

Activity 15

Climate crises impact people

One step forward



30-45 minutes



10-56 people



easy

Materials:

- One role card per person (see attached sheets)



Additional role cards can be downloaded from <https://erlassjahr.de/en/campaigns/educational-material-debt-crises-affect-people/> (sets 1 and 2 with 15 cards and set 3 with 8 cards)

What it's about

- Through a game, participants learn how different starting conditions affect whether people can realize their dreams in life.
- Empathy within a randomly-allocated role enables a change of perspective and thus a reflection on one's own social status and the associated privileges.
- Participants find out that sovereign debt has an impact on people's life circumstances.
- The participants reflect on the effects of external shocks such as climate disasters on the debt situation of a country.
- The participants recognize that inequality exists not only between, but also within, most societies.

How to play

A sufficiently large room is needed so that all participants are able to stand side-by-side and move forwards at least 8 metres. With very large groups, a large circle with a radius of around 12 metres also works well. In this case, the

participants would move forwards towards the centre of the circle. This activity also works very well outdoors.

Participants stand side-by-side. Each person now takes a role card. They read through their role description but are not allowed to talk about it or show it to anyone else.

Ask the participants to imagine themselves in their particular roles. They can reinforce identification with the role by asking themselves the following questions and answering them silently to themselves:

- What is characteristic of the country in which you live?
- What is your living situation like?
- Who do you live with?
- How is your typical daily routine?

You can now explain the process of the game: tell the participants that a series of questions will be asked which each person should answer for themselves with either yes or no. Each person will decide for themselves on their answer. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' answer. Participants who answer 'yes' then silently take a step forward, while those who answer 'no' stay where they are. After the last question, everyone remains in their final position. For the time being, no discussion takes place.

Now, one at a time, ask the questions in the text box on the following page.

Evaluation and feedback

Part 1:

Ask the participants to look around. Where do they find themselves standing? Where are the others standing? How does it feel to be where they themselves are standing? You can now ask individual participants standing in different positions in the field of play:

- How does it feel to be standing so far forward? How does it feel not to be moving forward?
- When did you notice that you are leaving the others behind, or that you are barely advancing forward at all?



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Questions

- Do you have the option of a hot meal every day?
- Are your children able to go to school?
- Can you enable your children to have a good education or go to college or university?
- Is it difficult for you to find a home?
- Can you afford a car?
- Can you go on holiday?
- Are you able to do things you enjoy in your free time?
- Are you able to travel from one place to another along decent roads?
- Do you have a stable internet connection?
- Will you have a pension in your old age which is enough to live on?
- Do you have access to clean water?
- Do you have a regular income?
- Can you go to the doctor when you are sick?
- Can you find everything in markets or in shops that you need in order to live?
- Do you expect your life to improve over the next 5 years?

Here, you could discuss how people who are privileged in real life often do not realize, whereas underprivileged people are mostly very well aware of their situation.

Now you can ask the whole group:

- Who lives in a rich country, and who lives in a poor country?

It is likely to come as a surprise that there is inequality both between countries and within countries. Even in countries with a very low gross domestic product (GDP), there exist very wealthy people – and vice versa.

If the group is not too big, at the end, the participants can read out their role cards. With large groups, each participant should at least state the country, gender and most important feature of their role.

Part 2:

Participants cast off their roles by shaking themselves out and then sitting in a circle of chairs. The subsequent discussion round is an opportunity for feedback and evaluation of their experience of playing the game.

You can then discuss the following questions with the participants:

- Was it difficult or easy for you to put yourselves in your roles? How can you explain this?
- What have you learnt about living conditions in different countries?
- What did you find surprising about the outcome of the game?
- What reasons are there for moving forward or not moving forward?
- What could a country's debt level and climate change have to do with moving forward or not moving forward?
- What would need to be done so that all people in the world have the same opportunities for a good life?

With large groups, you may also form smaller groups. The smaller groups receive the evaluation and feedback questions, discuss them and record the results on whiteboards or wall panels. These can then be presented in a plenary session.

Ecuador ♂

You are a worker on a banana plantation. You are managing to make ends meet at the moment, but the use of pesticides on the farm is negatively affecting your health. You are very worried that you will soon no longer be able to do your job, since your family depends on you and your income.

Your country is economically dependent on oil exports. As a result, there are significant fluctuations in economic growth. At present, the country is suffering from a debt crisis and has suspended payments to its creditors. Climate change is already making itself felt, e.g. through the melting of glaciers in the Andes.

Ecuador ♂

You come from Venezuela and, like many other Venezuelans, a year ago you fled with your family to Ecuador out of economic necessity. You are glad that, as an Uber driver, you can earn relatively good money so as to provide for your children. Your ambition is to find work and settle in the USA one day.

Your country is economically dependent on oil exports. As a result, there are significant fluctuations in economic growth. At present, the country is suffering from a debt crisis and has suspended payments to its creditors. Climate change is already making itself felt, e.g. through the melting of glaciers in the Andes.

Mali ♀

You are a farmer and live with your family on the edge of the Sahara. You often go hungry and you are noticing that your income is declining. The few crops which you are still able to grow are barely enough to survive on. You have long since had nothing left over to sell. You no longer know which way to turn and are contemplating fleeing the country.

Your country is rich in natural resources, in particular gold and uranium. Nevertheless, it is one of the poorest countries in the world. Around half of the population live in extreme poverty. Political instability and increasing debt are further aggravating the situation. The consequences of climate change are clearly evident, particularly in the form of drought.

Sri Lanka ♀

You sell fruit and vegetables by the side of the road. This provides you with barely enough to sustain your four children and your sick parents. You live in a poor area. Over the past few years, your hut has been flooded several times and you have lost everything.

Your country ranks among the middle-income countries of Asia, but is heavily indebted. Moreover, it is extremely vulnerable to the effects of climate change, such as floods, landslides and drought. Sri Lanka's principal source of earnings consists of textile exports and agricultural products like tea.

Sri Lanka ♂

You live in the capital city of Colombo. Your family owns a large textile factory. Your business is highly successful. However, you are worried about your beautiful beach house which is under threat from rising sea levels.

Your country ranks among the middle-income countries of Asia, but is heavily indebted. Moreover, it is extremely vulnerable to the effects of climate change, such as floods, landslides and drought. Sri Lanka's principal source of earnings consists of textile exports and agricultural products like tea.

Australia ♀

You live with your partner in the north-east of the country near the Great Barrier Reef. Until now, you have both always earned good money as diving instructors. However, course bookings are currently on the decline since the reef's corals are dying off due to rising sea temperatures.

Your country is very wealthy, has a high level of economic growth and, as a member of the G20, is a lending nation. As an industrialized country and one of the biggest coal exporters, it is one of the principal contributors to climate change, and is indeed itself feeling the effects, with ever-worsening droughts and bushfires.

Australia ♂

You are an agricultural labourer and a member of Australia's indigenous Aboriginal population. After the last major bushfire, you lost your job and were forced to move into the city to join your daughter. She has a relatively good job and is supporting you financially.

Your country is very wealthy, has a high level of economic growth and, as a member of the G20, is a lending nation. As an industrialized country and one of the biggest coal exporters, it is one of the principal contributors to climate change, and is indeed itself feeling the effects, with ever-worsening droughts and bushfires.

Vanuatu ♂

You work on a cattle farm. In the last tsunami, your employer lost most of his herd. You are afraid that there will soon be another major storm and that you will then be made jobless.

Your country is an island state in the South Pacific, with only about 260,000 inhabitants. The country's economy is largely agriculture-based. Natural disasters such as earthquakes and tsunamis, as well as rising sea levels, are a big problem. Your country is heavily indebted. Over the past few years, it has become a tax haven.

Vanuatu ♀

You are a successful European online entrepreneur. Several years ago, you settled in Vanuatu in order to benefit from the tax advantages. You have substantial wealth, own a cattle farm, and enjoy life on a small private island.

Your country is an island state in the South Pacific, with only about 260,000 inhabitants. The country's economy is largely agriculture-based. Natural disasters such as earthquakes and tsunamis, as well as rising sea levels, are a big problem. Your country is heavily indebted. Over the past few years, it has become a tax haven.

Dominica ♀

You are an activist with Jubilee Caribbean, a non-governmental organization which campaigns for fair debt relief. You earn a reasonable amount and often travel for work purposes to attend conferences abroad. However, you are very worried about the future of your country. In 2017, Hurricane Maria also caused severe damage to your family home.

Your country is a small island state in the Caribbean. Its principal economic activities are agriculture (banana exports) and tourism. Your country is very heavily indebted and, in addition, severely impacted by climate change. Climate disasters are causing substantial economic losses. At the same time, Dominica's own contribution to the causes of climate change is virtually zero.

Lebanon ♂

You used to be a tourist guide in the capital of Beirut. However, since the Civil War, fewer and fewer tourists have been visiting the country, so you had to give up your job. At the moment you are unemployed and can no longer pay your children's school fees. They are now attending a state school, which is significantly worse than the private school they used to attend.

Your country is very heavily indebted, and at the same time economically dependent on capital imports. Over the past decades, Lebanon has been shattered by civil wars and political unrest. In addition, accommodating refugees, who made up almost one third of the population in 2020, is a huge challenge.

Lebanon ♀

In 2011, when the civil war began in Syria, you fled to Lebanon with your three children. Since then, you have been living in the most dreadful conditions in a vast refugee camp. You are dependent on aid supplies from the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and the United Nations.

The country where you are living is very heavily indebted, and at the same time economically dependent on capital imports. Over the past decades, Lebanon has been shattered by civil wars and political unrest. In addition, accommodating refugees, who made up almost one third of the population in 2020, is a huge challenge.

Kenya ♂

You are an environmental activist working in a large national park. The extreme drought of recent years is placing a great strain on the plants and animals in the park. Added to this is the threat from poaching. You and your colleagues are afraid that both you and the national park are going to lose your means of existence.

In recent years, your country's economic output has been steadily growing, but it is heavily dependent on tourism and agriculture. Climate change is increasing the hardship felt by the population, above all in the dry regions of the country, due to drought and locust plagues. Sovereign debt is growing, and your country is taking out more and more loans.

Kenya ♀

You are a small-scale farmer with a large family. All the family members help out in the fields. This year locusts have devoured almost all of your harvest. You are afraid that, despite the pesticides you are using, the number of locusts will simply multiply.

In recent years, your country's economic output has been steadily growing, but it is heavily dependent on tourism and agriculture. Climate change is increasing the hardship felt by the population, above all in the dry regions of the country, due to drought and locust plagues. Sovereign debt is growing, and your country is taking out more and more loans.

Spain ♀

You own large estates and glasshouses in Andalusia. During the harvest season, you have several hundred employees. However, cultivating vegetables is becoming increasingly expensive since the soil is turning drier and drier, so watering and irrigation are getting ever more costly.

Your country is wealthy, but has been battling an economic crisis for a number of years. Sovereign debt has grown steadily. The principal areas of economic activity include tourism and the export of agricultural products. Climate change is taking a heavy toll on the country, in particular in the dry south. At the same time, as an industrial nation, your country is one of the leading contributors to climate change.

China ♀

You are an engineering student, and for your doctoral thesis you are undertaking research on innovative techniques for the production of drinking water. You live in Shanghai and, like many other people, you suffer from the extreme smog in the city.

Your country has the second largest national economy in the world. Within China, however, there are considerable regional and social differences. Although your country is itself heavily indebted, it is on the path to becoming the biggest creditor in the Global South. With its high level of emissions, China is contributing significantly to climate change, but at the same time suffers a great deal from its impact, through storms, drought, soil erosion and floods.

Germany ♀

You work in the real estate sector and live in Berlin, where the price of housing is skyrocketing, enabling you to profit substantially. You live in a penthouse in Berlin-Mitte and drive a bulky SUV. The only thing that annoys you more than the traffic jams on the way to work is the young activists from Fridays for Future. They have no idea what life is all about!

Your country is one of the richest in the world and grants loans to poorer countries. Yet despite a large number of wealthy inhabitants, many are dependent on government support. In 2018, with heatwaves, drought, failed harvests and intense low-pressure weather systems, your country was one of the countries most significantly impacted by climate change.

Germany ♂

You will soon be finishing school and are now considering what you should do when you leave. Actually, you would like to take over your parents' farm. It is the only one left for miles around. But your parents are already struggling, and you see no future for the farm, most of all because climate change means that you can expect to see more and more crop failures.

Your country is one of the richest in the world and grants loans to poorer countries. Yet despite a large number of wealthy inhabitants, many are dependent on government support. In 2018, with heatwaves, drought, failed harvests and intense low-pressure weather systems, your country was one of the countries most significantly impacted by climate change.