

The Collective Action Approach Role-Playing Game

Introduction

Purpose: This activity will give participants a deeper understanding of how collaborative systems approaches, like collective action, have the potential to address complex problems. Through role-playing, participants will see how the institutional roles and priorities of members, as well as their individual personalities and motivations, affect interactions among group members and the ability to come to consensus. Despite the time-limited nature of the exercise, participants should also gain a greater appreciation for the importance of trust and personal relationships and why it can take several years for collaborative approaches to build the social and institutional relationships.

Group Size: This role-play was designed for groups of seven, with one facilitator per group (not included in the seven). If, after splitting a larger group into multiples of seven, participants are left over, a group of four, five, or six can be created by eliminating any of these roles: Pit-Emptying Service Provider, Utility Service Provider, or Head of Health Extension Works. The role of the table facilitator is to review the instructions, get the discussion going, take notes on the flip chart or whiteboard, keep the group on task and on time, and to report out at the end whether the group was able to come to a consensus or not.

Materials and Set Up: Facilitators should be prepped before the activity so they know their role and how the activity will unfold. Enough space is needed so that groups can have their own space (or table) and won't disrupt each other. It is useful (but not necessary) for each table to have a flip chart or whiteboard to take notes and tally votes. Character Profiles should be cut out of the packets such that each person can be given their role and roles aren't seen by others. The facilitator's guide and investment options can be printed for each facilitator, and the context and option slide can be projected for the whole group to see.

About this Game: USAID's Sustainable WASH Systems Learning Partnership and the Millennium Water Alliance developed this game for two international water, sanitation, and hygiene conferences in 2019. Others are encouraged to use and adapt this game for their own purposes. Attribution of the original concept is expected and appreciated.

The Collective Action Approach Role-Playing Game

Facilitator's Guide

Facilitators, please follow these steps:

1. **Review the overall instructions for the table (see deck at end for presentable slides):**
 - a. You represent members of a learning alliance within a small town in Ethiopia. Your roles range from political to community members — all of you are stakeholders for sanitation services.
 - b. A development agency has provided your town with \$100,000 to improve your sanitation services. They have asked you to choose two activities (of the six provided) in which to invest. If you do not agree on which options to choose, you will forfeit the money, and the development agency will invest it in a neighboring town instead.
 - c. Your task as a table is to:
 - i. Establish a short (one-sentence) vision statement for your investment. You might address one or more of the following within your vision:
 - What is your overall goal for the town?
 - What are the most important factors to consider?
 - ii. Discuss the options as a group and come to consensus on which two options to select.
2. **Ask everyone at the table to read their role profiles (silently).**
3. **Once they are finished, read aloud the six investment options.**
4. **Facilitate the group discussion:**
 - a. Go around the table and ask each person to quickly introduce themselves.
 - b. Ask for thoughts on an overall vision.
 - i. Encourage others to speak
 - ii. Take notes
 - iii. Help develop a statement
 - c. Once a statement is completed, ask for thoughts on which options to select.
 - i. Encourage others to speak
 - ii. Take notes
 - iii. Refer group to their vision statement if discussion stalls
5. **When only 5 minutes remain, remind the table that they MUST reach consensus or they will forfeit their funding.**

The Collective Action Approach Role-Playing Game

Investment Options

Option 1: Build a new disposal site, including funds to purchase land

Population served: Disposal services for 70% of households in the town plus hotels and larger institutions

Option 2: Install sewered connections in the town's center

Population served: Conveyance for 10% of households plus the major businesses in the town center

Option 3: Build one large public latrine block with shower facilities and three smaller communal latrines in the town center

Population served: Containment for up to 75% of the town's population including workers in transit and nearby communities

Option 4: Purchase two new vacuum trucks

Population served: Conveyance for approx. 10% of households in the town (that have septic tanks in higher income households) plus hotels and larger institutions

Option 5: Purchase protective gear and emptying equipment plus training for manual pit emptying

Population served: Improves safety for emptiers, who provide a service to the unsewered population, 90% of the town's residents

Option 6: Provide a household sanitation subsidy for \$100 per household

Population served: 100% of residents receive benefit; overall impact unclear

The Collective Action Approach Role-Playing Game

Character Profiles

Utility Manager

You are a big player in the town. You have also lived in the town since your childhood, so you have a good awareness of the sanitation situation and believe the best solution for the town is sewered connections. You manage the local utility and although water is your core business, you operated an aging waste vacuum truck that used to generate additional revenue. However, this revenue barely covered the maintenance of the truck because it broke down so frequently. Before the disposal site was closed, the truck provided a valuable service to the town, but it is no longer used since there is nowhere to dump the waste.

Local Hotel Owner

You run a profitable business as the town is located near a major tourist attraction. You are also a major employer in the town. The Environment Office recently temporarily shut down your hotel for disposing septage in the town's storm drains. The hotel was reopened after large protests from the town's residents, many of whom are employees or have family members employed by the hotel. It is too expensive for you to install your own waste management systems, but you want the sanitation situation in the town to improve so your business can grow.

Pit Emptying Service Provider

Your business is based in the capital city 200 km away from the town. You were concerned when the town's disposal site closed because you could no longer bring waste there, but you have now figured out a "creative" and cost-effective solution to dispose of waste on the outskirts of the town. However, you are concerned that you may be caught by the Environment Office and fined heavily. This could lead to authorities prohibiting you from working in the town. You have no safety equipment and perform your job using shovels and buckets. You typically work at night because of the stigma around emptying fecal sludge.

Chairwoman of Communal Latrine Block

You oversee the management of a communal latrine block located in the most densely populated neighborhood in the town center. You run a tight ship and operate the latrines based on the small revenues you received from users. Until recently you were able to keep the toilet blocks open, but you have had to close half of them because the septic tanks are full, or the blocks require major repair work and you have no funds to empty or repair them. Yet, you provide a critical service to an under-served population in your neighborhood.

The Collective Action Approach Role-Playing Game

Character Profiles, Continued

Head of Health Extension Workers

You are from the town and have spent your whole life there. You manage the town's Health Extension Workers who provide a critical service of increasing awareness and promotion of safe sanitation options to local households. You are very aware of the town's growing population because of the noticeable increase in your team's caseloads. Your team is finding it increasingly difficult to impose fines and penalize households for their illegal sanitation practices due to the growing number of latrine blocks in disrepair, the closure of the disposal site, and the high prevalence of poorly constructed pit latrines. You believe that private household sanitation is the only way to go for dignity and safety of the town's residents.

Head of Town Environment Office

You manage all the town's environmental issues. Your office is responsible for monitoring and regulating all investments and providing approval for any new investments to ensure that they are socially and environmentally responsible. One of the big actions your office has taken in the past year was closing the town's disposal site because of complaints from local residents of unpleasant odors. Until now the town administration has not provided any solutions to secure land for a new disposal site. Septic tanks at most of the hotels and households are filling up and private emptying service providers charge five times more than they used to because of the cost of trucking the waste to another nearby town.

Town Mayor

Your primary motivation is making constituents and businesses happy so you get re-elected. You also want to attract businesses and modernize the town. Over the past year, sanitation has become a major issue among the town's residents. Communities located near the disposal site shut off access to it after multiple complaints of bad odors. The local hotel was closed after it was found to be disposing its septage in the town's storm drains and later reopened because of political pressure. You want to improve the sanitation situation to please your constituents, but you have limited funding available to do so.



The Collective Action Approach Role-Playing Game

Presentation Slides



ACTIVITY TIME!

We are going to role-play a learning alliance.

- Each table is a learning alliance
- Read your role card to understand your position and interests
- As an alliance, you must
 - Establish your collective vision for sanitation in your town
 - Decide how to invest \$100,000 via two investments
- You have 30 minutes to **discuss, negotiate, and make a decision**
- If you do not make a collective decision, you will lose the \$100,000!
- Each table has a facilitator



ACTIVITY TIME!



MILLENNIUM WATER
ALLIANCE

Context:

- Official population 60,000 (probably closer to 100,000)
- Existing water and sanitation utility
- No central sewer system
- Current sanitation breakdown:
 - 5% open defecation
 - 10% septic tanks
 - 40% shared sanitation facilities
 - 45% pit latrines.
 - Access to water: 10% piped connections on house plot

Options:

1. New disposal site (serves 70% population)
2. Sewered connections for 10% of population
3. New public latrine block and three new communal latrines for 75% of population
4. New vacuum trucks
5. Protective gear for pit emptiers
6. Household subsidy (\$100) for all households



REFLECTIONS

- Did you come to consensus?
- Did you get what you wanted?
- Was it easy? Was it challenging?
- Did you have enough time?