



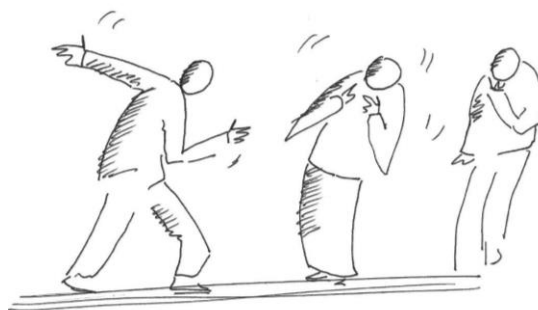
## C1 REVEALING WAYS OF TAKING ACTION

# Writing a community drama



## Why use this tool?

Drama can be used to communicate important messages to a community. The purpose of drama is to tell a good story in a way that people can engage with. Good drama often includes characters (the people in the drama) that remind people of themselves or people they know.



## A brief description

This tool gives advice on writing a drama with a community group.



## Time taken

It can take between one and four hours to prepare and decide on the drama, or much longer, depending on how many people are involved, and how long the drama is. The community group may then wish to act out the drama to others. It is up to them how many times they would like to act it out, and how much time they want to give to this.



## You will need

- A group of people who want to produce a drama to get a message across to others.
- A clear message you want to communicate.
- Access to a number of simple props to help identify characters, settings or actions.
- Some means of writing down or learning the drama you create so it isn't forgotten.



## Keys to success

- Enthusiastic people with time to prepare and act.
- A clear message and props to support the message.
- A sense of humour – included within the drama.



## Explaining the words we use

**Drama:** a story that is acted out or represented by a group of people to another group of people

Awareness-raising

Children &amp; youth

Climate &amp; environment

Conflict &amp; peace-building

Corruption &amp; governance

Disaster risk management

Discrimination &amp; inclusion

Food &amp; livelihoods

Gender &amp; sexual violence

Health &amp; HIV

Influencing decision-makers

Migration &amp; trafficking

Water, sanitation &amp; hygiene

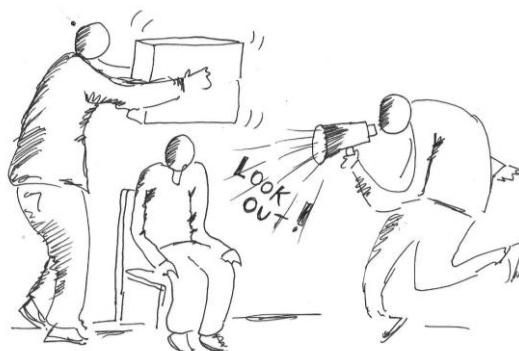


## What to do

### 1. Preparation

First, as a group, **choose the message** or theme you want to communicate.

Who is the drama for? Who will watch it? What messages do you want to communicate to them? What do you want people to do after watching the drama? For example, are you encouraging them to take action or to attend a community meeting, or perhaps you just want to give them information about a topic? It is important to think about these things as you prepare. There are some very useful tips to help you prepare in Footsteps 58, page 7 (see 'Finding out more', below).



Then, think about how you can **make it into a story**. You could include humour so that people feel encouraged, and not told off. **Keep it simple**. Be clear about what the problem is and what you think the one or two solutions are. You could write a short summary of the story.

### 2. Deciding the plot

Once you are clear on the summary, you can begin to **decide a plot** (the plot being the series of events that make up a story) and turn the story into a drama. Think about how the story will begin, how it will end and what will go in between. Make sure it includes the problem you want to communicate, as well as messages about how the problem can be addressed.

Think about **where the story will take place**. Perhaps in a home, in church, in the market, in a school? (This doesn't mean where the drama will be acted out, but where you will want the audience to imagine the story is happening.) Perhaps the drama will be made up of different sections, with each section taking place in different locations.

Think about **who the characters in the story are**. Try to make them quite different from one another. Try to include people who represent different groups in the community such as women and men, young and old, poor and wealthy. Give them names so they feel like real people.



### 3. Deciding the script

You can then begin to **decide a script**. The script includes the words that the characters say in the drama (also known as their 'lines'). Develop your plot and give lines to each of the characters. This could be written down, or done orally.

## C1 WRITING A COMMUNITY DRAMA

**Props** are objects in a drama to help tell the story. For example, if there is a farmer in your drama, she or he could hold a spade or hoe, or if somebody is cooking in the story, that person could use a pan and spoon. It is best to keep the props simple.



#### 4. Preparing to act

**Decide who will play the different roles.** Include a wide range of community members as actors – children, elderly, male and female.

You might want to think about **rehearsals**. Do you want to rehearse, or to write it quickly and perform it straightaway? Sometimes a drama is more fun when it's not been rehearsed much, but if you want to make a serious point then maybe you could practise it a few times together. Get feedback. Invite people to a rehearsal and ask for honest feedback to check that people understand your drama's message.

You could **advertise** the event. Do you want to make a poster? Or involve the children in the local school and ask them to invite their families? You could think about times when people gather together anyway – at the market, near the well, after church etc. This could be a good time to perform your drama.

You could think about whether to **encourage 'audience participation'**. This is when people from the audience are involved in the play. Somebody's role could be to encourage the audience to ask the questions to the different characters either during the play or at the end.



They could ask questions such as 'Why did you do that?' or 'Why didn't you help?' The characters should answer imagining they are the person they are acting, rather than speaking as themselves! Allowing people to ask questions could help the community think about what they are going to do about the issue.



### Finding out more

- Tearfund (2004) Footsteps 58: *Theatre for development*  
[http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/footsteps/footsteps\\_51-60/footsteps\\_58/](http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/footsteps/footsteps_51-60/footsteps_58/)

#### Related tools:

- A2 – Drama on child marriage [A2: Children & youth-2]
- C1 – Ways of taking action [C1: Awareness-raising-1]
- C1 – Story telling [C1: Awareness-raising-6]