nyumba, umepewa wiki

mbili ulete mbuzi mbili kwa wazee ili usamehewe kukanyanga nyumba ya wazee na uchafu.

Wazee wanaamka na kuchukua mijeledi, Murega anatimua mbio na kutoroka

Murega:Mnyonge hana nguvu,nitarudi kwa mamangu nikaishi huko, ningemjengea nyumba nzuri ningekuwa na makao.

Anarudi kwa mamake anamkuta ni mgonjwa, anaanza vibarua na kulewa chakari)

English translation of Murega by MYPA

Murega has been working in a white man's farm for 40 years, there were no holidays so he used to send his wife Kanyua money to manage their home. Unfortunately Kanyua misused funds and got into drinking, some of their children just got to class eight ,she kept telling them that she was struggling to get money not once did she tell them their father used to send money.

They grow knowing that their father abandoned them. Murega gets his retirement money one year before the actual retirement date so he gave all of it to his wife to build a mansion that they will live after retirement and also told her to invest in his business. Every time she visited him she told the husband that the children were in school. When Murega came home for retirement all wasn't well, he met his children ready to kill him. Kanyua had not built any house, she accused him of neglecting his children. Kanyua and her children beat him up, he wasn't given a chance to express himself. He

went to report to the Assistant Chief but he laughs at him saying one must be stupid to be beaten by a woman. He goes to the council of elders but apparently Kanyua had bribed most of them, indeed they beat him up as well, frustrated by life he goes to his old mother's house and becomes a drunkard.

Murega: Mama Ken you know years are moving fast. This job won't last, so all my money I give you to look after the children education and clothing so that when I leave here we can support ourselves in life, do you really understand me?

Kanyua: I fully understand you sweetie, I have been sent by the children to greet you very much, and let me tell you even if you are living miserable life here they work very hard at school so that when you grow old they will take care of you, those children love you, sometimes I feel like they don't even remember me.

Murega: Don't say that sweetie, you know we love you. When I come I'll sit them down and tell them that if it wasn't for you I wouldn't have been able to teach them in high school. Before they sit for exams I will plead with the white man and see at least if he could let me come home even one day. I miss my children so much.

Kanyua: I love you so much darling, don't even bother to ask permission from the white man, I will tell your children how much you care for them, even if it's crying I'll cry for them to understand.

Murega, I love you so much my lady, I'd rather drink salt water and sleep so that you and children live a good life. Look at how bad this house is, it is as if I live in a cow shed, when it is raining I feel like I am outside. Outside and inside this room there is no difference. Yes I hear the boss calling, sometimes they slap us when we late.

Kanyua : I'm so sorry darling, I'll have to leave, would there be at least a bed I could sleep in, but I'll have to leave now

Murega: I understand dear. Now I have received retirement money, I have one year before the actual retirement date. I have been thinking a lot about what project we can do with the money let's think about it

Kanyua: I think we should build a palatial house so that when you come home you can enjoy it. The rest we clear school fees for the children and then start a business that will keep us busy. By the way how much money darling?

Murega: It's five hundred thousand dear, and I have listened to your suggestions seriously, I have admitted I married a very intelligent wife, I love you very much, With these few remarks I give you all that money and then and then I will be sending the salary of the remaining months to complete those strategies. Here, take the money darling. Mine is yours and yours is mine. Next month I will be paid for six months' pay and I will also send it in cash via "m-pesa"

Kanyua Darling, I don't know if I should cry or kiss or sing a song. Thank you so much for believing in me, but what will you eat? You have given me

everything even the clothes you wear are all torn, take this eight hundred shillings for upkeep

Murega: All kisses you will give me when I come home, that eight hundred buy baby soda and you drink tea on your way. I'll have to leave, bring a kiss now.

Kanyua: I am yours to death. I love you darling. I will miss you very much. Goodbye, see you.

Murega: I love you dear, safe journey. I will miss you very much. Say hello to the children. (Leaving with a smile)

Events take place in a thatched mud house

Ken: Mum, you look tired and unhappy

Linda: I also see the face swollen

Leonard: And that bandage on the leg?

Cyrus: What is wrong mum? We've been working all day in a neighbor's farm so you'll be happy with the money, here it is.

Kanyua: My children, I went to look for your father, to get there I found him so rich, he has a lot of money he lives in a luxury house and he has a beautiful girl who calls his wife the pain came to me I looked at all the problems we go through, I remembered you did not go to high school. I was so upset that I pulled him telling him to come home. He pulled my hair out, whipped me like

a dog while the girl laughed at me. My children, these tears are yours (*she cries some more, the children are also crying*).

Cyrus: Mum, don't cry again, that person will regret it, even if we don't go to secondary we will help you, don't cry again.

Ken: I Will Kill Him with my own hands, I swear, he will regret it. Sorry mum

AFTER ONE YEAR

Murega : Mama Ken, Mama Ken yoooo, come open the door for me

Linda: Mum, someone is calling at the gate, this old man with dirty torn trousers.

Kanyua: call your brothers, maybe he's a thief. All the children are coming and they are all going out.

Kanyua: *Starts screaming* Uui uui uui uui, come and see, the man who left his children and wife has been chased away by the side chick and he is coming is coming to harass us, uuui uuui uui, my children I am dead.

Ken: This sword will kill a person today, move mum know this one won't bother us here ever.

Leonard: Linda, give me that stone.

Cyrus: Mum give me the knife, as for you just be a spectator, we got this

Kanyua: Beat him but don't kill him.

Murega: Mama Ken, what's wrong my dear, why are you letting children beat me?

Kanyua: Why are you calling me my dear after eating happily with your young wife while we and your children are suffering uuui uuui

(Murega's arm is cut off his arm by his son, others beat him with their mother, and he faints, burns his belongings and then drags him away from the gate.

Murega: *My God my God, why have you left me? Where should I go now? You mean my blood can oppress me like this? Let me go to the Assistant Chief and see if he can help me, I think his home is up there. My head hurts, my mouth is bleeding. Surely human beings can be so evil*

Kaleria: Hello Murega, long time, have you have been attacked by thieves or what? Very sorry

Murega: I am not well Mr. Sub chief, I was attacked by my wife and children after giving her all my retirement money, how can you help me?

Kaleria: (Laughs at him) you have lived with a white man and become a fool, I have worked for seventeen years and I have never heard of a case like yours, a man beaten by a woman ? You have a very serious defect. Who is the man in that house now? Listen carefully; the man is a lion in his home. Go back there and beat them all properly, the woman and the children beat them until I hear them screaming, don't embarrass the Meru men. M'wenda calling out

aloud! M'Mwenda M'Mwenda yeeee, come and see heifer being milked, a man beaten by the wife hahahaha!!!

M'Mwenda: Alas! Many days I have not seen you Mr. Murega, what have you brought to the elders? You are covered in blood; you need to see a doctor

Kaleria He has been beaten by the wife; he has brought a case against her

Mwenda: Stop joking, these things are not to be tried here, this is not Nyeri

Murega: It's not a joke Mr. Mwenda, my wife together with the children have done this to me

M'Mwenda Come on, let's stop talking nonsense here, since when does a man say he's been beaten by a woman? You idiot, get out of here or help finish what your wife began

M'Mwenda \$ Kaleria (*Laughing aloud as Murega exits*)

Pwahahahahhahahahaah!! Go away

Murega: my God, what is this life? I have no front or back, I will go to Njuri Ncheke and tell them my case, maybe they will give me meat, I am starving

(Dragging himself to Njuri Ncheke's house, he enters full of fear)

Elder 1: Introduce yourself and say what you want nkurumbo, or you are hungry?

Murega: I greet you with great respect my fathers I have been brought here by hunger and also to accuse my wife, she has beaten me and hurt me after I gave her all my retirement money.

(He gets a sudden slap and falls down, the elders laugh and continue to eat meat, old Mon approaches him carrying a piece of meat)

Elder 2: Get up and go your way, if we decide we will eat your meat, send this meat to your wife, it is a gift since she is now the man of that house. You have been given two weeks to bring two goats to the elders so that you will be forgiven for trampling on elders house with dirty feet.

(The elders get up and take the whips, Murega runs and escapes)

Murega: The weak have no strength, I will return to my mother and stay there, If I had built her a beautiful house I would have a home,

(He returns to his mother and finds her sick, starts working and getting drunk)

End