



Exercise Four: Portraits of Hunger Around the World

 Time: 25 minutes

Objectives

- To illustrate inequalities in access to food and land to grow food.
- To illustrate the connections between access to food and land to grow food to hunger and poverty.

Materials needed

- A bag of dried kidney beans (or any other large bean) with at least 100 beans
- 10 clear plastic bowls
- Paper for participant instructions

Preparation

- Place ten beans each in ten clear plastic bowls and set aside.
- Print or write each of the ten instructions from Appendix 1 on a separate piece of paper. Fold them closed and label them with their corresponding letter, a – j on the outside of the paper.

Procedure

Steps 1-5 should take about 6 minutes total.

1. Explain to workshop participants that this is an exercise to illustrate inequalities in access to food.
2. Ask for 10 volunteers to come to the front of the room. Give each volunteer a small bowl with ten dried beans in each bowl and one of the instruction sheets. Tell the volunteers to hold onto the pieces of paper and to follow the written instructions when you point to them later in the exercise. As you pass out the instructions, verify that each volunteer understands them.
3. Tell participants that these volunteers represent the world's population. Read the following statement out loud: "The world produces 20% more food than the entire world population can consume, yet more than 850 million people around the world experience hunger. According to the United Nations, about 24,000 people die every day from hunger or hunger-related causes."
4. State: "Each of these people has ten beans, representing about 4.3 pounds of food or 3500 calories a day. If everyone had equal access to food, this is what the distribution of food would look like. Imagine each of these people with daily access to grains, beans and nuts, fruits, vegetables, meat, milk and eggs."
5. State: "In reality people have unequal access to food and to land to grow food." Ask the last 9 people to give you five of their beans. Then redistribute them by giving the first person an extra 45 beans. In the end person 1 should be holding 55 beans and persons 2-10, 5 beans each. State: "On average, the meat-heavy and calorie rich diet of North Americans consumes more than ten times the grain of the diet of people in the developing world."



Exercise Four, continued

⇄ Procedure, continued

- 7 min 6. Explain that hunger, lack of access to food and low caloric intake are dramatically different depending on where we live and what our gender and social position are. **State:** Let's take a look at what this unequal access to food means for different people. Collect all the beans from the volunteers and pass out the instruction sheets that you prepared ahead of time. Hand them out in order, so "a" is on the right and "j" is on the left. Tell them to open the note and follow the instructions when you point to them. Read the statements below and point to the volunteer with the corresponding instructions as you read.
- You are one of 150 million children under the age of five suffering from malnutrition. This prevents your immune system from functioning at full capacity, making you susceptible to easily preventable diseases. You will die before your fifth birthday. (Point to the volunteer so they know to follow the instructions: **this person should lie on the floor in a fetal position.**)
 - You are a child suffering from malnutrition in Haiti. You made it past your fifth birthday, but are suffering from stunted growth and delayed development due to malnutrition. (Point to the volunteer so they know to follow the instructions: **this person should lie on the floor on their back with their weight on their elbows. Their shoulders should be slightly raised off the floor.**)
 - You are a Palestinian refugee dependent on food aid for survival. (Point to the volunteer so they know to follow the instructions: **this person should do child's pose yoga position, i.e. kneel on the floor with your face down and your arms stretched forward.**)
 - You are a young girl in Mali, West Africa. Your family's lack of access to land to produce food that can be sold for income means they can't afford school fees to send you to school. You will never finish primary school and will marry by the age of fifteen. (Point to the volunteer so they know to follow the instructions: **this person should sit on the floor "Indian style."**)
 - You are a woman in India or Burma in South Asia where 50% of all children are malnourished and 60% of women are underweight. You suffered from malnutrition as a child. As a result, your pelvis did not fully develop. This increases the likelihood that you will suffer complications during child birth such as obstructed labor. (Point to the volunteer so they know to follow the instructions: **this person should kneel with their hands over their face.**)
 - You are an agricultural worker in Brazil or South Korea. You have no land of your own, but work for a large farmer who produces a cash crop such as bananas, soy or cotton. You were beaten and then imprisoned for staging a peaceful demonstration at an international conference on trade and agriculture. (Point to the volunteer so they know to follow the instructions: **this person should kneel with their hands over their head clenched in fists.**)
 - You live in Mexico and your income is below the poverty line. Like 80% of those suffering from hunger around the world, you are a small farmer or agricultural worker. Despite producing food for others, you cannot afford to feed your own family. (Point to the volunteer so they know to follow the instructions: **this person should bend over from the waist.**)



Exercise Four, continued

Procedure, continued

- h. You are one of the 36 million people experiencing hunger in the United States. You are homeless and rely on shelters and soup kitchens for food and shelter. (Point to the volunteer so they know to follow the instructions: **this person should stoop.**)
 - i. You are a person in the United States or Europe suffering from diabetes. You are obese from eating unhealthy, over-processed foods. (Point to the volunteer so they know to follow the instructions: **This person should bend to one side and lean into a side stretch.**)
 - j. You are a person in the United States. You have access to an overabundance of calories. You are healthy and have never experienced hunger. (Point to the volunteer so they know to follow the instructions: **this person should stand tall.**)
7. State that this exercise provides a visual for people of what unequal access to food looks like and the consequences of hunger. There is obviously a range or spectrum of access to healthy food. Ask the volunteers to return to their seats.
- 8 min* 8. Ask participants what might shape this unequal distribution and access to food. What affects people's access or lack of access to food? Categories may include unequal access to land, poverty, environmental factors, **Free Trade** policies, aid dependency etc... feel free to add your own. Facilitate a discussion and note the responses on a large piece of butcher paper. Note that a number of policies at the national and international level contribute to inequality in access to food and land.

Questions for Reflection

Leave the participants with the following questions to ponder. (It is not necessary to facilitate another discussion, just let them think about the questions on their own.)

- Think about how policies are made and who has the power to shape policies. Think about the country we imagined in the previous exercise. What would distribution look like in a country that did not guarantee food as a human right?
- Now think about the concept of land as a human right. Is land a right? In one of the previous exercises we saw a number of different examples of the uses of land: roads and public open space are examples of how we all have access to land for common use. These two exercises are designed to get us thinking about a different framework when we think about land.

Facilitator Context

The context below can be read aloud by the facilitator and/or printed in large type and placed around the room for participants to read.

- Of those that experience hunger 80% are small farmers and agricultural workers, living on less than \$2 a day.



Exercise Four, continued

Facilitator Context, continued

- Hunger is directly linked to unequal land distribution worldwide. Many large land owners control most of the best land but leave much of it idle or grow cash crops for export. For example: 4% of the landowners in the U.S. own 47% of U.S. farmland. In Brazil 3% of the population owns 2/3 of the land. Also, small farmers in developing countries typically produce four to five times more per acre and use more sustainable farming methods.
- Current international trade policies support an agricultural system that is hurting the poor around the world. Many countries that could feed themselves are now producing mono-crops or cash crops for export, while becoming dependent on imported food. Many family farmers used to plant a number of different crops including things they could eat and some they could sell. Current trade policies place pressure on countries to grow just a few crops for export. In a country like Brazil for instance, while soybean exports boomed to feed Japanese and European livestock - hunger spread from one-third to two-thirds of the population.
- Rich countries have a disproportionate amount of influence and input in trade policies, agreements and the World Trade Organization. Due to this, current trade policies and agreements focusing on agriculture do not pay significant attention to the problems of poor countries. For example, rich countries have not fully opened their markets to products from poor countries, but force poor countries to open their markets.
- Many international trade policies at the national and international level contribute to inequality in access to food and land. Ex: Mexico had to change its constitution to allow the introduction of NAFTA. (Communal land was broken up into plots of private land). Trade policies can compel sovereign nations to change their constitutions, laws and regulations by declaring that they are in violation of Free Trade.
- Poverty and income inequality are directly linked to hunger. One fifth of the world's population earns less than a dollar a day. That is more than 1 billion people. According to Forbes magazine 358 billionaires have a combined net worth equal to the bottom 45% of the world's population. In other words, the 358 richest people own more than the 3 billion poorest.
- People around the world are not hungry and poor by accident. There is a complex system of policies, trade agreements and economic history that have created the conditions for poverty and hunger. Vandana Shiva (an activist and environmentalist) says that we like to tell a "false history of poverty" as if poverty is an accident of geography. Shiva states:

"The poor are not those who have been "left behind"; they are the ones who have been robbed. The wealth accumulated by Europe and North America are largely based on riches taken from Asia, Africa and Latin America. Without the destruction of India's rich textile industry, without the takeover of the spice trade, without the genocide of the Native American tribes, without African slavery, the Industrial Revolution would not have resulted in new riches for Europe or North America. It was this violent takeover of Third World resources and markets that created wealth in the North and poverty in the South."

From "Two Myths that Keep the World Poor" *The Ecologist* (July/August 2005).

- Rural communities around the world are finding ways to organize in order to access land to grow food, to feed themselves and to have some control over where that food comes from and how it is produced.

Sources: Twelve Hunger Myths, Food First, United Nations, Forbes Magazine, UNICEF-State of the World's Children Report, 1998, WHO-Nutrition, Sustainability: Carrying Capacity and Consumption December 31, 2005, <http://www.overpopulation.org/consumption.html>



Appendix I for Exercise Four: Portraits of Hunger Around the World

INSTRUCTIONS FOR TEN VOLUNTEERS

- a. Lie on the floor curled in a fetal position.
- b. Lie on the floor on your back with your weight on your elbows and your shoulders lifted slightly of the ground.
- c. Do “child’s pose” yoga position (on knees with torso and arms stretched forward and face down on the floor).
- d. Sit on the floor “Indian style.”
- e. Kneel on the floor with your hands over your face.
- f. Kneel with their hands over your head clenched in fists.
- g. Bend over from the waist.
- h. Stoop.
- i. Bend to one side and lean into a side stretch.
- j. Stand tall.