

Unfair Games to Illustrate for Children (and Adults) the Unfair Playing Field of Global Trade

Rejoice in the gift of movement, of play, of community in motion. Sun showers us with energy and grows the grass. Air fills the ball and our gasping lungs. Gravity gives us half a chance. Play in and with God.

Games and sports are universal languages, whose vocabulary includes joy, teamwork, physical expression, learning to win with humility and lose with grace. Games can teach us much about life and the world. In Edinburgh, Scotland, at the Make Poverty History protests and celebrations in 2005, organizers staged Unfair Fútbol Games for kids (and a few adults). The goal was to have fun and illustrate how unfair the rules of international trade are. Of course, you can do this with any game and in many settings - Sunday school, youth and adult study groups, camps, and so on.

Unfair Fútbol, Unfair Red Rover and a very elaborate Unfair Musical Chair are explained below. Use the descriptions to spark ideas for these gamers, or for other games. And have fun!

UNFAIR Football, Fútbol, Futebol, Calcio, Fussball, Voetbol or Soccer

How unfair is world trade? Brutally unfair - in a world of staggering inequality, global trade policies are even further tipping the scales in favor of rich and powerful. Show people what's going on. Stage 'Unfair games'.

All you have to do to stage an 'Unfair games' is organize a public game of a well-known sport (Mongolian nose-polo is probably out). Then publicize it, and get as many people involved as possible.

But play the game with rigged rules and unequal teams.

You could pitch a team of adults against a team of toddlers (first check this with Social Services). Or maybe force one team to play blindfolded or with their hands tied. Totally unfair. Almost as unfair as today's trade rules.

Order the book, *Unfair Games* from Christian Aid:

<http://www.christian-aid.org.uk/campaign/resource/unfair.htm>

UNFAIR Rover, Red Rover

Two lines face each other.

Rig the game by putting all the big, strong people on one line and the smaller younger folk on the other.

Tape signs on the members of the strong and weak lines to identify each person:

- On the strong, with the names of transnational corporations, corporate lawyers, politicians and officials of International Financial Institutions (e.g. IMF, World Bank, Export-Import Bank)
- On the weak line, farmer, small businessperson, single mother, low wage worker, farm worker, undocumented immigrant, widow, child, for example.

The strong line calls one of them to try to break through the line (citing their debt), and that person must join the strong line if they cannot break through.

In the case that someone from the weak line breaks through the strong line, you can position two adults with signs reading: Riot Police, Immigration and Naturalization Service-INS, or Health Inspector. They are a backup to the strong line, and bring anyone who makes it through to join the strong line.

Conceived by Stephen Bartlett of Agricultural Missions, Inc (AMI)
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UNFAIR Musical Chairs *[Feel free to simplify and modify the following.]*

The game is simple to run but makes a good point about 'who makes the rules of trade.'

Chairs are placed in a circle or other fun shape (we did lips, you could do a heart), but facing outwards so that players walk around the chairs when the music is playing.

Players should be at least 7 years old, and intergenerational groups might be best. There should probably be at least 10 participants, but more is better.

Players are each given an identity, written in marker on ordinary paper. A minority proportion of the identities (40% or less) will be the rule makers, corporate lawyers, CEOs of major corporations, executives or shareholders in major transnational corporations, fast food empires, or agribusiness exporters, intellectual property moguls, etc... The exact corporations identified might depend on what the central theme or fair trade items purchased might be in a particular church or community group. Similarly, the workers, rural, indigenous peoples, economic refugees and other marginalized people whose identities are assigned to at least 60% of the players might also be custom fit for the particular knowledge and focus of the group.

In our case, the following identities were distributed:

The rule-makers:

Cargill Market Strategist
President of Starbucks
CEO of Archer Daniels and Midland (ADM)
Public Relations VP of McDonalds Corporation
Wal-Mart Executive

Secretary of the World Trade Organization (WTO)
President of the International Monetary Fund (IMF)
Corporate lawyer who helped write the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)

Those to whom the ordinary rules apply:

Minimum Wage Earner from _____ (name your community)
Coffee picker from Nicaragua
Rural woman from Honduras
Unemployed factory worker from _____ (name your community), because factory moved to Mexico/China
Indigenous person who speaks 4 languages
Afro-Colombian child refugee displaced by 'Plan Colombia.'
Family Farmers from either US or Mexico
Food vendor from Mexico

Coffee Cooperative treasurer from Chiapas, Mexico
Landless farmer from Brazil
Coffee farmer from Ecuador
Undocumented worker from Guatemala living in _____ (name of community)
Banana producer from St. Vincent in the English speaking Caribbean
Day laborer
Small business owner from Mexico or US
Economic refugee from El Salvador
Immigrant tomato harvester from Immokalee, Florida

Once the identities are distributed and the participants are in their chairs, the facilitator explains what the rules are, and (if desired) also the possibility for maintaining inclusion ("You can be creative and cooperative to make sure everyone stays in the game. People can share a chair or extend the chair to their laps, or find other creative solutions."):

1. The ordinary rules of Musical Chairs apply to everyone except the rule makers.
2. The rule makers do not have to stand up when the music is playing.
3. If the rule makers do stand up, they have a right to a seat always, even if already occupied after the music stops.
4. A rule maker may refuse to have anyone else sit on their lap, including another rule maker.
5. If someone to whom the rules apply is left standing when the music stops, they may negotiate with those seated for a place to sit.
6. No hurting anyone.

As the game unfolds the facilitator can intervene to either enforce the rules as presented or make observations that might have significance in terms of trade and political power. Example: Will the President of Starbucks not allow for a coffee picker from Nicaragua to sit on their lap?

Each time the music begins, the facilitator instructs his assistant to remove one, two or more chairs. Certain contradictions will become evident as the game progresses. If the group is able to work cooperatively, no one need be excluded, for a while, but the sitting will get more and more awkward, extending out three, four or more persons deep, with people seating on the laps or knees of their fellow workers, indigenous peoples, rural women, family farmers, etc...

If a rule maker allows a worker to sit on their lap, the facilitator could make a verbal observation of that fact. If many workers are able to be seated with good cooperation, the facilitator might comment on the excellent solidarity of those participants. At a point, there will be no chairs available for anyone but the rule makers who will likely remain seated in them. This is when workers might be tempted to individually or collectively try to physically displace a rule maker. If this happens, the facilitator might observe what the typical response of rule makers to such behavior have been in the past, and make reference to any of the large mobilizations for trade justice, such as Seattle in 1999, Quebec City in 2001, Genoa, Italy in 2002, Quito, Ecuador in 2002, Cancun Mexico in 2003, or other demonstrations in which protesters were tear-gassed, shot with rubber bullets, arrested, beaten or worse. Alternately, your assistant could also be designated as an enforcer with his own identity, i.e. Riot Police or another security-force identity.

Depending on the dynamics, the facilitator may have to end the game shortly after the point is reached in which even rule makers, while being besieged by the grassroots, will

also find it necessary to cooperate for all of their allies in the ruling class to be seated. This might be likened to what happens during an economic recession or during leveraged takeovers among corporations, leading to monopoly control.

The game facilitator could lead a discussion, tailored to the age level of the group, after the game is finished, posing questions to the participants:

- What does a food vendor from Mexico have in common with a minimum wage earner in your community? A Honduran rural or indigenous woman with an undocumented worker from Guatemala in your community? Etc...
- What are some of the rules and realities of trade as promoted by the 'free trade' proponents? (Normally, what are some of the obstacles people face that prevents many from successfully exporting their products into the U.S.?)
- How in real life can people show solidarity toward workers, rural women, family farmers, immigrant workers including farm workers, etc....?
- Might corporations also show solidarity toward workers by their own volition, or will their humanitarian gestures look more like 'charity'?
- How do economic interests and profit taking come into a contradiction with treating all people with dignity?
- How do corporations and international financial institutions (IFIs) like the WTO, IMF, World Bank, etc. collaborate with corporations? Who or what is the driving force behind the policies coming out of those IFIs?
- How does fair or fairer trade change this equation at a structural level?

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