

The Challenge of Exploring Ourselves and Our Community

Jennifer Jimenez and Steven Sillett,
Aiding Dramatic Change in Development

Thursday, October 9, noon to 2 p.m.
OISE, 252 Bloor Street West, Room 2-289

www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca/communitydevelopment.html

The Zisize Drama Project to raise awareness of and prevent HIV/AIDS in Ingwavuma, KwaZulu Natal, uses participatory theatre techniques to encourage community dialogue, negotiate gender equity, and empower men, women, and children in the community. This project involves eight local community members, trained in Image and Forum Theatre techniques, visiting Grade 7 classes and parent groups to conduct participatory theatre workshops. These workshops encourage participants to ask questions and challenge peer influence, preconceived notions of sexuality, and gender roles. They also provide an opportunity for adults to discuss the cultural implications presented by the project.

Aiding Dramatic Change in Development, a Canadian NGO focused on community development, in partnership with the Zisize Educational Trust, a local charity in Ingwavuma, initiated the Drama Project in 2006. They continue to be involved in supporting the project with training, play creation, and fundraising.

This presentation will describe the participatory methods used to reach the community, the benefits of project ownership within the community, and the challenges faced by an external organization working to introduce a sustainable, community-driven project. Particular attention will be given to the evolution of their practice and the benefits and realities of letting go of preconceived plans and responding to the complex nature of the social and cultural environment within the organization and in the wider community.

Jennifer Jimenez and Stephen Sillett founded Aiding Dramatic Change in Development. Jimenez has taught drama and art in the Ontario and British school system. She also works as a theatre maker, facilitator, and lighting designer. Sillett freelances as a graphics and media professional and multi-arts producer and is a member of the UK Theatre in Education Network.