

The Trading Game

more resources available at
www.christianaid.org.uk/learn

After the game: guidelines for follow-up discussion

It's not fair

If the game goes according to plan, it should soon become clear to some of the groups that the whole set-up is unbalanced right from the start. The groups' resources are unequal, and complaints of 'it's not fair' will soon reach the leader.

How did it feel?

When the game is over, players will require some time to settle down. You will need to patiently steer and guide the debriefing. The feelings of unfairness that some players experienced will provide a useful starting point for discussion. Begin by asking groups how they felt about being poor or rich. Ask them to recall incidents in the game and to discuss their reactions to what happened.

What's it all about?

Next, try to help groups see that the game isn't 'just a game', but a sort of 'acted parable' that tries to reflect the way the world's systems – in this case, the trading system – are structured.

Ask the players why the game isn't fair – for example, because of the unequal distribution of resources and tools at the start.

Go on to examine the injustices in the way world trade works and the difficulties of arriving at a just system of exchange between those with the raw materials and those with the economic muscle to buy, process and market them.

Ask players to describe their own experiences of helplessness, anger and sense of outrage during the course of the game. These illustrate the sentiments felt worldwide by many nations in the face of control by foreign companies or trading associations. It might be useful to bring in some examples of exploitation at this stage: how does an Indian rice farmer feel, for instance, when the decisions affecting his livelihood are made mainly by western commercial interests?

What is fair?

The next stage is to explore more profound issues. If some groups felt it was unfair that other groups controlled all the tools, move the discussion on to questions of economic power and the access that it can provide to valuable resources in poor countries.

Is it fair that 80 per cent of the world's resources are controlled by 20 per cent of the world's population – most of whom live in rich countries? This is a difficult area of debate, so don't expect any easy answers! 'Who owns the world's resources?' and 'What right have nation states to declare resources to be their property?' are questions which must be asked.

What should the world be like?

If you can bring the discussion this far, the debate will have moved from thinking about the way the world is, towards thinking about how it ought to be. Once the players have begun to ask questions about who has the

right to dictate terms, it shouldn't be too hard to help them see that the fundamental issue is our moral attitude towards wealth. If the world is an unfair place, and if we admit that its structures need changing, what sort of attitude should we have towards the world's resources and the use we make of them?

The world's faiths all have valuable insights about the earth's resources and how we use them. The basic issue is one of responsibility – to our fellow men and women, and to God. To say that we are responsible to our neighbour isn't just a pious sentiment – it involves an element of cost and sacrifice, at least in the short-term. This will not be a popular point: nobody wants to sacrifice anything if they can help it! But if the players all agree that the world needs changing, then they ought to be brought face to face with the admission that in a finite world someone has to be prepared to give up something if someone else is to have more. If this happens, eventually everyone can benefit.

The Trading Game

more resources available at
www.christianaid.org.uk/learn

Faith views

The concepts of justice, stewardship and sacrifice are central to many faiths' perspectives about the use of resources. Appreciating these concepts will give a fuller understanding of how the world's trading systems ought to be renewed.

Buddhism

'Better to swallow a ball of iron, red hot and flaming, than to lead a wicked and unrestrained life eating the food of the people.'
(The Dhammapada)

Christianity

'The world and all that is in it belong to the Lord; the earth and all who live on it are his.'
(Psalm 24:1. Christians believe that God has absolute ownership of the earth and that humans are responsible to God as stewards of the earth. Their wealth is given on trust, and should be used in God's way and for God's purposes – for the good of the whole world.)

'What good is there in your saying to [someone] without clothes and daily food, "God bless you! Keep warm and eat well" if you don't give them the necessities of life?'
(James 2:16)

Hinduism

'Whether he is well off or in distress, he must not pursue wealth through degrading or harmful activities, nor through forbidden occupations, nor through accepting presents from others.'
(Law of Manu 4:18)

Islam

'He who brings goods for sale is blessed with good fortune, but he who keeps them until the price rises is accursed.'

'He who eats and drinks while his brother goes hungry is not one of us.'
(Hadith)

Judaism

'Do not weary yourself trying to become rich.'
(Proverbs 23:4)

'He who loves silver cannot be satisfied with silver.'
(Ecclesiastes 5:9)

Sikhism

'The bounty of nature is there to be used. There is enough for all, but in this world it is not shared justly.'
(Guru Nanak, Adi Granth 1171)

'Blessed is the godly person and the riches they possess because they can be used for charitable purposes and to give happiness to others.'
(Guru Amar Das, Adi Granth 1246)

What can you do now?

You can become part of the Trade Justice Campaign. Christian Aid is campaigning for trade justice as part of the Trade Justice Movement, a group of organisations that have come together to call for fundamental change to the unjust rules and institutions that govern international trade.

Call **08700 787 788** to order all you need to promote the campaign locally, or visit www.christianaid.org.uk

Think fair trade: look out for fairly traded goods in shops and supermarkets – such as Traidcraft and those bearing the Fairtrade Mark.