

Minefield Game

Age Range: All

Background: *Land-mines: A deadly inheritance*

Land-mines represent persistent danger to children in countries affected by war. Often it is the children that must collect water and food for their families or look after animals like goats or cows.

Naturally curious, children are likely to pick up strange objects, such as the infamous toy-like 'butterfly' mines that Soviet forces spread by the millions in Afghanistan.

Children are particularly vulnerable to land-mines in a number of ways. If they are too young to read or are illiterate, signs posted to warn them of the presence of mines are useless. Because of their small size, children are far more likely to die from their mine injuries than are adults. Of those maimed children who survive, few will receive prostheses that keep up with the continued growth of their stunted limbs.

How to play the game:

1. Set up a land-mine restricted area (obstacle course). Use written signs warning of the land-mines eg "danger land-mines", "danger explosives", "danger bombs" etc as well as signs that simply have statements written on them eg "off limits", "private property", "keep out" etc.
2. Leaders explain the background to the game. Children being affected by land mines in their everyday life and how literacy has a marked impact on who will survive. (*MDG 2 Achieve universal primary education*)
3. Girls operate in pairs. One girl is blind-folded or keeps eyes closed (*the children who cannot read the signs*) and cannot talk (*optional – cannot speak the language*). The other girl can see (*is literate – can read the warning signs*) and talk but cannot enter the 'minefield' (*marked area*) or touch the person.
4. The challenge is for each blind-folded girl to walk from one side of the minefield to the other, avoiding the 'mines' (obstacles), by listening to the verbal instructions of their partner (only they speak the same language).
5. Allow a few minutes of planning time before the girls begin the activity.
6. The girls must be wary of other blindfolded girls in the minefield; hands in 'bumpers up' position – hands up in front of face with palms forward and elbows tucked in.
7. Make sure there are also spotters available – may be Leaders for younger girls.

8. Decide on the penalty for hitting a 'mine'. It could be a restart (*serious consequence - death*), loss of the use of a limb (*not fatal but profoundly affects your life*), a time penalty (*hurt but still able to function*) or simply a count of hits without penalty.
9. Once through the minefield, the girls swap roles.
10. The activity can be conducted one pair at a time or with all pairs at once for an extra challenge.

Debrief

Pose some leading questions to get discussion started.

How did being "not able to read" make you feel?

How did "not speaking the language" make you feel?

How could the signs be changed so that everyone could understand them?

What could we do to help children affected by land-mines in their country?