



A2 ACTIVITIES TO REVEAL HIDDEN ISSUES

Disasters ball game – shocks and stresses



Why use this activity?

To encourage a group to think about the different types of disasters which affect their lives, and to begin to discuss and plan how to reduce the impact of one or several disaster threats.



You will need

Six balls or bottles of different sizes and colours (these can be made out of paper crumpled together into a big ball, or you could use balloons).



Explaining the words we use

Shocks – sudden events that have a negative impact and could lead to a disaster. For example, disease outbreaks, floods, high winds, landslides, droughts, earthquakes, outbreaks of violence, or sudden food price increases

Seasonal shocks – shocks that usually happen at the same time each year, such as floods in the rainy season

Stresses – changes that happen over a long time that also make us more vulnerable. For example, loss of ground water or trees, polluted water or soil, ongoing reduction of crop yields, migration, climate change, political instability and economic decline

Disaster – a disaster occurs when a shock or stress affects vulnerable people to an extent that they are unable to cope with its impact



What to do

- This exercise can seem a little complicated. It is important that you take time to practice it amongst your team before trying it in the community. You should ask different team members to take turns in leading this exercise to check that you all have a good understanding of the difference between shocks, seasonal shocks and stresses.
- Before starting, ask somebody to be your ‘first volunteer’, and make sure that you have explained to them what will happen while the game is being played.
- It is important to ask everyone to throw the balls gently.

Explain that as a group you are going to be thinking about the different types of events that can cause a disaster, the impact they can have, and what the community can do to prevent disasters.

Awareness raising

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Climate & environment

Conflict & peace-building

Corruption & governance

Disaster risk management

Discrimination & inclusion

Food & livelihoods

Gender & sexual violence

Health & HIV

Influencing decision-makers

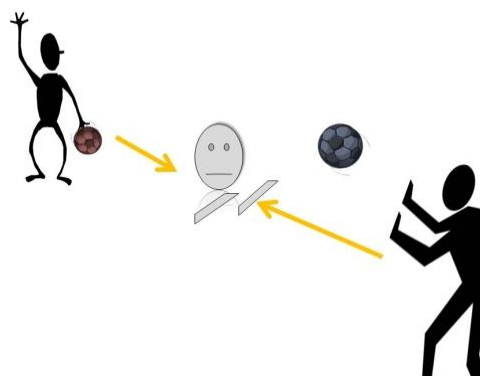
Migration & trafficking

Water, sanitation & hygiene

Introduce your first volunteer to the group. Say that this person is pretending to be a community member who is vulnerable to disasters, for example, a poor farmer. Ask the 'farmer' to stand in the middle of the whole group, and ask others to gather round them.

Round 1 – Sudden Shocks

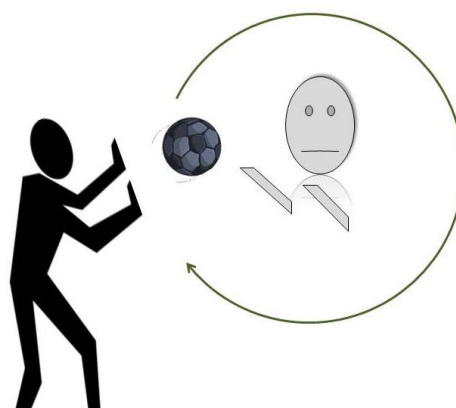
- Invite three volunteers to pretend to be 'shocks' such as an earthquake, war or new disease, which could happen at any time of year. (We're calling these 'sudden shocks', because we also have seasonal shocks below).
- The people pretending to be 'shocks' stand on three different sides of the farmer, several steps away. Whenever they choose, they **throw the ball** to the person in the middle. They may give warning that they're about to throw the ball or they may choose not to.
- The farmer can stop the shock from causing a disaster by catching the balls and immediately throwing them back. If they drop a ball then we say the shock has caused a disaster.
- Keep playing this round for a few minutes, then stop for a discussion.



Discuss: What do the group notice? Ask the farmer who is catching the balls how he/she felt. Then discuss which real life shocks the community faces that come with some warning. Are there any which come with no warning at all, like a ball thrown from behind the person? Some examples of warning signs may include a drought forecast, a disease outbreak that came from a nearby town, or a volcano eruption which increases in intensity over days or weeks.

Round 2 – Seasonal Shocks

- Explain that you're now going to look at a different type of shock.
- Ask for another volunteer; give them a ball
- Ask them to represent a 'seasonal shock' such as a flood or drought that usually comes during the same season each year
- Draw a big circle on the ground around the first volunteer ('farmer'). Explain that the circle represents one year. Ask the group to pick a point on the 'year' to represent the season when a seasonal shock happens.
- Ask the person who is pretending to be a seasonal shock to **walk around this circle**, and to throw the ball to the 'farmer' each time they get to the point which represents the season for shocks.
- Tell the 'farmer' that, to 'cope', they have to catch the ball and throw it back. If the farmer drops the ball, then this seasonal shock becomes a disaster.



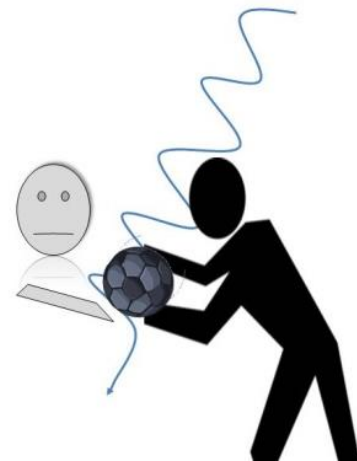
- Ask the volunteer to keep moving around for a few cycles. Then, ask for another volunteer to represent a new 'seasonal shock'. Ask them to also circle the first person, but to choose a different place from which to throw a ball to the 'farmer' at a *different* time in the year.
- Add in a third person representing yet another 'seasonal shock'. It should be getting harder for the 'farmer' to keep all the balls in the air, but if they are quick, they might manage it. If they're finding it easy, add a fourth volunteer. (This should be fun!)

Discuss: What do the group notice? How did our farmer cope with the 'seasonal shocks'? How did the person in the middle feel? What real-life shocks like this does your community face? Have any of them been changing and happening at a different time in the year from normal?

Now try round 1 and 2 together with some volunteers pretending to be 'sudden shocks' and others 'seasonal shocks'. The farmer will probably be quickly overwhelmed by this combination!

Round 3 – Add long-term stresses

- Now explain that you're going to look at a different type of impact on communities, that aren't shocks but can cause the same level of disruption.
- Ask the people pretending to be 'seasonal shocks' and 'sudden shocks' to sit down.
- Ask for three new volunteers to represent 'stresses'.
- Explain that stresses are changes that happen gradually over a long time that slowly make us more vulnerable and may eventually cause disasters. Examples include loss of ground water, rainwater or trees, polluted water or soil, ongoing reducing crop yields, migration, climate change, political instability and economic decline.
- The three people pretending to be stresses should hold a ball and stand close to the 'farmer' volunteer.
- Ask them each to slowly lower their ball toward the ground. If the ball touches the ground, there will be a disaster. Ask them to stop if the farmer touches their ball.
- The farmer can 'stop' the ball from being lowered by touching the ball with a hand or foot. However, as she or he only has two hands, it will be very hard to keep all three 'stresses' under control – the person in the middle will probably end up with each hand and one foot on a ball (with the foot one very close to the ground).
- Now ask one of the 'shock' volunteers to come back and throw a ball. Each time the farmer deals with a shock by taking a hand off the 'stresses' ball, the stresses will get a little closer to the floor.

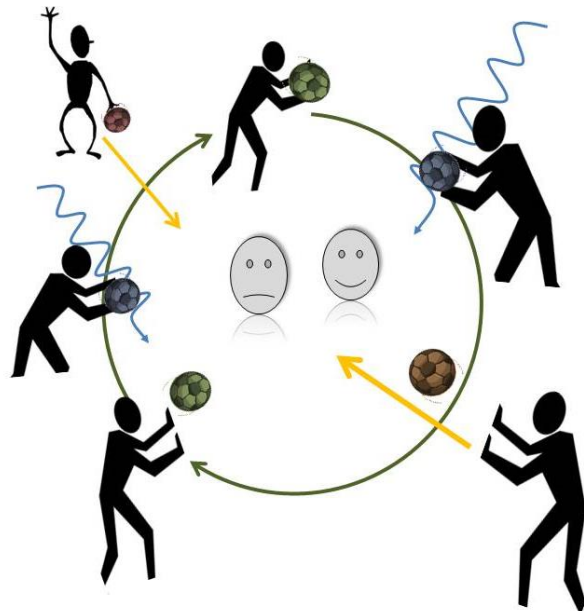


Discuss: What do the group notice? How did our farmer cope with the 'stresses', and the combination of a shock and stresses? Ask the farmer how he/she feels. What long term

changes are happening around you that feel like this? (Some examples might be rising food prices, worsening health, loss of soil or water).

Round 4 – You are not alone

- This round helps us see that working together can help us prevent shocks and stresses from becoming disasters
- **A household:** Ask for another volunteer to join the ‘farmer’ in the middle. Now the farmer is not alone: the two volunteers could represent a household, such as a husband and wife, or two neighbours helping each other.
- One by one, bring in at least two ‘stresses’, two ‘sudden shocks’ and two ‘seasonal shocks’. The two farmers can work together to try to keep all the balls in the air.



Discuss: How did the farmers cope with all the different kinds of problem put together? Did they come up with any organised response? How can you work together to reduce real disasters? – for example, improving early warning of real life shocks, or getting different people to focus on different tasks / roles?

Round 5 – Challenges

- Ask your group: in a disaster is everyone affected the same way, or do some people have more problems than others? Let people come up with their own ideas. Answers are likely to include: children, older people, people with disabilities, poor people, people who live in remote areas or lowland areas, etc.
- **Give ‘farmers’ challenges.** Add two to three more ‘farmer’ volunteers and ask the group to come up with creative ways to represent the challenges of highly vulnerable people within the game. So for example, ‘children’ might kneel or stand with bent knees to be small; poverty or disability might be represented by folding the right arm behind their back, standing on one leg, or closing eyes; a mother carrying her ‘baby’ might be given a big backpack to hold.
- Play again. To make it a little more challenging for the group, have one of the sudden shocks occur with no warning, or ask one of the seasonal shocks to speed up and run around the circle.
- After playing for a while, stop and discuss by asking the people with ‘challenges’ how they felt. Did they have more problems catching the ball? Did they feel excluded? What measures did they come up with as a group to work with these challenges?

Final discussion: How does this relate to your life? What seasonal shocks, sudden shocks and stresses affect us? Which ones do we expect? Why do they affect us? What can we do to avoid disasters? What actions do we want to take?



Notes

This game was inspired in part by a game by Plan International called 'Vulnerability and capacity game': <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net/repository/pc/ccd/VulnerabilityandCapacityGame.pdf>.



Finding out more

- Tearfund (2011) ROOTS 9 - *Reducing risk of disaster in our communities (second edition)* http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/roots/reducing_risk_of_disaster_in_our_communities/
- Tearfund (2011) *Disasters and the local church* http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/themes/disasters/disasters_and_the_local_church/

Related tools:

- A1 – Revealing fatalistic beliefs about disasters: information for facilitators [A1: *Disaster risk management-1*]
- A2 – The need to prepare – reducing the effects of disasters [A2: *Disaster risk management-1*]
- B – Fatalism: can we avoid disasters? (Bible study) [B: *Disaster risk management-1*]
- B – Noah, lessons in preparedness (Bible study) [B: *Disaster risk management-2*]
- B – Preparing for disaster [B: *Disaster risk management-3*]
- B – God of justice and mercy (Bible study) [B: *Disaster risk management-4*]
- B – God's provision for the future (Bible study) [B: *Disaster risk management-5*]
- C2 – Flood-resistant buildings [C2: *Disaster risk management-1*]
- C2 – Protecting a spring (a water source) [C2: *Water, sanitation & hygiene-2*]

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