



War Games

Aim:

to explore the impact war has on people and their environment.

Age:

10 years and older

Time:

30 minutes

Materials:

Photocopies of role cards, old newspapers, labels for participants, large space

(Adapted from: DEFY (1995), Young People Imagine).

Note to Leader

Alternatively form the groups so that one is larger, and one smaller than the rest. The larger and smaller groups should be civilians and journalists respectively.

Role Cards

Invading Army

You are part of a coalition of countries that are intent on overthrowing an enemy government. You have been ordered by your commanders to bring journalists with you to highlight your successes in battle. It has been made clear to you that the journalists must be protected, even if this means restricting their movements. You are aware the enemy has civilians mixed in with their army but are under orders to avoid civilian casualties.

Defending Army

You are proud of your country and are prepared to die defending it. The enemy has superior weapons but you know the territory better. As you pass through towns and villages you have gathered up local people for their protection. The enemy will be less likely to fire on you if you have civilians with you.

Civilians

The army has told you that you have to leave your towns and villages to protect you from enemy bullets and bombs. There's very little to eat and the children are frightened. You love your country but you don't want to die. You aren't happy hearing about promises of rebuilding when your house hasn't yet been destroyed.

Journalists

You are there to report the war first hand. You want to speak with ordinary people as well as soldiers on both sides. You are under pressure to get the big story so you are determined to do whatever is necessary to get all points of view. Some possible questions include: what have been the effects of the war on you?; how do you feel about the other side?; what will you do now?

What to do:

Break into four groups and give each group a role card. The larger and smaller groups should be the civilians and journalists respectively. Allow a couple of minutes to read and discuss the cards, then give the newspapers to the army groups.

Explain that there is going to be a war and they have one minute to make paper balls (ammunition). Clearly mark a dividing line across the playing area. The army groups try to hit their opponents with the paper balls. If the ammunition hits someone on an arm or a leg, they cannot use that limb for the rest of the game. If they are hit on the head or chest they are out of the game for 30 seconds. If journalists or civilians are hit, they are out of the game completely. Allow the groups to build defences using chairs or other materials.

Let battle commence, keeping particular note of any journalists and civilians killed. While the energy is still high, declare an end to the war. The journalists 'interview' soldiers on both sides and the civilians for five minutes. Meanwhile the other participants should clean up the space.

Bring the whole group together. Ask the journalists to present their reports. What happened? How did it make you feel? Also discuss the impact of the war on the environment. What problems would this present to ordinary people for rebuilding their lives?

