creating Participatory radio drama with children

A Facilitator’s Guide by

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2004 National Children’s Radio Seminar
Initiated by the Radio Infantil project of IBIS Mozambique, the Seminar was a collaboration between IBIS, CMFD, Radio Mocambique, UNICEF, Right to Play and FORCOM. More than 100 young participants accompanied by adult presenters working on children's programmes from 42 radio stations nationwide came together in Chimoio for the week-long forum. The seminar’s goal was to use participatory radio to create a series of magazine-style radio programmes produced by and for young people. Participants gained first-hand knowledge in interviewing, creating spots, putting together reportage and developing radio dramas. The magazines address the right to education, the right to health and the right to play. The magazine programmes were sent out with the manual, resource materials and a children’s sound effect CD to encourage good children’s programming. CMFD wrote the chapter on working with young people to create radio dramas in the seminar manual, facilitated the radio drama segment of the seminar, provided two portable recording studios and did on-site production. CMFD also produced the audio post-seminar and created the children’s sound effects CD.

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Creating Participatory Radio Drama with Children: A Facilitator’s Guide
By Deborah Walter and Daniel Walter

Introduction:
Children and drama...
The use of radio drama can be an important tool for any individual, group or community to tell stories, help preserve culture and as an educational tool to address issues as diverse as health, rights, community development and the environment. This guide explores working with children in a participatory process to create radio dramas that spark young imaginations, explore social issues related to children, and help young people to express their views, thoughts and feelings about the world around them. When involving children in creating radio dramas it is important that the facilitator help guide them through the process of developing a good radio drama while being sure that children are active in every part of the process. This also means being flexible, and adapting the programme to suit the children and the environment you are working in. What follows is a general guide to help you begin to develop a programme that works for you. The following is intended to give ideas, and help you to get started. Along the way, you may want to add and subtract, adapt, and change what is suggested to suit your environment and the children that you are working with.

The format that you use to work with the children will depend on your programme, resources and timeframe. If you are using this guide to help you put on a workshop, you can follow the activities here over a period of days. If you have a longer running programme, you can break up the activities into various meetings. For example, the first day you may want to just do ice-breakers to help the children to get to know each other better. During the second meeting, you may talk about different kinds of dramas, and discuss what makes a good story. On the third, perhaps undertake the “Creating Sound Pictures” activity to help the children begin to think about sound as a way to creating a good story. How many activities you do on a given day will depend on the age and abilities of the children and the amount of time you have available.

Whether for fun or as an educational tool, drama must capture the attention of the audience and keep it tuned into the radio station. Writing drama is not an easy task for anyone, and working with children in a participatory manner requires special understanding by the facilitator. Throughout the process, be sure to remember:

- Children must understand the process. The facilitator will help to guide the children step-by-step but not take over! (In longer term projects, the facilitator will find that, over time, their role will diminish as the children gain skills and confidence)
- The opinions of the children must be taken seriously

REMEMBER - This is a guide, adapt and change as is appropriate to the children you are working with! Feel free to jump around and go back to an earlier activity if it needs to be repeated.
Kinds of Dramas & Lengths

The type of drama and the structure of your programme will depend on what you want to accomplish and the time and resources available to you. You may choose to work with children in a workshop venue with a shorter timeframe (i.e. one week) or over a number of months. You will also need to choose what type of drama best suits your needs:

**HINT**

Throughout the participatory process it is important to keep a few key things in mind:

- Be flexible and creative! If something is not working, try something else!
- Adapt and change ideas to suit the children involved
- Children can get tired and bored of working on a project. Have some other types of games on hand when energy levels are low or too high.
- Or better yet, assign each group of children to be responsible for leading a mid-day game on various days.
- Since this is a participatory process, the facilitator should look for every opportunity for the children to lead sessions, evaluations and games.

**PSA**

A PSA or spot is a short (i.e. 30 second) commercial-style programme. A PSA is not necessarily a drama, but dramas with a tag line on the end can make good PSAs. The advantage of a short PSA drama is that it is relatively easy to do and, since it is short in duration, could be played by a station often throughout the day, helping audiences remember it. A drama-style PSA is ideal when there is a message that you would like to convey.

**Mini - Drama**

A mini-drama allows you to have a more in-drama storyline and characters than a PSA. Your drama can be a short drama of 3 - 15 minutes aired in a single slot or be part of a magazine-type programme.

**Full length drama**

A longer drama has the advantage of being able to incorporate more than one storyline and develop characters in a way that the audience will really be able to relate. However, the longer the drama, the more planning is needed. Remember your target audience’s interests come first so if you choose 2, 5 or 30 minutes or more, be sure that your listeners will stay tuned.

**Serial Drama**

In a serial drama, the story takes place over a number of episodes usually aired at a regular time slot. As the serial drama is longer, it allows for more in-depth characters and can involve a number of sub-plots. This is a great way to get your audience to tune in regularly while creating a very in-depth drama. However, lots of planning and organisation is needed, and it’s probably a good idea to learn with a shorter drama first.

**HINT**

Writing participatory radio drama requires the involvement of all participants. Since many of the children may not know each other at the beginning of the project, or may be generally shy, it is important to set the tone from the beginning and make them feel comfortable.

“Ice-breaker” games may be used to help children get to know each other a bit and begin comfortable creating stories together.
Icebreaker Ideas

- Name Memory Game: Have the children stand in a circle (if the group is very large, you may need to break into smaller groups). The first child will say their name. The second child will say the first child’s name, and then their own. The third child will say the first child’s name, then the second, and then their own, and so on.

- Twenty Questions: The game is easy and requires no set-up or materials. Have a number of cut out pictures from magazines, or have the children choose items in the room. One child chooses the object, while the other children may only ask questions that can be answered with either yes or no. For example: "Is it blue?", "Is it in the front half of the room?" The person who finally gets it gets to be the next "yes-no person." Stress that that person would never have gotten it without everybody else’s help; the "no" answers helped as much as the "yes" answers did!

- Listen and Guess: This requires some preparation by the facilitator, and may be done together, or as a competition amongst break-out groups. Bring along a cassette filled with recorded sounds. Have the children guess what the sounds are. For example, running water, a car starting up, a classroom, washing dishes.
Getting into drama...
Once the children and facilitators are comfortable with each other, it is time to start thinking about how to write a drama.

**exercise** To listen or not to listen? What makes a good story?

**aim** The aim of this activity is to begin thinking about what makes a good story.

**what you need** Black or white board or large sheets of paper

**method**

1. Ask the children what their favourite television, movie or radio show is and why do. Write on a large sheet of paper what makes these worth watching/listening to. Some key words that may arise are: exciting, adventure, romance, action, humor, interesting stars, etc.

2. Next, ask the group what makes a show dull or uninteresting to watch and listen to, and write these words down as well. Some key words that may come up include: boring, unrealistic, not funny, etc.

What do we mean by “sound picture”?

The sounds that we hear help us to know what is happening, whether in real-life or in a drama. For example, if you are sitting in your bedroom, and you hear the sound of a plate crashing down in the kitchen, immediately, you can imagine in your head the broken plate in pieces on the floor, even if you can not see it. If you hear the cry of a baby, you can imagine a baby nearby, even if you can not see her. In the very same way, if you are using sounds in a drama, it helps the listener use his or her imagination to know what is happening. The sounds are helping to create an image, or picture, for the listener. This is what we mean when we say...

“sound picture”
Exercise: Creating Sound “Pictures”

Aim

The aim of this activity is to start thinking about the stories that the children want to tell and how to tell them. Radio drama relies on being able to create a picture using only sound and voice. The following activity will help children begin to create stories and understand the use of sound in making people know what is happening in a drama.

A good way to begin to write the dramas is to help children begin to explore the world around them. Since many children may have a difficult time beginning to articulate these thought in words, and some may not be able to write, you can start to do this through pictures.

What you need

A large sheet of paper and coloring pencils or crayons, a bed sheet.

Method

1. Group the children into groups of 3 - 5 depending on the size of the group - ask them to think about what is a problem in their communities, a big challenge for children, or a story that they want to tell.

2. Ask the children to draw this problem, challenge or story. While they draw, they should not let any of the other groups see their work. Have the children look at the picture and imagine what sounds go with what is happening in the picture. For example, if they draw a girl washing clothes, ask them to think about all of the sounds that go with this picture/story: For example:

   - the swishing of the water
   - the sound of clothes being wrung out
   - is the girl singing or is she quiet?
   - are other children passing by on their way to school?
   - Are they talking or laughing?
   - what do their footsteps sound like?

This will help the children begin to think about how that can recreate this scene using sound!

3. Once they have created their idea in pictures, they can then make up a short skit about what they have drawn: Once all of the groups are finished, hang a sheet or divide the room in some way so that the two sides cannot see each other. Take turns having each group of the children go behind the sheet and act out the scenes that they have drawn - remembering that they now have to use voices and sound to create a “sound picture” of what they have drawn. The other children must then discuss what is happening - who is doing what where? The facilitator can help the children by asking questions about what is happening. After the groups have guessed what the “sound picture” might be, have them look at the picture and see if this is what they were imagining.

Afterward, it can be discussed what sounds and words helped them know what was happening, and what was confusing. They can also use this opportunity to begin talking about some of the issues that the children have raised.
The 5 Basic Steps of Writing Drama...

Once the children are warmed up, it's time to start writing the radio dramas. A drama must have a beginning, middle and ending. To begin the drama there must have a problem, a situation that confronts the character. As the drama unfolds, there can be humor, surprise, tragedy, romance, deception as the characters struggle towards resolution. Similarly, the ending can be happy, sad, tragic or surprising.

Step 1 - deciding on the theme or dramatic issue
To begin to write the drama, have the group start to think about the story or stories that they may want to tell. The first thing to consider is if there is a certain theme to be covered - depending on the objectives of the programme. For example, themes may include various aspects of children's rights, health, HIV/AIDS, etc. As stated above, a drama must have a challenge, or something to be resolved, so you may consider beginning there.

**exercise** What do We Want to Say?

**aim** To decide what story for the radio drama

**what you need**
A large sheet of paper, and coloring pencil or crayons

**method**

1. Break into groups: Brainstorm ideas about what everyone wants to talk about. You may use the following questions to get ideas started. (It is a good idea to write down the ideas that come out - so have a note taker in each group)

   - What are your dreams, where do you want to be in 10 years?
   - What do you like best about your community/school?
   - What are some challenges for children in your community?
   - What are some problems that girls face?
   - What are some problems that boys face?
   - What are you scared of?
   - What is your biggest challenge?
   - What are some problems in your community?

**What is something that you want to say?**

a story you want to tell?
The 5 Basic Steps of Writing Drama...

2. Each group should prioritise around 3 - 5 ideas and list them on a large sheet of paper. When all groups are finished, bring the groups back together. Among all the ideas, have the group prioritise which are the most important. From this listing you can then choose a numbers of ideas to create the drama’s theme.

Step 2 - Thinking through the story line...

Once there is a theme, then you begin to develop what the storyline will be. To do this, you may ask the question - “What if....?”

Some examples that can be discussed with the group:

- **What if**...what if a girl is in love with a boy? She wants to make love with him, but he does not want to use a condom. She is afraid of getting pregnant and getting HIV. What happens?

- **What if**...what if a mother wants to talk to her children about HIV, but she does not know how? What does she want to do?

- **What if**...what if you find out your brother or best friend has HIV? How would you react?

- **What if**...what if there is a girl who is top in her class wants to go to school but her family wants her to get married?

- **What if**...what if a child finds out that her friend is not at school because she is being abused?

Based on the themes chosen, have the children think through “what if” questions that relate to the themes

**exercise** Sharing the story

**aim** To think about how to develop the story.

**method** Have each group explain what their idea is for the story. The others can ask questions, make suggestions provide feedback on what they think of the storyline.

Some potential themes for young people are:

- **Children’s Rights** - Children have the rights too!
- **HIV/AIDS** - Negotiating condom use, dealing with discrimination, how to protect yourself
- **Abuse** - Child abuse hurts everyone
- **Education** - Girls’ right to education
The 5 Basic Steps of Writing Drama...

Step 3 - Who are the characters...
Now that you know what the general storyline, it's time to thinking about who the characters are.

**exercise** Good & Bad

**aim** The point of this exercise to is to show that everyone is not all good or all bad!

**what you need** Giant papers, markers

**method**

1. Ask the children describe a good personality trait of their own, and a not so good personality trait.
2. Have two sheets of large paper taped to the wall labeled, "good" and "not good." Have the children write their traits on the appropriate sheet.

OR

Ask the children to think of other personality traits – good and bad. The facilitator can get things started by asking the children to describe themselves, their friends or family members. As the brainstorming happens, write each of these traits on the paper.

Here are some traits you might hear about: honest, friendly, shy, rude, **greedy**, thoughtful, **dishonest** lazy, **intelligent**, creative, stubborn, intelligent, selfish.

**exercise** Personalities and problems

**aim** To outline personalities of the characters.

**what you need** Giant papers, markers

**method** Pick a good trait and a bad trait. Go back to your "what if" questions, and think about how some of the personality traits can help your character solve their problem while which traits will make things more difficult for them.
The 5 Basic Steps of Writing Drama...

Pick a good trait and a bad trait. Go back to your “what if” questions, and think about how some of the personality traits can help your character solve their problem while which traits will make things more difficult for them.

**Situation 1:** What if there is a girl who is top in her class wants to go to school, but her family wants her to get married? Imagine the main character is a girl who is very intelligent and creative, but also very shy. How does being shy make it difficult for her to get what she wants? How does being creative and intelligent help her? What does she do?

**Situation 2:** What if a girl is in love with a boy? She wants to make love with him, but he does not want to use a condom. She is afraid of getting pregnant or contracting HIV? Imagine the main character is a boy who is very thoughtful and loves the girls very much, but is stubborn and does not want to use the condom. What does he do? What does she do?

Once you have the idea that people’s personalities help to shape the story, think through the storyline that you want to write. Who are the characters? What are their personalities like? Write down 2 - 3 personality traits of each character.

**Step 4 - Creating Conflict...**
The above activity helps demonstrate how people and characters create their own challenges. Your character’s personality can sometimes make accomplishing what she wants to achieve easier or harder. Also, there will be additional challenges from other characters and the environment that the character comes from. All of these create the dramatic conflict, which is the challenge or drama.

**For example:**
**Situation 1** - What other characters are a challenge for the girl - family, friends, a potential husband? What factors in her community are obstacles?

**Situation 2** - What other characters influence the boy’s decision to refuse to use a condom - his friends?
The 5 Basic Steps of Writing Drama...

**exercise**
Listen and Learn

**aim**
To learn about and identify conflict in dramas

**what you need**
Recordings of drama clips

**method**
1. Listen to other radio dramas on hand
   Discuss:

   - **Who** is the main character?
   - **What** are the challenges/problems that he/she faces?
   - **Where** does that character and story want to go?
   - **What** are his/her good characteristics? What are his/her bad character traits?
   - **What** bad characteristics make challenges more difficult?
   - **What** other characters cause problems for them?
   - **What** about the situation makes things more difficult for him or her?
   - **Are there** other characters that help them?
   - **What** happens?
   - **What** did you like about the drama? What did you not like?
The 5 Basic Steps of Writing Drama...

Step 5 - “Write” the script!...
Depending on the abilities of the children, it is ideal for the script to be written down by the children or the facilitator. If this is not possible, then the children can simply begin developing their dramas orally or creating storylines in pictures! Some sort of guide will help keep the dialogue on track. The dialogue should sound real, just like ordinary people talking. A narrator can also be used to fill in gaps or add sound effects to the audience get a clear picture of what’s going on.

It is not necessary to be straightforward in telling everything but the dialogue will let the listener know what is happening. For example, in the bad dialogue below, it is not needed for the girl say she just got home from school because it’s obvious from the conversation between her and her mother:

Example: Bad Dialogue

“Hi there, mother. I arrived home from school. It was a really long day but I did really well on my tests.”

“I am happy you are home. I need you to help me clean the house.”

“But mother, I have a big test tomorrow that I must study for.”

Example: Better Dialogue

“Eish, what a long day! Hi, mom! Guess what, I did great on my tests today!”

“Good, you’re here! Get going on your chores, it’s late!”

“Oh no, but I have more tests tomorrow!”

Good dialogue should:
- be natural and sound like everyday speech
- use emotion
- avoid long spoken passages and strive for interactive conversation between characters
Voicing...
Once the story is created, it’s time to start voicing. There may be a choice between using professional child actors, children from a local drama club with some experience in drama or programme participants. Of course, there are advantages and disadvantages either way. Obviously, children with some experience in acting will be able to pick up lines quicker and may have a more professional appeal. However, using children from the community is a great way to ensure the children know that this is their programme – after all, everybody likes to be heard on air!

Before Beginning...
Getting the best sound quality, spontaneity and sincerity from kids can be a challenge especially when recording voice for radio dramas. Before even getting started, consider the following to ensure that you are ready to start:

Test and Retest!
Before getting the kids into the studio or behind the microphone, it is really important to make sure that you have tested and re-tested your equipment. There’s nothing worse than something going wrong when you have a half a dozen kids in front of your gear and you are following cables along the floor trying to find a problem.

Good Timing:
If possible, don’t record right after lunch or at the end of the day. Kids need to be enthusiastic but not too enthusiastic—i.e. not too much sugar—to record. At the same time, the after lunch crowd may be too full—and too lethargic—to motivate.

Variety:
The best thing to keep in mind with kids is that they may lose interest in what they are doing really quickly. To avoid this, create a regimen so that they are not doing the same thing all day long. Many breaks, lots of snacks (not too much sugar otherwise you will have your hands full but only for an hour until they become very irritable and crash.) Keeping children’s natural rhythms in mind will help you all work well together.
Getting Started Voicing...

When producing dramas of any kind, it is always better to record a live read of each scene of the script rather than recording part by part and then editing them all together later. This means that you will have a lot of kids in one area for the duration of each scene. There will therefore be a lot of background noise created by having all the people in the scene in the studio at the same time. This means that choreography of voices in front of the mic, and the angle and distance of the voice to the mic will be very important.

Remember, the closer you get the voices to the mic, the less you’ll need to turn up the mic’s volume and the less the background noise will be audible (this is increasingly important as many times you will be using an ad hoc studio that will not be perfectly designed for optimum audio (discussed later).

The other key thing to remember is the angle that the voice takes with the microphone. It is important to keep very close but to get the angle right so that the air from the lips especially in hard consonants like “p” and “b” is not directly into the mic’s diaphragm, i.e. the mic is a little to the side or under the mouth. This can be a challenge when you have only one mic so, if you are able, it is good to use separate tracks and separate mic in outs to record the scene so that you have a max of 2-3 people at each mic.

Audio Quality

Recording voice audio for radio dramas requires the best possible quality recordings for several reasons. Firstly, it is important for general audio quality of the end product. Secondly, the audio will be manipulated in a way in the postproduction phase that will require a lot of editing and volume change. For every time that you change the audio, or edit it, the most noticeable thing is the background noise cut out and volume change.

HINT

When doing low-tech mobile recordings, it is important to remember that everything from the echo in the room to the person talking in the next room to the cars passing outside will be picked up in the mic and therefore make it into your final mix. Therefore pick a quiet place out of the way.

Recording Outdoors

Sometimes outdoors can be the best option if there is too much uncontrollable commotion in the room that you wish to work. If you choose to record outdoors, pick a place that has little in the way of traffic, wind or birds. Should there be wind, a windsock or foam of some kind around the outside of the microphone will reduce the wind noise. Remember, a windsock will also reduce some of the higher frequencies and therefore the eq should be readjusted to give you a “normal sound.”

Glossary:

What is the diaphragm of a mic?

Technically speaking the diaphragm of a microphone is a thin vibrating disc or cone that converts sound waves to electrical signals. Most importantly, quick burst of air directly into this part of the mic causes a ‘pop’ and results in poor sound quality. Certain sounds such as the pronunciation of a "b" or "p," naturally create this short burst of air into the microphone. Keep the mic slightly to the side of the speaker to avoid “popped p’s.”
Creating an Indoor Studio

Should you decide to do the recording indoor in a non-traditional studio, your challenges differ somewhat. Echo is the most important factor. You will not be able to remove it completely. The echo is caused from sound waves hitting a blunt solid surface like a wall. To reduce it, to change the shape of the walls around the mics. Stack things along the walls like boxes or shelves and scatter some suitcases or travel bags. Then, think about using blankets to cover parts of the walls and ceiling you can’t reach. Tack them to window frames, prop them up with tables, use string to hang them and anything else that you can think of. If you have space between your mics, you can buy cement tacks to temporarily hold blankets in place—they will bang in with a hammer and leave only a small three pin mark on the wall. Get permission!

After the walls are covered and the sound is somewhat dampened, place your computer equipment away from the area that you plan to set the microphones.

Mic Techniques

Because of the reduced quality of audio in a non-studio environment, proper mic techniques are important. Proximity, volume, levels all play a part in getting the best possible result. Ensure the voice is really close to the mic but not speaking directly into it. Use a windsock or foam over the mic end if you can and don’t forget the eq!

Get the presenter to speak loudly so you can reduce the mic’s volume and allow for less room noise. Remember, the lower you put the mic volume while managing to get levels right (Ovu), the better the quality the audio will be. Proximity and volume are your two biggest factors.

Production...

Sound effects and music are an important part of dramas - both to make the drama more enjoyable to the audience, and more understandable. There are few ways to add sound effects and music to your drama. Your options depend on the level of technology and resources that you have at your disposal. We will discuss each briefly.

Tape Recorder:

Should you be working with a tape recorder only, your options are a little limited but the task is not impossible. You will have to do all of your sound effects in real time - this means that you will have to add the sound effects at the same time that the actors are voicing the script by making them live and recording while the actors read. You must think about a few factors that will make a big difference to your final outcome of the drama. Proximity, realistic sounds, unwanted noise.

You have to design the effects so that they are realistic, the distance to the microphone corresponds with the scene and the surroundings of the actors, and that you don’t have thirty people all clomping around the room setting up effects while the actors are presenting as this will cause a lot of unwanted noise and disturb the actors.

Glossary:

What is “Background Noise”?

Stop reading for a moment, and close your eyes. What do you hear? Maybe there is someone talking nearby, a car horn honking in the distance, or a dog barking. Even in a quiet room, you can hear a computer or air conditioner running, distant voices, maybe people passing outside. Background noise is everything you hear going on around you that may be recorded along with your voice or drama.

Background noise in audio can cause problems. Remember what we said about creating sound pictures? Background noise may confuse the picture created in the listener’s mind, making it difficult to understand what is happening in your drama. For example, if you are recording a scene set on a farm, but your studio is beside a school, you may pick up sounds from the school yard as background noise. What will the listener think? How confusing! The listener will not know if the scene is taking place at a school or on a farm.

Secondly, background noise disturbs a recording’s flow. Imagine there is a nearby air conditioner turning on and off. If you are recording a single voice over a period of time, at times the air conditioner may be on while at other times it may be off. Moreover, if you need to adjust the speaker’s voice, it will also change the volume of the background noise. This will make the recording less natural.
Proximity:
The distance to the microphone must correspond with the scene and surroundings of the actors. Whether creating sounds in real-time or in the studio, it is important to keep in mind distance and movement. For example, if there are children playing far away, then the sound must seem far away, even if you are creating this sound right beside you in real-time. Also, keep in mind spacing, and your use of left and right. For example, if you had two neighbours are talking to each other, one voice may come from the right and the other from the left to create a sense of distance.

Realistic sounds: You have to design the effects so that they are realistic.

Unwanted noise: Try to avoid having 30 people all clomping around the room setting up effects while the actors are present. This is not only disturbing to your actors but will result in a lot of unwanted noise.

Multiple Recording Devices
Scenario 2 for the production of dramas is that you have two or more recording devices — tape recorder, minidisk, mp3 recorder — and a way to mix them together: mixing board or multiple outputs on a tape recorder. The advantage that you have here is that you can prepare the sounds on one machine and play back the “clips” as you record the voices live. If you get your timing right, you can voice the drama and play the pre-recorded clips into the input of the tape machine or the mixer while the voices are recording You can also foley some of the easier effects, or even music, if you have enough people to handle this. (For more on “foleying” see the box below)

Digital Editing
Scenario 3 is that you are using a computer programme to add the sound effects after the voices are recorded. This is fairly straightforward, you would place the sound effects on a separate track from the voices and see that the volume and pan (if you can adjust it) is set accordingly so that the effects sound realistic.

Think about where the sound is coming from and try to use the left and right speakers and the volume to make it as realistic as possible.
Creative Sound!

Be creative using sound. Scene changes should be done with a long pause or sound effect/music clip so listeners know the scene has changed. Also remember to test sounds you plan to use. Record them and see if people identify what sound you are trying to create.

Using a sound to create the sense of a very different sound is called "foleying." It is not always easy to get the sound you will require, therefore we resort to foleying the sound we need. Worldwide, studio engineers have successful careers as foley engineers.

Whether you are recording the sounds, or creating them in real time, the following are just a few ways to create sounds that you want. Remember, you can use the real thing to create a sound, i.e. a cell phone for the sound of a cell phone ringing, or use something completely different to create a sound that you want to convey.

Some ideas are:
- walking through grass - squishing a plastic bag
- walking on wood - a shoe on a piece of wood
- a gunshot - folding a leather belt and pulling the ends quickly
- a cell phone - too easy!!
- thunder - shaking a piece of tin or metal
- a telephone conversation - talking into a toilet paper roll
- washing clothes - a few clothes in a bucket
- washing plates - a few cups and plates in a bucket
- expressing impatience - tapping of fingers on a board, someone sighing
- at the farm - digging in earth in a box
- at school, chairs and desks moving - drag some heavy chairs, a table across the floor
- someone being attacked - an old cloth being torn
- walking in the forest - scatter some sticks on the ground to walk on

Be creative! There is some way of creating almost any sound so take some time and think up some good ways to get these sounds onto your final recording. If you are in a group, assign a team of people to organize the sounds.

Glossary:

cheap cassette deck and you hear a hiss, that is usually tuned out at around 800Hz. Remember that when you start to use eq to change the sound, you are also changing the sound of what you wish to listen to as well so always go easy with the eq—don’t over do it.

What is Pan?
Pan refers to allocating a specific sound, track or recording to one of the two speakers used in stereo listening.

Notice a stereo cd player or radio has two speakers. When used in stereo mode, each speaker plays slightly different sounds. People who record music make a point of "spreading" instruments in a song by putting the guitar a little to the right or the drum a little to the left. Often singers are well spread in the recording mix. If you are using two singers, you will usually keep each to a different side.

Listen to a music recording again with two speakers and notice how this is done. If your radio has a mono/stereo setting, try switching back and forth and hearing the difference. There won’t be any difference for voice, but for music/adverts, you will hear a big difference. Surround sound, rarely used in radio, uses 5 speakers and is mixed with five independent tracks playing at the same time. Major movie companies use surround sound to give the audience the feeling of actually being in the picture.
Exercise

Aim

What you need

Method

1. Everyone should spend some time in different situations, with their eyes closed, just listening. Either as a group or as a home assignment, have all of the children go home and listen to the sounds of their homes, schools, and different areas of their community and write down everything they hear.

2. You can then talk about how to re-create these sounds in the studio.

3. Based on the story line you have developed, fill out the plan of scenes and sound effects. See an example of this plan at the end of the guide.

Tying it all together

Once the story is completed and the production finished, child participants must also be included in the follow-up activities. Testing the drama is important. Children can have their peers listen to the drama, and provide feedback. They can also plan and implement promotional activities around the release of the drama, including visiting radio stations to discuss airplay with station managers.

Let's clarify!

As we stated in the beginning of this chapter, this guide has been intended to get you thinking about how to work with children in a participatory manner to create radio dramas. Please use this guide as just that—a guide—and adapt and change it as needed. The most important thing is to be creative with the resources on hand while having fun!
### Example: Scriptwriting Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Story Idea – What is the theme that you want to talk about?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children’s right to go to school, and the right of girls to go to school.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What’s the message you want to give? What do people learn, or what do you want them to do?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>All girls have the right to go to school. It is also good for girls to go to school in that it provides girls with more opportunities they can in providing for their families in the future.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who is the main character? What challenges do they face?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The main character is Clara. Her father says it is time for her to marry, but she wants to finish school.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What characteristics does the character have? How does this help or hurt the characters attempt to overcome the challenge?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Good Traits</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Characters - Who are they?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Good Trait</th>
<th>Difficult Trait</th>
<th>How does this affect the main character?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Chauke Teacher</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Determined</td>
<td>A little aggressive and pushy</td>
<td>People do not want to listen, because she does not speak nicely to them. She will not take “no” for an answer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna Sister</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Loves her sister, who she has taken care of since their mother died.</td>
<td>Jealous</td>
<td>She wants to help Clara most of the time but does not want to help Clara go to school as she herself never went.</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td></td>
<td>Loves his daughter, and wants the best for her.</td>
<td>Operates a shop, not a very good businessman, very traditional</td>
<td>He is kindly, but strict. He does not believe girls can be good at business.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The story line - what happens in the story so that the listeners learn what your message is? (What if….?)
(You may wish to develop the characters more, then come back to this section again) What if a girl wants to go to school, but her father wants her to marry?

Clara wants to go school. Her father says she must marry. His business selling shoes is failing, and he does not have money. Clara tries to argue but is too shy. One day, her sister finds her crying and asks what is wrong, Clara tells her. Her sister is very kind, but says that it is for the best, that Clara does not need to go to school.

Clara becomes lazy in school, and the teacher wants to know why. The teacher talks to Clara, but Clara will not tell her what is going on because she is too shy. The teacher goes to talk to Clara’s sister later. The teacher does not know how to talk nicely to people so an argument begins. The sister tells Father, and everyone is angry with Clara.

The next day Clara tells the teacher she must quit school because of Father’s business. After some time, Clara says that she knows that Father cannot read. If he could, he would be able to read the catalogues and magazines about new shoes, and his business would do much better. The teacher encourages Clara to help Father see that her schooling can help him run the business. Clara is reluctant, but the teacher is insistent.

The next day Clara shows up at Father’s business. She is very nervous, but shows him that by reading the catalogue she can help him to get more profits. Next year, she says, when she studies math and economics, she will be able to help him even more. He is not quite convinced but agrees to put off the idea of marriage for at least a year.

What happens in the end? Do some of the characters change? Does the main character resolve their problem?

In the end, Clara gets to stay in school. She learns that she needs to speak up for herself and ask people for help sometimes. Father learns that school can be beneficial to the whole family.
Scriptwriting Worksheet

The Story Idea – What is the theme that you want to talk about?

What’s the message you want to give? What do people learn, or what do you want them to do?

Who is the main character? What challenges do they face?

What characteristics does the character have? How does this help or hurt the characters attempt to overcome the challenge?

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<tr>
<td>Scene</td>
<td>What is happening?</td>
<td>Sounds Needed</td>
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We hope that you will find this guide useful in your work. We welcome any questions or comments.

Who We Are

Community Media For Development/CMFD Productions works with communities, non-profit radio stations and media organisations to strengthen the use of media and communication for development. In addition to producing high quality media/communication products CMFD provides technical assistance and training, to enable individuals, organisations and communities to address their own social problems through media. Working in countries around the region including South Africa, Mozambique, Angola, and Lesotho, CMFD is committed using participatory strategies.