

THE SMALL FAMILY FARMING CHALLENGE

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OBJECTIVES //

- Understand the role of small family farmers in feeding the world's population
- Learn about the impacts of climate change and unjust political and economic systems on small family farmers

TIME // 60-90 minutes

GROUP SIZE // 20-100

MATERIALS //

- Crayons (at least 1 per participant)
- Plastic toy animals
- 2 water pistols
- 1 die
- 1 standard 8.5x11 sheet per participant
- 1 chair per participant

PREPARATION //

- For each group of 5-7 participants, set up a table with enough chairs for everyone.
- Each table should receive 1 sheet of paper per person, a handful of assorted crayons, and a handful of plastic animals.

ACTIVITY GUIDE

1. Divide students into varied groups of 5-7 people, representing small farming families in the global south.
2. Begin by sharing some information about the role of small family farmers of the global south in feeding the world:¹
 - 70% of the world's population is fed by small family farmers using less than a quarter of the world's farmland.
 - 80% of the population in the global south is fed by small family farmers
 - 2.2 hectares is the average size of a small family farm, but the sizes vary from one continent to another.
 - Subsistence farming is the type of agriculture practiced by most small family farmers. They grow their own food and sell some of the surplus. They use this income to pay for health care, education and clothing for their families
 - 1/8 of the world's population lives in hunger, and half of the hungry are small family farmers.
 - Most small family farmers are women.

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- Small family farms are getting smaller, while industrial farms are getting bigger.
 - Small family farms are overall more productive than large farms.
 - There are fewer and fewer farms and farmers in many parts of the world, yet small family farmers continue to be essential in the production of the world's food supply.
3. Ask students to close their eyes and imagine a farm. Tell them to think about what it looks like, based on their experiences in visiting farms, seeing them on TV or reading about them in books. Explain that farms look different in different parts of the world. Have them open their eyes after a minute and ask them what they saw.
 4. Give students 5-10 minutes to plan and draw their farm sites on the paper provided using a bird's eye/ airplane view. Each student will draw a component of the farm on his or her sheet of paper. Then, like a puzzle, the members of the family combine the sheets at the end of the 10 minutes. Advise students to discuss and strategize amongst themselves.
 - Tell them to include everything they think they would have on their farm (crops, buildings, etc.)
 - Have the students place their plastic animals on their farm papers.
 5. Once students have finished drawing and assembling their farms, explain that it is time to see how their farm holds up against various ecological, economic, and political challenges.
 6. Announce that Mother Nature is rolling the die to decide whether or not to deliver an ecological disaster. Climate change has increased the frequency and intensity of disasters in the Global South, and so the odds of rolling a drought or hurricane are 60/40. 1, 2, 3, or 4 equal disaster; 5 or 6 equal no disaster.
 7. If a disaster does not occur, have a family volunteer to show-and-tell to the whole group what their farm is like. After they have finished, roll the die of Mother Nature again. Repeat this farm show-and-tell and die-rolling process until a disaster does occur.
 8. When disaster occurs, tell students that each family must choose one square of paper to destroy. Animals located on this square must also be removed.
 9. Explain that the growing season has ended, and ask the following series of questions. Tell students to write the answers down somewhere on their farm papers.
 - a. How many different crop types does your farm have?
 - b. How many different types of animals?
 - c. Does your farm have a water source?
 - d. Does your farm have trees?

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10. Take note of average answers across groups, then decide and announce the requirements for surviving as a farm. Ensure that some farms make it, but most don't. For example:
 - If your farm does not have a water source, has less than 3 different kinds of crop, or has no trees, your farm does not survive.
 - Ask the families that failed to meet the requirement to stand up.
11. If a farm has failed, the family may choose between the following 3 options:
 - a. Give up farming to migrate to the city in search of wage employment
 - b. Trade in 2 animals to join the farmers' union
 - c. Take out a loan
12. Address each of the choices:
 - a. Explain that those who decided to migrate to the city are likely to end up in slums and without formal employment. Take a moment to explain that expanding slums are the result of rural to urban migration in many countries of the global south.
 - b. Hold a private farmers' union meeting off to the side with those families who chose to join the union. There must be at least 2 families for this to work.
 - » Explain to the union members that being part of a union means access to training and knowledge. Ensure they understand what they need on their farm to succeed: a diversity of crops and animals, trees, and water sources.
 - » Explain that union members also protect one another. Tell them explicitly that if they have any trouble, they should stand up and shout the word "union," and that if they hear someone else calling for the union, they should run and help them.
 - c. Provide families that asked for a loan with one new sheet of paper
13. Announce that growing season #2 is beginning. Instruct students to flip over their sheets of farm paper and begin to re-draw their farms for a second time.
14. Land grabbing is the key event this season. Have additional volunteers (possibly students who chose to give up farming) target one or two families for land grabs as they are finishing their farms. They approach the farms with water pistols threatening to take the land by force if the family does not vacate immediately. If the family calls for the union and if enough people put up a fight, the land grabbers should back off the first couple of times. Eventually, accuse a family of hiding rebels in their village and destroy the farm completely with the water pistols.
15. Approach any families that took a loan and announce an exorbitant interest rate. Tell them that they are unable to pay back the loan and have therefore been kicked off their land. This is how the activity concludes.

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OPTIONAL //

- Introduce food aid – a card to be given to families when their farm fails. This serves as a symbolic representation of Development and Peace’s work in bringing emergency relief to suffering communities.
- Announce a drop in crop prices due to a flood of agricultural imports from the United States. Two of the main crop types no longer fetch a reasonable price and will not contribute to the family’s income.
- Insects destroy two specific crops.

POST ACTIVITY DISCUSSION //

Have the entire group come together in a circle to share their thoughts and reactions to the activity:

- Ask students if the circumstances facing small family farmers seem fair to them, or whether a farming livelihood in the Global South seems easy.
- Make connections between farm characteristics and a farm’s ability to withstand the effects of climate change. For example:
 - » Having a water source can protect against the effects of drought
 - » Trees on a farm hold the soil together and prevent erosion, which is the loss of rich topsoil important for the growth of plants
 - » Having many kinds of crops and animals provides biodiversity, which is important in healthy, adaptive ecosystems
- Ask union members what happened in their meeting and the subsequent growing season. Have them share the experience.
- Explain that small farmers often get caught in the middle of civil conflicts within their countries or are victims of land grabs by large agricultural corporations.
- Discuss the importance of small family farmers being organized, and explain how Development and Peace supports this through peasant movements in the Global South like MST in Brazil. You can read about them here: <http://www.devp.org/en/international/brazilb>

¹GRAIN; Feeding9Billion