

# A Tool of Liberation

**W**omen's Drama at People's Place, Katutura on Saturday, April 20, 1991 marked the beginning of a process of women's drama in Windhoek.

Women in the Windhoek area came together to discuss drama and its usefulness in the women's movement and to create short plays around women's problems.

The day's workshop began with a discussion about the importance and usefulness of drama. Telling stories through songs and plays was discussed as being an educational tool for both the audience and the participants.

By acting out their experiences, women could express how they perceive their own problems and what they think can be done to work towards solutions.

After this brief discussion session, the workshop continued with warm ups, concentration and focus exercises, and the singing of well known Namibian songs. The exercise of creating clay statues in pairs and then in groups of six and seven, revealed relevant problems and issues which the women felt were important. For instance, one group statue focused on a family scene where the husband is drinking, while the wife is ploughing the field with their baby on her back. The son is shooting a bird in the scene, while the daughter is cleaning the hut.

The last part of the workshop focused on three short sketches. One was a wedding scene, while the other dramatized a robbery where the victim is reporting the story to the police.

However, each policeperson tries to ignore the woman, until finally one asks her "is it again this prostitute?", attempting to discredit her character.

The third sketch was about a daughter who was drinking with a group of youngsters while her sister and mother were very worried about her. Although the father is unwilling to go and find her, the mother finds their daughter and tries to convince her to stop drinking.

Another interesting part of the workshop was that it was not only the two facilitators who were leading the sessions. Spontaneously, one woman participant began to teach the group about a song she knew which also included movement.

It is hoped that these workshops will lead to the establishment of a regular group of women who will write and act out their problems through street theatre.

In Zimbabwe, for instance, the Glen Norah Women's Theatre Group was formed in September 1990 with seven women who were mainly unemployed school leavers living in one of the high-density suburbs of Harare.

They are presently rehearsing a play about a woman junior certificate graduate and her problems with job hunting and family expectations.

In Bulawayo (Zimbabwe), another drama group focused their energies on a play against the horrible practice of baby-dumping which was occurring in the area. Young women, unable to support a newborn, would sometimes abandon the baby.



There was a growing campaign from the community to force the government to change the maintenance law so that fathers would also be obliged to financially contribute to their children's well being.

In fact, Evie Globerman (the drama group's original facilitator) believes that their play against baby dumping also helped to put pressure on the government to change the maintenance law, which the Zimbabwean government eventually did!

In Namibia, it sounds like women's drama is about to take off! Watch your daily newspaper for the time, date and venue of the next women's drama workshop (most likely a Saturday or Sunday afternoon). Viva Drama for Women's Empowerment and Liberation!!