

Development and Peace

Walking for Water



WALKING FOR WATER

Materials:

- Tokens for each player (pieces of construction paper in an equal number of four different colours)
- Chairs arranged in a circle (one for each player)
- “Future” cards (can be constructed from scenarios on attached sheet)

How to Play:

Hand players a coloured token each and instruct them that this token and the chair upon which they sit represent their livelihood. Throughout the activity, their goal is to preserve their livelihood in order that they might survive to care for themselves and their families.

The game then goes as follows:

At the beginning of each round, the leader calls out a colour. Those players who carry a token of that colour must get up, run across the circle and find an empty chair. While they are running, however, helpers (representing multi-national corporations and private water companies) outside the circle try to remove empty chairs from the arrangement. If they succeed in removing one or two chairs, the individuals left without a ‘livelihood’ must go to the leader and choose their ‘future’ from among the available cards. The leader reads out the card and then one of two things will happen – either the players will get another chance and can regain their seat or they must start “walking for water”. If the latter fate awaits them, then these players must give up their token to the leader and start walking around the inside of the circle while the rounds continue.

The game continues (with more and more difficulty due to the increasing number of walkers) until all the cards have been read out.

Note: if more than one player is left without a chair in a particular round, then one player should choose only one future card which will apply to them all.

Debriefing questions:

1. What was it like walking for water during the rounds?
2. When was it the most challenging to maintain your livelihood?
3. What were some of the reasons that people lost access to clean water?
4. Why did some people get a second chance?
5. What do we learn about how water privatization impacts communities?

Source:

This adaptation of the ‘land game’ was developed by Lisa-Ann Bilinsky, Chaplain, Fr. Leo Austin CHS.

You are a poor worker in Ghana. Water in your community has just been privatized and water prices have increased by 95%. You make only 1.35 a day and can no longer afford to pay the \$0.80/day for the water supply. Start walking your six hours for water.

You are a poor mother of six children in Ghana. Because of water privatization you can afford only dirty, untreated water. Your children get sick from water borne diseases like dysentery. Start walking your daily visits to the health clinic.

You are a citizen of Cochabamba, Bolivia. After water privatization in your community, prices increased by up to 400%. Your friends and family were very upset and started a peaceful protest. One of the government police got scared and shot and killed your 18 year old brother. Your family is no longer the same. Start walking.

You are a citizen of South Africa. You belong to one of the 10 million households that had their water services disconnected because you couldn't afford to pay. Start walking your six hours for water.

You were an employee of the city's water department in Manila, Philippines. After a private company took over the water services, you were one of the 40% of employees that lost their jobs. Start walking the streets looking for more work.

You are one of 250 000 people who contracted the deadly water-borne disease cholera after water privatization in your home country of South Africa. You still need water, but because of your illness, you need help to get it. Choose two others sitting down and the three of you start walking your six hours to get water.

You are a citizen of Plachimada, Kerala, India. Coca-Cola sets up a bottling water plant in your community and you have hope of a job. However, the plant diminishes the quality of your well water. Your family is getting sick and you now have to go 3 km each day to get clean water. Start walking.

As a citizen of Cochabamba, Bolivia, you used to collect rainwater for your washing and cleaning. Once the private corporation Bechtel took over your water system – collecting of rainwater became illegal. You can't afford the privatized water. Start walking your six hours/day for water.

You are a citizen of Porto Alegre, Brazil. Water privatization is threatened in your community, but with the hard work of people in your area, you are able to create a community-based water management programme that is both democratically-run and profitable. You may return to your seat.

You are a citizen of Rajasthan, India. The land in your community is very dry and rains often run-off without nourishing your water supply. With the help of CARITAS, India, your community creates dams that collect rainwater which fills the soil and your wells. You may return to your seat.

You've been promoted to CEO of a major water company. Because of water privatization in many countries, your salary has just increased 780%. You may return to your seat.

You are a government official in Indonesia. Your country is highly in debt and the World Bank is telling you that the only way to get loans is to make water a commodity. You know this will be hard on your citizens but you have little choice. You privatize the water and receive lots of opposition. Life isn't easy – start walking.