

# Understanding seasonal forecasts through games

Learning about climate smart disaster risk reduction by playing a serious game:

Paying for Predictions

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## In brief

### Purpose of the serious game "Paying for predictions"

This participatory activity aims to support experiential learning and dialogue on climate-smart disaster risk reduction, which is a key prerequisite for tackling climate change. In this table game, players become disaster managers who face changing climate-related risks. Players make individual and collective decisions, with consequences. Rich discussions emerge at the end.

### When to use this serious game?

During workshops or training sessions around the theme of climate-smart DRR.

### Who can participate?

A wide range of stakeholders, including civil society staff, government authorities, meteorological services staff, donors and private actors. This game is often best played with mixed groups.

### How long does the process take?

45–60 minutes, depending on facilitator experience, group size and desired level of discussion during gameplay.

## Why this game?

The humanitarian and development sectors underutilise climate forecasts for a number of reasons, which include:

- Forecasts are not always disseminated to the appropriate decision-makers.
- People who receive the forecasts often do not understand them.
- If the forecasts are understood, people are often unclear on what types of action could be taken to mitigate risk and/or prepare for a potential disaster.
- People fear 'acting in vain', such as taking disaster preparedness measures when a disaster does not manifest itself.
- Funding is often not available until after the disaster has already occurred.

Playing this game is one step in publicising the potential value of forecasts, and helps break down some of these barriers to their effective use. Also, this game introduces climate impacts in a way that is easy to understand.

**Curious?** For a full facilitation guide and instruction video, please visit:

\*<http://climatecentre.org/resources-games/paying-for-predictions>

## Play space requirements

A room with tables and chairs. Participants sit in groups of three.

## Materials

- A PowerPoint file
- Per player: a six-sided die, 10 beans, a red stone/other object representing 'crisis'
- Per three players: a coloured six-sided die and a non-transparent cup
- Per six players: a transparent cup, a token representing 'DRR'
- Optional: prizes for the winning player and team

## Start by setting the scene

*While explaining, you can follow a facilitator's PowerPoint presentation, which can be found on the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre's website.\**

- The game is a simplified representation of reality. It is designed to amplify certain aspects that matter for the purpose of learning about resilience, while excluding other aspects of reality that, while relevant, would make the game too complicated.



BRACED aims to build the resilience of more than 5 million vulnerable people against climate extremes and disasters. It does so through 15 NGO-consortia working across 13 countries in East Africa, the Sahel and Asia.

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- Players join the game accepting the rules for the duration of play.
- While consultation with team members is encouraged, each player's decisions are individual.
- Players cannot share resources, otherwise players tend to behave in unrealistically altruistic ways.

## Gameplay

- Each person starts with 10 beans. To win the individual prize, be the player with the highest number of beans at the end of the game. To win the group prize, be the team with the highest number of beans at the end of the game. In the event of a tie, the tied team with fewer 'crises', represented by red stones, wins.
- Play one practice round and then 10 rounds 'for real'. A round consists of the following steps:
  - 1) Roll a die representing regional rains, under a cup.
  - 2) Decision time! Players make decisions on whether or not to take early action. It is recommended to give one or two minutes at the beginning for people to discuss an individual and collective strategy.
  - 3) By the end of a countdown, each player is either
    - a. Standing: taking early action that expresses implementing a preparedness action and costs one bean; or
    - b. Sitting, which is free but means that player is not prepared.
  - 4) Collection of upfront payment (one bean) for those who took early action.
  - 5) Reveal the regional die, by lifting the cup.
  - 6) Roll the individual die,

representing local rains.

**Any player whose local and regional rainfall (two dice) add up to 10 or more has a flood.** *Game assistants take four beans from any player who had a flood but did not take early action. Those who run out of beans receive a red stone, representing a crisis.*

7) Resolve this round and continue with the next round.

- **Forecast twist:** Before 'real' gameplay you can introduce an 'early warning system pilot programme'. In the real world, this means investing in better understanding forecast information. Players will bid a number of beans and the winners of the bid will see the value of the regional rains through a transparent cup before they make their decision.
- **DRR twist** (optional): After round 2, you can introduce a 'DRR pilot programme'. In the real world, this could mean investing in planting trees on hill slopes to mitigate the impact of flooding. Introduce another bidding process. Once the trees are mature (wait one round), the impact of a flood (dice: 10+) is reduced from four to two, when the player remains seated.
- **Climate change:** At the start of round 7, introduce new conditions affecting player decisions. The regional rains are no longer represented by a regular, six-sided die, but by eight-sided dice. The effect? The probability of extreme events increases!

## End game and reflection session

The game ends on completion of the 10th round and the winners are

announced. This is followed by a reflection session. It is important that the facilitator has a good understanding of climate change adaptation and the concept of anticipation to guide the discussion in a way that draws out the shared learning. The following questions can be included:

- **What?** What did you experience?
- **So what?** How does this relate to your reality? What happened when the climate changed? How does this relate to your reality?
- **Now what?** Is there anything you would do differently as a result of this experience?

**Interesting note:** It was this game that inspired forecast-based financing, a humanitarian financing mechanism whereby action is automatically triggered by climate forecasts.

## Acknowledgements

This is a tool created by the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre.



"Experiential learning activities and games can support us in understanding the complexity of linking seasonal forecasts to planned actions. (Photo: Climate Centre)"