

The scramble for wealth and power

In life, some people are fighting for their dreams and some are fighting for wealth and power.

- Themes** Poverty, Human security, Globalisation
- Complexity** Level 3
- Group size** 8 - 25
- Time** 90 minutes
- Overview** This activity simulates the fight for wealth and power and inequality in the world. The main issues addressed are:
- Inequality in the distribution of wealth
 - Power imbalance and the consequences
 - The injustice of poverty
- Related rights**
- The right to equality in dignity and rights
 - The right to education
 - The right to health, food and shelter
- Objectives**
- To develop an understanding of the injustices that result from the unequal distribution of wealth and power
 - To think critically about the causes and consequences of poverty
 - To promote human dignity and justice
- Materials**
- 120 coins
 - 3 to 4 pairs of socks
 - 2 large sheets of paper and markers
 - Paper and pens
 - An open space
- Preparation**
- Read through the instructions so you have an overview of the whole activity, Note that the simulation is divided into three parts: part 1, The Scramble (10 minutes); part 2, The Donations (10 minutes); and part 3, Creating Economic Fairness (40 minutes). Discussion follows at the end.
 - Take 20 of the coins and keep them to one side
 - Choose three people for the role of migrants
 - Make a wall chart to record players' wealth (see illustration)
 - Prepare a chart headed "Honourable Donors"

Instructions

Explain that this is a simulation game. Participants will distribute the world's wealth and power among themselves.

THEMES



POVERTY



HUMAN SECURITY



GLOBALISATION

COMPLEXITY



LEVEL 3

GROUP SIZE



8-25

TIME



90 MINUTES

Wealth chart

Great Wealth and Power (6 or more coins)	Some Wealth and Power (3 to 5 coins)	Little Wealth and Power (2 coins or less)

The global divide

In developing countries, one child in 10 dies before his/her fifth birthday. By comparison, in the United States one child in 165 will die before turning five years old.

In 1998 in developing countries, about 130 million eligible children out of a total of 625 million did not attend primary school. 73 million of those children are girls.

(UNICEF)

The wealthiest fifth of the world's people consume an astonishing 86 percent of all goods and services, while the poorest fifth consumes one-percent.

Life Expectancy at birth 1995-2000

The number of years a newborn infant would live if prevailing patterns of age-specific mortality rates at the time of birth were to stay the same throughout the child's life.

UNDP Report 2001

Japan:	80.5
Norway:	78.1
Ireland:	76.1
Greece:	78.0
Czech Republic:	74.3
Russian federation:	66.1
Maldives:	65.4
South Africa:	56.7
Equatorial Guinea:	50.0
Zimbabwe:	42.9
Zambia:	40.5
Sierra Leone:	37.3

From the highest life expectancy at birth to the lowest there is a difference of 43.2 years!

Part 1: The Scramble (10 minutes)

1. Explain that the aim of the game is to get as many coins as possible. There is only one rule: no participant may touch another member of the group at any time (you may stipulate a punishment for this, for example, pay 1 coin).
2. Ask everyone, except for those playing the "migrants", to sit on the floor in a large circle (so they can have enough space to play).
3. Take the reserved twenty coins and share them out between any four or five of the participants
4. Give four other participants one pair of socks each. Tell them that they must put them on their hands and keep them on during the whole game. Postpone any discussions of the reasons for sharing out the coins and socks until the debriefing.
5. Scatter 100 coins evenly in the middle of the circle.
6. On the word, "GO" participants are to gather up as many coins as possible. This will probably not take longer than 2 minutes!
7. After all the coins have been collected, ask participants to report their wealth to the rest of the group. On the wealth chart, record each participant's name and the number of coins they have.
8. Remind the group that these coins represent their wealth and power in the world. The amount they possess will affect their capacity to satisfy their needs (e.g. for basic education, adequate food and nutrition, good health care, adequate housing) and their wants (e.g. higher education, cars, computers, toys, televisions and other luxury items). The implications are as follows:
 - six or more coins - people will be able to meet all their basic "needs" and most of their "wants"
 - three to five coins - people will be able to meet their basic needs
 - two or fewer coins - people will have difficulty surviving due to disease, lack of education, malnutrition, and inadequate shelter.

Part 2: The Donations (10 minutes)

1. Tell participants that they may, if they wish, give coins away to others. However, they are not required to do so. Tell them that those who do share will be honoured as donors, with their names written on the list of "Honourable donors".
2. Allow 3-4 minutes for participants to redistribute the coins if they wish.
3. Then ask for the names of those who gave away coins and the amount that each donated. List them on the chart of "Honourable donors".
4. Ask if anyone changed category as a result of giving or receiving coins and record these shifts on the chart with an arrow.

Part 3: Creating economic fairness (40 minutes)

1. Divide the players up into three groups according to the number of coins they have (great wealth, some wealth and little wealth)
2. Place one of the "migrants" in each of the three groups. Take note of their reactions at being placed in one group rather than another, but save any discussion about their placement until the debriefing at the end.
3. Hand out the pens and paper. Give each group the task of creating a plan for the fair distribution of the coins (the world's wealth) in order to decrease the gap between

- the different categories of wealth and power. Each group's plan of action should:
- explain what needs to be done (if anything),
 - describe what the group plans to do and why, and
 - show why their plan is fair.
4. Give the groups ten minutes to devise their plans. Explain that it is not necessary to go too deeply into the drawing-up of the plan, but rather they should highlight some of the possible actions that should be done to address the problem of poverty.
 5. Ask each group to appoint a spokesperson to explain their plan to the others and answer questions. List the proposed plans on a large sheet of paper.
 6. Now announce that a vote will be held to decide which plan to adopt. The distribution of votes will be as follows:
 - each participant in the group with "Great wealth and power" - five votes
 - each participant in the group with "Some wealth and power" - two votes
 - each participant in the group with "Little wealth and power" - half a vote
 7. Have participants vote. Record the votes cast for each plan on the large sheet of paper. Announce which plan is to be implemented.
 8. Carry out this plan, redistributing the wealth if necessary.

Debriefing and evaluation

Start with a brief feedback on the activity itself and how people enjoyed it. Then go on to discuss what happened and what people learnt. Draw on the following questions to promote the discussion:

- How did people feel about the way in which the coins were acquired and distributed? Were they treated fairly?
- Why did the people who gave coins away do so? To be honoured? Because they felt guilty? Something else?
- How did the people who received coins in part 2 feel? Grateful? Patronised?
- What about the participants with socks? What kinds of people do they represent? Which group did they end up in?
- What about the three participants, the "migrants", assigned to groups? Did they feel 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 differences were there in the recommended plans for fair distribution? Did the plans reflect the wealth of the group making the proposal?
- Why were some people given more votes than others? Was this an accurate representation of those with more or less power in the world?
- Are human rights infringed when we see such differences in wealth and power? If so, which ones?
- Who are the "haves" and the "have-nots" in the world in your country and in your community? How did they come to be in these positions?
- Should the "haves" be concerned about the situation of the "have-nots"? For what reasons? Security, economic, moral/religious or political reasons? Why might the "haves" give money or resources to the "have-nots"? Is this a way to solve the problems of poverty?
- What might the "have-nots" do to improve their situation? What are some actions that "have-nots" have taken around the world and in our country to address the inequalities of wealth and power?

Key date

17 October
International Day for the
Eradication of Poverty

- 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?
- Can human rights discourse be used to support a new redistribution of wealth?

Tips for facilitators

The aim of this activity is to make people aware of the unequal distribution wealth and power in the world, yet there is a danger that it may confirm the existing inequalities. You should therefore be aware of the social and economic composition of the group and develop the discussion accordingly.

Try to bring people into the feeling of the game so they get involved and really “act” as if the coins were their wealth. You could tell them that they will be allowed to keep the coins and after the activity or during tea break, be able to “buy” drinks and/or biscuits with the money.

Emphasise that, as in real life, if they give away some of their coins they will lose some of their wealth and the privileges that wealth brings.

If it is too hot to use socks, use other means to emphasise that some players have more wealth and power than others. For example, some participants could be held back and only allowed to join in after 15 to 30 seconds. Alternatively, players could have one hand tied behind their backs - if they are right-handed they should use their left hands and vice versa.

The questions in the debriefing and evaluation are complex and may very well require deep and lengthy discussions. If the time is short or the group large, you may want to divide the questions amongst small groups. These small groups should be “mixed”, that is contain people from each wealth category. Make sure that the different groups feedback in plenary so that everyone has a chance to hear and reflect on all the questions.

Note: This activity is adapted from another one in *Economic and Social Justice: A Human Rights Perspective*, Human Rights Resource Center, University of Minnesota, 1999

Suggestions for follow-up

You could debate the issues further or ask people to write a report. Suggested topics are:

- How do wealth and power affect one’s ability to enjoy human rights and human dignity?
- Are there responsibilities associated with having wealth and power?

The group may like to continue with the theme poverty and explore some of its consequences through the activity “Horoscope of poverty”, on page 145.

Ideas for Action

Make contact with an organisation that works with the disadvantaged in your community to ascertain the local needs. Then go on to plan a project to try to help.

Sometimes the simple fact of “spreading the word” about an issue is a good step towards making change. Thus, you could suggest that people raise the issues of wealth distribution with their parents and friends.