

## Activity: 'Controversial' Topic Response



### TIME ESTIMATE

45 minutes in class or  
take-home assignment



### MATERIALS

Sheets of paper and writing materials for all participants

### PURPOSE

To critically reflect on and respond to a controversial topic related to philanthropy's role in global development and international food systems governance.

### DESCRIPTION

Learners select one of the prompts from the list and respond with a thoughtful opinion piece supported with evidence. This activity can be a take-home assignment or 45-minute in-class writing activity. It is adapted with permission from Dr. Crystal Karakochuk's FNH 455 Applied International Nutrition course syllabus (University of British Columbia, Faculty of Land and Food Systems).

### STEPS

- 1** Outline to the group which option of the activity you have selected: in-class written assignment or take home written assignment. Show the list of prompts (on page 2) either on a screen or circulate a sheet of paper with the prompts on it to each student.
  - Instruct participants to pair up with someone who is doing the same prompt as them.
  - Give them 2 minutes to silently reflect on the prompt. Give them 5 minutes to discuss with their partner.
  - Bring the group back together and ask if anyone would like to share what they discussed (5 minutes).
- 2** **Option A: In-Class Written Assignment**  
Give participants 45 minutes to free-write a response to the prompt. Participants should aim to deliver a clear and concise message through their commentary. This response is focused on their personal perspective, but they should build on examples discussed in class (see the Background section of this module). Use 'why' or 'why not' to guide your response.  
**Option B: Take Home Written Assignment**  
Assign the response as a take-home assignment to be completed with sources cited (2-4 pages, double-spaced, minimum 4 references). Participants should still aim to deliver a clear and concise message through their commentary. This response is focused on their personal perspective but should be supported with citations. Use 'why' or 'why not' to guide your response.
- 3** Optional: Debrief the activity with participants by having them share their response with another participant either after they finish free-writing (option A) or after they have submitted the take home assignment (option B).

## PROMPTS

- Should philanthropists get to make decisions about how the money they are giving is used, or should it be entirely up to the recipients to utilize as they see fit?
- Should donors be able to profit or benefit financially from their contributions, either through tax breaks or capitalist philanthropy? At what point does a donation become an investment?
- Does encouraging smallholder farmers to transition from subsistence to commercially-driven farm enterprises benefit those farmers in terms of justice and equity?
- Should society praise those who spend their fortunes charitably if their wealth was acquired in exploitative or unjust ways?
- Should wealthy individuals (often white men) be able to use their fortunes to transform local economies to which they have no cultural connection or pre-existing social ties?

Facilitators are encouraged to come up with other prompts.

## ASSESSMENT

A range of assessment options is available, from marks for completion to marking based on the quality of the arguments made and the supporting materials used. Assessment method will depend on whether or not the activity was conducted in class or as a take-home assignment.

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## NOTES: