



How to play the gender and climate game

A guide for facilitators, 2020¹

Goal of the game

The goal is to support experiential learning and dialogue on the vulnerability of women and men facing climate variability and change. Players first take on the role of subsistence farmers facing changing risks -- then 'walk in the shoes' of a specific gender role.

Learning objectives

- To explore how the impacts of climate change exacerbate existing vulnerabilities.
- To open dialogue among game participants about gender inequalities.

Group size and setting

- There need to be at least two facilitators: one to call out instructions and one to hand out beans (or any other small articles like buttons, beads, etc which serve as the currency for this game) and move around the groups of players to provide assistance.
- This game can be played with as few as 4-6 players and as many as 60 people. That's about as many people as could be instructed comfortably to play at once, in a large room.
- The game is generally suitable for a workshop-style setting, due to its discursive and interactive nature, and because it is intended to raise issues for further dialogue and exploration among the participants.
- This game will not work in a theatre-style lecture hall. The room needs to be set up so that each player group is sitting around a table to play.
- If it's culturally and situationally appropriate and players are physically able, they could also play the game sitting on the floor. Each player group would sit in a circle.
- The optimal size for each group of players is 6-10 players.
- Assess the overall number of participants you will have and decide ahead of time how many small player groups you want to divide them in to. For example, you may have 30 people coming to your workshop, and you could divide them into 5 groups of 6 people.

¹ This is based on the Gender and Climate Game developed with CDKN/ukaid funding by Janot Mendler de Suarez of the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre and with input from the American Red Cross. This version of the game has been adapted by Mairi Dupar, Arsema Andargatchew, Geeta Sandal and Bedoshruiti Sadhukhan, CDKN, 2019-20, with funding by the Royal Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and IDRC-Canada.

Preparation: materials to source in advance

The facilitator should gather and prepare the following materials beforehand:

- 500 g - 1 kilo of beans (approx.) and a small bowl or container for each player group to keep 'their' store of beans in. Each group of players is a 'village'. Every little bowl of beans in the middle of each village group is the village's assets.
- Wristbands or bracelets for half of the people in the overall group of participants. These can be as simple as a piece of string for half the people to tie around their wrist. (If you have a small group and a flashier kind of wristband or bracelet for half the people, you could use it!)
- A pile of game play cards for each group of players, so if you are going to divide all your participants into five groups, you need five sets of game play cards overall.
- (Optional) prize for the winning 'village' (e.g. sweets that could be divided among the winning sub-group of participants).

Setting up the game

- Each player group begins in their circle with a pot of beans in the middle of the group.
- The teams should all be as gender-balanced as possible.
- **Narrative:** "You are a farmer and you are going to get some beans from the central pot at the beginning of the game. When you get some beans, these are your personal income and assets. (In a simple way, it's just a game!)"
- **Narrative:** "Each of you (each individual 'farmer') gets four beans to start with."

Playing the game: warm-up rounds

Let's play...

- **Narrative:** "You are farmers who traditionally plant maize and beans. Lately because of climate change impacts, droughts and floods are wiping out harvests..."
- **Narrative:** "Now it's time for each farmer to buy their seeds and plant their seeds for the coming season. What you will do is pay some beans into the central pot, the village pot, according to what kind of seed you want to buy. Are you going to bank on its being a normal weather year? A flood year? Or a drought year? Here is what you should do:
 - Pay one bean into the central pot for a normal seed that will perform well in a good year.
 - Pay two beans into the central pot for a flood-resistant variety of crop that will do well in a flood year or a normal year, but fail in a drought year.
 - Pay two beans for a drought-resistant variety of crop that will do well in a drought year or a normal year but will fail in a flood year!"
- **Facilitator instruction:** Count down while players decide which kind of seed they are going to invest in this year! They have ten seconds to make the decision of whether they'll buy normal seeds, flood-resistant or drought-resistant varieties. Count: 10, 9, 8,

- **Narrative:** “Ok? Everyone paid for their seeds into the central pot and did you tell all the other players in your group what kind of seed you bought and planted?”
- **Facilitator instruction:** The next step is for the players to pick a weather card, in their group, to see what the weather is this year.
- **Narrative:** “The group of players, each representing a ‘village’ is going to pick a card to see what the weather is going to bring this year: a drought year, a good year with a good harvest, or a flood year! Just to be clear: it’s not one weather card for every player. It is one weather card to be turned over to show the weather for the whole group, the whole village. Ok everybody, turn the card over in your group, to see what kind of weather the village got.”
- **Facilitator instruction:** Now all the groups should be turning over one weather card for their table/circle, to see what the weather was. Each player will find out whether their own personal harvest flourished or failed!
- **Narrative:** “Now you find out if your own personal harvest succeeded or failed:
- If your harvest succeeded, you get two beans.
- This means: if you paid for a normal seed and the card says it’s a good year, you harvest two beans!
- If your crop was successful because it was a flood and you planted flood-resistant, or it was a drought and you planted drought-resistant, then you harvest two beans!
- If your crop failed because you paid for a normal seed and it was a drought or a flood year, then you have to give up four beans to the central pot.
- If your crop failed because you planted a drought-resistant seed and it was a flood year, or because you planted a flood-resistant seed and it was a drought year, then you have to give four beans to the central pot.
- **Narrative:** “If a farmer cannot pay the four beans (after a disaster) or has no beans left at all to plant for the next season, it means the farmer’s family will not have enough food to survive the full year, and must seek survival in the capital city. Ie they sit out for a round to ‘go to the city’.”
- After one round, they can come back to the ‘village’ and start playing again. They can get one bean from the village’s pot (which represents the wage she earned in the city), so it’s enough to plant a normal seed in the next round.

Continue the game: Gender surprise

- Give bracelets to half the participants in each village – assigned completely randomly (not by their real gender).
- Tell the participants that everyone wearing a bracelet is a man. Everyone without a bracelet is a woman in the game.
- **Narrative:** “We are starting the game over. Put all your beans back in the pot.
- **Narrative:** “Everyone wearing a bracelet, you are a man in this game. Men (those of you with a bracelet) take five beans from the pot in the centre of your group; you start with a

strong endowment because you are advantaged in your culture. Women (those of you without a bracelet), please take only four beans from the pot. As a woman in your culture, you do not have as many inheritance or land or property rights and you own fewer assets than your male counterparts, so you start at a disadvantage.”

- Distribute the mini cards (with the designations ‘pregnant’, ‘disabled’ etc) to every third or fourth player in each group, making sure to mix it up a bit – giving some mini cards to ‘game men’ and some to ‘game women’ but just take care that a player doesn’t get one that is physically impossible – ‘game men’ can get a ‘disabled’ card but not a ‘pregnant’ card).
- Narrative: “Some of you have got additional health, age, ability/disability attributes and so on, as described on the mini cards you received. Hold on to these for the rest of the game, as these are important for affecting how you will benefit from a harvest at the end of the season.”
- **Narrative:** “We’re going to plant our seeds again and take another weather card to see what the weather will be like this season. Once more,
 - Pay one bean for a normal seed that will perform well in a good year
 - Pay two beans for a flood-resistant variety
 - Pay two beans for a drought-resistant variety
 - When you take a weather card, see if you will get a drought, good year or flood year.
- Instruct the players to take a weather card.
- **Narrative:** “Don’t collect your beans yet. Now comes another gender surprise!”
- If you, the farmer, paid for a normal seed and the card says it’s a good year, you get a harvest.
- If it was a flood year and you the farmer planted flood-resistant seeds, or it was a drought year and the village planted drought-resistant seeds, then you get a harvest.
- The crop fails, no harvest, if you paid for a normal seed and it was a drought or a flood year. This means you have to give up four beans to the central pot.
- If you get a harvest and you are a female in the game, you only get two beans.
- If you get a harvest and you are a male in the game, you get three beans.
 - As well as this,
- If you get a harvest and you are pregnant or nursing, elderly, or have a disability or illness, please surrender another one of your beans.
- **Optional narrative:** “We know that men and women are vulnerable to climate change in different ways. What is more, many of women’s daily responsibilities go beyond farming and also include raising children, collecting firewood and fetching water, taking care of the sick and elderly, and cooking food for the household. These unremunerated tasks coupled with social and cultural norms can leave women confronting different challenges than men when disasters strike.”
- As before, if a farmer cannot pay the four beans, they must leave the village ‘for the city to find work’ and is out of the game for one round. After one round, they can come back to the ‘village’ and start playing again and gets one bean from the village pot (enabling them to plant a normal seed at harvest) when they return.

Wrap up and facilitated discussion

After a few rounds (e.g. 5-6 rounds can be enough, or a few more, if you prefer), the game is over. Make sure there are at least 15-20 minutes left for discussion if you are not playing the 'gender programming round' at the end and intend to finish here. Or, leave a further 30 mins for game play and discussion if you are playing the 'gender programming round' next.

- Identify the winning village (whose farmers collectively have the most beans left), and give out prizes.
- **Narrative:** "In your groups, share insights and come up with 1-2 very brief comments to be shared with plenary about what you experienced and what you learned during the session."
 - Name an **emotion** you felt while playing the game
 - Name an **insight** you gained while playing the game
 - Were the climate conditions realistic?
 - How did you choose what to plant?
 - What did you realise about vulnerability to climate change: in the game and in real life?
 - Was the gender inequality realistic?
 - What other ways can women and girls and men and boys be differently affected by climate extremes?
 - What actions/resources/assistance/plan does your community need to address differences in vulnerability?"
- If you are ending the discussion here, ask the last question: "What are the implications and options are there for **gender-smart programming** that would help address these inequalities and help women and girls to achieve equal outcomes to men and boys? In a real-world situation, what kind of gender-responsive programming would be helpful?" (If you are continuing for the gender-smart programming round at the end, save this question for the end.)

Optional extra:

Gender-smart programming

- The participants keep their bracelets (or not).
- Everyone wearing a bracelet is a man. Everyone without a bracelet is a woman.
- **Narrative:** "We are starting the game over. Put all your beans back in the pot."
- **"This time your village might have gender-blind programming like before or it may have gender smart programming. Take a programme card and see what your village gets."**
- If you get 'gender-blind' then continue to play as before.
- If you get a 'gender-smart' programme card, then the rules will change, this is what happens. Men (those of you with a bracelet) start off the game afresh by taking five beans from the pot in the centre of your group; you start with a strong endowment because you

are advantaged in your culture. Women (those of you without a bracelet), start afresh - please take five beans from the pot.

- **Narrative:** “We’re going to plant our seeds again and take a weather card again to see what the weather will be like this season. Once more,
 - Pay one bean for a normal seed that will perform well in a good year
 - Pay two beans for a flood-resistant variety
 - Pay two beans for a drought-resistant variety
 - When you take a weather card, see if you will get a drought, a good year or a flood year.
- Instruct the players to take a weather card.
- If the village paid for a normal seed and the card says it’s a good year, you get a harvest.
- If it was a flood year and the village planted flood-resistant seeds, or it was a drought year and the village planted drought-resistant seeds, the village gets a harvest.
- This time, in the gender-smart villages, when the crop succeeds, both the game men and the game women receive three beans for harvest!
- If you hold an extra tile showing you have an additional characteristic such as pregnancy, disability, health problem, etc, you get one extra bean (on top of the three bean harvest) if your harvest is successful.
- The crop fails, there’s no harvest, if the village paid for a normal seed and it was a drought or a flood year. This means the villagers each have to give up four beans to the central pot.

Gender-smart villages

(*Facilitator’s note: if you have played lots of rounds already (more than 5-6) of the ‘gender surprise’ variety, then you might want to tell all the groups or ‘villages’ to be gender-smart this time around)

- If the village gets a harvest and you are a female in the game, you get three beans.
- If the village gets a harvest and you are a male in the game, you get three beans.
As well as this:
- If the village gets a harvest and you are pregnant or nursing, elderly, or have a disability or illness, you get an extra bean. As before, if a farmer cannot pay the four beans, they must leave the village ‘for the city to find work’ and is out of the game for one round. After one round, they can come back to the ‘village’ and start playing again and gets one bean from the village pot (enabling her to plant a normal seed at harvest) when they return.
- Play the gender-smart programming round for about four rounds to see what difference there is from before. Compare notes with the gender-blind villages! How do you feel differently about your situations?

Facilitated discussion and wrap up:

- How do things turn out for the women and men in the group? If this is representing a real-life situation, how would things be in reality? How would the community fare as a whole?
- In a real-world situation, what kind of gender-responsive and socially-inclusive programming would be helpful?