

USING COMMUNITY THEATRE TO INFLUENCE ATTITUDES TOWARDS MARINE TURTLE CONSERVATION IN TANZANIA

Prepared by Temu Pastory

Sea Sense

Tanzania

What is community theatre?

- Participatory tool for raising awareness in local communities: **‘educational entertainment’**
- Data collection process to identify specific **issues of local concern**
- Local community members trained as ‘theatre artists’ to develop skills in **role playing, scripting and story telling**
- Artists process data to develop **storylines and scenes**



How does community theatre work?

- ❑ 10 days of **rehearsals** and development of scenes and scripts takes place
- ❑ Each scene is designed to **explore community perceptions** and deliver a specific message to the audience
- ❑ **Village leaders** join the rehearsals to share their views
- ❑ A joker (MC) connects the audience with the performance by **provoking discussion and debate**
- ❑ Exchange of opinions/ideas: **‘peer to peer learning’**



What are the attitudes we want to influence?

- Turtles are just fish. Why do I need to conserve them?
- Turtle meat and eggs are so delicious, I don't want to stop eating them.
- If I catch a turtle in my net, then it is my right to sell it or eat it.
- I know turtles are protected but nobody will arrest me if I kill one.
- Throwing plastic waste into the environment doesn't harm wildlife.
- Protecting marine resources is not my job, it is the work of the government.

What are the responses to community theatre?



- Debate about the **right to consume turtle meat** arises frequently
- Widespread **disbelief that turtles are not fish**
- Some communities agreed to **end sea turtle meat consumption**
- Some village councils are **taking action against turtle poachers**
- Increase in citizens **reporting illegal fishers** to authorities

How does community theatre influence attitudes?



- Citizens are exposed to **different points of views** e.g. myths and beliefs are discussed and challenged
- Raises awareness** of the importance of sea turtle conservation
- Discourages negative behaviors** that threaten sea turtles
- Connects citizens together to find **common solutions**

Use of community theatre in Tanzania

- ❑ Sea Sense has organised community theatre performances in **19 coastal villages** since 2011
- ❑ Reaching approximately **11,000 citizens**



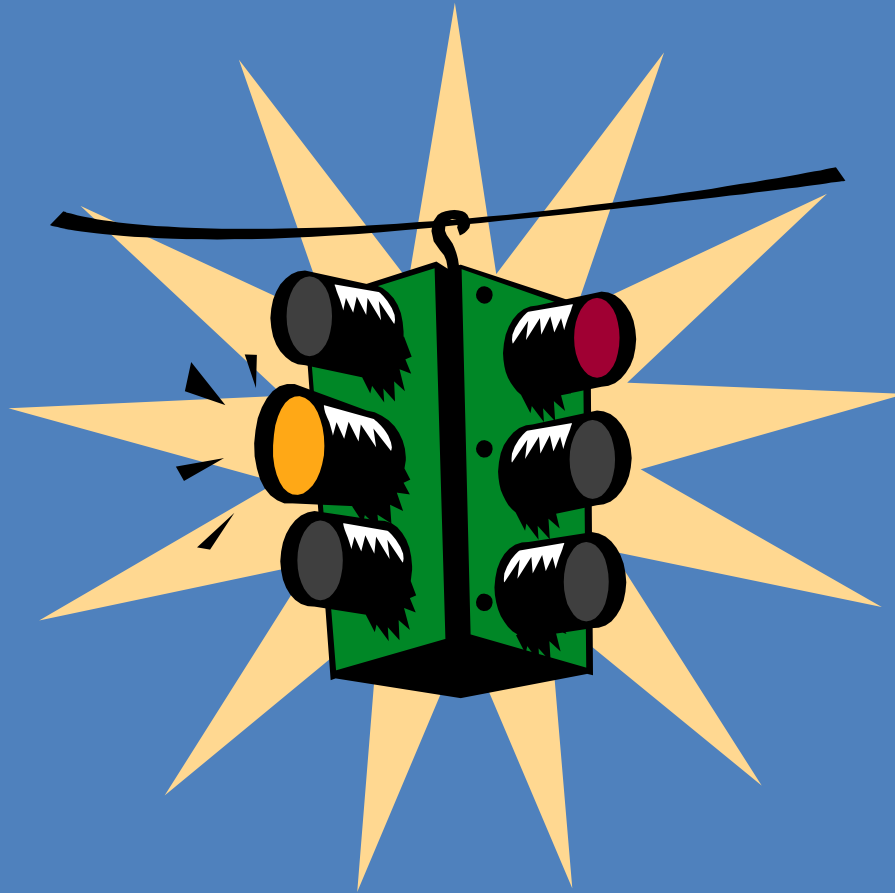
Successes

- ❑ **Challenges value systems** related to sea turtles
- ❑ Reaches **broad cross section** of the community including youth and women
- ❑ Creates a platform for **information sharing and learning** between youth and elders
- ❑ Encourages **dialogue** on opposing views
- ❑ **Empowers women** to express their views concerning conservation issues
- ❑ Encourages communities to **demand greater accountability** from their leaders
- ❑ Identifies **knowledge gaps** for future awareness programmes

Challenges

- ❑ Limited support from some local leaders due to fears of their **weak leadership** being exposed
- ❑ **Expensive** to conduct training for artists
- ❑ **Resistance to change** amongst many citizens
- ❑ Cultural, socio-economic and political **barriers to change**





Ahsante kwa usikivu