

Money to spend

In the time of war, bread is better than bombs

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| Themes | Human security, Peace and Violence, General human rights |
| Complexity | Level 2 |
| Group size | Any |
| Time | 90 minutes |
| Overview | <p>This activity uses activity cards in small group discussions to decide a family budget. There is an element of role-play. The issues addressed include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The distinctions between “wants” and “needs” ▪ State expenditure and militarisation ▪ The opportunities that could come from the peace dividend |
| Related rights | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Social and economic rights such as the right to health, food and education ▪ The right to live in a healthy and clean environment ▪ The right to security of person |
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To reflect on personal and family needs and how they should be prioritised ▪ To develop democratic decision-making skills ▪ To promote responsibility and justice |
| Materials | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Copies of the “Item cards” (one set per group) ▪ Envelopes, one per group ▪ Scissors ▪ Tape or glue for sticking cards to wall charts (one per group) ▪ Large sheets of paper (A3 size) or flipchart paper to make wall charts (1 sheet per group) ▪ 1 copy of the Parent role card ▪ 1 copy of Box 3. |
| Preparation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Copy the items sheet. Cut it up to make the “item cards” and put the cards in an envelope. You need one set of cards per group. ▪ Copy the chart on world military spending and its alternatives on page 380 (in chapter 5) onto a large sheet of paper or an overhead transparency, or make one photocopy per participant ▪ Arrange the room so that people can work in small groups ▪ Prior to starting the activity, discretely choose one participant to role-play a “special parent” in one of the families. Tell them to keep their “special” role secret from everyone else and give them the copy of the “Parent role-play card”. There should be only 1 “special parent” in one family/group, irrespective of the number of groups. ▪ Make copies or overhead transparencies of any of the data boxes you may wish to use. |

THEMES



HUMAN SECURITY



PEACE AND VIOLENCE



GEN. HUMAN RIGHTS

COMPLEXITY



LEVEL 2

GROUP SIZE



ANY

TIME



90 MINUTES

Instructions

1. Explain that people will be working in small groups, each group representing a different family. The aim is for each family to draw up a budget for their expenditure in the coming month.
2. Divide the participants into small groups (preferably not more than 5 participants per group). Each group should be composed of a father, a mother and child(ren). Ask people to agree who will play the different roles, and then to decide together on a family name.
3. Give one envelope containing item cards and one large sheet of paper to each group,
4. Explain that the items cards represent those items that are to be discussed in relation to the next month's budget. Only these items may be considered. The cost is written on each card and cannot be altered.
5. Their budget is 10 000 (ten thousand) so each family will have to select what should be included, and what should be excluded from the budget.
6. Explain that the budget should preferably be agreed as the result of democratic consultation and that they should stick the item cards they have chosen onto the large sheet of paper to make a wall-chart for display.
7. Groups have 20 minutes to make their decisions and to prepare their wall-charts.
8. Allow 10 minutes for everyone to walk around and look at the different budgets and to consider which family budget is the most appropriate and which is the least appropriate.
9. Come into plenary and begin the debriefing.

Debriefing and evaluation

Ask each group in turn for their general comments on the activity. Then use the following questions as a guide for further discussion:

- How did the families decide the budget? Was it democratic?
- What criteria did they use to make the decisions?
- How did they balance their "needs" for food, shelter and clothing with the need for security and with their "wants" for leisure? What social and economic factors were important?
- How did people feel when an item, which they considered important, was out-voted by the rest of the family and not included in the budget?
- Which budgets were the most appropriate and which the least appropriate? Why?
- Are there parallels between the family budgets and the budgets of states worldwide? Can they be compared?
- Which lists most nearly reflect state budgets?
- Which lists should ideally reflect state budgets?

Now show the group the chart, "World military spending and its alternatives".

- What do people think about the actual total state budget in military equipment, armaments and other military-related things?
- Why do states worldwide spend so much on armaments?
- Has this spending been justified? Is the world a safer or more peaceful place?
- What are the consequences of this kind of budget allocation for people's enjoyment of their social and economic rights? And for the environment?

- How can we change the situation? Has anyone heard of “military conversion” or the “demilitarisation fund”? If not, why do you think that there is so little information about them in the news?

Tips for facilitators

The traditional family varies from country to country. Therefore, allow participants to include grandparents or other relatives in the families as appropriate.

The aim of having one “special parent” is twofold; first to provoke discussion, especially in countries where there are strong traditions of democracy and second to ensure that there are a variety of budgets to compare and discuss. You should be aware that the other “family members” in the role-playing group might get upset and even angry at the parent’s attitude. They may also be confused because they do not know that it is a role-play! You will have to be sensitive to the fact that “problems” may arise within that group, which will require your intervention. Try to ensure that the group continues with the activity without discovering the role-played character! However, if you think the role will create too many difficulties or will not work in your situation, then omit it from the activity.

Feel free to adapt the list of items if it does not reflect the reality of families in your locality, region or country. However, be sure to include some “security” items and some very luxurious items, so participants still have to make a choice as to what are to be considered as needs and what are not.

Variations

An alternative to using cards is to simply use the sheet as a list and ask the families/groups to tick their choices. In this case, ask the families/groups to write down their budgets on a large sheet of paper that can be put up for everyone to see.

Suggestions for follow-up

The group could do some research into positive changes, for instance, into the proposal for a demilitarisation fund or into the situation in countries that do not have any army or military weapons (such as Costa Rica).

If you want to explore some of the consequences of war especially on refugees, you may like to do activity “Can I come in?”, on page 98.

Ideas for action

Why not encourage discussion on the issue of demilitarisation? The more people there are who are aware of the problem, the more there will be who can bring pressure on governments to make changes. Find out what proportion of your state budget is spent on military and social needs. The group could write to their MP and ask for changes.

There are also numerous opportunities to join the many demilitarisation campaigns that are organised worldwide, such as Youth and Student Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (<http://youthstudentend.org.uk>) and Pax Christi International (www.paxchristi.net/). Or start your own campaign in your group and you can use organisations like these ones as resources.

Key date : Further information

**Tuesday following the
second Monday of
September**
Peace Day

The international arms industry fundamentally undermines human security because it diverts priority attention, and therefore resources, away from basic human needs. The main argument forwarded for the allocation of resources for the military is the need to protect the state's population and territory. But are people truly protected if they do not receive education, health and food? Does military spending reflect the populations' needs or the states' interests?

An additional problem is that the state's investment in its security (and arguably the security of its people) is a vicious cycle; each state tries to have better and better weapons to overcome the military power of other states. This is called the "arms race".

During the 10-year period following the end of the cold war there was a reduction in military spending. As demilitarisation took place state policies should have been developed to ensure that the "peace dividend" - the money saved from the military budget - was used to enhance human security, for instance, by increased spending on education and health. In reality this rarely happened because most of the "peace dividend" was used to reduce national debts.

World military expenditure is now on the increase again. The rise began in 1999 and continued in 2000. This would appear to be a paradox because security is now much improved in many areas of the world. The reason seems to be that several of the major spenders have adopted or announced defence plans that include growth.

Peace activists and campaigners have argued for decades that a vigorous and creative programme of conversion from military to civilian production is vital. They give a number of reasons including:

- the immorality of the arms industry itself and its destructive capacity
- the dangers of the increasing proliferation in arms dealing
- the inability of the arms industry to police itself and the use to which its products would be put
- the inherent wastefulness of the industry and scandalous misuses of resources and human brain-power and
- the potential which conversion would unleash.

In chapter 5, in the background section on Peace and Violence on page 376, there are statistics and tables which are relevant to this activity.

HANDOUTS

Item cards

| | | |
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| Food (2 000) | School/University fees (2 000) | Family medical insurance (1 000) |
| New car (4 000) | Monthly payment for sport activities (300) | Toys and games (200) |
| Computer (800) | Lottery (100) | House renovation(400) |
| Alarm system (1 500) | Clothing (400) | Pet food (100) |
| Water bill (200) | Trained security dog (400) | Medicines (300) |
| Transport (petrol, bus and train fares) (400) | Rent or mortgage repayments (2 500) | Mother's birthday present (400) |
| Washing machine repair (200) | School/University materials for the month (300) | Personal gun (400) |
| Fishing equipment (200) | New electronic equipment for the house (100) | Electricity bill (200) |
| New model of reclining chair (700) | Self-defence lessons for mother and daughter(s)(300) | Leisure activities (cinema, theatres, funfair, amusement parks) (200) |
| Car-alarm (300) | Long weekend in a beach house (400) | Personal defence equipment (for example, pepper spray and shock)(100) |
| Family dinner in a restaurant (100) | Telephone bill (300) | Financial help for grandparents or other relatives (200) |
| Youth holiday camp (200) | | |

Parent role card

Authoritarian parent role card

You are the family breadwinner and because of this you feel that you should have more say in money matters than your spouse or children; after all you are the one who brings home the money!

You strongly believe that there is a big problem of lack of law and order in the city where you live. It is so dangerous nowadays! Therefore, you put the highest priority on protection and the security of your family, home and property.