

### FOOD OR FUEL?

An interactive game on food sovereignty

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**OBJECTIVE //** Participants will be introduced to the struggles faced by small-scale farmers in the Global South, through a game based on the real experience of D&P partner communities

**TIME //** 60 minutes + 15-30 minutes debriefing time

**GROUP SIZE //** 12-150 people

**LEADERS REQUIRED //** 4 (if you have more than 40 people, consider doubling each role)

#### **MATERIALS //**

- A large open space (no tables & chairs),
- Dry popcorn kernels (2-4 bags, depending on number of participants)
- 4-6 water guns in a cloth bag
- Small suitcase or backpack with \$ sign on it to represent business people
- One gym mat or blanket for each small farming group, situated around your large room. The blankets do not have to be the same size, since they will be used to symbolize land.
- Sheets of paper with a country name (ex. Colombia, Sudan, Mexico, Indonesia – or choose your own), one sheet for each blanket or mat.
- Index cards: 1-2 per participant
- Meditative or calm music to play

#### **FOR EACH FARMING FAMILY/SMALL GROUP:**

- 3 pieces of poster paper
- Pens or markers
- 2 bowls/plastic containers
  - 1 bowl empty
  - 1 small bowl filled with a token amount of any type of grain (ex. rice, corn, soy, flax, wheat)
- One ball of yarn per group
- One piece of cloth for a blindfold

#### **PREPARATION //**

- Prepare the supplies for each family/small group
- Within your large space create different areas for the small groups by laying out gym mats or blankets throughout the room.
- The blankets symbolize the farmland of each group. Place a bowl with the small amount of grain on each farmland area. Lay out country names (ex. Honduras, Mexico, Philippines)
- Place markers/pens and index cards/posters at each area of land.
- Have leaders review their roles as Mother Earth, Business Person, and two as Military Personnel (role description and instruction cards)



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ROLE DESCRIPTIONS

MILITARY PERSONNEL: 4-5 PEOPLE

In the next Action Round you will be acting as military personnel. Keep this a secret.

Leave the room to prepare (ex. fill water guns with water). Read these instructions and practice with your friends.

Once the facilitator announces: **"I have news that the military are coming. They are being sent into the region to calm us down."**

Enter the scene and shoot at the farmers with your water guns. (Have fun but be safe!)

**You can not shoot at farmers who lift their arms and show the "peace sign"!**

Once the farmers flee, surround and capture Mother Earth. Your job is to keep Mother Earth as your captive.

Next, position yourselves between the people and their fields, their land.

Next, go and talk to the business people. Make a deal with them and take their money.

The facilitator will work with the farmers on what to do next. The goal is to have the farmers organize themselves and peacefully take back their land.

When the farmers march to reclaim their land - Slowly move away and give back about 1/2 of the land to the people.

Release Mother Earth and send Mother Earth over to the farmers.

This is the end of the game.



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### BUSINESS PEOPLE: 1-2 VOLUNTEERS

Watch the military personnel activities. They will enter the scene and shoot at the farmers with water guns. Once the farmers flee, the military will surround and capture Mother Earth. Next, they will position themselves between the people and their land.

After the military position themselves between the people and their land, you, the business people, enter the scene.

You go up to the military, have a mini- business meeting, and make a deal with them. Explain, in a loud voice, why you want to buy the land from the military:

**Using this land for growing food is not going to make us rich. No way, not at all. We want profit and we have a plan. We are going to use this land to grow crops for producing Ethanol. Agrofuels are the way of the future. Food crops for fuel!!**

As part of your deal, hand over the backpack filled with money. Once you have given them the money, turn around and tell everyone: Now it is us, big business, who is giving orders around here!

After your business deal, remain standing with the military until the end of the game.

### MOTHER EARTH: 1-2 VOLUNTEERS

You, as Mother Earth, have the job of handing out food - corn kernels. The farmers are trading their hard work and their grain crops for food to eat. Listen to the Facilitator and follow their instructions to know the amount of food to give out.

Be joyful when you hand out food to the farmers.

Stay calm when you get captured. (Keep this part a secret!)

Once captured, you are very sad.

When you are released by the military go over to the farmer's reclaimed land. Once you are back with the farmers and the land, rejoice!



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**HOW TO PLAY //** The game has three phases: Set Up, Action, and Community Meeting.

**PHASE 1: SET UP**

Intro to the game, and participants set up their farming families/communities.

**Phase 2: THE ACTION**

The Action Phase has three rounds. In each round the farming families grow their crops and for their harvest receive food from Mother Earth. Throughout the game 'News Bulletins' are announced with news that will affect everyone.

**Phase 3: COMMUNITY MEETING**

As part of the game all participants gather together for a community meeting to debrief their experiences and to discuss food sovereignty.

**NOTE TO THE FACILITATOR //**

This game needs strong guidance from you as a facilitator, especially after Action Round 2. The goal is to let the group develop its response to the scenarios outlined in the game, yet you should be comfortable enough to step in to guide them and to move into the next steps. The debriefing of this game is very important and you should plan enough time for students to express their feelings, thoughts and comments on their experiences as farmers, business people and military personnel. The debriefing also allows the participants to reflect on the importance of food sovereignty.

**PHASE 1: SET UP**

*Divide your large group into at least 4 smaller groups. An ideal size for groups is 5-8 people. Adjust your group sizes according to how many participants you have.*

**FACILITATOR //** You are all farmers living in small villages. As a group, go and look for a piece of land where you can grow crops for your livelihood.

*Each group chooses a piece of land and settles down.*



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**FACILITATOR //** In this game, each of you is part of a group. Your group is a farming family living in the Global South, in Africa, Asia, Latin America or the Middle East. Countries in these areas often experience natural disasters, human rights abuses, civil unrest and major gaps between rich and poor.

This game will give you an experience of farming in the Global South, of the struggle for land, and of the hardships that farming families experience. Right now farmers in your country are losing control over their own farms. Giant agro-fuel companies want YOUR farmland. They want control over it so they can produce their own crops to be used for the manufacturing of agro-fuels. Agro-fuel companies are challenging the rights of farmers to control their own food and crop production. They are challenging YOUR food sovereignty.

### PHASE 2 : ACTION



**FACILITATOR //** Each segment of land is in a different country and is growing a different kind of crop. What is your country, where is it located in the Global South, and what are you growing on your land?

*Participants respond, sharing with the larger group their country and the type of grain in their bowl (ex. soy beans, rice, wheat).*

**FACILITATOR //** The task for this first season of farming is to reflect in your small groups on these questions. In your farming family write down the questions and your responses on the poster paper:



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What do you know about food and farming in your country?

What do you know about hunger in your part of the world?

To get you started I am going to share some statistics...

- 1.5 billion people depend on small-scale agriculture for their livelihoods.
- 232 kg of corn is needed to make 50 litres of bioethanol – a type of agro-fuel. A child could live on that same amount of corn for a year.
- In tropical regions, family farming generates 35 jobs or livelihoods per 100 hectares. This is in contrast to agro-fuel crops, which give only 10 jobs per 100 hectares for palm oil and sugar cane, and only one half of a job per 100 hectares of soy.
- Canadians spend 10.2% of their monthly income on groceries. In the Global South up to 80% of monthly income is spent on food.

*Play some quiet, relaxing background music. After 10 minutes each group should have 5+ thoughts or reflection points written on their poster.*

**FACILITATOR //** This time of reflection symbolizes the time it takes for farmers to grow their crops. We are at the end of one season of farming. Your farming family can now come up to trade your crops for food from Mother Earth. The corn kernels you receive represent the food from the harvest.

Bring your bowl and your completed poster. You must walk up together with your arms interlinked, to represent that you worked together to harvest your crops.

*Each group receives corn kernels in their bowls from Mother Earth. Ask each group to hang up their poster with their thoughts on the reflection question on one wall and then return to their land.*



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#### PHASE 2 : ACTION

Round  
2

**FACILITATOR //** We are now in season two, and it is time to grow our crops. Things are not looking good though, I am worried about our harvest. We have not had rain for over a month – there is drought throughout the region.

**FACILITATOR //** To represent the work of growing our food this season each farming family needs to send up its members, one at a time, to Mother Earth. Only one person can go up at a time, relay style, to get a Food Card.

*Mother Earth hands out the index cards to participants as they line up. Mother Earth needs to have about 3-5 fewer index cards than the number of participants in the whole group.*

**FACILITATOR //** A number of people did not receive a card because of our food shortage this season. They have died of hunger and poverty. For the people who did not receive a card - please stand to the side of your group's land. The remaining farmers interlink your arms in your group to come up to Mother Earth to trade your cards for food. Bring your bowl to receive the food – though this season everybody has less to eat.

*Once everyone has returned to their land...*

**FACILITATOR //** In your families, you will need to plan for how you are going to deal with the food shortage. To start, each of you, thinking of your real life, make a list of 3 things you could trade for more food.

*After a few minutes...*

**FACILITATOR //** Once you have picked your three personal things to give up, share your ideas with each other in the small group. In your small group you need to create one list of three things your group has decided to give up. Write these three options on your second piece of poster paper and put up this sheet on the wall.



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*While the farmers have their discussion, ask the "dead" players to leave the room with you. Give them the handouts explaining their new roles as military and business people for the rest of the game. Give the business person(s) the money backpack prop and give the water guns, hidden in a cloth bag, to the military personnel. The group should talk quietly with a leader/staff to prepare for their new roles. There should be at least one businessperson (two is best), and at least three military personnel.*

### PHASE 2 : ACTION



#### NOTE TO THE FACILITATOR //

During this round feel free to interrupt the action if it becomes unruly, particularly the activities of the military. Some degree of confusion and uncertainty are part of the game. As the military move into the room, indicate that showing the peace sign in the air will stop their shooting action.

Some thoughts and ideas that you can "coach" the students on:

- Feelings of upset and anger are normal because being hungry is demoralizing and even painful.
- People have many different ideas about, and solutions to, the same situation.
- Unusual situations can push law-abiding people into civil disobedience or other actions.
- People who are not used to being leaders might be unsure of themselves and hesitant to take action.
- Marching/demonstrating about a problem is an action that has often been used peacefully and successfully.
- Using the media to highlight a problem/crisis is a positive action to take, and one that is used today.
- When threatened by violence most people react by trying to flee the situation, although some will stay and try to resist or fight.



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**FACILITATOR //** It is now the third season and it is time to grow the crops. To represent the hard work of farming and the struggle of working when you are already hungry and your children are hungry, there is a new twist. You must use the yarn to tie your ankles loosely to each other AND blindfold one farmer. When you have finished with these preparations, stand together on your land.

*Once all groups are ready...*

**FACILITATOR //** Walk up to Mother Earth, as a group, to receive your harvest.

*POSSIBLE MODIFICATION BEFORE CONTINUING:*

*You can ask the farmers to cut the yarn and to take off the blindfolds so all can move around easily or you can leave them on, although the next steps will be disorganized and more challenging. Keeping the physical limitations intact would indicate to the students some of the complexities of the situation.*

*When all are assembled...*

**FACILITATOR //** Announcement - a major natural disaster has hit your region. This disaster is causing a major shortage in food supplies. Mother Earth has no food for you.

**FACILITATOR //** What is your reaction to this announcement? Are you upset? What can you do? Who can help you?

*Allow the group to express their thoughts and feelings about this new difficulty. Allow the farmers to respond and to start exploring ideas. If they need some coaching, you can ask them: Who would you turn to, or what would you do if you were back in Canada?*

**FACILITATOR //** Oh, excuse me, I have news that someone is coming to us. Maybe they are bringing food...

Uh oh, I have news that the military is coming. They are being sent into the region to calm the situation down.



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*The military enter the room. They start shooting at the farmers with water guns (or imaginary guns/imaginary handcuffs).*

*Two military personnel block the farmers from returning to their land.*

*One or two military personnel capture Mother Earth and take her away to the other side of the room.*

*After a few moments of chaos (10-15 seconds) announce that the military cannot shoot at anybody who has their arms raised and is making the "peace sign".*

**FACILITATOR // Flee!**

*The facilitator and farming families move to the other side of room/gym. (Remember that the participants may still be tied together. Make sure that everybody plays this part of the game safely.)*

*Once the farmers have moved, the business people come forward to meet with the military. The business people are carrying lots of money with them (backpack/suitcase with \$ sign on it).*

*The business people ask for the land:*

**Using this land for growing food is not going to make us rich. No way, not at all. We want profit and we have a plan. We are going to use this land to grow crops for producing Ethanol. Agrofuels are the way of the future. Food crops for fuel!!**

*The business people hand over the money to the military and say:*

**Now it is us, big business, who is giving orders around here!**

**FACILITATOR // This land will now be used to grow crops for agrofuels instead of food. Growing crops for fuel creates higher profit.**

**What are YOU going to do? The military is blocking access to the land and has captured Mother Earth. What can be done?**



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*The Facilitator talks with the farmers and asks them what to do next. Allow the farmers to respond and to start exploring ideas. Our goal is to have the farmers organize themselves and **peacefully** take back their land.*

*Encourage the farmers to peacefully march towards the soldiers. They can link arms together as a large group and use these words as a chant to inspire them:*

**"the people/united /will never be defeated".**

*The soldiers will slowly move back and give half the land back to the farmers.*

*Once the farmers are back on their land...*

**FACILITATOR // You have done it! Peacefully and non-violently! You can get back to work - growing crops for our daily bread. But some don't have land. You have been displaced and have no means to earn a living.**

*Ask the farmers to sit down on their land. Let them know this is the end of the action part.*

## PHASE 3 : COMMUNITY MEETING

*This is the debriefing session. Participants need to have time to share their feelings about the game.*

**FACILITATOR // We are now in Phase 3 of the game where we, as farmers or other characters, have a community meeting to talk about what happened. We can use this time to share with each other what we experienced throughout the game.**



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#### DEBRIEFING QUESTIONS //

- How did it feel being in the different roles as farmers, military, business, Mother Earth?
- Was this game fair to you? Was this game fair for others?
- Are there similarities between parts of this game and real life?
- What contributes to hunger in the world? (You can look to your posters on the wall)
- Would giving up certain things (Action Round 2) help the farming situation? Why? Why not?
- The object of the game was to grow sufficient crops that you can trade for food to feed your families – this is what food sovereignty is all about. What were the barriers to food sovereignty in the game?
- What can we do to support farmers in the Global South?

#### FOLLOW UP

*This interactive game is based on the experiences of communities in the Choco region in Colombia. The following messages come directly from our partners in the region.*

The land belongs collectively to the Afro-Colombian communities who farm it, and for whom the land is synonymous with life itself. This land is one of the most fertile areas of Colombia and has long been a secure source of food.

**"They told us we had to leave our land for a few months so that the army could defeat the armed rebels. Those few months turned into several years. When we began returning to our land in 2000, we understood why. African oil palm plantations had taken over everything and our villages had been destroyed."**

*Don Oscar, Community of Pueblo Nuevo*

**"We can't live like refugees any more. Nor can we accept that our lands will be forever used for growing African palm oil, which kills biodiversity and destroys the soul of the land. This is why we chose to resist, peacefully, by returning to occupy our land and creating humanitarian and biodiversity zones."**

*Benjamin, Community of Nueva Esperanza*



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