

TITLE: The “How” and “Why” of Hunger and Homelessness

OBJECTIVES: To investigate why people are homeless and/or hungry, and what it is like to be in these situations.

TIME REQUIRED: 120 minutes

MATERIALS: Large bags of hard candies, three pairs of mittens or thick gloves, handouts

Activity 1: The Scramble for Wealth and Power (75 minutes)

1. Explain to participants that in this activity they will distribute the wealth and power of the world among themselves. Give the participants something they will value (such as candy) represents this wealth. Also, at the end of the game giving a reward for the person who ends up with the most wealth to make the power of their wealth seem real. There is only one rule that must be followed: **NO ONE MAY TOUCH ANOTHER MEMBER OF THE GROUP AT ANY TIME.** The role of the facilitator is to make them feel unselfconscious about getting the most!

Note: The quantity of candy is important, because the group must be highly motivated to go after it. If there is too much, then no one will feel desperate.

2. Arrange the room so that participants have a fairly large area to play the game. Have participants stand or sit in a circle and scatter the candies (that will represent wealth) evenly in the middle of the circle. Withhold three participants from this part of the activity. Distribute mittens for some participants to wear but postpone discussion of this until after the game. *Note: To emphasize that some start off with more wealth than others, five of the participant’s five extra candies to begin with (this number will vary based upon the group size).*

At the order of GO, have participants (except the three withheld) gather as many candies as possible without touching one another.

Note: Keep in mind the socioeconomic composition of your participant population. Do not let this activity confirm the existing inequalities in wealth and power among group members.

3. After all the candies have been collected, have participants report their wealth to the rest of the group. Record participants’ names and amount of candies on the board in decreasing order. Divide the list into three groups based on the number of candies they have:
 - a. GROUP 1 = GREAT WEALTH AND POWER (those with the most candies – the smallest group – should be 15% of total group);
 - b. GROUP 2 = SOME WEALTH AND POWER (those with a moderate amount of candies – the middle group – should be 30% of total group);
 - c. GROUP 3 = LITTLE WEALTH AND POWER (those with the fewest candies – the largest group – should be 55% of total group)



4. Remind the group that these candies represent their wealth and power in the world. The amount they possess will affect their capacity to satisfy their needs (e.g. basic education, adequate food and nutrition, good health care, adequate housing) and wants (e.g. higher education, cars, computers, toys, television and other luxury items). Those participants in Group One will have their basic “needs” and most of their “wants” met; those in Group Two will have their basic needs met, and those in Group Three will have difficulty surviving due to disease, lack of education, malnutrition, and inadequate shelter.
5. Explain that some people in their country (and perhaps in their community) and in every country around the globe lack adequate necessities, such as food, education, health care, and shelter. Point out that others, often in the same community or country, are able to acquire almost everything they need or want.
6. Tell participants that they may, if they wish, give candies to others; however, they are not required to do so. However, also caution them that they could change groups or forfeit their reward if they give away their candies! Tell them that those who do share will be honored as “DONORS”, with their names placed on the board. People may ask for candy too, if they would like. Allow a few minutes for participants to redistribute the candies if they wish. Then ask for the names of those who gave away candies and the amount they gave. List them on the board entitled “DONORS”. Determine if anyone changed groups as a result of giving or receiving candies and record these shifts on the board.

PART B: Creating Economic “Fairness”

1. Have groups 1, 2, and 3 get together. Distribute the three participants withheld from the original “scramble” randomly among the different groups, by having them draw a 1, 2, or 3 out of a hat. Make note of their reactions to being placed in one group rather than another but save discussion of their placement until the debriefing session.
2. Give each group the task of creating a plan for the fair distribution of the candies (the world’s wealth). Each group should prepare to explain what needs to be done and what are some of the plans they would do and why?
3. Ask each group to appoint a spokesperson to explain their plans to the others and answer questions.
4. Now, have the whole group choose a plan they like for redistributing wealth and implement it. This can be done by selecting the suggested strategies that are common across all three groups, having the facilitator pick from the plans, or having the group vote on the plan they like best. *(When we did this activity in 2002, every group proposed that the wealthiest people be required to give some of their wealth to those who had less. I asked them how they thought the wealthiest people would feel about it, and the youth said that their opinion didn’t matter – they should be required to share. So when it came time to implement their plans, I asked for all the people in Group One to give me half their candies and all the people in Group Two to give me a third of their candies so I could distribute them to those in Group Three. They were outraged and tried to hide their “wealth”. There was no one among them who gave me*



the candies willingly. It made for a powerful comparison to real life and prompted a great discussion on why they types of reforms the three groups proposed are so hard to enact.)

PART C: Debriefing the Activity

Draw on the following questions to promote a productive discussion. Be sure to devote time to a discussion of changes needed and changes undertaken.

- How did you feel about the way in which the candies were acquired and distributed?
- Were you treated fairly by me? By others?
- Did some people give candies away? Did you give away or receive candies? Why or why not? How did this feel?
- What determined whether or not people gave away candies? Knowing what the candies represented? Having one's name displayed? Feeling guilty? Something else?
- What aspects of this game represented how the world's wealth is distributed?
- What about the three participants assigned to groups? Were they treated fairly? Is what happened to them similar to what happens to people around the globe? What sorts of people? Is it just chance where we end up?
- What about the participants with mittens? What kinds of people do the mittens represent? What group did they end up in?
- After playing this game do you have a better understanding of the situation or attitude of poor people/nations? Of the situation or attitude of wealthy people/nations?
- Who are the "haves" and the "have-nots" in the world today? Which countries are the "haves" and the "have-nots"? Who are the "haves" and the "have-nots" in our country? In our state or community? Why?
- Do you think there should be a redistribution of wealth and power throughout the world? Why or why not? If yes, how would you propose to accomplish this? What principles would guide your proposals for change?
- Do you think there should be a redistribution of wealth and power in this country? Why or why not? If yes, how would you propose to accomplish this? What principles would guide your proposals for change?



Activity 2: Family Budget Activity (45 minutes)

1. Pass out copies of the *Family Budget Sheet* and explain that this is a monthly budget for a family of three (two parents and one child).
2. Read the following aloud from the *Family Budget Sheet*: Imagine that this is your family. Like other families in similar situations, yours will have to make difficult decisions about how to spend your money. Every month you have to make choices about how to meet all your financial responsibilities, including feeding your children. Currently your budget contains no room for luxuries, such as entertainment or a car.
3. Go over the items on the list, stressing that the family lives from month to month with no savings to help them meet an emergency.
4. Divide participants into six small groups and assign each group a budget sheet and one of the three situations at the bottom of the sheet. Explain that the group must respond to the situation by reworking their family's budget in the second column.
5. After the groups have revised their budgets, ask groups with the same situation to join together to compare their revised budgets. Do they differ? How and why?
6. Discuss this budget-making with the whole group, using some of these questions:
 - Is this budget realistic (e.g., is this a realistic amount for rent, food, clothing, utilities, and transportation in your community)?
 - Do people in your community actually live on so little money? **Note:** if possible, obtain information about income levels in your community.
 - What do people do when they cannot meet their expenses?
 - Is any help available for people who cannot meet their expenses?
 - How would living on a budget like this affect the family's human rights? Which of those found in the UDHR? Explain.

Source: Adapted from: Dorosin, Geelan, Gordon, and Moore, *Why is There Hunger in Our Community?* (Oakland: Alameda County Community Food Bank, 1997).



Budget Activity Sheet

Imagine that this is your family. Like other families in similar situations, yours will have to make difficult decisions about how to spend your money. Every month you have to make choices about how to meet all your financial responsibilities, including feeding your children. Currently your budget contains no room for luxuries, such as entertainment or a car.

Item	Budget #1	Budget #2
Rent (2 bedroom apartment)	\$1,200.00	
Phone	\$50.00	
Gas, Water & Electricity	\$90.00	
Groceries	\$400.00	
Transportation (2 Bus Passes)	\$80.00	
Entertainment		
Medical Care (addition to basic employer coverage)	\$80.00	
Savings		
Other		
Total Expenditures	\$1,900.00	
Monthly Income	\$1,900.00	
Balance	\$0.00	

Situation 1: Your child gets sick. The doctor's visit, the tests, and the medication costs are \$300.00 more than what your employer paid health insurance will cover. How will you pay the medical bills?



Situation 2: You lose your job. The unemployment benefits, which begin one week after your last pay check arrives is only equal to two-thirds of your regular pay. Your total monthly income decreases by \$633.00. How will you balance your budget?

Situation 3: You catch the flu and miss four days of work. Without paid sick leave, your income is reduced by \$380.00. How will you make up for this shortfall in your budget?

Source: Dorosin, Geelan, Gordon, and Moore, *Why is There Hunger in Our Community?* (Oakland: Alameda County Community Food Bank, 1997). Used with permission.

