

How much to live?

Aim

to explore how families are struggling to meet their basic needs in different parts of our globalised world.

Age

12 years and older

Time

45 minutes

Materials

Important stuff list, Hermosa's story and Angela's story, weekly budgets.

Note for Leader

Poverty is defined in a number of ways:

Absolute poverty means not having enough resources to satisfy the most basic human needs — food, clothing and shelter — in order to ensure continued survival.

Relative poverty means not having enough resources to participate in the ordinary living patterns, customs and activities of society. Though a person may have enough to survive, s/he may be poor relative to others in society.

Basic human needs are the things that we could not do without under any circumstance. They are our minimum requirements for life.

What you need to do

Think about a typical day. What basic necessities does it require? What luxuries do you allow yourself? Split into groups. Give each group a copy of the important stuff list (cut into strips) and ask them to rank the items according to what they think is most important to their lives. Each group feeds back their top and bottom priority.

Give each group a copy of either Angela's or Hermosa's story. The groups discuss what is a necessity and what is a luxury in each case. Ask the groups to consider the budgets. What choices do the women have to make to provide for their families? Ask each group to prepare a short drama to illustrate the choices the women are faced with. The groups present their drama.

Alternatively, ask some groups to prepare a drama and others to create a collage using old newspapers and magazines to show the choices the women have to make.

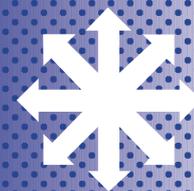
In the large group, discuss the following:

- How were the choices made by the two women similar?
- How were they different?
- What barriers are there to both women escaping poverty?

Angela's Story

Angela has two children, Emer and Seán. They live in a flat in Dublin. Angela does not work because she can't afford childcare. In a week, Angela spends €215 on all the household needs. For the same week she has an income of €154, leaving a deficit of €61. Angela has the constant worry of never having enough money to make ends meet and knowing that her children will grow up in poverty.





How much to live?

Important Stuff List

- Family
- A home that is warm and safe
- Healthy food
- A television and video
- Your own bedroom
- Pocket money every week
- Somewhere to play or hang out
- Mars bars, Coca Cola and crisps
- School books
- A CD player
- Protection from violence and abuse
- Medical care when necessary
- Roller blades/skate board
- A warm jacket
- The chance to express your opinion and be listened to
- Clean air and water
- Nike or Reebok trainers

Angela's Weekly Budget

Item	Cost (€)
Rent	35
Food	76
Clothes	24
Housekeeping	70
Education	1
Travel	9
Total	215

Source: Vincentian Partnership (2001).
'One Long Struggle': A study of low income families.

Hermosa's Story

Hermosa has three children and lives in a crowded, shared house. She works in a garment factory in El Salvador, making sports shirts and shorts for Adidas, Puma and Nike. She gets up at 4.30am each morning to collect water and prepare the children for school. Usually Hermosa works a 12 hour shift to try to make ends meet, for which she earns €0.60 per hour. She often does not get home until 8.15pm. Hermosa's income for the week is €52. This is not enough to cover the basic needs of her family. She has a weekly shortfall of €13. Sometimes Hermosa cannot afford to pay the rent.

Hermosa's Weekly Budget

Item	Cost (€)
Rent	13
Food	30
Health	3
Housekeeping	5
Education	6
Travel	8
Total	65

Source: Oxfam (2002). *Rigged Rules and Double Standards: Trade, globalisation and the fight against poverty.*

