



Exercise 7: What You Can Do

 **Time: 15 minutes**

Objective

To brainstorm what participants can do as a response to some of the problems and issues discussed throughout the workshop.

Materials needed

- Butcher Paper
- Markers

Procedure

1. Open a discussion with the participants by stating the following:
When faced with the magnitude of problems related to hunger and access to food and land, the tendency is to look for new solutions that focus on technology. Our experience illustrates that the solution does not start with a technological focus, but rather a political focus. Who currently controls land, seeds, water and markets?
Certainly technology is helpful but not if the technology simply entrenches power inequities. Now the question is what you can do as individuals, as students, teachers, parents, consumers, and citizens. This is always the hardest part of the workshop.
We exposed and discussed a number of problems so at the end we are all waiting for “the solution,” the one thing that will make everything better or will, at least, make us feel better as individuals. This is the challenge to you as participants. We wove the stories of families from our partner organizations throughout the workshop. Look to them for guidance as you decide what your role can and should be. Note that our partners have very limited resources, limited access to technology and information. Despite this, they have found ways to organize. You need to decide if you can and want to do anything.
2. Lead participants on a brainstorming exercise. Ask them to suggest concrete things that we can do as a response to some of the issues discussed throughout the workshop.



Exercise Seven, continued

⇄ Procedure, continued

3. Ask for a volunteer to record responses on butcher paper. Ask participants to think of concrete things that they can do as individuals, as members of organizations and as citizens of a country with policies that adversely affect people around the world (see below).

Possible Responses

Individual Level

- Consumer Choice – join a Conscious Consumer Association
- Educate yourself and others about the U.S. Farm Bill.
- Consciousness raising—share with others what you learned.
- Individual Challenges:
 - Challenge yourself to eat on \$2/day for a week (the amount that many in the developing world earn as daily wages).
 - Challenge yourself to eat only locally produced food for a week.

Possible Responses, Individual Level, continued

- Donate to organizations working on these issues.
- Get the organizations that you work with to link to the websites of organizations working on these issues and then begin to build stronger relationships throughout the movement.

Policy Level

- Support policies that provide incentives to farmers to use fewer chemicals and to protect the environment.
- Support legislation to end subsidies to large agribusiness companies by shifting subsidies from large businesses to family farmers. For example: The Food from Family Farms Act.
- Inform yourself and find out if there are efforts in your state to ban patents on life and genetically engineered crops. Link this to lobbying efforts in your state.
- Advocate that International Trade Laws be more aligned with United Nations Human Rights treaties—right now there are competing interests between these two bodies of law.



Exercise Seven, continued

Facilitator Context

At Grassroots International we work to help build the global movement for social justice. Woven throughout this workshop are examples of the work and issues that our partners in Haiti, Mexico, Palestine and Brazil struggle with on a daily basis.

Our Brazilian partner, the **Landless Workers Movement (MST)**, is fighting to enable landless agricultural workers to become farmers.

Our Haitian partner, the **Peasant Movement of Papay, the MPP**, is organizing for water rights and reforestation, so that its members don't have to rely on food aid or suffer drought, floods, etc.

Our Mexican partner, **CEPCO**, an organization of family coffee farmers, organized to demand a decent price and to diversify their farming techniques—so that their families didn't have to suffer the collapse of the global coffee market.

Our Palestine partner, **PARC**, the **Palestine Agricultural Relief Committees**, and the “**Stop the Wall**” campaign are fighting to gain access to water and land and to keep from being separated from those resources by the Israeli government's Wall.

More and more, our partners, in addition to building movements within their own countries, are working on these problems on the global level, as part of an international network. Together, they are saying “no” to an economic globalization that threatens communities' rights to food, land and water. Our partners have been successful because they are sharing knowledge and working across national borders on these issues.

One good example of this is the **Via Campesina**, a global movement of family farmers, indigenous communities, community fisher people, agricultural workers and rural women. They are from Asia, Africa, the Americas and Europe. They are changing the face of globalization. The **Via Campesina** is the largest force challenging the World Trade Organization and the world's richest countries' and corporations' domination of agricultural markets.