

2 RICH MEAL, POOR MEAL

Themes :

Poverty
Human Security
Health

Taster

To eat or not to eat? That is the question.

Overview

This simulation brings home to people the reality of the inequitable distribution of food and the injustice that is thereby done to 75% of the world's poor.

Related Rights

- Right to a standard of living adequate for health and wellbeing
- Right to food

Group size : 4+

Time : 30 mins

Objectives :

- To develop knowledge and understanding about the unequal distribution of food
- To encourage imaginative solutions to the problems of poverty.

Materials :

- Slips of paper, one per participant. A quarter of the slips should be of one colour and marked with an "A", all the other slips of a second colour and marked with a "B".
- 1 hat or bag
- Food and drink
- Cutlery for a quarter of the participants
- Tables and chairs, sufficient for a quarter of the participants

Preparation

- Prepare the food and drink for the participants. There should be a plate of food each and juice or tea or coffee for a quarter of the participants and a small bowl of rice each and water for the other three quarters of the participants.
- Arrange the room so that there is a large area with tables and chairs and a smaller area with none (optional)
- Put the slips of paper in the hat
- Secretly ask one or two participants (or other staff) to serve as "waiters".



Instructions :

1. Do not let the participants know that they are about to take part in a simulation activity. It should be a surprise!
2. Pass round the hat and ask each person to take out one slip of paper.
3. Ask participants who have slips marked "B" (3/4 of participants) to stand up and send them to the small corner of the room. Do not answer any questions or give any explanations. Tell the rest, those with "A" slips to make themselves comfortable at the tables
4. Now serve the meals. Get those playing the waiters to help. Give full meals only to the participants sitting at the tables (group A). The waiters should treat the members of group A well and with respect and they should all but ignore those in group B.
5. Wait about 5 minutes, and then get the waiters to serve group B with the bowls of rice and water.
6. While people are eating, explain that this is a simulation. It represents the way in which the world's wealth is distributed. Three quarters of the world's population live in the "third world" or "developing countries" but control less than one quarter of the world's wealth. However, because it is meal time (and supposedly a break) leave any questions and discussions until later. Simply observe participants' reactions and comments.

Debriefing and evaluation :

Start the debriefing either at the end of the meal or at the beginning of the next session. Begin by reviewing the activity itself and then broaden the discussion.

- How did people feel about the selection procedure? Was it fair? Did it mirror reality? Do people have a choice about where they are born and therefore which group they live in?
- Did anyone think about reacting immediately? Offering / asking for food? Talking? Stealing / donating? Going on "hunger strike" (refusing to eat the meal)?
- If some participants did in fact take action, discuss what they did and their reasons.
- What happens in the real world? What are the implications for human security?
- What are the implications for the development of a country if the people are hungry and unhealthy?

Tips for facilitators

Be aware that this activity may not be suitable for groups for whom social exclusion is the reality.

If the group usually participates well, you may consider running the simulation for the entire meal break. This can make participants' feelings even more acute! With other groups you may have to stop the simulation just after the rice has been served and have an alternative meal ready for the hungry three quarters!

This activity is challenging for the facilitators because you never quite know how the participants are going to react! Thus flexibility and discretion are essential.

V a r i a t i o n s

This activity can also be done during a short tea break, almost like an icebreaker. Give the quarter of the participants (group A) coffee, tea and biscuits, and give only water - in large bottles to be shared between all! - to the three quarters (group B).

S u g g e s t i o n s f o r f o l l o w - u p

You could run the activity "The Scramble for Wealth and Power" (page 231 of Compass), which simulates the actual fight for wealth and power. It gives participants opportunities to reflect on the causes and results of these injustices, and to brainstorm possibilities for change.

K e y D a t e

16 October, World Food Day

F u r t h e r i n f o r m a t i o n

Box 1. *The Rich v. The Poor*

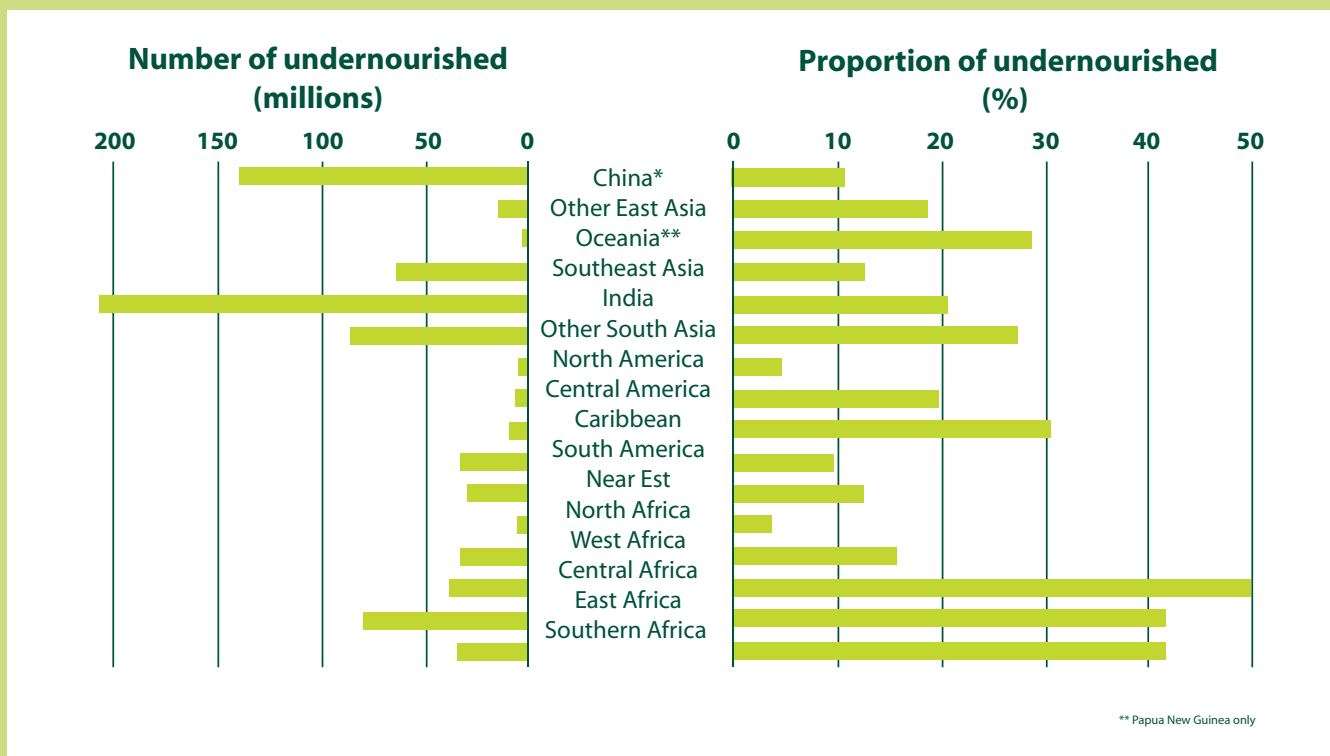
The Rich One quarter of the world's population	The Poor (people in Developing countries) Three quarters of the world's population
Own four fifths of the world's wealth	Own one fifth of the world's wealth
Eat 70% of the world's food grains	Eat 30% of the world's food grains

Box 2. Hunger numbers

- 826 million people remained undernourished in 1996-98: 792 million people in the developing world and 34 million in the developed world. (United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation)
- One quarter of malnourished people are children.
- The population of over 50 countries face hunger. Most of these countries are in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Every 24 hours, 35 000 persons die of hunger.
- Each day in the developing world, 30 500 children die from preventable diseases such as diarrhoea, acute respiratory infections or malaria. Malnutrition is associated with over half of those deaths. (UNICEF, World Health Organisation)
- Three times more people have died of hunger and poor sanitation in the last fifty years than were killed in all wars fought in the entire 20th century.



Box 3. Number of Undernourished persons by world region



Source: *The state of food insecurity in the world, 2000*, Food and Agriculture Organisation, United Nations

Box 4 Food production

- There is enough food to feed everyone; the problem is access to food, not underproduction.
- The minimum required calorie intake per person per day is 2350 calories. Worldwide, there are 2720 calories available per person per day.

"It is humankind that is responsible for having imposed hunger on itself for so long, but humankind is also capable of eliminating this burden. There can be no greater challenge than this."

Chris Bryer in *The Hunger*

"This 'normal hunger' [deprivation of adequate diet] will kill their children in the first year, destroy their health in adulthood and take them to an early grave."

Chris Bryer in *The Hunger*

"Sharifa laughs, exposing her red stained gums. 'Without betel nut I wouldn't survive. Whenever I feel hunger, I chew it and it helps the pain in my stomach. I can go on for days without eating - it's only worrying about my children that makes me thin'. She looks at her daughter asleep on the bed. 'Do you know what it's like when your children are hungry? They cry because you can't feed them'..."

B. Hartman and J. Boyce (1983), *A Quiet Violence: Views from a Bangladesh Village*, London.

