

To : Director, BMS

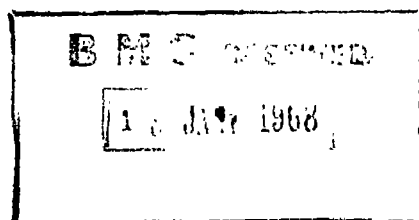
Through : Mr A. Gille, Unesco Chief of Mission in Kenya

Summary of mission under CLT 0404 and 5095, 19.12.1966 - 18.12.1967
at the Kenya National Theatre (Programme of Participation)

The consultant was assigned to the Kenya Cultural Centre in Nairobi in order to assist in the development of activities at the National Theatre, which is a building available for hire rather than a body of people whose activities it houses. The consultant sought the help of interested and knowledgeable people to form, officially, the National Theatre Centre, under whose aegis a variety of training programmes, presentations have been possible, and which will continue to operate until an executive Kenyan director is appointed. The lack of a counterpart has inhibited some aspects of the work, much of which must be done away from the building, in the areas where people actually live. The potential scope of this mission in Kenya is staggering: in the towns and in the rural areas. Priorities will have to be established and staff found to canalise the interest that exists - education, nation-building and entertainment become a social experiment of value, especially if the relevant Ministries can be involved.

The work of the past year has been, to some extent, exploratory, providing some indications for development in the future. The problems inherent in the local situation must be given time to resolve: virtually all the work stems from the interest of individuals, and cannot be imposed from above.

The mission has succeeded in creating a group of people identified with the National Theatre Centre, but this is only the beginning. The National Theatre must be a movement before a National Theatre has a meaning.



Laurence Hayes
Consultant

To: Director, Bureau of Relations with Member States

**To: Mr M. Elmandjra
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**From: Lawrence Hayes, Unesco Consultant
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Through : Mr A. Gille, Unesco Chief of Mission in Kenya
Report on the activities of the mission under CLT 0404 and CLT 5095
(19.12.1966 - 18.12.1967)

Consultant's arrival in Nairobi 2.1.1967
Consultant's departure from Kenya 14.1.1968

Contractual terms: 'to carry out the duties of the Director of the National Theatre, in an advisory capacity, to assist in the development of activities at the National Theatre'.

Consultant assigned to the Kenya Cultural Centre 4.1.1967 by Mr J.D. Malinda (Office of the Vice-President)
Consultant re-assigned to the Kenya Cultural Centre 31.1.1967 when the portfolio for the Cultural Centre was allocated to the Ministry of Natural Resources.

The Kenya Cultural Centre is administered by a statutory board under the Laws of Kenya Cap. 218, its original constitution having received piecemeal amendment since Independence in 1963. The National Theatre is part of the Cultural Centre and subject to the jurisdiction of the Governing Council. There are two main elements on this body. One, a largely well-intentioned group understandably concerned with the problems arising from an insecure financial position, but reactionary in attitude; and the other, aware that the Centre as constituted is not appropriate to the post-Independence situation, is occasionally vocal but equally inactive. During the year the composition of the Council has been amended to include a majority of African members, but owing to irregular attendance at meetings the value of their comment tends to be minimised. The consultant has been invited to meetings, has made recommendations, has tried continuously to co-operate.

His reluctant conclusion has to be that he has not really been wanted, probably because he has (rightly) been precluded from accepting the responsibility of making the theatre commercially viable, as he has been told, that far from making money for the theatre, his activities have cost the centre money.

A great deal of confusion has arisen since Independence, and still exists, resulting from the word 'national' in the title of the theatre: it was, and is, a building available for hire. It has to operate on a normal commercial basis of revenue derived from hire charges, and despite greater usage in 1967 than hitherto, the revenue is still inadequate. The consultant has held, and still holds, the belief that a theatre is as strong as the activities of the people using it. In Nairobi, the European groups are well established and financed, and capable of putting on plays and musicals as a hobby - providing entertainment in the process. The African groups, though less numerous, function in the same way. There is no regular African group within the city, and those struggling in the suburbs were technically outside the brief - a technicality ignored by the consultant, who has been able to some extent to build on their lively enthusiasm.

Recognising the need for a common meeting point, and realising that new activities could only come about by co-operation, the consultant was able to interest individuals in the formation of a National Theatre Centre, an official sub-committee of the Governing Council, as an aegis under which parts of the programme previously drawn up and approved, might be carried out, and through which African participation might be encouraged.

An informal training programme was started from which it was hoped that an ensemble might eventually come into being. Meanwhile, a programme based on the parallel skills of the three racial groups was prepared, and arrangements made for members of these 'workshops' to undertake a probe tour of villages in Central Province with a popular programme - a start on 'popular' drama outside the capital, unconnected with school activities. In all, the Theatre Centre has come to be a group of people of all races who are willing to do something rather than to talk about it, and identified with the National Theatre.

In Nairobi the vested interests in amateur drama seem to be incompatible with more than surface collaboration, and, as usual, personalities clash and the personnel of societies overlap. There is an uncomfortable lack of trust between individuals and some established members of the Governing Council. The consultant has not been willing to take sides in these parochial squabbles, but inevitably in his advisory capacity, he has not been able to ignore inefficiency of management and deplorable

inertia. In the absence of a counterpart he has been regarded as at least the quasi-executive director; lacking the necessary authority has made this year extremely difficult and often more frustrating than it might have been. Fortunately, relationships with African groups has been rewarding. One of the inhibiting factors has been this absence of a counterpart; in this direction the consultant has failed to move the Governing Council which has regarded the lack of immediate funds as definitive. In October, a letter from the Ministry of Natural Resources informed the writer that the Treasury had agreed to make a grant-in-aid of £5000 to support the activities of the Cultural Centre, a large part of this sum being for items recommended by the consultant - including the Theatre Centre's activities and the counterpart's salary. It is now learned that the grant will not become effective before the appointment of an African director, who will be the employee of the Governing Council. There is one likely candidate, but it is not known if or when he will take up the appointment.

During the year an increasing number of Africans have ventured into the office used by the consultant at the National Theatre, and he has been able to offer assistance, or at least a sympathetic ear.

Summary of main activities initiated and carried out by consultant

A. At the National Theatre

- January:** Participation in weekend school for Schools Drama Festival. Report and recommendations to the Governing Council covering budgeting, staffing, planning, the physical building, publicity. First request for counterpart.
- February:** Public meeting outlining programme of development agreed by Ministry of Natural Resources and Governing Council.
- March onwards:** Setting up of the National Theatre Centre as sub-committee of Governing Council, for canalising activities which over the remained of the year comprised:
- Periodical newsletters to some 250 people and organisations.
 - Training workshops during April and May.
 - 'Three Drums One Voice' - a multi-racial music and dance show in June, with personnel from the workshops augmenting local performers, presented at the National Theatre.
 - Entertainment tour of Central Province by African group from the workshops in August.
 - Participation on the stand of the Ministry of Natural Resources at the Nairobi Show in September.
 - A second series of training workshops in August/September.
 - Presentation of 'Mother Courage' by Bertolt Brecht at the National Theatre in October, as which performers and staff were basically from the workshops.
 - Entertainment tour of Western Kenya by African group in Dec. (in which the Ministry of Social Services collaborated).
 - Preparation of drama course in connection with the Schools Drama Festival - January 1968.
- June:** Revision of hire agreement for the Cultural Centre.
- Having obtained free supplies of material, the re-decoration of the Theatre foyers which made possible the replacement of obsolete display material with an exhibition space: continually changing exhibitions since June.

B. With Ministry of Natural Resources

Preparation of a draft outline scheme for an alternative, and to be hoped more appropriate, cultural centre in Nairobi. Some aspects of this were subsequently discussed with a **representative** of the Ministry of Economic Planning.

Through the good offices of the Permanent Secretary, active liason with the Ministry of Social Services (Community Development), and the first stages of inter-ministerial co-operation with the Theatre Centre.

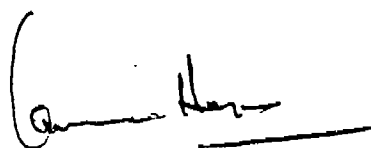
Recommendations for consideration and observations

1. The Theatre Centre. This remains in being under a new chairman at the pleasure of the Governing Council at least until the African director is appointed. Arrangements have been made for it to carry out existing commitments and to initiate others. The consultant is anxious that the present contacts should not be lost.
2. The National Theatre. Maintenance and improvements apart, there is little that can be done until the locally responsible authorities are willing to accept change, not the least being a change of attitude. No theatre, even with a subsidy, would budget to run at a loss, but at this time the consultant feels that certain calculated risks should be taken. Once a national theatre movement has gained momentum and official support whether through the activities of the Theatre Centre or another body, the National Theatre will start to have meaning, but until that time the present title is misleading and ambiguous.
3. Drama in Kenya. Throughout the year there has been a great deal of talk, and comment in the press about Kenyan culture and drama. Loose thinking about traditional oral material and imported formal dramatic structures has contributed to the confused situation. In the writer's view, it will take a long time before the apparently irreconcilable views find a meeting point, and even then there will be parallel lines of activity. Very few of the more vocal people actually contribute in practice, which is a pity because drama is an activity. It would be helpful if Government could indicate a positive line for the guidance of those concerned. Drama here is assumed at two levels, the formal school-curriculum-influenced play, and the ritualistic traditional. These are not incompatible, and need not be mutually exclusive. It will take an African to bridge them.
4. Until such time as a new cultural centre is thought out and established, a meeting place in the suburbs (where people live) could contribute to increased African participation. An elaborate hall is not required, existing groups might form the nucleus, the potential audience exists. It is believed that the collaboration of the Nairobi City Council could be encouraged.

5. The touring group is obviously needed. Money should be allocated for engaging a small group of suitable people for, say, three months, of which two would be spent in preparation and one on the road. Some of these people proved adequate would be retained and the group augmented for a second period and so on. In a twelvemonth about twenty people might be available for splitting into two teams. The work involved would be considerable, but the influence of such touring groups could be of great social value, especially if, for example, the Ministries of Health, Agriculture and Education were involved in the programme mentioned.
6. The sheer volume of work makes it imperative that the director's terms of reference are exactly defined, and that adequate secretarial facilities are made available. The director cannot cope on his own: he will need a colleague in addition to the goodwill of voluntary workers.

Personal note: The consultant has enjoyed cordial relations with the permanent Secretary, Ministry of Natural Resources, and greatly appreciates his interest.

The staggering number of hours engaged on the mission have produced some positive and satisfactory results. The consultant is only too aware of what might have been done, and what remains to be done.



Lawrence Hayes
Unesco Consultant

8.1.1968