

SAPlandia Role Play

PESM Winter 2007

Adapted from a workshop by www.debtireland.org

Note : For this role play, refer back to and review Juhasz (especially chapters 3 and 6), RWMacro chapter 8, Understanding Capitalism chapter 15, the film Life and Debt, and this week's lectures. Especially important are Peter's Lecture Notes from this week on the "Rise and Fall of Neoliberalism."

Time: 45 Minutes – Caucus and Cross Caucus
50 Minutes – Representative Panel
10 Minutes – Workshop Debriefing Discussion

Scenario: In order to pay off external debts, under pressure from the IMF, the SAPlandia government implemented a Structural Adjustment Program:

- 1.** Devaluation of 100% which is expected to improve the trade balance by making their exports cheaper and imports more expensive. Unfortunately, because many basic goods are imported, it also means that inflation will rise dramatically.
- 2.** Cuts in subsidies and protectionism for non-export sectors. Tariffs on imported crops and price supports for small growers are to be eliminated. There are big grants available to promote export crops such as cocoa, cotton and tobacco, although most export crops require large acreage.
- 3.** Government announces opening of an EPZ (Export Processing Zone). Employers are looking for young women without children. In order to provide energy for the EPZ, the government has secured a World Bank loan to build a huge hydro-electric dam.
- 4.** Privatization of telephone, gas and electric industries. Nationalized health service will be partially privatized.
- 5.** Government cuts social spending. Cuts to education requires students to pay for books and uniforms. Many small local clinics will be closed and fees introduced for all treatments and drugs.
- 6.** The Central Bank is pursuing a policy of tight money which has led to higher interest rates, but has also resulted in a recession. This is part of the austerity package that is supposed to keep down inflation.
- 7.** Government seeks to increase foreign remittances (earnings sent home from abroad) by encouraging work abroad. A private firm, WomenWork Agency has opened up in town to recruit women as domestic workers and entertainers.

Women's Forum on local TV has invited a panel of women to talk about the impact of these policies on women. Each household role-group is made up of similar concerns. The household role groups have 45 minutes to caucus and come up with a list of concerns about these policies and how they will approach life in the wake of the implementation of the SAPs. Each group should discuss all the policies and consider the impacts of as many of them as possible (at least 5) and what might be alternative solutions to the problems SAPlandia is facing. Then a representative from each household role-group will present on the panel. Each household role group has 5 minutes for its presentation. Though the concerns of the men of SAPlandia are important, please be reminded that the focus of the panel is the impacts on women and the actions of women.

The Households

Role 1 - Gilda has two young sons and a daughter - one of the boys has diabetes. Her husband has a job at the electric power station that barely enables her to stay home with the kids. This is especially important for the child with diabetes who needs constant monitoring and care.

Role 2 - Evie is married to an energy tycoon who is poised to buy out the national gas operation at quite a good rate. They have three children who are all being educated at universities abroad.

Role 3 - Sonia works in the informal sector (isn't registered as a business, doesn't pay taxes, hold a license, etc.) selling shoes from a street stall. She crosses the border to purchase her supply. She takes care of her husband who was disabled in a work-related accident for which he gets a small worker compensation. They 3 have children aged 18-23 living at home.

Role 4 - Teresa and Natasha work for an organization that works against trafficking in women workers.

Role 5 - Suzanne and Lydia are workers for a subcontractor to Wal-mart. They don't even earn the minimum wage and both are owed back wages. They have talked about trying to organize other women workers in the plant, but are pessimistic about the prospects. They have also talked about trying to get a job in the well paid but male-dominated mining sector.

Role 6 - Elizabeth inherited a large tobacco plantation that her husband runs. She is a well known socialite and is known for her work for children's charities. She and her husband have two young children who are privately tutored at home.

Role 7 - Qy and her mother work their family's small farm which belongs to Qy's uncle, since women have limited rights to land ownership. It is mostly subsistence agriculture, although they grow a small cash crop of corn. She has two younger sisters and a brother who are in school.

Role 8 - Arlene owns a small business that makes traditional cloth dolls and outfits. She needs to expand production to bring down the cost of production but needs a loan in order to expand.

Role 9 - Gabriela and her daughter Merelda have recently arrived in the capitol after being displaced from the countryside. They are both relatively healthy, though they have been living on the streets of the city for two weeks. Neither can read or write, but Chatter is young and considering going abroad as a "wife" to send money back to her mother.

Role 10 - Sage and Libbie work for a US NGO that has a field office in SAPlandia. They are hoping to help women in SAPlandia by launching a boycott of certain goods. They are in the country doing field research to see which products should be boycotted and what other ways there may be of helping .

Each household role group should also consider the political power that they have and how they might use it to influence local, national and international decisions to lessen the impacts of the SAP or to perhaps overturn them altogether. While thinking about this please be as detailed and close to character as possible while you consider short, medium and long range goals and the alliances you may need to achieve them.

Further Reading

Darder, Antonia. *Reinventing Paulo Freire: a pedagogy of love*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2002.

della Porta, Donatella, et. al. *Globalization from Below: transnational activists and protest networks*. Minneapolis: UMP, 2006.

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Frank, Ellen. *The Raw Deal: how myths and misinformation about deficits, inflation, and wealth impoverish America*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2004.

Benería, Lourdes. *Gender, Development, and Globalization: economics as if all people mattered*. NY: Routledge, 2003.